

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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as a spiritual practice

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Creating a village

DOREEN MARTENS

Recently, our congregation discovered Facebook. “Discovered” isn’t quite the right word, of course, since many of us were already part of the online community reputed to have a mind-boggling billion users around the globe.

But someone started a “secret” Facebook group—meaning it isn’t publicly visible and requires an invitation to join—and it quickly garnered 136 members in a church of 200.

We are a big-city, commuter congregation. Most of us see one another in the flesh only every seven days. We jam meetings, greetings and feedings into three hours a week, in our desire to build Christian community in that brief interlude we call Sunday.

But Facebook did something different: It created a village.

Not a “virtual” one, because we do remain committed to regular face time. But the kind of village that knows a little more intimately the everyday struggles, joys, challenges and questions its members face. Facebook has become a forum for sharing prayer requests, offers of spare furniture, musings on faith, news from afar, reflections on loss, thanks for creative worship and provocative sermons, pointers to Young Voices pieces on *Canadian Mennonite’s* website, and reminders about upcoming events. We have used it to encourage one another in good work, to rally support on a social justice issue, and to answer needs. Teachers have used it to provide follow-up reading; preachers, to invite reflection

on Scripture in advance; pastors, to convey sad and joyful news; and debaters, to carry on a lively give-and-take on issues.

As in any community, it is the more verbally extroverted who appear most prominently, while many are content to listen in. Sometimes this online conversation points us to areas where we must learn to “agree to disagree in love.” Often, it highlights our unity. There’s nothing like seeing a comment light up with “likes”!

While the group is unmoderated, it isn’t a free-for-all. Members are expected to treat each other with respect and tolerance for different perspectives. Occasionally there’s a gentle reminder that some critique is best done in a more private, Matthew 18 kind of way.

No one member owns or runs the group, or can claim to represent it. It is a rich, multi-voiced community in which it is our collective speech that is “the church.”

It occurred to me at *Canadian Mennonite’s* annual board meeting in March that this magazine, at its best, is a similar kind of community. It is both for the church and of the church, not meant to be an official mouthpiece for any part of it, but a multi-voiced chorus.

Like our Facebook group, it shrinks the geographic and psychological distance between us during those long stretches when we don’t meet face to face. When we read about the struggles of an Alberta church, it has resonance in Ontario. When Manitoba churches grapple with a social justice issue, ours can learn from their experience. Articles that make us think

get others across the country talking, too. Letters that leave me nodding in appreciation, or shaking my head with dismay, do the same for readers across Canada.

Like our Facebook group, *Canadian Mennonite* is a place where many perspectives should appear, reflecting our diversity. Sometimes, we won’t agree. Often, those perspectives will challenge official church positions. But if we’re doing the magazine right, they will reveal the reality of our village.

Canadian Mennonite isn’t a free-for-all. It’s moderated by staff and guided by a mission statement and values you can read on the page opposite. Yet ideally, when the work of reporters, columnists, editorial writers and letter writers comes together in these pages, it offers the same rich, diverse “multi-logic” and sense of community as our congregation’s Facebook page.

The dilemma in these days of instant communication is how to bring the village-style immediacy of social media to the print medium. *Canadian Mennonite’s* website, with its comments and blogs, and especially the Young Voices initiative—which also promotes lively discussion online—are attempts to do that.

As a board, we’ve suggested that *Canadian Mennonite’s* staff do even more to focus on a multi-voiced style for the magazine itself, perhaps by putting a news report on an issue, commentary from a church leader on that issue, and an invitation to readers to respond, on the same or consecutive pages. That sends a message: As Mennonite Christians, we don’t speak with one voice, but with many. That is our strength and our joy.

Doreen Martens is a Mennonite Church Canada rep on the board of Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service, which publishes Canadian Mennonite.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Detail of ‘The Creation of Adam’ by Michelangelo, 1511. Our ‘Reimagining touch as a spiritual practice’ feature begins on page 4.

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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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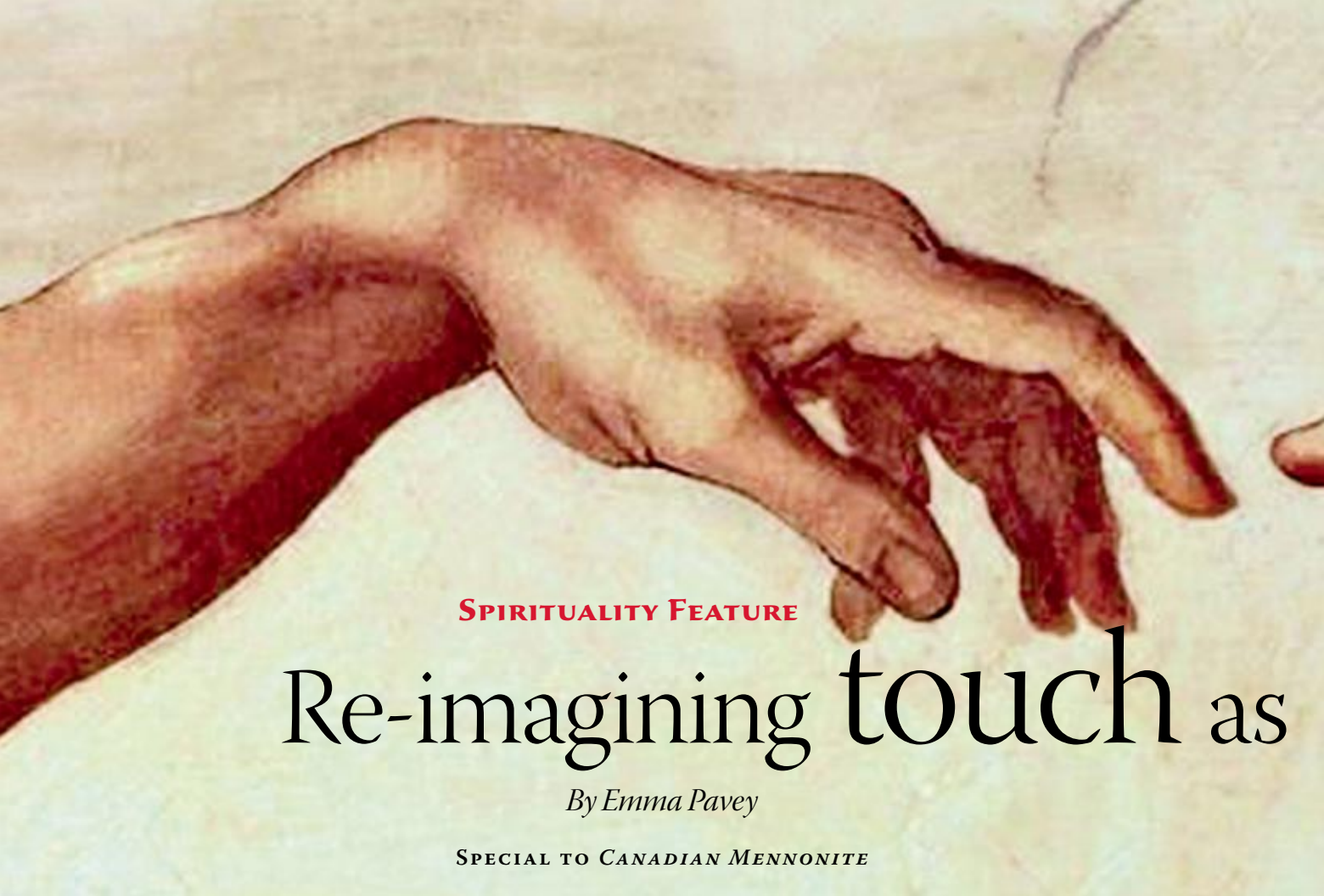
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SPIRITUALITY FEATURE

Re-imagining touch as

By Emma Pavey

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Touch is holy because it plants our feet on God's created earth, on the dust from which we are formed. It reminds us that a human and divine act of touch brings us into existence, that life is breathed into us and we are intricately woven (Psalm 139).

Pinch the skin on the back of your hand, then release it and watch it fall. Your skin gradually slides back into place. Constantly healing and being recreated, our skin both protects us and offers us the sense of touch through which we experience the world.

In our modern times, touch and religion can make for troubling associations, but I want us to re-imagine touch as holy and to see that a spiritual practice involving appropriate touch—and ways of connecting to God through touch—can offer healing, stability and solidarity in today's touch-sensitive world.

Touch is the first sense we experience. We grow in constant physical touch with our mother and touch is our first means of communication.

Touch works with the other senses, in particular with vision, in generating meaning. Our sense of proprioception (“the perception of stimuli relating to position, posture, equilibrium or internal condition”) tells us where our bodies are in relation to our world. Even the word “perceive” comes from *percipere* (“to grasp”).

Touch is a metaphor for emotion. We might say something is touching or that we know how someone feels. It is through both sight and touch that we experience and process our changing world.

Unlike vision, however, touch is not a sense we can switch off, and the absence of received touch can be a major problem: Consider homeless people and the amount of physical contact



a spiritual practice

Detail of 'The Creation of Adam' by Michelangelo, 1511.

from other people that they receive—or lack. The medical world is increasingly aware of the fundamental importance of touch for health. Practices of therapeutic touch used for premature babies, the elderly and the sick have been proven to aid in recovery and development.

Ahead of her time, the late Princess Diana was admired for holding the hands of AIDS patients she visited, during a period when the disease was poorly understood. We admire such behaviour because we recognize instinctively the importance of ethical, permitted touch for recovery and resilience. Touch is thus a highly empathetic sense.

Connecting with God through touch

It is clear, then, that touch is central to our human experience, yet there is no getting away from the fact that we cannot touch God. In “The Creation of Adam” by Michelangelo, there is an unresolved space between the fingers of Adam and God. They do not touch. God’s hand is outstretched while Adam’s is lazily raised.

We may often feel like the reverse is true, that we are stretching while God is just waiting for us to try a bit harder.

What then are the ways we can connect with God through touch? What would it mean to consider touch holy, to make of it a spiritual practice?

First, touch is holy in connecting us with our emotions, our loves and our fears. It is no coincidence that we use the same word for emotional affectedness and for physical contact. Touch is not only pivotal for how we sense and experience the world, but also for our emotional engagement with it. Many times in the Bible we see images of God as holding, carrying or embracing us, and we naturally feel this as a comfort. We react emotionally to tactile images such as the father of the prodigal son, who ran to his son, “*threw his arms around him and kissed him*” (Luke 15:20).

Both real and imagined touch connect our sensory experiences with our emotions. As small children, we clung instinctively to our parents when we

felt afraid. We often close our eyes to enhance our sense of touch, and we close our eyes to pray. Closing our eyes and turning up our hands embody our desire to reach out to touch the Divine, like the blind, homeless beggars that Jesus often healed through his touch. It moves us to consider that God has our name inscribed into the palm of his hand (Isaiah 49:16).

The emotional connection with touch is one reason why the cross of Christ impacts us. We can imagine the feel of the rough wood on his skin, as well as the emotional and physical pain of nails and a spear through his body.

Touch is also holy as the point of contact between imagination and grounding. In a changing world it tells us what is real. Touch connects deeply with belief, with proof, with our sense of reality: Just think of Doubting Thomas. Many people like to work in the garden to feel real through touching earth.

We touch our own wounds, and some
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may harm themselves, as if that touch, even though damaging, affirms that they are real.

Touch is real on many levels

We also see this idea of holy grounding in Exodus 3, where Moses meets God in the burning bush: God calls to Moses, saying, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (Exodus 3: 6). We are used to interpreting God’s command to Moses as a prohibition or a warning: Moses is instructed to take off his shoes because they are unclean.

But what if we read it instead as an invitation? That God invites Moses to take off his shoes so that Moses can feel the holy ground with the sensitive soles of his bare feet? Moses hides his face, covering his eyes while his feet are planted on the real, holy ground. Suddenly, everywhere we tread in bare feet is holy ground. God is inviting us to touch with our skin what God has touched, created, moulded.

Perhaps our greatest need in a shifting world is to feel that sense of grounding, to know where we are rooted. Touch is holy because it plants our feet on God’s created earth, on the dust from which we are formed. It reminds us that a human and divine act of touch brings us into existence, that life is breathed into us and we are intricately woven (Psalm 139). Touch makes us real in a literal sense, so touching is believing and it is powerful.

In Mark 5 we read of the woman who had endured many years of bleeding and suffering, and who still defiantly believed that she could reach out to Jesus for healing. She knew that if she but touched the hem of his garment, she would be made well. The woman did not touch Jesus himself, only his clothes, but she understood that this was enough, that he would do the rest.

We are also unable to touch Jesus and yet God knows that we are created so that touch is necessary for our health and wholeness. Even though we cannot reach out and touch Jesus, we can still reach out to God—even if we can’t touch God. God responds through the Holy Spirit, who is with us and within us.

Flesh wounds will only heal if they are not touched from the outside; the healing is internal, cell on cell building on each other from the inside. Our bodies are created to be constantly healing from the inside out. Like the cell on cell of internal physical healing, the Holy Spirit touches and heals our spirits, cell on cell, constantly and gradually healing us from the inside out. This touch is holy; God is more tactile than given credit for.

A holy moment of healing

As we think about Jesus’ death, we remember that he experienced damaging, painful touch for our healing. Jesus’ body was wounded, struck down, crushed, bruised, pierced, crucified. As a divine human, Jesus carried and bore the opposite of healing touch in order that through his wounds we might receive the slow salvation of the Holy Spirit’s healing and redeeming touch on our soul (Isaiah 53: 4-6).

When Jesus rose from the dead, he still bore the marks in his hands and side. He was scarred for life, both his own and ours. These marks were the way he proved his identity to his disciples. In our lives of stress and burden we all carry marks, but we are alive and we are being made whole, as we are formed into the

image of Christ.

Every one of us is made in the image of God. The next time we are invited to touch another person through a handshake or a hug, we can look to recognize this divine image in each other and in this way touch the hem of Jesus’ garment. As we pass the peace we are doing exactly that, passing tangible peace to each other. In the spiritual practice of appropriate, permitted touch of another—or of creation—we participate in a holy moment of stability, solidarity and healing.

Touch is holy. It is life-affirming to our humanity and central to our connection to God. In a touch-sensitive world, we must certainly be wise, but also fierce in following Jesus’ call to especially embrace and touch those on the margins, trusting the Holy Spirit’s healing inner touch, and accepting God’s loving invitation to walk on holy ground. ❧



Emma Pavey is a member of Langley (B.C.) Mennonite Fellowship. This article originated as a sermon delivered there, and was developed from graduate work at the Vancouver School of Theology, where she is a Th.M. student.

