



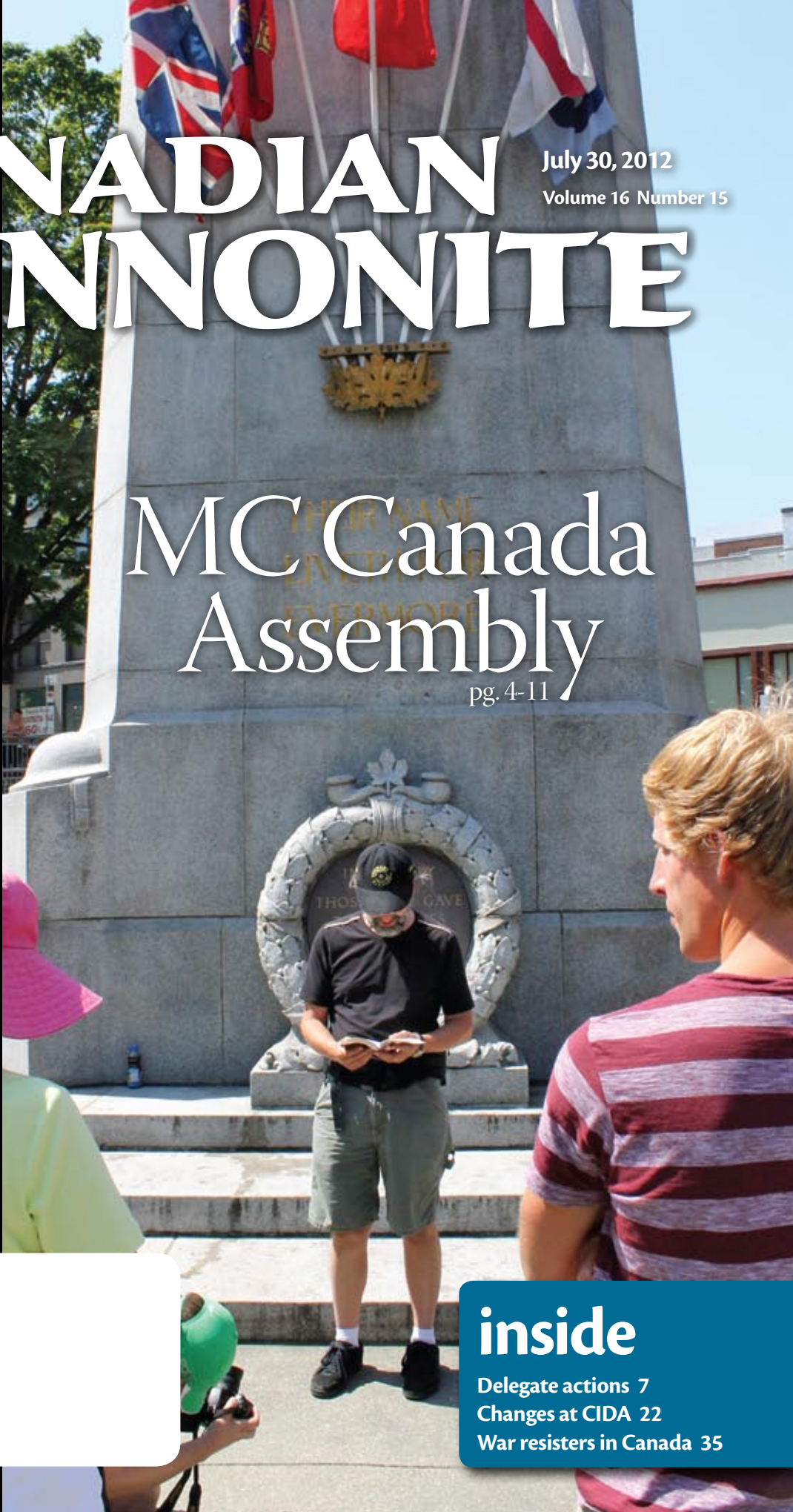
# CANADIAN MENNONITE

July 30, 2012  
Volume 16 Number 15



## MC Canada Assembly

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## EDITORIAL

# Assembly 2012: a many-splendored thing

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

It's difficult to pinpoint just what made Assembly 2012 in Vancouver earlier this month a standout. Its rich textured fabric made it a many-splendored thing that made you want to dance despite the heavy theme of "Dusting off the Bible for the 21st Century."

Dusting off the Bible we did. 21st Century it was.

Was the flash point when Tom Yoder Neufeld, dropping his scholarly demeanour, and taking on the role of the actor, grabbed the Bible with both hands at the podium as plenary speaker and, noted with some drama that, like Jesus' writing in the sand when her accusers wanted the adulterer's head, he would say to us: READ? Or write it, in big, bold letters, in the sand?

Or was it humourist Ted Swartz on video, mimicking Josiah in his Yiddish accent as he was squirreled away in the inner sanctums of the Temple, pretending to be an underground mole in discovering, with a female compatriot, the new word of the Lord? Or when slowly, with much deliberation, making a bologna and cheese sandwich as a story-teller of the strange happenings on the road to Emmaus, punctuating the Jesus' experience with an invitation to EAT?

Or maybe it was the swirling grace and beauty of the Chinese dancers on stage at the barbecue put on by Peace Mennonite



Church as we took a break from deep biblical mining and scarfed down steak, sausages and peppermint chocolate ice cream?

Perhaps it was an off-campus event, as it were, to hear Gareth Brandt read the Holy Word in front of a city monument on the streets of downtown Vancouver while passers-by wondered, and listened, to this strange prophet of the 21st Century as he read the ancient text straightaway without comment or pulpit-pounding, making room for a sacred space in a rushing, Facebook-driven world. Or more in the vernacular—putting shoe leather on the gospel.

Or was it when we discovered the hidden musical talent of our moderator, Andy Reesor-McDowell, when with his wife, Joanna, and members of a pick-up band belted out Hank Williams' "Dust on the Bible," to the accompaniment of banjo and guitar? Who would have known that this statesman, with the patience of Job and the seriousness of Josiah, had a secret love for the rhythm and blues of country music?

For sure, it must have been when our hearts were torn asunder when Aboriginal Kwitsel Tatel wept as she told her agonizing story to those of us attending the workshop Sacred Scripture in Invaded Space—a story of unconscionable harassment by federal officials in exercising her right to fish in the Fraser

River and the bravery with which she has defended herself in court over a harsh eight-year period.

Or did not our hearts burn within us as Sheila Klassen-Wiebe dug deeply into the passages of II Kings and Luke, revealing the good intentions but spiritual blindness of God's people in both the Old and New Testament narrative, and challenging us with our own blindness and 21st Century idols in her "So What" conclusions each day?

Yes, even the art gallery told the story of women heroes of the Bible. And the hallways echoed with conversation and stories shared among friends, connections made, networks broadened, not to mention the moving along of the Being a Faithful Church process that will now have congregations delving more deeply into discernment.

## Farewell and shalom

With some sadness we say farewell to Andrew Reesor-McDowell as moderator of Mennonite Church Canada, who with this Assembly, is taking leave of the post after four years. Andy, the ultimate statesman, has shown grace, patience and a whole lot of wisdom, as he directed a difficult discernment process, fielded our questions, celebrated our diversity and differences and brought calm, often, to troubled waters. His successor, Hilda Hildebrand, says it best: "He invites all into the conversation, then from a diverse range of perspectives, thoughtfully seeks to weave together the threads of common ground, testing as he goes along to ensure integrity." Farewell and Godspeed, Andy. We will miss you. And a soft landing to the strains of Hank Williams as you take your leave!



## ABOUT THE COVER:

At Assembly 2012: Gareth Brandt reads from the Bible at the Victory Square memorial in Vancouver; Tom Yoder Neufeld (top left) tells Assembly goes to dance with the Bible; Alissa Bender dramatizes scripture; artwork is prominently displayed; and dancers from Peace Chinese Mennonite Church, Richmond, B.C., perform at the Friday barbecue.

PHOTOS BY RACHEL BERGEN, DAN DYCK, DAVE ROGALSKY, AMY DUECKMAN.

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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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## Online NOW!

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

Check the **YouTube links** in Dick Benner's editorial to **full-length video** of Assembly 2012 plenary presentations by Gerald Gerbrandt and Tom Yoder Neufeld, as well as Sheila Klassen-Wiebe's Bible studies of II Kings and Luke.

There are links also to a clip of the Chinese Dancers at the barbecue and the pickup band performing Hank Williams' "Dust on the Bible."

# Writing in the dust

*MC Canada Dusts Off The Bible—report from MC Canada Assembly July 12-15, 2012*

**DAVE ROGALSKY**

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
VANCOUVER

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



*Lily Cheung, an assembly volunteer, shepherds participants onto their bus after the Friday evening barbecue.*

**W**e know of Jesus writing only once, Tom Yoder Neufeld told the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly gathered here for Sunday morning worship. Urging his listeners to use more than the written word, he recalled the story of the woman adulterer's accusers fuming while Jesus wrote in the dust on the ground.

"Perhaps Jesus will reach out and write on the dusty covers of our Bibles: Read!" mused Yoder Neufeld, professor of Religious and Peace and Conflict Studies at Conrad Grebel University College, emphasizing the Assembly theme, "Dusting off the Bible for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."

While the theme seemed to have hit a sensitive spot with some, the suggestion that the Bibles in the homes of at least some Mennonites across Canada were unused would fit in with both statistical and circumstantial evidence gathered across North America and reported by Willard Metzger, executive director for Mennonite Church Canada.

More and more university teachers note that their students do not have the biblical background to understand classic Western literature, and surveys of students at Bible colleges show ignorance of basic biblical characters and stories. Taking Yoder Neufeld seriously, MC Canada delegates read and studied the Bible together for four days in July.

The focus of Being a Faithful Church this year, the fourth instalment, was "Testing the spirits in the Midst of Hermeneutical Ferment: Using the Bible in Helpful and Unhelpful Way." The previous three instalments of BFC were (2009) the foundational document on Hermeneutical Ferment, (2010) Peace, and (2011) guidance on moving forward in discussions on sexuality. The use of terms like "hermeneutical" (the study of how we



*The “Dust on the Bible” band—(l-r) Chad Miller (Associate Pastor at Foothills Mennonite, Calgary), Doug Klassen (Senior Pastor at Foothills), Jerry Buhler (MC Saskatchewan Conference Minister), and Joanna and Andrew Reesor-McDowell (Hagerman Mennonite, Toronto)—play the bluegrass classic, “Dust on the Bible.”*

use and interpret documents and materials) was a frustration for some delegates.

One, making the hand flying over the head sign, spoke of not having the biblical or theological background to understand some of what was being said by speakers or in documents. Despite this, delegates spoke highly of the BFC 4 material. Friday afternoon they took part in a prayerful appreciative inquiry-like process listing affirmations, concerns and hopes about the material.

Arnold Neufeldt-Fast of the BFC task force, reported from a summary of the table discussions that: “your feedback gives strong support for the BFC process, especially the extent of involvement by

scholars, congregations and individuals. The process has given space for many voices—BFC represents all of us and suggests a community of accountability.”

Table groups had used words like “comprehensive,” “thoughtful,” and “well rounded” to describe this year’s document. Particularly appreciated was the use of the extended metaphor of ditches and paths for biblical study. The document noted “twelve paths to stay on” and “six ditches to avoid” when engaging in Bible study and discussion. This image was suggested by one scholar that biblical interpretation “is like a communal hike.” Paths suggested by respondents last winter included the “life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus are central and serve as the critical lens of interpretation that helps us understand all of scripture” and “it is the Holy Spirit who guides the interpretive community in faithfulness.”

Ditches to avoid include disconnecting “Jesus from his own scriptural roots (the Hebrew Bible) and his own social/political context in first century Palestine. We need to avoid proof-texting” and “generalizations without having immersed ourselves in particular texts,” and “we live in a changing context, and our understandings are partial.”

Neufeldt-Fast also noted a concern that “the document in its present form is too scholarly and intimidating for non-theologians.” This ongoing refrain was responded to by Andrew Reesor-

McDowell, outgoing moderator and Rudy Baergen, chair of the Faith and Life Committee. Both noted that the materials which congregations will be receiving this fall will use simpler language to make the BFC 4 material more accessible to average congregants.

Another repeated concern was that only 40 of MC Canada’s 225 congregations responded to the request for process this past winter. But Reesor-McDowell noted that such a response was a good cross section of the denomination. The General Board felt that the shortened format of the gathering, as well as the study focus brought a larger-than-expected response from across Canada, showing a good buy-in by congregations and individuals.

Neufeldt-Fast’s summary also included table groups’ hopes for the process. He reported that “we are hopeful about the journey we are on; momentum is building; it is an open, inter-generational return to scripture. We really believe God is at work in our collective discernment. We are talking and listening and processing intensely on this journey together, all the while loving and respecting each other. This will serve our unity in Christ. We really do have good handles to work with; we are rich with scholars and wise leaders.”

At the Saturday conclusion of the BFC 4 process for Assembly 2012, delegates accepted three resolutions (see page 7). Reesor-McDowell then drew attention to a recommended timetable for the ongoing BFC process. With the move to bi-annual assemblies, one delegate wondered how long members of Harmony, a Mennonite gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender group, would have to wait for resolution of the sexuality questions. Leaders responded that while the process is taking time, there is a commitment to move to sexuality questions, albeit the same-sex relationships discussion is now slated for 2016.

In support of the theme, “Dusting off the Bible for the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” assembly planners engaged Gerald Gerbrandt, recently retired president and long-term teacher at Canadian Mennonite University, and CMU Associate Professor of New Testament Sheila Klassen-Wiebe



*Brander McDonald, MCBC Indigenous Relations Coordinator, plays a West Coast native lullaby to say welcome to the natives on whose land the assembly was held.*



to present and lead Bible studies in addition to Yoder Neufeld.

In his first presentation Gerbrandt focused on the image of the Bible as a play in many acts which is as yet unfinished. In the story of the people of God, actors have moved across the stage in the past. Ensuing acts have added their own creative touches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "So we see the Jews of the Exile moving beyond the story of the Exodus with its focus on the land of Palestine. We have Jesus moving beyond the Jews of the Exile and reconstruction, and we have the Christians of the New Testament moving beyond Judaism."

Klassen-Wiebe, in a Bible study on the finding of the "Book of the law" in the temple in the time of Josiah (2 Kings 22-23), taught that many scholars believe the book found was Deuteronomy, probably written around that time, which then influenced the writing of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings during the Exile in Babylon.

In response to her own "so what? how does this apply to us today?" she concluded that we are left with unanswered questions about the cause and effect of sin and its consequences, about the uncertainty of the future, but that, like at that time, we are faced with idols which claim our allegiance—idols of security and finances. She also noted that the 2 Kings text calls the church into corporate interpretation and application of the Bible.

