

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

August 19, 2013

Volume 17 Number 16

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## Shared ministry

TOBI THIESSEN

It is a great experience to be on the board of *Canadian Mennonite*. On a personal level, it is both fun and interesting. You get to meet other Mennonites from across the country and hear what is going on in their churches. You find that some things between congregations are very similar. You also see that some issues are distinctive because of different social, demographic or economic conditions.

In essence, the *Canadian Mennonite* board is a microcosm of the Mennonite church in Canada. The 12 members on the board represent urban and rural congregations from British Columbia to Ontario, and have a variety of educational and work backgrounds. Coming from different congregations and experiences, we unite in common purpose. Meeting together, we learn from and inspire each other.

The board meets as a full group only once per year, over two days in March. It always amazes me how, in this time, we gel from a disparate collection of skills and experiences to a cohesive group excited about this magazine, its role as a connecting thread for the church in Canada, and its future.

A key ingredient in the success of this board-meeting format is that we rotate the location of the annual meetings around the provinces. Last March, we were in Lethbridge, Alta. Next March, we will be in Winnipeg. Board members from the province where we meet arrange for us to be hosted in a given church, and the board becomes more

familiar with the Mennonite church in that region.

We meet in a church basement and are billeted in church members' homes. We invite local pastors and church leaders in that community to share a meal with us, and to tell us how *Canadian Mennonite* can better serve their ministries. Each annual meeting concludes with a fundraising banquet attended by many in the area, where we enjoy local entertainment and celebrate our shared ministry in *Canadian Mennonite* magazine.



Just as coming together with Mennonites from different provinces gives each individual a better understanding of the national church, meeting in a different community each year gives the board new insights. We could sit in a room anywhere to discuss the budget, new initiatives or website activity. But by having this conversation in a different Mennonite church each year, listening to local voices and learning about the church in that area, we underscore the fact that this is a magazine of and for the whole church body.

**Mutual accountability**

The mission of *Canadian Mennonite* is "to educate, inspire, inform and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada . . ." (The full mission statement appears on the facing page of this column and on the About Us page of our website.) Undergirding the mission statement are a number of guiding values, the first of which is Hebrews 10:24-25:

*"Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching"* (NRSV).

It makes complete sense to me that a church magazine would be educating, inspiring, informing and fostering dialogue on matters of church and faith, but this passage from Hebrews adds an interesting twist. I am most intrigued by Paul's words "to provoke one another to love and good deeds." Usually, when I see someone provoking someone else, it leads to anger and rash action. With Paul's words as guidance, *Canadian Mennonite* strives to provoke readers, conscious that our purpose in doing so is to encourage faithful discipleship: love and good deeds.

Occasionally, readers question how a given article or opinion piece fits our mission. We receive more letters of affirmation and praise than criticism, but we listen carefully to all exhortations. It is part of our theology to hold each other to account for our behaviour, and explains why "seeking and speaking the truth in love" and "covenantal relationships and mutual accountability" are also on our list of guiding values.

We cannot often meet in person with other Mennonites from across the country to share, learn and inspire each other. Thankfully, this magazine was created to do the same thing, as best it can, in print form. Keep those letters coming.

*Tobi Thiessen of Toronto is chair of the 12-member Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service board.*

**ABOUT THE COVER:**

**A member of Skill Circus Family and Fire Entertainment swallows fire at the 2013 Fat Calf Festival, Mennonite Church Canada's biennial youth assembly, held this summer at Camp Assiniboia in Manitoba. See story and more photos beginning on page 32, and also on the back cover.**

PHOTO: MOSES FALCO, MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

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

**Guiding values:**

Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom •

Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will •

Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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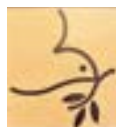
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In 2000, the late **JOHN REIMER** created wooden plaques for every Mennonite Church Canada congregation that feature the now iconic olive branch logo of the denomination.

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## Young Voices 32-37

Young Voices co-editor **AARON EPP** reports on the successful Fat Calf Festival, MC Canada's biennial youth assembly. Plus, **ANDREA PALPANT DILLEY** advises congregations desperate to keep their youth to think carefully before acceding to young voices seeking change; and

**MICHAEL WIEBE** profiles **MICHAEL MIFFLIN**, who was born with spina bifida, in our continuing 'Voice of the Voiceless' series.

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GOD AT WORK IN US FEATURE

# Join the Big Hearts Club

*Generosity strengthens discipleship, builds community and promotes unity, donor researcher discovers*

BY LORI GUENTHER REESOR

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

**G**iving is about much more than money. What we do with our time, talent and treasure all matter to God. As Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21, Luke 12:34).

I am a doctoral student researching giving within the sustaining church bodies of Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC). I’m also a fundraising consultant and former pastor, and am passionate about both fundraising and theology. When I do donor research, I ask about money, but I’m even more interested in hearts. Generosity makes our hearts grow bigger, according to *Growing Givers’ Hearts: Treating Fundraising as Ministry* by Thomas Jeavons and Rebekah Burch Basinger; it strengthens discipleship, builds community and promotes unity.

In a typical year, church members in MFC’s constituency give more than \$100 million to their local congregations, which is astonishing for a base of around 70,000 members. And that’s only receipted giving to churches. It doesn’t include the sponsored children, fundraisers for church camp, regular support for mission workers, gifts to local causes and much more. Nor does it include the thousands of volunteer hours and gifts of time and talent.

From May to December of last year, I met with groups of donors from B.C. to Ontario in order to learn more about how and why people give. With support from MFC, I held 10 focus groups with a total of 66 people.

It was humbling to meet so many generous people. The quotes are from real donors, but the characters I have created are composites and the identities are fictional. I want to talk about discipleship, community and unity, and after reading their stories I hope you will be inspired to join the Big Hearts Club too.

## **Discipleship**

Being a regular and cheerful giver makes an excellent start on a journey of faithful stewardship. Sharing our stories along the way encourages us to “walk the talk,” which is what discipleship is about. Let me introduce two characters:

*In a typical year, church members in MFC’s constituency give more than \$100 million to their local congregations, which is astonishing for a base of around 70,000 members.*





• **ANNE IS ANALYTICAL** and her father-in-law Fred is free-spirited. Anne is the kind of donor who looks carefully at a charity's financial statements, or checks it out on the Canada Revenue Agency website. She is very concerned with efficiency. If a charity advertises on TV, she wonders how much it costs to do that. Some of the charities her father-in-law supports Anne wouldn't go near. She regularly and faithfully supports a small number of charities: her church, local agencies and trusted mission workers. She reviews the list every year.

• **FRED GIVES MORE SPONTANEOUSLY** than his daughter-in-law does. It might be to a missionary or to a Christian organization on TV. Unlike his daughter-in-law, he never looks at the financial reports. Once he gives to an organization, "they're accountable to God for what happens to the money," he says. Fred makes numerous one-time gifts to charities like the Heart and Stroke Foundation when asked. (He gets asked a lot.) Aside from his church, Fred's giving patterns are unpredictable.

Anne and Fred could learn from each other, seeking "to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man" (II Corinthians 8:21). Fred could use some help with his planning. People who plan their giving generally give more in total. While Fred likes spontaneous Spirit-inspired giving, it's also true that the Holy Spirit can work 12 months in advance, according to Edwin Friesen, who was an MFC stewardship consultant from 1995 until his death in 2008. Anne could learn from Fred's example of being a "hilarious giver" (II Corinthians 9:17), and perhaps create a budgeted amount for spontaneous giving.

Testimony and discussion encourage discipleship around giving. I enjoyed hearing people's stories of how they learned to give, and how giving has changed their life:

• **CAL—THE FAITHFUL TITHER**—learned tithing from his dad. Without fail, 10 percent of each paycheque went to the church. "It didn't matter what we wouldn't get [as a result of money going

to the church instead of other things]," says Cal, not harshly but admiringly. Cal's wife Linda remembers getting her allowance in dimes so she could easily tithe. Cal and Linda model regular giving to their four children, just as their parents did. They tithe faithfully to the church, support several sponsored children and give to other church-related causes when they can.

• **CHRISTINE—THE VOLUNTEER**—works in her church office part-time and volunteers for a Christian children's charity the rest of the week. She also recruits friends from church to volunteer. She donates regularly to both places. Christine cannot afford to be a big financial donor, but she is generous with her time and talents. If she could afford to stop working, she would like to take in foster children. Many people from her congregation donate to the charity where Christine volunteers because of her involvement.

• **JANET—THE GOD-TESTER**—laughs and says, "You've can't out-give God. It's a little

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game we have.” She means you can always afford to be generous (II Corinthians 9:8). She is excited to talk about her giving: “You just see God working. So many people don’t see God working in that way because they don’t give him the chance. We run on a pretty tight budget and we make it through every month. . . . It almost seems like I have more money when I give it away.” Janet testifies that her husband became a Christian through their giving, and it’s clear that giving forms a big part of her faith.

• **KEITH—THE THEOLOGIAN**—is actually a mechanic. He would be surprised, and possibly insulted, to be called a theologian. He understands tithing, but is not legalistic. “Ten percent is a good number, but if you can give more, give more,” he says. “If you can only give 6, 7 percent, that’s okay.” When asked how he learned to give, Keith talks about God’s ownership, saying, “If you’re just pleasing yourself . . . it’s a lot harder to give because it feels like it’s your money. But if you approach it as if it’s God’s money, not mine, it’s a whole lot easier. It was never mine to begin with.” Keith understands that everything he has belongs to God, that people are stewards of what God has given to them.

• **JOYCE—THE “BAD BANKER”**—is actually a retired banker. She jokes that her employer thought she was a “bad banker” because she counselled clients to take off their giving first, then their payments, and then live on the rest. She used to be a church treasurer too, a few years back. Joyce and her husband have been faithful donors all their lives, and by now their list of causes is well-established. Joyce has quietly taught her children how to give. She would be the ideal person to assist in premarital counselling and to help people in her congregation who are experiencing a financial crisis.