/// For discussion

1. As you go through your daily life, in what situations do you touch other people or experience them touching you? Who is most apt to initiate touching? How important is touch in greeting someone? Is touching others something you welcome or something you try to avoid? When do we most feel in need of touch?
2. What are the rites or practices of the church that involve touch? How important is touch in these moments? What are some examples of touch in Jesus’ ministry? What is the relationship between touching and healing?
3. Emma Pavey uses the phrase “appropriate touch.” What is the point where touch becomes inappropriate? Has fear of inappropriate touch led our culture to avoid touching? What happens when people are deprived of touch? Can too much touching lead to inappropriate touching?
4. How do you respond to Pavey’s comment, “Touch is holy because it plants our feet on God’s created earth, on the dust from which we are formed”? Although we are not literally able to touch God, what are some ways that we can feel touched by God? How can we extend God’s touch to others?

—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.

✉ Conscientious tax objectors look for more support

RE: “ARE YOU paying for peace or war?” Jan. 21, page 12.

We have chosen to divert the military portion of our taxes to Conscience Canada’s Peace Tax Fund since 2007. As we listen to the daily news and hear about Canada’s increasing militarization, spending billions on fighter jets and submarines, we question this direction.

We are paying more for militarization and less for development assistance, and yet the latter could be much more effective in creating friends, instead of enemies. For these and other reasons, we feel positive about the course of action we have chosen.

Our action has always been accompanied by letters of explanation to the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) and government leaders. We invite them to imagine with us the possibilities of using tax dollars for peace, rather than preparing for war. We remind our leaders that we pray for them even as we pray for peace.

Letters of reply indicate the dilemma it would create for them if Canadians were allowed to redirect their tax dollars as they see fit. This may be true, but Canada has a long history of allowing for conscientious objection, and so allowing for conscientious objection to military taxation is only a logical next step in our present age of technological warfare.

Another argument used is that Canada’s armed forces provide valuable assistance in times of national disaster. Our response has been to slightly reduce the portion withheld to allow for this.

We have felt very alone and saddened by the reality that seemingly very few of our Anabaptist sisters and brothers have chosen conscientious objection to military taxation. The folks at Conscience Canada need our support.

Our elected representatives need to be challenged to consider alternatives to increasing militarization. Most importantly, as followers of the Prince of Peace, we as an Anabaptist community need to re-imagine the possibilities of paying for peace instead of war.

If redirecting tax dollars is not an option, we can, as Eric Unger suggests, minimally declare our objection to military taxation or send two cheques to the CRA, 92 percent for taxes owed and 8 percent for a Department of Peace.

We invite others to join us on this journey.

**ERNIE AND CHARLOTTE WIENS,
LA SALLE, MAN.**

✉ Bible reading is a ‘complex and difficult undertaking’

RE: “WHAT ABOUT this Bible?” March 18, page 2.

I appreciate the way in which Dick Benner has identified the issues in this editorial. The Bible is, in fact, a problematic book for children as well as for adults, but we have not been ready to admit this to ourselves or to our children.

During the Reformation the “perspicuity” of Scripture was assumed. One definition of this term is: “clearly presented, easy to understand.” The assumption was to just take the Bible and read it because it’s all clear. This has had negative consequences ever since. While reading the Bible is very important, it is also a complex and difficult undertaking.

One reason the Bible is difficult is that we are listening in on conversations being carried on between people with quite different perspectives and convictions within the range of biblical literature. For example, Isaiah challenges the viewpoint of Deuteronomy about the attitude that Israel should have towards Ammonites and Moabites; Deuteronomy 23 teaches exclusion, while Isaiah 56 calls for welcome and inclusion.

A second reason is the attitude that, since the Bible is God’s Word, it must be literally understood. This has been called biblicism and it makes reading the Bible properly an impossibility. This attitude may be related to the expression, “the Scriptures we venerate,” in Part III of “On the Use of Scripture” series in the same issue.

The honouring of Scripture is a good thing, but we do need to ask, “What is a responsible way of honouring the Bible as we have it?” In my mind, taking

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the literary form, the cultural-historical context and the literary environment of the time into account all contribute to responsible reading, when combined with disciplined and Spirit-guided imagination. We may have to acknowledge that some understandings of God's will reported in the Old Testament may really be misunderstandings of God's will.

The resources for fruitful never-ending conversations are available to us. Will we have the courage to become engaged afresh with our own past understandings, to become aware of "conversations" and development within the Bible, and to discover anew what Jesus told his disciples: "the Spirit would guide us into all truth." I hope that we will accept the challenge.

JOHN H. NEUFELD, WINNIPEG

✉ Channels of communication around suicide must be open

PARENTS' LOSS OF children is always upsetting. If that loss is due to suicide, such as happened to friends recently, the effect is magnified. Most suicide occurs in the context of depression. With rates of depression increasing among young people, we can expect the number of suicides to increase unless we do more about the background.

One of the myths that persists is that talking about suicide might bring up the idea and increase the risk of it occurring. It probably stems from our own discomfort and denial of the topic. One thing that I, as a practicing psychiatrist, stress with my patients and their parents is that suicide is a symptom of depression. If

FROM OUR LEADERS

Responding to a more religious Canada

DONNA KAMPEN ENTZ

Living a life of witness among our neighbours is what the church is about. Because only a small percentage of Canadians attend church regularly, we Mennonites have put energy into figuring out how to live in a secular society. Most assume globalization creates a huge secular force in the world community, but that was not my experience as a mission worker in Burkina Faso.

Andrew Preston, writing about religion in America, agrees. He says westerners expect globalization to weaken religiosity. In fact, that is not true for most of the non-European world. Instead, people have embraced one of the world religions, strengthening the role of religion in the world for better or for worse.

In Burkina Faso in 1978, almost half the population practised sacrifices and rituals known as African Traditional Religion. Many villages had no mosque and certainly no church. During my last

years there, things were changing for youth in this cyber-world. They were discarding sacrifices as old-fashioned, and attaching themselves to Christianity or Islam. Our family thrived, and for 20 years we engaged Muslim neighbours by sharing our faith.



In 2010, we relocated to North Edmonton to create a Mennonite presence among newcomers from Africa and the Middle East. Feeling drawn into witness in the Muslim community, I began learning about Canadian Islam. I accepted invitations to Muslim homes, invited them to my home, and when invited found ways to serve in the Muslim community.

I have had some surprises. Various Muslims articulate delight that I talk about faith and Jesus, a key prophet in Islam. Faith is central to their identity. When I show the importance of my faith, they can relax and be themselves.

Relationships form and quickly deepen. I have heard from several guests that, although they have strong ties in the Muslim community, and have lived for many years in Canada, they have never felt they belonged until they had a meal in a "Canadian" home like ours.

I recently read Brian McLaren's 2012 book, *Why did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha and Mohammed Cross the Road?* His challenge is to find balance in our witness by being both "strong" and "kind." We are called to focus beyond our walls and engage in our neighbourhoods. We need to be equipped, personally and collectively, to engage those of other faiths.

As Mennonites, we are often "kind" in service, but have we verbally shared the treasure in our spiritual heritage and values? Some of us are strong but are we sometimes strong to the point of being un-kind, pushing the other away, closing doors instead of opening them? How is God at work as we make connections? As we seek chances to chat with neighbours, let's see what McLaren writes about these connections. If that person is non-European, chances are, they will not be secular. Are we ready?

Donna Kampen Entz is an intentional presence and witness in North Edmonton among various African and Middle Eastern Muslims. She works part-time for Mennonite Church Alberta.

anything, it tells us that we need to work harder to overcome the depression.

We need to open up the channels of communication about those who suffer with it and their families and caregivers, so that they can receive the support they need until they recover to the point that suicidal thinking is no longer an issue. There are also agencies with websites and suicide prevention numbers to call,

that every person with depression and their family should always have available.

Having said that, we need to realize that, as concerning as the prospect is, we will no more be able to prevent every suicide than we can prevent every other type of mishap that we fear. Suicides even happen in mental health wards, where people are admitted for

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OUTSIDE THE BOX

Producing coaches, not just players

PHIL WAGLER

I was watching my son's baseball game with a bunch of other parents on a beautiful spring afternoon. The loud "snap" of ball in glove, the distinctive "clink" of bat making contact, took me back—way, way back—to my own playing days. Nostalgic longing crept over me. Oh, to stand in there, push that scrawny tween out of the way and swing for the fences!

I began to think about how much goes into the development of players. We parents look for any small glimpse of potential and fill our kid's schedules in desperate attempts to wring it out. We are determined to turn these kids into players. Coaches, for their part, show up early, nurture and occasionally consider ramming their head into the backstop out of sheer frustration.

And yet, in the overwhelming majority, we are simply planting the seeds of future nostalgia. Most will play a few years and eventually find themselves in the stands watching their own kids, suppressing dugout homesickness and a host of "what ifs."

A handful will eagerly become coaches, while a few others will be backed into the role because, if no one else does, the kids

can't play. This shortage and reluctance shouldn't surprise us; after all, we're busy investing in the pipe dream of making players, not coaches.

And then, pastor that I am, I begin to think about the church. Every local fellowship is intent on making disciples. We know this is what Jesus commissioned us to do (Matthew 28:16-20), and we like to think our methods are accomplishing this, but in reality we're simply producing players and not enough coaches.



This may all sound like a metaphor trying to be stretched into a triple, when I should have been content with a double.

Stay with me. If our goal is to make disciples, we're not wrong, but we're just not aiming high enough. Jesus commissioned his followers to teach others to "obey everything I have commanded you." This implies an emphasis on playing in order to coach. We are sent not to make players who can perform for a spurt, only to retire to the bleachers. No, we are to develop player-coaches. Jesus wants no player retired into obscurity, but everyone developed into a coach of others.

Everything he has taught us through wins and losses, errors and home runs, is to be invested in others who will become player-coaches, too.

This may all sound like a metaphor trying to be stretched into a triple, when I should have been content with a double. But listen to what Dallas Willard has to say in *The Great Omission*: "[Jesus] told us, as disciples, to make disciples. Not converts to Christianity, nor to some particular 'faith and practice.' He did not tell us to arrange for people to 'get in' or 'make the cut' after they die, nor to eliminate the various brutal forms of injustice, nor to produce and maintain 'successful' churches. These are all good things, and he had something to say about all of them. They will certainly happen if—but only if—we are and do what he told us to be and do." That is, constant apprentices

making more constant apprentices.

In other words, we are called and commissioned by our Lord to be player-coaches of those who are to become player-coaches. We are drafted by Jesus to be, and to make, disciple-makers. Anything less is to not heed the coach.

Phil Wagler (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca) loves a good ball game and still hopes a scout is out there looking for a preaching pitcher. No, he's not holding his breath.

(Continued from page 9)

closer observation and more intensive treatment.

As Christians, I think most of us are moving beyond the idea where we think of suicide as always a sin. We know of Christians who have committed suicide. My belief is that in the throes of depression, people are really not in their right mind when it comes to making a decision. Therefore, I think it helps us to hold on to the belief that our all-merciful and forgiving Heavenly

Father does not hold that against them.

Of course, when a suicide has occurred, we need to be there to support the family and friends of the lost loved one. They need our presence, prayers and reassurance for the struggles and questions that such an event raises for all of us.

LORNE BRANDT, RICHMOND, B.C.

NEW ORDER VOICE

An aspiring cyclist

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

I pulled out my bike for my first spring ride a few weeks ago. It was invigorating to feel the cold air hit my face, dodge the ice puddles and feel the strain in my legs as I propelled myself along.

I don't call myself a cyclist, mostly because I don't think I qualify. I don't ride in winter, I do minimal bike maintenance, and if the ride will be longer than 30 minutes I'm prone to consider other options. But I do, however, aspire to be a cyclist. That is, I want to move away from being car-dependent and travel in sustainable ways.

This is a constant struggle for me. I still drive to church, friends' houses and choir rehearsals, wrestling with the conviction that I should ride my bike more often. It's true, I should, and not just because it's environmentally responsible, but because I have to. I need to. Because, as a person of privilege, riding my bike is a necessary restraint I must make. And, as a Christian, it marks my participation in a vision of the world mended by love for the earth, its creatures and God.

In her book *Blessed are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint* (Fortress, 2013), theologian Sallie McFague writes about the Christian tradition of *kenosis*, or "self-emptying." For her, *kenosis* can be an ethical response for the wealthiest nations to climate change and the devastating

behaviours behind it. She writes that "serious change at a fundamental level—of who we think we are and what we must do—is necessary." She believes it is the religions of the world that must give "radical, deep and broad responses that demand substantial changes in the lifestyle of those of us who have an unfair share of the world's resources."

I've heard this call before. It sounds a lot like the story of the early Christians in Acts, who lived in community, and shared their personal wealth and possessions. They lived out an alternative vision of reality by forsaking imperial loyalties to follow Jesus. Could it be that to live out this vision today we need to forsake our loyalty to the car, the convenience it affords and the resource extraction that powers it? Can we see something different and act on it, like they did?



It sounds a lot like the story of the early Christians in Acts, who lived in community, and shared their personal wealth and possessions.

In March, Boris Johnson, the mayor of London, England, announced his plans to invest \$1.4 billion in the city's cycling infrastructure over the next decade.

His vision includes a 24-kilometre cycle superhighway from the suburbs through the heart of London, a network

of cycle routes on low-traffic back streets for less experienced cyclists, and 80,000 more places to park and lock bicycles in the city centre.

"I set out my plans for substantial—eventually transformative—change," says Johnson of his initiative. "Cycling will be treated not as niche, marginal or an afterthought, but as what it is: an integral part of the transport network. . . . It means less traffic, more trees, more places to sit and eat a sandwich." He says cycling "will transform more of our city into a place dominated by people, not motor traffic."

I find Johnson's vision encouraging. His willingness to imagine radical change and act on it inspires me to make the "substantial changes" that McFague writes about and that the early church performed. For starters, I want to leave the car behind and get on my bike more

often. Because, when it comes down to it, when I get on my bike I feel alive and uplifted, and for me that's loving God.

Katie Doke Sawatzky (katiesawatzky@gmail.com) attends Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

VIEWPOINT

Obedience to whom?

BY MICHAEL BUTTREY
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God”
(Romans 13:1 NRSV).

Like many Mennonites, I have struggled with the opening verses of Romans 13. The words appear innocuous compared to more violent texts, but, according to the interpretation dominant in many churches, Paul here commands obedience to the state, even including military service.



may have encouraged subjection to the authorities to help protect the vulnerable Jewish minority from further persecution.

Also, when Paul was writing, Nero had recently come to power, and there were still great hopes of peace, justice and clemency under his rule,

which may help explain Paul's optimism about the Roman authorities. Finally, Paul's comment that the authorities are instituted by God may sound inoffensive to our ears, but the imperial propaganda of the Roman Empire claimed its emperors were gods and sons of god. Paul, therefore, both upholds and undercuts the status of Roman authorities by making them unwitting servants of the one true God they deny.

Other insights into Romans require no specialized knowledge, just close attention to the text:

• **FIRST, THE** wider context of chapters 12 and 13 include many allusions to the Sermon on the Mount, which suggest Paul was familiar with Jesus' teaching. "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse," in Romans 12:14 closely mirrors Luke 6:28 and Matthew 5:44, the only other passages in the New Testament that contrast blessing and cursing.