Many of the workshops also focused on Bible interpretation. The workshop, "And the Lord smote them: problem texts in the Old Testament," led by



*Participants of a humorous skit describing Korean social rules take a bow at the Friday evening barbecue at MC Canada Assembly 2012 in Vancouver.*



*(l-r) Hilda Hildebrand, new moderator for MC Canada, blesses outgoing moderator Andrew Reesor-McDowell with Willard Metzger, Executive Director of MC Canada.*

new Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary professor of Old Testament Safwat Marzouk, looked at the conquest of Palestine under Joshua. He showed a quote from a stele by a Moabite king of the same time, in which he "annihilated" a Jewish city, under the command from his God, Chemosh, eerily echoing Old Testament texts. Marzouk noted the "anthropological nature" of the Bible—it is a book written by humans in specific times and cultures—incorporating as God's word common assumptions of the time.

Other workshops included, "The Bible: A place for women?" led by Christina Reimer, lecturer at St. Jerome's University at U of Waterloo, and "Exploring diverse voices in Scripture on the theme of wealth and poverty," led by Lydia Neufeld Harder, pastor at Hagerman Mennonite Church, north of Toronto.

In the workshop, "What about the hard texts? Is the Bible a children's book," led by Rodney Wiebe, adjunct professor at Columbia Bible College, participants favoured teaching scripture selectively, recognizing children's cognitive abilities and stages of development. This will help them to think about what a disciple of Jesus looks like, as opposed to teaching everything in the Bible in an unfiltered manner, avoiding difficult passages, or editing the Bible for children. A repeated refrain from both presenters and participants was that the workshops did not

answer all the questions.

The assembly also included scripture in the worship times with songs about scripture, and effective dramatic presentations of scripture. Videos of humourist Ted Swartz' take on Biblical stories, an art gallery of works with references to specific scriptures and a workshop which took assembly goers out on the streets of Vancouver to hear scripture texts in new contexts helped assembly goers appreciate scripture.

Assembly goers were also invited to hear the story of a "Residential School Healing Pole" and to participate in carving the pole (see back page). On Friday evening the assembly moved to Peace Mennonite Church for a barbecue and evening of multicultural music, dance and humour. Late night activities for young adults included a beach party.

Hallways and tables were full of discussions, catching up with family and friends, making new connections, and exchanging congregational stories. Final answers on many questions seemed unattainable, but a spirit of "we're in this together as followers of Jesus Christ" permeated the four days.

As Sharon Schultz, pastor of Eyebrow Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan put it, "At first I felt threatened [by those who held to liberal scriptural interpretation] but as I got to know those who held such views, I began to see that they too were trying to follow Jesus." ❧

## Delegate Assembly actions on Being a Faithful Church 4

### *Using the Bible in helpful and unhelpful ways*

1. We acknowledge with gratitude the counsel received from congregations, groups, scholars and individuals of our body. We receive this summary report as a sign of the Holy Spirit's work among us, and will use this emerging framework in future efforts to interpret scripture together for our faith and life.

2. We recommend that in the next 12 months (July/2012 – July/20123) each area church of Mennonite Church Canada organize opportunities to explore, deepen, and

strengthen our understandings of each of the “paths and ditches” identified in this summary report. We further suggest that some common resources generated and/or identified by Mennonite Church Canada be used.

3. We recommend that congregations process this document carefully. We further recommend that congregations highlight particular questions or issues they are facing that could benefit by using this framework of scriptural discernment.

## Year-end changed as overall revenues continue to fall

By DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada  
WINNIPEG, MAN.

**R**andy Wiebe, Mennonite Church Canada's CFO, reported to delegates at Assembly 2012 that while total revenues increased by \$55,000 over the previous year, the fiscal year ending Jan. 31, 2012 still ended with a \$129,000 deficit. Wiebe showed the continuing downward trend since 2004, and warned that increasing or even maintaining current programming is not possible over the long term.

Wiebe thanked the body for meeting, by half, a challenge issued at assembly 2011 to increase giving over the previous year by \$150,000, resulting in \$75,000 in increased giving. Leadership presented a motion to change the fiscal-year-end date from Jan. 31 to Sept. 30. In a typical year, 40 percent of annual revenue arrives in the final quarter of the year—from Oct. through Dec. However, the national church also experiences atypical years when the final quarter does not meet expectations, leaving no time for corrective action, said Willard Metzger, executive director.

Delegate Peter Rempel raised a concern that the interim shorter fiscal year will end in a large deficit that will be carried forward. Wiebe responded that there will be a deficit in the short year, but the following longer

fiscal year will balance things out.

Henry Paetkau asked how the delegate body will vote on an annual budget now that the national church will meet every two years. Metzger responded that the General Board will be responsible to present a two-year budget and will have greater responsibility for communicating to the delegate body in years when no assembly will be held. The proposed budget and the change to a Sept. 30 fiscal year-end date were both passed by delegates. ❧

## “We are the ones calling for blame”

By DICK BENNER

Editor/publisher  
VANCOUVER

**J**esus plays the role of scapegoat so that we don't have to hate, kill and blame each other for those sins, observed Rose Graber in discussing the “Three Views of the Atonement” workshop led by April Yamasaki. The workshop focused on Christ-the-Victor, Substitutionary and Moral Influence categories developed

by biblical scholars over the ages.

Graber, pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Regina, was one of several who questioned the neat and tidy boxes into which “atonement” has been placed. “I have come to another perspective in my own struggle with the issue,” she said in the discussion period following a look at 11 different scripture passages. In the Substitutionary Atonement view we think it is God who had to be satisfied with punishment for human sin, but Graber believes the blame for Jesus' death “lies on humanity's doorstep.”

“We are the ones, because of our brokenness—broken community, broken relationships—who need ‘someone’ to pay the price. God, in the person of Jesus Christ, steps in and allows us to throw that blame on himself rather than on child abusers, rapists, torturers, slanderers, gossips—whoever has hurt us deeply,” she asserted. “God is willing to do anything to restore us to right relationships.”

Others thought both the language and the culture have changed so much from the time of the text's authors that we need to find new words and concepts to look this basic happening in the biblical narrative. “In the indigenous view, there is no adversarial relationship,” said Brander McDonald. “Atonement is present in all of the created world around us.”

Yamasaki, pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., concurred that the views of atonement defy categorization in our modern context, but that it is important to work from the established ones to make our own applications. ❧

# She is fighting a lonely battle

STORY AND PHOTO BY DICK BENNER

Editor/publisher  
VANCOUVER

She wept as she told her gripping story of being criminalized by the Canadian government for exercising her indigenous rights to fish from the Fraser River. And she drummed a prayer for “indigenous” Mennonites attending the overflow “Sacred Scripture in Invaded Space” Assembly workshop as she appealed for help in fighting a lonely battle in the courts for the past decade.

“How would you feel if you were denied preparation of your indigenous food,” Patricia Kelly, whose Coast Salish name is Kwitsel Tatel, asked, wearing her traditional head-dress while detailing her arduous journey in her own defence through the provincial court in Chilliwack, British Columbia. She came to the workshop at the invitation of Professor Anthony J. Hall of the University of Lethbridge who has written up her case and has served as an expert witness in the many court appearances. Hall was a guest of Steve Heinrichs, director of Indigenous Relations for MC Canada.

Hall reported that Tatel has been made

to pay a high price for continuing the heritage of her ancestors in British Columbia by exercising her aboriginal right to fish even in the face of aggressive force by the RCMP and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. “The DFO has sided with the farmers of domesticated fish in coastal waters,” he said, “but these fish farms have been the sources of infestation and sickness for the wild salmon populations.”

Tatel reported that her fight for her right to fish has cost the court an estimated \$1 million, not to mention the number of times the DFO has harassed her for what they charge is the illegal possession of fish. DFO regulations confine fishing activities of Aboriginals from Thursday to Saturday, but in order to feed her family, from time to time, she has been forced to violate the code.

A single mother of two teenagers, Tatel has represented herself on in the legal proceedings, now fighting, with the help of Hall, to win her case under an the Rights and Title clause of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 Act. She

has not received any monetary backing from federally or provincially-funded Aboriginal organizations who “unfortunately are sometimes subject to political manipulation by their paymasters,” according to Hall.

She could pay a \$200 fine and be over her legal troubles, but she says such a cowardly act would betray her posterity by giving in to the federal Crown’s effort to deny and negate the viability of her people’s aboriginal fishery.

The tragedy of Kwitsel Tatel’s case is part of a larger dark narrative in Canada, writes Professor Hall in a well-documented case. “It is one small part of a dark process that is filling Canadian jails, especially in western Canada with disproportionately high numbers of Indian, Métis and Inuit individuals. This federal push to deny and negate rather than recognize and affirm aboriginal and treaty rights is part of a scandal of law enforcement marked by a stunning lack of protection especially for aboriginal women.”

In what appears to be a strategy of ongoing intimidation, Tatel told the *Canadian Mennonite* that she has been surrounded in her home by DFO agents repeatedly over the years, frightening her children, most times without cause. She has been followed and stalked after fishing trips with her relatives, once ending in her conducting a citizens’ arrest of them for harassment. Having had so many encounters, she knows several of the agents by their first names and has confronted them with their harassing techniques, all to no avail.

This is too high a price to pay for one individual, insists Hall. “Because of her alleged crime of harvesting and possessing wild salmon, Tatel has faced incarceration where she was subjected to the indignity of vaginal and anal inspections. Her picture appeared in Crime Stoppers. Having been branded as a criminal in Crime Stoppers and with requirements to appear in court almost 200 times in the last decade, her employment opportunities have been severely limited.”

Her next scheduled court appearance is scheduled for July 25 in the Chilliwack provincial court, according to Hall. “If you know of some Mennonites that would be willing and able to come out and ‘witness,’ that would be great, says Hall. “Just being there will make a real difference.”



Steve Heinrichs gives Kwitsel Tatel a peace lamp as a symbol of support, while Anthony Hall, who has written up her case, is given a jar of jam to represent “Mennonite food.”





Gareth Brandt (left) reads the creation story in Minoru Gardens during the Word on the Street workshop.

## Reading the Bible with the damned

STORY AND PHOTO BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-Editor  
VANCOUVER, BC

The Bible was primarily written for the damned, proclaimed Gareth Brandt provocatively during a roving workshop called, “Word on the Street” on Friday afternoon. The nine participants went on an urban hiking and public transportation adventure around Vancouver to read Bible verses and tour around the city.

Brandt chose verses from Genesis to Revelation and took the sightseers to Minoru Garden, to Vancouver’s City Hall, to Victory Square (a war memorial), to the edge of West Hastings Street, to Mountain View Cemetery, and to Oakridge United Church/Global Community Church.

According to Brandt, a professor at Columbia Bible College, “We too often read the Bible from the perspective of the privileged and so we concern ourselves with the formulation of cute doctrines and dogmas rather than allowing the Bible to facilitate God’s transformation in our lives.”

Brandt took the group to the cusp of East Hastings, one of the poorest areas of Vancouver, known for prostitution, drug addiction, and social injustice. The people who live there tend to be judged as

“damned” or “sinners.”

“Jesus concerned himself primarily with social outcasts, reserving his barbs for the conservative religious establishment,” Brandt said in his blog about the workshop.

According to Kyle Berg, a delegate from Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Winkler, Man., said God was visible in the various settings.

“I really liked seeing God in places you don’t expect to see Him. I saw Him during the walk from the waterfront to Hastings because you could see God at work in one of the richest areas of the city but also the poorest.”

Another participant, Corey Hildebrand, also a delegate from Emmanuel Mennonite Church appreciated the contextual nature of the day.

“I felt that God’s word came alive. It was very contextual—the text matched the setting. God appeared in so many different neighbourhoods, not just in the poor area. God was present in so many different areas and situations and settings.

The Word on the Street workshop took place on both Friday and Saturday. ❧

## Dusting off our DVD collection

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-Editor  
RICHMOND, BC

Film has become the most important entertainment medium of this time and can shed light on scripture, said Vic Thiessen, Chief Administrative Officer at Mennonite Church Canada, in his workshop, “From the Prince of Egypt to Batman: Can Film Illuminate Scripture.” Thiessen said film can allow us to see biblical stories and themes in new ways and showed clips from *The Prince of Egypt* and *The Last Temptation of Christ* to illustrate his point.



Thiessen

“There are about 20 films made about Jesus in the past 100 years. Some portray the divinity of Jesus or the humanity of Jesus. I have seen American Jesus, Jewish Jesus, Marxist Jesus, New Age Jesus, rebel Jesus, Jesus as a pacifist social critic, etc. All help me think of Jesus in new ways,” he said.

Thiessen talked about the two cultural themes—the myth of redemptive violence and superheroes. To illustrate that the church is often complicit in dehumanizing enemies and perpetuating redemptive violence, he showed a clip from *Joyeux Noel*.

According to Thiessen, a superhero is appealing to most people because the moral landscape is black and white and it’s a quick and easy situation. Using a *Spiderman 2* clip he wondered if we could all be superheroes with the right inspiration and motivation. Thiessen suggested that Jesus was once that inspiration. When Jesus was born, people were looking for a violent superhero.

“Jesus can inspire us to be real life, non-violent, compassionate heroes as we work to fill the world with God’s shalom,” Thiessen said.

Finally, Thiessen showed clips from the movie, *American Beauty*, to show the hollowness of the “American dream” and the attempt to control one’s life. Watching the film helps one to understand the themes of nothingness, yet fullness in Christ. ❧

# Many young adult delegates attend Assembly

STORY AND PHOTO BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-Editor  
RICHMOND, B.C.

Many people remark that it's difficult to get young adults interested and involved in church. But that wasn't the case for the 44 registered young adults at the 2012 Mennonite Church Canada Assembly.

Kristina Toews, a youth leader from Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church in Abbotsford and a delegate, is very involved in the local, national, and global church.

"I think it's really important that we're a part of a national assembly. It reminds people that we're a part of a larger congregation. I'm involved in Mennonite World Conference, I see a lot of importance in being a part of the global community, as well." She has attended the annual Mennonite Church Canada Assembly for the past five years.

"I love meeting people at other conferences and events. It's so much fun to see people again. I'm so encouraged by the other people here. It's life giving," Toews said.

Susie Guenther Loewen from Toronto United Mennonite Church was asked to come to Assembly to assess the situation regarding the Being a Faithful Church process and to share the work she has done on a paper called, "Unwelcoming the Stranger: Marriage from a Canadian Mennonite Perspective," with people she came across.

Blake Penner, a 21-year-old delegate from Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg was sought out by his congregation to participate in Assembly this year. It was his first and he found it an interesting experience as he knew nothing about what these gatherings were about. "It's really cool to see all the churches together," Penner said.

