

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Chin church supports
fellow Burmese believers

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EDITORIAL

Why do we meet?

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

"And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near."

(Hebrews 10:25, New Living Testament)

Twenty-first-century Christians, a far cry from the first-century ones, do not spend their time looking to the skies for the imminent return of Jesus. So the need to "meet together" does not seem as pressing as it did then. Besides, we also don't live in small towns and villages as much; we have, in large part, moved to hugely populated urban centres and consider ourselves culturally to be part of the "global village."

And some of us are committed to bringing the "kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven" (Jesus' prayer) more than we are focused on a glorious and unending afterlife. So, is the sermonizing from the writer of Hebrews out of date and not applicable to our modern age?

No. In fact, it is more applicable than ever.

For one, moving from the village to the more socially and educationally advanced cities has actually made us strangers to each other. Our preoccupations in this setting have made it more difficult to get together as a faith community, not easier. And in a Facebook/Twitter age, we have been lulled into thinking our social networking is broadening and enriching our interaction.

But while they may have grown broader, Steve Bordeau, an English professor writing an op-ed piece in a recent

Toronto Star, observes that they are shallower. "Even if Facebook serves well in certain respects, foremost as a communication tool," he writes, "it fails miserably as a primary vehicle for meaningful interaction." Its fault lies in being a means for some people to substitute a real-life relationship with a virtual social connection—merely the possibility of a tenuous, and digital, link.

This critique is especially important as congregations in Mennonite Church Canada are encouraged to seriously discern together in the Being a Faithful Church process. It has been disappointing to learn that those who have seriously tackled this process have had turnouts of only a third of the membership when special times have been set aside to engage Scripture together.

Just as important as discerning Scripture together around prescient issues of sexuality and peace, "hermeneutical ferment" is the refining of our assembling together—all of us, not just a committed few—in the spirit of encouragement and "*provoking each other to good works*," as the writer of Hebrews admonished. This is the framework in which we can best hear the Word of the Lord.

There are other cultural influences working against our sense of community.



In an upcoming series entitled "On the use of Scripture," Bruce Hiebert, an adjunct professor of ethics at the Vancouver School of Theology, encourages storytelling in congregations as part of the discernment process, but warns that certain obstacles persist, such as: "In our self-centred world we look for the lazy way out, not the one that will bring us into confrontation with ourselves, teach us about true community, or lay us bare before God and each other."

"Story-telling is not quick and easy, but as a people of Scripture—a body of laws and poems and teachings, and, above all else, stories—we should see that God's way into our world is through stories. This is not accidental. We don't know the stories of Scripture and tell the stories of Scripture because they get us to someplace else. The truth is in the stories."

And in another upcoming feature on "Wrestling with our identity" from Derek Suderman, a professor at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., comes a warning that, despite our distinctive Anabaptist belief in the "priesthood of believers," we are in danger of "creating a new 'magisterium,' only this time they are university professors, preaching/teaching pastors, or Sunday school curriculum writers, who we subcontract to interact with the Bible on our behalf."

Being a Faithful Church is not an easy process. And it will require hard work. Yes, it calls for good leadership, good teachers and serious students of the Bible in our congregations, but most of all it requires a commitment on the part of all the "priests" in all the congregations to undergo a transformative process that gets us in touch with each other. That can only happen if we meet together.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Members of the Chin community in Waterloo Region, Ont., attended a protest at Kitchener city hall on Jan. 19 against violence directed at the Kachin in Burma, where the Christian minority has been embroiled in a more-than-half-century battle for autonomy with the majority Burmese military government. See story on page 24.

PHOTO: DAVE ROGALSKY, CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Guiding values:

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

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FOCUS ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FEATURE INTERVIEW

In conversation with Tom Yoder Neufeld

Following his retirement from 'professing' at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., at the end of 2012, the acclaimed academic and author discusses his own life and legacy with Canadian Mennonite managing editor Ross W. Muir



RWM



TYN

RWM: *For much, if not all, of your adult life, you have served as a chaplain, pastor or professor. What—or who—were the influences in your growing-up years that led you to a life of ministry in these ways?*

TYN: There is no doubt that my parents, engaged their whole life in missionary and pastoral work, instilled in me early a sense that ministry marks the Christian's life. For me, that has taken various forms in various contexts, including the last three decades in teaching at Grebel.

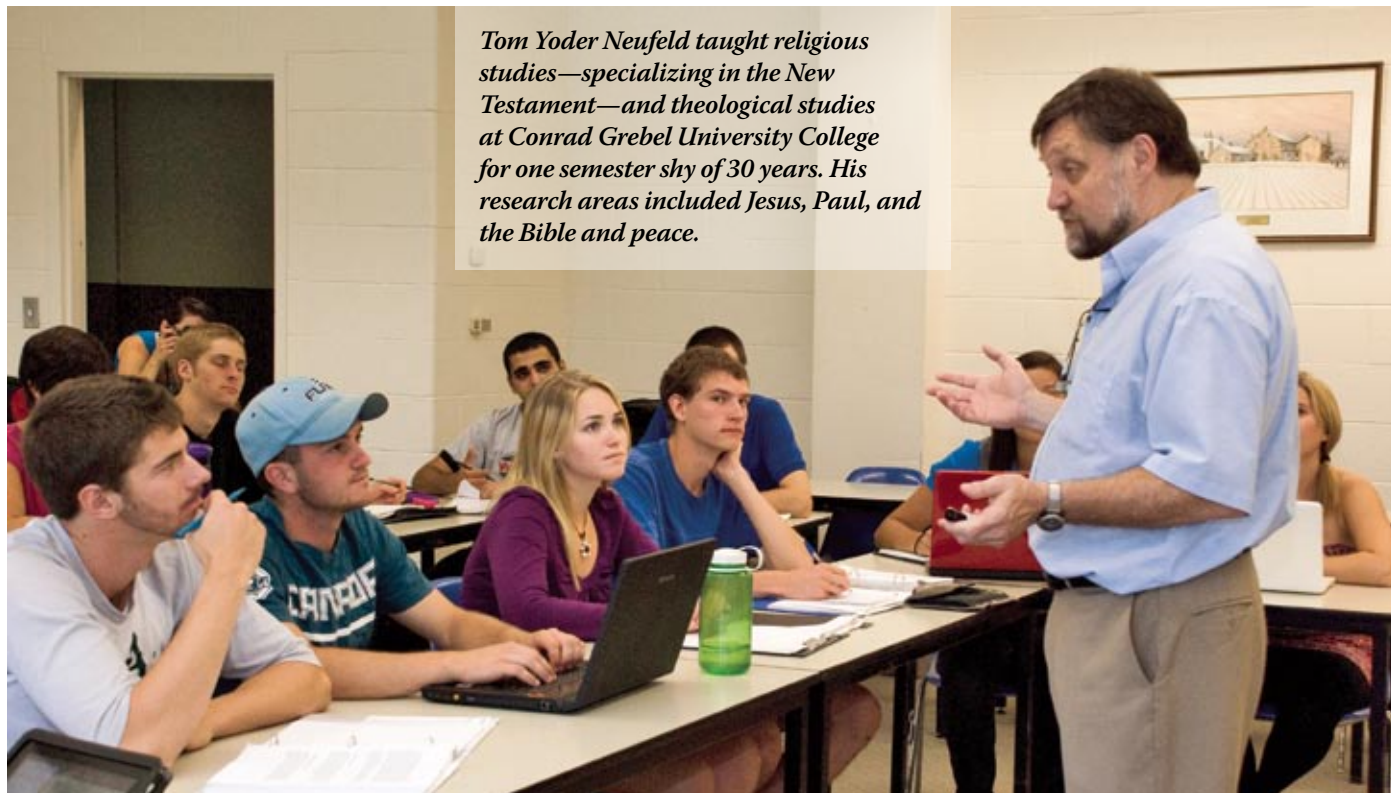
RWM: *Conrad Grebel University College turns 50 this year. Your tenure as a professor there spans more than half of its existence. What changes took place during those years: in the college itself, in the students you taught and the faculty you taught with, and, most importantly, in yourself? What do you see for the future of Christian education at Grebel and more widely?*

TYN: It's rather startling that I have been at Grebel for more than half of its life. I suppose it's rather difficult to chart how one has changed. My love for the New Testament has not diminished, nor has the enjoyment of teaching it. The students are always new, after all, and that always makes for new instances of learning and discovery.

It is frequently observed by folks in my guild that Bible knowledge is diminishing rapidly, and with that the capacity to think "biblically." I think that is something I, too, have observed over my teaching career. I continue to ponder what effect that will have on the church. It is an essential tenet of our Anabaptist tradition that the Bible, rather than a hierarchy or formal creed, is our authority.

It is an essential tenet of our Anabaptist tradition that the Bible, rather than a hierarchy or formal creed, is our authority. If so, I worry that the hollowing out of our knowledge of, and our ability to work with, the Bible will have deeply troubling consequences.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE



Tom Yoder Neufeld taught religious studies—specializing in the New Testament—and theological studies at Conrad Grebel University College for one semester shy of 30 years. His research areas included Jesus, Paul, and the Bible and peace.

If so, I worry that the hollowing out of our knowledge of, and our ability to work with, the Bible will have deeply troubling consequences.

With respect to “Christian education,” you are aware of the uniqueness of Grebel among Mennonite schools, fully integrated as we are at both undergraduate and graduate levels in the University of Waterloo. That brings profound challenges and opportunities. I have loved teaching Bible to a great diversity of students. It’s a stimulating and highly enlightening experience to reflect on the Scriptures in a context in which little can be assumed, and there to discover the power of the gospel embedded in human testimonies gathered together in the New Testament.

The academic context of critical inquiry does not still the living gospel, in my experience. Perhaps that is a microcosm of the challenge of the church in this moment in history—learning to hear the Word and witness to it within the vulnerable context in which little is assumed and little is taken for granted. That is a profound challenge for Christian

education when it takes place beyond the confines of the community of faith.

RWM: *I was reading a short story recently in which the main character was a professor. I have always thought of the term “professor” as a synonym for “teachers,” who teach. In the story, though, the character used the verb form of “professor.” Have you ever thought that what you did was “profess,” and, if so, what were some of those “professions”?*

TYN: Well, you’ve sat through some of my courses during your recent sabbatical from *Canadian Mennonite*. You’re probably in a better position to judge that. I’ve always tried to be explicit and transparent about my own convictions and hospitable to any and all students. And then I get gripped by the “stuff” of what I teach. Students typically comment on the “passion” with which I teach. It always worries me that I might be “professing” too much. So I also listen to students’ comments for signs that I give ample room to their questions and opinions. My experience is that “profession” mixed with hospitality goes a long way to create

a shared experience of learning.

RWM: *Has what you “professed” changed over the years? What things seemed perfectly clear when you were a young man that you hold more loosely as you’ve grown older? Conversely, what things in your youth were murky but have grown clearer or more profound over the years?*

TYN: The older I get, the more I am struck by the silliness of simple hard answers to complex questions, which does not mean, of course, that we can afford not to take courageous stands and act on them. But each such stand is an act of faith. And I am more aware than ever that faith is precisely not, or at least very seldom, the same thing as “seeing.”

I’m heartened that the great apostle Paul, whose writings have guided the church for two millennia, could confess that, to quote literally, we look into an enigma through a mirror. And that is why, in addition to faith, we need, above all, love—love for God and each other. I have thus come to value increasingly over the years to see Jesus not only as the recognizable Galilean who is “just like



Conrad Grebel faculty members Arnold Snyder, left, and Tom Yoder Neufeld in deep discussion in the college library sometime in the 1980s.

us,” but also as God’s baffling wisdom, the “stupendous stranger” as one of our hymns has it, who nevertheless walks alongside us as we grope our way.

RWM: *On the first day of my seminary training, the president told us that what we were about to experience was not Sunday school, where we would be coddled in our beliefs; rather, we would be challenged, in the hope, as one professor later put it, we would involve ourselves in the upward spiral exercise of “faith seeking understanding, seeking deeper faith.” As a professor who was a former chaplain and minister, how do you balance prodding students out of their comfort zones while watching that they don’t go over the proverbial cliff?*

TYN: I suppose my last comments anticipated this question. The short answer is that I have never seen it as my task to take people to the edge of the cliff and then to keep them from falling over. Teaching, too, is an act of faith—as is learning. Especially when it comes to religion, and most especially when it comes to sacred texts such as the Bible, the mind and heart are typically already fully invested.

A fair and careful reading will quickly banish comfort, to be sure. But I think students have typically had a sense that I appreciate what is at stake in the

questions and that they trust me as a guide not to violate their own often-frightening quest for new learning.

My work many years ago as a hospital chaplain has brought an appreciation for the trauma new and unwelcome information can bring. I’m quite explicit about that with students. Years ago, I came to the conviction that if this really is God’s world, if the Bible truly is a vehicle of God’s self-disclosure, then we should trust the process of wrestling with it, however bumpy the ride, so to speak.

RWM: *I’d like to ask you some questions about those courses I sat in on now. In your final class of Jesus: Life and Legacy, your undergrad survey course, it was said that you had probably taught Christ to a few thousand students. What did you want them to learn about him and why?*

TYN: I was less interested in controlling what it is people should know about Jesus, than to invite them into as deep and rich an encounter with the New Testament’s presentation of Jesus as possible—all of the New Testament, not just the gospels. In that sense, my course on Paul is also a course on Jesus.

I’m very grateful to be an Anabaptist Mennonite, but I’m deeply suspicious of thinking we’ve got the corner on Jesus. So I try to listen along with the students—Mennonite, Catholic, evangelical, Muslim—to the Jesus who emerges out of the New Testament to ask all of us uncomfortable questions. Those questions are life-giving even when they unsettle us, and especially when we’ve gotten a bit too familiar—even cozy—with the Jesus we think we know so well.

RWM: *In reading the four gospels for class, I noticed a particular difference between the synoptic gospels and John. Matthew, Mark and Luke talk a lot about the “kingdom of God” being near and the implications of that. John, on the other hand, talks about “believing” in Jesus in order to be saved for eternal life. Do we get two different types of Christians if we start from two distinct entry points? If so, how do we reconcile them?*

TYN: You mention the Synoptics and John. I might add those who go to Jesus via Paul. Different traditions have privileged certain entry points into the Jesus of the New Testament. That is a problem only if we each stay in the vestibules of those entrances. There is too much mistaking the entry hall for the whole house. I’m struck again and again by the breadth and depth of the New Testament canon. I take that depth and breadth as providential, and an important signal to visit the whole house together with those who typically come in through another door.

RWM: *In Recovering Jesus, you quote Matthew 10:34: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” You go on to explain that “[t]he words cited above are part of his speech where he warns [his disciples] of the opposition their words and activities are likely to provoke.” But if Jesus’ words and actions resulted in opposition—lethal opposition at that—would our time not be better*

Resurrection as a ‘symbol’ of hope is not enough. We have hope because of the resurrection. If you take the resurrection out of the equation, there is no math left.

spent on proclaiming and enacting the kingdom of God, as Christ did, and take what comes, rather than busying ourselves with trying to make the planet more peaceable for us to carry on our activities? After all, Melvin Gingerich, in a July 1951 Mennonite Quarterly Review article, stressed “. . . [w]e have no illustrations of Jesus and the apostles ever petitioning the government for favourable laws.”