• **SECOND, GIVEN** that Paul is also the author of Corinthians, his advice to do what is good—so that the Roman Christians will have praise from the authorities—must be considered alongside his more sceptical comments to the Corinthians on the rulers of the age and his experiences with Roman justice.

• **THIRD, IT** is important to note Paul does not tell the Roman Christians to obey the state. There are several words translated as "obey" elsewhere in the New Testament, but Paul uses none of them here.

With these and other points in mind, Witherington and Furnish arrive at interpretations of Romans 13:1 that are compatible with pacifism.

In his commentary on Romans, Witherington interprets Paul as encouraging Christians to accept the established order and "not resist the legitimate demands of the government."

Furnish goes even further, arguing in *The Moral Teaching of Paul* that "one might, for example, 'disobey' a law of the state and still 'be subject' to the political structure, namely, to the due processes and penalties administered in cases of disobedience."

These scholars are careful not to suggest that Paul endorses anarchy, rebellion or revolution, but they are also careful to leave room for Christians to disobey laws and demands that they discern to be unjust and incompatible with Jesus' teaching. I take their conclusions to support the choice of those Mennonites who went to prison or did alternative service, rather than serve in World War II.

In our current age, in which the threat of conscription seems distant, we should recall that Paul was not primarily concerned with military service, which was only possible for the rare Christian who was a Roman citizen. Paul also does not discuss modern questions, such as how to respond when the government challenges our charitable status or threatens to deport refugees back to countries where they face death. Instead, he provides a powerful example of how to obey God even when that may mean accepting the penalties associated with breaking human laws. ☺

Pacifists who see violence as antithetical to following Jesus naturally find this troubling. My own discomfort was eased when I read John Howard Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus*, but I struggle to convince my non-pacifist friends using Yoder's arguments.

One problem is Yoder's reputation as a Mennonite and a pacifist, which some say disqualify him from giving an unbiased interpretation. Another problem is that, as a mere student of theology, I cannot even pretend to have expertise in the area of biblical studies.

Yet I am also convinced the Bible is too important to leave to the biblical scholars, and so I have occasionally dove into the vast literature on Romans 13, where I have found Yoder's arguments are often corroborated by the work of non-Mennonite biblical scholars like Victor Paul Furnish and Ben Witherington III.

In interpreting Romans, it helps to know some of the history and context of Paul's audience. Paul is writing to a mixed church of gentile and Jewish Christians, the latter having been expelled from Rome along with their fellow Jews in AD 49 and had only recently been allowed to return. Anti-Jewish sentiment was, therefore, common in Rome, and so Paul

Michael Buttrey is in the second year of his doctoral program in Christian ethics at Regis College, part of the Toronto School of Theology; he is specializing in the field of medical ethics.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Buhler—Kaden Robert (b. March 21, 2013), to David and Brandi Buhler, Carrot River Mennonite, Sask.

Fox—Maycee Rylynn (b. Feb. 16, 2013), to Ryan and Jennifer Fox, Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.

Love—Tom Shepherd (b. Feb. 9, 2013), to Emma and Matt Love, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Moffatt—Dimitri Nova (b. Feb. 15, 2013), to Kris Moffatt and Katherine Finn, Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.

Penfold—Ruth Anne (b. Feb. 26, 2013), to Joshua Penfold (Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.) and Rebecca Penfold (Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.).

Peters—Lauren Claire (b. March 6, 2013), to Kyle and Renee Peters, Morden Mennonite, Man.

Tiessen-Dyck—Hannah Chipecto (March 22, 2013), to Melissa and Mark Tiessen-Dyck, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Tonelli—Aria Dawn (b. March 14, 2013), to Twila and Paul Tonelli, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Unrau—Jonathan Ty (b. March 24, 2013), to Rowena Kehler and Maikel Unrau, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Wall—Mikayla Cadence (b. March 8, 2013), to Abe and Anita Wall, Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Wijnands—Jared (b. March 22, 2013), to Kyle and Christa Wijnands, Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Baptisms

Bo Xu—Markham Chinese Mennonite, Ont., Dec. 25, 2012.

Deaths

Epp—Anna (Annie) (nee Franz), 92 (b. Sept. 14, 1920; d. March 13, 2013), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Lammert—Frank, 84 (b. March 3, 1929; d. March 3, 2013), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Martin—Magdalena, 95 (b. Sept. 29, 1917; d. March 18, 2013), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Phoon Hsu—Ger Fei, 85 (b. May 16, 1927; d. Jan. 12, 2013), Markham Chinese Mennonite, Ont.

Rempel—Helene, 93 (b. March 11, 1919; d. Feb. 17, 2013), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Retzlaff—Bernhard (Bernie), 80 (b. July 1, 1932; d. March 14, 2013), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Sauder—Luella, 84 (b. Dec. 25, 1928; d. March 21, 2013), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Thiessen—Verna, 88 (b. Feb. 4, 1925; d. March 17, 2013), Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.

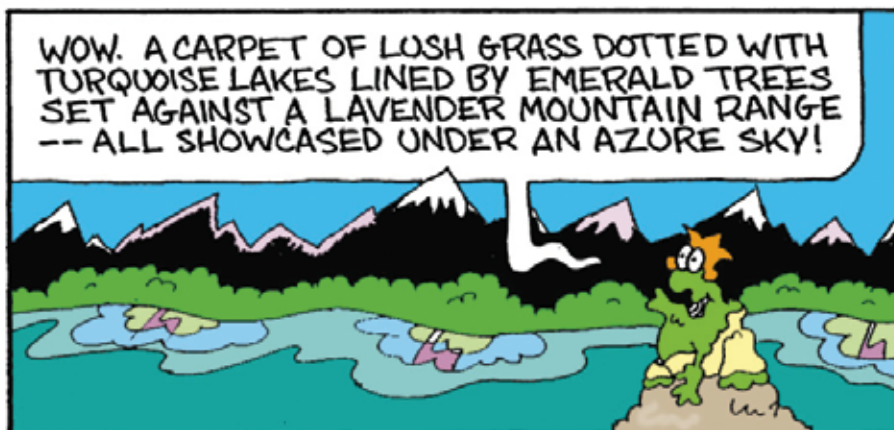
Wiebe—Abram, 94 (b. Nov. 3, 1918; d. March 5, 2013), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

Zacharias—Jake C., 85 (b. Aug. 7, 1927; d. Feb. 1, 2013), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event.

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

Pontius' Puddle



MENNONITE CHURCH ALBERTA ANNUAL DELEGATE SESSION

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Unity amid diversity

Percentage of multicultural churches highest in Alberta

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
CALGARY

From her seat at the front, Mennonite Church Alberta secretary Joani Neufeldt could see all of the gathered Mennonite Church Alberta delegates as the story of the newly forming Edmonton South Sudanese Mennonite Church was shared by Rueben Tut and Rueben Joach.

"If you want to get at what assembly is all about, it was the two Ruebens standing in front of us, singing 'Rock of Ages' in Nuer and the conference humming along," Neufeldt recounted. "It was powerful. There were a lot of watery eyes."

The annual delegate session, held at Menno Simons Christian School in Calgary from March 22-23, was remarkable for the diversity of cultures present to worship and work together. English, Vietnamese, Chinese and Spanish congregations formally received the Calgary Chin Christian Church into membership the first night.

Tim Froese, MC Canada executive minister for Witness, remarked, "Six of the 16 congregations in Alberta [are non-English]. This is the richest group of congregations in Canada, percentage-wise, in terms of diversity!"

Business items

A surplus of \$9,700 was realized in 2012 as donations came in higher than budgeted. This provided the executive with an opportunity to recommend \$9,400 be put towards one-time projects, including \$3,000 to a church-planting congress, \$1,000 to support MC Canada's Future Directions Task Force, \$3,000 for the Camp Valaqua planning committee, and \$2,400 for rental assistance for Edmonton South Sudanese Mennonite Church. The motion passed easily. Although the surplus is positive, it is more an indicator of modest budgeting than of an increased giving trend.

During a finance workshop, area church



Willard Metzger, left, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada, shares a laugh with Ernie Engebrecht, moderator of MC Alberta, at the area church's annual assembly held last month at Menno Simons Christian School in Calgary.

treasurer Tany Warkentin said, "This is not income going up, but compared to the budget we have surpluses."

For 2013, a break-even budget was proposed. Budgets are set each year after consultation with churches regarding what they plan to give to MC Alberta.

Outgoing finance committee chair Lois Epp said, "For three years in a row we've had more income than we've budgeted for, but we can't project into the future."

Camp Valaqua reported a welcome 10 percent increase in camper numbers, strong support for ongoing cabin replacement, and a good response to fundraising initiatives.

One noticeable difficulty, however, was found in camp director Jon Olfert's written report: "It is a growing challenge to find adults to help during the summer camp program. . . . Finding people to work for a week seems to grow increasingly more difficult and our kitchen structure, as it stands today, cannot operate without those volunteers."

A planning committee led by Darrel Heidebrecht was given the task of discerning a vision for the camp in the years ahead. The committee heard input from pastors as well as delegates at the assembly, and is

looking forward to gathering input from congregations in the months ahead.

A General Council resolution to hire a part-time area youth minister when funds are available received the most on-floor discussion. For the past five years, discussion at assembly and in the Congregational Leadership Commission has struggled with the question of what kind of youth ministry leadership is possible in MC Alberta. While an almost unanimous vote affirmed the recommendation, the problematic fact remains that there are no funds available, making the resolution basically a "motherhood" statement at this point. The Leadership Commission and General Council will assume responsibility for exploring options.

Area church chair Ernie Engebrecht commented on the importance of making sure the discussion about where the money comes from actually happens. "[We] need fire in the belly; this is the first step," he said.

Garry Janzen, executive minister of MC B.C., addressed a pastors meeting and the assembly regarding Forge Canada, an organization providing connections and training to help congregations engage their neighbourhoods. B.C. signed on with Forge in 2012, and Janzen is hopeful it will be a strong resource and encouragement as congregations build a "missional DNA" in B.C. The Forge discussion was taken as information only until congregations have more time to understand what the organization can offer.

'God's gift of unity'

Cheryl Pauls, president of Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, challenged the assembly with meditations on the theme, "Brothers and sisters in Christ: God's gift of unity," in two keynote addresses. Pauls noted that it is particularly difficult to accept unity when there are key differences on theological matters, when trust has been broken and where people are different. Yet these are the places where needed gifts and insights for the church are often found. "How can we honour both the one and the all, the unity and diversity into which we are called?" she challenged the delegates. ❧

Speak without fear amid political turmoil

BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher
LETHBRIDGE, ALTA.

Canadian Mennonite was urged at its annual banquet last month to “pass on the best of the Anabaptist faith” to its Mennonite readership and to speak without fear in the face of political turmoil to its own community and, increasingly, to the larger public sphere.

Speaking on the role of Christian journalism in the public sphere, David Goa, a University of Alberta professor whose work focuses on religious tradition and modern

culture, appealed to the magazine to “speak out of the heart of *ecclesia* [the called-out church] across the boundaries of political self-interest, shedding

light where shadows are in danger of extending our ignorance.”

He lamented the shallow reporting of the secular media in stories where faith



PHOTO BY DOREEN MARTENS

Matt Groenheide, left, a well-known local percussionist specializing in classical percussion and world drumming, and Scottish singer/cellist George Fowler, provided the entertainment for Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service's annual banquet held last month in Lethbridge, Alta.

and politics intersect, as reporters, caught up in current ideological conflicts, focus only on the “the struggle between the two institutions.” They seem to understand the

Pastors voice support for Canadian Mennonite

BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher
LETHBRIDGE, ALTA.

In a luncheon discussion with local Mennonite pastors and church leaders at Lethbridge Mennonite Church, where Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service board members were holding their annual general meeting, the magazine received strong support for its content and emphasis.

Harold Preston Schilk of Springridge Mennonite Church, Pincher Creek, said the publication is valued and often used in Sunday school discussions and in church. Noting a good balance, he appreciated the “nurturing value and affirmative material, and the attempt to improve our spiritual walk and commonality as Mennonites.”

Ryan Dueck, host pastor, said the publication is “more politically engaged” than other magazines he reads, “is dynamic and intellectual, and does not promote personal piety to the exclusion of other points of view.” The perception, he said, is that it uncritically embraces “leftist” ideology, referring to coverage of the proposed Gateway pipeline and the Idle No More movement. On the Canada Revenue Agency issue, he observed that both sides were presented, adding that overall the articles are “well read and valuable,” with the magazine “poking, prodding and stimulating” appropriately.

Ernie Engbrecht, moderator of Mennonite Church

Alberta, said the magazine needs to stress its independence from MC Canada since “most readers don’t know it is independent.” Engaging youth is an issue in the province, he said, as is engaging the Asian community, which tends to be more conservative. Racism is a major concern in Alberta in relating to the large aboriginal population, according to Engebrecht, and hence Mennonites risk a potential liability in getting involved in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

There was some feeling among the pastors that churches do not embrace diversity, creating tension in housing and hiring, but others felt that diversity is tolerated.

In other business, the board approved *Canadian Mennonite's* 2013 budget, which anticipates \$675,705 in revenue, including a \$20,000 cutback from MC Canada, and expenses of \$710,797, leaving a deficit, after depreciation, of \$26,092.

In its annual election of officers of the executive committee, Tobi Thiessen was re-elected as chair, as was Carl DeGurse as vice-chair. Les Klassen Hamm will serve as both secretary and treasurer, and Tim Reimer was elected member-at-large, succeeding Jim Moyer.

The board bid farewell to Ed Janzen, who declined to serve for a third three-year term, and to Joon Park, who served for one term. Both are from Abbotsford, B.C., and both were representatives of MC Canada on the board. ❧

vested interests involved, but fail to grasp the depth and richness the two sides bring to the conflict, he said.

Citing a 1978 court case in Three Hills, Alta., when a Holdeman Mennonite pastor was charged with violating the Truancy Act for taking children out of the public school system and into the church's own school, he said local journalists were not prepared to investigate what was behind this conflict, only pitting one side against the other—the religious leaders against the school administrators, teachers' union and the provincial board of education.

"They missed the 'back story' entirely, missing the Mennonites' urge to recover spiritual disciplines in the rearing of their children, feeling a deepening responsibility to their children and bringing a certain critique of what was accepted as 'progress and development' in the public school system, and their longing for community bonding," he said.

What would the story have looked like if the journalists had dug deeper into the story? Goa asked. If they had studied the 16th-century Anabaptist history of the Mennonites, they would have discovered what the early Anabaptist church contributed to European humanism of the Reformation, he said. "They would have discovered the clear thinking these religious reformers did about the reach of the state and the cost of sponsorship by the state in its religiosity, and thus would have understood where these present-day Anabaptists were coming from."

Likewise, the reporters didn't highlight the "gifts of the public education system," he said, something that could have been educational for the public.

The tragedy of missing the "back story," he said, is that this separation of the religious and the secular just reinforces the "political silos" in which Canadians live. "And we end up with the worst of both worlds."

By contrast, he said the responsibility of Christian journalist is to tell readers that these political acts and policies are "acts of faith": "You reflect for us what we hold dear, including our values, . . . what we aspire to and with whom we wish to align ourselves."