Because the area churches and individual congregations are involved in different projects, it's a great experience to see what's happening throughout the community and

provinces, Toews said. She believes it is important for young people to get involved with the church locally, nationally, and globally. And not just 10 or 20 years from now, right now!

In the past two years, fewer than 20 young adults registered to attend. Their numbers more than doubled this year. ❧



*Kristina Toews at a young adults event at Assembly.*

## Bring back discipling and wisdom

BY DICK BENNER

Editor/publisher  
VANCOUVER

"Never in Canada's 150 year history has an emerging generation been exposed to such an explosion of change and choice," Tim Froese said in his "Scripture in Exile" workshop Saturday afternoon. Attended by persons of all ages, the workshop focused on how this generation, like no other, is working with a completely new set of cultural constructs as it struggles to find a faith expression based in the biblical narrative.

Froese, growing up a "missionary kid" in India and as an adult in Brazil and Panama and now executive minister for Mennonite Church Canada Witness, not only enumerated the interests, values and commitments of the younger generation based on David Kinnaman's research, but outlined the new multi-cultural nature of our world with its many "isms." The influences of pluralism, consumerism and globalism on our everyday lives prompt the question, "Who is my neighbour?" and give, especially the young, a sense of "exile" in a land foreign to their elders.

"Young people are leaving the church not because they won't listen or aren't trying to fathom what the church has to say," he quoted Kinnaman of the Barna Group. "A large majority of young people

consider themselves spiritual, seeking, or as possessing some sort of faith. However, at some point the message the church is sending doesn't add up with what they are experiencing in the rest of their lives."

This seemed to resonate with several of the young persons attending. "An important ingredient to keeping me in the church," said one youth in attendance, "is because my parents were highly immersed in congregational life and gave me the excitement needed to want to belong." Another observed that elderly mentors were key to "showing an interest in my development and questions as I journeyed through a spiritually formative period."

As a path forward out of this dilemma, Froese recommended that the church refocus its mission on "making disciples," particularly through intergenerational relationships. "We need to reprioritize wisdom," he said, again referencing Kinnaman, "because wisdom empowers us to live faithfully in a changing culture. Older generations imparting wisdom upon Mosaics (a category of young persons) will help them better discern and sift through the mass of unlimited information they consume every day." ❧



# Stitch by Stitch, Seed by Seed

*Sixty years for  
Mennonite women*

STORY AND PHOTOS

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
RICHMOND, B.C.

Mennonite women in Canada have sown seeds of peace while they sewed blankets for relief, and they celebrated 60 years of service on July 14 when 130 women gathered for the women's luncheon at Mennonite Church Canada's annual Assembly.

Theme for the afternoon was "Scattering Seeds for a New Season" based on Mark 3:26-34, where Jesus tells the parable of seeds falling on different kinds of soil with different results. Decorative plants, a seed-guessing game and take-home napkins with dandelion puffs added to the atmosphere.

Members of the Mennonite Women Canada executive presented a history of women's ministries in Canada, beginning with church sewing societies in the early 1900s where women gathered to make items for overseas relief. By the 1940s, Mennonite women realized the value of organizing provincially and with women in the United States in the then-



General Conference Mennonite Church. This helped them get an overall picture of conference work and relief projects for Mennonite Central Committee especially in the post-World War II years.

On July 8, 1952, 300 women gathered in Gretna, Man. to formally organize as the Canadian Women's Conference, the predecessor to Women in Mission and eventually Mennonite Women Canada.

Since the 1960s Mennonite women's societies have continued in various forms, whether as sewing/blanket-making groups, or speaking out on social issues such as substance abuse, war toys, family violence and pornography.

A sharing time following the presentation brought out many stories and memories of women across Canada. Valeria Alvarenga, pastor from Recife, Brazil, gave greetings from Latin American women, and Lovella Schellenberg of the popular *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* cookbook shared how she and her co-authors had the vision to prepare the cookbook and give the proceeds to charitable projects. The study guide for 2012, *Let Justice Roll Down* written by Rebecca

Seiling, was introduced.

Evelyn Buhr of Edmonton, youngest member of the Mennonite Women Canada executive, says the first seeds for her interest in women's ministries were sown in childhood in Henley, Sask. in the late sixties and early seventies. She recalls going with her mother to the meetings, and how her mom would clean the house from top to bottom before the women's group came over. Buhr says she loved listening in on those women's meetings, even as a young child. "I like to watch people and I always liked to listen to the adult conversation. Now I am the president of Alberta women. . . . I love meeting people from across the country and I love women of all ages. It's all about connecting with women and all the things we can be with a larger body," she concludes enthusiastically. ☼

MC CANADA PHOTO BY DEBORAH FROESE



**Laura Eriksson's "Revere and Sing,"** based on Psalm 67, in watercolour and gouache, was created for the 30th Anniversary of Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond, B.C. Eriksson, a calligraphy artist, helped Ray Dirks, curator of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, put together an art exhibit for the Assembly.



*Women from across Canada celebrate 60 years.*

## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

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

## ✉ A healthy alternative to no meat or factory-farm meat

RE: "WHAT WOULD Jesus eat?" June 11, page 30.

I read this article with great interest and agree with John Borger that factory farming is not ideal, but he makes it sound like the only options we have are to eat factory-farm meat or not eat any meat at all.

There are still small family farms like my Roesacres Organic Farm that do our best to allow our animals to live in conditions where they can do what they were created to do. My cattle spend most summer days outside having access to fresh pasture. My chickens are also allowed outside to eat grass and scratch around in the dirt.

God created cattle to eat the things that people don't. Unlike me, cows can take grass and turn it into milk and meat for us to eat, and at the same time fertilize the ground so more grass grows. It's a pretty efficient system.

Borger also makes the comment that meat is the cause of many diseases. In reality, meat has very little to do with these diseases. We live in a culture where fat-free is thought to be healthy. While many people try to cut out the fats in their diets, our society is only getting heavier. The main problem is actually the carbohydrates.

Meat can be, and should be, part of a healthy diet. While fruits and vegetables should make up at least half of what we eat, meat raised in a healthy way can also be beneficial to our health. The meat and eggs in my diet do not have a negative effect on my health; in fact, they only make me healthier.

There are many other farms like mine that are doing

their best to raise healthy animals to produce healthy food for us all to eat. Meat does not need to be cut out of our diets, but we do need to know where it comes from and how it was raised.

SCOTT ROES, MILVERTON, ONT.

## ✉ Magazine 'contributes significantly' to spiritual formation

THE "DUSTY BIBLES" editorial, on page 2 of the June 11 issue prompted me to write this.

I am increasingly impressed with *Canadian Mennonite*, its editorial policy, and its layout. But mostly I applaud the direction of the content. It contributes significantly to what is often called spiritual formation; that is, nurturing the sense of the presence of God and of the nature of salvation, and, what follows directly: the shaping of a specifically Christian conscience about the many issues we face in our world today. *Canadian Mennonite* does this better than many other church papers.

If our focus is primarily on our private salvation, our response to public issues is likely to be of the political, social and psychological views current in the media. If we are to be non-conforming to this world, we had better allow the gospel to shape our responses to public issues. Much of evangelical Christianity does not seem to be aware that it is conformed to the world as much as liberal Christianity ever was. Reflection on our salvation and its expression in action need to be kept welded firmly together. *Canadian Mennonite* helps us do this.

WALTER KLAASSEN, SASKATOON

## ✉ Article brings back fond memories of German ministry

RE: "MIGRANT CHURCH grows new roots," June 11, page 12.

Reading about the new roots and traditions of the German church, a blessed experience came back. Hildur and I served the now thriving Umseidler Mennonite congregation in Wolfsburg, Germany, from 1978 till 1982. Here, we found ourselves in the midst of different Mennonite traditions—Russian, German and North American—and we of the original West Prussian/Lutheran tradition. We tried to understand and appreciate all with the attitude and love of Jesus Christ.

We also found meaningful relationships with rather large independent Russian Mennonite/Baptist congregations there. We observed strong new roots nourished by a serious commitment to Jesus Christ



often under a repressive non-Christian society, where a Halloween fun night certainly was out of question.

ERWIN CORNELSEN, VANCOUVER

### ✉ Snake handling has something to say about giftedness

RE: "SNAKE PASSAGES are optional" column, June 25, page 11.

For several years I lived in eastern Kentucky and got to know a number of people connected to the branch of holiness churches that sometimes use snakes in their worship services. I renovated a home for one of those families and got to talking to them about church. The man explained to me that they very rarely took the snakes out of their boxes during the service out

of concern that the ability to handle the snakes could make one member feel more prideful than others, and lead the group into divisiveness and sin. It was an insightful comment that many of us could apply to more mundane issues of giftedness in the church.

He also explained to me that, although his congregation rarely handled the snakes during worship, they did believe that a believer who is "in good with the Lord and with his Christian brothers" should need not fear any creature God has made. It was a very powerful claim of holistic faith.

Later during that renovation project, I disturbed a large poisonous copperhead snake under the house and the snake crawled out into the yard. True to his word, the homeowner casually walked over, picked it up and gently placed it in a plastic bucket nearby. Neither the man nor the snake was agitated or afraid

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# A lost cause?

WILLARD METZGER

I don't think I am delusional, but as the leader of a national church, I sometimes feel as though I am romanticizing a lost cause. I serve a collective within the context of individuals. I depend on the communal while appealing to the private.

Rather than dismiss the disengagement I encounter, I seek to understand it. There is often great wisdom within the expression of disillusion. Disappointment reflects a loss, discontentment a cherished hope. And so I welcome these gifts. I ponder the future, as mysterious as it is. I consider the past as selectively as it is recounted.

Such a gift was given to me recently. The following statement was included in a supportive and encouraging email: "I would be like most people in our church and have a love/hate relationship with conference. We love the idea of belonging to something bigger than ourselves and speaking with one voice and sharing common theological and ecclesiological ground. But we find quite a large

disconnect between what goes on in the offices and what goes on in our daily congregational life. And because of that disconnect, I end up not trusting what comes out of the office."

Another email conversation offered the following: "I think distrust and disconnect might come from just not knowing/not being in relationship with anybody from Mennonite Church Canada. I don't think we otherwise have ongoing trust issues with Mennonite Church Canada. If anything, we might feel indifferent because Mennonite Church Canada has little-to-no impact on our lives as a church."

I treasure these comments.

At a recent event, Stuart Murray, the author of *The Naked Anabaptist*, told of entire denominations in Europe planning for discontinuation. Leaders have even identified closure dates. I made a few notes about this in the company of many pastors and leaders. One of them saw me writing and asked; "What date did you write down?" I laughed at the witty comment but grimaced at the conjecture.

I understand the common dilemma of pastors in a context where few people are interested in denominational identity. I remember it well. But still something feels restless within me. Intuitively, individualism and isolation feels wrong, but practically, it seems preferable. We warn against it from our pulpits, but prefer it as congregations.

I am not interested in defending an institution, but I am interested in nurturing a historical movement. As some congregations distance themselves from Mennonite/Anabaptist identity, other emerging leaders are discovering Anabaptism and yearning to recover its expression.

At our recent national Assembly in Vancouver, B.C., 44 young adults attended, some for the first time. I'm grateful for the inspiration I received from them.

People of all generations long to belong to something beyond themselves, but the church cannot take for granted that it will be selected to meet that need unless we display a readiness to engage current concerns, embrace creative approaches to worship, and share leadership influence. That will make the church a place where people can find meaningful engagement and a cause worth sacrificing for.

*Willard Metzger is executive director of Mennonite Church Canada*



of the other. It was amazing to see.

That man and I disagreed about a number of things theologically and politically. He read his Bible carefully and with great faith and confidence that what is written there is the inerrant, infallible word of God for him and others for all time and in all places. He and his family did what they could to follow what is written in the New Testament in every way, even when those models seemed difficult to understand or apply, and

put them at odds with society and even the church around them.

Troy Watson uses the snake-handling example to critique Christians who claim to believe in a literal inerrant reading of Scripture and yet clearly do not. That's a fair criticism. However, both conservative evangelicals and those who see themselves on the progressive postmodern end of the theological spectrum would do well to give occasional credit to those

## FAMILY TIES

# Wedding gifts

MELISSA MILLER

**O**n a lovely summer day 36 years ago, my husband and I were married in an outdoor service at our church camp. Standing beside him and facing our family and friends, I was overcome with a joyful surprise. "All of these people have come just because of us!" I thought, as tears came to my eyes. I was awed and delighted by the sight of these people and the love they extended towards us. The support that I first glimpsed at my wedding has continued to be one of the firm pillars upholding our marriage.

Marriage is hard work! The two people in the marriage do not live in isolation. The marriage itself cannot be healthy without the interaction and care that comes from circles of support—circles that include family members, friends, neighbours, co-workers, helpers like doctors and counsellors, and for Christians, other Christians.

As I write, a wave of memories rolls out as questions, calling forth these ties that bind. Who befriended and encouraged us as a couple? Who reminded us to keep our covenantal promises? Who walked with us through infertility and miscarriages? Who helped us raise our son? Who companioned us when we left our Ontario home and resettled in the prairies? Who comforted and cried with us when our parents died? Who used humour and understanding to soften our

sharp edges and deepen our capacity to forgive? It is the people of our community, some of whom were with us on our wedding day and are still with us now. Others have come into our community along the way.

This vital support present at a wedding, or its absence for those who cohabit, is one of the things that troubles me about the increasing trend of cohabitation. A



*Like baptism, a Christian wedding is a gift from God and the church to the participants.*

wedding marks a transition in an individual's or couple's life, moving from singleness to married. Typically a wedding is a communal event, when the people who love and care for the couple gather to celebrate, to witness vows and to pledge ongoing support for the couple and their marriage.

When all goes well, the newly married couple leaves the marriage ceremony with a treasure of gifts beyond the fancy wrapped packages. The gifts may be intangible or difficult to see, such as prayer, understanding, and comradely loyalty in the muddy, joyful trenches of married life. The newlyweds and their commitments are held in the hopeful, loving hearts of the community members who send them off with a cheer, "We're rooting for you!"

This encouragement is delayed or muted when a couple joins their lives together without a wedding ceremony.

The community members also receive gifts at a wedding. First of all, there's a party, and who doesn't love a party? Then there's the pageantry and beauty and drama—carefully selected clothing; artful flower arrangements or the simple splendor of nature; big or little glitches that punctuate the ceremony; sacred stillness as vows are pledged; the kiss. All of these elements pull us into bonds of connection and knit us together even more closely.

Finally (and I'm sure my list is not

complete), community people are invited, even compelled, to examine their own commitments. As at baptism, we remember the promises we have made and recommit ourselves to faithfulness. Like baptism, a Christian wedding is a gift from God and the church to the participants. A gift that nurtures the focal person as well as the gathered community. May we treasure these gifts, and continue to practice them with diligence and joy, especially when society lures us away from them.

