

CANADIAN MENNONITE

November 12, 2012
Volume 16 Number 22

Food for Zimbabwe

pg. 23

PM-40063104 R09613

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EDITORIAL

'Political reminder' disturbing

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

When I received a registered letter from Canada Revenue Agency reminding me, as editor, of limitations on registered charities regarding partisan political activities, I took it personally.

First, it grates on every journalistic bone in my body to have to be "reminded" by the government that I have crossed the line in what I consider a professional and religious duty. This is not a new conflict. Journalists and government are always in tension about the dissemination of information and advocacy because one power (government) wants to keep critique and transparency to a minimum and the other (journalists), are, by nature, wanting to shine the light in dark places.

Added to the duty of the religious journalist is the task of representing a certain faith community—in this case Mennonites with an Anabaptist history and belief system. I take seriously my duty to represent our core beliefs in a prophetic and redemptive manner that sometimes challenges the "powers" (government) in the area of militarism and injustices that affect the poor, the "stranger" (immigrant), indigenous peoples and protecting our economy over the environment. So this "reminder" comes as a double-edged sword in my work as editor.

Secondly, as I told the audit officer, this represents a "chill" on free speech that I

had never anticipated. Rather than feeling the freedom to represent my church in its witness, I now feel constrained to couch my voice in non-critical terms for fear of losing charitable status that favours us with certain financial advantages, namely giving individual donors tax credit for their gifts and enabling us to enjoy a funding relationship with our Publishing Partners (area churches and Mennonite Church Canada). I thus feel boxed in and disheartened in my work.

While we intend, as a publication, to be law-abiding in every possible way, this constraint, through the muscle of the law of a registered charity, presents a struggle I wish to share with you, as our regular and faithful readers.

I am, above all, puzzled at the singling out of the *Canadian Mennonite*, which as a member of the 82-religious publications comprising the Canadian Church Press, has been the only one to be sent such a letter. In a survey of the members of that organization, done anonymously by its executive committee, none of them has received a "reminder" despite the fact that several of them representing mainline denominations regularly critique the government on a variety of issues.

Further puzzling is the fact that *Canadian Mennonite* engages in very little political commentary, but uses most

of its space to tell the stories of our congregations at work, of God at work in the world through our witness and service agencies.

For the CRA to cite six editorials/articles out of approximately 720 over the course of 24 issues a year is considerably under the 10 per cent "allowed for political advocacy." Even if the measure is 10 per cent per issue, we seldom exceed three editorials/articles out of 30. And those cited were speaking primarily to justice issues affected by government policies rather than "advocating" for, or "opposing" a particular candidate or party.

Yes, we have specifically called the government to account on some of its policies and practices in what we perceive is excessive spending on military weapons, on its immigration and public safety and prison matters. These are areas of primary concern to our young people, thus the citing apparently of the four articles in *Young Voices*.

But they are not partisan, per se.

I am actually proud and very supportive of their engagement with public policy and do not want them to quiet their voices and constrain their comment because I am thrilled that they see this as an expression of their faith. A previous generation of young people was criticized for its apathy in political engagement; this one is taking very seriously the tension points at which the popular culture diminishes their faith and for that I am inspired and hopeful.

I am most of all saddened at a time when our faith community, collectively, is becoming more vocal on public policy issues as an expression of our Anabaptist faith, that we are being constrained under the legal language and interpretation of the law to lower our voices and dim the lights of our witness.

Are you as disheartened as I am?



ABOUT THE COVER:

The Zimbabwe Food Relief Action, a Quaker-sponsored project, distributes maize meal to villagers in Zimbabwe. See story on page 23.

PHOTO: JOHN SCHMID

Circulation: Please contact Lisa Jacky toll-free at 1-800-378-2524 ext. 221 or by e-mail at office@canadianmennonite.org for subscriptions and address changes. Subscriptions can also be ordered at our web site. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund for our publishing activities. ISSN 1480-042X

Canada

CANADIAN MENNONITE

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

490 DUTTON DRIVE, UNIT C5

WATERLOO ON N2L 6H7

Phone: 519-884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 Fax: 519-884-3331

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General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Obituaries: Graeme Stemp-Morlock, obituaries@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

Material can also be sent "Attn: Submissions/Readers Write/Milestones/Obituaries/Calendar" by postal mail or fax to our head office.

Reprint requests: reprints@canadianmennonite.org

Mission statement: *To educate, inspire, inform, and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonite Church Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through a regular publication and other media, working with our church partners.*

Guiding values:

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

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Culture and character

We are primarily shaped by our practices

By Carl Friesen



After many hours of methodical and systematic doubting of all that he held certain, seventeenth-century French philosopher Rene Descartes came to an astounding conclusion: the only thing that he could know for certain, beyond any reasonable doubt, was that he was a thinking creature. His famous dictum, “I think, therefore I am,” ostensibly gave him a foundation upon which to build all subsequent knowledge. Descartes’s rather drastic, rationalistic notion of human persons—of what human beings essentially are—is still prominent in many parts of our culture today. That is, to a great extent, it is still popular to think of human beings as primarily and fundamentally “thinking things.”

Philosopher James K. A. Smith appropriately describes this view as the “bobble head” view (*Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, 2009). Human identity or human essence—the very definition of what it means to be human—is wrapped up in what we think. In an important sense, in this view the centre of our being is in our heads; we are bobble heads.

However, there is a critical problem with this view of persons: it doesn’t seem to be true. We are not primarily thinkers or primarily driven by rational thought



Friesen says that a modern mall has similarities to a cathedral—it is a secular cathedral with rituals and liturgies.

processes. Our identities are not primarily wrapped up in what we know or even what we believe. In the last few decades, psychologists, neuro-scientists, and psychoanalysts (among others) have shown that conscious, deliberate, rational thought only accounts for a tiny fraction of our brain activity or the profusion of individual tasks that we accomplish throughout any given day. (See for example David Brooks, *The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement*, 2011). They have “re-discovered” a much more ancient way of looking at human beings, a much more pre-cognitive one.

To be clear, this is not to denigrate rational thought in any way. But it is an attempt to push against a fundamentally rationalistic view of persons because it does not seem to fit with our everyday reality or with modern psychology and it does not fit with the Biblical view of persons.

My contention, following a long and rich Christian tradition, is that human beings are primarily “lovers” or “desiring beings.” If I really want to get to know someone or what drives and motivates them, I do not want to know what they think. While that has some value to be sure, what I really long to discover is what they want, what they desire above all else, what they long for.

What we fundamentally desire is what primarily defines who we are and what we are aiming toward as persons. This is what Jesus referred to when he repeatedly described the “heart” as the primary motivator of action. These ultimate loves, the affective core of our being, includes what is often referred to as our “character.” So instead of centering our human identity—our true humanness—in our heads (in what we rationally think), it is centered in our hearts (in what we love) because what we love determines who we are and what we strive for as persons.

One could sum up this view of persons with the motto. “I am what I love.”

What this means is that we are fundamentally dynamic, driven, longing, and desiring beings. We all have ultimate loves that are always aimed toward something, toward what the Greeks called a *telos*. And these ultimate loves are what constitute our identity and life trajectory. All persons have ultimate desires or longings whether they are aware of them or not, because they function at a non-cognitive or perhaps pre-cognitive level. Our ultimate loves are formed deep inside of us, in the very core of our being, from when we are born.

Perhaps it is worth noting that this is not a reference to trivial loves like a love for coffee or sunshine or even a specific person (although these “trivial” loves will all be determined by our ultimate loves). To quote James Smith here, “Rather, we are talking about ultimate loves—that to which we are fundamentally oriented,

what ultimately governs our vision of the good life, what shapes and molds our being-in-the-world—in other words, what we desire above all else, the ultimate desire that shapes and positions and makes sense of all our penultimate desires and actions” (Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*). In other words, our ultimate loves propel and compel us to act or refrain from acting in certain ways.

The fundamental structure of human beings is as these kinds of desiring and loving beings; beings that are oriented toward some vision or picture of what we take to be the good life. In other words, we are aimed at and striving toward some kind of picture, whether good or bad, of human flourishing. There are pre-cognitive, affective forces that drive, motivate, and shape us into who and what we become. Because our loves usually function at a pre-cognitive level, we are often not fully aware of them or able to articulate exactly what they are. There is a gap, in a sense, between what we think and what we love because we know what we should love or what end we should be aiming toward but it often remains a cognitive process. We do not actually reshape our loves to line up with our cognitive processes.

If this is true, then how are our ultimate loves shaped? The way that our ultimate loves are shaped is through practices that, over time, become formative habits. The practices that we participate in, whether consciously or unconsciously, shape and form us into certain kinds of people. Our formation as persons, as desirers or lovers, is shaped on a daily basis by practices and habits that shape and alter what we are striving for. Every practice has a certain *telos* or end out of which it is born and it consequently shapes its participants toward that *telos*.

In this picture of human persons, “culture” is then defined as a set of practices that, over time, shape our ultimate loves. In other words, culture is something that we do; it is something that we participate in and it is aimed at a specific end—a specific vision of human flourishing. Every facet of culture has an underlying vision of what the good life looks like. A culture like ours can be seen as a

multifarious conglomeration of practices that are born out of diverse (and often competing) visions of human flourishing. That is why, as Smith notes, culture functions as a kind of liturgy. The term liturgy simply refers to a set of practices that form and shape our ultimate loves. Cultural practices, as a kind of liturgy, define our ultimate goals. This is how liturgy is understood in the historical and religious sense of the word as well. Liturgy, in a church setting, is a formative set of practices that ultimately define for us who we are and what we are about—what we are aiming toward. Culture also functions as a formative liturgy.

What this means is that there is no such thing as a culturally neutral space. There are no value-free institutions or cultural practices. Economics, politics,

social science, art, music, theatre, retail, education and so on, are all wrapped up in some vision of the good life. Put another way, every aspect of culture has an implicit picture of what it means for human beings to flourish (Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2007). Although these images are usually implicit and often difficult to articulate, they are still there, shaping people to specific visions of flourishing. However, when one begins to see culture in this way, one can often hear echoes of what those underlying visions look like.

Let us take a contemporary example of a shaping cultural practice or secular liturgy: a contemporary shopping mall (Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*). A shopping mall is not merely a neutral space where one can go and buy goods. Rather, it is a charged space with certain rituals or liturgies that, over time, are formative and, over time, birth in us certain ultimate loves or longings—a certain picture of what human flourishing looks like. And

to a great extent, this liturgy is deeply antithetical to the kingdom of God.

To start, one can immediately notice great similarities between the North American shopping mall and the great cathedrals of Europe. In many ways the mall is a kind of secular cathedral, a culturally formative place with rituals and liturgies. For example:

- Basically every mall tries to reconfigure the way that persons normally inhabit space and time. The layout of malls invites its entrants on an existential journey to happiness. Have you ever seen a mall with windows (other than skylights)? Probably not. There is an intentional shutting out from the outside world.
- Have you ever noticed that most malls have a confusing, labyrinth-like layout? This is also intentional. A mall is designed

*As followers of Christ, and through the Holy Spirit,
we need to immerse ourselves in practices that
point toward the end for which we were intended
so that our ultimate longings and our characters
will be transformed to reflect true humanness.*

for maximum peripatetic effect. Not only is one shut out from the everyday reality of the outside world but one is supposed to wander around aimlessly or at the very least be forced to walk excessive mileage and, in the meantime, be unintentionally drawn to enter more stores.

- To add to the reconfiguring of our everyday reality, it is almost impossible to find a clock anywhere. This is also not an accident. One is not supposed to be constantly aware of time when entering this cathedral.
- The mall has a liturgical calendar: Mother’s Day, Valentine’s Day, Christmas, Easter, Halloween etc. There is an ebb and flow to the calendar year in the mall as it is devoted to different holy days.
- The mall is lined with 3D icons (manikins) that point toward a perverted vision of what true human flourishing looks like.
- The mall does outreach (which we call advertising). Ads are really just a bunch of compressed, powerful little narratives that envision the good life for us if we will

only buy a specific product.

The purpose of this extended example is to point out that when we begin to see culture as a kind of formative liturgy, then we can begin to see where cultural practices are pointing. More importantly, we can see the formative impact of cultural practices as we participate in them. We do not really care what the mall thinks or believes because we do not go to the mall for a theoretical defense of free market capitalism. But when we go to a mall, we are impacted by images that consequently shape our desires. Malls are all about drawing people into a forma-

The practices that we participate in, whether consciously or unconsciously, shape and form us into certain kinds of people.

tive set of practices that shape them into certain kinds of people.

If this is true and we are in fact fundamentally loving and desiring beings and not primarily rational beings, then following Christ is first and foremost about a transformation of our loves or our characters. In the language used earlier, it is about aligning our loves or desires to a proper *telos* or end. In other words, being a follower of Christ is not primarily about following some abstract rules that are imposed on us after deciding to become a Christian or about praying a prayer of repentance. It is not even primarily about thinking the right things. Of course, these things are all important to an extent. But the primary role of the church is to cultivate certain kinds of people; people that are aimed toward the true human *telos*.

Consequently, we, as the church, need to develop practices that are character-forming and that point toward our proper end. Unsurprisingly, Scripture repeatedly describes the nature of being a Christ-follower in just these terms. It speaks of a transformation of our longings and our characters so that the foremost desire that guides all our action is to see the restoring and loving rule of God on earth, literally, “God’s kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” And

in numerous passages—like Genesis 1, Matthew 5, and Galatians 5—we have images of what the reconciling and loving character of God looks like—what the kingdom is all about. We need practices—real, tangible, habitual actions—that will both show the world what story we are part of and also form us into better actors in that story.

In conclusion, when we think of human persons primarily as thinking things, we end up undermining the core of who we are. We see our primary role as people that need to think properly. To reiterate, thinking properly is certainly important and a vital part of living a holistic life

of integrity. But we are primarily transformed by formation not by information. Formation and information are not mutually exclusive categories to be sure; they complement one another to an extent. Yet, we are primarily shaped by our practices—what we do from minute to minute throughout the day. As followers of Christ, and through the Holy Spirit, we need to immerse ourselves in practices

that point toward the end for which we were intended so that our ultimate longings and our characters will be transformed to reflect true humanness.

This also means that we need to be aware of the formative nature of culture. Culture shapes and molds our ultimate loves. Cultural practices change our characters over time. Our culture, like all cultures, is a charged space of competing visions of human flourishing. Every person and every society lives by some conception of what constitutes human flourishing. Although there are many distorted notions of human flourishing all around us, our calling is not to seclude ourselves from the “outside world” but to refuse to buy into the distorted pictures of what a true human end looks like. Using the apostle Paul’s language in his letter to the Romans, we are not to be conformed to the world but transformed. It is through the transformation of our characters that we bear witness to the character of Yahweh as seen in Jesus Christ. ❧

Carl is a graduate student at Regent College in Vancouver. This is from a sermon he preached at Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver, on Sept. 2, 2012.