Why is this important? Because religion (*ecclesia*) binds things together, and Christian journalists, through their work, "bind us together to be mutually

responsible." On the other hand, he said politics binds people to a new bondage, to new forms of limitation and marginalization.

Speaking to those in attendance, he said their Anabaptist heritage brings a special insight to the tormented public discourse today, because all "party politicians" of every party are anti-*ecclesial*, forming alignments that amount to a form of warfare. "Parties square off against each other, defining the terms of their relationships in opposition, and seek to defeat the 'other.'"

"Party politics is in danger of reducing each person to a uniform set of single issues," Goa said. "The other parties are the enemies, reduced to symbols of what is driving our world to perdition. Each party occupies its own tree house and once you know the password—a single set of issues—you are granted admission."

But journalists with a "stance of faith" know no political allegiance. They are called to participate in politics, he insisted, not to engage in its "organized inadequacies," but

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- CHURCHES & SAFARIS in ETHIOPIA & TANZANIA (Oct 10-22/2014)
- VIETNAM & SINGAPORE (Nov 10-24/2014)

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- HOLY LAND: HARVEST the OLIVES & EXPERIENCE the BIBLE (Oct 12-21/2013)
- BEHIND the VEIL: EXPERIENCING EGYPT (Oct 17-28/2013)
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(Continued from page 15)

to bring the church's call to healing enmity, to "making all things new," because they share the divine image with each and all, and are taught to treasure the mystery at work in every human being, including those thought to be their enemies.

Goa was invited to address the banquet by his fellow professor at the University of Alberta, Roger Epp, a Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service board member. In his introduction, Epp said he invited Goa who, through his work as director of the

university's Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life, has "created a space inside a public university where faith communities, the public and religious thinkers can engage each other."

Some 65 people attended the annual event, that included musical entertainment by well-known local percussionist Matt Groenheide, and George Fowler, his Scottish sidekick singer/cellist. For a short clip of their performance, visit <http://www.youtube.com/user/waterlooish?feature=mhee>. ❧

presentation, Bauman spoke of the difference between monocultural, multicultural and intercultural, referring to Fanosie Legasse's opening devotional on Revelation 7:9-12. Legasse, an Ethiopian worshipping at Bethel Mennonite Church, Elora, Ont., a Swiss Mennonite congregation, noted that, while there were 144,000 Jews worshipping before God's throne, there were multitudes of others who had also become God's people there as well.

Bauman spoke to the need for "us and them" to become "us" even while remaining "them." "Intercultural" does not mean giving up one's culture, he said, but living it in the midst of, and in, relationship with others who are also living out their cultures.

He drew attention to the changes in MC Eastern Canada as it approaches its 25th anniversary. In 1988, there were 89 congregations of Swiss/Russian Mennonite and Amish background, and four in Quebec. Now, there are 85 English-speaking congregations and 22 from other nationalities. "The church needs to set the example of 'intercultural'" to society, he said.

Yoel Masyawong, pastor of Grace Lao Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., said, "The church needs to realize that we are living in multicultural churches. We need to discuss the issues [brought about by] many cultures in one congregation."

This sentiment was echoed by Kuaying Teng, pastor of Lao Christian Fellowship, St. Catharines, Ont., itself a congregation of many cultures, including Lao, Vietnamese, Chinese and Filipino.

Suderman led a study of the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15, helping the group to see that the inclusion of gentiles into the people of God was a cultural issue that had been brewing ever since the Jews returned from the exile in Babylon. The church has been an intercultural project of God since the beginning, he explained, noting that the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 directly references the inclusion of others mentioned in Isaiah 56.

Lamxay Moda of Grace New Life Mennonite Church, an emerging Laotian congregation in Hamilton, said Suderman's Bible study was the high point of the day for him, as he learned how to apply the history in the Bible to current realities. ❧

Cultures in conversation

All churches are ethnic churches: Derek Suderman

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
HAMILTON, ONT.

As evidence that the sand is shifting under the feet of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, a recent "Cultures in conversation: Bridging the gap" workshop, designed for pastors from the area church's newer non-European assemblies, became a time of providing resources for both these congregations as well as those of Swiss/Russian Mennonite or Amish descent that are finding themselves in cultural shift.

Sometimes the term "ethnic" has been used to describe those of Chin, Caribbean, Eritrean, Hispanic, Lao, Hmong, Chinese,

Ethiopian, Tamil, Vietnamese or Thai descent, but one of the presenters, Derek Suderman, assistant professor of religious studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., stated that as far as he was concerned, all of the congregations present were ethnic churches.

This idea had some traction, as Suderman and Brian Bauman, MC Eastern Canada's missions minister, led the church leaders in sociological/missional and biblical studies around the question of culture.

In his "Towards the New Jerusalem"



Derek Suderman, left, assistant professor of religious studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Fanosie Legasse of Bethel Mennonite Church, Elora, Ont., and Chinda Kommala, pastor of Lao Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church in Toronto, enjoy conversation and lunch at 'Cultures in conversation,' a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada resource event, on March 23 at Hamilton Mennonite Church.

Mennonites respond to election of Pope Francis

Mennonite World Conference Story and Photo

After the March 13 election of Argentinean Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio as Pope Francis, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) issued a letter of congratulations and then sent two of its leaders to his inauguration services in Rome.

In a March 14 letter to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, MWC general secretary César García wrote: “Without a doubt the ministry of Francis as the first Latin American—and the first Jesuit—pope will bring new impetus to our relationships.”

García expressed his belief that the history of MWC dialogues with the Catholic Church “will create important spaces for our churches under the pontificate of Pope Francis.”

“Please be assured of our love and prayers for your church in these days of momentous transition,” García continued. “Sharing in the same Latin American background, I was especially touched by Francis’ attitude when he bowed to the crowd after asking prayer from the many people that had come to receive him. . . . His attitude of humility has been a special blessing for me as a Latin American.”

Attending the inaugural services in Rome were Rainer Burkart of Germany and Henk Stenvers of the Netherlands. Both had the opportunity to greet the Pope personally.

“Pope Francis seems to be a very friendly and humble person,” they wrote of their experience. “It was our impression that he will take steps to let the papal office appear in a different way.”

They noted several important “small signs.” For example, “the chair of the pope during the audience [with ecumenical guests] was not standing on a podium, but at the same level with everybody else. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, representing the Eastern Orthodox world, was given the exact same kind of chair as that of the pope.”

In an interview with a Dutch newspaper on March 20, Stenvers stressed

the importance of the inauguration for the ecumenical church movement. At the same time, he noted that many world political leaders and royalty also attended, which led him to stress the importance of the separation of church and state in the Anabaptist tradition. ❧



Henk Stenvers, left, and Rainer Burkart represented Mennonite World Conference at the inauguration of Pope Francis in Rome last month.

Staff change

New Testament prof brings a fresh voice to Grebel

WATERLOO, ONT.—Alicia Batten has been named as Conrad Grebel University College’s new professor of New Testament, beginning July 1. She is currently chair of religious studies at the University of Sudbury, Ont., and has significant teaching and administrative experience. “One of the reasons why I was attracted to the position at Conrad Grebel is that it is explicit about its commitment to justice and peace,” Batten says. “Social justice has been at the heart of my own theological development.” During the past 15 years, Batten has taught at the University of St. Thomas, Minn., Pacific Lutheran University, Wash., and in Sudbury. She has demonstrated creativity and competence in teaching a great range of undergraduate biblical courses, including surveys, book studies, thematic courses and hermeneutics. Her books and articles have been primarily on the Letter of James, the teachings of Jesus, wealth, poverty, clothing and adornment in the early church. “Alicia’s proven track record in community-building will make her a strong leader in strengthening ties with colleagues at the University of Waterloo and in offering a refreshing voice in the community for advancing faith and learning from an Anabaptist perspective in our churches and other settings,” says Susan Schultz Huxman, Grebel’s president. Batten succeeds Tom Yoder Neufeld, who was New Testament professor for nearly three decades. —Conrad Grebel University College



Batten

Briefly noted

MEI student earns Goshen College scholarship

GOSHEN, IND.—Do Won Park of Abbotsford, B.C., who is graduating from Mennonite Educational Institute this year, is one of six students being offered the Goshen College President’s Leadership Award (PLA), which is the college’s top merit scholarship. The PLA is given in recognition of outstanding academic performance and promise in potential leadership. The award, worth \$19,000 per year—\$76,000 over four years—includes participation in a leadership program. The award is renewable if recipients maintain a 3.5 grade point average during college and contribute 15 hours per semester in the leadership program. Park plans to be an interdisciplinary major. —Goshen College

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Ottawa gets more 'strategic' about foreign aid

CIDA now a part of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

Helping people in need overseas is not only a “tangible expression of Canadian values,” but also a “critical instrument for advancing Canada’s long-term prosperity and security.”

That’s according to the March federal budget, in which the federal government announced that its main foreign aid body, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), will be folded into the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, a department that manages the country’s diplomatic affairs and advances Canadian economic interests abroad.

CIDA has long been a major funder of faith-based development organizations like Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB).

The move surprised few in the development sector, as Conservative and Liberal governments alike have long talked about achieving “policy coherence” with respect to development, defence, diplomacy and trade.

Jim Cornelius, who heads the Foodgrains Bank, said the move could give aid a higher profile within government or it could result in other departmental priorities outcompeting aid for funding. Cornelius

believes, however, that aid could be delivered effectively under the new arrangement. It all depends on how the new arrangement unfolds.

The Foodgrains Bank is three years into a five-year, \$125-million funding arrangement with CIDA. That funding will not be affected by the changes.

Julian Fantino, the minister responsible for CIDA, has called the Foodgrains Bank the government’s “primary Canadian partner for international food assistance.”

“The concern we have,” said Cornelius, “is the degree to which the aid programs give primacy to the reduction of poverty.” The focus should not be Canadian prosperity or security, he said, although those could be natural bi-products of certain development programs.

When asked how Foodgrains Bank donors might feel about government language that frames aid as serving Canada’s own interests, Cornelius said donors have a “deep concern about people who they know are suffering.” Donors give out of love for people, he said, without expecting anything in return.

Cornelius said donors wouldn’t necessarily oppose other goals—noting that a world with less poverty and inequity will be more secure and generally prosperous—but Canada’s interests should not be the “driver” behind its actions.

The move comes at a time when nervousness and uncertainty have settled over the Canadian development sector, with some organizations feeling their government funding may be cut if they are seen to oppose government priorities, including international trade priorities.

“The fact is, our work is going to go on,” said Don Peters, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada. MCC currently receives relatively minimal CIDA funding, as its most recent request was denied.

While Peters said some people in the sector fear that development will now be “trumped” by foreign affairs and trade agendas, he hopes the opposite might happen, that policy coherence could translate into a strengthened commitment to the poor.

MCC will continue to apply for government funding but only, Peters emphasized,

CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK PHOTO



Jim Cornelius, left, Foodgrains Bank executive director, presents a glass grain elevator—an “image of what the Foodgrains Bank has stood for and meant across the country”—to CIDA president Margaret Biggs and Julian Fantino, federal international cooperation minister, at a reception in Ottawa on March 5 to celebrate the two organizations’ 30-year partnership. At right is Don Peters, the Foodgrains Bank’s board chair.

when government programming, whichever department it is based in, matches MCC priorities. The bedrock of MCC will continue to be the “large group of faithful donors and volunteers.”

At the head office of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) in Waterloo, Ont., president Allan Sauder remains “optimistic” about the government’s development programming.

CIDA funding for MEDA has remained relatively constant in recent years, at more than \$6 million annually, making up about 20 percent of the organization’s budget. Fantino visited a MEDA project in Ethiopia earlier this year.

Sauder is comfortable with the

government’s desire to create strategic linkages between development and trade. “We welcome more voices around the table,” he said, referring to “government, industry, business leaders and partners from around the world.”

“Business relationships can be very powerful” in creating sustainable livelihoods for the poor, Sauder said. MEDA would even be open to controversial tri-lateral-style arrangements that have seen CIDA partner with development organizations and large Canadian mining companies overseas.

Like others, though, Sauder said it is too soon to know what the repositioning of CIDA will mean.

What is known, and what hasn’t changed, is a continued slide in Canada’s overall financial commitment to assisting vulnerable people abroad.

Cornelius noted that Canadian “levels of [official government] aid as a share of economic output are slipping, rather than moving toward the internationally agreed target of 0.7 percent [of gross national income].”

Unlike the United Kingdom, which recently adopted the 0.7 percent target despite austere times, Canada’s commitment is expected to dip below 0.3 percent in the coming year. Regardless of which arm of government administers that money, Cornelius would like to see the figure rise. ❧

‘It’s a miracle’

Mennonite Disaster Service continues to rebuild/restore homes in Staten Island, N.Y.

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

Partnering with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) New York, volunteers from Ontario and New Brunswick have been working to clean up and rebuild following Hurricane Sandy’s four-metre storm surge last October.

The whole leadership team in March was from Ontario, with short-term volunteers from New Brunswick and New York.

Nick Hamm, project director from Vineland, Ont., reports that over and over again they find themselves as “agents of

God” meeting people’s very real needs. One story he recounts is that of a couple who moved to New York last August from Texas, so that the wife could continue chemotherapy. But Sandy wrecked and flooded their newly renovated house.

While repairs were underway, the woman’s invalid husband relocated to Australia to stay with a daughter while the wife struggled to get the work done, watching her funding get used up to pay for an apartment, living costs and the slow



PHOTOS BY NICK HAMM

New Brunswick MDS volunteers Jack Christie, Liam Hill and Peter Bunnett ‘mud’ drywall in a Staten Island, N.Y., home that was damaged by last fall’s Hurricane Sandy.

response of contractors.

The woman was referred to MDS by the New York City Housing Recovery Office since she had no insurance. After taking over the project, MDS helped her get her money back for supplies, since she qualified for free materials.

As the volunteers began the work, Hamm gave her a prayer shawl knit by a women’s group from Cambridge, Ont., telling her that she was being prayed for by people back home.

“It’s a miracle that you are here, and now you are going to help me finish my house,” she said, tears streaming down her face.

Hamm was able to assure her that MDS would finish the house and she could bring her husband home. ❧



Ivan Martin of New York, left, and Errol Stein of Ontario install new flooring.

Quilt to make space for dialogue on sexuality

'How do we build a hopeful future in which people of all sexual identities can share life together in the Mennonite community?'

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Jonah Langelotz and three of his classmates needed to participate in a nonviolent action for their History and Strategies of Nonviolence course at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). It did not take them long to decide on an issue.

"We are aware of the dialogue around inclusion of all sexual identities in our community that is happening in many of the churches," said Langelotz, who hopes their project will help to move that dialogue along. "People continue to be excluded from the Mennonite church, as diverse and as welcoming as we are."

On the afternoon of March 27, they staged their event in the student centre on CMU's south campus. They hung a large reclaimed quilt that was the product of their labours over the last several weeks.