*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.*



sometimes odd groups of very conservative Christian believers who do what they can to live out and apply everything they read in the Bible as literally as they can. They follow a path that few of us feel called to, but all of us should be aware of with a certain respect.

What became of the snake in the pail? Why, he took it to church, of course!

JEFF THIESSEN, AUSTIN, MAN.

## ✉ Is unity at any cost worth the price?

RE: “DISCERNMENT FRONT and centre” editorial, June 25, page 2.

I’m not convinced that “agreeing to disagree” is always “a sign of spiritual health,” or that it’s what the Bible advocates. “Agreeing to disagree” can too easily be an excuse for not engaging in serious discernment of what the Spirit is saying to us.

Clearly, unity is important in the Acts 15 discussion

## GOD, MONEY AND ME

# A Bible full of stewardship

DORI ZERBE CORNELSEN

I have been fortunate not to have to wear glasses to correct my vision for most of my life. But like many others who have reached a certain age, I now need glasses in order to read or see anything up close. For a time, I was managing to get by with a few pairs of inexpensive reading glasses kept in strategic locations for me to pick up and use when needed.

Reading glasses are great for reading and stationary tasks, but not for walking away from the desk or especially going down a set of stairs. And even with multiple pairs in various locations, reading glasses are not always within reach in a moment of need. Given this, I recently took the plunge and acquired a set of glasses with progressive lenses. While progressives have their own issues, when I wear these glasses they do allow me to see all distances quite clearly.

In the church, we sometimes tend to view stewardship as a topic of select verses in Scripture that can be used as the basis for a fundraising campaign. Based on what the church needs, we may quote Bible verses that are meant to encourage everyone to step up and meet those

needs. Thus, stewardship is reduced to a sporadic topic for specific occasions. It’s as if we put on stewardship lenses like reading glasses that are lying around to be used only when necessary.

But what if our stewardship lenses were progressives through which we viewed the whole Bible, not just select passages at convenient times? Such lenses might reveal that a “great pattern of Scripture revolves around God’s generosity and human stewardship of the gifts



*What human tendency—such as accumulating, hoarding or sharing—is revealed in the text?*

God has given,” as Lutheran scholar Craig Nesson puts it.

God’s generosity and human stewardship, both good and bad, are revealed throughout the pages of the Bible, from creation, covenant and on to the exodus and law; through the monarchy and sages tumbling into psalms, the prophets and exile; throughout the incarnation, passion and resurrection; and then within the early church and beyond to the fulfillment of time. We have a Bible full of stewardship!

We can try on progressive stewardship lenses when reading the Bible by considering questions such as:

- **HOW IS** God’s generosity expressed in this text?
- **WHAT HUMAN** tendency—such as accumulating, hoarding or sharing—is revealed in the text?
- **IS THERE** a disconnect in this text between God’s generous nature and human activity?
- **DOES THIS** text communicate a specific stewardship teaching?
- **WHEN I** consider this text alongside my interaction with money and the material world, how does it make me feel?

Read this way, we discover that the

Bible is not just a book that contains stewardship texts. Instead, the whole of it contains the revelation of God’s generosity, which invites a human response of appropriate stewardship in all of life.

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

and in Paul's responding to issues in the various Christian communities. However, designating unity

*However, designating unity as our highest priority over anything can leave us hostage to the notion that any personally held feeling or conviction is therefore valid and needs to be respected and accepted.*

as our highest priority over anything can leave us hostage to the notion that any personally held feeling or conviction is therefore valid and needs to be respected and accepted.

Even in the Acts 15 discernment process, what was seen as "good to the Holy Spirit and to us" was to identify certain behaviour—idolatry, sexual immorality and consuming blood—as behaviour inappropriate for those in the body of Christ. And, yes, as you say, some of these

issues do "sound familiar to our discussions today."

So let us give a measure of value to our unity, but let us also take our discernment process seriously before too quickly throwing in the towel and simply "agreeing to disagree."

**JIM BROWN, WELLESLEY, ONT.**

### ✉ 'Becoming a mega-church just happened'

**RE:** "BIG BOX churches" editorial, April 30, page 2. Dick Benner's piece on the subject of "big box churches" surprised me, as he included Willingdon Church, in Burnaby B.C., as a big box church, and furthermore suggested Willingdon took as its model Willow Creek, the very large church in Chicago.

I suspect he has never been to, nor seen, Willingdon, and I doubt he's ever talked to anyone from or in that church. It is somewhat offensive to paint large churches with the broad brush of commercialism without doing a little homework.

My wife and I have been members of Willingdon for 30 years and I've just recently retired from leadership, having served for nearly all of that time as a lay-leader. During this time we've seen this church grow from a small group of ordinary Christians of around a hundred souls who heard God call them to go out and give the gospel to their neighbours, into what it is today.

When we arrived in the early 1980s, the Sunday morning attendance was approximately 600. As far as I recall, becoming a large church was never anyone's goal. Our motto was, and still is: "To know Jesus Christ personally and to carry on his ministry." As more and more people experienced what it was to know Jesus personally, and were being fed sound biblical messages, the number of people attending increased.

Soon people groups who didn't know English well started coming and brought with them those who could translate English into their native language; today, the doctrinally sound biblical messages are translated into nine languages at last count.

As leaders, our constant scramble was to keep providing a seat for all these people to hear what God was saying; becoming a mega-church just happened.

May I invite Benner to visit Willingdon, stay a weekend and visit the five services we need in order to allow everyone who wants to hear the message to have a seat. Please spend a day or two, to see what God is doing in this community. Although I'm an octogenarian now, I'll volunteer to give him a personal tour.

**GEORGE GOERTZEN,  
NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C.**

*Originally posted at [www.canadianmennonite.org](http://www.canadianmennonite.org).*

### ✉ Listen to the prophetic young voices

**THANK YOU SO** much for beginning the Young Voices section in *Canadian Mennonite*. It is refreshing to hear the opinions of the younger generation.

I especially appreciated the prophetic voice of Daniel Eggert ("Young adults pursue walk with God in other Christian traditions," May 28, page 35) when he said, "I think right now the [Mennonite church] has to make a decision on whether it wants to clothe the naked and feed the poor, or whether it wants to be a community of followers of Christ."

He eloquently states what I have felt for some time: "By focusing continually on social justice and motivating people to take action in that regard, it's a little bit like harvesting all the crops and not re-planting the seeds—like owning a stock and taking all the dividends and never reinvesting. We can focus on the outcomes of faith . . . but if we don't continue to focus on faith and growing the number of believers, then it minimizes the future fruits."

In how many Mennonite congregations do we already see the results of what Eggert is talking about? There are many aging congregations where younger people haven't been schooled and mentored in their faith, and therefore find the church irrelevant to their social justice and action. How soon will the vision for social justice disappear, too, because the roots of faith haven't been nourished?

Yes, I believe the Mennonite church does face an important decision, and we need to go back further than our Anabaptist heritage to focus on inspiring people in their faith to be followers of Christ. We had better listen to those prophetic young voices.

**RUTH SMITH MEYER, AILSA CRAIG, ONT.**

## POSTMODERN SHIFT

# Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater

TROY WATSON

“The Walking Bible” was my nickname on my PeeWee hockey team. Scripture was my passion. It was more than important to me; it became part of me. Memorizing practice of my upbringing and I believe my life is richer today because of it.



Scripture was a chief spiritual life has stifled the evocative power of its literary elegance, poetic flow and inspired purpose. In fact, I'm convinced the conventional approaches to Scripture have been a major factor in the decline of Christianity in Canada.

The reality is that not only nominal Christians,

who wouldn't know where to locate the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament without the aid of Google, but also devoted students of Scripture have

*I'm convinced the conventional approaches to Scripture have been a major factor in the decline of Christianity in Canada.*

been converting to the notion that the Bible is a debunked, superstitious, collection of ancient texts. I am sure we all know adult believers who were committed to understanding and living out the Bible their entire lives and have recently walked away from it.

Mark Twain once commented, “It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.” Isaac Asimov suggests, “Properly read, the Bible is the most potent force for atheism ever conceived.” As much as I appreciate the elements of truth and clever sentiment behind these comments, I would argue it is not the biblical content itself but the way it has been presented that has caused such widespread faith crises in Canada.

Many of us were coerced as children into believing the Bible is a book dictated word for word by God. When a believer comes to the conclusion, as I did, that we have been sold a bill of goods with regards to the Bible, it is inevitable one's faith is shaken to the core and often crumbles, for the Bible has been presented to us as the very foundation of our faith.

The false dichotomy I grew up with proclaiming the Bible must be either God's self-revelation, word for word in the original languages, or merely “man's book” on par with *Moby Dick* or the *Readers Digest*, haunted me for years. It has been a confusing and difficult journey trying to figure out what the Bible is and why it is still important if it does not house God's actual words. Through all the doubting and questioning I've refused to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Instead of tossing the Bible aside I chose to throw away the modern way of reading it and this is probably why, unlike so many of my friends and peers, I still call Christianity home.

Over the next few months I will be

relating my own complicated journey with Scripture while exploring these questions:

- Why does our understanding and approach to Scripture need to evolve and expand?
- What authority and role does the Bible have in our lives if it does not house God's very words?
- How do we approach Scripture meaningfully with everything else we know about physics, biochemistry, psychology, textual criticism, etc? ☿

*Troy Watson is pastor of Quest Christian Community in St. Catharines, Ont. This is part 2 of an ongoing series on the Role of Scripture for Christians in the Postmodern Shift.*

I was nursed with the milk of the King James Version as a child and I still think about Scripture in the language of the KJV. It holds a beautiful, poetic and other-worldly power that seems to quicken the soul as it engages the mind.

The late Christopher Hitchens regarded the King James Bible as the one positive contribution religion made to society. He claimed the language and imagery in this translation of the Bible is unrivaled by any other work of literature. He writes, “A culture that does not possess this common store of image and allegory will be a perilously thin one. To seek restlessly to update it or make it “relevant” is to miss the point, like yearning for a hip-hop Shakespeare. “Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,” says the Book of Job. Want to try to improve that for Twitter?”

I am certainly not an advocate of the “KJV only” agenda but Hitchens has a point. We are clearly becoming a biblically illiterate society, both inside and outside the church, and we are poorer for it. I also agree with Hitchens that our attempts to make the Bible more relevant often miss the point. I disagree with him on his critique of versions with updated language, but our modern approaches to the Bible pose serious problems. Treating Scripture like God's textbook explaining everything under the sun or as God's step-by-step manual for contemporary



## THE WAR OF 1812: PART III OF III

# Longing for peace in Niagara

BY JONATHAN SEILING

The historic District of Niagara included what is roughly the whole of the Niagara Peninsula. It began at Hamilton and stretched along Lake Ontario toward the Niagara River, bordering the United States, and it continued southwest from Fort Erie along Lake Erie past the mouth of the Grand River into Haldimand County, although the Mennonite Rainham settlement was located just outside the border of the district. Those who lived in Niagara along or near water were the most affected by battles and military garrisons. For the duration of the war this was an embattled people longing for peace.

### **Erie Shores: Boats of 1812 and raiders of 1814**

The boats of Mennonites from two of the earliest settlements were taken already at the initial phase of the war, when Isaac Brock commandeered a contingent to sail to Detroit.

The Zavitzes of Port Colborne and the Hoovers of Rainham would lose more than their boats through the course of the war; later, these two settlements along Lake Erie became the scene of the lawless marauders—both “Canadian” and American—who came to pillage and take advantage of the American occupation of Lake Erie, including much of the Niagara District and western Upper Canada.

Mennonites in Niagara faced demands from all sides, including British officers, who sometimes destroyed their property so that supplies didn’t fall into the hands of the Americans; American soldiers who pillaged their homes for supplies; first nation warriors who sometimes took horses or food forcibly; and American raiders who came to pillage but had no connection to the military. There were also

“Canadian” traitors who sided with the Americans and turned on their neighbours in anticipation of American rule in Upper Canada.

Throughout the war, the Mennonites in these two communities also served the British in noncombatant ways, including hauling whisky to the battlefield, transporting soldiers in the retreat from Fort Erie, fixing the militia’s guns, feeding soldiers, allowing their homes to be used as barracks and barns as supply depots, and other sorts of things most Mennonites today would blush to even consider.

### **Battle of Stoney Creek (June 1813)**

Throughout Niagara, the war came repeatedly knocking at their doors, quite literally in some cases.

In Hamilton, Catherine (Hess) Burkholder confronted American soldiers who, during the Battle of Stoney Creek, tried to steal one of their cows. They tried but, according to a family account passed down, the soldiers did not succeed.

These pioneering folk were not pacifist possums, playing dead at the first sign of adversity. In the same battle, the Wismers confronted a different sort of visit from American soldiers. While fleeing a British gunboat, an American supply boat ran ashore at their lakefront farm. As the story goes, the Americans laid their weapons down at the door of these unsuspecting Mennonites, highly motivated by the British who were hot on their trail.

### **Riverfront destruction**

Along the Niagara River between Fort Erie and Niagara Falls, there is a stretch of 14 riverfront properties, of which 11 were owned by Mennonites during the war. The Battle of Chippewa was fought just

three lots downstream from this group of Mennonites. American, British and first nation troops repeatedly caused hardship and destruction throughout the war.

Further inland, many lots in Willoughby and Bertie townships were owned by Mennonites and Brethren in Christ. Some Mennonites had only been living near the Niagara River for a year prior to the war.

While the losses of all these homes deserve more detailed attention, a few examples stand out:

- **ANNA BYER**, a widow in her late 80s, was required to billet soldiers through the winter into the spring of 1815, after the war had ended.
- **NEARBY, 18-YEAR** old Sara Miller initially refused to allow American soldiers to steal their chickens, until her mom convinced her otherwise, and she offered them the skinniest one.
- **THE HOME** of Abraham Hershey was damaged and his barn was burned by troops, which was a minor loss compared to his neighbour. Henry Neff, whose two-storey house and carpenter shop were also destroyed.

Many others lost fences, horses, wagons and a host of household goods, hay and produce.

After the war, leadership and solidarity among Mennonites was lacking. The process of rebuilding and applying for compensation lagged; some never received a dime for the loss of their livelihoods and properties.

Many migrated elsewhere in Upper Canada or returned to the U.S. Many joined other religious groups, especially the Brethren in Christ.