/// For discussion

1. Do you consider yourself as a rational being or more of an emotional being? Do you find others reacting more rationally or more emotionally? In what ways has the Mennonite Church tended to appeal to our heads rather than our hearts? Has this been changing?
2. What vision or picture do you have of “the good life?” How do you work at trying to achieve this? How does this vision of the “good life” fit with what we talk about at church? How much does the culture of the broader society influence our deepest longings?
3. Friesen suggests that shopping malls are like secular cathedrals. Do you think this is an apt comparison? Can you think of other examples of how the practices of our culture tend to draw us away from being true Christ-followers? How seriously do Christians take Paul’s words in Romans 12:2 to not be conformed to this world?
4. What church practices might help us transform our longings so that we can be better aligned with God’s Kingdom? Do you think traditionalist or “plain” Mennonites have done a better job at maintaining practices that constantly remind them of the ways of God?

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

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

✉ Canada enjoys world-wide respect and admiration

As a returning Canadian (having lived in the U.S. most of my adult life), I was very proud to read about Prime Minister Harper's recent visit to the "Francophonie Summit" in Kinshasa, Congo. In his public summit speech, he left no doubt about the "complete unacceptability of the failures of the electoral process and the abuse of human rights that are taking place in this country." No pussy-footing around, hiding behind diplomatic language. Harper is not known for "emotional outbursts, so I think he got the message across. He also made no secret of meeting with opposition groups in the Congo while he was there.

Sometimes I wonder about Harper and why we need expensive fighter jets. On the whole, however, I think as a economic unit, a people and its leaders, Canada is enjoying world-wide respect and

FROM OUR LEADERS

Where are the Followers?

DAN GRABER

Ever since being part of the North American Mennonite Church, I've appreciated the cyclical if not constant emphasis on leadership development. Self-development for personal satisfaction, new and increased competency for pastoral and lay leader success, and a wider range of healthier leadership patterns are needed and wonderful. But at the same time it's caused me to wonder.

Are we simply falling in line with society's emphasis on personal fulfilment, individualism, power and status? Most likely we've seen ads for discipleship training—so we can be leaders. Take a look on the web and figure out the difference between the number of books with leadership or followership in their titles. Study Christian publishing sites. I think what gets published and sold and what we pay attention to is a mark of our Christian culture.

Is our emphasis on "priesthood of believers" really a nice way to Christianize our need to be leaders instead of seeing

ourselves first and foremost as followers? Is our teaching and application of "servant leadership" really what we see in the Bible? Does this language and theology stroke our egos? When was the last, or even the first time you saw an advertisement for a seminar, conference, or course on followership? Despite the value of leadership training, wasn't Jesus' first call to be followers? Take Matthew 4:19. Usually the focus has been on Jesus saying, "I will make you fishers of men." Seldom have I heard a heavier emphasis on Jesus' preceding words, "Come, follow me." So shouldn't we have followership training? Wasn't the Bible given to us to help us be God followers and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading?

Would we have better pastoral and congregational leaders if congregational members were better followers? Would we have fewer congregational tensions if we had as many working definitions of followership as we do of leadership? And how important is it for every church member to be both a follower and a

leader? If we are all leaders, priests, and servants, who are the followers?

James Maroosis says, "The difference between followers and leaders is that followers need leaders to help them follow what leaders themselves are following. This relationship takes the form of a shared responsibility to a shared calling."

Reverend Paul Beedle has written, "Followership is a discipline of supporting leaders and helping them to lead well. It is not submission, but the wise and good care of leaders, done out of a sense of gratitude for their willingness to take on the responsibilities of leadership, and a sense of hope and faith in their abilities and potential."

Since, I suspect, most Canadians see themselves as leaders, the time and effort needed to build trust and agree on a vision/mission/purpose/goals for a fellowship of believers is crucial. The Apostle Paul several times reminds us to "make every effort" toward unity and mutual edification so that we are living in peace. Only this can create a church culture and organizational structure where members become active, competent committed followers—and leaders.

Dan Graber is Area Church Minister of Mennonite Church Alberta.



admiration. Some of us who live here lose perspective of this as we deal with our day-to-day lives.

We have gotten here, not through short-term fixes, but through long-term steady growth in our economic and political policies. Our banking system is the envy of the world. Canadian companies are growing everywhere, in spite of our strong dollar. We are doing a better job of managing our very abundant natural resources with local control of potash in Saskatchewan, with Ottawa saying “just a minute” on the Chinese investment in Alberta oil, and by pushing the north pacific pipeline for leverage with our large neighbour to the south.

Contrary to what’s going on in Europe, multi-

culturalism is alive and well in Canada. We encourage everyone to bring their religion, their food, their music—as long as they never forget the democratic principles and laws this country was founded upon. Let’s not forget the freedoms and liberties that brought us here in the first place. A poignant memorial on Parliament Hill in Ottawa is a group of statues representing the Famous Five women who championed women’s right to vote in the 1920s. They were five very ordinary women who fought for equal rights all the way to the Privy Council in England.

Now, if we could only get this NHL thing straightened out!

RICHARD PENNER, CALGARY

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Deliberate and Deliberate

PHIL WAGLER

I’ve been part of countless conversations where people deliberate over the state of the church. Among church veterans this usually revolves around what the church has lost or is no longer. Among younger types such chatter circles around the church’s failures and supposed irrelevance. Different angles don’t change the fact that, quite often, such deliberations usually end up, to agonize with Shakespeare’s MacBeth, as “sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

Generally, we talk lots, but nothing really changes either in our perspective or in what we do about it. Recently, again, our small group spent an evening deliberating about what

it means to be the church, the *ekklesia* of God in our small corner of Canada.

The Apostle Paul begins his letter to the Corinthians referring to those growing followers of Jesus, living in a very challenging place, “...the church/*ekklesia* of God in Corinth...” (1 Corinthians 1:2). The Greek word *ekklesia*, carefully chosen by Paul, was in the ancient world a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public space for the purpose of deliberating. It was a word in reference to something akin to the town council.



It’s as if Paul is saying to the fledgling, floundering Corinthians, “You may feel like the odds are stacked against you, but you have the awesome, thrilling task of being intentional and calculating about what it means to be growing followers of right where you are planted.”

One younger member of our group pointed out that “deliberate” and “deliberate” are spelled the same, but with different emphasis. Both are words of action, but one implies heart and mind activity while the other is all about active

What might happen if we deliberated in order to be deliberate in the expression of our faith more often?

follow-through. It seemed prudent to put them both together, and so, we took time to deliberate in hopes of becoming more deliberate in the living out of our conviction that Jesus as the resurrected Lord rules everywhere.

We asked for a question to chew over and one adventurous soul came up with this doozy: How do we help people in this multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-faceted city know the love of Jesus? Deliberate over that one for a while. We did. It was stimulating. It was disheartening.

Stimulating in that we live in an incredible area teeming with wonderful people, rich diversity, deep problems, and untapped opportunities. Your own locale will have its own sweet aromas and rotten spots requiring some stimulating intentional thought and calculated action.

But, our deliberating was also disheartening because it all seems so daunting. I don’t know my atheist or Sikh neighbours as well as I should like. The tolerant divides seems so wide. The messiness of life seems beyond the pale.

However, daunting to us in not daunting to God! As we deliberated we caught some of the breath of the Spirit that moves the impossible and moved us too. We felt a call to action.

What might happen if we deliberated in order to be deliberate in the expression

of our faith more often? What refreshing wind of the Spirit might fill our sails? What daunting mountain might begin to move? What conversation may become more than sound and fury?

Phil Wagler lives in Surrey, BC where he deliberates about what it means to be faithful to Jesus in family, work, play, and community. He is a contributor on Mennonite Media’s Shaping Families and the author of Kingdom Culture (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca).

✉ Eight young adults not a broad consultation

IS IT NOT a bit rich for Willard Metzger, Mennonite Church Canada executive director to plainly set the bar and state, “It didn’t seem to make sense to us to try and imagine what the future of the church will look like without including those who will be living out and leading (sic) that future reality,” when under his administrative authority MC Canada “invited eight young adults from across Canada”? And this the *Canadian*

Mennonite (Oct. 15, 2012, page 35) headline underlines as “National church consults young adults”?

Kudos of biblical proportions and hope in the younger generation however for the writer’s sagacity in documenting the noted quote and adding one participant’s heartfelt chagrin that “other young adults were interested in attending, but space was limited and they weren’t sure how they could become involved”!

EDUARD HIEBERT, ST. FRANCOIS XAVIER, MAN.

NEW ORDER VOICE

Facing the sins of the social gospel

AIDEN ENNS

I’m fumbling for a third way to define sin. I recently led a Sunday-morning discussion in our church on the topic of the social gospel. In that discussion, I found it helpful to distinguish between two different ways of understanding sin.

The first understanding sees sin as personal moral failure. If I commit bad acts, or have bad thoughts, or deliberately fail to be a good person, then I have sinned. For example, when I was younger and living at home, if I went out drinking with friends at a bar and told my parents that I was at Bob’s house, I was intentionally deceiving my parents into thinking I was not out drinking. In my heart I knew I was sinning; I was lying in my heart.

If I went “too far” with my girlfriend, either in my mind or with my hands, I knew I had sinned, because sex before marriage was against the will of God (according to youth leaders and pastors). If I saw someone drop a five-dollar bill and kept it for myself, it was stealing—a sin. A sign of faithfulness was attending church on a regular basis.

At that time, I did not see other forms of sin. I didn’t see the beer ads as promoting a view of men as macho and women

as sex objects. I did not see the church’s narrow allowances for physical intimacy as a form of patriarchal and heterosexist control. I did not see any problem with relatively wealthy Mennonite bosses hiring cheap labour to make large profits as a form of stealing or exploitation.

A second understanding of sin occurred to me when I discovered the social gospel. This is a gospel that brings good news to groups of people: those in prison, those who suffer under male domination, those who are poor and unemployed, those who hunger in cities where food is abundant, those whose skin colour does not give them special benefits. In my mind, it’s also a gospel

As people of privilege, we can’t escape our participation in social sins.



that brings good news to the salmon who can’t swim upstream because of dams and to the trees which long to set roots and not be ploughed under.

A sign of faithfulness in this case would be to go to church without the use of a car: walk, bike or bus. These types of Christians care more about how they get to church than if they go at all.

The problem with seeing sin as a social

structure is a lack of hope; it’s hard to have a sense of spiritual vitality when human-caused suffering and destruction is so prevalent. As people of privilege, we can’t escape our participation in social sins.

This leads me to a third understanding of sin. It is a sense of despair and alienation that comes from withdrawing from full participation in our life situation. This can be a personal sense of resignation, aloofness, a nebulous decision that nothing matters. But it is also a society-wide pattern of behaviour that sets personal gratification and material aspirations over against love of neighbour and connecting with a Spirit of Life among us.

This is where spiritual exercises become necessary once again. Personal actions such as prayer and contemplation, while nostalgic for some, become surprisingly refreshing when they include awareness of social sin and the need for grace and courage. Communal actions—such as gathering on a Sunday morning to sing and hear stories of failure, faith and forgiveness—become life-giving exercises. They become conduits of salva-

tion. We begin to feel hope on a personal level, and, if we are faithful and wise, we begin to live in a way that embodies love and a more just and sustainable future.

Aiden Enns welcomes your feedback and ideas. He is a member of Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man., and the co-editor of Geez magazine. He can be reached at aiden@geezmagazine.org.

VIEWPOINT

MCC's big building rationale not compelling

BY WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

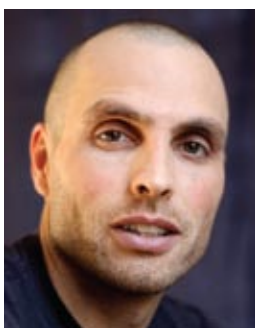
During a July interview, Rick Cober Bauman—head of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario—spoke with much enthusiasm about the \$12-million Menno complex now under construction in Kitchener, Ont. At the end of our conversation he asked whether I found the case for the MCC-led project “compelling.”

His question reminded me of other occasions when the things that excited the heads of Mennonite organizations were entirely outside the realm of what would excite me. At the 2010 MCC Canada board meeting I was genuinely surprised and baffled by the degree of focus and near-enthralment with the internal restructuring elements of the Wineskins process. In past interviews with heads of Mennonite post-secondary institutions their most fervent comments were about building relationships with wealthy donors.

When I compare this to the subjects that evoke the most passion among my circle of Menno peers, I see a troubling discrepancy. I believe in diversity, but still, it feels jarring to realize that those with the power to set agendas have very different agendas than the segment of the church I find myself in.

My reply to Cober Bauman's question about whether I found the building project compelling was muted—that wasn't the time for me to hold forth—but if I had responded I would have explained what qualifies as compelling for me:

- Volunteers across the country who support released sex offenders, choosing



to see Christ in people often portrayed as scary and disdainful.

- Catholic-Mennonite seminary student Jason Greig who, after 11 years living with people who have intellectual disabilities, seeks to bring the perspective of those people into the realm of theology.

- MCCers Dave and

Margaret Penner who work with creativity and care to deepen the faith and improve the lives of Low German-speaking Mennonites in Mexico.

- A new Anabaptist-linked retreat house in Minnesota that brings together social justice, Christian service and contemplative spirituality.

I am compelled to overflowing by these people, who are present to the woundedness of the world in creative, loving and often simple ways.

I could go on with this list, but no matter how long I did it would never include the up-scale new MennoPlex in Kitchener. Nor the million-dollar Wineskins restructuring of MCC, nor other Menno building projects past or present.

I know Cober Bauman and other Mennonite leaders care deeply about the sorts of work I mention above, and I believe organizations deserve investments of time, money and creativity, but when I see leaders get so wrapped up in these internally focused projects, I worry.

Of course, the executive directors would say that institution-building efforts are designed to enable more of exactly the sort of work I list above. The logic of that argument is alluring but not

convincing. It is too close to the logic of ends that justify means, of quantity over quality. It is too close to the logic of the business model, the right-side-up kingdom, the tyranny of numbers, the obsession with size and growth. It's what everyone else is doing. Can't we contribute something more creative and distinct?

The bigger-better logic also ignores the fact that big projects change the complexion of organizations. The MCC Ontario project, along with MCC B.C.'s \$16-million capital project and MCC Canada's office retrofit, represent a drifting toward affluence. They animate a certain segment of the Mennonite constituency—Cober Bauman says raising money for capital projects is part of the Mennonite ethos—but they alienate another segment.

I'm not certain how large this latter group is but I know it includes some creative, committed, spiritually-rooted people. I call them the creative fringe. Though I can't attach the above attributes to myself without a string of disclaimers, I more or less associate with this group.

Of course, these folks are generally not affluent so they can be excluded without significant impact to institution-building. But they have other gifts, so organizations that leave them behind do so to their detriment.

A more troubling dynamic is that a move toward affluence makes it harder for MCC to support marginalized people when such support would be controversial among donors. You don't have to talk to many MCC staff to know that this tension is not merely theoretical. Nor is it new, though the financial pressure of big capital projects amplifies this sensitivity.

Despite its imperfections, I believe MCC remains a great organization. That's why I hope it doesn't distance itself from the creative fringe or from the poor.

But my main hope lies outside the big buildings and showy head offices, in the lowly, ragged and unlikely places that the mystery of Christ's love tends to appear most vividly. Institutions play an important role in church life, but God's plan is far broader and less logical than capital campaigns and maximized budgets. ❧

VIEWPOINT

A Public confession of our personal wars

BY DAVID DRIEDGER

The sound-bite was simple, “What would happen if we all just truly—I’m talking about all religious stripes here—started praying for the peace of this city and then actually started putting some action behind that?” With that quote Devon Clunis, Winnipeg’s incoming chief of police, stirred up a brief and vigorous media storm. Responses ranged, predictably, from clear support for someone publicly declaring Christian values to criticisms over the misuse and abuse of religion in the public sphere.