• **RICHARD—THE NON-GIVER**—is someone I never actually met, but I met people who knew him. His church never talked about giving. Richard never heard the expectations about giving that come

with membership because those expectations were unspoken. And he didn’t learn about giving at home, like Cal did. Richard has a mortgage and a car loan, and owes money on his credit card. His church does not thank him when he does give, nor does it seem to notice if he goes six months without putting anything in the offering plate. The only difference Richard observes is whether or not he gets a tax receipt from the church at the end of the year.

Richard represents a missed opportunity for encouraging discipleship. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if Richard and Joyce could go out for coffee? They could have a great discussion about God’s ownership, first-fruits giving and how to develop habits of regular giving. It would strengthen discipleship and build a stronger community of faith.

**Community**

The discipline of giving strengthens a community of faith, and giving to a common cause strengthens it further. However, one cannot assume that people from the same area church give to common causes. My small sample of 66 donors gives to more than 200 different causes, which suggests tremendous diversity. I frequently quote the donor who said, “My parents raised me to be an atheist,” as a reminder not to presume a common background, such as one where people naturally grow up knowing about Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

The reasons people give are also diverse. “To help a cause I believe in,” was the top response from MFC constituents by a wide margin, while getting a tax receipt was at the bottom of the list of reasons for giving.

I also found evidence of a generational shift towards giving to a variety of causes beyond Christian circles:

• **ALBERT—THE MISSIONARY PARENT**—supports missionary children based in the Philippines. If you saw Albert at Tim Horton’s, you wouldn’t realize that he is a major supporter of an overseas mission station. His daughter married a Filipino, and they run a base for mission workers

in the area. Churches, as well as area and national church offices, support mission workers, but families support them in a more involved way. Albert gives to the church, but doesn’t have to think about where the rest of his giving goes.

• **STELLA—OVERWHELMED BY CHOICES**—finds deciding where to give is much more difficult than it is for Albert. There are so many good causes! Some choices are easy: the church, of course, and the woman undergoing medical treatment who is being supported by the congregation. Stella gives to local families in need, or to youths going on a mission trip or to Bible camp. But the Compassion and World Vision Christmas catalogues come on the same day. And then Samaritan’s Purse and Gospel for Asia both do something along the same lines. People come to her door asking for donations. Stella gives to the causes that are most familiar, but she struggles with the constant decision-making. “How do you decide?” is a question I heard over and over again, and not just from Stella.

**Unity**

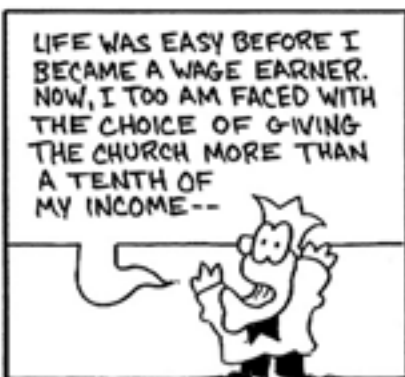
Albert and Stella both need the community of faith to help them. Common causes build unity. The church could help Stella choose causes that are aligned with the mission of the church. The church could help Albert build a broader base of support for the mission station where his daughter lives. Conversely, when a community gives and works toward a common purpose, it becomes more unified.

Giving becomes community-building when we give “to help a cause we believe in.” Giving becomes unity-building when multiple communities give together. Agatha’s story illustrates this:

• **AGATHA—THE AREA CHURCH LOYALIST**—says of the decline in giving to her denomination, “We are very strong conference people, and it hurts us.” Without the assistance of MCC and the denomination in helping them settle in Canada after the war, she wonders what would have become of her and her husband? Their loyalty and gratitude to

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# Pontius' Puddle



Pontius' Puddle on **GIVING**

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MCC and the wider church are unbounded. “Some of it is payback,” her husband explains. They are saddened that younger generations do not give in the same way to these causes, but younger people are not well represented in the church Agatha attends.

• **BRIAN—THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK**—gives to the same camp that Agatha supports, but other than that they have no common causes. He doesn’t have any history with the Mennonite church. As a child, he attended a Catholic church sporadically, and his wife has no church background. They attend a local, recently planted Mennonite church, where they enjoy the worship and the friendly people. The church connects well to the community. Brian does not know what an area church is. It doesn’t really matter to him or to his congregation. Brian’s giving connections are to the local congregation, the mission workers who share testimonies there and to the church camp where he volunteers in the summer.

According to my survey, after the local church and mission workers, children’s causes such as child sponsorship and camp are the most frequent regularly supported causes. Brian is a typical donor. His giving pretty much stops where his community stops, as he is largely unaware of any bigger connections.

**In conclusion**

In my survey, I asked people which area church they belonged to. A couple of people didn’t know and one brave person asked what that was. While most people did check the appropriate box, many didn’t really know what their area or national church did.

Not surprisingly, then, survey results show more trust in the local church than in the wider church bodies. The Muttart Foundation study, from which I borrowed the question, found something similar: People trust their church more than they trust a religious organization. The local church feels closer.

While there are exceptions, it seems that MFC’s constituent congregations

have no difficulty funding projects that are meaningful to them. I saw new buildings and heard numerous stories about youth mission trips. These tangible, visible projects build local community, but each church can be headed in a different direction.

While the local church remains the charity of choice, my survey results show a “gratitude gap.” The local church and Christian organizations do not thank donors nearly as often as secular organizations do.

What does it say about our theology if the church doesn’t celebrate the gifts of time, talent and treasure that it receives? Saying “thank you” acknowledges gifts the church has received from God through member giving. The local congregation could start by intentionally thanking volunteers and donors. Thank the donors and tell them what their gift will accomplish (II Corinthians 9:12). Make it easy for donors to plan their giving and give on a regular basis (I Corinthians 16:1-2). It’s not just about money, but about growing disciples, building community and promoting the unity of the church.

In closing, I want to promote the MFC. Its consultants do a fantastic job of working with congregations and individuals to promote “faithful joyful giving.” Ask if someone can come speak at your church. Instead of thinking of it as someone coming to talk about money, consider it as an invitation to make your hearts grow bigger. ☸



*Lori Guenther Reesor of Mississauga, Ont., is completing her doctor of ministry studies at Tyndale University College and Seminary, Toronto, and*

*then looking to expand her fundraising consulting practice. She attends Hamilton Mennonite Church with her husband and two teenage children.*

**☸ For discussion**

1. What motivates you to give? Where did you learn to be generous? When you give to the church or to other charities, how much of it is carefully planned and how much of it is free-spirited? Is it important to you to analyze charities and to carefully plan your giving?
2. Which charities do you support regularly? What criteria do you use to decide which ones to support? How closely do you follow the activities of the charities you support? How do you respond if an unknown person shows up at your door, collecting for a charity?
3. Lori Guenther Reesor writes that many people don’t support the area or national churches perhaps because they don’t know what they do. How do you support your area and national church? Is it part of your congregation’s budget? How could your congregation work at improving the visibility of the area and national church?
4. Should your congregation do a better job of expressing appreciation to donors? Should generous donors receive public recognition? How should a congregation express its thanks to those who give gifts other than money?
5. How can we encourage each other to be more generous? Where do we hear each other’s stories of generosity?

—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](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) or by postal mail or fax, marked “Attn: Readers Write” (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author’s contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Preference will be given to letters from MC Canada congregants.*

✉ **Movie ‘gave me something to rankle against’**

**RE:** “A NEW low for Hollywood” review by Vic Thiessen, July 8, page 24.

Thiessen’s review echoes my own feeling of unease watching *Man of Steel* in the theatre last month. I, too, was bothered by the false connections between Superman and Jesus. I did not know about the Christian marketing angle.

Unlike Thiessen, I did enjoy the film, almost in spite of how untrue its message struck me. The forwardness of its religious theme gave me something to rankle against. Thanks for calling it out in this review.

**MICHAEL TURMAN, WATERLOO, ONT.**

✉ **Short-term mission trips have great value**

**RE:** “DISPELLING THE myths of ‘microwave ministry,’” June 24, page 34.

While I generally agree with Bethany Daman about short-term missions, I think she missed an important aspect of the short term missions experience: the personal spiritual formation that occurs at the same time.

Short-term mission team members may not be able to build a lasting relationship with the people they are serving, but they can provide the human power needed to complete important ministries, ministries that allow long-term missionaries to continue to build relationships after the short-termers are gone. Very rarely do short-term mission teams go somewhere

where there isn’t a local partner.

And while it would be more efficient to send our finances to the communities and hire local workers, which often does happen, the fact that we also send short-term missionaries shows that we are willing to walk alongside them.

And while we may not be able to learn everything about a culture in a week, that doesn’t mean that we can’t learn anything. We can begin to become aware of the issues in that area, and share what we’ve learned with our congregations.

One of the most formative experiences I had while a teenager was a short-term mission trip to Guatemala. No, I didn’t learn everything about the culture, but I could see how Canadian mining companies were ruining it. And, no, I am not maintaining relationships with people in Guatemala, but I know that the work I did there, like building a greenhouse, and running children and youth programming, helped continue to build relationships between the long-term workers who were there and the community.

While my trip might not have been the most efficient way to do development work, it did work towards the growing of the kingdom of God in a way that sending a cheque would not.

**TIM WENGER, KITCHENER, ONT.**

✉ **Teaching, prayer, witness must not be lost in changing church**

**RE:** “FINDING NEW paths through the wilderness,” June 24, 2013, page 4.

I welcome Evelyn Petkau’s significant article of the church in postmodern society. I affirm other *Canadian Mennonite* writers who have dared to comment in recent issues on the same theme. “Wilderness” is an appropriate term.

I quickly remind readers that the church in the decades of the 1940s to the ’60s was also the New Testament church. Missions, prayer and Scripture had high prominence. I recall, as a camp instructor in the mid-’50s, at times being asked in the morning by the camp director, “What was your QT [quiet time] learning this morning?”