For these pioneers of peace, the war’s end did not cease their suffering, only relief from embattlement. ☸

*Jonathan Seiling, a member of The First Mennonite Church, Vineland, Ont., counts more than 20 of his ancestors among those alive in Waterloo Region during the War of 1812. He has researched the history of Mennonites during the War of 1812 throughout Upper Canada.*

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Dick**—Hannah Irene (b. June 6, 2012), to Jonathan and Sandra Dick, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.  
**Friesen**—Noah Patrick (b. June 11, 2012), to Al and Sandra Friesen, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.  
**Harder**—Emma Sen (b. May 19, 2012), to Ryan and Trang Harder, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.  
**Klassen**—Kylie Bryn (b. June 10, 2012), to Brian and Meaghan Klassen, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.  
**Manicom**—Asher Ryan (b. June 1, 2012), to Adam Manicom and Kristina Dueck, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.  
**Martens**—Olivia Judith (b. April 12, 2012), to Michelle McKinnell and Karl Martens, Osler Mennonite, Sask.  
**McKinnell**—Peter Francis (b. April 18, 2012), to Teresa and Matthew McKinnell, Osler Mennonite, Sask.  
**Neufeld**—Anna Nancy (b. April 5, 2012), to Rachel Buhler and Clint Neufeld, Osler Mennonite, Sask.  
**Peters**—Levi Greyson (b. June 2, 2012), to Steven and Shantelle Peters, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.  
**Wiebe**—Sylvia Yan Yu (b. April 14, 2009; adopted March 12, 2012), by Chris Wiebe and Jan Schroeder, Ottawa Mennonite.  
**Wiens**—Julianne Elizabeth (b. May 18, 2012), to Alex and Chani Wiens, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Rachel Janzen, Tim Janzen, Diana Lantin, Cathleen McCabe**—Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont., June 24, 2012.  
**Mandy Redekopp, Mallery Peters, Hope Epp**—Laird Mennonite, Sask., June 17, 2012.  
**Riley Wiens**—North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask., June 24, 2012.  
**Jerry Kuepfer, Elizabeth Kuepfer, Jocelyn Martin**—Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont., June 24, 2012.

**Halley Matthews**—St. Agatha Mennonite, Ont., June 24, 2012.

**Evan Bechtel, Dylan Brenneman, Rachel Ruby, Joel Wagler, Emily Wagler, Tyrone Winfield**—Tavistock Mennonite, Ont., June 3, 2012.

**Jesse Bender, Brady Finn, Riley Finn, Matthew Gerber, Katie Gerber, Sam Jantzi, Brett Lebold, Justin Lebold, Matthew Poole**—Wellesley Mennonite, Ont., June 17, 2012.

### Marriages

**Caza/Kroeker**—Mike Caza and Ashley Kroeker, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., May 26, 2012.

**Fehr/Klaassen**—Devin Fehr and Leah Klaassen, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., June 16, 2012.

**Krahn/Lotz**—David Krahn and Heather Lotz, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., May 19, 2012.

### Deaths

**Bergen**—Agatha, 95 (b. Jan. 8, 1917; d. June 21, 2012), Waterloo-Kitchener Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Loewen**—Wilhelm (Willie), 83 (b. Jan. 22, 1929; d. June 21, 2012), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Ratzlaff**—Elsie (nee Gliege), 93 (b. June 24, 1918; d. June 10, 2012), Laird Mennonite, Sask.

**Reimer**—Elizabeth J. (Betty), 73 (b. Feb. 17, 1939; d. July 3, 2012), Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

**Wieler**—Arthur E., 82 (b. March 6, 1930; d. June 24, 2012), Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

### 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



## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

## Hutterite author inspires heritage retreat

BY DOREEN NEUFELD

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
WATER VALLEY, ALTA.

“Interesting!” “Informative!” “Inspiring!” were immediate responses to the question, “What did you think of the day?” Well over 100 participants, most of them over 60, participated in the annual Alberta Heritage Retreat held at Camp Valaqua on June 6, an exceptionally strong turnout.

A major draw this year was the guest speaker Mary-Ann Kirkby, author of *I am Hutterite*. A Hutterite by birth, her family left the colony when she was 10 years old. The move from a sheltered, protected, predictable environment painfully interrupted her carefree life and natural friendships. In the outside world, she was judged to be strange and different. Soon, she felt compelled to work at hiding her identity. Conformity became the operative word, whether in attire or in content and packaging of school lunches.

Ostracized by her peers at school, books became Kirkby’s greatest friends. She identified profoundly with *Anne of Green Gables*, but was distressed that the local library yielded no books about Hutterites.

Both her reading and her inherited abilities drew her in the direction of becoming a journalist. In the process, she experienced a growing awareness of the importance of owning and valuing her identity. “I have learned that our humanity is what we have in common, but our cultural heritage is a gift each of us is given at birth,” she said. “We will not reach our full potential if we do not receive and understand who we are.”

Also well-received was Jake Wiebe’s morning presentation based on *Extreme Grandparenting* by Tim and Darcy Himmel.

“I was very, very impressed with the morning message,” said Jeanette Heidebrecht from Carstairs, “because it opened the eyes

of older people to our worth. Our legacy is not money, but love. The legacy I want to leave behind for each of my grandchildren is that ‘Grandma loves me, no matter what.’”

After Kirkby’s moving tribute to the Mennonites for saving her people from extinction due to starvation in the Ukraine, the hymn “Blest be the Tie that Binds our Hearts in Christian Love” expressed the unity everyone felt with each other. ❧

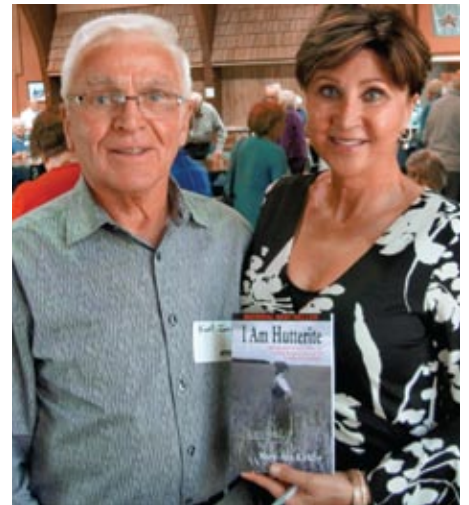


PHOTO BY HUGO NEUFELD

*Kurt Janz, left, host of the Alberta Heritage Retreat at Camp Valaqua on June 6, poses with guest speaker Mary-Ann Kirkby, author of *I am Hutterite*, during one of several breaks.*

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



**Orlan Martin, project director for the Mennonite Disaster Service 2012 Youth Summer Build works with Marshal Ragland, a Hesston (Kan.) College student at the Welcome Inn Community Centre, which was founded by Hamilton (Ont.) Mennonite Church in 1966. The first project was to build an enclosed entrance and connecting space between the centre’s main building and a large refrigeration unit. The month-long project will also involve a team from Pennsylvania and two from western Canada working at the centre, its thrift store and with its summer day camp program, as well as helping families in the low-income community.**



## Go to [canadianmennonite.org](http://canadianmennonite.org)

for links to full-length videos of presentations by Tom Yoder-Neufeld, Sheila Klassen-Wiebe and Gerald Gerbrandt at Assembly. Look for the links in Dick Benner's editorial.



## /// Briefly noted

### Weather can't dampen anniversary spirit

Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Altona celebrated its 130th anniversary on June 3. The day began with looming clouds and the threat of rain, but this did not dampen the spirit of the celebration. The planned outdoor service simply moved inside the church sanctuary. The service tied together elements from the past and present, young and old. Based on the theme for the day, "Rooted in faith—Growing in love," several people from the congregation shared about their experiences in the church. These stories highlighted the important role the church had played in the faith and life of so many people. Once the lunch was finished, the threat of rain seemed to have subsided and the children's games and visiting were able to take place outside. The highlight of the day seemed to be the afternoon cake and tree planting. The tree was planted as a reminder of the many ways that the church continues to plant seeds of faith, and how God continues to nourish and sustain these roots to grow into strong trees.

—BY VIRGINIA GERBRANDT

## /// Briefly noted

### Avon Mennonite 'burns' its mortgage at campfire celebration

STRATFORD, ONT.—At the end of 2011, Avon Mennonite Church paid off the last of its loans for its building project. On June 9, it celebrated by burning copies of the original promissory notes in a campfire while on a congregational retreat at Hidden Acres Camp. The mortgage burning was the completion of a financial undertaking that began in 1989 when Avon and Tri-County Mennonite Homes first began discussing the possibility of taking part in a joint building project in Stratford. What followed were several years of joint committee meetings, building plan drawings and revisions, and numerous congregational meetings. Along the way there were obstacles to be overcome: the total cost estimates came in \$2 million dollars higher than expected and there were also regulatory delays. In spite of these and other hurdles, the congregation persisted, so that in May 1993 construction of Greenwood Homes and Avon Mennonite Church was underway. The building was completed and Avon held its first service in the new sanctuary on Sept. 18, 1994. The generosity and courage of the congregation and its friends is striking: the congregation of 60 adults took on a million-dollar financial commitment, paying it off in 17 years!

—BY HERB SAWATZKY

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## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

## Chill settles over relations between Ottawa and church agencies

WILL BRAUN  
Senior Writer

Unlike the directors of many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Jennifer Henry can speak freely. She's the head of Kairos, a social justice organization representing seven of Canada's largest denominations, including Mennonites.

Kairos is well-known for having \$7 million worth of government funding abruptly axed in 2009 by Bev Oda, who was then the minister responsible for CIDA (the Canadian International Development Agency). That cut is exactly why Henry can now say what's on her mind; she doesn't have to worry about offending the holders of government purse strings.

It's also part of the reason why some

NGOs that still rely on CIDA money are nervous about what they say. This "chill" is the new reality in the NGO sector.

While Kairos never received a straight answer about why it was cut, most observers

assume it was because the organization's advocacy on particular issues—perhaps abuses by Canadian mining companies overseas—aggravated government. Several other NGOs

have also been cut.

Henry says historically government has been willing to work with organizations that offered "an element of criticism or alternative proposal making." That was "welcome," she says, "as part of a vibrant democracy." But not any more.

In contrast to Henry's candid critique, a spokeswoman for CARE Canada repeatedly defended and praised both CIDA and Oda in carefully calculated remarks on CBC recently. This, despite over \$5 billion

*After receiving CIDA money almost continuously since 1968, MCC was unsuccessful in its 2011 bid for \$8.7 million of CIDA funding*

in cuts to Canada's foreign aid commitments since 2010 and despite the fact that Oda had just resigned after a scandal-ridden term in which she lied about her involvement in the defunding of Kairos and was forced to apologize for spending public money on an uber-posh London hotel.

CARE received \$24 million from CIDA last year.

"There's been a lot of anxiety in the sector," says Jim Cornelius who chairs the board of the Canadian Council on International Cooperation, a coalition of NGOs that do development work and promote social justice. It was also cut by CIDA.

Ironically, Cornelius also serves as director of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) which is in the second year of a five-year, \$125-million grant from CIDA. When the funding was announced, Minister Oda called CFGB "Canada's biggest contributor to ending global hunger."

The \$125 million is applied primarily as matching grants to boost funds raised by the 15 faith-based development agencies that make up CFGB's membership. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is the largest of these members.

Cornelius believes CFGB has succeeded in securing CIDA money partly because of the agency's "distinct" expertise and programming, as well as its strong public support, particularly among rural Canadians.

“Gracious God, protect our members during storms and other calamities.”

*Excerpt from a "Prayer for the MAX Enterprise" © 2012*



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The current chill has not changed CFGB's policy and advocacy work. "We have a very diverse ideological support base so we tend to be moderate in our approach," says Cornelius. "We have always taken a constructive engagement approach."

In April, CFGB released an unflattering release about the federal budget. It noted that government cuts would result in hundreds of millions of dollars less in aid for "the world's neediest citizens."

In contrast, when Bev Oda resigned amidst widespread criticism, CFGB issued a release entitled "Bev Oda Leaves Positive Legacy at CIDA for Hungry People." That release was removed from the CFGB website after feedback from other NGOs. Emily Cain, who speaks for CFGB, says it will be re-issued with a different title and a more narrow focus on Oda's efforts related to food security. Cain says this will more accurately reflect CFGB's original intent.

The new CIDA reality is also on MCC's mind. After receiving CIDA money almost continuously since 1968, MCC was unsuccessful in its 2011 bid for \$8.7 million of CIDA funding. MCC still accesses about \$4 million per year for projects funded through its account with CFGB.

Don Peters, who heads MCC Canada, says the organization will likely seek CIDA funding again but only if the sorts of projects CIDA is looking for are a good fit for MCC. Before applying for money, Peters says MCC would ask whether doing so would "in any way compromise the work we do." He says MCC is "determined to ask that question very seriously."

Peters notes that MCC is less dependent on CIDA money than many NGOs.

In terms of its advocacy work, the chill has not stopped MCC from openly opposing federal immigration policy and the recent omnibus crime bill. "MCC needs to say what it needs to say," Peters says. It needs to speak "with integrity" and on the "basis of relationships with partners around the world."

Jennifer Henry also emphasizes mandate over money in the current political climate. "As organizations we have to be true to our mandates," she says. "Losing your mandate is much more critical to an organization than losing your CIDA funding." ❧

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by Ginnie Horst Burkholder

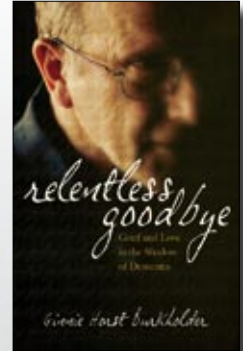
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## Mennonites learn through voluntary service at TRC event

BY KARIN FEHDERAU  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATOON

Saskatchewan Mennonites came to help, listen and learn during the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) national event last month. Mennonites in this province have been preparing their hearts and minds over the course of 16 months to take part, having spent the last two Mennonite Church Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions focusing on first nation issues and learning about the importance of treaties and blanket exercises, and listening to stories by indigenous elders.

For those who chose to get involved, the experience will not be

easily forgotten.

Marianne Siemens of Mount Royal Mennonite signed up to volunteer and found herself transporting people around the exhibition grounds where the event was held. In speaking with her passengers, she heard various comments.

"For first nations people, they felt like it was a safe place," she observed. "A lot of people said it was really hard, but felt a real sense of relief once it was over."



Siemens

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SASKATOON STARPHOENIX



*Ted Quewezance, centre, with other family members, speaks at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Saskatchewan National Event at Prairieland Park, June 22.*

Len Andres of Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, also shuttled people around, but used the opportunity to engage people in conversation. "People were really willing to talk," he said.

Growing up, Andres knew little about the residential school tragedy. He recalled churches in the area collecting canned goods, vegetables and clothing for the Montreal Lake school because it was underfunded. "We were told it was a children's home, but it was a residential school," he said. "I didn't know children had been forcibly taken away."

Reliving the emotional trauma was difficult for many, said John Elias, an organizational psychologist. As a contract employee for Health Canada, he helped to set up the health supports for those residential school survivors who attended, including finding support workers and writing a crisis response manual. "The decision was that people would be provided with frontline first nations health workers," he noted.