Canada has remained relatively unscathed from the extreme and polarizing “culture wars” around religion in the United States. I was recently given a Christian newspaper, based in Wisconsin, in which the front cover displayed an image of David vs Goliath. From the reader’s perspective, David was positioned as watching the monstrous and clearly enraged Goliath approaching, holding . . . wait for it . . . a rainbow flag. The message of course is clear—good Christian values are under threat, vulnerable to the powerful and encroaching forces of evil. Perhaps a bit much, whatever your position on this matter. What has been interesting with the Clunis interview is how quickly the conversation shifted precisely towards this sort of tone.

In response to this uproar, Clunis tried again and again to “set the record straight,” as he put it, and remind everyone that he called for prayer and action. Looking at the media responses to his initial interview, I wish he instead would have focused on how the interview started. Clunis began by confessing that he was tired of the sort of violence that occurs in Winnipeg. Now, he was speaking of violent crime in that context, but in light of this controversy I want to address other

claims of violence that have emerged.

In letters to the editor there have been claims that such religious sentiments do violence to modern constructs of reason, sending us back to faith in Santa Claus. One editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press* implied how this incident revealed the ease with which people turn to “Christian-bashing” which would not be tolerated against other religions or ethnic groups. An audio clip of ethicist Arthur Schafer was played on CBC in which Schafer accused Clunis of “exploiting his position” and in so doing, Clunis “violates the liberties” of others. It may take just a little prodding, but it seems we all have ready-made sketches of our Goliath bearing down on us.

I have my own questions about Clunis’s theology as it appeared in his *Christian Week* interview. My concern is more about his direct attributing of God’s hand in his success (leaving open dangerous implications for those not as fortunate). However, I am no more concerned about his theology than the manner in which his statements were taken up as tools for waging a different war.

Are Christians now really the most readily persecuted? By what standard? By having to deal with some discomfort in the workplace? Is reason really at stake here? And whose reason are we talking about again? And what exactly is the liberty being “violated” according to Schafer? With respect to Clunis it is, at its most tangible, a conceptual violence, but one that Schafer is also asking Clunis to undergo by separating his moral environment from his position. These are all accusations of violence. And I suppose, in their own way, they have some merit or at least some cause for reflection.

But these arguments are coming from places of relative security and privilege.



Devon Clunis, a 25-year veteran of the police force, will be sworn in as Winnipeg’s chief of police later this year.

These are places that can afford to have these conversations, places that have the leisure and resources to carry them out. These conversations come from the church, the media, political offices, and the academy. Clunis’s words were quickly taken from the hopes of addressing bloodshed in neighbourhoods to the work of defending privileged institutions.

I am not sure it was wise to frame prayer as a sort of “instrument.” But I confess that is because I don’t rightly understand prayer. I don’t really know if I am doing it right or what it in fact does. But I live in a neighbourhood of Winnipeg where I have at times felt crippled by the weight of the violence that is inflicted within and upon my community. And many times all that can escape my lips is a resigned bit of profanity or at my more hopeful moment there may even be a “have mercy.”

This may not be the type of prayer Clunis was referring to, but at this point I will take it over the pious wars of those (myself and the church included) defending social forms that already exclude so many. Before returning to the issue of violence in our cities and neighbourhoods let’s discard our straw-men, our caricatured Goliaths, and do no further violence to those already suffering, those stripped of the leisure and opportunity of carrying on such narcissistic wars of privileged preservation. ☿

David Driedger is Associate Minister at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and a regular blogger at Canadian Mennonite online.

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Mennonite women in leadership – then, now and in the future

Three generations of Ewert women from Saskatchewan share their stories

Margaret Ewert, a former teacher and librarian, who lives in Drake, writes:

I didn't dream that women might aspire to be pastors when I grew up in a Mennonite church in Vancouver in the 1940s. That wasn't even thought about—though women had a vote in my congregation right from the start. They attended membership meetings, taught Sunday School and like most other churches, had ladies sewing circles with annual auction sales to raise money for missions.

When I married a widower with four children and moved to Saskatchewan in the 1960s, it surprised me that in some churches meetings were strictly "brotherhood" events. However, with the arrival of the feminist movement in the 1970s, Mennonite women too felt it was time for greater recognition of their work within the church locally, nationally and globally.

By 1974, when I was elected president of Canadian Women in Mission (now Mennonite Women Canada), women's groups decided that it was time they had official status in the annual conference meetings in order to be more aware of needs in the conference and on mission fields. Because almost no women were involved in conference committees, General Conference women requested that representatives be appointed. It was an awkward situation; because they were not elected they felt they had no voice.

Gradually this changed. Now we have many women in leadership positions, serving effectively not only as pastors, but in other positions in our colleges, seminaries and charities. Personally, I'm very pleased to see this.

Claire Ewert Fisher, Margaret's daughter-in-law, is the executive director of MCC Saskatchewan and lives in Langham. She remembers how her early call to ministry evolved:

My father and I would sit at the kitchen table studying the Bible together. Also, he played piano, calling all eight children, plus mom, to come and work out the harmonies from the old blue Mennonite hymn book. He died when I was 15, but his influence prompted me at 16 to declare to my pastor that I wanted to be a pastor.

It was the late 60s and early 70s—an era of heady optimism. Our church was not ready for women in leadership so instead of studying to be a pastor, my education was more practical—an MCC assignment in Vietnam.

After another service term in the Philippines, and the

death of my spouse, I enrolled at Lutheran Theological Seminary where professors and students, both male and female, encouraged each other to be all we were created to be. By the early 90s, I was delighted to find a place in pastoral ministry in the Mennonite church. Before long, there were a dozen female pastors in Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

Pastoring together with my husband in two small rural congregations was life-giving for us and we felt affirmed as leaders. These affirmations propelled me to accept leadership in MCC Saskatchewan. We come this way not on our own, but by way of prayer and prompting and encouragement of others. I stand on the shoulders of many praying, courageous and faithful people.

Lara Ewert-Molesky, Claire's daughter, is a teacher & mother of two, living in Regina:

I was born into a faith-filled, rural, Mennonite family and community where I grew up watching my parents collaborate as partners in faith, work, and life. We were taught to treat everyone as equal—regardless of gender, race, or socio-economic status.

Most of my early faith-building came from women. All my Sunday School teachers, VBS leaders and Girl Guides instructors were women. As I became older, I watched the church struggle with the emergence of women in full leadership. Nurtured in a church that values the priesthood of all believers, I had difficulty understanding why the church struggled with the idea of equal leadership between men and women.

Today leadership in the church is less a question of "should women be in leadership" than "will anyone step forward?" Many Mennonite women now work outside the home. Church roles that traditionally were filled by women are falling vacant because time and energy are stretched thin. As women and men, we need to support each other and work in partnership to move the church forward.

I believe the Mennonite church's honest struggle with difficult issues, like gender equity in leadership, sets us up to be leaders in our world as we work to be people of peace and reconciliation. ❧

PHOTO BY CHAI BOUPHAPHANH



Margaret, Claire and Lara

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Barnewall—Camryn Ryan (b. Oct. 10, 2012), to Danielle and Jamey Barnewall, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Coppola—Grace Rosa (b. Oct. 15, 2012), to Anne and Vince Coppola, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Janz—Serena Violet (b. Oct. 18, 2012), to Stephanie and Trevor Janz, Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Koenig—Katie (b. Oct. 7, 2012), to Beverly and Michael Koenig, Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Zehr—Adelynn Ruth (b. Oct. 17, 2012), to Brett and Lindsay Zehr, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Baptisms

Jacob Erb, Alyssa Huber, Sharmayne Kuepfer, Dylan Lebold, Nicholas Poole, Darryn Ropp—Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont., Oct. 28, 2012.

Marriages

Dreja/Lymburner—Alexander Dreja and E. Jolene Lymburner (Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont.), at St. Lawrence Hall, Toronto, Ont., Aug. 18, 2012.

Bender/Cole—Shannon Bender (East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.) and Brian Cole, in Jordan, Ont., Aug. 12, 2012.

Deaths

Bergen—Frank, 79 (b. April 16, 1933; d. Sept. 25, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Derksen—Henry D. (Hank), 90 (b. Jan. 1, 1922; d. Oct. 11, 2012), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Dyck—Helen (nee Rempel), 86 (b. Feb. 25, 1926; d. Sept. 27, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Dyck—Peter, 80 (b. Nov. 28, 1931; d. Sept. 20, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Epp—Gerhard (Hardy) Rudolf, 80 (b. Feb. 2, 1932; d. Oct. 9, 2012), Zoar Mennonite,

Langham, Sask.

Epp—Helmer, 74 (b. March 17, 1938; d. Oct. 17, 2012), Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.

Epp—Susie, 96 (b. July 27, 1916; d. Oct. 26, 2012), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Friesen—Margaret (nee Esau), 81 (b. Nov. 17, 1930; d. Oct. 18, 2012), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Froese—Jacob, 84 (b. June 16, 1928; d. Oct. 6, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Gardner—Evelyn (nee Lewsey), 86 (b. June 25, 1926; d. Aug. 4, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Isaak—Katherina (Tena), 84 (b. Nov. 24, 1927; d. Oct. 21, 2012), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Klassen—Jacob, 91 (b. March 27, 1921; d. Aug. 7, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Mierau—Shirley, 57 (b. May 8, 1955; d. Oct. 12, 2012), Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.

Musselman—Marshall, 86 (b. Feb. 17, 1926; d. Oct. 15, 2012), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Olfert—Jake, 64 (b. Nov. 11, 1947; d. Oct. 9, 2012), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Peters—Hank, 89 (b. April 9, 1923; d. Aug. 26, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Schmidt—Lenora (nee Bartel), 89 (b. Aug. 27, 1923; d. Oct. 21, 2012), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Toews—Harry, 82 (b. July 17, 1929; d. June 25, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Toews—Oleg, 79 (b. Nov. 15, 1932; d. Aug. 29, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Wiebe—Louise, 91 (b. May 15, 1921; d. Aug. 10, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Wiens—Louise (nee Wiebe), 95 (b. April 1, 1917; d. Oct. 11, 2012), First Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Wieser—Susan (nee Kroeker), 83 (April 29, 1929; d. May 25, 2012), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Ponius' Puddle



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

BEING A FAITHFUL CHURCH PROCESS

The paths and ditches of Biblical interpretation

At the July 2012 Mennonite Church Canada Assembly, delegates approved *Being a Faithful Church 4* for study. These articles are to stimulate further thought and discussion. For more information visit www.mennonitechurch.ca and follow the “*Being a Faithful Church*” links.

Path #2: Context makes a difference

BY RUDY BAERGEN

Co-chair, Being a Faithful Church Task Force

“Context makes a difference in how Scripture is interpreted, understood, and applied for faith and life. Context refers not only to the importance of understanding the time and place out of which Scripture emerged and to which it was addressed. It also refers to our time and place and how that impacts our understandings of Scripture.”

In the weeks leading up to the American election, Barak Obama and Mitt Romney have both protested that their comments have been taken out of context. Words are given meaning by their context, both by the one in which they are spoken and the one in which they are heard. When a taxicab driver in Bogota, Colombia, where there are no seasons says, “we are having winter today” it means something quite different than when we say it in Canada!

By context we can refer to the whole conversation, its spirit and intent. Or to the broader things like historical and cultural environment which give life to a story, a teaching or a value.

When we study Scripture we must also be respectful of context. The words of Jesus in Luke 22:36, “And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one,” are not calling Canadian Christians to trade in their winter coat for a sword! We can’t understand these strange words without looking into the context, which includes



Jesus disallowing use of the sword by his disciples to protect him (22:49-50). Spoken and written words of Scripture belong to sentences, conversations, paragraphs and even a selected collection of books, all of which give shape to the particular meaning. Words spoken in one historical, cultural context will not necessarily allow for a simple application in another. And the blinders of our own context may make it difficult for us to hear the word of Scripture, as in the story of Lazarus and the rich man. What does it mean for us to remember the Sabbath in our post-Christendom time? How do we understand Paul’s prohibiting women to speak in church (1 Cor 14:34) given our own sociological context? What is the role of context when we consider the first Century tendency to merge mental illness with demon possession?

While we believe that God’s Word transcends time and culture we also know that our human language and concepts, as well as our scientific and political world views, are shaped by our context. Context is the water that we swim in. God’s Word waits to be transposed from its Scriptural context to the one in which we move, live and have our being.

Path #6: Scripture is a living word

BY RUDY BAERGEN,

Co-chair, Being a Faithful Church Task Force

“Scripture persistently hopes that the letters of its words will become a living word in a world in need of redemption. This does not diminish the authority of Scripture, but sharpens it and makes it real in our community and to the world. This pathway indicates that other sources can illuminate what Scripture also teaches.”

This pathway wants to teach us that Scripture is not a fossilized, time-constrained library of ancient literature. It’s not a quaint museum piece which tells us how things used to be or how people used to think. Rather, we believe it contains the living Word of God which through God’s Spirit brings new life to humans wherever they find themselves. Sometimes the new listeners can easily apply its stories or teachings. The parable of the Good Samaritan in any setting readily finds new characters that re-enact the roles of the ill-fated traveller, the robber, the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan.

In other cases, a story in Scripture speaks in ways that the author could never have foreseen, as in the story of King Ahab’s appropriation of Naboth’s vineyard. Ahab’s action becomes a prophetic word against speculation in our capitalistic economy. Or when Jesus’ exception clause allowing for divorce and remarriage in some situations (Matthew 19:9) might give other new insight on how to deal in a redemptive way with divorce and remarriage in the 21st century. Whenever Jesus clarifies the law with his pronouncement, “You have heard that it was said . . . But I say to you” he does not negate or diminish the authority of the law, but he goes to the heart of its intent and brings it to life in his own setting. Amazingly, Jesus, in turn, gives the task of sharpening the authority of the scripture to his disciples: “Again, truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will

be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

The stories and teachings of Scripture, while offered in a pre-scientific age, continue to reveal and guide in an age where humans now know that the earth is round and circles the sun. Scripture's insistence on the sanctity of life continues to be authoritative even in a time of accessible

abortion and difficult questions around the end of life. New sources of information from scientific research, the social sciences, medical studies, etc. will not negate the authority of Scripture but can help us to sharpen the intent of Scripture and make wise applications. ✎

registered charity "devotes substantially all of its resources to charitable purposes," but that it can "devote part of its resources to political activities—up to 10 per cent," but that these activities are "ancillary and incidental to its charitable purposes" and "do not include direct or indirect support of or opposition to any political party or candidate for public office."

Benner said he explained to Fournier that the cited editorials and articles were not partisan in nature and were not advocating specifics, but rather were done "as statements of the Mennonite core belief" in non-violence and objection to war as a solution for political conflict—core beliefs that are deeply held by our people over our 500-year history."

But, in a written response to the "reminder," Benner reassured the CRA audit officer that "it is our intent to obey the law and to operate within the guidelines set forth in these documents despite some differences we may have in their interpretation."