A large white dove in the centre dominates the quilt. They gathered between 30 and 40 responses to the question, "How do we build a hopeful future in which people of all sexual identities can share life together in the Mennonite community?" Those responses are inscribed on the dove.

"We gathered these responses from people who are part of the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered] community at CMU, or who have some personal connections with the issue," explained Clare Schellenberg, one of the students.

A colourful border on the quilt "speaks of the diversity within God's church, the many gifts that comprise its body, along with the voices of those who have sometimes been shunned to its margins," explains the written description that accompanies the quilt.

"Being part of a group that was to address the issue of sexuality in the church was somewhat daunting," said Langelotz. "It is clearly a 'hot-button' issue that

has been a topic of dialogue in the [area church] and many congregations."

"The quilt idea came to us when we were trying to think of a symbol that would reflect Mennonite culture, history and faith," said Langelotz. "The art of quilting and the symbol of the dove we hope will prompt a space for storytelling around the issue of inclusion of all sexual identities in our community."

The reclaimed quilt was one that Langelotz's grandmother had made many years ago.

"Choosing the symbol and the way we went about our action was done so that

we created a particular space, one that was intended to be open and welcoming, like the kind of church we are advocating for," he said.

"Many people are affected by this issue and the church is slowly beginning to talk about this," said Schellenberg. "We believe we first need to get to know each other, to tell stories, to build relationships, so that the church will be strengthened, not weakened."

She pointed out one of the inscribed responses that quoted Tzu Yeh (AD 316): "Do you not see that you and I are as the branches of one tree? With your rejoicing comes my laughter, with your sadness starts my tears."

"So much goes unspoken," said Schellenberg. "Hopefully this will create a place where dialogue can happen and where people can share their stories."

As she spoke, a stream of students passed through the student centre and many stopped to study the quilt, pick up a pen and add their name, their story or a reflection. A space for dialogue had been created. ❧



Canadian Mennonite University students Jonah Langelotz, left, Clare Schellenberg, Karla Froese and Laura-Lynne Hildebrand are pictured with their quilt, a nonviolent action assignment for their History and Strategies of Non-Violence course. 'How do we build a hopeful future in which people of all sexual identities can share life together in the Mennonite community?' they ask.

Manitoba orders Bethania Group to terminate CEO

Violation of wage-freeze legislation cited

STORY AND FILE PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU
Manitoba Correspondent

News broke on March 21 that decisions made by the board of directors of the Mennonite-supported Bethania Group Personal Care Homes in Winnipeg were in violation of legislation passed last year with regard to their contract with chief executive officer (CEO) Ray Koop.

Theresa Oswald, Manitoba's health minister, told media outlets, "Bethania delivers excellent care, but [a financial] audit has revealed a series of decisions made by the board and the CEO that fly in the face of new provincial legislation and widely recognized conflict-of-interest practices." The new legislation was enacted to protect taxpayers and ensure responsible and transparent use of public funds; it included a wage-freeze for senior staff.

The audit discovered that the board allowed the CEO to retire "from his position as CEO of Bethania Mennonite Personal Care Home on July 31, 2012," and, "im-



Ray Koop is at the heart of dispute between Bethania Group and the Manitoba government.

participation the CEO had in the restructuring of his contract."

The board was advised by the deputy minister of health to terminate the current contract with its CEO and gave it until

morally and legally obliged to honour our agreements. In other words, this was not an illegal contract. It was an employment contract entered into in good faith."

Some of the supporting churches were not aware of this letter. Jack Dyck, associate pastor at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, was unaware of any communication from Bethania. "I have had a busy Easter and have not checked their website, but nothing has crossed my desk," he told *Canadian Mennonite*.

"Koop was the highest-paid nursing home CEO in the province before his raise, earning more than Manitoba's premier and Winnipeg's mayor," Oswald is quoted as saying in local media reports.

In its Easter letter, the Bethania board stated, "We believe that Mr. Koop's pay for providing service to all Bethania's entities was justified by his experience, abilities and the demands of the task. The government has misled the public to thinking that his salary was only for providing service to two personal care homes. With this in mind, we do not believe he is the highest-paid personal care home executive and believe instead that he is fairly paid for his duties and responsibilities."

"I think that came as a surprise to a lot of people," Dyck said, adding, "The optics don't look good."

The board has continued to ask that the

*'It came as a surprise to a lot of people. The optics aren't good.'
(Jack Dyck, associate pastor, Springfield Heights Mennonite Church)*

mediately after his retirement, the former CEO was hired as the CEO of Bethania Housing and Projects Inc." A new contract, negotiated in April 2012, included a 3 percent increase in CEO compensation during the wage-freeze period.

According to the audit report, this is in violation of legislation passed in April 2012, which "requires the Regional Health Authority approval of any employment contracts entered into with a health organization CEO and, except with the minister's approval, prevents a health organization from entering into an employment contract with a CEO within one year after the CEO's employment termination. . . . We are also concerned with the level of

April 2 to comply.

In a statement, Bethania's board argued that "the current contract between Bethania Housing Projects Inc. does not fall within the jurisdiction of the [health authority] or the Department of Health. . . . [T]he board maintains it has the right and legal responsibility to hire the CEO of Bethania Housing and Projects, and to determine the terms and conditions of the contract."

The board wrote an open letter to its constituent Mennonite churches on Easter Sunday, stating that it continues "to believe that a binding agreement had been reached with Mr. Koop before the legislation was announced. We believe we are

issues be resolved through dialogue. On the eve of the April 2 deadline, the board of Bethania Group offered this terse statement: "We have made a proposal to government which we believe will satisfy all legitimate concerns. . . . Bethania will not make any further comment regarding the resolution at this time, but hopes to report a conclusion to this matter soon."

As quoted in April 2 media reports, Oswald said, "Indeed, Bethania did meet the timeline in giving us a proposal of how they will endeavour to remedy the matter. What I have asked of them is that they terminate the illegal contract and that any monies paid out as a result of that illegal contract will be restored." ❧

FOCUS ON FAIR TRADE

Fair trade falls on hard times

Ten Thousand Villages stores in B.C. particularly hard hit by restructuring

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

On March 18, shock waves rippled through the small community of New Hamburg, where the headquarters of Ten Thousand Villages Canada is located, and beyond, as store closures and staff layoffs were announced.

According to Ryan Jacobs, the organization's general manager, if TTV had not restructured aggressively now, in as little as a year the fair trade organization would cease to exist in Canada.

Jacobs said that "March 18 is the most painful day" of his career, culminating the week before when he saw the scope of the changes that were needed to bring TTV expenses in line with steadily declining income. Five years ago—2008—was the last of a number of years of double-digit growth, leading to an increase in the number of stores across the country, employees and the building of a larger warehouse in New Hamburg.

But the recent recession hit the fair trade sector hard and TTV Canada has not been profitable for a number of years, something Jacobs has tried to keep before the employees over the last two years, first as director of finance and then as general manager for the last 15 months.

After some "aggressive cost reduction" a year ago and the dismissal of a

few employees, Jacobs said the first seven months of fiscal year 2012-13 looked good, but last November and December saw a 15 percent decrease in traffic and sales over 2011, leading to another year in the red.

By January, the boards of both TTV Canada and Mennonite Central Committee Canada, to whom TTV is responsible, knew that major changes would be needed. Careful analysis showed that 10 of the 26 wholly owned stores were the major source of the losses and would need to be closed. Not affected are the 19 locally owned and operated "board" stores.

TTV Canada also entered into an agreement to buy services, including artisan relationships and development, marketing and pricing from the much larger TTV U.S. Together, these moves meant a reduction of nearly half of the New Hamburg operations staff, and the commensurate savings.

On March 18, staff were made aware of the massive changes and then, department by department, were called in. Each individual was called in for an interview and offered both immediate and longer-term counselling. The 22 head office staff whose positions were being eliminated were given what TTV hopes is a generous and fair severance package based on MCC Canada's

guidelines, and were then accompanied to their desks to clear out their personal belongings and offered rides home.

While some in the community wondered about the accompaniment, Jacobs insisted that it was intended to keep those dismissed from feeling isolated or abandoned.

Counselling services have been procured so any employee from head office or the affected stores can access them 24/7 until the end of June, both for grief counselling or for career counselling/resume preparation.

A further 18 "permanent position" employees and other short-term staff at the stores lost their jobs as well.

Jacobs noted that the restructuring, while difficult, makes him hopeful that all artisan groups will continue to supply TTV with materials, fulfilling the passion and vision that TTV and its predecessors have followed for nearly 70 years. It grieves him to have had to let go people who passionately support that vision, but he said he and the boards had to think about the organization first.

No former employees agreed to an interview with *Canadian Mennonite*. ❧

❧ Stores to be closed

- Penticton, B.C.
- Kelowna, B.C.
- Commercial Drive, Vancouver
- West Broadway, Vancouver
- Broadmead, Victoria
- Langley, B.C.
- Kingston, Ont.
- London, Ont.
- Queen Street, Toronto
- Regina



Ryan Jacobs, general manager of Ten Thousand Villages Canada, is pictured in the head office store in New Hamburg, Ont.

ARTBEAT

A fresh reading of the Apostle Paul

BY NADINE KAMPEN

Canadian Mennonite University
WINNIPEG

CMU Press of Winnipeg describes its latest release, *Citizenship: Paul on Peace and Politics*, by Gordon Zerbe, as a collection of essays that offers “a revisiting of Paul’s theological vision and practical activism around the theme of citizenship.”

Zerbe, a professor of New Testament at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Winnipeg, is the author of *Non-Retaliatio in Early Jewish and New Testament Texts*, as well as a contributor of two essays to *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes* (Fortress Press, 2011): “The Politics of Paul: His supposed social conservatism and the impact of postcolonial readings,” and, “Constructions of Paul in Filipino theology of struggle.”

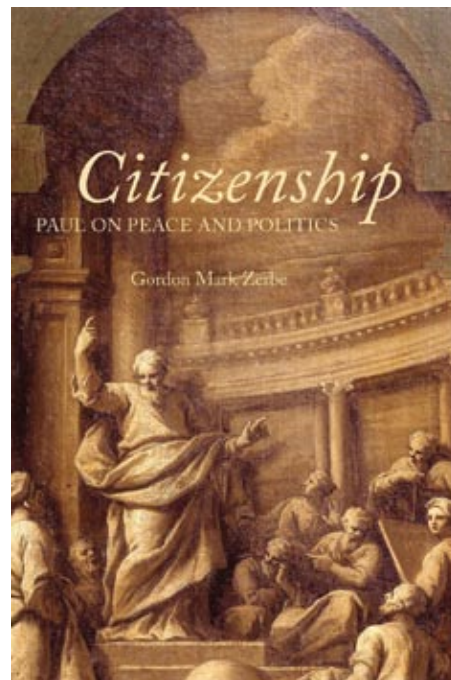
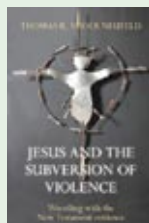
The chapters in *Citizenship* are organized according to the citizenship themes of loyalty, mutuality and security. Essays in the “loyalty” section draw attention to the fundamental personal and corporate dynamics of citizenship in the context of Paul’s ecclesial politics. The “mutuality” section is centred mainly on the internal features of the Messianic assembly as a citizen community, including its approach to social diversity and economic disparity. The “security” section includes essays that investigate the questions of violence, peace and warfare in, and pertaining to, Paul’s writings. A last section, “affinities,” engages Paul’s perspective with broader conversation partners beyond the fields of biblical

The chapters in Citizenship are organized according to the citizenship themes of loyalty, mutuality and security.

/// Briefly noted

Yoder Neufeld book shortlisted for prestigious Ramsey Prize

Jesus and the Subversion of Violence (the British title of Tom Yoder Neufeld’s *Killing Enmity*) is one of six books nominated for the Michael Ramsey Prize, which is sponsored by the Lambeth Fund and administered by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Yoder Neufeld recently retired as a professor of religious studies and theological studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., after a 30-year teaching and writing career. The other nominees are: *Up with Authority* by Victor Lee Austin, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics* by Luke Bretherton, *Disabled Church—Disabled Society* by John Gillibrand, *Heaven* by Paula Gooder, and *Claiming Abraham* by Michael Lodahl. The biennial prize commemorates Ramsey, the former archbishop of Canterbury (1961-74), and his commitment to increasing the breadth of theological understanding of people in general. The winner, to be announced in May, will receive a handmade mosaic plaque by British artist Dee Hardwicke.
—Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge



and theological studies.

Zerbe attributes his most significant inspiration for the interpretation of Paul to four years of learning and teaching in the Philippines as a visiting professor at Silliman University Divinity School, Dumaguete City (1996-98 and 2002-04). Born and raised in Japan, Zerbe continues to take an interest in intercultural engagement, having completed an MA in cultural anthropology from Western Washington University in 1987.

Mark Reasoner, author of *Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation*, describes Zerbe’s latest book as “a wonderful introduction to social and political issues in the Pauline corpus, making a significant contribution in Pauline studies and in political theology.”

Neil Elliott, author of *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire*, describes these essays as “exegetically judicious and boldly creative,” and adds that, “by organizing these essays around aspects of ‘citizenship,’ Zerbe provides the most nuanced and compelling description we have yet seen of the political dimensions of the apostle’s thought and praxis.”

Zerbe earned a Ph.D. in New Testament from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1991 and has taught at CMU since 1990. //

PHOTO BY RAY DIRKS



Visual artists Miriam Rudolph and Bennie Peters explore their upbringing in Paraguay in the new art exhibit, 'From Paraguay to Winnipeg: Explorations of Place, Home and Childhood,' at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery.

Beyond stereotypes

Artists chronicle life growing up in Paraguay

By AARON EPP

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
WINNIPEG

Miriam Rudolph has spent most of the past decade living in Winnipeg, but Canadians often ask her what it's like living in Paraguay, where she grew up.

"Everything is so absolutely different," the 30-year-old artist explains. "So much of life takes place outdoors. The colours are different. Cows, bicycles and cars all share the same highway, which you don't see here. . . . It's such a different life. I hope I can somehow show people what Paraguay is like through my work and that they can see it through my eyes, too."

Rudolph and Bennie Peters are the two artists included in "From Paraguay to Winnipeg," a new exhibit on display at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery until April 27. Subtitled "Explorations of Place, Home and Childhood," the exhibit features works by the two native South Americans that reflect on their heritage.

Rudolph uses painting and printmaking for her work. Her early pieces included creating maps of Paraguay as a way to record memories from her childhood. She also



'Working in the Garden' by Bennie Peters. Peters, 32, works predominantly with paint on drywall to create his work.

created maps of Winnipeg in her art as a way to connect herself to the city, familiarize herself with new places and buildings, and as a way of finding beauty in the city.

Peters works predominantly with paint on drywall. The 32-year-old says that for the work he created specifically for "From Paraguay to Winnipeg," he challenged himself to tell stories from his childhood growing up with his parents, four sisters and three brothers in the Sommerfeld Colony in eastern Paraguay.