Petkau identifies key points to consider, and shows a few cases of how this has been effective. I appreciate the openness, and the spirit of seeking a reality that works. We search. We ask. We do need change.

There are three areas, however, where we, as a people of God, need further renewal and serious consideration. How will believers in or outside the church:

*(Continued on page 10)*

(Continued from page 9)

- **BE TAUGHT** faith and Scripture without teachers?
- **CRY, COMMUNICATE** and further the kingdom of God in prayer?
- **WITNESS FULLY** to God's mercy and goodness?

Our deeds and our actions, as indicated by Petkau, will be evident among believers in the postmodern

era. Jesus and Paul urge us to give verbal voice to our faith at appropriate moments.

**JOHN PETERS, WATERLOO ONT.**

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

# Becoming Onesimus

PHIL WAGLER

I just turned 41. Finding new aches that never used to be there. Peculiar. Discovering a nap is disturbingly easy to slip into. Odd. Found some hair growing on my ear. Just plain weird. My belly is officially a well-insulated one-pack even though I don't eat near what I used to. Depressing.

Where are marks of health at this stage of my development people call "over the hill?" Well, my physique needs some fine tuning; it's not prone to manage itself anymore. But, as a person, I think I'm wiser. Okay, I hope I'm wiser. I'm less prone to rashness and sarcasm with my words. I think before I speak, I think.

I'm more patient with people and their complexities, but less patient with that stuff the bull leaves behind. I'm more awake to the wonder of grace,

the power of the Spirit, and the curse of legalism, while being more aware that submissive community and surrendered obedience are the pathways to understanding the marvels of grace, the Spirit and freedom from the law.

I have begun to live in the comfortable world of the paradox and don't find that paradoxical at all. I identify with other's sorrow more readily, have a deeper understanding of what it means to be lost and a new humility in having been found.

I have less overt experiences of God than I once did, and yet have a deeper

sense of his constant presence, his strong hand that both holds and disciplines.

Maybe this is some of what Richard Rohr hints at when he observes that the big difference between that first stage of life and this one "is that your small and petty self is out of the way and if God wants to use you, which God always does, God's chances are far better now."

So, on the one hand, my body is saying I'm a little less functional than in my more beguiling youth. But, on the other, it's as if I'm actually becoming Onesimus.

Onesimus was that runaway slave belonging to Philemon. In his sly wit, the Apostle Paul pokes Philemon that



*I have less overt experiences of God than I once did, and yet have a deeper sense of his constant presence, his strong hand that both holds and disciplines.*

Onesimus's turning to Christ now makes him more than a brother to the slave owner: he is finally useful. ("Onesimus" means "useful.") He was ancient property, but now the deeper work of the Spirit makes him more than muscles. Philemon—in one of Paul's most radical counter-cultural statements—is to measure usefulness by more than mere appearance. He is to measure him by who he truly belongs to and by the fruit of his life.

And so I find myself in a culture that drools over the measurements of that

first stage of life to such an extent that it can barely even describe the second. We measure the wrong things. We do this when we look in the mirror as individuals, households, and even as churches.

When we ask, "What are the signs of a healthy functioning body?" we rarely ask the truly useful questions, like "Am I more able to endure suffering or rejection in a Christ-like manner?" or, "When was the last time I practised the confession of sin with someone?" or, "When was the last time we as a church nurtured a truly broken person to wholeness and restoration in Christ?"

These and other questions are true measures of our body and our soul. And they are work. Which is probably why as individuals we settle for measurements like how much is in our bank account or why as churches we are thrilled to count buttocks in seats.

But don't those types of metrics simply sound a lot like looking at your adolescent biceps in the mirror? Wouldn't asking different questions be real signs of functioning healthy maturity? Wouldn't they help us in becoming Onesimus?

*Phil Wagler serves a community of disciples in Surrey, B.C., who are beginning to ask new questions. You can travel with him to Israel in February 2014 and ask your own. Send him an e-mail ([phil\\_wagler@yahoo.ca](mailto:phil_wagler@yahoo.ca)) to ask how.*

## ✉ New evidence challenges 'gay choice' idea

RE: "A REFLECTION of a rebellious people" letter, July 8, page 13.

I grew up with a strong biblical bias, and, like Kathleen Rempel, I have pondered the verses about homosexuality which she quotes. My guess is that the

writers of those verses were convinced that people who practised homosexuality were free to choose whether they would be gay or straight.

However, recent developments have made it more difficult to persist in the belief that being gay is a choice. It seems more likely that being gay is part of a person's given nature, just as it is with being straight.

*(Continued on page 12)*

## NEW ORDER VOICE

# A call for support as I parent

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

Right now, my family and I are living in mild chaos. Boxes are stacked against the walls, bookshelves are empty, the give-away piles mount and to-do lists abound. We're moving from Winnipeg to Vancouver, so my partner Glenn can study at the Vancouver School of Theology.

I know moving is a significant event, but I never expected it to elicit the same kind of daily mantras I recited at other times in my life. I used to answer the questions, "What colour are your bridesmaids' dresses?" and, "When is your due date?" Now the inevitable question, well-meant but annoying all the same, is, "What are you going to do out there, Katie?"

People ask because they're curious, because they care. But as a budding feminist who is mother to a young child, this question bothers me because I can't answer it in a way that satisfies anyone, myself included. Right now, it looks like I'll be the primary caregiver while Glenn goes to school, and that's it.

The "that's it" part of that response is what bothers me. I hear the guilt in my voice as I admit I won't be doing anything

else. I don't have a job lined up and am not sure if I'll get one during the two years Glenn is studying.

This is hard for me to admit because, up until this point, Glenn and I have shared childcare equally, resisting the prevalent, patriarchal assumption in our society that the mother is the more natural caregiver. As a result, we've both had the freedom to pursue career interests. So the fact that we're transitioning to a more traditional parenting model makes me uneasy.

On the flip side, I also feel guilty for



*On the flip side, I also feel guilty for considering daycare, which, while unaffordable, would allow me time to work . . . .*

considering daycare, which, while unaffordable, would allow me time to work, go to school or take on other projects.

While this guilt may just seem like a bad case of pre-move anxiety, I'm learning that the reason for it is the result of a much bigger problem.

Thanks to a society that embraces individualistic living, mothers are expected to be the primary providers of physical and emotional support to their children. For mothers with the financial means, this often results in solitary days giving

constant care. For mothers without, it means shouldering the harsh judgment of not tending to their child's needs.

I'm learning to resist the expectation that I am to be everything for my child. After all, I don't expect him to fulfill all of my needs. Instead, I want to embrace parenting as what feminist blogger and writer Jessica Valenti calls "a community exercise." In her book *Why Have Kids?* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), she encourages mothers that "children do best when they're raised by a community of people—parents, grandparents, friends and neighbours"—and that "if we want to take some joy in [parenting], we need to let go of the notion that we are the only ones who can do it correctly."

This will be hard to do in a new place. We're moving far away from all kinds of supportive "parents": friends, family, people in our church. But whether it's through student-family housing, our few B.C. friends or the mom's group down

the street, I hope to build relationships with people who will help me parent, who will teach my child in ways I do not.

So what will I say the next time I'm asked what I'll be doing in Vancouver? If it's a bad day, I'll grit my teeth and admit to full-time parenting. But if it's a good day, I'll say, "I'll be seeking a supportive community. Do you know anyone out there?"

*Katie Doke Sawatzky can be reached at [katiesawatzky@gmail.com](mailto:katiesawatzky@gmail.com).*

(Continued from page 11)

The most recent event indicating this is the disbanding of Exodus International, a Christian ministry in North America whose mission was to change gays into straight people by prayer and conversion therapy. In closing down the ministry, Alan Chambers, the organization's president, apologized and acknowledged that its mission was "misguided and even harmful."

According to a June 21 *Globe and Mail* report, after treating gays for 37 years, the ministry found that some people "spent years working through the guilt and shame [they] felt when [their] attractions didn't change." Some were driven to suicide. Chambers admitted that he had never overcome his own same-sex attractions. "Today," he is quoted as saying, "I accept these feelings as parts of my life that will likely always be there."

Evidence like this is a challenge to the belief that being gay is a choice. It challenges us to change

our thinking about homosexuality and our attitude towards gays. However, for some of us who hold a particular view of Scripture, this can be difficult to do. And yet Scripture itself set us a precedent for changing our thinking even when we have based that thinking on Bible verses.

In the story of the early church in Acts, Christian leaders who were Jews made a revolutionary change in their thinking and attitudes towards uncircumcised gentiles. Their previously held attitudes had been based on the Scriptures, yet they abandoned those attitudes. The change began when Peter had a vision (Acts 10) in which God said, "What I have cleansed, do not call common or unclean" (King James Version).

I wonder what the Holy Spirit is saying to us now about our gay brothers and sisters.

JOYCE GLADWELL, ELMIRA, ONT.

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Walking humbly

JERRY BUHLER

The quest for truth and reconciliation is a high and holy one that inspires us even with its flaws and imperfections. Those who have observed and participated in the first nations' Truth and Reconciliation events across Canada have found it to be a sacred experience.

For many years I have wondered whether the Mennonite church would do well to publicly recognize stories of pain and humility experienced by those subject to congregational leadership in our churches. In particular, I am thinking of the treatment of many young women who found themselves pregnant outside of a marriage relationship. Most of us are not far removed from such a story and are aware of the injustice and frequently the resulting exit from the church.

If we addressed this question, no doubt many of the same dynamics that were

present in the residential school stories would surface:

- **THAT LEADERSHIP** meant well and was trying to be faithful
- **THAT DECISIONS** in part reflected the cultural thinking of the day
- **THAT THERE** were, in fact, cases of



*Most of us are not far removed from such a story and are aware of the injustice and frequently the resulting exit from the church.*

thoughtful, hopeful responses.