TYN: That is too complex a question to answer adequately with a sentence or two. Jesus, along with his fellow Jews, lived under Roman occupation. Participatory democracy, human rights, conscientious objection—all highly valued features of our life in Canada—were nowhere on the horizon.

The summons to seek first the kingdom and take up our cross nevertheless comes to us no less than to Jesus’ contemporaries. What it demands of us might well look very different in Canada than it did in Jesus’ day, or than it does in many places on our globe today, where the followers of Jesus are attempting to live the kingdom.

In our setting, where we have some means with which we can affect government and economic policies, God’s reign requires that we do engage our government and our society generally, most especially if it is for the sake of others who suffer injustice. To “enact God’s kingdom,” as you put it, means we seek first it’s justice, as Matthew remembers Jesus saying, to take up “our” cross. That also means that to “seek” or “enact the kingdom” means so much more, encompassing the whole agenda of the church’s ministry of reconciliation: between us and God, and between us and our fellow human beings, including in the church.

I find it so frustrating that we so often seem not to be able to hold together in a seamless whole the Jesus who comes seeking lost sheep, offering God’s parental love and demanding forgiveness

in turn, and promising good news to the poor and release to those in prison. Shalom in its fullness still eludes us, I fear.

RWM: *The Nickel Mines’ shootings showed the world an Anabaptist community that did not seek justice from the authorities or the family of the shooter. Instead, it forgave the man and showed extravagant mercy and grace to his family. What is the relationship between justice and mercy? Given our sinful, fallen state, is our salvation a just action of God or a merciful one?*

TYN: The short answer is “yes.” The “or” is a fundamental mistake. God’s justice is first and foremost “right-making.” And so Paul can say in Romans 3, for example, that God’s righteousness or justice is manifested in mercy. Weird justice, not? God’s justice is sometimes bafflingly harsh, but as Paul teaches us to see in Jesus, including in his death and resurrection, God’s justice is most fundamentally and mercifully “saving.”

RWM. *In your Biblical Foundations of Peace class, we spent time on the atonement, a hot topic in many circles today. While we discussed the differing theories of atonement, I thought your statement in Killing Enmity—to the effect that “[m]aking Jesus’ death God’s atoning gift, however inadequately any metaphor will capture the mystery of that gesture, was what God ‘had to do’ to reconcile with humanity”—both enlightening and provocative. Can you unpack this idea of “what God ‘had to do,’”—through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection—as opposed to our theorizing about what has to happen?*

TYN: Putting it that way was to say that Jesus’ death happened in real history as a result of human brutality, human rejection of the messenger and enactor of God’s reign. This was not a puppet show.

God responded in a surprising



Tom Yoder Neufeld spoke at Conrad Grebel University College’s chapel shortly before he retired last December. Listening attentively is Ed Janzen, chaplain.

way—shockingly surprising to his enemies—to transform that act of rejection into God’s own ultimate offer of peace. The gospels don’t mince words about Jesus’ death being the undeserved death of a righteous person, even as they, in hindsight, trace the loving ingenuity of God to reconcile even with God’s enemies.

Too much of the discussion of atonement today takes place in the present tense, as it were: “what does it take” to bring about reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, etc. The gospels tell a story, and an essential part of that story is the rejected offer of peace on the part of Jesus. But the apostles and gospel writers also narrate that story as the heart of “good news,” “gospel.” After all is said and done, however, the atonement remains an inscrutable wonder, and the most fitting stance is one of awe and gratitude.

RWM: *Last fall, I reviewed Elmer John Thiessen’s latest book, The Ethics of Evangelism, in which he notes that, for many Christians, the fact Christ gave his followers what is now known as “the great*

My work many years ago as a hospital chaplain has brought an appreciation for the trauma new and unwelcome information can bring. I’m quite explicit about that with students.

commission," is reason enough to be involved in evangelism. An online response to my review included the following comment: "For people like me, who considers himself a Jesus person but who doesn't believe Jesus physically came back to life after his execution, I have little choice but to dismiss statements attributed to Jesus after he was dead. This view would be shared by all scholars who do not believe in the literal physical resurrection of Jesus." If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, and all we're left with are the words and example of a dead man, is that enough?

TWN: There are two convictions I hold equally. One, I'm with Paul when he says to the Corinthians, "If Christ hasn't been raised, then we are most to be pitied as those whose faith is utterly futile," to render Chapter 15 of his first letter to them rather freely. That bald assertion does not set Paul apart from any other New Testament writer. Resurrection as a "symbol" of hope is not enough. We have hope because of the resurrection. If you take the resurrection out of the equation, there is no math left.

But my second conviction runs just as deep: There is about the nature of resurrection a great and unfathomable mystery. All you have to do is compare Paul in I Corinthians 15 with the accounts in the gospels. It's impossible to distill one clear view of what happened, not least with respect to what "physicality" means. What I find most surprising is that no attempt is made in the New Testament



Bert Lobe, left, congratulates Tom Yoder Neufeld at his retirement celebration from nearly three decades of teaching at Conrad Grebel University College.

I'm very grateful to be an Anabaptist Mennonite, but I'm deeply suspicious of thinking we've got the corner on Jesus. So I try to listen along with the students—Mennonite, Catholic, evangelical, Muslim—to the Jesus who emerges out of the New Testament to ask all of us uncomfortable questions.

to make sure that the witnesses all claim exactly the same thing in terms of what it means for Jesus to have risen "bodily." So I'm not sure our contemporary notions of "physical" can quite capture the New Testament understanding of "bodily."

I'm willing to keep pondering these questions while acknowledging the mystery at the heart of Easter and the limits of our understanding to grasp it. But to downplay the resurrection empties the gospel of content and force.

One essential implication of the resurrection is that the church has a living liberator, master and sustainer. It is that premise that helps us to understand the gospels, for example, as a mix of pre- and post-Easter recollection. That historians have difficulty deciding what goes back to the pre-Easter Jesus should not surprise us. But as a "Jesus person" who believes he rose and accompanies the life of the church, that is precisely what we should expect to find. The gospels were written not by archivists, but by evangelists, after all. That excites me, and gives me hope.

RWM: *On numerous occasions, I have heard you call Jesus, the church and the Bible "messy." Each time, the description was used as a positive term. What do you mean by "messy"?*

TYN: I like the word "messy" because it warns us against reducing persons, events and even doctrines to cut-and-dried assertions and propositions. I also like it because we learn of Jesus through the witness of a hugely diverse community of believers—men and women, companions of Jesus and those who joined later through their witness, Jews and Gentiles, educated and uneducated, urban and rural, Palestinian, Galatian, Macedonian and Greek. The ongoing incarnation of the Word in his diverse body

is surely a miracle beyond comprehension. "Messy" points to that in a somewhat playful, or even mischievous, way.

RWM: *Besides your scholarly achievements, you are an accomplished singer in English, German and Spanish; you play the guitar; and you paint. A former professor of yours, Dr. Vic Adrian, told me recently that one of your artistic works still graces his living room. How are these artistic activities informed by your faith, and, in turn, how do they inform it?*

TYN: I grew up in a family in which music was a constant. My parents were both accomplished singers. And we often sang in public as a family.

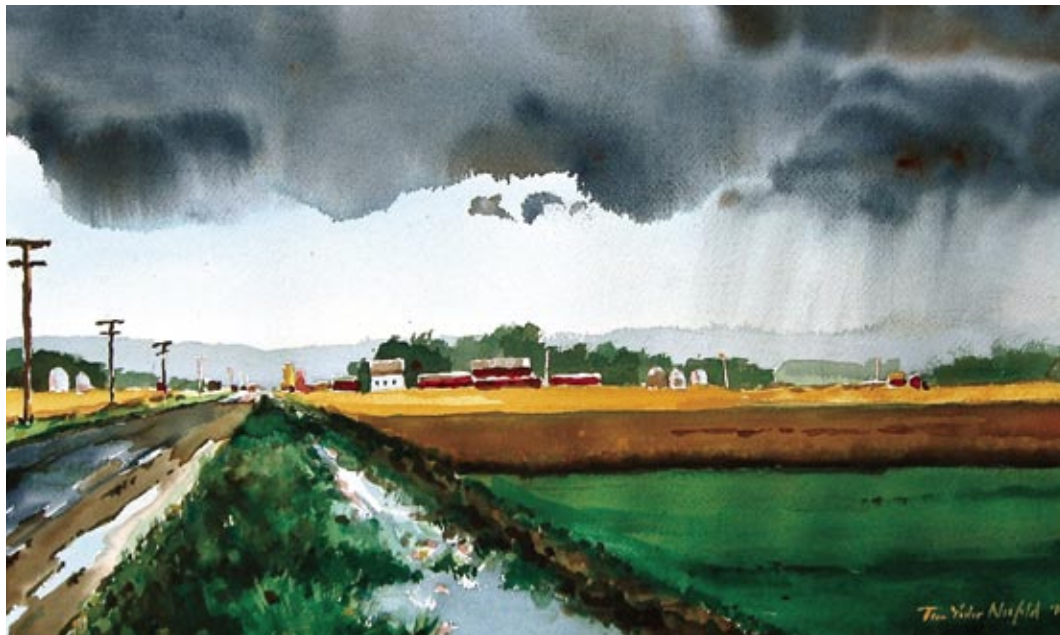
I started painting as a young teenager. Turns out, my mother has taken up painting in her latter years, so that, too, is likely "genetic."

I love listening to a wide variety of music, most especially to that in which words are weighty. That is especially the case with sacred choral music. I have had some wonderful opportunities to sing some great works with the Grand Philharmonic Choir here in Kitchener-Waterloo, for instance. It's always a profound worship experience for me to sing the great works of the choral repertoire.

But I also love leading singing in our church, helping the community to worship, even if I have to fake knowing Spanish.

In terms of visual art, while I deeply respect artists who can convey great meaning, my own painting and photography is an endless fascination with creation. I absolutely love evocative landscapes that have us keeping our eyes open to the wondrous world around us. Tom Thompson is one example of such an artist. I suppose my landscape paintings are also an act of worship—worship

ARTWORK COURTESY OF MARGARET LOEWEN REIMER



Tom Yoder Neufeld describes his painting and photography as 'an endless fascination with creation.' He painted this watercolour, 'The Storm is Passing Over,' for his long-time colleague and friend, Jim Reimer, on the day of his passing, Aug. 28, 2010, saying, 'It evokes the Manitoba prairie, his home before coming to Grebel.'

as wonder and gratitude.

RWM: *You dedicated Recovering Jesus to "my companion for life, Rebecca, and our children, David and Miriam, with whom to follow Jesus together is a gift too great to measure." Do you have a story to share that would illustrate how your family has followed Jesus together?*

TYN: I'm not sure I have a specific story to tell, but I am enormously grateful to live alongside one whose commitment to following Jesus puts my own to shame, and who encourages me through the depth of her commitment and discipline in the direction of faithfulness.

I'm also deeply thankful for the thoughtful and independent decision my daughter, son and daughter-in-law have each taken to be baptized. I can't imagine there will not be times of testing of the resolve baptism represents, as there have been for me, but I am convinced that Jesus walks alongside them at least as much as that they follow him, as he has me.

RWM: *When I told you Dr. Adrian said you were much too young to retire, you replied that you weren't rolling up your tent completely just yet. Have you plans, either professionally or personally, that you'd like to share?*

TYN: I hope very much that there will be

opportunity to serve the church in various kinds of teaching venues, both locally and internationally. That is exciting to contemplate. I would not be surprised if I might do some more writing as well. That said, I also hope to do more singing and painting. We'll see how all that gets balanced.

RWM: *Thank you for this time, Tom. Is there anything else to add that we haven't covered today?*

TYN: That's more than enough, I'm sure. Thank you for your thoughtful questions. ☘

/// For discussion

1. Tom Yoder Neufeld says that teaching and learning are acts of faith, especially when it comes to sacred texts such as the Bible (page 6). What learning or teaching experiences have stretched or deepened your faith? Are there settings that are more effective than a traditional classroom? What factors encourage or hinder us from being eager to learn?
2. The older he gets, the more Yoder Neufeld says he is "struck by the silliness of simple hard answers to complex questions" (page 5). Is faith as complex as he suggests, or is he an academic out of touch with real life? What do you think he means when he says that faith is not the same as "seeing"?
3. Are there questions in this interview that you would like to see answered in greater depth? Where would you like to push Yoder Neufeld to explain himself? Do you disagree with any of his comments?
4. Because Conrad Grebel University College is integrated into the University of Waterloo, Yoder Neufeld taught a wide variety of students, including non-Mennonites and non-Christians. What are the opportunities and challenges of this approach? Is it a good model for a church school? Are there situations where the church should shelter fledgling Christians from challenging faith questions?

—BY BARB DRAPER

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.

✉ Free speech more important than charitable status

I ENCOURAGE YOU to continue the habit of thinking out loud as you and those who contribute to *Canadian Mennonite* challenge us to think more deeply about what we believe, and open ourselves more and more to the illuminating light of Jesus. I appreciate the articles and also the responses that they generate.

In the Dec. 17 issue, you printed numerous responses to the letter of warning that *Canadian Mennonite* received in response to a view that was printed. Freedom of speech is under attack and being challenged in many places in our culture. The church often succeeds in being countercultural, and sometimes we follow a bit behind, taking our cues from the subtle culture around us. I am often not able to open myself up enough to listen in the way that the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers listened to the apostle Paul in Athens. What is so amazing is that they seemed to want to understand what this babbling was trying to say and asked the apostle Paul, “*May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?*”

I’m encouraged that the responses to the warning letter from the government also included thoughts that are opening up the idea that our capacity to speak may be hindered by our charitable status and the tax receipt we receive for our donations.

I was part of an interdenominational gathering for a day with Stuart Murray, author of *The Naked Anabaptist*, when he travelled through B.C. in 2012. One of the items of discussion at our table was the idea that, as Christians, we accept—and maybe even expect—privileges like charitable status and the tax

receipt, which may hinder our witness, and we wondered what would happen to our voice and witness if we advocated to freely give it up. At present, I utilize the tax receipt.

I see an opportunity for a collective response from us in the Mennonite church, that is to lead the way and to freely give up our charitable status and tax receipt.

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

✉ MCC may actually need a ‘big building’ in Kitchener

IN RESPONSE TO Will Braun’s article, “MCC’s big building rationale not compelling,” Nov. 12, 2012, page 11, I would like to say that Saskatoon’s Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) building got criticized for being too big when it was built. Now it is just right, although there is limited parking because there are so many activities going on in that wonderful place. I just returned from Calgary two weeks ago, where MCC’s newish building was roundly criticized for being too big. Now it is 25 percent too small.

Braun may be right about the Kitchener, Ont., project, but for the kingdom to grow in Saskatoon and Calgary, bigger buildings were needed.

One final thing: Braun does give MCC a bit of credit when he says that, “despite its imperfections, MCC remains a great organization.” I want to upgrade that by saying, “It remains one of the finest organizations.”

JAKE BUHLER, SASKATOON, SASK.

✉ Make space for each other around MCC table

RE: “SOMMERFELD CHURCH pulls out of MCC,” Jan. 7, page 26.

Concerns expressed by Sommerfeld leaders around the politicization and lack of overt evangelical emphasis by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) are shared widely among the traditional and conservative evangelical members of the Mennonite family, and have been expressed in *Canadian Mennonite* as well.