"The reason I wanted to tell stories from that time is that when I see my sisters' kids growing up now, they have such joy hearing stories, and I remember I had such joy when I was growing up and someone told me stories," Peters explains. "I wanted to capture those stories so we would never forget them and so that we could pass them on."

Another one of Peters' goals was to connect with his siblings, most of who now live in Canada, and talk about what they remembered about growing up in Paraguay. "There were a lot of things that I had forgotten," Peters says.

Ray Dirks, curator of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, says he is pleased with the exhibit. "I find it's interesting that,

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coming from a place we wouldn't know as being a place where the arts are promoted—and that could very well be our own ignorance—they express themselves about their upbringing in largely positive ways," Dirks says. "I think it's great that we get to see and experience things about Paraguay, and Mennonites in Paraguay, from the perspective of two artists who come from there."

"They're offering something beyond the stereotypes that we might have," he adds.

The exhibit is a reunion of sorts for Rudolph and Peters, who both grew up in the same town in Paraguay before moving to Winnipeg to study fine arts at the University of Manitoba.

Rudolph recalls hanging out with Peters in high school and discussing art with him. "I think it's partly his fault that I came to Winnipeg," she says with a laugh. "He went to the U of M two or three years before me, and it was encouraging that someone from Paraguay with little knowledge of English could go to Winnipeg to study art. I followed in his footsteps a little bit with that."

Peters hopes the exhibit will inspire those who see it to tell their own stories. "They should tell them because everybody loves stories," he says. "I believe those stories have made people who they are." ❧



'Waving Goodbye' by Miriam Rudolph. Rudolph, 30, grew up in Paraguay, lived in Winnipeg for nine years and currently resides in Minneapolis, Minn. Much of her work deals with searching for belonging.



Scattered and Sown: In Every Seed a Promise

MCEC Celebrates 25 Years of Ministry

By Lisa Williams
MCEC Director of Communications

In a message remembered as moving, and filled with inspiration and hope, Nelson Schiefele addressed those gathered 25 years ago during MCEC integration meetings by saying, “God prepared this soil carefully, and over the years planted many integrating seeds. It has now become our honoured task, even our holy task, to reap the harvest of God’s tender and patient nurturing.”

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s (MCEC) Annual Church Gathering on April 26 and 27, 2013 will kick off a celebration year marking 25 years of ministry. Sue Steiner, Friday night’s speaker at the event states, “The most important thing I want to convey, is that MCEC is not about us. MCEC is about an extravagant gardener named God, who has been working in the garden that we call MCEC long before we got here.”

Ordained to pastoral ministry at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church as MCEC was being formed, Sue has served six congregations. In recent years, she has coached pastors in MCEC’s Transitioning into Ministry program – a program for pastors who are new to ministry,

and the congregations who support them. She is also part of the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada network. Now retired from pastoral ministry, Sue offers spiritual direction to church leaders and takes pleasure in volunteering in her congregation, Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ontario.

“I marvel at the seed God has planted in individuals and congregations and revel in the surprising shapes and forms that growth has taken,” reflects Sue. “I wonder what seed God is planting in us now that will bear fruit in future generations.”

All are invited to a free public worship celebration to be held at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate on Saturday, April 27 at 2:30 p.m. Worship will include the Chin Christian Church Choir, First Mennonite Hispanic-Anglo singers, and an Amharic choir. Ted Swartz’ drama troupe, Ted & Company, has developed and produced scripture

“MCEC is about an extravagant gardener named God, who has been working in the garden that we call MCEC long before we got here.”

- Sue Steiner

videos for the celebration and **César García** of Mennonite World Conference, will be the afternoon speaker. Communion and a special blessing service will conclude the celebration.

“Scattered and Sown: in every seed a promise speaks of the kind of life that you can’t control, the

***Speakers for MCEC Annual Church Gathering
and 25th Anniversary Celebrations:
Sue Steiner and César García***



kind of life that is not very organized, but is very vibrant," muses César. "How might MCEC begin another 25 years, in a post-modern society, in a way that will promote growth?"

Born in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1972, César cites two conversion experiences. The first was at the age of 19 when he found Jesus. The second was 12 years ago when he and his wife were planting a new Mennonite Brethren (MB) church in Bogotá. In his second conversion he found Anabaptism. The new ministry he was planting led him to embrace an Anabaptist theology.

With a rich history of working in the Church as pastor, church planter, professor, Chairman of

the Colombian MB Conference, and representative on various international organizations, César now serves as the General Secretary of Mennonite World Conference.

You are invited to MCEC celebrations of 25 years of ministry together! MCEC's Annual Church Gathering and 25th Anniversary Celebration is on April 26 and 27, 2013 at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ontario.

For more information please see www.mcec.ca.

“How might MCEC begin another 25 years, in a post-modern society, in a way that will promote growth?”

- César García

You are invited to MCEC celebrations of 25 years of ministry together!



Scattered
and
Sown



In every seed,
a promise

MCEC 25 years

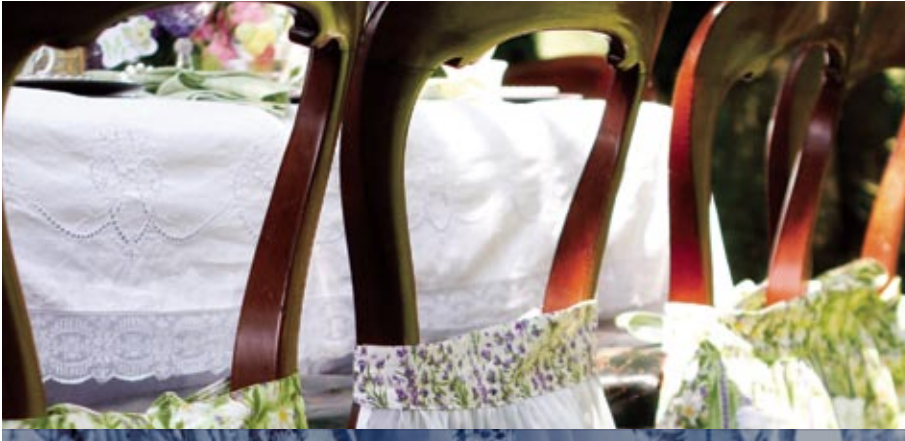
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Rosthern Junior College (RJC) is a Christian high school providing a quality grade 10-12 program within a Mennonite school community

for students of any faith or culture.

RJC invites staff applications for the 2013-2014 school year. Anticipated openings include:

1. Full and/or part-time teaching positions in Senior English Language Arts; Physical Education; Christian Ethics, History, Art.
2. Full and/or part time positions for male and female Residence staff.

Visit www.rjc.sk.ca for more information about the school. Please forward a resume and direct inquiries to:

Jim Epp, Principal
Rosthern Junior College
P.O. Box 5020
Rosthern, SK S0K3R0
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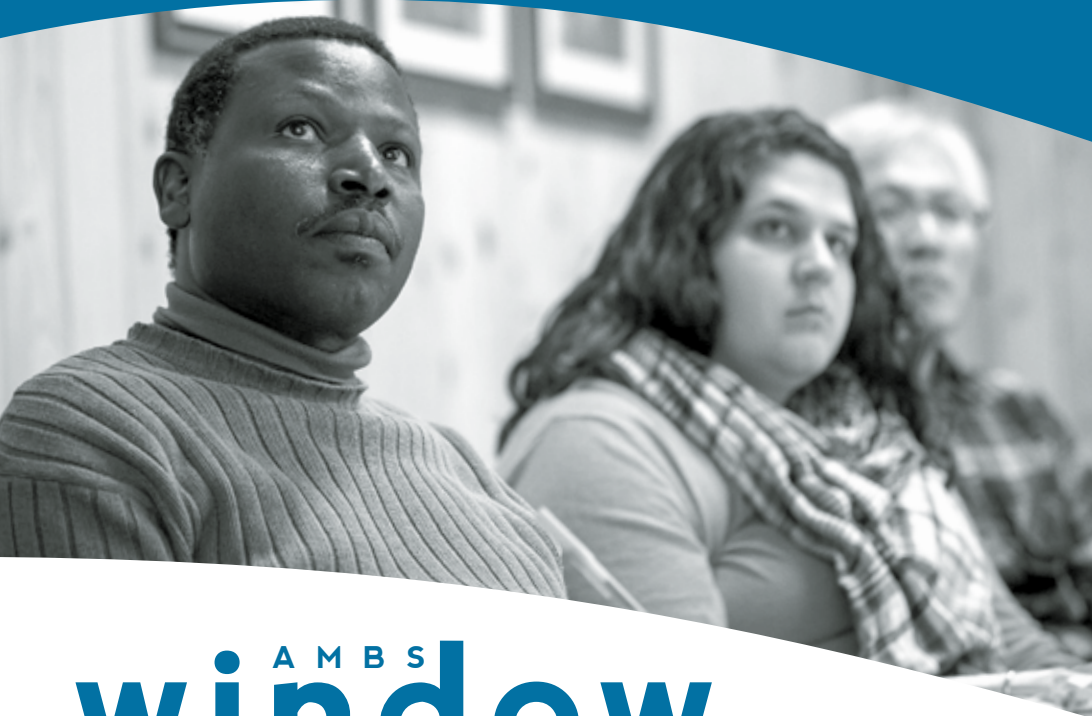
Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite Church Canada together with its family of 5 Area Churches and 225 congregations wish to express sincere gratitude to **over 2000 individuals and businesses** who provided a donation in 2012. We appreciate that so many support our shared ministry.

Thank you from...



Église Mennonite de l'Est du Canada



SPRING 2013
VOLUME 23 ISSUE 2

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AMBS window

IS THE COST OF SEMINARY WORTH IT?

A MBS students answer this question in this issue. We also invite readers to reflect on this question with their pastors and with people who have gifts for ministry. Then use the contact information on page 3 to join us in making seminary education affordable for students who are preparing for ministry.



Jacob Hess

Truth #1: Seminary is expensive. Truth #2: Seminary is also incredibly transformative. Most of us students live in the strained tension between these

truths. Thankfully, AMBS works diligently to chip away at the veracity of the first truth while bolstering the precious potential of the second. How many other educational institutions, after all, have lowered rent by 15% recently?!

More personally, AMBS's need-based support and matching grants have helped my family make it through seminary without

diving into debt. For this, and so much more, I am thankful. Though I may not be leaving seminary with a bulging wallet or an enviable savings account, I will be leaving as one transformed and better equipped to serve Christ's church and our broken world.

Jacob Hess is a student in the Master of Arts: Peace Studies program. Jacob is doing an internship this year with the Center for Community Justice in Elkhart, Ind.



Deborah-Ruth Ferber

The first semester of being a member of the AMBS community has been a good investment. AMBS was a more expensive option

for furthering my studies, but the quality of the school outweighs the cost. Seminary education is worth it for me not just because of the degree, but because of the classes and community which have fostered my stay here.

I am willing to make this investment because of the maturing that takes place from being a part of AMBS. I am not the same person I was six months ago as a result of being shaped by this community in incredible ways. The low-key atmosphere, classes which stretch my critical thinking, the connection between faculty and students, and extracurricular involvement have all cultivated a new identity for me.

I was blessed by the support of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Mennonite Church Canada, and AMBS, because I could not have considered seminary without them. I want to take it a step further, though: it is not just the funds, but the confidence, support and encouragement receiving those funds gave to me that inspired me.

Deborah-Ruth Ferber is a student from Leamington, Ont. Previously, she participated in !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth. This summer she anticipates joining L'Arche Daybreak, Richmond Hill, Ont.

(Continued on page 2)

IS THE COST OF SEMINARY WORTH IT?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Caitlin Michelle Desjardins

My time at AMBS has been the most formative and crucial educational experience of my life thus far. When I was a recent college graduate who

hoped to study full-time, receiving a merit scholarship that covered my tuition was an incomparable gift. I knew even before I was offered a scholarship that God was calling me to AMBS and there I would thrive. The ability to attend and focus on my studies and investing in the community that is such a distinctive blessing of AMBS without loans and financial worries has deeply enriched my time here. AMBS, beyond anything, has been a place where I have discovered a deep love for Christ's church and all of God's people. I can confidently say I am leaving AMBS both ready and enthusiastic to dedicate my life to building Christ's church and serving with all that I am. I am so grateful to everyone who has made that possible. An education at AMBS is truly priceless, building God's kingdom in remarkable ways.

Caitlin Desjardins anticipates graduating in May with a Master of Divinity degree and a focus on theological studies.



Jocelyn Graber

I am now faced with the repayment of student loans for my seminary education. Was it worth it? Yes, a resounding yes!

The cost of a seminary education is the cost of answering God's call; it is the cost of discipleship. I am reminded of the financial assistance from my congregation and from our conference. I am humbled by the many donors who unknowingly contributed to my education, and that of many others, because they believe that an Anabaptist education for our denominational leaders and pastors will strengthen the churches to serve as God's witness to the world. I am touched by the many prayers that are behind those donated dollars and from those who are unable to give as generously as they would like.

AMBS is not a tuition-driven institution. The financial cost is shared by the community of believers who support the vision of the seminary and the Anabaptist faith. I still have loans because I chose not to work while being a full-time student, but thanks be to God, AMBS helped to transform my life, and that is priceless.

Jocelyn Graber earned the Master of Divinity in spring 2012. She studied at AMBS—Great

Plains in addition to taking classes on the Elkhart campus. She now is a development officer for AMBS, serving in the Great Plains region.



Theo Odhiambo

At AMBS I find the community in which a leader can be safely wrong and the space to learn from the mistakes. The experienced mentorship of a

professor gives the future leader much-needed skills that simply cannot be learned or honored by reading a book or attending a weekend conference. Being told you are wrong by the right person can be the best thing to ever happen to a leader.

Seminary is a sacrifice. Plans are delayed, resources are expended, and criticism can be abundant, but all of this contributes to the development and growth that is vital to thriving in ministry.

Theo Odhiambo is a Master of Divinity student, after earlier earning a Master of Arts: Theological Studies. He and his family returned to Elkhart from Tanzania where he had served as a school administrator. ●

Page 1 photo: AMBS students Tobias Magatti and Sara Erb and visiting scholar Dr. Won-Bum Chung listen intently to in a fall class on economic justice.

AMBS Window SPRING 2013 Volume 23 Issue 2

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A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

ALUMNI NEWS

The Institute of Mennonite Studies has released a book telling the story of **Emma Richards (Bachelor of Theology 1950)** and her ordination, the first ordination of a woman for congregational ministry in the Mennonite Church. *According to the grace given to her: The ministry of Emma Sommers* traces the roots of Emma's call and the encounters that shaped her legacy as model and mentor. See www.ambs.edu/publishing/New-publications.cfm.

Franklin Breckenridge (Master of Divinity 1999) and Cora, his wife, were recognized in October for their leadership and service to the Indiana NAACP.

Lauren Friesen (Master of Divinity 1970) has been granted the Outstanding Alumni Award by Pacific School of Religion (where he earned an MA and PhD). Lauren is the chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Michigan-Flint.