Could we find a way to engage this question graciously today? A way that might avoid the scepticism that is often associated with public apologies, and that might lead to helpful, restorative conversations? A way that would rise above cynicism and employ respectful language?

Hopefully, there are individual

congregations that have done this and would be willing to share their experience and wisdom with the larger church.

Jeremy Bergen's book *Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Pasts*, offers some very thoughtful insight and could serve as a helpful guide.

It seems to me that walking humbly with our God means that we are a people willing to say we were wrong and to face the results of the wrongdoing. Each authentic step along this path will lead us

to deeper celebration.

If the topic of pregnancy seems too daunting, maybe we could start with something smaller. For example, we could collectively apologize for teaching songs to our children that have imprinted into their minds some very questionable theology. Just saying.

*Jerry Buhler is area church minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.*



## ✉ A different take on 'a very different world'

AS REPRESENTATIVES OF Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Latin America, and specifically in Mexico, we would like to broaden the story told in "Ministry in a very different world," July 8, page 4.

We affirm the perseverance that Dave and Margaret Penner demonstrated throughout their four years serving in the Mennonite colony in Durango. They carried out their work in a very difficult environment, where colony members face multiple challenges, including hostage-takings and violence connected to drug trafficking.

These factors create a context where speaking out and promoting change not only goes against traditions, but can also cost one's life.

Low German-speaking Mennonite communities in Mexico are characterized by people who value strong family and community ties, and church authority. Their commitment to keeping tradition has held their communities together over many generations.

This also means that decisions to adopt technologies, or change how things are done, occur at a community level. It takes much time and dialogue before the community moves together towards new ideas, new forms of education or new relations.

Gradually, there are local initiatives in Durango and elsewhere to address the consequences of an extremely limited education system: alcoholism, drug abuse, intra-familial violence and the stigma attached to disability. Community interest in more information, literacy and written resources is one of the things that led to MCC's involvement in resource centres in the Cuauhtémoc, Nuevo Casas Grandes, Durango and La Honda colonies in Mexico.

Before the Penners arrived in Nuevo Ideal Colony in Durango, the resource centre was run by a local woman, Margie Giesbrecht. She recognized that people were calling for support that could be better provided by a combination of male and female workers, so she requested that MCC send a couple. The Penners were the first to fill this role. They will be followed by Helena and Johan Guenther from Ontario, who will be seconded to Servicios Integrales Menonitas (SIM), a social service organization of Low German Mennonites from various colonies and church conferences, including the Old Colony. As of this year, SIM will be administrating all of the resource centres mentioned above.

In coming years, MCC, through its office in Mexico, will continue to support health and education work with Low German-speaking Mennonites in Mexico by providing resources in the form of personnel and funds to local organizations such as SIM, the

*Read 'Low German program structure shifts, but MCC commitment remains unchanged' on page 21 for more details about the shifts described in this letter.*

Blumenau Mennonite High School in Cuauhtémoc, Steinreich Bible School and Centro de Rehabilitación Luz en mi Camino (a substance-abuse rehabilitation centre that also works at addiction prevention).

MCC, in all its work, respects the dignity of individuals and communities, and takes into account local decision-making structures and practices. The work that MCC supports arises from the openness and desire of local people to promote healthy communities, and embraces specific new ways of doing things. MCC Mexico is grateful to the many Low German-speaking Mennonite leaders across Mexico who give their counsel and trust.

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## VIEWPOINT

# Boxing up the Old Colony Mennonites

BY ROYDEN LOEWEN

In his July 8 editorial, Dick Benner considers “the trouble with labels.” He says that in our pluralistic society we tend to put people into boxes with a smug “now we know who you are.” This stereotyping, he says, “de-humanizes,” divides and tends to “self-righteousness.”



by humanizing them. Why can't we do the same with the approximately 150,000 Old Colonists spread across the Americas?

Why not ask what holds the community together despite the predictions by sociologists and missionaries of impending implosion? Why not

ask the Old Colonists to describe their community? Why not read their own historians—Johann Wiebe, Isaak Dyck, Bernard F. Rempel—or listen to the sermons they preach?

Why is it so hard for us northerners to see that, as Anabaptists, they emphasize praxis over words? Every time they refuse a modern fashion, a cool technology, the lure of sports, they know they are being “obedient.” Sunday schools and Bible studies encourage debate and speculation, simply foreign to an Old Colony mindset.

In writing about a place like Durango, why not also highlight its strengths?

- **ITS COMPLETELY** new ministerial has struggled to heal a community broken by recent deep-searing schism.
- **ITS CHEESE** factories produce a highly sought-after national commodity.
- **ITS ECONOMIC** base has been highlighted by Mexican academics.
- **ITS TIME-TESTED** institutions—the Flemish inheritance system, fire insurance agency, taxation code, conflict resolution procedures, forgivable loan systems—are undergirded with values of love, care and equality.

Why not ask how it is that most of the Durango Mennonites prefer living in close-knit, rural communities within

the pristine landscape of central Mexico, rather than in our more individualistic, dog-eat-dog, urbanized worlds.

Do Durango Mennonites have social problems? During a week-long visit to Durango in 2007 I learned that they did. Just as we have domestic abuse, depression, poverty and spiritual hunger, they have their share. And certainly years of drought have exacerbated their problems. But surely this is not the Old Colony lot alone.

I wish the friendly minister, the engaging cheese factory manager, the lovable elderly couple who I met in 2007 had also been interviewed for this article. I wish it had sought independent analysis by asking other MCC personnel or Mexican officials who know the Durango people.

Ironically, the July 8 issue also features Evelyn Rempel Petkau's report on the criminal investigation at the Westbourne Old Order community in Manitoba. To my mind, here is a report infused with empathy, love and sympathy. It calls us to understand this strange and anti-modern people.

Why must we hold the Old Colony people to a different standard than we do the Old Order or Amish? Each of these groups holds sacred their baptismal vows, their commitment to simplicity in Christ. Certainly, they can learn from us, perhaps to forgive less easily and insist on greater accountability. I know I can learn from them, perhaps to consume less and live more humbly.

If we wish to help build capacity, perhaps we can begin by attempting to understand the Old Colonists' “plain,” “communitarian” and “anti-modern” way-of-life, rather than being perplexed that they do not accept ours. ❧

*Royden Loewen is Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg. His book Village Among Nations: 'Canadian' Mennonites in a Transnational World, 1916-2006 will be released this fall.*

I found it deeply ironic that the very same issue of *Canadian Mennonite* features a piece by Will Braun entitled “Ministry in a very different world.” To my mind, it does the very thing Benner spurns. It “boxes” people in, de-humanizes them and makes us northerners seem the more spiritual, intelligent and wise.

The article highlights the return to Canada of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) workers Dave and Margaret Penner, who gave up their comfortable lives in Winkler, Man., and served among Old Colony Mennonites in Durango, Mexico, for four years. Clearly, they worked hard and creatively, and now deserve a chance to report.

The problem is that Durango is introduced to us as a problem, a “vacuum,” a place “impoverished in every aspect of life.” There is widespread domestic abuse, “stifling status quo,” theological ignorance and weak education. It is a distressing story.

But to my mind, what is especially distressing is that the article puts the Old Colonists in a box. And it raises this question: Why do we not write about Old Colony Mennonites as if they were our friends, our partners in faith, a community we actually want to learn to know? We have learned to write empathetically about other marginalized people

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# ‘Torn from home’ hits close to home

BY MARK DILLER HARDER

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

I have always appreciated hearing stories of refugees to Canada, so I eagerly joined our St. Jacobs Mennonite Church seniors group on its trip to Doon Pioneer Village and the Waterloo Region Museum, with its special summer exhibit, “Torn from home: My life as a refugee.” I entered the exhibit interested to learn more and left with a stark reminder of how close to home these stories actually are.

Almost immediately I was struck by the personal connections that I was making. The first panels told the story of escaped black slaves settling in Ontario in the mid-1800s. The previous Saturday I had taken the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario bus tour to the Glen Allen/Yatton area, where my friend Timothy Epp has researched Mennonite/black interaction.

I moved next to a recent Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support video, which told the story of Maria Alejandra Posada Arcila, a Colombian high-school-age refugee claimant to Canada. She has received much support in this process from Lynn Schulze, my direct neighbour across the street. Both Schulze and Arcila shared on the video about the tough situation in Colombia and what it means to live in Canada, with the fear of being sent back because Canada considers Colombia a “safe country.” I recently wrote a letter of support for Arcila’s refugee claim.

I had just finished watching the video when out of the corner of my eye I caught a photo display ahead. I commented out loud to the seniors around me: “Up there is one of those Russian Mennonite photos. You can tell because there is a dead body in an open casket, with the rest of the family standing behind for a

family photo.”

It was a tradition in that branch of Mennonites. Since photographs were rare, they would take full family photos at a funeral.

As we moved closer, I began to read the accompanying story panel and commented again how typical a story this was of Mennonites in Russia in the 1920s, a time of civil war, unrest and much persecution of Mennonite villages.

It was when I saw the name at the bottom of the display—Peter Neufeld—and the source of the display: Dave Neufeld—that it suddenly clicked. I burst out, “That is my great-grandfather lying there in the casket!”

Indeed it was. This was my family’s story that my *opa* (grandfather) Cornelius K. Neufeld told me as I sat beneath the cherry tree on their Niagara fruit farm. *Opa* recalled how word got out that their family was going to emigrate (escape) to Canada and might have money.

During the Russian Revolution, prisons

had been opened and bands of armed men roamed the countryside. These bandits showed up at their farmhouse, knocked out brother Willi (notice the bandaged head in the photo), and shot my great-grandfather, who died the next day. My *opa* hid on his knees and prayed. A few weeks after burying their father, the family left for Canada. This is my family refugee story. This is close to home!