MCC should consider itself fortunate if the Sommerfeld group is the only one to actually withdraw. During recent years it has been possible to assume that MCC is the private domain of liberal and progressive congregations in Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A., with a bit of meat canning and quilt making thrown in for the benefit of conservative supporters.

We have both actively and passively alienated conservative viewpoints, especially in terms of MCC’s

advocacy role, and are now seeing the results of our efforts. MCC may eventually decide that progressive social advocacy is worth the high price of alienating an important group of traditional supporters, but we need to recognize that costly price for what it is.

Some of the most strident voices against MCC, especially in connection to perceived left-leaning political advocacy and the situation in Israel and Palestine, come from people who are not Anabaptist Christians. MCC has, in the past, been critical of fundamentalist Christian politics and evangelical practices, and we should not be surprised that they are, in return, critical of us. We should, however, speak out actively, confidently and consistently against fearmongering and

conspiracy theories used by some, who have made it their mission to draw conservative Mennonite believers away from MCC connections.

The Christian church in communities where MCC works around the world tends to be socially conservative and evangelical. We should be wary of a situation in which congregations similar to those in which MCC is working internationally are distancing themselves from MCC here. Liberals and social progressives are sometimes accused of being condescending and patronizing. We risk that label again when we alienate those most similar to the ones we hope to serve.

While MC Canada members of MCC must remember to make space for the concerns of conservative

FROM OUR LEADERS

Navigating change

KAREN MARTENS ZIMMERLY

On Jan. 11, I joined an Idle No More event initiated by Mennonites in Winnipeg on the same day aboriginal chiefs met with the prime minister. One driver who was temporarily stopped by the marchers enthusiastically shouted out her car window, cell phone in hand: "I've just tweeted your event!" Within minutes, another voice from a passing car yelled, "Get a job!"

There are numerous media links to inform us what the Idle No More movement is about, but how do I evaluate where I sit on this issue, or, more appropriately, how will I respond, not only in conversation but in relationship with our aboriginal neighbours?

How does following Jesus help the church scrutinize current challenges in our Canadian society?

During a conversation on the sidelines of a soccer tournament, a public servant told me that it is usually power and greed that gets politicians in trouble. And then he said, "All politicians should have a theology degree."



While we might heartily agree that studying theology—God and God's relationship to the world—could help political leaders navigate the sticky challenges they encounter, such reflective study is also critical for the church today, as we fumble through an ever-changing world. So how do we figure out God's relationship to our world? Are we even asking what that relationship is all about?

Voices across the country, and increasingly from all age demographics, are expressing restlessness. People are growing impatient with the church and understandings of God that were influenced by the Christendom world of the last century, saying:

- "WHY IS the church silent, so that individuals are accessing alternative healing and medicine outside the church?"
- "I DON'T want to come to church to sit and listen, or attend a meeting. I want to make a difference."

In a world where it is easier to identify what is not working than it is to select strategic responses, we need theological reflection to help us navigate this time of

incredible change.

Not all of our children and grandchildren attend Mennonite Church Canada schools, but we still need these schools to help form leaders for the church's engagement with the world, where sustained and critical theological reflection happens, not only in the traditional theology class but across all disciplines.

How does God and God's relationship to the world meet our ever-expanding knowledge of science? How does it jive with the Indian Act and our relationship with indigenous communities? How does theology shape our response to calls for assisted suicide, reduced social services and an economy that views monetary gain as the measuring stick for well-being?

These are hard questions, so hard, in fact, that they sometimes render us helpless. Now is not the time to abandon theology, but to engage it rigorously between the classroom and our homes, our churches and our neighbours on the street. Like the four women who began the Idle No More movement in response to abuse of water and land, we need to be captivated by God's movement in the world to find our way home.

Karen Martens Zimmerly is denominational minister of Mennonite Church Canada.

evangelical brothers and sisters at the MCC table, we also must continue to ask that they make space for us. While we need to be careful not to bulldoze their concerns, we need to also insist that the voice of liberal and progressive faith is heard confidently and unapologetically, too. The great saving grace of MCC is that it brings

together a group of opinionated, motivated, faithful people who can hardly agree on anything other than serving human need in the name of Christ. For any of those groups to walk away in frustration is a loss to all of us.

JEFF THIESSEN, AUSTIN, MAN.

FAMILY TIES

Elder wisdom

MELISSA MILLER

“**M**om, does my hair look okay at the back?” asked the pastor just before she exited the washroom to enter the hall where she would officiate at a wedding. “Yes,” the gray-haired mother assured her. “You’re fine.”

As a bystander, I caught this bit of a familial relationship, marvelling at the long-term impact of parents. The pastor was well into her 40s; her mother, a couple decades older. Presumably the adult daughter knows many things about her hair(!), and appearance, and how to negotiate life’s tasks. She doesn’t need her mother’s care in the same way she did when she was a child.

And yet, just before stepping into a public leadership role, possibly feeling self-conscious, she turned to her mother with a simple question, seeking reassurance and connection. Without missing a beat, the mother offered such reassurance and connection seamlessly. Would that we all could be so skilled in requesting what we need, and in responding with such gracious nuance.

I don’t imagine that this mother-daughter pair always functions with such ease and equilibrium. Parent-child relationships are tricky, requiring negotiations in the balance between closeness and distance, between helpfulness and getting in the way. When my son was about nine years old, his need for independence was irritated by my very

involved parenting. He seemed to be acting like a teenager. I eased off and gave him more space, and he expanded into his identity and subsequently expressed less frustration. “Reading” the child, at whatever age, and making adjustments over time, are challenges and are delightful when all goes well.

More than one parent has stumbled along the road, and erred either by pulling away when closeness was needed, or by inserting themselves into their child’s life at a point when separation was more helpful. Counsellors speak of parents as a nest holding their children. With cupped hands, we can imagine these children in the nest provided by their parents’ care. The challenge is to know when to hold the nest firmly and securely around the young life, and when to relax its sides or even to nudge the fledglings out of the nest, to try their wings and find their own way.



Paul understood he had something of value to share and he didn't hesitate in doing so.

Elders in a family must exercise all the wisdom and care they can. By elders, I mean parents and grandparents certainly, but also anyone who has life experience to pass on to someone who is younger. Whether we are in our 70s or 80s, or much younger, someone is looking to us to guide them, counsel them, show them

the way.

Even teenagers and middle-aged children are guiding those younger than themselves. We are all elders, or “spiritual grandparents,” to use Elsie Rempel’s term from her book *Please Pass the Faith: The Art of Spiritual Grandparenting*. The definition of family is expansive also, including relationships that stretch beyond biological lines. In our neighbourhoods, communities and churches, we are all in the position of transmitting insights and Christian values, and nurturing the bonds of connection.

In II Timothy 1:6, the elder Paul urges his spiritual son to “fan into flames the gift of God that is within you.” In doing so, Paul exercised his role as spiritual forebear. He understood that he had something of value to share and he didn’t hesitate in doing so. Likely Timothy benefited from his words of counsel and encouragement, and we do as well. We have many ways and many opportu-

nities to tend the flames of those who are younger than us. Let us be attentive and mindful of how we do so.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mts.net) lives in Winnipeg. She is wrapped in the family ties of daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend and pastor.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

The priority problem

BY TROY WATSON

Fewer Christians are reading their Bibles today. Not exactly a news flash. The real question is, why are so many of us no longer reading our Bibles? I think there are three primary reasons:



disagree with, or at least question, Point B. They are confident they can maintain a healthy faith and grow spiritually without the Bible.

Engaging Scripture is essential to my faith and spiritual development because:

• **I BELIEVE** God relates to, and communicates with, human beings.

man beings.

• **I BELIEVE** the Bible is a product and conduit of God's communication with humanity.

• **I BELIEVE** God continues to speak to us through Scripture as a primary, but not exclusive, medium today.

Of course, these beliefs cannot be proven, but I can support them with reason, experience and tradition. These beliefs are not naïve, illogical, wish-upon-a-star fantasies that I have been brainwashed into since childhood and have given no real thought to since. It is not insignificant, for example, that billions of other people throughout history have had experiences that substantiate these very same beliefs.

However, I am hesitant to share with others the supportive rationalizations that, in my opinion, validate my beliefs about Scripture, because those kinds of conversations quickly turn into debates that rarely produce fruit in the kingdom of God, or anything good, really.

It is important for us to gently and humbly share with others our beliefs and our reasons for our beliefs when it is appropriate, but to argue or attempt

to persuade others of the importance of Scripture is a fool's errand. We cannot make the Bible a priority for others. We can only live in such a way that the priorities in our own lives become intriguing, inspiring and compelling to others.

The truth and power of Scripture has rarely, if ever, been demonstrated by persuasive arguments, but by the kind of character development and transformation it produces in people's lives. A life bearing the fruit of the Spirit in good measure will always have influence in the lives of other people.

The best solution to this priority problem, if I can even frame it with such language, is for those of us who take the Bible seriously to live lives that create curiosity and hunger in others for the source of our hope, joy, peace, love, strength, wisdom, compassion, generosity and "God connection." If regular Bible reading is partly responsible for all the goodness in our lives, people will want to know about it and try it. Antoine Saint-Exupéry is credited with saying, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."

People prioritize what they value and desire. The task of the church and her leaders is not to get—or guilt—Christians into making Bible reading a priority, but to evoke within them a hunger for the God that Scripture points to, that opens us up and becomes a medium through which God speaks. ☿

Troy Watson (troy@questcc.ca) is pastor of the Quest Community in St. Catharines, Ont. This is Part 7 of an ongoing series on 'The role of Scripture in the postmodern shift.'

1. IT'S NOT a priority. Some may claim their neglect of Scripture is due to how busy they are, but we all know we make time for what we value. Whether they admit it or not, people don't read their Bibles because they don't think it's important.

2. THE BIBLE is a difficult, confusing and incongruous collection of books to navigate through, so people look to more accessible sources for spiritual guidance, or let their pastor or priest read the Bible and explain it to them.

3. THE UNDERSTANDING of Scripture we grew up with stopped making sense and we have yet to find an approach to the Bible that enables us to engage it meaningfully.

I will respond to the second and third reasons in my next article. First up, Reason No. 1: the priority problem. So how should the church address the low priority of Scripture reading for many Christians today? First, we should evaluate why reading the Bible is a priority for those of us who do it. Regular Bible reading is a priority for me—besides being part of my job as a pastor—because:

A: I VALUE my faith, my relationship with God and spiritual growth.

B: I'M CONVINCED the Scriptures play a vital role in my faith, my relationship with God and spiritual growth.

Most Christians would affirm Point A. Why bother following the way of Jesus if you don't? However, some Christians

The truth and power of Scripture has rarely, if ever, been demonstrated by persuasive arguments, but by the kind of character development and transformation it produces in people's lives.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bartel—Jayden William (b. Jan. 13, 2013), to Steven and Kaylyn Bartel, North Start Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Bauman—Charles David Toews (b. Jan. 10, 2013), to Jenn Toews and Scott Bauman, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Boettger—Elise Margaret (b. Dec. 31, 2012), to Tiffany and Kevin Boettger, Tofield Mennonite, Alta.

Driedger—Natalia Hope (b. July 11, 2012), to Jon and Judith Driedger, Elim Mennonite, Grunthal, Man.

Friesen—Bethany Grace (b. Jan. 6, 2013), to Ryan and Nancy Friesen, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Lehn—Emmeline Yvonne (b. Dec. 4, 2012), to Craig and Danielle Lehn, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Marshall—Aiden Christopher (b. Jan. 8, 2013), to Christopher and Jennifer Marshall, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Teichroeb—Ephraim (b. Jan. 1, 2013), to Jonathan and Andrea Teichroeb, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Tut—Chudier (b. Jan. 4, 2013), to Martha Ruei and Reuben Tut, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

Baptisms

Kate Strathdee—Breslau Mennonite, Ont., Jan. 6, 2013.

Margaret Penner, Justin Schram, Elizabeth Wiens—Elim Mennonite, Grunthal, Man., Dec. 30, 2012.

Chris Penner—St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont., Dec. 9, 2012.

Marriages

Del Bianco/Harms—Alex Del Bianco and Jessica Harms, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, on the Mayan Riviera, Mexico, Jan. 11, 2013.

Driedger/Giest—Tim Driedger and Kris Giest, Elim Mennonite, Grunthal, Man., Oct. 7, 2012.

Martin/Riley—Justin Martin, Breslau Mennonite, Ont., and Jen Riley, in Cambridge, Ont., Dec. 28, 2012.

Deaths

Andres—Anne (nee Penner), 75 (b. Sept. 6, 1937; d. Jan. 6, 2013), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Bender—Elda (nee Gingerich), 98 (b. Nov. 26, 1914; d. Jan. 8, 2013), Zurich Mennonite, Ont.

Braun—Leonard Jacob, 66 (d. Oct. 30, 2012), Elim Mennonite, Grunthal, Man.

Derksen—Katharina (nee Loewen), 87 (b. April 1, 1925; d. Jan. 12, 2013), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Dirks—Paula Marie, 41 (b. Feb. 25, 1971; d. Nov. 13, 2012), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Enns—Katharina (Kathe) (nee Friesen), 89 (b. May 24, 1923; d. Dec. 24, 2012), Coaldale Mennonite, Alta.

Feick—Aileen, 86 (b. Dec. 22, 1926; d. Jan. 7, 2013), Pioneer Park Christian Fellowship, Kitchener, Ont.

Foth—Arnold, 73 (d. Dec. 4, 2012), Elim Mennonite, Grunthal, Man.

Friesen—Dora, 88 (d. Dec. 11, 2012), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Friesen—Helen, 84 (b. July 28, 1928; d. Jan. 3, 2013), Carman Mennonite, Man.

Friesen—Mary, 99 (d. Dec. 26, 2012), Zoar Mennonite, Sask.

Friesen—Melitta (nee Warkentin), 86 (b. April 17, 1926; d. Dec. 14, 2012), First Mennonite, Edmonton.

Froese—Kaethe (nee Letkeman), 83 (b. Jan. 15, 1929; d. Nov. 6, 2012), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Kehler—Mae, 84 (b. May 6, 1928; d. Dec. 22, 2012), Carman Mennonite, Man.

Konrad—Betty (nee Fleming), 87 (b. Dec. 15, 1925; d. Dec. 30, 2012), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Pontius' Puddle



Klausen—Charles, 96 (d. April 23, 1916; d. Dec. 23, 2012), Carman Mennonite, Man.

Loewen—Jacob, 92 (b. April 17, 1920; d. Dec. 30, 2012), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Mannell—Alex, 87 (b. March 22, 1925; d. Nov. 11, 2012), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Martin—Arthur, 81 (b. May 4, 1931; d. Jan. 8, 2013), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Ruibal—Edna (nee Good), 99 (b. May 26, 1913; d. Jan. 10, 2013), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Shantz—Hazel, 84 (b. Dec. 22, 1928; d. Jan. 13, 2013), Wilmot Mennonite, Ont.