Andy Alexis-Baker (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2007) is coeditor of *A faith embracing all creatures: Addressing commonly asked questions about Christian care for animals*, published by Cascade Books. **Malinda Berry (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2000)**, **Nekeisha Alexis-Baker (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2008)** and Andy wrote chapters. ●

HELP STUDENTS PAY THE COST



Snapshot of student aid and scholarships

Percentage of students who receive aid:

- Full-time students: 80%
- Part-time students: 60%

Percent of tuition that full-time students receive in aid (average):

38.5% (excludes full-tuition scholarships)

Percent of students whose aid includes gifts from conferences and congregations: 38%

Number of students currently receiving full-tuition scholarships: 6

Number of full-tuition scholarships available this fall: 2

Long-standing full-tuition scholarships for students demonstrating gifts for ministry are the Church Leadership Award and Next Generation Scholarships.

A new Anabaptist Scholarship will begin this fall. This will cover half of tuition for students who identify with the Anabaptist faith but are not members of Mennonite congregations. Applications for fall 2013 were due in February. For more details,

visit www.amb.s.edu/admissions/Anabaptist-Scholarship.cfm

Assist students in paying for seminary study

Church Partnership: AMBS matches aid that students receive from congregations and conferences. Details of this match will change in fall; visit www.amb.s.edu/admissions/documents/Church-Partnership.pdf for information. Forms for this aid for 2013–14 are due by May 1.

Scholarships: You can establish a scholarship with a minimum gift of \$25,000 or contribute to an existing scholarship. AMBS development officers can assist donors in doing this.

President's Circle: Make a commitment to a level of giving to AMBS each year. This helps AMBS anticipate how much aid can be given to students as well as how to fund the day-to-day work of the seminary. A new President's Circle is the **Fidelity Circle**, in which donors set up a recurring electronic gift, usually by credit card.

Designate a gift for student aid:

Friends of AMBS, when they send contributions, can designate all or part of the gift to go to student aid. (This aid will go to the general student aid fund, not to the account of a specific student.)

Contact us

AMBS development office
development@amb.s.edu

AMBS financial aid office
jwalker@amb.s.edu
Or call 800.964.2627 ●

NEW MASTER OF DIVINITY WAITING TO LAUNCH

AMBS anticipates offering a new plan of study for the Master of Divinity degree, available in two different modes of study:

Master of Divinity Connect will allow students to earn a Master of Divinity degree even if they cannot move to campus. By taking most courses online and visiting campus occasionally for intensive learning and formation, students can apply what they are learning to their current context of ministry or work.

The **Master of Divinity Campus** will build on the long-standing strengths of AMBS. Students will benefit from the mentoring, formation and fellowship that are provided in daily intentional community life.

AMBS awaits approval from accrediting agencies with the anticipation of offering these two options for the Master of Divinity this fall. To sign up to receive more information as it is available, visit www.amb.s.edu/academics/Master-of-Divinity-Connect.cfm

Photo: Joel Ickes from Etna Green, Ind., is a first-year student in the Master of Divinity program.



YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

Volunteers are essential to much that happens at AMBS, especially to hosting events such as the annual Pastors Week. Several volunteers returned in January to assist with preparations as well as with special maintenance projects, including Helen and Wilbur Yoder from Wellman, Iowa; Hedy (pictured) and Ed Rempel from Chatham, Ont.; and Cathie and Wes Braun from Keewatin, Ont. Local volunteers also are valuable, contributing to the beauty of the campus, serving in the library and assisting with office tasks. All volunteers have opportunities to join in chapel services, eat meals with the seminary community and use resources in the library. Learning to know students and faculty is often a highlight of the volunteer experience.

Volunteers' time, energy, expertise and hospitality are gifts to AMBS. Tasks are varied, so if you are interested in contributing your time and skills, AMBS has opportunities for you. Please contact Viridiana Navarro: volunteercoordinator@amb.s.edu ●

PANORAMA



The Mennonite Cooperative Bookstore at AMBS serves all who are interested in books about Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and ministry. Seminary student Martin Navarro (right) is bookstore manager and students, such as Charles Bontrager (left), serve the customers—who are not limited to students and faculty. See www.amsb.edu/bookstore.

Commencement: May 25

Celebrate with 2013 graduates on Saturday, May 25. The commencement service, at 2:30 p.m. at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., will feature speaker Lydia Harder, former director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre.

New books

- *John* in the Believers Church Bible Commentary Series, by Willard Swartley, Ph.D., professor emeritus
- *Living Gift: John's Jesus in Meditation and Poetry, Art and Song*, compiled by Willard Swartley

Webinar

Discerning the Powers: Moral Discernment, Theology and Mission, May 1, 2:00–3:30 p.m. Eastern, with Jamie Pitts, assistant professor of Anabaptist Studies.

Summer courses

See details: www.amsb.edu/academics/summer-courses.cfm

May 28–June 14

- **Greek Readings: Synoptic Gospels**
- **Seminar in Theology: Baptism**

June 17–28

- **The Five Scrolls**
- **Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations**
- **Celebrating the Christian Year**

June 28–29 (hybrid)

- **Pastoral Counseling and Theology**

July 8–19

- **Faith Formation and Spirituality: Adults and Seniors**

AMBS–Great Plains summer course

- **Family Systems and Pastoral Care**, May 28–June 15 ●

PRESIDENT'S WINDOW SARA WENGER SHENK



It's impossible to put a money value on effective and visionary leadership for the church. No price tag comes close to marking the worth of a wise biblical interpreter who knows what makes for peace in the midst of a church conflict. There's no way to calculate what adequate payment would be for a pastor who tenderly shepherds your family after searing tragedy strikes.

Is Mennonite seminary education worth its cost? The answer is straightforward and unequivocal. Absolutely. Frankly, the privilege it is to join a community devoted

over decades to dwelling in the Scriptures and to best pastoral practices is priceless. Compassionate, competent and confident leaders play an immensely critical role in the flourishing of healthy communities everywhere.

Not all seminary graduates become good leaders, but a whole lot of them do. Remarkably high percentages of teachers in our Mennonite colleges, staff members of mission boards and service agencies, and pastors learned Anabaptist best practices of Bible reading, caring for the poor, restoring right relationships, and communicating the transformative story of Jesus from a Mennonite seminary.

The price of an education is daunting if we expect the courageous persons who say, "Here am I" to pay it all themselves. Even though tuition covers only a portion of the actual costs of a quality education, too many of today's graduates are carrying unacceptably high debts, and too many gifted young people can't afford to come in the first place.

Do I, along with our board and seminary leadership, worry about that? All the time. Not because the education they receive isn't worth every penny. But because too many of us have lost the vision for investing in persons who will lead the church into a revitalized future.

Thank God for those who remember that the cost of ignorance and immaturity given full sway in local congregations is far greater than an investment in those who are ready to become masters of the craft. Thank God for those who know that investing in Christ-centered leadership formation will bear fruit long into the future. ●

Ask questions with Sara

Join Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president, in asking questions and engaging issues in the church. Her blog, *Practicing Reconciliation*, will "pose questions, test assumptions, resist labels, play with possibilities, experiment with integration, practice wholeness": www.amsb.edu/practicingreconciliation/

An invisible minority

Atheist feels welcome in the halls of Canadian Mennonite University

STORY AND PHOTO BY MICHAEL WIEBE

Special to *Young Voices*
WINNIPEG

Conversation within the walls of the Great Hall once fell on deaf ears, as what is now Canadian Mennonite University was originally built as a school for the hearing-impaired. Today, students from a variety of disciplines sit in what is now called the Blaurock Café talking academics and theology over fresh, fair-trade coffee.

CMU's mission statement is unapologetically Christian. But as a liberal arts university, the institution does not require of its students a Christian commitment. This seemingly contradictory philosophical stance stimulates debate among students with diverse convictions who enter the school community.

Some students find their faith at CMU. Others, such as 21-year-old Matt Mayers, lose it as well. He contests, however, that CMU provides a comfortable home for an atheist such as him.

His comfort level at CMU may have something to do with his Mennonite upbringing.

"I grew up Mennonite and my mom is Mennonite," he says. "My dad is kind of Jewish, but he doesn't really care, and he went to church with us all the time. Because I was raised Mennonite, I kind of know the Christian language, you know? If someone says 'the love of God,' I can translate that in my head to 'people's love' or something; you know, just humanize it."

Seated in a plush armchair in a corner of the café, the history major recounts his questions about faith in middle school, and described his religious status in his first year at CMU as "agnostic, but wanting to

be Christian."

"After taking the classes, talking to people, praying, and talking to professors, and the essays and what not . . . during the summer I thought, well, this doesn't make sense to me," he says. Mayers's journey towards a compassionate atheism had begun.

In a first-year Exploring Christian Spirituality class, Mayers's final essay challenged him to grapple with the question: "What is Christian spirituality?" He was able to describe what he wanted Christianity to be, but discovered that his views did not fit with what Christianity is. "What I wanted my life to be wasn't Christian," he acknowledges.

At the same time, Mayers embraced values of social justice and pacifism similar to those found in Christianity. He describes the similarities and differences between atheism and Christianity in an inspiring manner. "The goal is to love people," he says. "Social justice, pacifism: those are identical, I feel. But then the sort of underlying beliefs that inform that are completely different. There is no God in any of that, and, from a Mennonite perspective, God is in all of that."

Mayers explains that many students at CMU are convinced that there is neither social justice nor pacifism without the presence of God. These students tell him that he is spiritual but doesn't recognize it.

"They take their faith and put it over me," he says. "It's like, 'You're loving and you're this and that, you have the love of Jesus in

(Continued on page 34)



Matt Mayers, a third-year history major at the University of Winnipeg, stands in the Canadian Mennonite University chapel.

(Continued from page 33)

you, but you don't realize it.' . . . It's a little condescending, but I'm okay with it, and I'm good friends with people who think that way."

Mayers clearly values relationships, another benefit, perhaps, of a Mennonite upbringing steeped in community.

Despite the condescension of his peers, Mayers gracefully accepts that the community is Christian, and reflects that it need not go out of its way to accommodate him.

"It's called Canadian Mennonite University for a reason," he says. "It's not that big of a deal. They're not deliberately inclusive, like, there isn't an atheist club or something, but they aren't exclusive with anything either. I can go to chapel and get something out of it, or I can go to Wednesday night worship and get something different out of it than everyone else there."

This is not to say that any atheist would be content studying theology at CMU. After making the choice to be an atheist,

theology courses did less to define Mayers's beliefs and did more to test his patience.

"Coming to CMU last year, which was my second year, the religious courses just frustrated me so much," he says. "They were amazing in the first year, but second-year I just didn't get anything out of them."

These sentiments explain why Mayers, currently in his third academic year, lives on the CMU campus but is a student at the University of Winnipeg. And he plans to live on campus again next year.

There is no mystery as to what is keeping him coming back. Currently dating a Christian woman, Mayers says the CMU population is home, a place to strengthen his beliefs and the beliefs of others through engagement.

"I love it here because of the community, and because of the people, and I think that you can get that no matter what faith you are." ❧

Michael Wiebe is a second-year communications student at Canadian Mennonite University.

VIEWPOINT

God, dogs and capitalism

Rethinking our relationships with pets to work towards an Anabaptist ethic of nonconformity

BY LAURA TAIT

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES



Tait

Companions, guides, watchdogs and friends; No matter how you slice it, pets play a huge role in the lives of Canadians. The latest survey by Statistics Canada shows this, too, estimating that 35 percent of Canadian households have a dog and 38 percent have a cat.

With pet ownership, though, comes great responsibility. Across Canada, new bylaws are being proposed and passed that require all cats be registered for a licence as a way to reduce strays in animal shelters. Recommended prices for pet licences range from \$15 for spayed or neutered cats to \$64 for non-spayed or

-neutered dogs. The fine for not licensing your pets sits at an average of \$250.

When asked why we must license our pets, organizations such as Petplace.com respond by reminding pet owners that owning a pet is a privilege, much like owning a car. Since cars can be both useful and dangerous, governments must regulate how and who can use them.

This licensing debate points to the disturbing fact that, in the West, our legal system recognizes two forms of life: people and things. Animals are considered things in this system, and, more specifically, our things, our property.

If we are to be good stewards of God's

earth and see the value of creation in itself, this way of thinking points us in the wrong direction. As such, it is an important task as stewards to recognize the problems that come with thinking about animals as though they are cars.

In her book *More with Less*, Doris Janzen Longacre challenges readers to nonconform freely, emphasizing how, like Jesus, we, too, must work against the oppressive forces in our society. As Anabaptists, how we think about pets is theologically relevant when working towards an ethic of nonconforming freely in an oppressive capitalist system.

Reimagining dominion

Recounting their recent move from New Brunswick to Manitoba on their blog, Terry and Monique Mierau write how neighbours repeatedly asked why they brought their animals with them. Noting that no one ever questioned why they brought their couch, Terry and Monique describe how their animals are not simply possessions, but their own creatures with their own personalities and particularities.

“Simply buying an animals doesn’t make them ours,” they write. “They only belong to us when we, to some or the same degree, belong to them.”

Changing how we think about pets and other animals starts with changing how we think about our role as stewards of

God’s earth. If we think of our “dominion over the earth” as a kind of capitalist ownership or possession, we miss the point that nonhuman creatures are a gift that requires both care and reciprocity.

A better comparison than a car might be to compare pets to children. While we are certainly responsible for them and must care for them, they are not for us to use. Equally, this relationship is not a one-way exchange, or one that we can own.

Scripture clearly states that because God created everything, God is the owner of all: “*The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world and all those who live in it*” (Psalms 24:1).

To deny this is to deny animals are our fellow creatures, children of our divine and holy creator. It is also to deny that we ourselves are animals, called to care for God’s creation.

Yes, licensing pets may be an effective way to address strays in shelter, but the story cannot stop there. Reimagining pets as fellow creatures, instead of property, is an important step towards recognizing the oppressive forces in our capitalist society and an essential step towards working against them. ☞

Laura Tait is a fourth-year international development and communications student at Canadian Mennonite University.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAURA TAIT



Laura Tait’s dog, Jodi.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

To lead or not to lead

Are the traditional expectations of lead pastors unrealistic for today’s ministry candidates?

BY KYLE PENNER

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

“So Kyle, are you ever going to be a lead pastor?”
Good question. I am 29, married, have two kids and an undergrad degree, and have worked as a youth pastor for almost eight years. I am also

lucky enough to have been a part of two wonderful congregations that let me use my gifts in areas other than youth ministry. I love being a part of churches that try their best to be followers of Jesus
(Continued on page 36)

PHOTO COURTESY OF KYLE PENNER



Youth pastor says, 'We put a remarkable amount of expectation on lead pastors, but have a hard time giving them the freedom, tools, systems, grace, commitment, resources or the trust to lead us.'

(Continued from page 35)

as they try to love God and love their neighbours.

But as I approach the age of 30, I seem to be at a bit of a crossroads. Is youth ministry my lifelong calling? Or is God inviting me to consider using my gifts for a wider audience? Or, more specifically, am I ever going to accept a call to be a lead pastor?