There were more connections. The Laotian/Hmong stories of the 1980s included a photo of several Hmong church members taken at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, where I have also pastored. More recent stories were of Palestinian refugees who came through Syria, like the family recently sponsored by our congregation.

I was struck by how much refugee stories have shaped the history and present reality of Canada. Later, I saw the display of Canada’s first nations peoples, the only group not refugees to Canada, and yet so often displaced. This, too, is a big part of my family story through my sister Kristen.

The refugee stories of being torn from home are horrific and unimaginable, and yet they are closer to home than we think. I left the museum with a profound sense of wonder and awe, and of a deep thanksgiving that cannot help but lead to compassion. ☿

*Mark Diller Harder is a member of the pastoral team of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, Ont.*

PHOTO BY ERNIE FRETZ



*Mark Diller Harder stands beside a display that includes family members. In the casket is his great-grandfather, Gerhard Neufeld; on the left is his great-great-grandfather, Johan Friesen; third from left is his great-grandmother, Maria (Friesen) Neufeld; fourth from left is his grandfather, Cornelius K. Neufeld.*



## VIEWPOINT

# Revisiting the legacy of John Howard Yoder

BY SARA WENGER SHENK

ANABAPTIST MENNONITE BIBLICAL SEMINARY

**T**ime has its way. As does the Spirit.

The accelerating interest in and widespread appreciation for John Howard Yoder's theological work has also provoked renewed calls for the Mennonite church, including Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), to revisit unfinished business with his legacy.

Last year, in February and March of 2012, AMBS faculty did significant work to review the seminary's history with Yoder and to come to a shared agreement that guides how we teach, critique, interpret and use his work with integrity, recognizing the significance of his theological work and the harmfulness of his actions. This Faculty Statement is posted on the AMBS website ([ambs.edu](http://ambs.edu)).

In addition to the hard work our AMBS faculty has done to interpret the complicated ironies of Yoder's legacy over many years, I want to add a personal word.

As the current president of AMBS, I'm committed to a new transparency in the truth-telling that must happen. We must strive to get the facts straight, to acknowledge healing work that has been done and to shoulder the urgent healing work that must still be done.

- **SOME WHO** are only tuning in now will say, I had no idea about Yoder's widespread sexual harassment and abuse.
- **OTHERS WILL** say, why keep bringing this up? It was settled long ago; he submitted to a church disciplinary process and was cleared for ongoing ministry.



- **OTHERS WILL** say, finally. This has taken far too long.

The renewed outcry ("What's to be done about John Howard Yoder?" by Barbara Graber on [ourstoriesuntold.com](http://ourstoriesuntold.com)) for truth-telling about what really happened and what

didn't happen in the 1970s, '80s and early '90s has deepened my resolve and the resolve of Mennonite Church U.S.A. leaders, including executive director Ervin Stutzman, to continue the healing journey.

I was not close to the Yoder saga when it was unfolding, and only heard him speak once during his visit in 1997 to Harrisonburg, Va. Now, as I review the written materials about him and talk to people, I am dumbfounded—appalled—at how long it took for anyone in authority to publicly denounce his harmful behaviour.

I am also keenly aware that I was not there. I do not presume that I would have done things differently at that time. I thank God for all the faithful and arduous labor that was exerted under extreme stress to stop Yoder's sexual abuse and to listen to the victims, as ineffective as it proved to be for many years.

As AMBS professor Ted Koontz said elsewhere, "The women who experienced sexual and power abuse by John personally have far too long been sidelined—along with others who were directly abused by other church leaders—and are rightfully at the centre of our concern. I nevertheless am aware the hurt caused by John's behaviour was and is far-reaching.

That circle of hurt includes some who carried major responsibility to work at stopping his abusive behaviour, who were unsuccessful and who were burdened by weight of that failure."

True, there was confusion about who Yoder should have been accountable to, with various influential church leaders and institutions continuing to send him all over the world even as AMBS leaders of the time discouraged his use as a resource. It took far too long to realize how he was out-manipulating people who sought to confront him, along with providing his own theological rationalization for his sexual activities.

But it's time to say frankly that we have fallen short. Even those of us now in leadership, who weren't remotely involved at the time, must commit to the deep listening needed to get the facts straight. What did actually happen? What was done to address it and what was left undone regrettably, or done poorly, in retrospect? Who suffered because of that failure? Who was disbelieved for too long, even as an abuser was allowed to continue his globetrotting ministry without public censure? In what ways would we respond differently today, given the benefit of hindsight and so much learning in the meantime?

Yes, Yoder's ministry was and is an exposition of the gospel that is reaping an enormous blessing. Thanks be to God! This flawed man was gifted in ways that allowed him to grasp radically good news in the gospel that needed retelling, reimagining.

Ironically, it is because of that gospel that we can fearlessly call sin what it is. The far-reaching hurt of the evil that was perpetrated and allowed to fester too long must be more fully and publicly acknowledged. It is then that we can move into deeper healing and reconciliation. May it be so! ❧

*Sara Wenger Shenk is president of AMBS. This reflection originally appeared on her 'From Practicing Reconciliation' blog and was first reposted online at The Mennonite ([themennonite.org](http://themennonite.org)).*



## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Enns**—Titus Joseph (b. July 4, 2013), to Michael and Rebecca Enns, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Froese**—Denae Olivia (b. July 12, 2013), to Lorie and Marcella Froese, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Grainger**—Ava Brooklyn (b. July 6, 2013), to Christine and Shawn Grainger, Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite, Zurich Ont.

**Hand**—Sarah Bronwyn (b. April 11, 2013), to Terrance and Emily Hand, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

**Hovius**—Samantha Elizabeth (b. July 8, 2013), to Beth and Jake Hovius, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

**Janzen**—Clark (b. June 26, 2013), to Ed and Janice Janzen, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Jantzi**—Caleb Daniel (b. June 1, 2013), to Brittany and Ryan Jantzi, Kingsfield-Clinton Mennonite, Clinton, Ont.

**Kuepfer**—Alex Raymond (b. July 4, 2013), to Jerry and Liz Kuepfer, Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

**Lehr**—Tristan Blake (b. July 23, 2013), to Steven and Tami-Lynn Lehr, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

**Martens Bartel**—Kaleb Emmett (b. July 5, 2013), to Ben and Lisa Martens Bartel, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

**Mutala**—twins Annika and Ezri (b. July 3, 2013), to Marcy Koethler (Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.) and Brandon Mutala, in Regina, Sask.

**Regier**—Alice Maria (b. June 3, 2013), to Andrea and Thomas Regier, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

**Thiessen**—Harrison Jacob (b. June 19, 2013), to Derek and Jillian Thiessen, Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

**Tiessen**—Brianna Yasmine (b. July 8, 2013), to Scott and Natasha Tiessen, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Wiebe**—Henry Leo Peters (b. July 12, 2013), to Reg Wiebe (Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.) and Allison Peters, in Edmonton.

**Zacharias**—Jordan Alexander (b. June 18, 2013), to Elmer and Jennifer Zacharias, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

### Baptisms

**Morgan Giesbrecht, Zachary Stefanuik**—Hague Mennonite, Sask. July 7, 2013.

### Marriages

**Andres/Hostetler**—Ryan Andres and Angela Hostetler, First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta., June 29, 2013.

**Buddingh/Smith**—Sarah Buddingh and Patrick Smith, First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta., on Salt Spring Island, B.C., June 15, 2013.

**Enns/Wagner**—Jared Enns and Tonya Wagner, at Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, July 6, 2013.

**Friesen/Klinger**—Blaine Friesen and Tammy Klinger, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., June 29, 2013.

**Greydanus/Martin**—Steve Greydanus and Brittany Martin, Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont., July 6, 2013.

**Hammond/Hoffman**—Alex Hammond and Janelle Hoffman (Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.), in Winnipeg, July 6, 2013.

**Klassen/McKeown**—Jennifer Klassen and Andrew McKeown, North Leamington United Mennonite, July 20, 2013.

**McLean/Stapleton**—Stuart McLean and Joan Stapleton, Nairn Mennonite, Ont., June 8, 2013.

### Deaths

**Boldizar**—Paul, 86 (b. Oct. 14, 1926; d. May 26, 2013), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

**Driedger**—Agatha, 97 (d. June 24, 2013), Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Fieguth**—Werner, 82 (b. Nov. 11, 1930; d. June 15, 2013), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Friesen**—Peter, 92 (b. Feb. 16, 1921; d. July 17, 2013), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Gingerich**—Kenneth Hilbert, 83 (b. Dec. 5, 1929; d. June 19, 2013), Zurich Mennonite, Ont.

**Hodder**—Albert George, 91 (b. Sept. 6, 1921; d. July 18, 2013), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Kasdorf**—Alice (nee Gerbrand), 95 (b. Feb. 7, 1918; d. July 1, 2013), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Krahn**—Ed, 63 (b. Feb. 11, 1950; d. June 15, 2013), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Kroeger**—Helene (nee Penner), 82 (d. July 13, 2013), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Loewen**—Hedie (nee Thiessen), 92 (b. Oct. 17, 1920; d. July 13, 2013), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Martens**—Agatha (see Schroeder), 96 (b. April 6, 1917; d. June 27, 2013), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Penner**—Hertha, 80 (d. July 1, 2013), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Reimer**—John, 86 (b. Dec. 20, 1926; d. June 28, 2013), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Tiessen**—Peter, 81 (b. Oct. 11, 1931; d. June 18, 2013), North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Toews**—Anne (nee Penner), 86 (b. Nov. 15, 1926; d. July 3, 2013), Carman Mennonite, Man.

**Toews**—Helen K., 90 (b. Sept. 8, 1922; d. July 4, 2013), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

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

## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# Faith and Life Women's Chorus tours Europe

*Nearly two decades old, the choir takes its first overseas tour*

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

An idea that began in a chat on the way to choir practice became a dream come true for members of Manitoba's Faith and Life Women's Chorus.