"The main object of health supports is to keep people safe in the hopes that it will contribute to healing," he said. "I completely believe and accept the stories they tell," he said, pointing out that the schools were "badly run, underfunded, teachers were poorly trained and there was a huge problem with tuberculosis." ❧

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## Organizing goodness

Sara Wenger Shenk, President

Vincent Harding, longtime friend and co-worker of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said at a recent event at AMBS, "Martin used to love to say this: 'We've got to organize goodness.'" And Harding asked: "What would it mean to organize goodness? Is that what seminaries are for?"

My mind has not stopped spinning around this intriguing question ever since. I recognized immediately that it named what I believe to be AMBS's mission as a learning community.

A few years ago, Jewish ethicist and educator Hanan Alexander published a book: *Reclaiming Goodness—Education and the Spiritual Quest*. He asserts that "people are searching for spirituality today ... because comprehensive visions of the good are conspicuously absent from modern culture."

Alexander states that "education is not first and foremost about acquiring knowledge, or gaining identity, or insuring group continuity ... but rather

about empowering a person to choose a vision of the good life."

Philosophers from Socrates and Aristotle onward have debated what it means to be good and what the good life entails.

Our Scriptures tell us that God organized goodness out of chaos. The earth was a formless void, and dark. God organized celestial lights to rule the day and night, waters and dry land to appear under a dome of sky, plants and trees to bear seeds and fruits, living creatures to fill the earth, man and woman to be created in God's image. God also blessed and hallowed rest. God looked at all that was created and proclaimed it very good.

The goodness of God. Being good. The good life. There is no end of ways to ponder what goodness looks like and how we are called to "organize goodness"—as schools; as non-profits, health institutions, businesses—and above all, as leaders of faith communities. I'm reminded of

Paul's encouragement to the church: "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good .... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

As an Anabaptist seminary we educate leaders to "organize goodness" within communities of shalom—empowered to minister in the way of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

With the program redesign underway at AMBS, we are embracing a "comprehensive vision of the good" inspired by Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and the fervor of the Anabaptists to live out that goodness in their communities. It is their witness to the good news of Christ's peace as central to God's grand and good mission for the world that fires our imagination. ●

**NEW!** *Becoming Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary on August 28*

## 2012 Graduates

## Twenty-eight graduates honored at commencement

Twenty-eight graduates were honored at the AMBS commencement service on May 26, 2012. They received the following degrees and certificates:

**MDiv** Master of Divinity

**MAPS** Master of Arts: Peace Studies

**MATS** Master of Arts: Theological Studies

**MACF** Master of Arts in Christian Formation

**CERT** Certificate in Theological Studies

**Bryan Belting** *MATS with a concentration in biblical studies.* Bryan and Dawn, his wife, have two children. They are members of Epic Church in Mishawaka, Ind.

**Kay Bontrager-Singer** *MDiv.* Will continue as pastor of Faith Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. She and Jamey, her husband, have three children.

**Jeff Boyd** *MAPS with a concentration in International Development.* Jeff is married to Charissa and is a member of Farmington Seventh Day Adventist Church, Farmington Hills, Mich.

**Heather Bunce** *MATS with a concentration in biblical studies.* Will continue

as adjunct teacher at Great Lakes Christian College, Lansing, Mich. She and Ryan, her husband, have two children. They are members of Delta Community Christian Church, Lansing.

**Wilma Cender** *Cert.* Will continue study at AMBS in the Master of Arts in Christian Formation program. Wilma is a member of Valparaiso Mennonite Church, Valparaiso, Ind. She and Karl Cender are parents of two children.

**Dreama Coleman** *MDiv.* Will continue on the pastoral team of Canaan Baptist Church, Elkhart, Ind., and pursue a vocation that incorporates both her Master of Arts in Education-Curriculum and Instruction and Master of Divinity degrees. She and her mother, Cecelia Goodrich, also a 2012 graduate, are waiting on God's leading to restart their church, Only God Outreach Ministries. Coleman has three children and three grandchildren.

**Jane Friesen** *MDiv.* Served on pastoral team of Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio, until her death on

April 22. Jane was married to Kel Friesen, who survives, along with two young adult daughters.

**Teresa Geiser** *MDiv.* Will do a chaplaincy residency program at St. Joseph Medical Center, Mishawaka, during the next year. She is married to Charlie Geiser and they have two adult children. She is a member of Hively Avenue Mennonite Church.

**Jennifer Gingerich** *MDiv in pastoral care and counseling.* Will serve as interim pastor on the pastoral team of Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, then pursue hospital chaplaincy. Jennifer is a member of Salem (Ore.) Mennonite Church and Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, Ore.

**Cecelia Goodrich** *MACF with a concentration in teaching ministry.* Serves in the Ministers Training program at Canaan Baptist Church, Elkhart, teaching the Bible study for senior life ministry, and plans to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree. She is married to DeVon L. Goodrich, Sr., and they have four adult children.



Bryan Belting, Kay Bontrager-Singer, Jeff Boyd, Heather Bunce, Dreama Coleman, Teresa Geiser **Not pictured:** Wilma Cender, Jane Friesen



**Jocelyn Graber** *MDiv.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment and exploring options for a chaplain residency program. Jocelyn is a member of Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka, Kan.

**Anna Ruth Hershberger** *MDiv.* Considering ministry assignments. Anna Ruth is a member of East Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Keith Hiebner** *MATS with a concentration in theology and ethics.* Keith is married to Anne Hiebner and is a member of Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Neb.

**Janna Hunter-Bowman** *MAPS.* Continues Ph.D. study at the University of Notre Dame through the Kroc Institute for International Peace. She and Jess Hunter-Bowman have two daughters. They participate in Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, Ind., and she is a member of Bally Mennonite Church, Bally, Pa.



Sara Klassen

Jane Friesen, member of the pastoral team of Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio, received a diploma in a special commencement service in her home on April 3. Jane died on April 22, and her daughters, Kimberly and Kate, received her official diploma in the commencement service on May 26.

"AMBS granted the degree in recognition of a mission accomplished, a ministry fulfilled," Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president, reflected. "It was a recognition of her persistence and courage, but most of all an acknowledgement of the integrity of her calling to ministry."

David Miller, associate professor of missional leadership development at AMBS, noted that through her reflections in her blog over the time of her illness, "Jane has given a legacy gift to family and friends, the church and future seminary students in the way that she has engaged the struggle with cancer and its attendant questions with deep faith, humanity and theological insight."



Jennifer Gingerich, Cecelia Goodrich, Jocelyn Graber, Anna Ruth Hershberger, Janna Hunter-Bowman **Not pictured:** Keith Hiebner

## 2012 Graduates

**Rebecca Kauffman** *MDiv.* Will begin as copastor of Paoli (Ind.) Mennonite Fellowship this summer. Rebecca is married to Andrew Blount, and she is a member of Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

**Joshua Kinder** *MATS with a concentration in biblical studies.* Josh has received a fellowship from the Knowles Science Teaching Foundation to pursue a career in teaching high school mathematics and he will begin Goshen College's Transition to Teaching program. He is a member of Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

**Christopher Kruchkow** *MDiv.* Will continue serving Cross Community Church, Berne, Ind. Chris and Laura Lee Kruchkow have three children.

**Sandra Miller** *MDiv.* Will continue as Director for Church Relations with Mennonite Mission Network. She and Michael Miller have three daughters. She is a member of Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Karla Minter** *MACF.* Seeking ways to engage congregations and individuals in the biblical story, Christian faith

formation and spiritual guidance. Karla and William Minter have two children. She is a member of Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Adam Nussbaum** *MDiv.* Will be pastor of Shalom Mennonite Church, Eau Claire, Mich. Adam is a member of College Mennonite Church and attends Eighth Street Mennonite Church, both in Goshen.

**Andrea Opel** *MDiv.* Will continue study at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich., to complete the Master of Social Work. She is a member of Glade Mennonite Church, Accident, Md.

**Delora Reinhardt** *MDiv with a concentration in pastoral care and counseling.* Currently doing pastoral counseling. She and Randy Reinhardt have three children. She is a member of Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Jamie Ross** *MDiv with concentration in biblical studies and an emphasis on mission.* Approved for an international placement with Mennonite Mission Network and plans to pursue a Ph.D.

in Islamic studies. She is a member of Southside Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

**Hilary Scarsella** *MDiv with a concentration in theology and ethics and an emphasis in peace studies.* Hilary is a member of Kern Road Mennonite Church. She is engaged to Sam Jerome.

**Marcus Schlegel** *MDiv with a concentration in theological studies.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. He is a member of First Mennonite Church of San Francisco, Calif.

**Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg** *MDiv with a concentration in theological studies.* Exploring further education as well as other ministry possibilities. She and Shem, her husband, have two children. They are members of Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

**Mark Seymour** *MDiv in pastoral care and counseling.* Mark is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Elkhart.

**John Werner** *MDiv.* Seeking a pastoral ministry assignment in the United Church of Christ. He has been pastor of First Salem United Church of Christ in Wichita, Kan., for five years. ●



Rebecca Kauffman, Josh Kinder, Chris Kruchkow, Sandy Miller, Karla Minter, Adam Nussbaum



## Faculty gives awards to graduates

**A**MBS faculty select graduates to receive special awards and present these at the Dean's Breakfast the day before commencement. Awards include subscriptions to journals, gift certificates at the Mennonite Cooperative Bookstore and registration at a future Pastors Week.

This year's award recipients are:

**Karla Minter:** Certificate for excellence in Christian spiritual formation

**Kay Bontrager-Singer:** Certificate for excellence in pastoral ministry

**Marcus Schlegel:** Certificate for excellence in missional leadership

**Jennifer Gingerich:** Certificate for excellence in pastoral care and counseling

**Joshua Kinder:** Millard Lind award for excellence in biblical interpretation

**Adam Nussbaum:** Willard M. Swartley award for excellence in biblical interpretation

**Heather Bunce:** Perry B. Yoder award for excellence in Hebrew exegesis



Mary E. Klassen

**Jamie Ross** receives a certificate for excellence from AMBS Professor Gayle Gerber Koontz.

**Janna Hunter-Bowman:** John Yoder award for excellence in theological peace studies

**Jamie Ross:** Marlin Miller award for excellence in theological studies in the Master of Divinity program (mission and evangelism concentration)

**Hilary Scarsella:** Marlin Miller award for excellence in theological studies in the Master of Divinity program (theological studies-peace studies concentration) ●



**Andrea Opel, Delora Reinhardt, Jamie Ross, Hilary Scarsella, Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg** Not pictured: Marc Schlegel, Mark Seymour, John Werner



## Where does this day fit in God's larger story?

Where does this day fit into the story of the river of life flowing through the city and the leaves of the tree bringing healing for the nations?

That question from commencement speaker Shanta Premawardhana brought the text from the end of Revelation to the context of graduation.

Throughout his address, the president of the Seminary Consortium of Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago explored the ways graduates might contribute to this vision of bringing healing to the world today. "Dreaming the impossible dream is not enough. We need to be willing to strap that faith to our feet," he said, "or it stays a utopian vision with no reality on the ground."

Recounting a challenge he received early in his ministry as a pastor in Chicago, Premawardhana noted that a pastor is not just a pastor to a congregation, but to the community. When people are evicted from apartments because of the greed of financiers, children are getting substandard education, mothers must buy food at liquor stores because they live in an urban food desert, young African-Americans are incarcerated in record numbers and teens are killed because our society is awash in

guns—"all of those fall under my job description as pastor," he emphasized.

However, pastors have the responsibility to equip members of congregations for the work of building God's beloved community. Members of churches today may want to be safe, Premawardhana said, but "the effective church is an engaged church; it is a prophetic church; it is a dangerous church."

In conclusion he asked the graduates, "Today, you are graduating. Where does that fit in the story that ends with the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations?"

Dr. Premawardhana served as an urban pastor for fourteen years in Chicago and is a community organizer, theologian and scholar. Originally from Sri Lanka, he has worked at the National Council of Churches in New York as associate general secretary for Interfaith Relations, and director of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation for the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland.

AMBS has been a member of SCUPE since its beginning in 1976, and regularly has students who commute to Chicago to participate in classes and conferences that equip seminarians with information and experience for leadership in urban settings. ●



Nekesha Alexis-Baker

The commencement banner and visuals were created and organized by Teresa Geiser and Andrea Opel. They illustrated the Isaiah 41 and Revelation 22 texts that served as the theme for commencement.

## Three new faculty members appointed

Three new professors will join the AMBS faculty this summer.

**Andy Brubacher Kaethler** (left) will serve as assistant professor of faith formation and culture, a half-time position. He has been director of !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth since 2003 and has been a sessional instructor at AMBS. He is a Ph.D. candidate at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill. Before coming to AMBS he was conference youth minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and associate pastor of Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil, Ont.

**Rachel Miller Jacobs** will serve as assistant professor of congregational formation, a half-time position. She is a Doctor of Ministry student at McCormick Theological Seminary,

Chicago, Ill. She also serves as a spiritual director and worship resources coordinator for *Leader*. For six years she was pastor of Christian formation for Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, Ind., and has led retreats and workshops for various church groups.

**Jamie Pitts**, Ph.D., will become assistant professor of Anabaptist studies. Jamie serves as social media coordinator for the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. In 2011 he completed a Ph.D. at the University of Edinburgh, focusing



on the sociological theology of John Howard Yoder. Previously, he was coordinator of Interethnic Dialogues on Immigration for Church World Service in Washington, D.C.; online adult education instructor for the Clarendon Presbyterian Church; and English language instructor at the Pasadena Community Job Center, Pasadena, Calif. ●

## John Rempel and Walter Sawatsky retire from AMBS

John Rempel, professor of theology and Anabaptist studies, will become director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Center at the Toronto School of Theology when he retires this summer. He has taught at AMBS since 2003 and served as associate director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies.

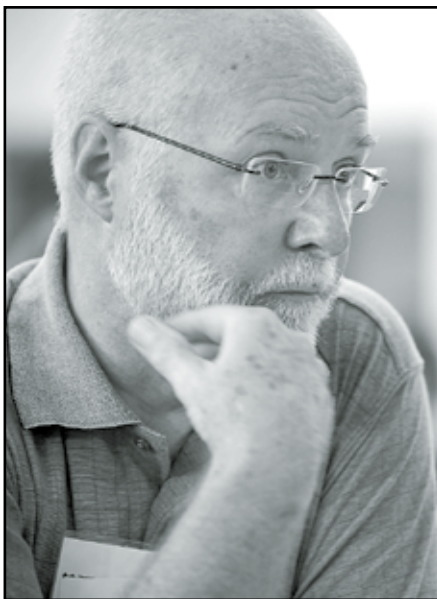
John is a seasoned and wise pastor, recognized scholar, and observer and participant in world affairs, Rebecca Slough, academic dean, said.