Revenue Canada has a relationship with *Canadian Mennonite* because the agency governs the charitable status that lets individual donors to *Canadian Mennonite* get tax credit for their financial gifts. It is also important in maintaining such status with its publishing partners, namely the area churches and Mennonite Church Canada, which funds 44 per cent of the magazine's budget through an Every Home Plan that subsidizes subscriptions.

The editor consulted the executive committee of the 12-member board of *Canadian Mennonite* which, after discussing the issue in a meeting in Winnipeg in October, moved to "support the editor's desire to make our readers aware of the CRA auditor's recent reminder letter about the law regarding political advocacy and how that letter has affected the publication."

Benner has also been consulting others in what he calls a "leadership circle," including representatives of Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Central Committee (Ottawa and Winnipeg) and legal representatives knowledgeable of the CRA tax laws. ✎

Carl DeGurse is vice-chair of the Board of Directors of Canadian Mennonite.

Canadian Mennonite warned of political activities

BY CARL DEGURSE

A federal government Agency has warned *Canadian Mennonite* about publishing material that could rally its readers to oppose specific politicians and political parties. A letter to the magazine from Canada Revenue says: "It has come to our attention that recent issues . . . have contained editorials and/or articles that



appear to promote opposition to a political party, or to candidates for public office."

The letter from Paul E. Fournier, office audit officer, reminded the magazine of "the limitations imposed on registered charities regarding partisan activities," citing subsections under the Income Tax Act and its Regulations that speak to rules around "political advocacy."

"Under the Act, charities are allowed to engage in some political activities, but are prohibited from engaging in partisan political activities."

Although the registered letter was delivered July 23, the decision to report its contents to *Canadian Mennonite* readers was delayed until the matter was discussed at the semi-annual meeting of the magazine board's executive on Oct. 13.

No specific editorials or articles were cited in the letter, and Dick Benner, *Canadian Mennonite* editor and publisher, said he phoned Fournier and asked for specific citations. Four days later, in a second conversation with Benner, Fournier cited two editorials and four

articles appearing in the Young Voices section of the paper:

An editorial by Benner called readers to "Vote your Core Beliefs" (April 18, 2011). "While we won't endorse candidates of the five political parties in the upcoming election, or tell you how to vote, we do ask you as Mennonite voters to

both examine the political views and voting records of candidates regarding our deeply held core beliefs in peace-making, compassion for the poor and care for creation before placing your ballot in the ballot box."

In another editorial, titled "A Political Lament" (May 16, 2011), Benner wrote that he was "intrigued and saddened by two political events of the past ten days in two North American countries—the take-out of Osama bin Laden by the U.S. military and the take-over by a militaristic Conservative majority government in Monday's election in Canada."

The Young Voices articles cited were entitled "Political Issues for a young electorate," (Oct. 3, 2011) by Aaron Epp, "Jack Layton inspires young people to vote for change," (Sept. 19, 2011) by Rachel Bergen, "Planes for Peace," (Aug. 1, 2011) by Emily Loewen, and "MCC calls on feds to seriously rethink Bill C-10," (Nov. 14, 2011) by Rachel Bergen.

The section of the Income Tax Act to which Fournier refers says, in part, that a

Timber Bay Children's Home being considered for list

BY KARIN FEHDERAU

Saskatchewan Correspondent

SASKATOON

During the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings throughout Saskatchewan, Mennonites watched and listened to the stories about residential school dysfunction. But Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan (MCC Sask) staff had concerns of their own to consider. Although not involved in a church-based school, MCC, through one of their constituent supporters, did lend support to a home where First Nations children were cared for and where some abuse did take place.

The Timber Bay Children's Home (also known as the Montreal Lake Children's Home) was managed by the Brethren in Christ conference and many Mennonite Church Saskatchewan congregations helped out by sending meat, vegetables and clothing to help care for the First Nations children who lived there between 1969 and 1993. After the Brethren in Christ denomination took over the management of the home in 1969, MCC also helped out by providing paid workers for the home for 16 years, ending their involvement in 1989.

"MCC sent staff to serve in a variety of positions, for example, nurses and dorm staff," said Leonard Doell, Aboriginal Neighbours Coordinator.

Melita Penner, from First Mennonite Church Saskatoon, travelled up to the home to help. "Clothes offered by Mennonites were appreciated because they had been mended," she said. Penner disagrees with the belief that children were brought there against their will. "People need to know it was a voluntary thing," she said.

According to Brethren in Christ spokesperson Leonard Chester, the home was started when native families began approaching missionaries from the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission who worked in the area to ask if they could care for their children. The families in the area lived on trap lines and the federal government was

insisting that their children be sent to a school. Eventually, the Children's Home was built and the children were sent there to live while they attended the local public school.

"It was not like a residential school where children were forced to leave their parents," he said.

Marg Hein-Wiebe, who sat on the board of the home, agrees. "As far as we know, children were not forced to go" she said. As a board member for MCC Sask, Hein-Wiebe attended the TRC hearings in Lac LaRonge with MCC Sask director Claire Ewert Fisher to hear what stories about the home might come forth.

"We sent letters to four of the bands in Northern Saskatchewan where we thought there might be descendants of those students," said Ewert Fisher. The letters invited former students to tell their stories.

They heard both positive and negative comments. During a break, one First Nations woman confided to Hein-Wiebe that she had enjoyed being at the home as a child. One man, who spoke from prison, spoke about being hit with a stick and slapped in the mouth and also referred to his years at the Home as, "the beginning of his institutionalized life."

For her part, Hein-Wiebe struggles to reconcile how something so good went wrong. "People that worked there poured their lives into that home," she said. "Negative things did happen, that's the part we have to deal with."

"Things went very wrong, whether it was children or staff," she said, noting that in the later years, the staff was not prepared to handle the number of children sent to the home by Social Services, nor did they have the proper training.

Although the Children's Home was not a residential school, the Lac LaRonge Indian Band is trying, through legal means, to have the Timber Bay home added to the list of residential schools. For those who lived in these homes, however, there was still a loss of culture and language, said Doell. ❧



Carrie Martens has volunteered over 100 hours at the Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre. She is helping to sort and catalogue the generous collection of books and DVDs donated by the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Resource Centre in Kitchener, Ont., after it closed recently. Martens previously worked in the bookstore of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary when she studied there for her Masters of Divinity. "Volunteers are special," says Resource Centre Director Arlyn Friesen Epp. Circulation keeps growing and volunteers relieve some of the backlog.

Who can afford time off?

Pastors plan for sabbaticals

DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONTARIO

Sharon and Rudy Dirks came back from their sabbatical to the Niagara United Mennonite Church changed. Focusing on a “Pilgrimage of sabbath practice,” they took four months to explore what it means to “keep the sabbath.” (see page 19) Theirs was the first sabbatical of any pastor in NUMC’s 73 years of existence.

They came back with new patterns, praying morning and evening regularly, Saturday evening “Sabbath Faspas” (light meals) to enter into the coming day of worship similar to the pattern of Jews on Friday evenings, and the knowledge of the need for daily, weekly, yearly and lifetime Sabbaths, thinking of old age as a God-

generated time of rest from life’s labours.

The Dirks led a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) seminar for pastors on October 10, planning for and discussing the reasons for sabbaticals—sabbaths in the work life. “The difference between a holiday and a sabbatical is intention,” they said. If we vacation we “vacate,” while if we sabbath we are intending to look for and meet God in our time away.

Planning for a sabbatical should begin up to two years before the actual time away, including plans for what will be done or not done, how the congregation will be cared for, what can be afforded in time, money and energy. One participant with young children grieved that she would have a hard time to sabbath with the children’s needs, and another at the high cost of a potential mission trip. Ruth Boehm, a participant via internet from Faith Mennonite Church in Leamington said, “What you can afford is the perfect sabbatical for you.” She too has parenting responsibilities and plans for day retreats while school is on.

Many pastors in MC Eastern Canada “earn” weeks of sabbatical year by year

to be used after a certain time of service. Some congregations pay 35 percent of salary, with an MCEC fund paying 35 percent and the pastor the final 30 percent. Other congregations state in the memo of understanding that they will pay the pastor’s whole salary during their absence.

MC Eastern Canada has been asking pastors to submit careful plans for the sabbatical, outlining rest, learning and service plans, as well as hopes both for what the pastor will learn, and how the sabbatical will benefit the congregation. The Dirks noted that not only they changed. The congregation realized that they have gifts and abilities and are not as dependant upon the pastor as they thought. Rudy has not re-assumed the leadership of the Spiritual Council on his return, depending on a lay leader instead.

The seminar’s conversation ended with a discussion of the great need in our society, and perhaps in particular among Mennonites, to slow down, be intentional about life, and look for connections with God. ☸



(From left) Lloyd Oakey, Jim Brown, Wendy Janzen, Rudy Dirks, and Sharon Dirks discuss “Meaningful sabbaticals” at the Oct. 10 MC Eastern Canada seminar.

Sabbatical pilgrimage brings Sabbath rest

BY RUDY AND SHARON DIRKS

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

David Benner has said that “The pilgrim’s journey is both the means and the end. . . . Pilgrims quickly come to appreciate that the journey is itself transformational when it is taken with prayerful openness to God.” We called our winter of 2012 sabbatical “A pilgrimage of Sabbath rest” and are forever changed by that experience.

Starting with a three-day silent retreat at the Ignatius Centre of Spirituality in Guelph, Ont., we began to unwind and centre more fully on God and to let all the other “stuff” that is normally in our spirits settle down. We each met with a spiritual director and had time for reflection, prayer, worship, rest and exercise. We ate healthy meals in silence in their dining room with 25 others who had been in silence for several weeks. On another weekend, our children and their spouses joined us for the centre’s Taizé Advent retreat. This meaningful time was our Christmas gift to them before we left on our journey.

Before leaving, we spent a weekend with a Messianic Jewish community in Brooklyn, NY. It was a blessing to experience the power of praying the ancient prayers of God’s people in Christian community



In the high plateau of New Mexico, Sharon and Rudy Dirks discovered these large radio telescopes designed to listen to the universe. They believe this is an image of what they learned on their sabbatical—to rest quietly and patiently listen to God.

and participate in Sabbath.

We packed up our car and the little trailer that Rudy built for this excursion and took off. Through a snowstorm in New Mexico, we arrived at the Monastery of Christ in the Desert. Twenty kilometres off the road, and entirely off the grid, we found our way to the breathtaking beauty of this amazing place. Nestled within a towering canyon, we were delighted by the beauty of it all. Rising at 4 a.m. daily for two weeks, we joined the monks in their prayers as they sang the psalms in Gregorian chant, and then participated six more times in daily scheduled prayer times. We were so moved by the beauty and solemn joyfulness of this place.

Over Christmas we were in Arizona, camping and hiking in the beautiful mountains near Phoenix as we continued to pray the psalms and have extended times of silence and just resting in the presence of Jesus.

At Little Portion Hermitage in Arkansas with the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, we lived for one month as monastic volunteers. This is an integrated community of celibate men and women, other single people and married people with families who order their lives after the Rule of St. Benedict. It was hard, physical work on their farm, but rewarding to participate in another community who worshiped the Lord so passionately, and made prayer the first priority over work. We loved their times of prayer, their sharing from the word, and their lively times of worship. Again Christ’s presence was so real there.

The final part of our pilgrimage began with our friends’ cottage in Florida. It was a place to rest a bit, bike a lot, walk the beach, and practice the presence of Jesus through prayer. We put together a book of pictures with the photos we had been taking. It was a prayerful experience to capture this amazing pilgrimage in the form of a collection of meaningful images.



Sharon and Rudy Dirks are ready to set off. Their camper trailer, large enough to carry all they needed yet compact enough to tow behind the car, represents their pilgrimage.

At this part of the pilgrimage there were seemingly random experiences like the time we walked into a Baptist church and the pastor happened to be speaking on “Silence, Solitude and Simplicity.” He said he had never preached on anything like that before, but felt it was an important message for the church. This was an affirmation for us and our journey and he had some wonderful insights. At another church, the pastor asked any visiting pastors (how random is that?) to come forward for prayer. He prayed beautiful words over us, thanking us for our participation in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and prayed for us to experience God’s Sabbath rest. We were so touched! And the congregation was amazing to us. One woman leaned over and gave us some money as a symbol of blessing. While on a hike we met another couple who were so intrigued with our journey. Before we knew it, we were praying together right there by the seashore!

A precious image we’d like to leave with you is the image of the VLA (Very Large Array) radio telescopes which we saw in the high plateaus of New Mexico. These telescopes are oriented towards the heavens, just listening. We stopped and watched them for a long time as we pondered the beautiful image they are of our own ideal orientation towards God—waiting and listening.

We’ve come back to life as it was before. But since this remarkable experience, we trust that we are transformed people and that God’s rest and peace continue to grow in us. 卐

CMU receives Winnipeg CBC music collection

AARON EPP

Canadian Mennonite University
WINNIPEG

Canadian Mennonite University recently acquired a large donation from the Winnipeg CBC's music library, including 20,000 classical and jazz CDs. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation donated the CDs to CMU's music program. As part of the agreement, CMU will make the collection available to other educational institutions.

Vic Froese, CMU Library Director, looks forward to reviewing the full collection. "It more or less increases our existing CD collection by ten times, so it's an enormous donation," says Froese. "We're very happy to have it."

Among those benefitting from the donation are the many music students who

use the library's CDs for their music listening requirements as part of their course work. CMU School of Music faculty and members of CMU's choirs and ensembles will undoubtedly also be among the many Library users who will appreciate this treasure trove of classical and jazz music.

"We're happy that we can not only serve our CMU School of Music with this collection, but also the broader community," says Froese. "Members of the public are welcome to use our library, and they can check out these CDs for seven days at a time."

As part of a process it began in 2009 to digitize its entire music library, the CBC has been selling or donating CDs and

albums to a variety of organizations.

For the present, due to a lack of library space at CMU, the CBC collection of CDs are temporarily in storage. In June 2012, CMU announced an \$11-million capital project to construct a new Library and Learning Commons. Shelving space for CMU's CD collections will be incorporated into plans for the new library.

In the meantime, now that cataloguing is completed for the books and DVDs that were part of the CBC donation, cataloguing the CDs is the next phase, a process that will take thousands of hours. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

CMU's capital campaign passes half-way mark

Winnipeg, Man.—With the backing of friends and supporters Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) is kicking off the public phase of a major capital campaign to construct a new library and learning commons and pedestrian bridge. "We are excited to announce campaign progress to date of over \$5.5-million in support of this campaign," says campaign chair Elmer Hildebrand. The Library will act as a learning commons at the heart and centre of CMU's Shaftesbury campus, offering high quality services, important resources, and spacious new study areas. The facility will include mezzanine study rooms and a commons meeting area and will house the University's substantial library collections. In addition, the new building will host a bookstore and resource centre and a vibrant café, providing the broader community with access to a fine array of resource materials and a forum for engaging dialogue. One highly visible part of the project is construction of a pedestrian bridge to span Grant Avenue, connecting the two sides of CMU's Shaftesbury campus and providing safe passage across the busy thoroughfare. The bridge will signal the presence of CMU as an institution that connects people to one another.

—Canadian Mennonite University



CMU's Vic Froese, Wes Bergen, and John Dyck display a few items from the library's recently acquired donation of CBC music library CDs.