For two weeks in early July, 26 choir members gave a series of concerts as they toured European churches, castles, countrysides and Mennonite heritage sites, all while meeting their Mennonite counterparts in the Netherlands, Germany and France. Everywhere they went, the warmth and hospitality with which they were received was overwhelming.

Ruth Derksen, a choir member, recalled the welcome they received at the *Doopsgezinde Gemeente* (Mennonite Church) in Sneek, the Netherlands, where they performed their first concert. "People were standing outside the church, waiting and waving with open arms as they saw our bus approach," she said. "That hospitality was extended to us everywhere we went. And after the service, they were effusive with their thanks."

The choir, conducted by Millie Hildebrand and accompanied by Leanne

Regehr Lee, gave eight concerts in mostly Anabaptist churches on their tour. Three were part of worship services and five were evening concerts during which they were able to offer a fuller repertoire.

As they travelled and toured other churches and cathedrals, the choir also offered brief impromptu concerts.

"The Strasbourg Cathedral was one of the places we were able to secure some singing time and so we did a short 10-minute mini-concert during our tour," Derksen recounted. "At a former monastery in the Black Forest, we managed to secure 10 minutes sandwiched between a wedding and an organ rehearsal to sing and people in the area would begin to gather. It was truly remarkable.

"People would weep openly when they would hear us sing 'Gott ist die Liebe' or the 'Rheinberger Abend Lied,' which was arranged for us in six parts," she said. "Often, when we would sing, we heard comments about how meaningful the songs were, and they would invite us to sing more. We often make music for ourselves, but the emotion

PHOTO BY SARAH KLASSEN



*The Faith and Life Women's Chorus is pictured by the Menno Simons monument at Witmarsum, the Netherlands.*



*'Often, when we would sing, we heard comments about how meaningful the songs were, and they would invite us to sing more.'*

*(Ruth Derksen)*

the music drew from others was surprising and touching."

Some of the members chose to stay in hotels, but most were billeted in homes.

"Staying with host families has been an interesting experience . . . farm smells, roosters crowing and visiting with the aging aunt of our hostess in *Plaut Dietsch*,"

were among the memories choir member Irene Schellenberg shared in a blog she kept throughout the tour. "We have had warm fellowship and gained a sense of family with those who have welcomed us."

The women's chorus is a branch of Mennonite Church Manitoba's community-building ministry and is dedicated to

the mission of inspiring others to worship God through music. In the nearly two decades that the choir has existed, it has sung at various Mennonite church assemblies and congregations, and in seasonal concerts and songfests. It provides music for the *Frohe Botschaft* radio program and has recorded several CDs. But this was its first tour overseas.

"Since we have been home," said Derksen, "we have appreciated how friendships within the choir have been formed and strengthened. . . . Even those who were reluctant to go initially are so glad that they did." ❧

## Eben-Ezer marks 50 years

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

**T**he Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church community marked its 50th anniversary on the weekend of June 22-23 with a jubilee celebration that involved the church family past and present.

On June 22, 400 people attended a community party with something for all members of the family: face-painting and a bouncy castle for children, and volleyball and world music for adults. All enjoyed Laotian food and a barbecue for the evening meal.

Praise, remembrance and reminiscing in English and German were part of the June 23 worship celebration attended by 550 people who praised God for the past five decades of ministry.

Pastor Artur Bergen spoke on remembering the past and its importance for the church. "If we do not remember well, life becomes difficult, and at the end of all our religious activities, all our effort, the whole life is for nothing," he said. "It's a waste of time, a waste of energy, a waste of space."

"We remember so many blessings, sorrow and pain, challenges," he noted. "We remember faithful leaders. We also remember that, in each decade, Eben-Ezer has been reminded to keep Jesus as our centre."

Special greetings were brought by those serving in missions, and by Eben-Ezer's mother church and two daughter

churches.

A fellowship lunch was served following the service. Each person received a small cross with a poem made by a member of the church as a souvenir of the day and a reminder of Christ's love.

The afternoon's focus was on youth, as now-middle-aged youth group members from decades past gathered on the church lawn to recall their days as young people.

Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church began with 52 members on Jan. 24, 1963, as an offshoot of West Abbotsford Mennonite, but with a special focus on retaining the German language to meet the needs of its immigrant members. Today, the church is multi-generational, retaining German while also worshipping in English. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF EBEN-EZER MENNONITE CHURCH



*Norbert Giesbrecht, Friedbert Sawatzky and Artur Bergen of the Los Peregrinos musical group provide outdoor entertainment at Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church's 50th-anniversary celebration in June.*



*Future youth group members Todd and Neil Martin (Thing One and Two) dig into the potluck lunch at Listowel Mennonite Church's 50th anniversary, celebrated Aug. 3 and 4.*

## Listowel Mennonite celebrates five changing decades

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
LISTOWEL, ONT.

In 1962, Ken Snider and his wife Marie moved from Mannheim just outside of Kitchener to the Listowel area, about 50 kilometres to the northwest. Land was getting too expensive in the Waterloo area, so they and other young Mennonite and Amish Mennonite families were looking further afield.

At first, they worshipped with the Glen Allan congregation pastored by Amzie Martin. But after a short time, seeing the increasing influx of families, Martin recommended that they begin a congregation in Listowel.

The group bought a building from a Pentecostal church in 1963, but within two years it was buying a lot and building

a new larger building. Listowel Mennonite was a church founded so that Mennonite families in the Listowel area could have a familiar place to worship.

Like Hanover Mennonite Church, which was founded at the same time, Listowel was soon made up of Swiss, Amish and "Russian" Mennonites all working and worshipping together.

In 2000, a major building project added a new sanctuary and education space, although Leonard Bauman, current congregational chair, notes that at that time the Mennonite Youth Fellowship (MYF) was in a slump from which it is only now beginning to recover. "What were we thinking?" he wonders aloud.

If the energy in the building during the Aug. 3 and 4 celebrations was any measure, the congregation was planning far into the future with its building. A large Sunday school now uses the education space, and the many young families of Mennonite and other backgrounds, who have been attracted to the congregation, look to be developing a new MYF generation.

The congregation struggles with similar issues to many others in the present post-modern, post-Christendom times. Elder Steve Weber believes that the church's job is to develop 24/7 disciples who will then both serve the congregation and beyond.

Marilyn Nichol, another elder, notes that the local Salvation Army congregation's food bank is overwhelmed and could use help from other congregations.

Pastor Norm Dyck and Listowel Mennonite's leadership are excited about where God will be leading the 240 members/190 regular worshippers in the years to come. They have moved from being there for local Mennonites to being a welcoming place for all Christians in the community.

The celebration itself included a potluck lunch and barbecue on Aug. 3, a service in which Mary Mae Schwartzentruber and Kara Carter shared about how they processed their calls into ministry through the congregation, and a reunion of MYFers from 1976-79 planned in part by Louise Wideman, another woman nurtured to pastoral leadership in the congregation.

Two worship services and a lunch were held on Aug. 4. Wideman and Julie Ellison White shared about their calls to ministry in the afternoon service.

As part of the celebration, the congregation set a goal of \$15,000 to be sent to three projects:

- **A LOCAL** Christian ministry focussing on youth;
- **A BUILDING** project at the local Conestoga Bible Camp; and
- **MENNONITE CHURCH** Eastern Canada's Anabaptist Christian Resource Starter Kits, which are being distributed to new Mennonite congregations. The kits include MennoMedia Sunday school curricula, part of the Believers Church Bible Commentary series and a large children's peace library. ☸



# Low German program structure shifts

*But MCC commitment remains unchanged*

By GLADYS TERICHOW  
Mennonite Central Committee

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada's work with Low German-speaking Mennonite communities in Mexico will continue despite recent structural and administrative changes within MCC Canada's program department.

The program, which has been operated as an MCC Canada domestic program, is now being administered as an MCC Mexico international program. This change became effective April 1.

"MCC's commitment to work with the Low German Mennonite communities in northern Mexico has not changed," says Pam Peters-Pries, MCC Canada associate program director. "These changes are being made to fit the models and procedures of all MCC programs outside of Canada and the U.S."

Under the old structure, MCC-supported programs were supervised from the Winnipeg office. Now, programs are developed by local organizations and supported by MCC through financial assistance and service workers.

This decision, Peters-Pries says, was made in consultation with Servicios Integrales Menonitas (SIM), a non-profit organization started by MCC in Mexico in 2009. SIM has been the legal umbrella organization for MCC's work in northern Mexico.

MCC's provincial programs with Low German Mennonites in Canada are unaffected by this change. MCC Canada's support for its German-language newspaper, *Die Mennonitische Post*, also remains unchanged.

And MCC Canada's Low German program coordinator will continue to support programs in the provinces, Mexico and



Schellenberg

Bolivia. James Schellenberg of Winnipeg was appointed to this position on May 21, succeeding John Janzen, also of Winnipeg.

Over the years, MCC Canada has developed and supported resource centres in Cuauhtémoc, Casas Grandes, Durango and La Honda. These centres provide a variety of services, including lending li-

braries, literacy classes and distribution of MCC's German-language publications, *Die Mennonitische Post* and *Das Blatt fuer Kinder und Jugend*. SIM will gradually assume full responsibility of these resource centres over the next couple of years, according to Peters-Pries.

MCC Canada will also continue to support the work of the rehabilitation centre, Centro de Rehabilitacion, Luz en mi Camino (Light on my way), Steinreich Bible College, Blumenau Secondary School and others.

MCC Mexico has invited an MCC service worker, Sandra Kienitz, from Brazil, to the position of MCC Mexico northern coordinator in order to accompany partner organizations, including SIM, with

the transition process. Her work will be in addition to the support provided by MCC Mexico representatives based in Mexico City.

To prepare the way, Mary Friesen, MCC Canada's Low German program coordinator from 2002-08, worked with SIM and MCC from February to May, to identify and address major transition issues.