Unger—Jacob, 89 (b. April 1, 1923; d. Dec. 10, 2012), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Wall—Irvin, 79 (b. Sept. 8, 1934; d. Jan. 6, 2013), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Wiebe—Ervin, 93 (b. Sept. 26, 1919; d. Jan. 6, 2013), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Zehr—Harvey, 92 (b. Jan. 14, 1920; d. Dec. 11, 2012), Poole Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

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

/// Corrections

- Elmer Hildebrand is a member of Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, not Charleswood Mennonite Church, as was erroneously reported in the Jan. 21 story, “Menno businessmen named to the Order of Canada,” page 16.
- In the same issue, Ernie Unger was misnamed as the author of “Are we paying for peace or war?,” page 14; his correct name is Eric Unger.

Canadian Mennonite regrets the errors.

/// Obituary

Rudy Goerzen

June 23, 1921 – May 29, 2012



A memorial service for Rev. Rudy Goerzen, age 90, was held on June 4, 2012, at Bethel Mennonite Church in Aldergrove, British Columbia. June 23, 1921, Rudy was born in the Mennonite village of Samojlovka in the Ukraine, Russia. As a small boy, he immigrated to Canada in 1924 with his family, who settled and farmed in Springstein, Man., and attended “Springsteiner Mennoniten Gemeinde” (Springstein Mennonite Church), where he was baptized in 1946. On May 31, 1947, Rudy married Katherine (Kay) Braun. During several winters Rudy studied at Canadian Mennonite Bible College. More winters were spent living in Winnipeg and studying at CMBC full-time. Rudy was called to the ministry at age 27 and served his congregations tirelessly and enthusiastically. Rudy and Kay also farmed full-time during this time. It was hard work and Kay, along with caring for the children, willingly handled the farm chores when he was at college or involved in church or conference activities. In June 1948, Rudy received the call to the ministry and served as a farmer-minister at Springstein Mennonite Church until he received a call to full-time ministry to B.C. and Bethel Mennonite Church in 1966. In 1975, he accepted a pastoral position at Cedar Hills Mennonite Church, Surrey, B.C. Rudy was a very studious man and served on many Mennonite church affiliated boards, including Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Columbia Bible College, Missions and Evangelism, Church

Planting and Radio Ministry, in both Manitoba and B.C. He also served as a volunteer chaplain at Surrey Memorial Hospital and Royal Columbian Hospital in B.C. for many years. At Rudy’s funeral, Pastor Phil Wheaton mentioned the close contact he had maintained over the years with his dear friend and mentor, Rudy, via many encouraging and mentoring e-mails. Phil said, “Rudy loved the master, Jesus Christ, with sincerity and passion. I believe that it would be safe to say that you could define his life by his relationship to Jesus Christ. Even his commitment and love for Kay and his family was fashioned around the person of Christ.” Jake Tilitky quoted Psalm 1:3: “He is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season.” Another friend and former pastor, David Nickel, reminded us all of Rudy’s intense love for God, for the church and for each and every individual that he met. Highlights of Rudy’s retirement included music, playing guitar and harmonica with the Praise Players, where he ministered in many Care and Senior Homes, including the Menno Hospital, where he spent his last days. He also enjoyed listening to music on his computer, especially in his later years when he was confined to his ejector chair with his laptop computer. Rudy will be dearly missed by his whole family: his beloved wife Kay; son Ric and Helen Goerzen; daughters Carolyn and Bruno Braun, and Rosalea and Don Minosky; as well as seven grandchildren. He loved his children and grandchildren unconditionally and was always there for them. One of his greatest joys was having his family around him. Rudy impacted many people with his kindness and compassion, and was always ready to give a helping hand to those who needed it. He lived his life ever faithful to his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

FOCUS ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

VIEWPOINT

Why reimagine seminaries?

BY SARA WENGER SHENK

ANABAPTIST MENNONITE BIBLICAL SEMINARY

There are countless good schools that prepare all manner of public servants. We have great doctors and lawyers, business leaders and scientists—thanks be to God.

But as Craig Dykstra of Lilly Endowment reminds us, leadership of the church requires a complexity and integrity of intelligence that is unusual. One has to be smart in lots of really interesting ways, he says. That smartness involves substantive knowledge and



practical know-how, along with the remarkable ability to move into contexts that are full of joy, misery and conflict, and name what is really going on—through the eyes of faith. There is no other work like it, according to him.

• **A CONFESSION:** As an educator and seminary president, I presumably know a few things about how leaders are formed. But I must confess that I am confounded

by the mystery. When I see a leader guide worship that awakens body, mind and spirit, I am in awe. When I watch a pastor initiate ministry that attends to the well-being of an entire neighbourhood, I give thanks. When leaders of a congregation empower everyone's gifts for the good of all, my spirit dances with joy.

There is no foolproof formula for educating leaders of any organization, and certainly not for the church. Biblical stories of God's call often surprise us by the way unspectacular people become spokespersons for God's reconciling mission—some of them highly educated, others not so much.

What I do know, however, is that many ordinary people who said, "Here am I," and gave themselves to study, prayer and practise in one of our Mennonite seminaries, have become spiritually mature, respected leaders in congregations, businesses, universities and social service organizations. During my travels in the last two years, many alumni have told me about the transformative impact their seminary education had on the quality of

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their leadership.

• **A SOBER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

There's a lot of talk these days about "the future of the seminary"—from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to *Canadian Mennonite*, from the Association of Theological Schools (with its 260 accredited institutions), to the "Sam-Hedrin" (20-plus retired Mennonite professionals with whom I recently spoke). Lots of concerned people are cogitating about how theological education needs to change in order to better serve the church.

I have participated in countless conversations about the cultural, pedagogical, financial, demographic and spiritual dynamics in flux as we form leaders for a rapidly changing world. There are calls to move more learning from the classroom to "the streets" with extended apprenticeships. Financial strains faced by many seminaries have led to a search for fiscally sustainable models. Educational pedagogy is expanding to make learning accessible to people from a distance. Faculty are

shifting their specialized focus to create interdisciplinary learning experiences.

But more needs to change. The future church may not look much like the established congregations of today, with our lined-up pews and scripted-bulletin worship. The evidence is everywhere that people are hungry for spirituality and for genuine relationships, but they are not coming to church like they used to. The church has become a modern, secularized institution, say authors Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger. Many spiritually minded people are going elsewhere to feed their hunger.

What if the primary purpose of an Anabaptist biblical seminary was to educate Christian leaders to form and guide communities of shalom? And what if we recognized in our fragmenting, individualistic world, how singularly important it is to form leaders within community? What if a seminary was an intentional community, a community solely devoted to understand the Bible, to speak fluently about faith, to discern the Spirit at work in culture, and to grow into spiritually

mature disciples of Jesus Christ?

One doesn't acquire the qualities needed to serve as trustworthy, Christ-centred leaders without being deeply formed by the biblical story. Nor will one be ready to serve the reconciling mission of God without theological fluency as ambassadors of Christ's peace. Within a culture polarized around divisive issues, one won't confidently lead community discernment without practice. Nor can people serve as worthy spiritual guides without themselves growing in spiritual maturity.

More than ever, we need seminaries for reimagining Bible study, theological fluency, cultural discernment and spiritual maturity.

• **READING THE BIBLE:** More and more of us want to engage the Bible on its own terms, not through some preconceived theory imposed on the Bible. We want to read the Bible as the astonishing drama it is—a multi-splendoured drama of the Word who was there at the beginning with God, and yet became one of us—full

(Continued on page 18)

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(Continued from page 17)

of grace and truth.

Canadian Mennonite educational leader Gerald Gerbrandt told a recent gathering of Mennonites that we have had inadequate imagination for what Scripture is and how it can be authoritative. Scripture is an ancient narrative book. We need to treat it in a manner consistent with its true nature, he said. Scripture offers us a great authoritative and divinely inspired drama that is as yet unfinished. We need to go back to Scripture to better understand our role in the drama.

An Anabaptist biblical seminary that's worth its salt will teach Spirit-attuned readers to translate, preach, pray, sing and dramatize the biblical narratives. Why? Because of their enduring ability to reveal God to us wherever we are.

• **THEOLOGICAL FLUENCY:** Whether because of laziness, fear or immaturity, many of us are unable to think, write or talk persuasively about what we believe. This was hardly a shortcoming of the Anabaptists!

Theology should not be an esoteric discipline reserved for the experts. Theology is what any faith-filled person does—more or less well—to make sense of how God is active amid the dilemmas, tragedies and joys of everyday life.

An Anabaptist seminary will make fluency in the language of faith a priority. We draw from deep wells of ancient wisdom to enrich conversations about who God is, who we are and how we are called to live. To become confident, respectful witnesses, we practise theological conversation in cross-cultural, interracial and inter-religious contexts.

• **DISCERNING CULTURE:** Gone are the days when we could hide in ethnically separate, homogeneous enclaves of assumed purity. Gone are easy divisions into tidy categories of sacred and secular. But front and centre is the need for us to discern the spirits, to become detectors of where the Spirit of God is moving.

Our communities are increasingly diverse, making life richer and making it more challenging to find the kind of unity

that Christ so longed for his disciples to cultivate. Jesus prayed for his disciples, just before he was arrested: *"May [they] become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me"* (John 17:23).

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary New Testament professor Mary Schertz writes that the Mennonite tendency to divide over disagreements, rather than learn to be a discerning and yet unified community, has not been one of our strengths. Taking the cross of Jesus seriously means that suffering love is to be played out in the arena of discernment around difficult issues, as in all other areas of our common life. There can be no holier work, she says, no more compassionate work, than to understand each other and God better by engaging in the difficult conversations that we currently find ourselves in the midst of.

The splits our community has often experienced are a tragic fracturing of Christ's body. It is no wonder that many people's immediate association with religion—Christian and otherwise—is of conflict. An Anabaptist seminary has an important responsibility to educate leaders who can guide discernment processes around difficult issues, so that everyone will know by our costly love whose disciples we are.

• **SPIRITUAL MATURITY:** Almost nothing is more painful and disillusioning than when a trusted leader is found to be abusive, deceptive or more into self-promotion than the glory of God.

An Anabaptist seminary provides opportunities in an overwhelmingly self-indulgent culture to grow in spiritual maturity. We invite each other to grow as disciples of Christ, willing to be accountable with our longings, failures and joys in spiritual friendships.

We invite each other to affirm lifestyles that steward the goodness of creation and are financially disciplined. We invite each other to affirm vocations of singleness and uphold public covenants of marriage. We are committed to fostering sexual shalom, as theology professor Gayle Gerber Koontz calls it, holding together the unity of the church and holiness of life.

As spiritually mature people of faith, we invite each other to covenant together

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to incarnate the saving reign of God. We covenant together to become, by the grace of God, the visible body of Christ, led by the Spirit.

• **CONCLUSION:** The qualities I name above—biblical understanding, theological fluency, cultural discernment and spiritual maturity—seem to be weakening in many of our faith communities. Thus my assertion with full-hearted

conviction that more than ever we need seminaries re-imagined. The mission of an Anabaptist biblical seminary to educate Christian leaders to form and guide communities of shalom has become ever-more critically important. ✎

Sara Wenger Shenk is president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

Headed in the right direction

EMU grad now studying medicine with an international focus

BY ANDREW JENNER
Eastern Mennonite University

Bethany Johnson is exactly where she wanted to be after graduating from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in 2012 with a degree in biology: well on her way to a career in medical missions.

Johnson traces her interest in practising medicine overseas all the way back to elementary school in Pennsylvania, where she heard a presentation about the work

of Mercy Ships, a non-profit organization that sends hospital ships to give free medical care in developing countries. Years

later, when she began to think about post-graduate life, she turned to Google to see what opportunities she could find.

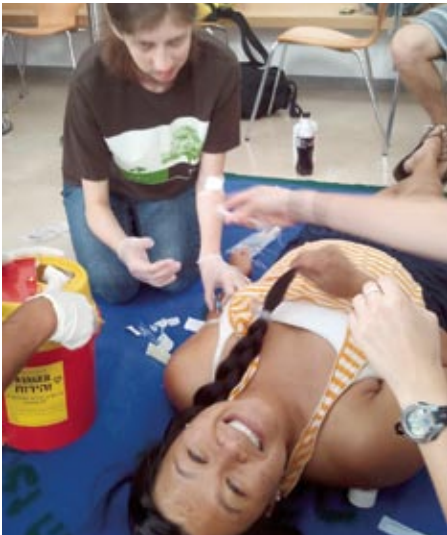
Among those that popped up was the Medical School for International Health (MSIH) in Beer-Sheva, Israel, a partnership between the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and the Columbia University Medical Center for training medical students with a special emphasis on global health and preventative medicine.

“What makes our program unique is, we take additional courses that focus on having a global perspective,” says Johnson, whose first-year courses largely include traditional medical classes like physiology, microbiology and biochemistry.


While the program follows a North American curriculum, and is designed for medical licensing in the U.S. or Canada, all the classes incorporate global health perspectives and issues in some way. One distinctive first-year course, with special emphasis on international health, is Clinical and Global Medicine, which looks at issues and skills related to cross-cultural

(Continued on page 20)


PHOTO COURTESY OF BETHANY JOHNSON



Bethany Johnson is a first-year student at the Medical School for International Health in Beer-Sheva, Israel.



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(Continued from page 19)

healthcare. Johnson and her classmates also study Medical Hebrew during their first two years.

Once she reaches the fourth year of the program, Johnson will have an opportunity to do a clinical rotation in several countries in Asia, Africa and South America. Johnson says that as of now she's interested in a rotation in India.

In the meantime, she continues to work at her first-year course load, which was interrupted in unexpected fashion last November by violence between the Israeli military and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip. On the first day of fighting, sirens went off throughout the night as rockets were fired toward Beer-Sheva. Johnson and a classmate, who live together less than a kilometre from the school, stayed inside the whole time, as all students were instructed to do by the school.

After several days of periodic rocket sirens, during which classes at MSIH were cancelled, Johnson caught a train north to calmer areas in Israel. When fighting

continued for a week, the school cancelled classes for the remainder of the semester, and Johnson flew home to Pennsylvania on American Thanksgiving Day. It gave her an early winter break, but it also meant an early end: she flew back to Israel just before Christmas for a special session of classes and exams to make up for lost time.

In Beer-Sheva, Johnson has also taken advantage of the opportunity to interact with new friends and neighbours who aren't enrolled as MSIH, and has gotten involved with a Jewish cultural exchange group for American students. Johnson, who went on EMU's Guatemala-Mexico cross-cultural trip when she was a student, says that being at EMU "definitely helped" prepare her for this new cross-cultural experience, which she plans to extend from the next few years of med school into an entire career of overseas medicine.

At this point, she's not exactly sure exactly where she'll end up, or what kind of medical missions she'll become involved with, but for now, she knows she's headed in the right direction. ☘

Activist, peace trainer and role model

Ouyporn Khuankaew aims to equip and inspire a new generation of peacebuilders

BY LINDSAY WRIGHT

Canadian Mennonite University
WINNIPEG

Ouyporn Khuankaew travelled a long way to teach at the 2012 Canadian School for Peacebuilding at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) last summer, and she says the trip was well worth it.

Khuankaew is a Buddhist, feminist peace trainer who has been working with activists in south and southeast Asia since 1995. In 2002, she co-founded International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice, which runs its own centre and works with activists in Burma, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Courses include Buddhist peacebuilding, non-violent action, counselling for trauma survivors, leadership for social change, gender and sexuality, feminism and Buddhism, and meditation.

On a personal level, she is a domestic trauma survivor. That experience, along with the injustices and gender inequality she has witnessed in Asia, led her to pursue a life dedicated to peacebuilding and to inspiring a new generation of women to do the same.