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/// Briefly noted

Pastoral Changes at MC Sask

Five different congregations in MC Saskatchewan have new people in leadership. Ken Bechtel will be serving at Carrot River Mennonite in an interim position. Chad Doell has accepted a leadership role at Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite, a small conference of churches located in Glenbush, Mayfair and Rabbit Lake. Joe Heikman is the new pastor at Wildwood Mennonite. Ben Pauls transferred to Zoar Mennonite church in Waldheim and Josh Wallace has begun as the new pastor at Warman Mennonite church.

—KARIN FEHDERAU

/// Briefly noted

New principal for Rosthern Junior College.

Jim Epp has been named as acting principal at Rosthern Junior College (RJC) for the 2012-2013 school year. Lloyd Schmidt



and Ryan Wood will be sharing the position of acting vice-principal. Former principal, Gail Schellenberg, moved to a position with the Ministry of Education in early July, said board chair Geraldine Balzer. Epp's appointment will give the board time to find a replacement for Schellenberg. Jim Epp began at RJC as a dean in 1986, and served in that capacity for three years. Since 1987, he has been teaching history, psychology and Christian Ethics.

—KARIN FEHDERAU

/// Briefly noted

Saskatchewan women called to rest and renewal

Approximately 50 women gathered in the Shekinah Retreat Centre's Timber Lodge, near Waldheim, on Oct. 19 and 20 for the annual fall retreat of Saskatchewan Women in Mission. Dora Dueck, author and historian from Winnipeg, was the guest speaker. From the intertwining stories of Jesus healing the hemorrhaging woman and reviving a twelve-year old girl, she demonstrated both God's call and our need to rest and to be renewed. Relating this to our own lives, Dueck said, "Rest settles the past, renewal embraces the future." A highlight later on Friday evening was the discussion of Dora Dueck's prize winning novel, *This Hidden Thing*. At the request of Lavonne Dyck, discussion leader, Dueck, read several excerpts from her book. During free time, the women enjoyed browsing and buying crafts from three craft exhibits: Lois Siemens's calligraphy, Barbara Schmidt's felt and angora knitting, and Dora Wiebe's quilts from fun fur. Nola Scofield was present to give mini-massages and Dory Isaac of Saskatoon, brought Ten Thousand Villages items to sell. Spiritual refreshment through prayers, candle-lighting and a communion service completed the women's time together on Saturday afternoon.

—NAOMI UNGER

PHOTO: DORA DUECK



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GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO



The Frey Yoder family, from left to right: Deborah, Nancy, Jeremiah and Bruce.

New assignment in Burkina Faso

Mennonite Church Canada

Nancy Frey and Bruce Yoder are building a new home in Burkina Faso with their children Jeremiah and Deborah. In the capital city of Ouagadougou, the Frey Yoders connect with and help support the *Foyer Evangélique Mennonite de Ouagadougou* (FEMO), a congregation primarily comprised of young adult university students, 24 of whom live in the FEMO residence. Until 2011, FEMO was served by Tany and the late Jeff Warkentin, of Springridge, Alberta. The Warkentins were called by the Burkina Mennonite Church to the specific ministry of serving Mennonite university students who had to leave their home villages to study in the capital city.

“[The students] are a talented and energetic group and actively engaged in the ministries of the church. We feel privileged to be walking alongside such a gifted and committed group of future Christian leaders!” writes Frey in her most recent prayer letter.

In addition to their work with the Mennonite Church in Burkina Faso, both Frey and Yoder teach intensive seminars at Benin Bible Institute in the neighbouring country of Benin. Nancy Frey’s home

church is St. Jacobs Mennonite Church (St. Jacobs, Ont.), while Bruce hails from Martinsburg Mennonite Church in Martinsburg, PA.

Burkina Faso is also served by Lillian and

/// Briefly noted

Sandy hurts Haiti

MCC will distribute relief kits to people affected by flooding caused by Hurricane Sandy. Although the hurricane did not hit the island, it caused three days of steady rain which uprooted some people who are still living in tents after the 2010 earthquake. MCC had prepositioned supplies there for the hurricane season. Other responses are also being considered.

—Mennonite Central Committee Canada

Norm Nicolson, Mennonite Church Canada workers who are currently in Canada and will return to Burkina later this year. Lillian transforms oral language into written language to facilitate Bible teaching, while Norm provides technical expertise and trains local technicians for work in entrepreneurial vocational trades and radio ministry—the most popular and accessible form of communication in this oral culture.

The Frey Yoders are Mennonite Church Canada partners through Mennonite Mission Network. For up-to-date news from the Frey Yoder family, follow their blog at freynyoder.wordpress.com. ///

/// Briefly noted

East Africans appoint new mission board

NAIROBI, Kenya—Mennonite bishops from Kenya and Tanzania formed a mission board during their annual meeting, held in August at the Mennonite Guest House. “We are no longer churches which just receive missionaries, but churches which send missionaries,” the church leaders stated. The new mission board, named International Mennonite Mission of East Africa, or IMMEA, reflects the bishops’ conviction that East Africans have what it takes to do missions on their continent. To stimulate passion for missions, the leaders are introducing the concept of a “Year of Service for Christ” into their churches, with a goal to train 100 people as disciple-makers by the end of 2013. A committee of three—Bishop Philip Okeyo and Pastor Rebecca Osiro of Kenya Mennonite Church, and Bishop Christopher Ndege of Tanzania Mennonite Church—will take responsibility for the ongoing development of IMMEA. Both churches are members of Mennonite World Conference.

—From EMM release by Debbi DiGennaro

PHOTO BY ZION DIGENARO



Bishop Philip Okeyo, president of IMMEA

COVER STORY

Quakers distribute food in Zimbabwe

BY JOHN SCHMID

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

In 1999 my wife Kelitha and I moved from the United Kingdom to Zimbabwe. I had retired, and as Kelitha was born in Matabeleland South where her mother still lives, we decided to settle in Bulawayo. From there we can keep an eye on the old lady.

In 2002 there was a severe drought. The land invasions had already driven away many productive farmers whose work had made this country the bread basket of the region. Our silos and shops were empty of cornmeal, the staple diet, and hunger was stalking the land. When we attended the Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Southern Africa, Friends were concerned about the effects of the drought and asked us to collect funds from Quakers worldwide so that we could purchase and distribute food where the need was greatest. We opened an account in neighbouring Botswana where the money was safe from Zimbabwe's galloping inflation and from where we could import the cornmeal (known here as maize meal).

In the intervening 10 years we have served 16 villages with about 3,200 households whenever there are drought conditions, provided we have sufficient funds. We hire an eight-ton truck, load it with cornmeal, and distribute 25 kg to each household in a given village. The lists of households are compiled by the local sub-chiefs. Kelitha accompanies the truck on every trip to ensure that all households are served and ticked on the list. To date she has distributed nearly 700 tons of cornmeal.

My jobs include purchasing the cornmeal, organising storage, hiring the truck, banking, and keeping the account books which are audited annually. Our bank account is still in Botswana, but we now have collectors in the U.S., Ireland, Australia, the UK and South Africa, who deal with individual donations and forward the funds when required.

As we are only two, we are concentrating our efforts on cornmeal, the food most wanted by the people, and we help villages which are a reasonable distance from Bulawayo (between 90 and 200 kms). This leaves out another 100 villages in Matabeleland South alone, all in dire need at present. The 25 kg which we give to each household, one, two or three times a year, is little enough but we have neither the funds nor the manpower to help others in need. Sadly, we have to accept our limitations, but we regard it as a privilege to be able to help at least some people.

Our program is called Zimbabwe Food Relief Action (ZFRA). The word Action makes it clear that we have no constitution and no endless meetings: we just take action on the ground. But we do report to every Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Southern Africa.

Although this is a Quaker project, help has come from other sources as well. The largest ever single donation came from the Mennonite Foundation in Goshen, Indiana, which had received an anonymous earmarked legacy. We have also received, for two years running, the proceeds of a Christmas collection at Grace Mennonite Church in Pandora, Ohio, where personal

friends of ours minister.

Another link with Mennonites is that Matabeleland South is the heartland of the Brethren in Christ population of Zimbabwe, and when the Mennonite World Conference was held in Bulawayo in 2003, hundreds of Brethren from our rural area attended the meetings.

Meanwhile you have probably asked yourself why this food relief is still needed and how much longer it will have to go on. I can identify several factors which led to this problem. First, the recurring droughts, made worse by a growing population on marginal land, by deforestation, and by global warming. Secondly, the impoverishment of the rural population during the years of hyper inflation, during which we knocked off an unbelievable 25 zeros from our currency before adopting the U.S. dollar in 2009.

Thirdly, our silos are still empty because the government is broke. Yes, we have found diamonds, but they are exploited by the ruling elite and exported without benefit to the state. As for outside help, the World Food Program estimates that 1.6 million Zimbabweans are in need of food aid which could cost 119 million U.S. dollars, but so far WFP has only been able to raise 34 million! Given these factors, our help will probably still be needed for some years.

More information stories and pictures are available at www.zfra.org, or contact David Gerhan, treasurer, c/o Schenectady Quaker Meeting, PO Box 638, Schenectady, NY 12301. ❧

John Schmid is the treasurer of Bulawayo Quaker Meeting.



Zimbabwe villagers return to their homes after receiving maize meal from Zimbabwe Food Relief Action in 2010

Alcohol addiction the new 'tobacco'

By DICK BENNER,

Editor/publisher
WATERLOO, ONT.

Alcohol addiction is the new tobacco, Ann Dowsett Johnston told some 350 diners at the annual House of Friendship fundraising banquet on Oct. 26. "And it took us 30 years to come to grips with that."

"The stigma of alcohol addiction silences us as women," she said, focusing on the addiction of women rather than men because research shows that women are more susceptible to the risks of alcohol. Dowsett Johnston, who as a journalist and past vice-president at McGill University, has spent the last 18 months studying the affects of alcohol on women as part of an Atkinson Fellowship grant, said that women's metabolism does not absorb alcohol as well as men and that while men are slowing down their drinking, women are increasing theirs.

Women have more fat in their bodily structure than men and thus less capacity to dilute the alcohol, as well as fewer metabolizing enzymes than men. More of the alcohol enters women's bloodstreams than men. Alcohol consumption, overall, is more risky for women when it comes to strokes, heart attacks, cancers, liver diseases and others.

It is especially risky for younger women because their bodily development is not fully formed until about age 25.

Socially, we think that alcohol abuse is relegated to the homeless, to skid-row, even, God forbid, mostly to aboriginal women and we don't tell the truth about our own consumption. "Seldom do we think it might be a problem of our mother," she said. And when asked, in research questions, how much the average educated, higher-income person consumes, we seldom tell the truth.

"We so don't tell the truth," she elaborated, "that we might as well pour seven out of 10 bottles right down the drain—that's how far off we are in acknowledging the abuse." She said that the threshold for abuse is four drinks at one sitting for women and five drinks for men. At that level, the effects of drinking begin to show up in domestic abuse and other social and health ills that are increasing in Canadian society.

"This is a global trend: the richer a country, the fewer abstainers, the more women drink, and the smaller the gap between men and women." Dorsett Johnson

quoted Jürgen Rehm, director of social and epidemiological research at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, as saying "A lot of hospital waiting lists would not exist if we eliminated alcohol in our society." Women, too, are also largely ignorant of the connection between alcohol and breast and colorectal cancers. She cited a recent British medical study that says alcohol is responsible for every one in ten men and one in 33 for women as to the cause for cancer.

Further, since women entered the work force in greater numbers since the late 1970s, they are drinking to keep up with their male counterparts; so much so that they began to be labelled as "weekend warriors," in that they worked hard all week and then "blacked out" with alcohol over the weekend to absorb the pressures. Women are drinking harder alcohol, including vodka, while men have gone more toward beer-drinking.

Compounding the problem, she said, is the increased marketing to women by the seven big multi-national alcohol companies, comprising \$19.9 billion in annual sales, and what she calls the "feminization of the LCBO (Liquor Control Board)"—using colours such as pink in the imaging, the emphasis on wine and pink lemonade.

The spirit industry became major sponsors of sporting events, so that on university campuses, beer and wine became associated with football, fun and social time as recreation. Young people who use drink to socialize become "brand loyal"—just what the industry wants and promotes.

As a culture, we don't really know what to do about this phenomenon. She says we need new public policies regarding alcohol abuse, something that is not now top of mind with politicians. There is still the illusion, she insists, that our most pressing problem is illicit drugs, which is only half as severe as alcohol abuse.

One government insider, she said, observes that the Harper government has "no political will to do anything about alcohol; it is still stuck in the illusion that 'drugs' are our most pressing problem as a country'.

Canada's alcohol abuse is 50 percent above the world average, she said, with the Waterloo Region having the highest alcohol consumption rate of all the provinces—an



The new "Under One Roof" House of Friendship facility for addictions is a building to be renovated at 71 Ann Street, Kitchener, where the footprint of the building will be maintained, while the existing second floor will be extended across the entire building, adding 2,500 sq. ft., to the current 12,000 sq. ft.—a \$2 million project.

area known for the most highly educated and highest income population.

Dowsett Johnston says the only solution is to get behind community programs

such as House of Friendship which has launched a residential addiction treatment program for women, one of only eight of its kind in Ontario. The program will bring all

of Friendship's programs under one roof, where women can build their recovery, improve their health and strengthen relationships with their children and families. ❧



(From left): Judy Squires, Eric Squires, Glenn Buck (MDS Ontario chair), Janet Plenert (MDS Region V manager), and Vic Hamm (MDS Region V chair) visit over dessert at an MDS fundraiser at Breslau Mennonite Church.

MDS supported by wide variety of Mennonite groups

DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent
BRESLAU, ONT.

Eric Squires, pastor of St. Peter's Anglican Church in Catalina, Newfoundland, when Hurricane Igor swept through with destructive winds and rain gave a report to a Mennonite Disaster Service fundraiser at Breslau Mennonite Church, near Kitchener, Ont., on Oct. 20. MDS built or repaired a number of homes on the Bonavista Peninsula. The evening also included reports by Vic Hamm, chair of MDS Region V (Canada), Glenn Buck, MDS Ontario chair, Esther Buck and Janet Plenert, MDS Region V (Canada) manager.

As the "new kid on the block," Plenert focused on what she has learned in the months since taking over as manager of MDS Region V (Canada). Key points included that MDS includes more different Mennonite groups than even Mennonite Central Committee, and that MDS is part of the body of Christ, "Responding, rebuilding, restoring," bringing hope to those who fall through the cracks of insurance and government help, praying, listening and "nurturing faith, hope, and wholeness." ❧



Orlan Martin hands out shears to Ivan Unger (left) and Palmer Becker at the Oct. 20 MDS fundraiser. The shears were given to MDS by MCC Ontario when they cleared out the building at 50 Kent Avenue.