"They are excited about the new possibilities, but they are also anxious about the new responsibilities," says Friesen, who visited the Low German communities in April and May.

A notable change during the past six years, she says, is the comfort level of leaders of different churches in working together. This desire to work as a team will help SIM and other local organizations make the adjustment to working with MCC under a new structure, she adds. //

## // Briefly noted

### MC B.C. moves 'upstairs' again

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Mennonite Church B.C. offices have moved once again. The office, which had been on the first floor of the Columbia Resource Centre at Columbia Bible College, has moved upstairs to Suite 305 of the same building. This is familiar territory for MC B.C., which had occupied two different suites on the third floor some years ago. The change was necessary because of different space allocations at the college.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN



## FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH - KITCHENER

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# Commoners find a tribe to join

*Hamilton congregation joins Mennonite Church Eastern Canada*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
HAMILTON, ONT.

As Randy (Randell) Neudorf, the half-time pastor of the Commons, tells it, as leaders and congregants separated from their founding denomination they began to look for a new place where their values of “justice, hope, beauty, authenticity, truth, community, and peace” could be lived out “as sign posts that we use to help guide us on our collective journey.”

The Commons, a postmodern congregation in Hamilton’s gritty downtown Beasley neighbourhood, has a decade-long history. Begun as a church plant by another denomination, the members of the congregation felt more and more out of step with the hierarchy and theology of their parent.

Reading online material and attending Mennonite Church Eastern Canada events convinced them to approach Brian Bauman, the area church’s minister of missions, to



*The Commons symbol.*

begin a conversation. Bauman quickly involved Troy Watson, pastor of Quest, another post-modern congregation in St. Catharines just down the highway from Hamilton.

Neudorf is fond of saying that his tribe has found a home among the Mennonite tribe. MC Eastern Canada accepted the Commons as an emer-

ging congregation at its April 2013 annual church gathering. The Commons wants to be a place where anyone can be at home: churched, unchurched, and those who are giving the church one last chance before they become unchurched.

Leadership is carried out by a cohort of four who test ideas with the whole group, around 50 adults and children, before implementing them. Neudorf is only one of that group, and only one of six who teach on a regular basis.

The congregation meets in a building owned by Living Rock Ministries, a resource centre for “youth at risk.” Neudorf works for Living Rock half-time and the Commons uses a windowless upper room, which began its life as a union hall and later a pub.

For the summer, the Commons has been meeting in Beasley Park with a sign inviting any and all to join in. A recent service included readings, communion, singing and invitations to the congregation’s “end of summer beach day,” to the regular Thursday barbecues and to its “peace think tank.”

Matt Thompson, a member of the leadership cohort, explained that, as they are becoming Mennonite, they thought it important to explore in moderated 45-minute sessions what peace means. Over four sessions, they are exploring defence, power, pacifism and violence.

He also explained that he and many of the others believe that the ideal church size is one which is small enough for everyone to know everyone else, and has both sustainability and flexibility. Having multiple leaders and not owning a building would be examples of those two ideas, as their overhead stays low.

Thompson believes that now that the Commons is a part of MC Eastern Canada, it will not only learn from the denomination, but that it has things to teach the established congregations. ☿



*The Commons worships in Hamilton’s Beasley Park.*

# MC U.S.A. grows by 85 churches in last five years

BY RYAN MILLER

Mennonite Church U.S.A.  
ELKHART, IND.

In recent years, examinations of Mennonite Church U.S.A. demographics have focused on declining membership. But a recent list offers a new perspective.

A “snapshot” inventory compiled in March 2013 by MC U.S.A. shows 85 new congregations since January 2008. The inventory, which is based on information shared by 17 of 21 area conferences, includes new church plants as well as several established congregations that have joined area conferences. It does not include memberships transferred among conferences.

Executive director Ervin Stutzman says new churches effectively invite new people to follow Jesus in fellowship with the church. “Over time, nearly all churches adopt ways of doing things that keep them from being relevant to some of the people in their communities,” he says. “New worshiping communities can connect with their contexts in creative ways. Newer churches and older churches have a lot to learn from each other.”

Mauricio Chenlo, denominational minister of church planting, a staff position shared between Mennonite Mission Network and MC U.S.A.’s Executive Board, identified three main types of new Mennonite congregations:

- **IMMIGRANT CONGREGATIONS:** Nearly half of the 85 new congregations are involved in bilingual or non-English ministry. Chenlo said these new Mennonites often have converted in the United States and tend to be more evangelistic.
- **CONGREGATIONS LED** by baby boomer Mennonites who were often previously involved in international service with Mennonite agencies. These congregations, Chenlo says, often focus on outreach towards the marginalized.
- **EXPLICITLY POSTMODERN** congregations that seek radical discipleship,

inclusion and a strong desire for justice.

Warren Tyson, a leader within the Atlantic Coast and Eastern District conferences, says leaders of new faith communities tend to exhibit passionate spirituality with an appreciation for risk-taking. Because of their commitment to Anabaptist theology, today’s church planters apply themselves in their communities, creating connections and offering services that fulfill local needs.

For example, when a massive earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010, Bernard Sejour already was part of Philadelphia’s Haitian immigrant community. After the quake, Sejour visited hospitals, agencies and neighbourhoods in Philadelphia, offering help and support as newcomers dealt with their post-traumatic stress. He didn’t usually mention that he was starting a congregation—Solidarity and Harmony Church in Philadelphia, part of Eastern District Conference—but people came anyway.

Sejour feels embraced by Eastern

District Conference and hopes for continued support in planting new churches, including congregations in Haiti, where most Haitians do not know of Mennonites. “The Anabaptist theology is too good, too peaceful, too loving, for Haitians not to know what it is,” he says.

Larissa Moore believed God was calling her to youth ministry at Lee Heights Community Church in Cleveland, Ohio, a congregation of the Ohio Conference. Instead, she leads Victory Community Church, a congregation in the Cleveland suburb of Solon that began in a nursing home. Moore initially just visited a friend’s mother, but as she prayed with her friend, others joined and eventually asked for their own prayers. With support from Lee Heights, Moore began a Sunday afternoon worship service, which has expanded outside of the nursing home and turned into Victory.

“Victory Community Church is going to be a beacon of light because we believe in peace,” says Moore, who believes Mennonites can be the face of peace and compassion for those who struggle, even if those who deliver the message are not the faces some expect.

“The faith of the Mennonite church has not changed,” Moore says. “The representatives of the church are African-American, they are Caucasian, they are Asian. But the representatives of the Mennonite church are speaking a message of peace, love, encouragement and hope.” ❧

## ❧ Briefly note

### Old Order parents asked to take MCC parenting course

WINNIPEG—A lawyer for the parents of Old Order Mennonite children arrested last month in rural Manitoba for allegedly punishing their children with cattle prods and leather straps has asked the court to return the children while the community’s adults take a parenting course developed by Manitoba Mennonite Central Committee. Winnipeg lawyer Paul Walsh represents 10 of the parents who cared for a total of 18 of the seized children; he said some of the children were still being breast-fed when they were taken. Others speak only German and are having a difficult time with their English-speaking foster families. Jay Rodgers, a chief executive with the provincial government’s Child and Family Services Department, said that if the children are returned home, social workers will regularly visit the community to assess their safety. For a link to the full Canadian Press story, visit [canadianmennonite.org](http://canadianmennonite.org).

—BY DICK BENNER



## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# Peacekeepers receive mixed reception in Haiti

BY CASEY VAN WENSEM

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

In a decision that could have a direct impact on the work of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Haiti, the Canadian government has stepped up its contribution to the United Nations-led military peacekeeping mission in this Caribbean nation.

On June 21, 34 Canadian Armed Forces personnel from the 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group from Valcartier, Que., were sent to join a Brazilian battalion, joining five Canadian military staff officers and 90 Canadian police officers already serving as part of the UN mission. In addition to the June deployment, the Canadian government is also sending another 25 to 30 police officers to Haiti this month.

According to the Department of National Defence, the platoon from 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group

will “assist Haitian security and stability efforts,” and support “the Government of Canada’s objective to build a more prosperous, secure and democratic hemisphere.” In terms of the day-to-day operations of the troops on the ground, its main task is to assist the UN and the Haitian government with security patrols.

“As we are the third in line to provide security, we conduct joint patrols with elements of the Haitian National Police and United Nations Police,” Captain Nicholas Payne, platoon commander of 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, says via e-mail from Haiti.

Payne says that his platoon, which will serve in Haiti until December, also occasionally conducts “static security tasks,” which can include “anything from refurbishing schools to cleaning parks to

education programs.” Its main task, however, remains security. “We are quite easily able to saturate a zone and provide a very effective security presence, which ultimately deters minor and violent crime,” he explains.

While the UN and the Brazilian and Haitian governments have welcomed Canada’s new peacekeepers, MCC and its local partners see Canada’s increased support for the UN mission as a “show of force,” rather than a show of solidarity to people living in the poorest country in the Americas, which is ranked 161 out of 187 on the UN Development Programme’s 2012 Human Development Index.

“The priority needs in Haiti at this time include health care, improved infrastructure, better education, improved agriculture, technical training and capacity-building in the judiciary,” says Wawa Chege, policy analyst and advocacy coordinator for MCC Haiti, which has been delivering relief and development programs on the island since 1958. “These [needs] do not necessitate an intervention of a military nature.”

Many of MCC’s local partners have been critical of the UN mission in the past, citing a number of grievances, including human rights abuses by UN personnel, the waste of funds that could be used in other development activities, and an inadequate response to a 2010 cholera outbreak.

Nine months after a devastating earthquake that killed more than 200,000 residents, the nation was hit with a cholera epidemic, which has claimed more than 8,000 lives to date. MCC and its local partners claim they have found evidence that UN peacekeeping troops were responsible for the cholera outbreak, although the UN has denied these claims.