"My experience at the Canadian School of Peacebuilding was wonderful," Khuankaew says. "I loved how the event was organized, with an emphasis on small groups and integrating diverse groups of people. Everyone was so welcoming, so eager to know each other. We were really able to accomplish a lot in a very short period of time. The students especially were very analytical and engaged—especially the young women—and it was exciting to see."

"I hope that the course that I taught inspired them," she continues. "When I was young, we didn't have role models for women doing this kind of work. I hope



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that I can be that kind of mentor, increasing women's confidence and helping them connect with likeminded people, so they don't feel alone in their passions and their efforts. I feel a responsibility to help create a space for women to feel connected and empowered. No one is alone."

"Peacebuilding has become one of the major issues of this generation," she says. "We are all in need of peace, whether in family conflicts or widespread war. I admire CMU's commitment not just to peace, but to peacebuilding, and the way they are involving women in the solution. In my work, I have seen the impact of feminine involvement. In Burma, when we teach women to be peacebuilders, they can go back and teach men and women, and they help to increase the role and status of women in their communities."

Khuankaew feels strongly about equipping women as leaders in the peacebuilding process. "In our culture, we assume that women are natural peacemakers," she says. "We see this role at work in our families, and, as important as that is, this role should not be confined to the home. We need it on a global level. A woman's perspective and approach [are] different than a man's. We are uniquely qualified to be peacebuilders. From a young age, we are trained through gender roles to be caring and loving, to

Khuankaew feels strongly about equipping women as leaders in the peacebuilding process

share and listen and experience—and that is the foundation of peacemaking. . . . We intuitively understand the emotional and psychological aspects of peacebuilding. We need to be committed to deliver the training required to empower women to take that understanding and use it to impact the world around them."

"We need to use our hearts, and use

more than intellect and logic to solve our issues," says Khuankaew. "Our world is in trouble because we use our heads without our hearts. When we use our hearts, there's no argument or anger there. It equalizes us. Women are more in touch with that. But in the end, we all need to work together. It's not a matter of men versus women, it's humans working toward a solution together." ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF CMU



Khuankaew

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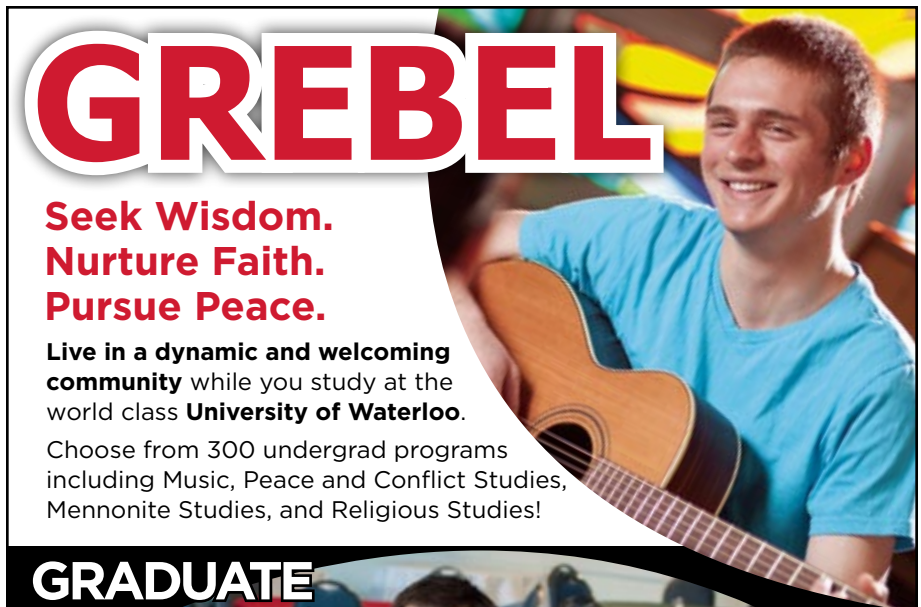
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THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Just a 'peace' of Jesus?

BY SEAN EAST

Pease. The final frontier. This is the hope of the Mennonite Church.

Its mission: To witness in a strange new world. To seek renewed life, renewed community, and to boldly go where only one man has gone before.

I operate in some decidedly non-Mennonite circles and responses are interesting when I self-identify as a Mennonite. After inquiries about my plain black suit and horse and buggy, even those unable to articulate another piece of Mennonite theology know that Mennonites and peace go together like the cookies and cream of an Oreo. Whichever part you may choose to eat first—I'm surprised we haven't had a church split over Oreo-eating preferences yet!—you can't have one without the other.

I enjoy a love-hate relationship with peace; most of the time I love to hate it for what I perceive it represents. I use quotations to reflect how it grates on my nerves, like fingernails scratching along the surface of a chalkboard. I find in contemporary society—and dare I say church?—a narrow word usage describing the absence of armed conflict.

I wonder if our preaching of peace has become similarly narrow, focused primarily on war and its instruments like fighter planes, and secondarily on the man who is our source and example of peace.

My personal experience within our churches reflects an unspoken assumption that encouraging people to live a life of peace (as per Mennonite exegesis and hermeneutics) implies an invitation for humans to be reconciled to God. But peace advocacy is not limited to faith-based groups, and I find myself frustrated by this implied belief that preaching peace and preaching Jesus are synonymous.

With this history and attitude, I walked



into Tom Yoder Neufeld's Biblical Foundations of Peace class at Conrad Grebel University College last fall. (See page 4 for a feature interview with the now-retired professor.) I walked out enriched, but with unreasonable expectations unsatisfied—more confused than clear, more questioning

than resolving.

My hope was to confirm that Mennonite preaching of peace is misguided, not because peace is undesirable, since I am not an advocate of indiscriminate war, but because we exaggerate its centrality to the biblical narrative. After a detailed exegesis of the biblical words of "peace"—in Hebrew, *shalom*, and in

Greek, *eirene*—my hope was both confirmed and denied.

Peace in the Bible has a more comprehensive meaning than I might want to admit. It can include, but is not limited to, the absence of war (God as peace-keeper), and represents a fundamental shift in relationships brought about by the presence of God. God-as-peacemaker peace in the Bible is both individual and relational. It includes completeness, wholeness, safety, provision, reconciliation and unity, and is rooted in Yahweh. It describes the state in which God intends all his creation to live, and is a central message of the biblical narrative.

I find us quick to proclaim an incomplete conception of peace exclusively framed as a reconciled relationship with God, but if we imply that reconciliation with God doesn't play a big "piece" in "peace," isn't our conception of peace equally incomplete? What does it really

mean to not resist, or resist in unconventional ways, and what if we translate that verse as "do not retaliate"? How do we respond when the peace of the weak is oppressively violated by the ambition of the strong?

Biblical peace is central to Jesus' teaching, but is the totality of Jesus reflected in the preaching of peace? In our teaching and practice, do we risk a separation of faith and life in a way inconceivable to the apostle Paul? Might he express equal surprise at those proclaiming faith without living a life of comprehensive peace and those living a life of comprehensive peace without a proclamation of faith?

Are we interested in only a "peace" of Jesus—or would we rather have the whole darned thing? I remain convinced that what we proclaim cannot simply be the establishment of peace, but must simultaneously point those who may not know him towards a relationship with the establisher of peace as well.

I wonder if the peace theology of our Mennonite fabric and tradition has

I find myself frustrated by this implied belief that preaching "peace" and preaching Jesus are synonymous.

become so determined a focus that its distinctiveness distracts us from our shared distinctiveness with all Christian denominations: as followers of Christ. And yet it is with much surprise that I find myself longing not for the cessation of preaching of peace, but for a broadening our conception of it, and for our church to exhibit as much passion in preaching Christ, who established our peace, as we do advocating for the peace he established.

I get really excited thinking about how he really could become our peace, and about how the political and social changes we so desperately advocate might just come right along with it. ✎

Sean East is pastor of West Hills Mennonite Fellowship, New Hamburg, Ont., and a student in the master of theological studies program at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.

FOCUS ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION



Long-time donors and friends of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Katie Epp and John Epp, joined their granddaughter, Rebecca Longhurst, a student, at CMU's Tuition Freedom Day. John graduated from Mennonite Brethren Bible College, a forerunner of CMU, in 1953. Katie is a former music faculty member.

CMU celebrates Tuition Freedom Day

Canadian Mennonite University
WINNIPEG

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) gathered on Nov. 26, 2012, to celebrate Tuition Freedom Day, recognizing the assistance of donors and the government of Manitoba for their support of higher education. Tuition Freedom Day is the time when revenue from student tuition fees would technically run out and support from the community essentially kicks in to pick up the rest of the actual costs for the students' university education.

CMU president Cheryl Pauls noted that CMU operates with a budget of \$13.4 million, out of which approximately \$4.7 million (35 percent) is paid through student tuitions and fees. The Manitoba government supports CMU with an annual grant of approximately \$4.0 million (30 percent), while \$2.9 million (22 percent) is raised through ancillary business, meal plans and campus rentals. The final 13 percent of CMU's budget, \$1.8 million, reflects the

generous giving of individual donors and businesses, along with the undergirding of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Brethren Church congregations.

"I am honoured to be here on behalf of the CMU student body to say thank you to all of those who so generously support our education," said fourth-year CMU student Gabrielle Lemire, who is completing her bachelor's degree in Bible and theology, and mathematics. "Education is so much more than just information, or the way to get a job. Education has the potential to help us learn who God has created us to be in a supportive environment. And this is exactly the kind of environment that CMU provides."

"Going to CMU would not be possible

[Thank you for investing in us....!]

(Gabrielle Lemire)

/// Briefly noted

Goshen College adds exercise science major

GOSHEN, IND.—Goshen College is adding a new exercise science major and changing the Physical Education Department to the Kinesiology Department. The exercise science major is for students interested in focusing specifically on the scientific aspects of physical education, such as exercise physiology, biomechanics, motor learning and exercise testing. Students will also learn how to help people live healthier lives through nutrition, exercise and injury rehabilitation. The exercise science major will be a rigorous program, requiring anatomy, physiology and chemistry. Students who are successful in the program will be prepared for careers in exercise science and for graduate school. Exercise science majors have the option of getting a concentration in fitness leadership. In terms of the department name change, "the name kinesiology more accurately describes current programming in our department at Goshen College," says department chair Jewel Lehman. "Kinesiology is a broad term, which refers to the scientific study of human movement, and it incorporates the varied areas of study within the discipline. Our department is evolving with the discipline and this growth merits the name change. Scholarly study, experience and professional practice are all included as important aspects within the program."

—Goshen College

for many of us if it weren't for the financial support that our broader community has given. On behalf of all the students here at CMU, thank you for investing in us, and entrusting us with this precious gift," said Lamire, addressing the gathering in CMU's chapel. ///

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

COVER STORY

Chin church supports fellow Burmese believers

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Victor Khambil, secretary for the Chin Christian Church, Kitchener, was front and centre at a peaceful protest at city hall on Jan. 19.

An emerging congregation in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, the Chin came out to support the Kachin in Burma (also known as Myanmar), who have been embroiled in a more-than-half-century battle for autonomy with the majority Burmese.

Khambil explains that the Kachin are the same ethnic group in Burma as the Chin, but they live in different states. Burma is overwhelmingly Buddhist, with only 4 percent Christian, but the Chin, Kachin and Karen peoples are 95 percent or more Christian. They have long been oppressed by the majority, especially as Kachin Province is rich in resources, which the majority wants to exploit. The Kachin and Burmese military had a 17-year ceasefire, which was broken by the military in 2011.

Burmese Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, recently elected as a representative in the Burmese government, noted that, unless the government will make peace with the ethnic groups, there can be no real democracy in Burma. There are claims that, during the recent Christmas holidays, the Burmese military targeted churches filled with Christian worshippers.

The Kitchener protest was one of many rallies taking place all around the world. Because Canada recently rewarded the increase in freedom in Burma with the opening of an embassy there, the protesters called on the federal government to bring pressure to bear on the Burmese government to recognize the rights of minority peoples.

A ceasefire announced on Jan. 18 was not holding as the protesters chanted in

front of the Kitchener city hall. The protest was attended by Gord Martin, executive director of Vision Ministry Canada, which supports the work of Christians in Burma, and Brian Bauman, missions minister for MC Eastern Canada, who had recently



Victor Khambil of the Chin Christian Church, a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada emerging congregation, leads chants with his megaphone in support of the Kachin people of Burma.

been on a teaching tour to Burma among the Chin. ❧

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO



Colouring books that heal: Continuous violent conflict and recurring, disastrous weather events got Joji Pantoja, a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker with Peacebuilders in the Philippines, thinking about how to help people overcome ongoing psychological trauma. In response, she connected with graphic artist Kublai Ponce-Millan, to create a unique set of three colouring books that focus on the themes of peace, love and happiness. The illustrations are designed to help children and adults meditate, and thereby reclaim a positive outlook in the midst of lives traumatized by flooding and the aftermath of decades-long armed conflict. The pictures, designed for adults as well as children, depict familiar, comforting scenes, from images of a mother and child to people fishing or planting trees. In an online video about the colouring books (mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1944), she explains the benefit for adults who pick up a crayon or two: "The little lines give you some time to meditate. . . . It relaxes your mind as you colour."

'Faith' influenced federal whistleblower

BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher

A Department of Justice lawyer with Mennonite roots is paying the price for blowing the whistle on his own department. Edgar Schmidt, who says he grew up on a farm near Arnaud, Man., has been suspended without pay for violating what it considers his duties as a public servant and lawyer.



Schmidt

"Whistleblowing sounds so shrill," Schmidt told *Canadian Mennonite* in explaining just what happened when he challenged his own department in Federal Court on Jan. 15, revealing details about how federal lawyers have been conducting pre-enactment examinations of proposed legislation that are required by law. Schmidt maintained that government lawyers are instructed to raise possible infringements of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms only when inconsistency with the Charter is certain.

"Even if a bill is deemed to have a 95-percent probability of contravening the Charter," said a Jan. 20 *Toronto Star* editorial supporting Schmidt's actions, "as long as some argument, however dubious, can be made in its defence, the minister is not to be notified."

Federal Court judge Simon Noel heard from the two sides in the Schmidt case, according to the *Globe and Mail*, and criticized Ottawa's response to the lawyer. "The day after the filing of this statement [by Schmidt]," the newspaper reported, "bang: You're suspended."

While the case is legally complicated, Schmidt told *Canadian Mennonite* that it boils down to whether the department is to ask itself whether or not any bill or regulation is consistent with Canada's Charter and Bill of Rights, or can be content to ask itself only whether some argument can be made in the general direction of consistency. Schmidt's duties included carrying out, in the name of the Justice Minister

and his deputy minister, these examinations regarding the conformity of legislation with Charter rights. This is a task assigned to all legislative counsel (lawyers who draft legislation).

Schmidt denied that his actions are in any way politically motivated because he has been working in this role for the majority party in power over

the years and the practice to which he is objecting has been followed under both Liberal and Conservative governments. It is more about the relationship between the executive branch of the state and the state as a whole: Are parliament's instructions in the examination provisions being carried out by the department, which is part of the executive branch?