A particular interest of John's has been engaging in ecumenical conversations at the international level. This has included organizing a gathering of ecumenical peace and justice scholars and workers in 2010 at AMBS and serving on the Mennonite Church USA Interchurch Relations Committee.

For eight years John served on the committee that coordinated *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, and he edited the Mennonite *Minister's Manual*. At AMBS he was part of the team that created the Anabaptist prayer book. All of these were "remarkably formative for Mennonite spirituality," Gayle Gerber Koontz, professor of theology and ethics, pointed out. She noted his weightiest (literally) scholarly work was the painstaking editing of an English translation of *Jörg Maler's Kunstbuch*, a 16th-century collection of Anabaptist writings.



Mary E. Klassen



Peter Ringenberg

John Rempel (top) and Walter Sawatsky.

Walter Sawatsky will retire from teaching this summer, after serving as professor of church history and mission. He came to AMBS as a visiting professor in 1985 and was named to the faculty in 1990.

In addition to teaching, Walter also was East-West Consultant for Mennonite Central Committee for many years, continuing to build the relationships that he had developed in his previous 12 years in Europe with MCC. He continues to travel to eastern Europe and Russia to teach.

He is a member of the Global Mennonite History Project Organizing Committee and was instrumental in coordinating the celebration of the project last October. He edits two journals: *Mission Focus: Annual Review* and *Religion in Eastern Europe*, coordinated translation of a 31-volume commentary series into Russian, and has edited and written extensively on issues related to the church in Eastern Europe.

In honoring him recently, AMBS Dean Rebecca Slough said, "Walter has most often responded to needs of the church in scholarship and documented our story. He has been less driven by his own personal scholarly agenda. In that way he has been and continues to be servant of the church and its people, recording its stories—for the present and for the future."

Walter will now concentrate on research and writing projects that he has been hoping to do.

For photos of celebrations honoring John and Walter, visit AMBS's Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/followAMBS](http://www.facebook.com/followAMBS), and select the link for photos.



## Your gifts at work

A student's first encounter with AMBS often comes through the admissions team as they travel to colleges and conferences and respond to inquiries.

The work of this team, Rhonda Yoder, Jody Walker, and Brenna Harker, opens the door to the study, worship, spiritual growth and mentoring at AMBS. Under the direction of Bob Rosa, director of enrollment and student services, this

team welcomes students to AMBS each semester. They and the campus pastor, Janeen Bertsche Johnson, keep attuned to how students are experiencing their studies and life at AMBS.

Your gifts support this essential, day-to-day ministry. Your prayers sustain these staff members as they care for applicants and students. Thank you. ●





Summer 2012  
Volume 22 Issue 3

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

Editor: Mary E. Klassen  
Designer: Nekeisha Alexis-Baker, Karma Hooley

Distributed three times a year as a supplement to *Canadian Mennonite* and *The Mennonite*.

## Keep in touch with AMBS

### AMBS Calendar

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# panorama

## Pastors Week 2013

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon us: The immeasurable dimensions of Jubilee" is the theme, with Dr. Kim Tan, venture capitalist, Bible teacher and social entrepreneur from Surrey, United Kingdom. Visit [www.amsb.edu/pastorsweek](http://www.amsb.edu/pastorsweek).

## Missional church focus for weekend course

What does it mean for a church to be missional? What skills are needed to nurture a missional ethos? A fall weekend course explores these issues, led by David Miller, associate professor of missional leadership development. The course meets one weekend in each month of the fall semester. For details and to register, visit [www.amsb.edu](http://www.amsb.edu) and search for "Fall."

## Online classes next spring

When you take your first online class, you pay only half the regular tuition cost (if you are not already enrolled in

a master's level theological program). Next spring, online offerings are

- Anabaptist history and theology
  - Anabaptist approaches to Scripture
- More details are available by searching for "courses" at [www.amsb.edu](http://www.amsb.edu).

## Workshops, webinars, short courses

Worship planning workshops, stories from radical Christian renewal, group spiritual direction and planting peace churches are among the offerings from the Church Leadership Center for the next school year. Webinars, workshops and online short courses are available. For information, visit [www.amsb.edu](http://www.amsb.edu) and search for "Church Leadership Center."

## Faculty scholarship

A list of faculty books, articles, reviews and lectureships is posted on [www.amsb.edu](http://www.amsb.edu). Search for "faculty scholarship" to browse this compilation of resources for the church. ●

## Don Klassen receives 2012 award

Donald Klassen of Harrisburg, S.D., is the recipient of the 2012 Alumni Ministry and Service Award.

The ministry to which Don has devoted almost half of his life is matching inmates of the South Dakota State Penitentiary with friends on the outside. For more than 32 years he coordinated the M-2 (man-to-man) program, a part-time role that was sponsored by different inter-church organizations.

Don began in the coordinator role in 1978, but reports that since the program began in 1972, more than 4,000 matches have been established. The program has received state and national recognition, and has resulted in an annual recidivism rate of less than one percent. Since 2005, Don has been adapting the concept to include county jails, and thus also include women and youth.

Don explains that when he visits the prison, "I not only represent myself, but also all the M-2s and the

churches they come from and also the Association of Christian Churches of South Dakota. Most importantly, I need to represent the One Who gave His life for all humankind."

This commitment to Jesus Christ has been at the core of Don's life, but his decision to come to AMBS seemed somewhat spontaneous. During a 1967 communion service in his home congregation, Alexanderwohl Mennonite in Goessel, Kan., the question formed in his mind, "Why not teach Bible?" He was already teaching industrial arts, but applied to AMBS, arrived the next fall and completed a Master of Divinity in 1970.

The part-time nature of this ministry has allowed Don to give time in many other ways as well.



He has been involved with Choice Books, Mennonite Central Committee relief sales, South Dakota Peace and Justice Center, South Dakota Association of Volunteer Leaders, South Dakota Prison Chaplains Association and Victim Offender Reconciliation Program, as well as his own congregation. In addition, his work and interests include tool

and die making, raising hair sheep, planting a small orchard and building his own home.

Don credits the nursing vocation of Roine, his wife, for support that has allowed him to pursue such a wide variety of church and community involvements. They have one daughter and two grandchildren.

The award will be presented to Don this fall when he visits campus. ●



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## 59 cents for refugee health care

*Canadian School of Peacebuilding students start advocacy campaign*

BY RACHEL BERGEN  
Young Voices Co-Editor  
WINNIPEG, MB



*The coordinators of the 59 cents campaign, from left: Maureen Gathogo, Rianna Isaak, Cecily Hildebrand, and Matthew Dueck. (Deanna Zantigh not pictured).*

A Guatemalan man named Byron took a political stand against the injustice in his country. As a result, his family was murdered before his eyes. Byron managed to escape to Canada, but upon arrival, he was told that he could not receive health care coverage because his country was not considered a designated refugee state.

He was soon after diagnosed with cancer but could not return to Guatemala for care because he would certainly be killed, so after five years of working, paying taxes in Canada, and trying to appeal his refugee denial, he died on the floor of his apartment.

Byron's story, which was told in the *Toronto Star* on June 24 in "A new low for refugees," is looking to be a more common theme as refugee health care coverage is in jeopardy.

Citizenship and Immigration Minister, Jason Kenney, proposed changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Balanced Refugee Reform Act to keep "bogus claimants" from receiving better health care coverage than Canadian taxpayers. As of June 30, only approved refugees will receive medical care. Privately sponsored refugees, including those sponsored by churches, will not.

Some Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) and Canadian School of Peacebuilding (CSOP) students are concerned that these funding cuts will diminish Canada's reputation as a beacon of hope for truly vulnerable people and worsen their situation. So, as a part of their CSOP course,

"Speaking Out... And Being Heard: Citizen Advocacy," taught by Stuart Clark, Rianna Isaak, Matthew Dueck, Cecily Hildebrand, Maureen Gathogo, and Deanna Zantigh started the 59 Cents Campaign.

The campaign encourages Canadians to send 59 cents to Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Fifty-nine cents is the cost per capita for refugees to receive health care.

According to Dueck, a third year International Development and Peace and Conflict Transformation student at CMU, the campaign addresses the fact that "the government is trying to cut back on people taking advantage of our health care system, but people are being hugely victimized [in the process.]" People like Byron are the victims of these cuts.

From June 28-July 2 there were 50,000 views to the campaign's Facebook page, 181 news articles or blog articles written about the campaign, and Jenny Sims, Federal Immigration critic tweeted about the campaign.

Stephanie Coughlan, 23, who attends Springstein Mennonite Church, participated in the 59 cents campaign with her husband, Tim, 25. For Coughlan, it is an important part of her faith to care for "the least of these."

"My faith community has taught me important values of love, caring for the least of these, hospitality, and being welcoming. I believe that when we accept refugees into this country, we do have an obligation to care for them."

“Cutting services to vulnerable people goes very much against these values from my faith,” she said.

Though a representative for Minister Kenney denies that concessions have been made in the wake of a great deal of opposition to these cuts, Dueck believes the letters have made a difference, and so does Mennonite Central Committee.

Ed Wiebe, National Refugee Program Coordinator at MCC Canada, jokes that the 59 cents campaign should be asking for some of their money back, as the government has retreated about one third of the way.

Dueck says they will still be sending in 59 cents.

“We have made some progress! The government has conceded to about a third of what we have asked for. We ask people to still send in 59 cents, not 19 or 39 because we want to push forward,” Dueck said.

According to Alexis Pavlich, Press Secretary to Minister Kenney, the government has not ceded.

“We have taken steps to ensure that protected persons and asylum seekers from non-safe countries receive health care coverage that is on the same level as Canadian taxpayers receive through their provincial health coverage, no better.”

“Bogus claimants from safe countries and failed asylum seekers will not receive access to health care coverage, unless it is to protect public health and safety,” she said.

She went on to say that groups of government sponsored refugees will not lose coverage for any drugs that they had covered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees while living in a refugee camp.

“The original wording did not make this intention clear, which is why the language of the policy was modified,” she said. ❧

## Young War Resisters face uncertain future

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EMILY LOEWEN

Young Voices Co-Editor  
TORONTO, ON

**G**rowing up in a pro-military culture like Mesquite, Texas, meant that Kimberly Rivera never thought she would leave the army. “I was pro-war, pro-life, pro-death penalty,” said the 30-year-old.

“I thought it would be like a good thing as far as I will be serving my country, I’ll be, you know, doing the patriotic American thing.”

But after spending three months in Iraq she worried about the effect of the war on soldiers. “I was kind of getting to where I didn’t want to have people around me; I didn’t want to lose any friends so I didn’t want to make friends,” she said. She also saw the negative effects that home raids and searches had on the Iraqi people.

When she returned home on a priority leave in early 2007, she only planned to be gone two weeks, but after talking it over with her husband she decided to leave the military and drove with her family to Canada.

Rivera is one several young war resisters now living in Toronto. While the number of resisters coming to Canada has declined since the implementation of new passport rules in 2009, those who made it here before the change face an uncertain future. They live here, work here, find relationships and have children, but their fate still lies in the hands of the government and the courts.

Rivera has received two deportation notices so far. Both were successfully fought by her lawyer, but she still leaves many of her belongings in boxes in case her family of six is asked to leave.

The War Resisters Support Campaign estimates that several hundred US resisters live in Canada right now, with a concentration in Toronto. The campaign has worked with approximately fifty of them to try and gain entrance to Canada—none have been accepted yet said campaign volunteer Christine Beckermann in a phone



*Kimberly Rivera has lived in Canada since 2007. She is the first female war resister to claim refugee status here.*





*Christian Kjar left the military and came to Toronto in 2005, he is still awaiting a decision on whether he will be allowed to stay in Canada.*

interview.

Because of the decline in arrivals, media attention around the issue has decreased in recent years, but Operational Bulletin 202, issued in 2010, is still a main advocacy concern for the campaign.

The bulletin states that because military desertion is an offence under the National Defence Act in Canada, war resisters may be ineligible to stay. Their cases are now referred to a central Case Review Division which gives direction to decision makers, Citizenship and Immigration media relations staff Remi Lariviere wrote in an email.

But the support campaign believes the bulletin causes unfair political interference in refugee applications. "This isn't a normal thing, this type of decision is supposed to be made at the discretion of the immigration officers," Beckermann said, "we're really focusing on that and trying to have that operational bulletin rescinded."

It seems unusual to have US citizens applying for refugee status, but a United Nations handbook states that soldiers may qualify as refugees if they don't participate in a war because of political beliefs or because the international community does not support it.

Furthermore, many war resisters could

face a jail sentence if they return to the United States.

Potential prison time is a reality for Christian Kjar, another resister living in Toronto. He joined the military right before his 19th birthday because he believed it could help make the world better.

"At that time I was really idealistic," he said. "I really had almost a naive sense that I just wanted to help people as much as I could."

But after 10 months of working as a military police officer and reading about how the war affected people in Iraq, he decided he didn't want to participate anymore.

Though he didn't apply for conscientious objector status, he believes strongly in his non-religious stance. "I don't feel like I need to be religious to be an objector to war; I don't need to have any type of views other than that of compassion for people who suffer because of violence," he said.

Though many of the resisters don't have a religious background, says Paul Heidebrecht from the MCC Ottawa office, their cases have implications for pacifists like Mennonites. "The treatment of US war resisters in particular has ramifications for how freedom of conscience is understood for all those who would refuse to serve in the military," he said. ☸

## A Church with global limbs

*Why it's important to understand the stories of immigrants and refugees in our Mennonite community*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NICK SCHURMAN

Special to Young Voices



*Nick Schuurman works as Pastor of Youth and Young Adults at First Hmong Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario.*

In her book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, Anne Fadiman describes an autobiography that eighth-grader May Lee completed for school. Lee, a Hmong girl living in California's Merced county, recalls fleeing war-stricken Laos in 1979 to reach refugee camps in Thailand. Lee writes of her family's experience walking for days on end, carrying everything they had with little food, and bullets flying around them. I have heard similar stories from many in the Hmong community.

The teacher's response at the end of the

essay is heartbreaking, yet not atypical of the average North American. "You have had an exciting life!" she writes, "Please watch verbs in the past tense." To describe the experience of the Lee family, along with that of the 150,000 other Hmong who fled to Thailand, as "an exciting life" demonstrates how far removed our culture is from the tumultuous experience of refugees and immigrants.

As a church in Canada, where some 25,000 refugees flee each year, we can no longer assume our neighbour's story is the same as ours. We ought to consider it part

of our spiritual duty to listen to those who in cultural transition struggling to develop a sense of identity.

I am in one sense both a product of the immigrant experience and, like Lee's teacher, increasingly removed from it. My maternal and paternal grandparents emigrated from Holland to rural Ontario following the Second World War. They struggled to learn English and worked to support their families by farming. Three generations later, I live in a large urban centre, speak only English, and know only the most basic details of my history.