To answer that question, let's start with another: "Why do I love youth ministry?"

Working with youth means that I get to participate in all sorts of life-giving ministry. We pray, we laugh, we share, we eat and we encounter God on a weekly basis.

One of my friends serving as a youth pastor told me why he loved youth ministry: "We can create, develop and drive a team and multi-person group to success. We can worship, teach, create, imagine, serve, connect in community, and have fun all in the same night. We can change things spur of the moment. We have the freedom to be as creative as we want, and our expectations are to simply have transformational encounters with kids."

Who wouldn't love that kind of ministry?

Which leads me to another question: "Could I say the above if I was a lead pastor?"

I'm sceptical. Not because of the job description of a lead pastor, but rather because of the expectations many churches have of their lead pastor.

We expect them to be gifted speakers 40 times a year. We expect them to work in congregational systems set up when churches were full. We expect them to be leaders and vision-setters with creativity, yet we are often quick to tell them how things have always been done and how to maintain the system. We expect them to visit each member personally, attend every church function and speak at our anniversaries, and will remember if they don't. We expect them to be the end of the line for church conflicts, with most of those conflicts being life-draining and petty.

"Surely, being a lead pastor can't be all bad, can it?"

I am sure there are many life-giving aspects of being a lead pastor. They get to preach. They get to participate in impor-

tant rites of passages, such as weddings, baptisms and child dedications. They get to help grieving families at funerals. They get to set direction for congregations. They get to walk with people when life is easy and when life is hard. They get to explore the meaning of life and are allowed access to some pretty deep parts of people's lives. Some of them even get to go on cool trips. And if it's your thing (which for some people it is), they get to sit on boards and committees that are hopefully engaged in life-changing work.

But I think that's the crux of the matter. I'm not sure if all the highlights of being a lead pastor are better than the highlights of being a youth pastor. And I am quite certain that the life-draining parts of youth ministry are better than the life-draining parts of being a lead pastor.

We put a remarkable amount of expectation on lead pastors, but have a hard time giving them the freedom, tools, systems, grace, commitment, resources or the trust to lead us. Whereas, we put far fewer expectations on youth pastors and give them far more freedom, tools, systems, grace, commitment, resources and trust to create space for youth to encounter God.

It all seems a bit mixed up, doesn't it? So mixed up that I can't answer the original question with a simple yes or no. My answer starts with the words, "It depends."

"So Kyle, are you ever going to be a lead pastor?"

It depends. If I find a church that is looking for a lead pastor with reasonable expectations of him or her, and is able to give its staff the trust, freedom and resources to create space for everyone to encounter God—then, yes, I will consider being their lead pastor. If not, then youth ministry is just fine by me. ☺

Kyle Penner is associate pastor of youth at Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach, Man.

Calendar

British Columbia

May 4: MC B.C. Women's Inspirational Day at Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church.

Alberta

May 24-26: "Designed in God's Image" women's retreat at Sunnyside Christian Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake. Speaker: Michelle Copithorne of Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary. For more information, contact Ev Buhr at 780-436-3431.

Saskatchewan

May 11: RJC open campus day.
May 11: RJC spring choir concert, 7 p.m.

Manitoba

Until April 27: "From Paraguay to Winnipeg: Explorations of place home and childhood" art exhibit at Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg. Featured artists: Miriam Rudolph and Bennie Peters.

April 27: CMU spring concert featuring choirs and ensembles.

April 27: Mennonite Collegiate Institute fundraising supper, at Buhler Hall, Gretna, at 5:30 p.m. Concert featuring Ted Swartz, "Laughter is a sacred space," follows at 7 p.m. For more information, or to register, call 204-327-5891.

May 3: Mennonite Collegiate Institute Chamber Choir concert, at Manitou Opera House, Manitou, at 7 p.m.

May 7: Westgate Collegiate fundraiser banquet at the Marlborough Hotel, 6 p.m.

May 10-11: Workathon at Camp Moose Lake. For more information, e-mail camps@mennochurch.mb.ca.

May 12: Mother's Day fundraiser at Camp Assiniboia. For more information, e-mail camps@mennochurch.mb.ca.

Ontario

April 19: Menno Youth Singers present a coffeehouse and silent auction, at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 7 p.m. Free.

April 19: 12th annual ham dinner fundraiser for MCC's meat canner project, at Hamilton Mennonite Church, from 5 to 7 p.m.; entertainment to follow. Vegetarian alternative available. For more information or tickets, call 905-387-3952 or 905-528-3607, or email hmc@cogeco.net.

April 19,20: MCC and Theatre of the Beat present the *Forgiven/Forgotten* Tour, a play and conversation about restorative justice and a Christian response to crime, at the Conrad Centre, Kitchener; (19) at 8 p.m., and (20) 2 and 8 p.m. For more information, visit forgivenforgotten.wordpress.com.

April 20: Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada holds its spring Enrichment Day, at Tavistock Mennonite Church; registration at 9:30 a.m., activities run from 10:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Theme: "Wonderfully made: Women, faith and self-care. Speaker: Terri J. Plank Brenneman of Goshen, Ind. To register by April 5, contact Florence Jantzi at 519-669-4356 or jantzi@golden.net.

April 20: Shalom Counselling Services fundraiser, "Lessons my mother taught

me," featuring Roger Martin, dean of Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, at St. George Banquet Hall, Waterloo, at 6 p.m. Music by Michael Wood Trio. To reserve tickets by April 10, call 519-886-9690.

April 20,21: Pax Christi Chorale presents Handel's *Solomon*, an oratorio, at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto; at 7:30 p.m. (20) and 3 p.m. (21). For tickets, call 416-491-8542 or visit paxchristichorale.org.

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.

April 25: MCC and Theatre of the Beat present the *Forgiven/Forgotten* Tour, a play and conversation about restorative justice and a Christian response to crime, at St. Paul University, Ottawa, at 8 p.m. For more information, visit forgivenforgotten.wordpress.com.

April 26: Deacons of Jazz perform a fundraising concert for Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, at Hamilton Mennonite Church.

(Continued on page 38)

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(Continued from page 37)

April 26: MCC and Theatre of the Beat present the *Forgiven/Forgotten* Tour, a play and conversation about restorative justice and a Christian response to crime, at Valley View Mennonite Church, London, at 8 p.m. For more information, visit forgivenforgotten.wordpress.com.

April 26-27: MC Eastern Canada 25th-anniversary celebrations at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, including the annual church gathering. (27) Public worship celebration at 2:30 p.m. with César Garcia, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference. Everyone welcome to attend, but registration is encouraged by visiting mcec.ca and following the "registration" link.

April 26-27: Engaged Workshop, for engaged or newly married couples, at Living Water Fellowship, New Hamburg. For more information or to register, e-mail Denise Bender at denise_bender@yahoo.com.

April 27: Celebrate Len Enns's musical career at Conrad Grebel University College with a Chamber Choir concert, "Songs for this Day," at Sharon Temple, a national historic site north of Toronto, at 7 p.m. A celebration reception follows. For more information, e-mail music@uwaterloo.ca.

April 27,28: MCC and Theatre of the Beat present the *Forgiven/Forgotten* Tour, a play and conversation about restorative justice and a Christian response to crime, at the Bank Theatre, Leamington; (27) at 7:30 p.m., (28)

at 3 p.m. For more information, visit forgivenforgotten.wordpress.com.

April 29: Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp spring seniors retreat. Keynote speaker Arthur Boers will share about his book *The Way is Made by Walking: Spiritual Hunger in our World Today*. For more information, or to register, call 519-625-8602, e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca, or visit hiddenacres.ca.

May 3: MCC and Theatre of the Beat present the *Forgiven/Forgotten* Tour, a play and conversation about restorative justice and a Christian response to crime, at Nineteen on the Park, Stouffville, at 8 p.m. For more information, visit forgivenforgotten.wordpress.com.

May 4: MCC and Theatre of the Beat present the *Forgiven/Forgotten* Tour, a play and conversation about restorative justice and a Christian response to crime, at the Berkeley Theatre, Toronto, at 8 p.m. For more information, visit forgivenforgotten.wordpress.com.

May 4,5: The Soli Deo Gloria Singers present their spring concert, "Faith Tapestry"; (4) at UMEI, at 7:30 p.m., and (5) at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. Advance tickets are available at MSCU branches and Ten Thousand Villages, or by calling UMEI at 519-326-7448.

May 5: The Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir presents "We Will Sing," featuring

the music of Jim Papoulis, at Breslau Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m.

May 5: MCC and Theatre of the Beat present the *Forgiven/Forgotten* Tour, a play and conversation about restorative justice and a Christian response to crime, at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, Orillia, at 8 p.m. For more information, visit forgivenforgotten.wordpress.com.

May 11: The 75th anniversary committee of Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, is hosting a garden sale, bake sale, barbecue, silent auction and café, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This year's silent auction theme is "Experiencing life together"; instead of items, donors are asked to offer such things as an evening in your backyard, a boat or motorcycle ride.

May 11: Hidden Acres' 18th annual road hockey tournament, for ages 18 and up. Register by May 6 by e-mail at roadhockey@gmail.com.

May 11: Fifth annual Paddle the Grand fundraiser for Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. For more information, visit slmcc.ca.

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.

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Classifieds

Vote for Fave Recipes

Is tabouli on your go-to list of potluck dishes?

Does your son request samosas for his birthday meal?

Which pages in your copy of Extending the Table are the most splattered?

Herald Press is revising this World Community Cookbook, and we can't include all of the recipes in the new edition.

Which recipes should remain?

Vote for your favorite recipes at www.surveymonkey.com/s/extendtable by May 15.

Receive a 30 percent discount on the new edition and be entered in a prize drawing for three global-cuisine gifts.

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

Announcements

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.

Canadian Word Guild AWARDS

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MENNO YOUTH SINGERS, a choir for young people aged 15 -22 based in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, seeks a new **DIRECTOR**.

See www.mennosingers.com/mys for a complete job description and sample annual choir schedule. MYS is a part of the Menno Singers Family of Choirs. Contact mysapplications@gmail.com for more information. Application deadline: Apr. 30/13.

Employment Opportunities

MUSIC COORDINATOR POSITION

NUTANA PARK MENNONITE CHURCH in Saskatoon is looking for a Music Coordinator to serve as choral director and work with a music committee to develop and enhance the role of music in our congregation. This is a part-time position.

Please send all inquiries and/or resumes to:

Selection Committee, Nutana Park Mennonite Church, 1701 Ruth Street, Saskatoon, SK S7J 0L7; or email: npmc@npmc.net. The deadline for applications is May 24, 2013.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ST. CLAIR O'CONNOR COMMUNITY INC. (SCOC), a Not-for-Profit, Intergenerational Home, which was developed under the sponsorship of two Mennonite Churches, is now inviting applicants for the position of Executive Director. SCOC is committed to providing a continuum of care for the residents of the SCOC community.

SCOC receives funding from both the Provincial and City Governments, in support of the Long Term Care unit, Adult Day Program, and Housing operations.

This dynamic, independent individual will be responsible for the direction, finances, planning, funder relations and obligations, resident relations, and resident family relations, as well as ensuring good community relations. A key aspect of the responsibilities will be to provide direction in the planning and implementation of the SCOC's Long Term Strategic Plan and developing an organizational structure in support of the Strategic Plan. The Executive Director reports to the SCOC Board of Directors.

SCOC is located in Toronto at the corner of St. Clair and O'Connor streets. SCOC offers a competitive salary and benefits package.

Please submit applications with resumes by April 15, 2013 to:

By email to retlaw@fradsetr.com

or

Walter Friesen
Board Chair
St. Clair O'Connor Community Inc.
2701 St. Clair Ave. East
Toronto, Ont.
M4B 3M3

FULL-TIME LEAD PASTOR

GRACE MENNONITE CHURCH in Winkler, 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 gmcsearchcommittee@gmail.com

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



Mennonite Central Committee

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (MCC) MANITOBA is seeking to fill the position of **FINANCIAL SERVICES COORDINATOR**. This full-time, salaried, term position (13 months) is responsible for planning, organizing and managing all aspects of the finances of MCC Manitoba. A detailed job description is available at serve.mcccanada.ca.

Application deadline is April 26. Please send Resume and Cover Letter to Tricia Prosser at triciaprosser@mennonitecc.ca.

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

LENDRUM MB CHURCH invites applications for **TWO PASTORAL ROLES**. Lendrum is a well-established church in Edmonton, Alberta with an average attendance of 150 people. We are a diverse intergenerational congregation. We are looking for pastors who

- are committed to an Anabaptist theology and practice
- have a seminary and/or university education
- support the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith and the Mennonite Brethren church polity
- welcome dialogue reflecting a diversity of opinions

Specifically we are interested in receiving applications from individuals who are interested in two or more of these areas: preaching, working with youth and young families, small groups, adult teaching, and local outreach initiatives.

Salary is according to the MB conference guidelines along with generous benefits.

For further information, or to apply, please call (780.434.4268) or e-mail to Pastoral Search Committee lmbc@compusmart.ab.ca. All communication and applications will be handled confidentially.

Singing the Good Friday blues

PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN



Angelika Dawson, a member of the Good Friday Blues Band, nails her 'blues' to a cross as part of the Good Friday Blues service.

PHOTO BY KEVIN JESKE



Angelika Dawson and son Aaron perform the blues as part of the Good Friday Blues service in Abbotsford, B.C.

Musicians raise money for local youth shelter

BY AMY DUECKMAN
B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Blues filled the House of James Christian bookstore for two nights during Holy Week, raising the roof with music and raising funds for a local charity.

Made up of local Mennonite musicians, the Good Friday Blues Band performed two concerts on the evenings of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, March 28 and 29.

The band formed a year ago for the express purpose of performing on Good Friday, the darkest day in the Christian calendar. Aaron Dawson of Abbotsford had been inspired by Randy Stonehill's song, "Didn't It Rain," and the idea for the band was born. Dawson and his mother Angelika formed the group with other interested musicians, performing the blues at House of James on Good Friday last year. It was so popular that several dozen people were turned away at the door.

This year, the band decided to do the concert over two evenings and sell tickets at minimal cost ahead of time. All proceeds went to Cyrus Centre, a local shelter for on-the-street youths. The theme this year was "Storm Comin'," with the feature song of the same name by the Wailin' Jennys.

Also featured were prayers and a litany, a southern gospel-style sermon by John Dawson, a poem by Olivia Sharpe, and a chance for audience members to write needs and prayer requests on blue pieces of paper, then symbolically nail their "blues" to a wooden cross.

Both Thursday and Friday performances were sold out, and more than \$1,000 was raised for Cyrus Centre. Band members contributed their talents out of love for God and music, and took no payment for their performances.

The choice of location in a bookstore/coffee house was deliberate. "We were very intentional about doing this service in a place that was not a church," Angelika explained. "We want people who wouldn't feel comfortable in a sanctuary to feel that they could come and hear the Good Friday story in a unique way." ❧