According to the *Globe and Mail*, Joanna Gualtieri, an advocate for public servant whistleblowing who sat in on the hearing,

said that while Schmidt doesn't highlight specific cases, his argument raises a wide range of political questions, such as whether this government's crime measures violate the Charter rights. "The implications of this case are huge," she is quoted as saying. "I consider it to be one of the most profound whistleblowing cases I've seen."

In its editorial, the *Star* cited an interview on CBC's *As it Happens*, when Schmidt said he finally decided to bring the matter before the courts only after a trip to Egypt underscored "how fragile democracy is and how much it needs care and tending." The *Star* bluntly called the government's actions the "stifling of dissent."

The case could drag on for months, predicted Schmidt, and will probably not be resolved in this calendar year. He said that while his life is on hold, at age 60 he was close enough to retirement that it wouldn't impact his career as much as if younger colleagues had tackled the issue. "I felt it was incumbent on me, as a senior lawyer in the department, to bring this issue to the fore," he said.

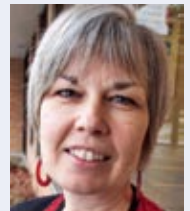
Schmidt said that while he has a limited connection to the Mennonite faith, his values were formed and informed early on—the values of integrity, honesty and courage—from his Mennonite upbringing. ❧

/// New staff

Communitas Supportive Care Society names new CEO

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Karyn Santiago has been appointed as the new chief executive officer (CEO) of Communitas Supportive Care Society, effective March 1. Santiago will bring experience in local and international community development to the CEO role, and was selected after a comprehensive search. Communitas is an accredited social service agency providing support and care for people living with mental and physical disabilities. These services are provided throughout B.C. by some 600 people serving as staff and contracted caregivers. With its roots in Mennonite Central Committee B.C., Communitas continues to serve as a faith-based organization, partnering with social service agencies throughout B.C. as well as with the Florence Centre in Zaporizhzhye, Ukraine, an organization focused on community development. One of Communitas's most recent projects is Matthew's House, currently under construction. As part of the Abbotsford Campus of Care, shared with Canuck Place and Abbotsford Hospice, Matthew's House will provide respite services to children and families living with complex healthcare challenges.

—Communitas



Santiago

'Helping hands'

Altona Mennonite responds to Hurricane Sandy flooding

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

When last November rolled around, Sandra Klassen realized her Sunday school materials for the winter quarter still had not arrived. Klassen, Sunday school superintendent at Altona Mennonite Church, Man., had ordered the materials early in September and now Advent was fast approaching.

Klassen called Kathy Shantz of MennoMedia in the Waterloo, Ont., office to inquire about the delay. "Kathy explained that all of our books were delayed because the New Jersey trucking company they use for shipping was flooded and had been without hydro for five days because of Hurricane Sandy," she said.

"We at MennoMedia were in the midst of shipping the Canadian winter quarterly orders from our Harrisonburg, Va., warehouse when Hurricane Sandy hit," explained Shantz, Canadian customer service and marketing rep for MennoMedia. "We use a trucking company that has their hub based in New Jersey. We got a call from them that their hub was flooded and without power."

Hurricane Sandy, classified as the largest Atlantic hurricane on record, hit the northeastern coast of the United States at the end of last October.

The next Sunday, Klassen told her Sunday school teachers and students about the books being delayed because of Hurricane Sandy. "I suggested if any of them wanted to write letters or draw pictures, and tell them we are thinking of them, I would send them on," she said. "I explained that we would be fine without the curriculum for Advent, but that some of them need places to work and places to live, and we hope that God will help them through this devastation and the rebuilding."

Fifteen students from the Kindergarten to Grade 2 class and the Grade 3 to 6 class created "helping hands" artwork with words of encouragement for those who suffered loss as a result of Hurricane Sandy.

Klassen sent the artwork to MennoMedia to forward to the trucking company. "We hope it will give them a little bit of sunshine and remind them that God is thinking of them, and we are, too," said Klassen.

"I received the packet just before Christmas and it was a wonderful encouragement," said Shantz. Before forwarding the artwork, she put all the pictures on her wall and took a photograph to share with MennoMedia staff.

When Glenn Graham of APC Postal Logistics in New Jersey received the package, he responded to Shantz, saying, "The pictures are great. . . Thank you! It's been an extremely difficult situation and could not have happened at a worse time, as we were in peak season, plus transitioning to a new online billing system, which was completely lost in the flood. . . To top it all off, once the power came back on, it tripped a circuit in my boss's house and burned half of it down."

Klassen and her Sunday school teachers and students never realized they had a personal connection to Hurricane Sandy. "When I told the children the story, their eyes grew wide," she said. "We had been thinking about the people directly affected and praying for them. This connection drew us closer to their plight."

When MennoMedia heard the hub was flooded and without power, it was able to delay some of its shipments, but some had already left the warehouse. "Some shipments arrived at churches unharmed but late, while others either did not arrive at all, or arrived at churches flood-soaked and mouldy. These were mostly smaller shipments of *Rejoice!*, *Purpose* and *Leader* magazines," said Shantz. Churches from Ontario to Alberta were affected. "We scrambled to reshipe as churches began to call us with damaged or missing magazines, and informed others to please be patient, as their shipments were delayed but in the mail."

"Things are pretty much back to normal," Shantz reported late last month. "Some churches waited up to four weeks, as it was a difficult judgment call whether to reshipe or wait for a package to arrive late. In some cases, we reshipped and then churches ultimately got two packages." ❧

MENNOMEDIA PHOTO BY KATHY SHANTZ



Kathy Shantz hung the 'Helping hands' pictures from Altona Mennonite Church's Sunday school in her Waterloo, Ont., MennoMedia office to take a picture before sending them on to MennoMedia's shipping company in New Jersey.

THE LEFT, THE RIGHT AND THE RIGHTEOUS: PART I

Dodging the liberal-conservative trap

BY WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

As Canada sinks ever-deeper into a quagmire of left-right divisions, will Mennonites manage to transcend this charged duality? Can we find healthy ways to deal with the formidable diversity among us?



number of whom, he predicts, would agree with “many of the policies of the current government.”

I take his point. I just moved to the farm. Specifically, I moved from Winnipeg, where I attended the most granola-ish (lefty) Mennonite

congregation in the city, to south-central Manitoba, where I now live in the most Conservative federal riding outside of Alberta and probably the most Mennonite riding anywhere: Portage-Lisgar.

In the last election, Candace Hoepner (now Bergen) received 76 percent of the vote. The next best was 9.8 percent for NDP candidate Mohammed Alli. Within the riding, the predominantly Mennonite towns of Winkler, where I grew up, and Altona, plus surrounding villages, were even more Conservative, at 85 percent. Across the river, the predominantly Menno towns in the Provencher riding voted 81.5 percent for Conservative Vic Toews.

Surely, many of these people would have considered CRA’s reminder appropriate, even if the more vocal *Canadian Mennonite* readers felt entirely otherwise.

Kris Peters navigates the differences within the Menno world regularly. As he told me by e-mail, he pastors a Mennonite Brethren church in an electoral district that is “more thoroughly Conservative” than any other in Canada and he sits on the board of MCC Alberta. The trip from Linden, Alta., to MCC meetings is an hour-long ride down the length of the spectrum of belief. He says it is “a very long journey philosophically from what my congregation and community thinks, to what many people in

MCC think.”

He talks about how liberal assumptions and conservative, or evangelical, assumptions affect church work. Conservatives believe the world is “saved at the level of personal relationships,” and society and government reflect the quality of those relationships. The liberal idea, Peters suggests, is that “people are trapped in systems of poverty, racism, inequality, and that only the government is big enough to break the system.”

When conservatives accuse MCC of being “too political”—an accusation often fired in my direction when I worked on indigenous rights issues out of the MCC headquarters in Winnipeg—Peters sees this as “a complaint against the assumption that the government solves our problems.” I always interpreted it differently, but frankly, my mind jumped straight to counter-accusations, so I never asked my critics what they meant.

Behind the role of government, Peters identifies another key difference in perspective—the question of whether we believe people are “fundamentally selfish” or “fundamentally good.” Are programs that address only temporal matters enough? If poverty and racism were alleviated without addressing spiritual needs, would people just find other ways to express selfishness?

Peters says the evangelical insistence on a gospel component to poverty and social justice work “is not just about heaven and hell, but about achieving the necessary breakthrough at the level of the heart, so as to open the way for permanent change at the level of society.” The underlying question is whether or not Jesus is the “only way to break the power of human selfishness.”

Peters offers something rare, valuable and challenging: personal familiarity with a wide range of Mennonites and a good-hearted attempt to understand some of the differences. ❧

In Part II of this article, Braun will explore the not-so-good-hearted urges that opposing views often evoke—“How could he be so stupid?”—and the possibility of leaving the left-right dichotomy behind altogether.

That diversity was illustrated candidly, perhaps too candidly, when James Loewen said the following as part of a *Globe and Mail* online forum in 2011: “Most folks at the Mennonite church I attend [a Mennonite Brethren church in B.C.] will vote Conservative, particularly as the candidate attends our church. [But] in the faith-based non-profit world that I work in [he was restorative justice coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) at the time], no one would vote for the Conservative Party even if you paid them to.”

The awkward fact that we Mennonites fill out the full breadth of the ideological spectrum was again highlighted when the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) reminded this magazine to curb what the agency perceived as partisan leanings. The six offending articles would have been viewed by most as closer to the liberal left than the conservative right.

And while a majority of readers who responded to the controversy sided with the magazine, the other responses were equally telling. One letter writer pointed out that the Conservatives have been elected by “thousands of Mennonites” and the editor had “angered many of them.”

Ernie Neufeld of Leamington, Ont., gently suggested the magazine has become “a bit out of touch with the grassroots at home on the farm,” a good

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Exploring mind, body and soul connections

Yoga retreat brings spiritual insights

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent

HOPE, B.C.

Determination to exercise more, or to improve one's spiritual life, are on many people's lists as they begin a new year. Thirty people who met at Camp Squeah from Jan. 11 to 13 found a way to do both through a retreat with the theme of "Breath of God" and the practice of yoga from a Christian perspective.

Angelika Dawson of Abbotsford, B.C., who spearheaded the retreat, had taken up yoga at her local recreation centre over a year ago, to increase her physical flexibility and strength. She loved the meditation and breathing exercises, but wasn't always comfortable with the secular direction of imagining peace and light, or the distracting music.

"I meditate on God/Jesus/Holy Spirit when I meditate, and I began to wonder what it would be like to do yoga in a Christian environment," Dawson said. "That's really where the idea was born, and then it wasn't much of a leap to think about doing a retreat at Squeah, which is one of my favourite places on earth."

Dawson was aware that yoga is often suspect among Christians due to its association with eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. "I wondered if other Christians avoided yoga because they felt it wasn't something a Christian could do," she said. "I thought, if we could offer a retreat from a Christian perspective, then it might help other Christians discover the value of yoga as a physical/mental/spiritual practice, loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength."

Realizing the idea could be controversial, Dawson first approached the camp director and got approval for the idea from the camp board. She contacted Laura Loewen,

the seniors pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, who had been introduced to yoga when she pastored a Mennonite congregation in Montreal years ago. Loewen's mentor, a Catholic priest, knew of a Christian yoga instructor in Vancouver, Ingrid Hauss, who agreed to lead the weekend at Squeah. It was important to the organizers that the instructor be a Christian, while respecting the eastern roots of yoga, and, after meeting Hauss, they knew she would fit the bill.

The weekend drew both women and men from Mennonite and other churches, both those who were experienced in yoga and first-timers. Hauss led the group through a series of body positions while reciting the Lord's Prayer. Each morning began with stretching, using prayer and meditation as a guide.

Yoga sessions incorporated the idea

that humans are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God. Free time allowed participants to reflect and relax through nature and fellowship. A Sunday worship service led by Loewen included communion, handwashing and worship through movement.

Participants responded enthusiastically with comments of, "Please, please, please do this again!" and, "Can we do it more often?" One man said he came to the retreat because "I worship in my head and I want to learn how to worship in my body." Another participant commented that she didn't think she could easily get back to traditional "up front"-centred worship that didn't involve her whole body.

"It was a wonderful way of quieting and coming to a quiet centre, to God, through movement," Loewen said of the experience.

Dawson agreed that the yoga retreat, a "stretch" for most Mennonite Christians, was indeed a valuable experience. "Personally, it confirmed for me that I can bring my Christian faith to this practice," she said. "What a practice such as yoga does is to help us be aware of meditation as a holistic worship practice, that we worship our Creator God, the Son of God, the Breath/Spirit of God, with our heart, soul, mind and body." ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELIKA DAWSON



Sitting in quiet, yoga retreat participants at Camp Squah experience the presence of God.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Building foundations for life

BY ALYSSA DUECK

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Junior high snow camp is not just about the fun.

Every winter, Camp Valaqua hosts a gathering for Mennonite Church Alberta churches that is a time where we have great food, Bible sessions with a special speaker, and lots of fun!

What I love about snow camp is that there is never a dull moment. Every moment is a time that you will remember for the rest of your life. Of course, there is time for just sitting by the fire to talk, or playing foosball or ping-pong, but you are always doing something.

A highlight for me is not just one thing, but a series of events that lead up to each other. The second night is a mystery

night. First, you have supper with a strange list of food items, followed by Diamond Smugglers, a game full of tricks and suspicion. Last and, in my opinion, best of all, is Mission Impossible, a game of stealth.

The Bible sessions bring us closer to God. The weekend's theme was on foundations and how you should build your life. We had six boxes, each labelled with a different need or want in our life: faith community, relationship with God, caring for others, family/friends, hobbies and school/money/jobs. We focused on how the foundations of our life should be our faith community, relationship with God and caring for others. Putting school

or sports on your foundation is not reliable because they can fall apart unexpectedly, whereas God will always stay strong for you. ❧

Alyssa Dueck is a Grade 8 student who attends Trinity Mennonite Church, DeWinton, Alta.

Falconry program brings wild birds to Camp Squeah

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
HOPE, B.C.

Thanks to a recent innovative outdoor program, campers at Camp Squeah can now experience the thrill of holding and handling birds of prey right on their arm, an art that goes back three millennia.

Professional falconer Joanne Bentley, a.k.a. "The Falcon Lady," has brought her raptors, or birds of prey, on several occasions to the camp. Passionate about these birds, Bentley shares her knowledge and teaches the correct handling of the falcons and hawks. Falcons are the fastest creatures on earth, with the peregrine falcon capable of diving or swooping on its prey at speeds of over 380 kilometres per hour.

Because of the nature of the wild birds, thus far Camp Squeah is able to offer the falconry program only to older campers and school groups, and at family camp in the summer. Teaching sessions help campers appreciate the power of nature through the birds taking off and perching on their leather-gloved hands. One activity involves the campers standing in a circle as they experience the birds taking off and landing from person to person.

"It's quite an amazing experience to have this bird staring at you," comments Dave Wismath of the Camp Squeah staff, who has taken part in the program.

Bringing falconry to Camp Squeah was the brainchild of program director Tim Larson, who hopes that through outdoor education the Squeah experience will be a memorable, educational and spiritual one. ❧

PHOTO BY DARIAN WIEBE-NEUFELD



Ethan Haluza-Delay, Tom Buhr and Noah Thiessen ham it up during a rousing game of broomball at this year's junior high snow camp at Camp Valaqua.

Can we overcome our prejudice?