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- HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR TO EUROPE (May 24-June 6/2013)
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- HOLY LAND TOUR WITH TRACY SPROAT (Mar 13-21/2013)

ISRAEL/PALESTINE WITH PASTOR PHIL WAGLER

- (April 16-25/2013)

- LANDS OF THE BIBLE WITH PASTORS SEBASTIAN & CAREY MEADOWS-HELMER (April 28-May 7/2013)
 - EXPLORE THE WORLD OF PAUL WITH TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17/2013)
 - FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF MOSES WITH PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31/2013)
 - BEHIND THE VEIL: EXPERIENCING EGYPT (Oct 17-28/2013)
 - ISRAEL/PALESTINE WITH PASTOR RICH BUCHER (Nov 5-14/2013)
 - ISRAEL/PALESTINE WITH PASTOR DAVID BOSHAUT (April 24-May 3/2014)
 - FROM NAZARETH TO ROME WITH PASTOR JIM BROWN (Nov 3-15/2014)
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 - GREAT TREK TOUR WITH JOHN SHARP (May 7-18/2013)
 - EUROPEAN HERITAGE WITH JOHN RUTH (June 6-19/2013)
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 - EXPLORE SOUTH AMERICA (March 15-27/2014)
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Storytelling event brings hope

Three veteran workers honoured

STORY AND PHOTO BY KARIN FEHDERAU

Saskatchewan Correspondent
WALDHEIM, SASK.

When Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Restorative Justice staff met for their annual meeting at the Shekinah Retreat Centre in October, they wanted to take time to honour those who had put in their time, laying the groundwork for future generations of restorative justice workers.

Critics of the Canada's omnibus crime bill have suggested that opportunities for restorative justice will be reduced. Recent government announcements that funding for part-time chaplains will be cut also adds to concerns about the future of

restorative justice.

Against that backdrop, inviting Saskatchewan Mennonites to an evening of storytelling with three seasoned veterans was especially well-timed. But none of those present were affected by politics. They simply came to share their heart for people.

Dale Schiele recently retired after 31 years as director of Person-to-Person prison ministry. Wilma Derksen worked for 13 years with MCC's Victim's Voice program and Helmut Isaac helped manage the Saskatoon office of Restorative

Justice Ministries Saskatchewan (RJMS) after losing part of an arm in a farming accident. All three spoke from their own experience.

Schiele shared about his many run-ins with security officers over the years and how his level of comfort in dealing with conflict improved because of his job.

"Restorative justice helped me to understand God," he said. From a personal perspective, "I dealt with break-and-enter and stolen bikes differently [at my house] because of my experience with restorative justice."

In his role, Isaac would often walk through the poorest parts of the city, sometimes with his children in tow talking with the people that he saw. One day, the question was asked, "Do you know that guy?"

It's an important question, said Isaac. "We've got to know the people we want to help; know them better than the CSC (Corrections Services Canada) worker." To help the volunteers who visit prisoners, Isaac recommends Rudy Wiebe's book *Stolen Life* to help them understand what went wrong. "My hope for the future is we can continue to call people down from the tree so we can come over to their house for supper," he said.

For her part, Derksen looks at restorative justice from a different perspective. She worked at how victims fit into restorative justice. From a victim's point of view, it may seem as though everyone is concerned about the person responsible for the crime.

"Restorative justice is too offender oriented," she said. Through her work in victim services, she came to see a lot of anger and how the word "forgiveness" was rejected by many victims. It made them angry. Rather than speak it, Derksen says she tried to define it by how she lived. In hindsight, she voiced regrets about that. "I wasn't forceful enough to say, in my work with victims, that forgiveness was important," she said.

Having worked with victims of crime, Derksen has also seen how prisoners are treated and believes things need to change. "We need prison reform," she said.

Celebrating what has worked in the past with an eye to changing what hasn't worked is a good formula for finding hope. ❧



Stephen Siemens listens as Dale Schiele talks about his experiences with Person-to-Person prison ministry.

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New director for Person-to-Person

By **KARIN FEHDERAU**
Saskatchewan Correspondent
PRINCE ALBERT, SASK.

Sandra Hainstock-White is the new director for the Person-to-Person prison visitation program under the umbrella of Restorative Justice Ministries Saskatchewan (RJMS), a program partly funded by contributions from Mennonite Church Saskatchewan churches.

Hainstock-White, who recently completed her sociology degree, first heard about restorative justice in a sociology class. "I've always believed in it, but I didn't have a name for it," she explained.

Her role will involve making sure clear communication flows to and from staff at the penitentiary and coordinating visits between volunteers and the prisoners. Visits for prisoners are very important, said former director Dale Schiele, and a good way for them to develop healthy and safe relationships with people beyond the walls of the institution.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) which helps released prisoners, usually sex offenders, make a smooth transition back into society will also be part of her job.

She will also fulfil a number of speaking engagements as she will be representing Person-to-Person (P2P) in various churches.

Long-term volunteer, Ed Olfert, has worked with her for the past two years in her role as the CoSA Coordinator. "She is a woman of some passion; she is pretty new to Restorative Justice but has grown so much in confidence," he said.

There has been concern and uncertainty in recent months about federal involvement in the program. A staff oversight in April resulted in a loss of funding, leaving the previous director to work without pay over the summer. After much wrangling with officials, said Olfert, the funding was reinstated for November. But then the news came that everything would change at the end of March and funding would

be completely stopped. "We're in a crisis state," said Olfert.

Despite all that, Hainstock-White is hopeful that the group will be able to find other avenues of support for Person to Person.

In recent years, MC Sask has been forced to reduce its support of the program and other denominations have been invited into the circle to participate.

At the present time, MC Sask contributions make up about 40 percent of their budget, said Ken Warkentin, financial chair for the executive. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF SANDRA HAINSTOCK-WHITE



Sandra Hainstock-White stands in front of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa during an annual gathering of Circles of Support and Accountability workers.



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Healing Pole journey

Interactive carving has involved hundreds

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

A literal “hands-on” totem pole project is helping to break down barriers between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in B.C. while bringing healing for the hurts committed years ago in Native residential schools.

The Residential School Healing Pole is travelling around the province under the sponsorship of Outreach Canada. Aboriginal elder and artist Isadore Charters is the main carver on the project, accompanied by Don Klaassen, church mission coach with Outreach Canada. Together the two are visiting various churches and community groups, inviting anyone who wishes to help carve on the pole.

The two men met three years ago when members of Klaassen’s home congregation, Sardis Community Church, wondered how they could more closely relate to the First Nations peoples in their community along the Vedder River. The church began reaching out and befriending the First Nations people, finding ways to overcome barriers between them.

At the same time, Charters was working through his own traumatic past. He says he was a happy little boy, hunting and fishing and living off the land with his people. Then he was taken from his family at age six and sent to the Kamloops Residential School, where he would spend eight years. Lonely and scared and separated from older siblings, Charters cried a lot a first, then learned to cope.

“After grade three or so, you grow a shell around your heart; you don’t cry as much,” he explains. “By fourth grade, just as I was going home for summer, I realized I’d changed.” His family also noticed the change, that he was never the same. “Part of the school took my voice and I couldn’t speak up for myself,” he says.

Charters says part of the indoctrination he received was that he would go to hell for one small sin, and he struggled to find how

God fit into his life. As a young adult, he felt very alone, but gave his life to the Lord at age 35.

The Healing Pole project came as a result of the interaction between the Sardis Community Church and their Aboriginal neighbours, including Charters. Charters realized he had to work through his past, and with his training in art found that carving a totem pole was therapeutic. He chose images with meaning from his past: a little bear to symbolize his childhood, a nurturing mother figure, a raccoon symbolizing Zorro, a Western hero who never killed Natives.

The wood he chose is yellow cedar. “When you take life off a tree [by cutting it], the life is gone. But then you put life back into it with a story,” he says. “Nobody will know your story unless you tell them.”

For his part, Klaassen has realized the importance of personal relations with

Aboriginal neighbours. “What we miss out on is the richness of these cultures and what they can do for us,” he says. “It really is possible for us to build relationships with the Aboriginal community. We will be enriched.”

So far hundreds of people have carved on the Healing Pole. It has been taken to Missions Fest in Vancouver, to the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly last summer, and to individual congregations such as Peace Mennonite in Richmond and Emmanuel Mennonite in Abbotsford.

Charters says he hopes to have the pole completed by January, at which time it will be painted and completed. It will appear at British Columbia’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission gathering in Vancouver in September 2013, a place for addressing the truth about what happened in Canadian residential schools from their beginning in the 1870s to their closing in 1996.

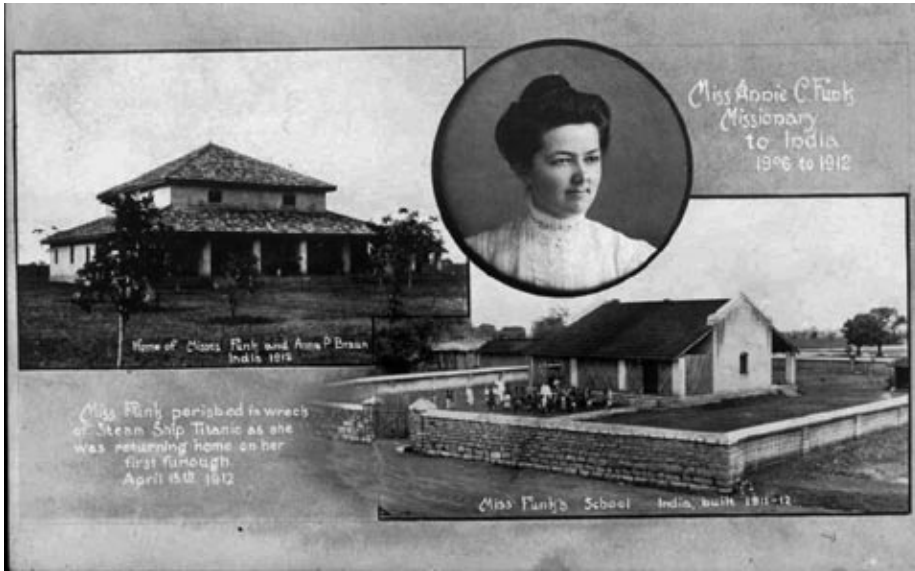
Klaassen and Charters are available for presentations in churches with the Healing Pole. Klaassen is coordinating arrangements for churches and agencies that would like to host the pole. He can be reached at 604 823 6909 or by e-mail at dklaassen@outreach.ca.



Isadore Charters, left, guides Sam Goertzen-Loeppky of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in carving on the Healing Pole. As volunteers help carve the pole, Charters shares stories of his boyhood experiences in an Aboriginal residential school.

GOD AT WORK IN US

MENNONITE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES PHOTO



This Annie C. Funk postcard was issued a couple years after her death in 1912.

First female Mennonite missionary went down with the Titanic

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU
Manitoba Correspondent

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic. Throughout this commemorative year there has been much in-depth coverage of the Titanic but a little-known part of that story will hold particular interest to Mennonite readers.

Among the more than 1,500 people who died in the icy Atlantic waters during the dark night of April 15, 1912, was Annie C. Funk. She was the first female missionary of the General Conference Mennonite Church returning home to southeastern Pennsylvania on her first furlough from India where she had been sent in 1906. She had celebrated her 38th birthday on the ship just two days before the Titanic hit an iceberg.

Annie had received an urgent telegram message from her family stating that her mother was very ill and that Annie should return home. The message said her passage for the trip was paid for. She left her work in Janjgir, India, travelling by train

and boat to England. She was to board the S.S. Haverford for the final leg of her journey back to America, but because of a coal strike the Haverford was delayed. She was guided to another ship, the Titanic, which would supposedly get her home "in record time." Annie paid the extra she needed for a second-class ticket and on April 10, 1912, "the largest, fastest, most luxurious ship ever built" steamed out of the harbour with Annie on board.

Annie grew up in Hereford General Conference Mennonite Church near Bally, Pa., where her father was a deacon. In 1899 the Hereford Church decided to add a new auditorium in preparation for the General Conference sessions. At those sessions the delegates listened to the urgent needs in India that had been ravaged by famine in 1896. It was at these 1899 sessions that the delegates agreed to begin mission work in India and formed a commission to send immediate emergency relief. Annie, home

from seminary and waiting for a call, must have been stirred by these stories of suffering.

Before she was called to India, Annie served in the African-American community in Chattanooga, Tennessee and with the Young Women's Christian Association in Paterson, New Jersey. In 1906, she volunteered to go to India. "Annie testified to her trust in God's care when she answered a friend who feared for her safety on her first transatlantic voyage: "Our heavenly Father is as near to us on sea as on land. My trust is in Him. I have no fear." (MC USA Historical Committee Archives)

After a year and a half in India, Annie founded a village school for girls in a mud hut and began her work as a teacher. The school initially had 17 students. In 1910 the school was able to move to a much more substantial building and over the next half-century more than 3500 girls attended. The school was later named the Annie C. Funk Memorial School. Only the outer walls survive today, with a small plaque describing her brief but extraordinary life and her tragic death.

When the Titanic struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic and began to sink, Annie was woken by stewards, dressed and went out on the deck. There were not enough lifeboats to accommodate all of the passengers. "Annie, according to a confirmed report, unselfishly relinquished her place in a lifeboat to a mother with children. When Annie's friends back in Pennsylvania heard of this incident they said, "It was just like Annie to do something like that." (Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online) She died in the sinking. Annie believed that the love that drew her to Christ would draw the people of Janjgir as well. A century later, she is remembered for her faith and what she has done. ❧



ARTBEAT

Reconciling our vision of holiness with the reality of sin

To See History Doxologically: History and Holiness in John Howard Yoder's Ecclesiology. J. Alexander Sider. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011.

REVIEW BY DAVID DRIEDGER

If the grim historical associations with words like “purity” and “cleansing” are any indication, then Sider is right to suggest that the church has had trouble reconciling the messiness of life with its concept of holiness. *To See History Doxologically* is a direct engagement with the tendency to sever holiness from the difficulty of life. Sider frames this question in the context of how we understand and tell our history.

The title of this book is taken directly from John Howard Yoder. Yoder is brought into conversation with a diverse range of thinkers including Oliver O'Donovan, Ernest Troelstch, and Miroslav Volf. In this conversation Sider attempts to tease out how the church is able to hold, with integrity, the fallibility of its past and present with the hope, witness, and work of the reconciling Jesus.

“To see history doxologically,” Yoder said, is to “describe the cosmos in terms dictated by the knowledge that a once slaughtered Lamb is now living” (137). Sider suggests that when we speak of our history and our present, the marks of the slaughter (the difficulty of life) are not erased, but must figure into our accounts and our actions as they lead into our revealed future.

Sider's criticism with the non-Yoderian accounts is that they tend to collapse either the vision of the resurrection or the reality of our sin. They make the church difficult but not holy, or holy but not difficult. Yoder's vision is an attempt to hold open the difficult (and as such vulnerable) work of patience that earnestly believes that all

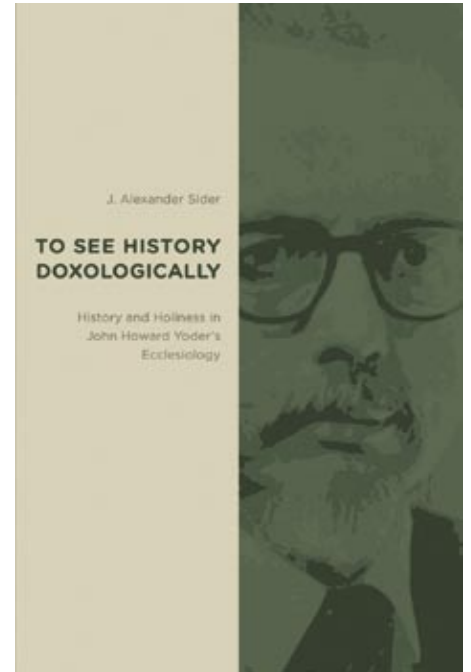
can be saved and reconciled. Sider spends the bulk of the book working through this image with his conversation partners.