Those tensions that accompany cultural transition have marked my upbringing and my work as a pastor within the Hmong community of Kitchener and Waterloo. I still remember as a child trying to talk to some of the older members of our church for whom English was a second language, and awkwardly mouthing the words (which I couldn't understand or pronounce) of the old Dutch hymns. I wasn't sure exactly where I fit in. All I knew was that I shared that story, and yet had a story of my own.

Similarly, the Hmong children, youth and young adults I work with, struggle to find a sense of place, having experienced both strong social and familial ties within their community as well as a profound loss of a cultural identity in an English-speaking environment. My friends are, like myself, both a product of the immigrant and refugee experience and increasingly removed from it. And while they struggle to find a sense of identity, they share in a cultural story that needs to be heard.

The reality is that three years ago my

reaction probably would have been similar to that of May Lee's teacher. Had I not had opportunities to sit down with people who have been forced to flee from their country I would have just assumed their story was the same as the next person's.

I ate lunch with one of my Chin friends a few months ago, and he told me how his family paid someone to smuggle them across the Burmese border, and how they travelled through four countries before arriving in Canada. A few weeks later one of the women from our congregation told her story, which included walking for what seemed like forever from Laos to the refugee camp in Thailand.

Seeking to understand where our neighbours come from allows us to grow together as the body of Christ, made up of limbs pulled from every corner of the earth. More than that, it allows us to reach out to the world around us as a church commissioned to preach the Gospel and work for peace.

As a community we are vocal about the fact that our identity in Christ supersedes any ethnolinguistic categories that could divide us, and that questions of salvation and spiritual growth take priority over concerns for preservation of language and cultural tradition.

The love we share, however, compels us to a sustained presence, and a commitment to listen to the stories of strangers. We all carry histories with us. Increasingly, our neighbours carry them from places further than we have. Let's take time to listen. ☘

*Nick Schuurman works as Pastor of Youth and Young Adults at First Hmong Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NICK SHUURMAN



*Nick Schuurman and youth from First Hmong (along with several others from around the States) at Hlub, a Hmong Christian conference held at Wheaton College in Illinois.*

## /// Calendar

### British Columbia

**Oct. 12-14:** Women's retreat weekend at Camp Squeah.

### Alberta

**Oct. 12-13:** Mennonite Church Alberta festival, hosted by First Mennonite Church, Edmonton.

### Manitoba

**Aug. 28:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate fundraising golf tournament, at Bridges Golf Club.

**Sept. 17:** Bethania spiritual care fundraising dinner, "Everyone can make a difference," at Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 6 p.m. Guest speaker: Arvid Loewen. For tickets, call 204-667-0795.

**Sept. 23:** A MennoNITE of Comedy fundraiser for Altona Youth for Christ and Mennonite Collegiate Institute, at MCI's Buhler Hall, Gretna, at 7 p.m., featuring Leland Klassen and Matt Falk.

### Ontario

**Aug. 10,13,15,17-19:** *Petrichor*,

a new play by Erin Brandenburg about Mennonite migrant workers in southern Ont. at the Factory Theatre Mainstage, Toronto. For more information visit [www.summerworks.ca/2012/](http://www.summerworks.ca/2012/).

**Aug. 12:** Contemporary Music Sing, at Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call Will Stoltz at 519-696-2805.

**Aug. 12:** Reesor reunion picnic at Niagara-on-the-Lake, 11 a.m. For more information call 905-468-7029.

**Aug. 25:** *Sacred Harp* All-Day Sing, at

Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information, e-mail [gillian@inksetter.com](mailto:gillian@inksetter.com).

**Sept. 8:** Wanner Mennonite Church 23rd annual corn roast, at 5:30 p.m. For more information, call 519-658-4902 or visit [www.wannerchurch.org](http://www.wannerchurch.org).

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

## Classifieds

### Announcements

#### Altona Mennonite Church 50th Anniversary Celebration and Homecoming

August 11 & 12, 2012

All members, friends and former members are invited to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of AMC. Come to enjoy visiting, reminiscing, eating and worshipping together.

Registration takes place Saturday afternoon at the Rhineland Pioneer Centre. To register, or for further information contact the church office at (204) 324-6773.

Registration forms are available at [www.amc.net](http://www.amc.net). Email [amc@mts.net](mailto:amc@mts.net) or [dhregehr@yahoo.ca](mailto:dhregehr@yahoo.ca) or [rekrahn@mts.net](mailto:rekrahn@mts.net)

#### 75th Anniversary Bethel Mennonite Church

Winnipeg, MB

November 3 & 4, 2012.

*"Come journey through the past  
and present to the future."*

For details visit

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

*I saw two paths in  
the forest;  
I wanted to take  
both.*

*Imagine what a good editor  
could do.*

Kerry Fast Editing  
[kerryfast@gmail.com](mailto:kerryfast@gmail.com)  
[kerryfastediting.weebly.com](http://kerryfastediting.weebly.com)

#### ABNER MARTIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

This annual scholarship is awarded by the Menno Singers to a student who is affiliated with a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation and is, or will be, in a full-time program of music study, graduate or undergraduate, during 2012-13.

Applications must be mailed by Sept. 15, 2012. For application documents or further information, contact:

Lewis Brubacher, 16 Euclid Avenue, Waterloo, ON N2L 6L9; phone: 519-884-3072; e-mail: [lbrubacher@sympatico.ca](mailto:lbrubacher@sympatico.ca).

### Employment Opportunities

#### SEEKING A QUARTER TIME (0.25 FTE) YOUTH WORKER

**ELMIRA MENNONITE CHURCH (EMC)**, a church in the Waterloo Region, is seeking a Youth Worker to help build relationships and offer pastoral care to children and youth. The Youth Worker will have a personal faith commitment to Christ and be able to articulate her/his faith from an Anabaptist/Mennonite perspective. S/he will be committed to the spiritual development of children and youth, resourcing and supporting both leaders and sponsors of the Jr. Youth and MYF programs. The ideal candidate will have some post-secondary education, an awareness of issues facing youth, and an ability to relate well to children and youth in the church and the broader community.

For a more complete job description, along with details regarding compensation and benefits, please see the EMC web site ([www.elmiramennonite.ca](http://www.elmiramennonite.ca)). Start date: September 2012.

Interested candidates may submit a resume along with a letter outlining their vision for effective ministry to children and youth. Please submit applications by August 24, 2012 to the attention of the Office Administrator at:

Elmira Mennonite Church  
58 Church Street West  
Elmira, ON N3B 1N2

#### TENANT RESOURCE - RECREATION/VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Bethel Place is a 140 unit independent, subsidized living senior's home, in Winnipeg with on-site support services. We are seeking a full time position in the coordination of recreation and volunteer services, in keeping with the mission and values of Bethel Place. Experience and education working with the older adult in recreation and volunteer management is required. We offer a challenging team oriented work environment. Salary plus benefit package included. Reply in confidence no later than August 10th, 2012.

**Attention – Bethel Place, Administrator**  
**Fax #204-284-3763 Email: [bethel.place@shawcable.com](mailto:bethel.place@shawcable.com)**  
*Only candidates selected for interviews will be contacted.*

#### ASSEMBLY MENNONITE CHURCH

Pastoral Search Committee  
Announcement of Pastoral Search

Assembly Mennonite Church, a congregation in Goshen, Indiana, that is part of both Indiana Michigan and Central District Conferences, seeks a **PASTOR (.50-.65 FTE)** to serve with two other pastors in a team ministry.

The person filling this role will work as part of a three-member pastoral team. Desired qualifications include interpersonal skills for nurturing children and young adults, overseeing Christian Education, as well as the ability to coordinate administrative tasks for the congregation. Other expected duties include preaching and leading worship up to nine times yearly, and helping make connections with the larger church.

Term of service is three years at .5 to .65 FTE (110-140 hours per month). Mennonite Church denominational guidelines for pastoral salaries and benefits will be followed.

Other qualifications include: seminary degree (or seminary degree work in process); administrative experience; experience in congregational leadership; ability/commitment to enable others in congregational tasks; team leadership experience; and affirmation of Assembly's covenant and practices.

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

**BERGTHAL MENNONITE CHURCH** is seeking an **INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTOR**, beginning September 1, 2012, flexible start time.

We are a rural Anabaptist Mennonite church located 20 min from Didsbury, AB and 45 min to Calgary AB. There is a newly renovated manse available on the church property. Bergthal will have an assessment done to help guide the interim work. Along with the general congregational ministry responsibilities, this 18 - 24 month position will help us in establishing our future.

Please send applications to David Derksen  
Box 546, Didsbury AB T0M 0W0  
Email: [dsderks@telus.net](mailto:dsderks@telus.net)  
Phone# 403 335-4509



**INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTOR**

Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal (MFM) is currently seeking an Intentional Interim Pastor to provide leadership during a time of transition, healing, and integration.

Located in the heart of a vibrant, multi-ethnic neighbourhood in Montreal, MFM is a diverse urban congregation with approximately 60 regular attenders.

The term is for one to two years at 75% FTE. Flexibility in how the work is arranged and scheduled is possible, depending on the needs of a successful candidate. We encourage all interested and qualified candidates to apply.

Training and/or experience as an intentional interim pastor is desirable.

Inquiries, resumes, and letters of interest may be directed to:

Henry Paetkau  
Area Church Minister  
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada  
4489 King St. E.  
Kitchener, ON N2P 2G2  
Telephone: 519-650-3806 / 800-206-9356, ext. 107  
Fax: 519-650-3947 / E-mail: hpaetkau@mcec.ca

Reviews will begin in mid-August 2012 and will continue until a suitable individual is found.

**FIRST UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH (FUMC)** located in Vancouver, BC seeks **TWO PASTORS** (1.5 FTE) to serve in a culturally diverse urban setting. We hold to the Anabaptist theology, are members of Mennonite Church BC and MC Canada, and need pastors to lead us as we strive to continue to develop our relationships with Christ, each other, and the community.

Candidates should have the following:

- Capacity to relate to various age groups and cultures.
- Church leadership experience, with a focus on preaching and worship, pastoral care, nurturing and supporting lay leadership gifts.
- Ability to work and mentor in a team environment. Actual responsibilities will take into account the gifts each person brings to address the needs of the congregation.
- Commitment to Anabaptist theology.
- Post secondary religious education (preferably an M. Div.)
- A completed Ministerial Leadership Information Form.

Interested candidates may contact the Search Committee at [laura.penner@gmail.com](mailto:laura.penner@gmail.com).

Closing date for applications: 31 August 2012.

**PASTOR****LOWE FARM BERGTHALER MENNONITE CHURCH  
LOWE FARM, MANITOBA**

We are a congregation in southern Manitoba with an average attendance of 85 in a small rural community of about 350 people.

We are strong supporters of Mennonite Church Manitoba and Mennonite Church Canada.

We are looking for a pastor and spiritual leader who is an effective preacher who supports Anabaptist beliefs.

Interested candidates may contact the Search Committee Chair Rick Giesbrecht at 204-746-8365 or [rickandliz@xplornet.com](mailto:rickandliz@xplornet.com)

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Communitas Supportive Care Society

Communitas is seeking a visionary Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who will be responsible for the health and performance of this complex, multi-location organization, the success of its operations, and strategic planning. Communitas Supportive Care Society (Communitas) is a non-profit, faith-based social services agency providing care in communities in Greater Vancouver, the Fraser Valley, North Vancouver Island and the Okanagan. Our organization provides various resources to persons living and dealing with mental, physical and/or emotional disabilities. Communitas commits itself to work with individuals who have been marginalized and stigmatized by the society around them. We support and empower people from all walks of life, regardless of faith, social standing, race, or ethnicity.

The CEO will focus on internal and external aspects of organizational health, guiding ongoing operations and future growth, while also establishing key long-term relationships with partners and stakeholders that enhance the organization's reputation and viability.

The ideal candidate will have a personal commitment to serve and dedication to the Christian principles, values and mission of the organization; in addition the candidate will have an understanding of development and monitoring strategies that ensure the long-term financial viability of the organization. The candidate will be enthusiastic about working in a not-for-profit organization that walks alongside people with disabilities.

The CEO will lead, evaluate, and oversee staff in a role of support and encouragement that will promote a culture that reflects the organization's values and encourages good performance. He or she will serve as the primary spokesperson and representative for the organization and will effectively advocate, build partnerships and achieve complex objectives in consultation with a Board and diverse stakeholders. The CEO will be a trusted team leader and developer with experience in change management and risk management that will advance the mission of Communitas.

For a full job description and to apply, visit our website at [www.CommunitasCare.com](http://www.CommunitasCare.com). In addition to completing an application, resumes should be sent to: Henry Wiens, Chair, Board Transition Committee, Email: [HenryWiens@CommunitasCare.com](mailto:HenryWiens@CommunitasCare.com) or Fax: 604.850.2634. Applications will be accepted through September 30, 2012. All interested candidates are welcome to apply, however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

**MCC U.S. SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES:**

Mennonite Central Committee seeks Service Workers for MCC U.S. Office in Akron, PA. Service workers receive full support and stipend. Positions open include **RECEPTIONIST, IT TECHNICIAN, RECORDS AND LIBRARY ASSISTANT, AND ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**. For more information contact Emily Stednick at [eas@mcc.org](mailto:eas@mcc.org) or call 559-301-3403, or visit [mcc.org/serve](http://mcc.org/serve).



## Healing pole visits Assembly

By **DEBORAH FROESE**

Mennonite Church Canada  
WINNIPEG, MAN.

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

PHOTO COURTESY OF OUTREACH CANADA



*Isadore Charters (left) and Don Klaassen carve the fragrant yellow cedar pole.*

When members of Sardis Community Church in Chilliwack B.C. sought ways to build connections with surrounding First Nations communities two years ago, Isadore Charters, an indigenous artist and elder from the nearby Cultus Lake area expressed that he would like to make a healing pole for residential schools. Don Klaassen was intrigued by the idea and offered to take on the logistics of the project. Charters and Klassen brought the Indian Residential School Healing Pole to Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2012, and the two shared of their experience during the closing worship service on July 15.

The carved pole of 200-year-old yellow cedar tells stories, said Charters. At the top are a black bear sent down from heaven to help Charters' people, a mother figure with a blanket to cover those who died in residential schools and to comfort survivors. A nun who served as a mother figure to him while he was in residential school will be carved into the ear of the bear at the top of the pole. There is also a racoon. "He's a bandit like Zorro," Charters says. "Zorro was my hero in residential school," because he stood up for the rights of the oppressed.

With the help of Outreach Canada, Klaassen and Charters took the pole on the road. Wherever the pole goes, individuals listen to Charter's story and share their own as he places his hands over theirs to help them carve. When the pole is completed, it will be displayed in a location designated by a residential school. ❧