STORY AND PHOTO BY JESSICA BUHLER

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
SASKATOON

“Why is it that churchgoers tend to be more prejudiced than non-churchgoers?” Delmar Epp raised this question during a series of “Deeper Life” services he conducted over two days at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, last month. Is it “the need for self-protection,” as author James E. Dittes suggests in his book *Bias and the Pious*, he wondered.

Epp, assistant professor of psychology at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, said people often create prejudice based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, physical state, descriptive labels, occupation and hobbies, to name a few. “Is

prejudice a resolvable problem, or an inevitable part of being human?” he asked.

At the opening session on Jan. 12, entitled “Habits of the mind,” Epp suggested that people tend to form groups that give them feelings of belonging, security and predictability. This leads to a form of identity in which they tend to favour their own group over outside groups. This perception hints at opinions of a superior nature, suggesting that their group is the “good” group.

“Can we/must we protect the boundaries of our faith?” Epp posed this question, suggesting that even though the church is instructed in I Peter 1:14-16 to “*be holy, for I am holy*,” Jesus reached out to those

considered not holy—tax collectors, prostitutes, the religious elite, adulterers, and lepers—all held in contempt by the society of his time.

How can the church create an environment that does not practise prejudice? Epp laid out several simple “conditions of contact” that reduce prejudice in the church. Mutual interdependence, a common goal, equal status, a friendly informal setting, self-disclosure and opportunities for friendships are all helpful in overcoming prejudice, he said.

“What the people of Saskatoon will need” in overcoming prejudice, Epp concluded, “is courage, support, perseverance and faith.” ❧



Delmar Epp, assistant professor of psychology at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, led a series of ‘Deeper Life’ services at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, last month, helping participants to overcome their prejudices.

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GOD AT WORK IN US

OBITUARY

A servant leader

Joseph S. Neufeld

Aug. 5, 1928 - June 27, 2012

BY DAVID NEUFELD

Joseph S. Neufeld was born into a large Mennonite family and community in rural Alberta. Having many sisters and brothers, and growing up in the Dirty Thirties, he quickly developed an ability to accommodate others, and be resourceful and generous. He saw Christian faith-in-action modelled, a lesson he took as his own.

Dad was a lifelong learner and educator who began teaching in a rural Alberta one-room school. He had many stories of those early years, finding ways to motivate strapping farm boys who saw little value in school until he showed them how to shoot a puck or throw a softball at recess.

Dad spent seven years at Rosthern Junior College, Sask., where he taught, coached sports teams, directed dramas and helped supervise dorm life. His academic training reflected his love for learning, rather than being driven by single-minded career ambitions. It included a bachelor of Christian education degree from Canadian Mennonite University and ultimately a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Alberta, where he researched the subject of teacher attitudes and open-mindedness.

Dad became a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Regina for the next 24 years, where he touched the lives of hundreds of students wanting to become teachers themselves. Dad never tired of interacting with students, and was not happy when forced to retire from the university at 65.

Another passion was international development, an interest that shaped his broad perspective of the world. In 1964,



Neufeld

he began what was to become a 30-year involvement with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), first as chair of the board of MCC Saskatchewan, then as vice-chair of MCC Canada and a board member of MCC International. He also had the privilege of serving on short-term assignments for MCC

in parts of southeast Asia, Chad, Zaire, Congo and Burkina Faso. A year teaching in Taiwan was a particular highlight, as were multiple teaching assignments in China. Wherever he travelled, Dad embraced new experiences, new foods and meeting new people from all walks of life.

Dad had a strong faith in God and was active in the church, helping establish Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary in the late 1950s, and holding volunteer positions as youth leader, Sunday school teacher, church board member and church counsellor in various congregations for the next 40 years, including Grace Mennonite Church, Regina.

Dad was a strong supporter of the larger church as well. Most summer vacations included car trips across the country and the United States to attend Mennonite gatherings. He could be counted on to ask pointed but constructive questions at these meetings. He also gave countless workshops, along with his life companion and co-educator Jeanette Janzen, on Christian perspectives on work and family life challenges.

Later in life, Dad served on the boards of Canadian Mennonite Bible College, and *Canadian Mennonite* as representative for Saskatchewan, before moving to Winnipeg in November 2011.

Dad was generous with his time. In retirement, his compassion for others was reflected in many hours spent visiting individuals in their homes, in coffee shops and hospitals, and calling friends and family all over the country to encourage them.

Over his lifetime, Dad also loved working with his hands, whether it was helping his brother do chores on the family farm, woodworking projects, or designing and hooking his own rug patterns.

Joe Neufeld's rich life ended on June 27, 2012, after a brief illness. Even as we grieve his sudden passing, we celebrate his life and take inspiration from his model of servant leadership. He is survived by his wife Jeanette; sons Keith (Phyllis) and David (Maureen); grandchildren Chris, Ryan, Nicole and Janelle; and siblings Paul, Trudi and Zelma, and their families. ❧

/// Briefly noted

Portage Mennonite gives new CMU scholarships

WINNIPEG—The small congregation of Portage Mennonite Church in Portage la Prairie, Man., left a generous and far-sighted legacy for the next generation. As a gift to Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), the church, which closed on July 1, 2012, created an endowed fund that will generate two annual scholarships of \$2,500 each to support the studies of future CMU students. Exceptionally active for its size, Portage Mennonite sent members to work with Mennonite Central Committee, Canadian Foodgrains Bank and Mennonite Church Canada programs. One of the awards will be given to an international student or to a student from a first- or second-generation church in Canada, who will be entering or continuing full-time studies in CMU's master of arts program with the intent of preparing for a church leadership role. The other award will be for a full-time student entering or continuing in CMU's music therapy program. Awarding of the scholarships will begin this September. —Canadian Mennonite University

ARTBEAT

BOOK REVIEW

One woman's journey into the pastorate

REVIEWED BY DAVE ROGALSKY
EASTERN CANADA CORRESPONDENT

Guelph Mennonite Church, which Martha Smith Good was pastoring, had requested ordination for her, but the then Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec wanted to license her instead.

When she requested a meeting to discuss why she was being asked to submit to that again, after many years of pastoral service and a previous stint of being commissioned and licensed, she was invited to chair a meeting with the conference's personnel committee. The committee's reasons were put to rest one after another until no valid reason to put off



ordination was left on the table.

In her recently released, self-published memoir, *Breaking Ground: One Woman's Journey into Pastoral Ministry*, Smith Good recounts her parting words, "Since I have not heard any valid reason why the request was refused, I am going to leave and wait for a call to come in for a pre-ordination interview. I eagerly anticipate my ordination."

In 1982, Smith Good became the first woman ordained in conference. Within that year, other women in the conference and the United Mennonite Conference of Ontario were also ordained.

Strength and grace, as exhibited in that meeting, are hallmarks of Smith Good's life and ministry. In recording her memoirs, she reminds the church of where it has so recently been in regards to half of its members and attendees.

Over and over again, Smith Good needed to push against both the church's blindness to her gifts, and her own inner voices negating her because she was a woman. From her conservative Waterloo-Markham Mennonite upbringing, to freezing in an exam at Goshen Biblical Seminary as a mature student, as well as the "interrogation" she received at the first church to which she applied, Smith Good pushed with grace against the church's patterns of doing ministry.

Often, as she was given opportunities to use her gifts, it was her grace and compassion that won over opponents to women in ministry. She graciously ministered to all, supporter or opponent, allowing God to use her gifts.

Smith Good has included few names of those she had to push, even in one particularly painful story where she was "eased" out of a pastoral role in favour of a male candidate by a male pastor and board. This, even after having been called by the congregation. While those who know the history of that congregation could put names to the characters, Smith Good has resisted naming them to the larger church, feeling no need to exact any sort of revenge.

The author is painfully honest about herself as she recounts her own inner struggles. But her vivid dream of driving a bus full of women for whom she is responsible, and who in turn cheer her on at every turn, show her strength and God's inner call.

One wonders that no denominational publisher was interested in her story. Many feminist leaders in and out of the church believe that, while great gains have been made in women's rights and their place in society, the stories of the groundbreakers need to be retold, so that those who now benefit from their struggles do not easily or accidentally relinquish those gains.

To order a copy of the book, e-mail the author at mg.good@me.com. ❧



Martha Smith Good signs her book Breaking Ground: One Woman's Journey into Pastoral Ministry for Jean Shantz at a book-signing event at Wilmot Mennonite Church, Ont., in mid-December.

Briefly noted

MW U.S.A. appoints new *timbrel* editor

Claire DeBerg of Minneapolis, Minn., has been appointed as the new editor of *timbrel* magazine by Mennonite Women U.S.A., following the resignation of Patricia Wells Burdette. DeBerg, an active member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Minneapolis, is a graduate of Bethel University, St. Paul, Minn., and of the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls. She has extensive experience as project manager for numerous websites,




DeBerg

as copywriter and copy editor, and as a writing instructor at the University of Northern Iowa. She is a published writer of poetry and prose, and a musician. "All facets of Mennonite Women U.S.A.'s mission inspire me, especially at this time of technological advancements in the midst of a long-established Anabaptist faith tradition," DeBerg says. "It begs the question: How do Mennonite Women U.S.A. publications

maintain relevancy during exponential change in how we communicate via media? In particular, I am drawn to the notion of 'empowering women as we nurture our life in Christ through . . . hearing each other.' I firmly believe Christ modelled the ultimate example of a 'hearer' when he listened to the people in his community and then continued the conversation by offering insights into the kingdom of heaven." DeBerg began her assignment in January. —Mennonite Women U.S.A.

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Let's talk about it

Why the church needs to discuss sex . . . and how to do it

BY EMILY LOEWEN

Young Voices Co-editor

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOSHEN COLLEGE



Keith Graber Miller, professor of Bible, religion and philosophy at Goshen College, Ind.

Youth growing up in many Mennonite churches could be forgiven for thinking that homosexual sex is the only kind of intercourse people have, because that's the only kind many congregations discuss.

Keith Graber Miller, professor of Bible, religion and philosophy at Goshen College, Ind., says that congregations have been so focused on gay and lesbian relationships that they have missed an opportunity to discuss intimacy with heterosexual youth

priorities.

Twenty years ago, Graber Miller promised himself that he wouldn't give presentations on sexuality if he could not speak about masturbation. While he says that the majority of men and women self-pleasure, including those in relationships, many wonder if it's okay or feel tremendous guilt about it—something he aims to alleviate.

He usually links that discussion to one about pornography because for many

Hearing about sex, or even relationships, pregnancy, adoption and infertility, would foster healthier congregations and help youth feel more comfortable asking questions.

and young adults.

"If I'm heterosexual, I get no guidelines for how to think about my body, sex, sexuality and relating to the other sex," he says. "That's a really bizarre thing."

While some churches, families or youth groups do a good job, many ignore the uncomfortable subject to the possible detriment of future relationships. "I don't know how we can imagine, as a church, that our people are going to grow up to be healthy sexual beings in congregations if the church does not talk about sexuality at all during their adolescent years," he says.

While the topic may make some parents or pastors squirm, many youth have questions the church won't answer.

What to talk about?

The conversation in many churches may focus on homosexual relationships, but youth and young adults often have different

people the two are closely linked. While Graber Miller affirms masturbation, he is against pornography, arguing that it exploits women and can create unrealistic expectations for relationships. He advocates separating masturbation from pornography in order to foster healthier relationships.

In the past, students have come to him, saying, "I'm in a relationship now really for the first time with somebody I really care about, and I'm finding that my past addictions to pornography are affecting the way I'm relating to the person I'm dating, and I don't want to be that kind of person," Graber Miller says.

When serving as youth minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, Anna Rehan also gained an understanding of what youth and young adults want to know, and masturbation is one of many items on the list. She says that many questions are

practical in nature, such as:

- **AT WHAT** point in a relationship should you or shouldn't you have sex?
- **IS IT** okay to live with a partner before marriage?

"Those are realities that they're asking because that's what's out there," says Rehan, who is now retired but serving on

sex, there are variations in what leaders will suggest. While Graber Miller says he is realistic that not all young people will save sex for committed, publicly affirmed relationships, he still presents that as the ideal.

Rehan says that she wants to affirm sex in a committed relationship, warning youth against recreational sex, which she says is harmful over time: "I think that would be

'We want to help our kids think . . . and understand, and so giving them guidelines for a variety of scenarios isn't probably our most helpful strategy.'
(Kathy Giesbrecht)

an interim basis until July.

Wendy (Harder) Eisler also encountered youth with a lot of practical questions throughout her 17 years in youth ministry. "When they start dating, that becomes their world and so they have tons of questions," she says. "I guess to me there wasn't ever a topic that was taboo."

Eisler says that sometimes kids just need a safe space to raise questions they are embarrassed to ask their friends or parents. Having open communication allows teens to understand what their friends are talking about, and then to form their own opinions.

Both Eisler and Graber Miller stress to youth that there are stages of intimacy in relationships, and encourage them to consider the significance of each one. Eisler provided youth with a pamphlet that described different stages of intimacy, and placed the talk in a series of Bible studies on relationships.

Graber Miller often distributes a list of approximately 40 intimate behaviours, from simple things like holding hands all the way to intercourse. He wants to remind youth that there are many acts of intimacy before sex that can have a significant impact on their lives and relationships. "What I want us to get away from is, to think that sex, having sex, is genital-genital sexual intercourse only. To me, there are broader forms of sexual behaviours that involve genitalia that are morally significant and that should not be entered into lightly," he says.

When it comes to guidelines about

our concern . . . to let kids know that you've got these impulses and it feels good for the moment, but what are some of the long-term effects that that can have and how healthy is it in the long run?"

Eisler always made clear to the youth where she stood, but remained open to talking with those who didn't do the same. "What I learned early on in dealing with teenagers is, if you do draw the lines in the sand and you create things really black and white, they stop talking to you."

Kathy Giesbrecht, associate director of leadership ministries for MC Manitoba and a long-time youth pastor, took a similar approach to encouraging a dialogue with youth. When teaching Sunday school, she tries to give them some guidelines, but doesn't set out strict rules, even though that's what some parents might prefer. "We want to help our kids think . . . and understand, and so giving them guidelines for a variety of scenarios isn't probably our most helpful strategy," she says.

How to have the conversation

Once a congregation decides to talk with youth about sex, it faces another significant hurdle: How to bring it up.

Both Eisler and Graber Miller suggest bringing in a facilitator from the congregation or community who is familiar with the topic, such as counsellors, social workers or doctors.

Graber Miller has also asked youth to write down questions on the topic ahead
(Continued on page 36)

PHOTO COURTESY OF WENDY EISLER



Wendy Eisler is the former youth pastor of Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

PHOTO BY EMILY LOEWEN



Kathy Giesbrecht is associate director of leadership ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA REHAN



Anna Rehan is the interim youth minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

(Continued from page 35)

of time to diffuse some of the tension. Youth groups can also watch popular movies, then discuss “what kind of messages are being communicated and how is that similar to, or different from, what you hear from the church and from your school and from your peers,” he says.

the church does talk about sexuality and bodies, and maybe it’s okay for me to talk to people here about them, too,” Graber Miller says.