Sider's concern with O'Donovan in chapter one is that O'Donovan's political theology becomes too closely linked to the idea of Jesus having fulfilled the political vision of Israel. The church then exists in this interim period, in which secular authorities are also called on to rule, with the church anticipating but not imitating what was and is to come.

With Troelstch, Sider addresses the role of history in understanding the tension between the contingent expressions and universal claims of the church. By maintaining an absolute “faith” in the value of Christianity, Troelstch ends up sealing off the church from its historical content and renders the church formally true but functionally or practically blank.

In chapter three, Sider questions whether Yoder himself was thoroughgoing enough in his vision. Sider criticizes Yoder's non-Constantinianism as being formed, at least in part, by a Constantinian method of history that assumes too much of history in its ability to be unified to address the present.

When addressing Volf, Sider raises concerns that Volf unhelpfully “purifies” the church by endorsing the need for individuals to temporarily forget or “non-remember” past sins until a final reconciliation. While understandable, this non-remembering of injustices becomes pre-emptive of what can be possible when our histories are



allowed into the doxological vision of the slain lamb who lives. In all these accounts the difficulty of life, as it is recounted and as it is lived, is deflected from the life of the church, as though God's call of holiness could not engage such messiness.

This book is a revision of Sider's PhD dissertation. It is a careful and dense body of work which has an awkward style at times. While it is clear at the beginning and end that Sider wants it to be accessible and relevant for the church, most of it is conceptually demanding and rigorously expressed (often with extended footnotes). This is not a criticism of what Sider wants to accomplish, only a note of caution for the reader.

In the end Sider calls the church to embrace holiness as difficulty. It will always be a temptation to either bemoan compromise (the loss of holiness) or attempt to purify any trace of the messiness of life. To hold open this difficult holiness calls for a particular kind of patience; to “keep your mind in hell and despair not” (202). This phrase, taken from Gillian Rose, reflects both the work and the openness necessary to navigate boundaries and allow them to dissolve and be re-enforced as the twin realities of life and holiness are taken up into the praise of Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. ☞

New generation of scholars refreshing John Howard Yoder theology

MennoMedia

John Howard Yoder was acclaimed as one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century. Now a new generation of scholars is making sure that his influence extends well into the 21st century as well.

“Yoder constantly surprises us by breathing fresh air into an amazingly diverse array of topics,” says John Nugent, professor of Old Testament at Great Lakes Christian College in Lansing, Michigan.

Nugent is one of three editors, all in their thirties, of *Challenge to the Church*, a new series of Yoder’s writings from Herald Press. The first volume, *Radical Christian Discipleship*, is one of two Yoder books from Herald Press this fall. *Things Hold Together: John Howard Yoder’s Trinitarian Theology of Culture* is by Branson L. Parler, professor of theological studies at Kuyper College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Things Hold Together and *Radical Christian Discipleship* are the ninth and tenth books by or about Yoder from Herald Press in the past decade. That people are still earnestly interested in Yoder, nearly a quarter century after his death, demonstrates that his theology is as relevant as ever.

“Evangelicals and post-evangelicals have recognized that wider society no longer supports Christian faith the way it formerly did,” said Nugent, who also edited *The End of Sacrifice: Capital Punishment Writings of John Howard Yoder*, published last year by Herald Press. “We feel like we need to respond to this change somehow. This has caused us to revisit the relationship between church and world.”

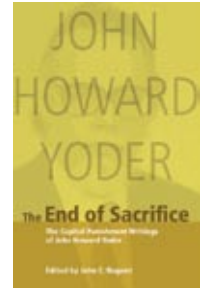
Yoder, while a Mennonite, is pertinent to a wide range of Christian expressions, says Andy Alexis-Baker, the third *Challenge to the Church* editor and the only Mennonite of the three. “He speaks scriptural language very well, which draws in evangelicals; he speaks radical critique well, which draws

in left-leaning people,” Alexis-Baker says.

The new series seeks to broaden Yoder’s appeal by presenting his theology in a less scholastic way. Both Nugent and Alexis-Baker were introduced to Yoder through Stanley Hauerwas, professor of theological ethics at Duke Divinity School. Nugent studied under Hauerwas at Duke and wrote his master’s thesis on Yoder. Alexis-Baker, now a doctoral student in systematic theology at Marquette University, learned of Yoder by reading Hauerwas as an undergraduate at Wheaton College. He subsequently joined the Mennonite Church.

“[Yoder] has a kind of straight-forwardness to his work that [students] find

**RADICAL
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John Howard Yoder



attractive in a world of ambivalence,” Hauerwas says. “That doesn’t mean they’re looking for simple solutions—John Yoder won’t give you simple solutions—but he’ll tell you straight forward what he thinks.”

He is gratified by the current level of interest in Yoder. “I think it promises well for the future,” Hauerwas says. ☼

A Peacemaker's Journey IN AFGHANISTAN

Making Friends among the Taliban

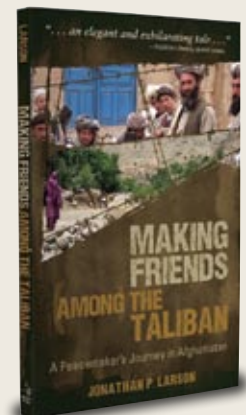
A Peacemaker's Journey in Afghanistan

by Jonathan P. Larson

Why would one man follow faith and calling into the political and religious maelstrom of Afghanistan, and—through four decades of war and strife—believe he could make a difference?

\$15.99 paper. Herald Press 2012.

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Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support launches video series

DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONTARIO

The Princess Twin Cinema in Uptown Waterloo was crowded with supporters and service users as the Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support (MCRS) launched a new video series under the title "Refugee Journal." Telling the stories of the

MCRS, its volunteers and of refugees who were allowed to stay, were deported, or still awaiting decisions, six short videos were shown on October 18.

The series, produced by Dave Klassen, videoed and edited by Dan Sherman, with original music written and performed by Ben Bolt-Martin, will eventually include 20 videos. At the launch, videos describing the larger work of MCRS and its volunteers were accompanied by one featuring Steven Schmidt a local lawyer who does much *pro bono* work for MCRS, helping refugee claimants to make their cases to stay in Canada.

More poignant was the video of a student from the Waterloo Collegiate Institute who had been deported back to her home country because it was deemed safe, even though she was returned to potential family and community violence. Good news stories included that of Noé Ishaka from the Congo who ended up at Floradale Mennonite Church, was accepted as a refugee claimant, found a wife, Angela Brubacher, and was present at the launch with their child Elijah. Another family present were the Torres family who were reunited in Canada, were accepted as refugees and now are productively contributing to the community.

A conversation with Eunice Valenzuela, the director of MCRS and herself a former refugee, and Schmidt focused on the sense that it is getting harder to be accepted as a refugee in Canada. With the removal of health care benefits, it is more difficult to wait while the claim is processed. Valenzuela noted that often the language used around refugees—queue jumpers, dangerous, lazy—builds a climate of fear around people who have left everything, including families, to try to find a safe place to begin again.

MCRS works with anyone who comes in the door to help them prepare their claim, often finding housing, emergency supplies and giving moral and emotional support. Schmidt noted the high calibre of the volunteers which MCRS trains to work with refugee claimants. ☸



Noé Ishaka (left) visits with Eunice Valenzuela (MCRS executive director) and lawyer Steven Schmidt after the launch of the MCRS video series "Refugee Journal" on October 18.

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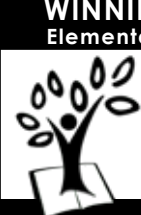
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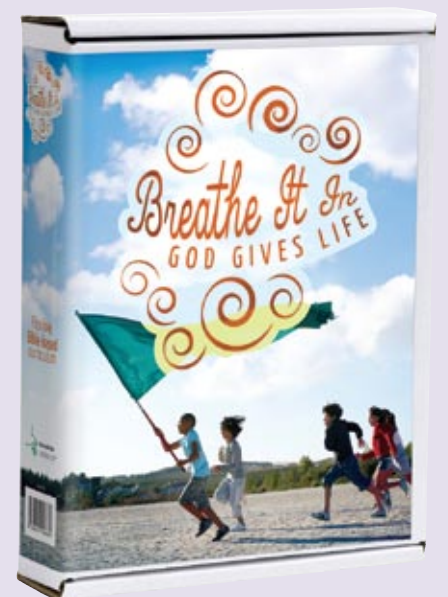
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Briefly noted

Children invited to 'breathe in' God's Spirit

MennoMedia's 2013 Vacation Bible School curriculum, *Breathe It in: God Gives Life*, seeks to help children understand the wonder, power, and essence of God. "We want this curriculum to guide children to understand that God is the giver of life, and always present with us," says Mary Ann Weber, MennoMedia managing curriculum editor. "Through *Breathe It In*, they'll hear Bible stories of breath and wind, explore how God's own breath was used to create people, and how the wind of the Spirit helped the young church to grow." MennoMedia produces a new vacation Bible school curriculum each year. The studies have been popular with both Mennonite congregations and with congregations from other denominations. Each curriculum is organized around five stories, adaptable to a traditional daily vacation Bible school program or to a 12-session midweek or club plan. *Breathe It In* sessions draw on Scriptures from Genesis, Ezekiel, Matthew, and Acts.

—MennoMedia



Mennonites and human rights

Claiming the good and the bad in our past

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AMANDA THORSTEINSSON

Special to Young Voices

WINNIPEG



Lloyd Axworthy, President of the University of Winnipeg, opens the conference



Namwira Folk, a group of Congolese-Canadian young people from Winnipeg, sing about peace and justice Mennonites and human rights



Virgil O. Wiebe

Sheep, shepherds and wolves—that’s the metaphor Virgil O. Wiebe uses to describe how Mennonites have traditionally related to human rights.

Wiebe, a professor from the Faculty of Law at the University of Minnesota and immigration lawyer by profession, addressed these apparent contradictions as part of a conference exploring different ways Mennonites have experienced issues of human rights throughout the years.

The conference, *Mennonites and Human Rights: Grappling with State Power in the Past and Present* was held from October 18-20 at the University of Winnipeg and hosted by the university’s Mennonite Studies department.

Mennonites have been and continue to be victims of human rights abuses, beneficiaries from the human rights abuses suffered by others, and advocates for the human rights of others.

“Dirk Willems is our favourite ice-fishing hero,” says Wiebe, referencing the story of the Anabaptist martyr known for rescuing his jailer, who had fallen through the ice while Willems tried to escape from jail. “But does claiming him mean I have to claim the nasty things too?”

Wiebe contrasts the much-loved story of Dirk Willems rescuing his jailer from an icy pond with the story of Mennonites starting farms on land taken from displaced Aboriginal people.

“They (human rights advocates and human rights abusers and victims) are separate groups,” says Wiebe. “But there’s movement from one group to another, and the most interesting places are the places in

between. A circle works well to draw them together.”

Stories of a Salvadoran military member turned Mennonite pastor; a Burmese refugee in the U.S. who murders his wife after fighting for years to bring her to safety; and a landmine clearance expert in the Serbian lost his arms in a mine explosion and then becomes an advocate for a global ban on the weapons are some of the examples Wiebe uses to illustrate the fluidity of human rights interactions.

A key question of the conference as put forth by Wiebe was, “What are the concepts, opportunities and pitfalls of Mennonites engaging in human rights?”

The idea for a conference exploring the links between Mennonites and Human Rights finds its roots partially in conversations surrounding the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights under construction in Winnipeg.

“It was the creation of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights that led to the creation of the community-based, inter-institutional Mennonites and Human Rights Committee about seven years ago,” explains Royden Loewen, the chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg.

“The committee was struck to provide a Mennonite voice to the CMHR as it was being conceptualized. Repeatedly, the message from the committee to CMHR—at one point, an official submission—was the Mennonites did not wish the CMHR to document Mennonite suffering.”

Mennonites have not traditionally used human rights language to talk about

systems of justice, peace, and oppression, a key theme of the conference. With regard to the CMHR, the committee suggested that instead the museum could “provide a voice for the powerless and to seek to document not so much victimization as reconciliation.”

Melinda Enns lives in Abbotsford, British Columbia, and majored in political science at the University of the Fraser Valley. She recently completed a term with Christian Peacemaker Teams, and attended the conference in order to learn more about what a career in peace-building might look like.

“Being of Mennonite heritage, I understand peace, nonviolence, and social justice to be highly important for our world’s proper functioning, and for each person’s highest quality of life,” she says.

A highlight of the conference for Enns was gaining an “understanding of the conflicting perspectives on human rights from a Mennonite perspective.”

She recalls one speaker explaining “that historically, Mennonites have been forced to look inwards in order to engage in the struggle for the right to conscientious objection. Now, in Canada and the USA, Mennonites have been given these freedoms and are now able to move the gaze from inwards to outwards.”

The question for Enns—and the question the entire conference attempts to address—is “what does the ‘Mennonite way’ look like in this new context?”

Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, President of the University of Winnipeg and former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, opened the conference by sharing the internal conflict he faced as a person of faith during the war in Kosovo.

Speakers, panelists and guests came from countries such as Russia, the Philippines, Columbia, and the USA as well as across Canada. ❧

Christianity on the margins

Making space for Christians from all stages and places

BY BEN BORNE AND GABRIELLE LEMIRE

Special to Young Voices

Canadian Mennonite University took 12 students on a study tour to the United Kingdom this summer led by Professor Irma Fast Dueck. The students explored the theme of Christianity on the Margins at the Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival, which brought out over 20,000 participants. Students travelled to Coventry, England, and Glasgow, Scotland, followed by a week of reflection on the Isle of Iona. Ben Borne and Gabrielle Lemire reflect on their experiences.

Q: How did you see Greenbelt or Iona engaging with the theme, Christianity on the margins?

Gabrielle: I found Greenbelt refreshing and stimulating because it engaged such a variety of content. Greenbelt is an arts and social justice festival offering experiences

for all ages and interests. I found myself attending many talks where I learned about everything from other faiths and marginal Christian groups to lent programs for doubters in a church. Even more important than the talks were the experiences available at Greenbelt: a communion service set to trance music for example. What Greenbelt offered in its music, sessions, theatre, worship and activities pushed the envelope and asked of the participant: what does it really mean to be Christian?

Another significant part of the experience was who I met. Greenbelt brings out people that have all sorts of feelings towards the institutional church: tired, engaged, frustrated, inspired, hopeless, hopeful . . .

These factors and many others, like camping in unusual amounts of mud, played important roles in creating a



Gabrielle Lemire and Ben Borne

PHOTO COURTESY OF JANE GRUNAU



The Deep Down tour participants: (back left): Joan Muehling, Irma Fast Dueck, Stephanie Dyck, Michelle Rizoli, Rose Krahn, Jane Grunau, (Middle): Ben Borne, Esther Klassen, Gabrielle Lemire, Melody Neufeld-Rocheleau, Nils Loewen, (Front): Danielle Miller, Belinda Morales

PHOTOS BY BEN BORNE



Iona Abbey

space to engage with a different side of Christianity. This is perhaps a hidden side: Christianity on the margins.