Why it’s important

If congregations choose not to talk about sexuality from a faith perspective, it’s as

*‘At the 2007 assembly, the seminar on sexuality was the most popular and well-attended seminar of the entire week, which just goes to show that youth crave a safe outlet to talk about and learn more about sexuality.’
(Janna Wiebe)*

Giesbrecht suggests bringing in couples or individuals in different stages of life to share about their experiences in adolescence and adulthood, and the stages of their relationships. “That has been helpful because it often will normalize experience, and kids will just see people in the congregation differently,” she says. She has also found that holding both co-ed sessions and separate ones for women and men helps some youth feel safer to voice their questions or concerns.

Youth assemblies or provincial retreats are also good opportunities to have a guest speaker start the conversation. Then youth leaders can pick up the discussion in smaller groups.

Janna Wiebe, youth pastor at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, and a session planner for this year’s youth assembly, says there will be talks with youth about sexuality, although the details aren’t confirmed at this time. “At the 2007 assembly, the seminar on sexuality was the most popular and well-attended seminar of the entire week, which just goes to show that youth crave a safe outlet to talk about and learn more about sexuality,” she says.

While talking with youth is important, both Giesbrecht and Graber Miller suggest that sexuality should also be part of congregational discussions. Hearing about sex, or even relationships, pregnancy, adoption and infertility, would foster healthier congregations and help youth feel more comfortable asking questions. Observing honest discussion from the pulpit “would help youth in the church say, ‘Oh, look

good as telling youth that anything they hear from friends or the media is good enough, Rehan says. Instead, she says congregations could say, “Here’s another way of thinking about it as Christians. As a child of God, how do we look at this whole picture?”

Some parents, teachers or youth leaders may fear they will encourage more sexual behaviour by talking about it, but Graber Miller says that is unlikely. “We’re not going to make them want to rush out and engage in something,” he says. “They are exposed to this all the time in other kinds of ways. They just haven’t had a chance to think about them from a faith perspective or from an ethical perspective.”

Furthermore, he says that if the church wants to remain relevant, it cannot ignore the issue. “The church will become increasingly irrelevant to youth if they’re not talking about sex and sexuality,” he says.

While Giesbrecht agrees that discussions with youth are important, she firmly believes congregations need to foster conversations about relationships in all age groups. “It’s actually about us as adults, as a whole community, being healthier, and then our children will feel our health,” Giesbrecht says. “They will experience it. That’s the greater gift.” ❧



Loewen conducted her interviews through e-mail, Skype and telephone. Visit youngvoices.canadianmennonite.org to hear interviews with Giesbrecht and Eisler.

Forging a missional fire

STORY AND PHOTO BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor
RICHMOND, B.C.

At one point Christianity was the centre of life in North America; now it has been pushed to the margins. But that's an important place to be, according to Cam Roxburgh.

Mennonite Church British Columbia hosted a day-long missional church seminar at Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond on Jan. 19 called "Faith Qwest: Sharing God's love in changing times." As keynote speaker, Roxburgh, of the Forge Canada Missional Training Network, an organization that equips leaders and churches to become missional, to multiply and to transform neighbourhoods, explained that the church often goes through peaks and valleys, but it is in the valleys that it thrives and becomes stronger.

The way the church has responded to this change in culture by building new models of the church, having revivals and returning to past traditions, is insufficient. "I'm not convinced this will turn it around," Roxburgh said. "We think we can tweak what we do on Sunday morning and they'll still come. But guess what? They ain't coming!"

The same applies to young people not being involved with or attending church, according to him, as these church responses aren't bringing this demographic back either.

Roxburgh suggested that a new way of understanding God and the church could help the church bear witness to God in every action. "I am convinced that a renewed theological vision of the church on mission, where we bear witness to God in every action, will strengthen the church," he said.

According to Roxburgh, this happens

when Christians obey the greatest commandments: "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself."

During the course of the day, youth and young adult participation in church and incidents of young people leaving the church were recurring concerns that came up in discussions and in Roxburgh's speaking.

Although some people talked about how technology has kept young people from engaging fully in the church, Tim Kuepfer, lead pastor at Peace Mennonite, had a more positive story to share. He spoke about his son Josh, who was starting to think more about the church and the role of young people within it ever since he moved away from home. Kuepfer said that in a phone call, Josh told him, "Dad, young people aren't leaving the church because you ask too much of us; they're leaving because they're bored. You aren't asking enough of us." During that call, Josh proposed turning the unused rooms on the top floor of Peace Mennonite into communal housing, building a community garden on the roof and having community meals every week.

Kuepfer later reflected on how the most influential Anabaptist leaders were young when they had their best and brightest ideas. "Grebel, Blaurock . . . they were all under 25," he said.

Young people often have creative ideas on how to improve the church if they are invited to contribute in their own ways, he said, adding, "We live in a time of creative opportunity."

Willard Metzger, executive director of MC Canada, participated in the workshop along with Garry Janzen, executive minister of MC B.C. ☞



Cam Roxburgh of the Forge Canada Missional Training Network, an organization that equips leaders and churches to become missional, to multiply and to transform neighbourhoods, was the keynote speaker at a day-long missional church seminar at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond, B.C., on Jan. 19, called 'Faith Qwest: Sharing God's love in changing times.'

'We think we can tweak what we do on Sunday morning and they'll still come. But guess what? They ain't coming!'

(Cam Roxburgh)

Calendar

British Columbia

Feb. 23: MC B.C. annual meeting and LEADership conference.
March 10: Installation of Bryan Born as president of Columbia Bible College, at Ross Road Community Church, Abbotsford, at 3 p.m.
March 14,28: Columbia Bible College campus view days.
March 23,24: Lenten vespers with Abendmusik Choir at 8 p.m.; (23) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (24) Knox United Church, Vancouver. Offering for Menno Simons Centre.

Classifieds

Announcements

Canadian Word Guild AWARDS

MYSTERIES OF GRACE AND JUDGMENT DVD

For special awards sale see:

www.mysteriesofgrace.com

Calling all Mennonites with interest in East Africa!

You're invited to attend East Africa Connections 2013, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, May 24 - 26, 2013. Speakers include recently returned MCC/EMM East Africa workers. Register by April 30. See <https://www.facebook.com/EastAfricaConnections2013> for speaker and registration details.

Parent Support Group: Announcing a bimonthly support group for Mennonite parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) persons in Southwestern Ontario. We provide confidential support, fellowship, resources and opportunities for dialogue in the Spirit of Christ. For more information please contact the following: rvfast@rogers.com, pmsnyderangel@rogers.com, or Roy and Mary Gascho, 519-742-1850.

Apr. 12-14: Youth Jr. Impact retreat at Camp Squeeah.

Alberta

Feb. 22-24: Senior High Snow Camp at Camp Valaqua. Speakers: Abe Janzen, John Schellenberg and Matthew Povey. To register, contact your church youth leader.
Feb. 23: MC Alberta General Council Meeting at Camp Valaqua.
March 22-23: Mennonite Church Alberta AGM at Menno Simons School, Calgary. Guest speaker: Cheryl Pauls, CMU president.

Rental Housing

Community living opportunity now available in Winnipeg, MB!

Join 5 people living in community in a spacious Wolseley home.

Rent: \$343/month plus utilities
 Community responsibilities: cooking, cleaning, brief weekly meeting, bi-monthly potlucks
 Available immediately (flexible) - Sept 2013
 Contact Adam Klassen at adamj2456@gmail.com or (204) 504-3925

Travel

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way!

12-15 day individual or group hotel Tours focusing on Mennonite/ Anabaptist heritage in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Poland and Switzerland.
www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu

SCHÜRCH (SHERK, SHIRK, SHERICK) SWITZERLAND HERITAGE TOUR

Sept 29 - Oct 8, 2013 sponsored by Schürch Family Association of North America. Visit key Anabaptist sites and Schürch homesteads including four days in Swiss Emmental Valley. Departure from Toronto or Newark.
 Contact Sue Shirk, suesbug@msn.com, 717-394-2947.

Saskatchewan

Feb. 22-23: MC Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions at Rosthern Junior College.
March 17: RJC Guys & Pies fundraising event.
April 13: A Buncha Guys spring concert, at Mayfair United Church, Saskatoon, at 7:30 p.m.

Manitoba

Feb. 21: CMU open house for perspective students.
Feb. 28: Mennonite Collegiate Institute open house. Includes tour of the school, information package and admission to the opening night performance of *Fiddler on the Roof*, the school's annual musical. To book seats, call 204-327-5891.
Feb. 28-March 1: MCI musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, at Buhler Hall, Gretna. (Revised dates.)
March 3: CMU Choral Connections.
March 4: CMU hosts author Stuart Murray, speaking on "Anabaptism as a missional movement."
March 15: CMU campus visit day.
March 21: CMU hosts the Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition.
April 4: CMU spring banquet and fundraiser.

April 8: Jazz@CMU.

April 18-20: Westgate Collegiate senior high musical.

April 26: Cottonwood Youth Chorus spring concert.

Ontario

Feb. 18: Family Day open house at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. Free indoor and outdoor activities, with donations appreciated for lunch, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. RSVP at info@hiddenacres.ca or 519-625-8602.

March 11,12: Grandparent and Grandchild Days at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, for children in Grades 1 to 6. "You can shine" with Julie and Bryan Moyer Suderman. For more information, or to register, visit hiddenacres.ca or call 519-625-8602.

March 14-15: Bechtel Lectures at Conrad Grebel University College chapel. "Violence, victimhood and recovery: Insights from the parables of Jesus," with Chris Marshall.

March 15-16: Engaged Workshop, for engaged or newly married couples, at Living Water Fellowship, New Hamburg. For more information or to register, call Denise Bender at 519-656-2005.

March 23: Menno Singers concert, featuring works by Bach and Zelenka,

Employment Opportunities

Employment Opportunity Stewardship Consultant

Mennonite Foundation of Canada, a donor-advised charitable foundation committed to helping others live generously, is seeking a full-time Stewardship Consultant to work out of its St. Catharines, Ontario office.

This person will be responsible to promote biblical stewardship of financial resources and to provide charitable gift and estate planning services. MFC offers a competitive salary and benefits package.

Please submit resumes by February 28, 2013 to:

Milly Siderius

Director of Stewardship Services

Mennonite Foundation of Canada
 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON, N2G 3R1
 Fax (519) 745-8940

Email: msiderius@mennofoundation.ca

Mennofoundation.ca



at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, at 8 p.m. Ticket information at mennosingers.com.

April 12: Benjamin Eby Lecture with Leonard Enns at Conrad Grebel University College chapel.

April 22: New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale promotion dinner, at Bingemans, Kitchener, at 6:30 p.m. Keynote speakers: Luke and Kaitlyn

Jantzi, returned MCC workers from South Sudan. For tickets, call 519-745-8458.

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.

NORTH LEAMINGTON UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH in Leamington, Ontario is inviting applications for a full time **PASTOR**. The pastor will be someone who has a passion for ministry, possesses visionary leadership and values building relationships.

The pastor will work as part of a pastoral team ministering to all age groups. Involvements will include worship and preaching, relationship building, developing and growing lay leaders, congregational visitation and missional outreach.

The pastor will be committed to Anabaptist theology and practices and have received post secondary training from an Anabaptist seminary or university or have pastoral experience in an Anabaptist congregation.

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

Henry Paetkau, Area Church Minister
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
4489 King St. E.
Kitchener ON N2P 2G2
Phone: 519-650-3806
Fax: 519-650-3947
E-mail: hpaetkau@mcec.ca

ST. CLAIR O'CONNOR COMMUNITY INC. (SCOC) is a Not-for-Profit, Intergeneration Housing Project with Continuum of Care, developed under the sponsorship of two Mennonite Churches. SCOC is seeking applications for a **STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT MANAGER**. This dynamic individual will provide strategic leadership in the planning and implementation of the SCOC's Long Term Strategic Plan, including budgeting, financial planning, arranging funding, and management development.

Applicants considered will have a strong, commitment to the mission and vision of SCOC; understand the importance of developing strong relationships with community and funding partners. Ideally, the candidate will have a proven track record of involvement of a successful project that has undergone physical changes or redevelopment. Has an understanding of (MOHLTC, LHIN) funding opportunities, proven interpersonal skill in leadership, relationship building, communicating, and negotiation skills.

Closing date for application is February 15, 2013.
Job Description available on request

Please send resume to:
Susan Gallant, Executive Director
St. Clair O'Connor Community Inc.
2701 St. Clair Ave. East
Toronto, Ont.
M4B 3M3
Fax: 416 751-7315
s.gallant@scoc.ca

FULL-TIME LEAD PASTOR

GRACE MENNONITE CHURCH in Winkler, MB, is prayerfully seeking a full-time Lead Pastor. We are asking God for a Pastor who is passionate, strong in pulpit ministry, with special emphasis on Biblical preaching and encouraging the congregation to walk the Christian walk. We are a congregation of approximately 400 members seeking a pastor who will be inspiring, and help provide spiritual vision and leadership to our congregation and pastoral team. Preferred start date would be May 1, 2013. All applications will be held in strict confidence. Please direct resumes and/ or inquiries to gmsearchcommittee@gmail.com

For additional information please visit our website at www.gracechurchwinkler.com



ROSTERN JUNIOR COLLEGE, a vibrant Christian high school invites applicants for the position of **PRINCIPAL**.

The successful candidate will:

Be a passionate ambassador for a faith based high school that prepares students to be responsible, globally minded, compassionate and reflective learners.

Be grounded and articulate in the Anabaptist faith tradition and be able to engage students from a wide spectrum of faiths and cultures.

Be able to communicate the school's vision to students, parents, staff, and the broader church community.

Be a collaborative leader who empowers others
Have teaching and administrative experience

Interested applicants should visit www.rjc.sk.ca for more information about the school.

Duties will commence September 1, 2013

Applications should be sent to Geraldine Balzer, board chair at balzer.g@gmail.com



ROSTERN JUNIOR COLLEGE, a vibrant Christian high school is seeking a half-time **DEVELOPMENT OFFICER** to assist in the planning and implementation of immediate and longterm fund development.

The ideal candidate will:

Be a passionate ambassador for a faith based high school that prepares students to be responsible, globally minded, compassionate and reflective learners.

Be able to communicate the school's vision to alumni, parents, donors, churches, and the broader community.

Know the culture, history and context of the school.

Have strong social skills.

Have technological competence including familiarity with databases and various social media.

Interested applicants should visit www.rjc.sk.ca for more information about the school.

Duties will commence March 1, 2013.

Salary commensurate with experience.

Applications should be sent to Geraldine Balzer, board chair at balzer.g@gmail.com

'Metaphors in cloth and clay'

'Metaphors in cloth and clay,' a new exhibit at the Mennonite Heritage Gallery, Winnipeg, combines the individual and collaborative work of Winnipeg artists Ingrid Lincoln and Gaëtanne Sylvester. It challenges perceptions of the organic and metaphorical nature of cloth and clay. These two media mirror the organic nature of human DNA, with its great strength and delicacy. Two artists, one working primarily with textile and the other primarily with clay, unite to express their understanding and observations of life. By allowing the visual intricacies of textile to inspire them, Lincoln and Sylvester explore the seen and unseen implied in the sensual and organic nature of cloth and clay. Using these two historical media, they consider the notions of endurance, beauty, and decay as they relate to people's lives. The exhibit runs until March 9.

'Women Rock Group 011: Illusion' by Ingrid Lincoln



'Pregnant Cross' by Gaëtanne Sylvester