Ben: Iona is a marginal place. Iona is a three-by-two-mile island that draws in many Christian sojourners who are looking for a place to rest and reflect. The island itself is rather barren, fully exposed to the eye of God. There is nowhere to hide from who you are. Many people come with deep hurts or conflict about faith, or maybe they come with no faith at all. Many are confused in their marriage, divorce, sexuality, and so on. Iona is a place that gathers in the lost and the marginalized of the church—those who sit on the outside. It offers a space to reorient or re-imagine the self in relation to Christianity, and sends people on their way with some healing, inspiration and probably many more questions.

Q: How has this experience impacted you?

Gabrielle: My experience on the study tour challenged me to face the unknowns in my faith. Encountering people of other cultures has continued to push me towards the admission that my own values and reason are not universal. However, I have also been invited into the awareness that the Spirit of God is working in people, places and ways that my values or reason would not have allowed. Sometimes I expect far too much from theology, and far too little from God.

Ben: My main concern is the large demographic of people who sit on the margins of the church, looking in and finding nothing for themselves. Is the Mennonite Church offering an intentional space to reorient and re-imagine the self in relation to the Christian faith? Is there a space, like Iona, to wrestle with deep hurts in a safe community? Might this kind of place allow for the unseen wounds on our bodies to be exposed and healed?

As a young adult, I've been craving this kind of church to be modeled in our Canadian context, without having to go across the pond. I think it is safe to assume that I am not the only one. How can we re-invigorate a new sense of authenticity, understanding, and community within the church? How can we welcome those who sit on the edges to jump in and feel safe? These are the questions that both Gabrielle and I are left mulling over. We welcome you into this journey to the edge of Christianity, a place of wildlife where paths are to be forged.

Gabrielle Lemire is in her fourth year at Canadian Mennonite University studying Biblical and Theological Studies with a Math minor. She is a member at McIvor Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg. ✎

Ben Borne is in his fourth year at Canadian Mennonite University, studying Biblical and Theological Studies, with a Communications & Media, and Music minor. He currently attends Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

No offence!

On being offended and offensive Christians

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-Editor

What offends you? When should Christians be offended by what they see in the world around them, and how should they respond? Those questions were recently addressed in a Huffington Post Religion blog post by Joanna Harader, pastor at Peace

Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kansas. She examined the questions and looked at biblical examples to illustrate her point.

She suggested that in some cases, as illustrated by Jesus' response to Pilate in Mark 15:1-5, Christians are called to bear silent witness. Sometimes, as Jesus did

when chastising money-changers in the temple, they should speak out. And other times they should engage in self reflection, as Jesus did when he changed his mind about healing the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-23).

With that in mind, what in the world should Mennonites, or more broadly Christians, take offence to?

Daniel Epp is offended by ignorance and Christians who don't act out their core beliefs, which he tries to do in his work.

As a program associate at Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), Epp works with high-risk offenders to keep them from re-offending. The group tries to live out the social gospel by standing in solidarity with those who are offended by structures that perpetuate violence.

A lot of the people Epp works with are aboriginal. Standing in solidarity with them is a part of living out his faith.

"They represent a minority group that have been oppressed by colonialism and other western structures that have been put in place," Epp said.

Talking about the work he does at CoSA often sheds light on things that people tend to oversimplify, or people that have complicated histories.

"I'm careful to say that there is still personal responsibility [for the crimes those in the program have committed] but insistent that we need to inform ourselves better about the systemic issues in our society," he said.

When expressing his concern, Epp makes sure to use gentle language, including the practice of stating a "star and a wish." This means that instead of bombarding a person with negativity, one starts with something positive (a star), and then frames concerns as things one wishes were different.

Melanie Kampen, a graduate student at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., is offended by "injustice, oppression, violence, apathy, laziness, wealth, arrogance, and hatred," she said.

As a Christian woman, she's offended by misogyny, chauvinism, and feminists who hate men and as such replicate the ideology they hate.

In her attempts to speak out and deal with those offences, Kampen poses questions to the people who say or do offensive

things.

"[In those situations] I will pose rhetorical questions designed to critique or unhinge assumptions behind something offensive someone does or says," she said.

"I think it's always important to speak truth to power," she said.

When offences take the nature of personal or social injustice, and not just irritations, Harader believes speaking out is important. "Particularly when the offensive behaviour is creating unjust systems and hurting vulnerable people," she wrote in her Oct. 25 article.

In some cases, speaking out means being an offensive Christian. Harader outlined a set of four principles to being an offensive Christian in an Oct. 2 article that we should consider when speaking out.

"Christians are allowed to be offensive," she wrote as her first principle. "We are not always called to be nice, accommodating, submissive, quiet or subtle."

Secondly, Christians should aim to offend people within their own religious group, not other faiths. Jesus modelled this by questioning the dominant interpretation of Jewish law. Harader even suggested that Christians might only want to critique their own denomination.

Next, she wrote, offending is not for the purpose of proving that one is right, to joke, or to merely make people mad for the fun of it. It is expressly to extend God's life in the world.

Finally, Christians should take responsibility for their actions and accept the consequences attached to being offensive. ❧



Dan Epp



Melanie Kampen

Calendar

British Columbia

Dec. 4-8: Ten Thousand Villages Christmas store at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. (5, 7).
Dec. 8-9: Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford (8) and Knox United Church, Vancouver (9). Offering to Menno Simons Centre.
Feb. 8,9: MCC winter banquet at Sardis Community Church, Chilliwack (8) and Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond (9). Contact MCC B.C. at 604-850-6639 or visit bc.mcc.org/whatwedo/events.
Feb. 8-10: Young adult retreat at Camp Squeah.
Feb. 15,16: MCC winter banquet at Bakerview M.B. Church, Abbotsford (15) and South Langley M.B. Church, Langley (16). Contact MCC B.C. at 604-850-6639 or visit bc.mcc.org/

whatwedo/events.

Feb. 23: MCBC annual meeting and LEAD conference.

Saskatchewan

Dec. 14: Buncha Guys Concert at Rosthern Junior College.
Dec. 15: RJC Choir Concert at Knox United Church, Saskatoon.
Dec. 21: RJC Christmas Choir Concert at RJC, 7 p.m.
Jan. 4-5: RJC Alumni Tournament of Memories.
Jan. 18: RJC Friday Night Live Youth Event.
Jan. 25-27: SMYO Sr. Youth Retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.
Feb. 3: Choir Concert at Third Avenue United Church, Saskatoon, featuring RJC Chorale, CMU Male Choir, Sonrisa and Buncha Guys.
Feb. 22-23: MC Sask Annual delegate sessions at Rosthern Junior College.

Manitoba

Nov. 22-24: Cottonwood Community drama production *Sherlock Holmes* at Buhler Hall, Gretna, 7:30 p.m.
Nov. 23: CMU Campus visit day.
Nov. 24: Christmas@CMU, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Nov. 25: Installation of Cheryl Pauls as CMU President at River East MB Church, 2:30 p.m.
Nov. 26: Westgate Collegiate annual general meeting, 7 p.m.
Nov. 30, Dec. 1: Southern Manitoba Choral Society Christmas concerts, Altona Bergthaler Church (30), Winkler Mennonite Church (1), 7 p.m.
Dec. 1: A Cottonwood Christmas featuring Cottonwood Youth Chorus and Grades 5-8 drama class, at Buhler Hall, Gretna, 7 p.m.
Dec. 1: First Mennonite Church Choir presents Mozart's *Te Deum* and Saint-Saens *Christmas Oratorio* at First Mennonite, Winnipeg, 7 p.m.
Dec. 3: Westgate Collegiate Christmas concert at Westminster United Church, 7 p.m.
Dec. 9: Sommerfeld Mennonite Church mass choir Christmas concert, Winkler Mennonite Sommerfeld Church, 7 p.m.
Dec. 20,21: MCI Christmas concerts, at Buhler Hall, Gretna, at 7:30 p.m. each night.
Dec. 22: Canadian Foodgrains Bank fundraising concert, "Singin' in the Grain," at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler with Winkler Men's Community Choir, 7:30 p.m.
Jan. 15: Grade 6 day at Westgate Collegiate.
Jan. 30-31: Westgate Collegiate junior high three one-act plays at the Franco-Manitoban Centre.
Feb. 1: CMU Campus visit day.
Feb. 6: Open House at Westgate Collegiate, 7 p.m.
Feb. 7-9: Worship + Imagination at CMU.
Feb. 21: CMU Open House for perspective students.
March 3: CMU Choral Connections.

Ontario

Nov. 17: Fairview Mennonite Home handicraft sale with Christmas crafts, decorations and more; 9 a.m.- 2 p.m. with lunch available.
Nov. 17, 18: Soli Deo Gloria Singers

fall concert, "Hope is..." at UMEI, 7:30 p.m. (17) and at Leamington United Mennonite Church, 3 p.m. (18). Call UMEI at 519-326-7448 for tickets.
Nov. 18: Youth Art Attack event and Waterboys concert for MCEC youth groups at Conrad Grebel Great Hall, 3-8 p.m. To register, contact rsgjbbin@uwaterloo.ca.
Nov. 23: *Gadfly: Sam Steiner Dodges the Draft* supporting Fraser Lake Camp, at Breslau Mennonite Church, 7:30 p.m. Tickets at nov23frasereventbrite.ca or 905-642-2964.
Nov. 23-24: Spirit of Christmas music and craft show at Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig, with Valleyview Men's chorus, Ten Thousand Villages, crafts and tea room 7-9 p.m. (23) 10 a.m.-4 p.m. (24). Call Barb at 519-232-4720 for information.
Nov. 24: Nithview Christmas Tea and Bake Sale sponsored by Nithview Auxiliary, 200 Bouleee St., New Hamburg, 2-4 p.m.
Nov. 25: Acoustic Advent Carols, at Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, 3 to 4:30 p.m. Led by the PMS Singers and No Discernible Key. For more information, call Will Stoltz at 519-696-2805 or Laurence Martin at 519-208-4591.
Nov. 27: Open House at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate for prospective students and families, 7 p.m.
Dec. 8: Handel's *Messiah* by Menno Singers with Mennonite Mass Choir and KW Symphony Orchestra at Centre in the Square, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 11: Rockway Mennonite Collegiate Christmas concert at St. Matthews Lutheran Church, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 31: New Year's celebration at Milverton Mennonite Fellowship with performances by Rescue Junction and Kingsway Quartet. Dessert extravaganza at intermission. Call 519-595-8762 for information.
Jan. 15: Rockway Mennonite Collegiate grade 9 information night, 6:30 p.m.

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

Briefly noted

Shaping Families November guests tackle heavyweight issues

A program looking at how one Christian humanitarian aid worker made friends with Taliban followers in Afghanistan, and another exploring the impact of race on faith development, are two of the issues addressed in upcoming *Shaping Families* radio programs. Almeda Wright, assistant professor of religion and youth ministry at Pfeiffer University in North Carolina, focuses on teen spiritual development and African American religion, as well as intersections of religion and public life. Jonathan Larson, storyteller and author of the new book *Making Friends among the Taliban: A Peacemaker's Journey in Afghanistan* (Herald Press), tells the story of Dan Terry, a United Methodist humanitarian aid worker killed in a 2010 ambush in Afghanistan, the same shooting that claimed the life of MCC worker Glen Lapp. Other guests on November *Shaping Families* programs include "Losing a Mom to Suicide" by Stephen Akinduro and "Child Abuse and Neglect" by Jeannette Harder, professor at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work in Omaha, Nebraska. Harder also helped found Dove's Nest, an organization dedicated to protecting children. *Shaping Families* programs can be heard online at www.ShapingFamilies.com.

—MennoMedia



Classifieds

Announcement

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Employment Opportunities



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Worship God With Us

First Mennonite Church, Burns Lake, a small body of believers in northern B.C., is looking for a **PART-TIME OR FULL-TIME SERVANT LEADER PASTOR**. We desire to find a person who shares our vision and will work with us to fulfill it. Our ideal candidate will have an exceptional ability to inspire discipleship, outreach, and a desire to embrace our community, while holding firm to sound biblical doctrine. Our candidate will agree with the Confession of Faith in the Mennonite Perspective. Please send your resume or MLI to FMC c/o Wilf Dueck wedueck@telus.net or Ph 250-692-3455.



A Rocha Canada is an international Christian organization which, inspired by God's love, engages in scientific research, environmental education and community-based conservation projects. We are seeking applications for the position of **OFF-SITE DIRECTOR** to lead the work of **A ROCHA PRAIRIE CANADA**. As a member of A Rocha Canada's national leadership team, this individual will provide leadership for all Prairie and Pembina Valley Interpretive Centre initiatives including fundraising. For a full description of this opportunity, please see our website at <http://www.arocha.ca/ARPC-director-search>.

If you are interested in this opportunity to contribute to the success of the A Rocha mission, please forward a brief cover letter, résumé, and the names of three references in confidence to the Search Committee co-chair, Antoinette van Kuik at avk@mymts.net. The position will remain open until it is filled but the processing of resumes will begin November 25th, 2012.



CHIEF MEDA ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

Due to our success and growth, Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) invites applications for a full-time Chief MEDA Engagement Officer. MEDA is an association of compassionate business women and men who invest in people living in poverty around the world so they can unleash their potential to earn a livelihood to provide for their families and enrich their communities. (www.meda.org) We invite you to join our team of innovative, entrepreneurial professionals dedicated to finding business solutions to poverty.

Position Summary

The Chief MEDA Engagement Officer (CMEO) provides executive-level strategic leadership to engage MEDA's association of private supporters with our mission; secure financial contributions that leverage other sources of funding; protect and enhance MEDA's image; and expand awareness of MEDA in diverse market segments. A member of MEDA's Executive Leadership Team, the CMEO will lead a staff of senior professionals to develop and implement the MEDA Engagement strategic plan and annual budget.

The ideal candidate will have a proven track record of strategic design and management of successful marketing initiatives, an understanding of fundraising, particularly within the Anabaptist community, and the ability to align cohesive team approaches. With a keen interest in MEDA's approach to finding business solutions to poverty, and desire to engage others in this vision, the CMEO will participate in speaking engagements, media appearances, and visits to key members of the constituency.

A full time opportunity, with a strong preference to be based in the Waterloo, Ontario MEDA office, this position will involve regular domestic and international travel. This unique position is a chance to use your significant leadership and technical expertise to make a difference.

Qualifications

- Minimum of ten years successful executive leadership and business experience including strategic planning and senior staff management.
- Excellent and proven interpersonal skills in team leadership, relationship building, active listening, communicating, and negotiation.
- Demonstrated experience in developing and leading successful marketing campaigns for a variety of audiences.
- In-depth knowledge and understanding of MEDA's constituency (Mennonite, Anabaptist and Christian business and professionals).
- Background and understanding of fundraising, especially in the development of major gift proposals. Familiarity with the Moves Management system is preferable.
- Highly motivated, self-starter, and results-oriented.
- Understanding and appreciation of international development and MEDA's approach of finding business solutions to poverty.
- Appreciation and support of MEDA's faith, values and goals.

Please submit resume to jobs@meda.org.



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