MCC and its partner organizations

*MCC and its local partners see Canada’s increased support for the UN mission as a ‘show of force,’ rather than a show of solidarity to people living in the poorest country in the Americas....*

MCC FILE PHOTO BY SILAS CREWS



Masonry students such as 25-year-old Ronald Sadou Zami benefited from a 2012 MCC seminar on disaster-resistant construction.



PHOTO FROM 'CANADIAN ARMY IN HAITI' FACEBOOK PAGE

have also questioned the appropriateness of the combat mission in a nation that has had no widespread conflicts since 2004. These organizations have even called for the complete withdrawal of UN mission personnel from Haiti, as they did in a 2012 letter, which was co-signed by Chege.

Although the decision to send more peacekeepers to Haiti was approved last October, the announcement of the deployment still came as a surprise to some parliamentarians. In a phone interview from his constituency office in St. John's, Nfld., NDP defence critic Jack Harris says he was "puzzled" by the announcement. "I don't understand why they announced this . . . the day after the House [of Commons] had closed and . . . two days before the troops were leaving."

Harris adds that, while the NDP is supportive of these types of UN peacekeeping missions, it is stunned by the lack of transparency the government displayed on this issue. "There was no debate, no discussion, no notice, no heads-up," he says.

The Liberal Party is also critical of the way the government announced this decision. "The mission to Haiti is not highly classified. We're not attacking anybody. We're going to help the Haitians," Liberal defence critic John McKay told the Canadian Press on June 19. "So why has this come together in such a clandestine fashion?"

The June deployment of troops came only six months after the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) announced its decision to freeze all future humanitarian aid projects in Haiti until further review. In April, Julian Fantino, the minister responsible for CIDA, met with the Haitian prime minister and international donors in an effort to strengthen accountability for development results in Haiti. The Government of Canada's financial commitment to Haiti totalled more than \$1 billion between 2006-12, making it the largest beneficiary of Canadian development assistance in the Americas. ❧

*Casey van Wensem formerly worked as an intern in the MCC Ottawa Office and is now a freelance writer living in Kelowna, B.C.*



*Members of 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group are welcomed to Haiti as part of the United Nations Stabilization Mission there.*

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- SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA & ITS FJORDS (June 13-26/2014)
- POLAR BEAR EXPRESS (Oct 16-25/2014)
- ANTARCTICA (Jan 3-15/2015)

### EDUCATIONAL TOURS

- BRITISH ISLES (ENGLAND, SCOTLAND & WALES) (Sept 13-25/2013)
- EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS (Dec 9-15/2013)
- JAMAICA: ITS PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY & FRUITS (Jan 18-27/2014)
- JAPAN & KOREA (Sept 15-25/2014)
- CHURCHES & SAFARIS in ETHIOPIA & TANZANIA (Oct 10-21/2014)
- VIETNAM & SINGAPORE (Nov 10-24/2014)
- CUBA (Jan 9-18/2015)
- AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND (Jan 30-Feb 19/2015)
- CHURCHES & SAFARIS in KENYA & TANZANIA (Feb 6-18/2015)

### CUSTOM TOURS

- HAITI CUSTOM TOUR (Feb 27-March 9/2014)

- HESSTON COLLEGE STUDENT CHOIR TOUR to EUROPE (May 13-June 3/2014)

### HOLY LAND TOURS

- HOLY LAND: HARVEST THE OLIVES & EXPERIENCE the BIBLE with Pastor Jamie Gerber (Oct 12-21/2013)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with Pastor Rich Bucher (Nov 5-14/2013)
- HOLY LAND TOUR with Pastor Phil Wagler (Feb 12-20/2014)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with Pastor David Boshart (April 24-May 3/2014)
- HOLY LAND TOUR with Pastor Darrel Toews (Oct 19-28/2014)
- FROM NAZARETH to ROME with Pastor Jim Brown (Nov 3-15/2014)
- EXPLORE THE WORLD OF PAUL with Tom Yoder Neufeld (May 6-23/2015)

### HERITAGE TOURS

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## VIEWPOINT

# Creation care in an age of indigenous industry

BY WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

Edward S. Curtis gained fame a century ago for his iconic photos of indigenous people. That fame was later tainted by revelations that he removed traces of western society from his subjects and paid them to wear culturally and historically inaccurate clothing. Curtis couldn't resist the urge to impose his own idealized notions on indigenous people.

A similar urge plays out in the national conversation about the environment. Narrow portrayals of aboriginal views are often used to support environmental protection. I have heard many versions of this line of thinking that says indigenous people have an exemplary conservation-oriented reverence for creation, while settler—non-indigenous—people have a bulldozer-oriented worldview that is killing the planet.

I have been informed and inspired by this argument. A profound alternative to the dominant ideology of limitless economic growth is vital. That said, to avoid the temptation to which Curtis succumbed, the above argument needs to account for another set of realities.

Indigenous-owned companies cashed in on more than \$1.3 billion worth of work in the Alberta oil sands in 2010, with 1,700 indigenous people working in oil sands-related jobs. Further north, three of the four regional indigenous governments in the vicinity of the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline have formally teamed up with the world's largest oil companies to push for a \$16.2-billion natural gas pipeline.

The Canadian Mining Association—which displays an Inuit inukshuk prominently on its website—says 4,500 aboriginal people work in mining (according to the 2006 census), with more than 170

agreements between indigenous people and mining companies. And in the hydro-electric sector, indigenous people in Labrador and Manitoba are backing \$22.6 billion worth of new mega-dams.

In most of these cases, indigenous influence has or will alter project designs to reduce environmental impact, but that doesn't change the fact that these are industrial mega-developments.

Of course, a segment of the indigenous population in each of the above cases opposes development. And in other places, indigenous governments are resisting developments, but gone are the days when virtually every big resource project could expect stiff aboriginal opposition.

The situation is more nuanced now. Consider the Haisla First Nation, located at Kitimat, B.C., within sight of the proposed western terminus of the contentious Northern Gateway Pipeline that would deliver bitumen from Alberta to China-bound super-tankers.

During visits with their chief and other leaders last summer, I learned that they are dead-set against the pipeline. I also learned that they have become a key player in the multi-billion-dollar push to export liquified natural gas, much of it from controversial fracking operations. They are shrewd and aggressive business people, as well as deeply committed defenders of the ecological health of their homeland.

Many more examples exist.

This murkier new reality is shifting the moral landscape of our country, a country still significantly defined by resource-development decisions.

To the extent that we church folk participate in dialogue about indigenous relations, the environment and the

economy—as I believe we should—we must grapple with this new reality. Those of us who may be inclined, like Curtis, to remove any hard hats or bulldozers from our image of aboriginal people, need to resist that urge.

Conversely, those people who are inclined to criticize aboriginal people for standing in the way of progress also need to reassess their perceptions.

For me, the upshot of this emerging era of indigenous industrialization is twofold. First, I still believe that there are essential lessons about balance and respect to be learned from aboriginal people. We need an antidote to the dogma of consequence-free growth.

Second, what I have learned from my conversations with development-inclined aboriginal leaders is that those of us who push for environmental protection must also address the need for economic opportunity among indigenous people.

In 2011, I interviewed Fred Carmichael, an indigenous leader who champions the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. His message for environmentalists and romanticists is blunt: "Don't just come here and take away our bread and butter." If people don't like pipelines, he says, "find us another alternative to the pipeline."

That is not necessarily an argument for pipelines; he concedes that the project "might not be the best for the environment." His comments could also be interpreted as a call for a society in which indigenous people have more choices than just grinding poverty or industrial mega-development.

The old dichotomies and simplifications—whether romantic or critical of indigenous people—won't get us there. Edward Curtis worked in black and white. We need to work in grey. ❧

*Adapted from Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice and Life Together, a collection of essays edited by Steve Heinrichs, director of indigenous relations for Mennonite Church Canada.*

## GOD AT WORK IN US

## OBITUARY

# A lasting legacy in wood

John Reimer, 86  
b. Dec. 26, 1926; d. June 28, 2013

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU  
WINNIPEG

John Reimer, who died on June 28 at age 86, left a lasting legacy to Mennonite Church Canada and its congregations. All of the wooden plaques depicting a dove with an olive branch that hang in MC Canada congregations across Canada were handcrafted by him in 2000.

In a tribute at Reimer's memorial service on July 12, John Lohrenz recalled how Reimer worked tirelessly almost every day to have nearly 250 plaques cut in time for the Lethbridge assembly in July 2000, a symbolic transition point when the Conference of Mennonites in Canada became MC Canada.

Lohrenz, then director of constituency relations and stewardship, prepared the federal legislation for the name change and presented it to the Senate for approval. "Upon that approval, we needed a public symbol to represent this change within the congregations," said Lohrenz.

He conceived the idea of the plaque using a design created by Glenn Fretz. Lohrenz's inquiries for a skilled artisan led him to Reimer, retired from a 33-year career with Revenue Canada. Reimer had the reputation of being an excellent carpenter and very accomplished in the art of marquetry.

Helen Reimer, his wife of 63 years, remembered that the task kept him busy all winter. "He loved it because it made him feel really good," she said.

Reimer, who was born in Altona, Man., and lived there until 1953, was banned from the Mennonite church, along with his two brothers and others, who, upon their return from military service in the Second World War, were not repentant of their involvement in the war. Reimer, who was too young to enlist, and his two brothers who were involved in the war, became part of the group that then formed Altona United Church, explained Helen.

It wasn't until their two children were older and their daughter was singing in the choir at First Mennonite Church



*John Reimer crafted all of the Mennonite Church Canada plaques that hang in congregations across the country today.*

in Winnipeg that they returned to the Mennonite church and became members at First Mennonite.

"John was known as a friendly, gentle individual," said Lohrenz, "and took pride in being able to contribute in this way." On one of his last visits to Reimer in the hospital, Lohrenz brought along a plaque and Reimer, with limited ability to speak, asked if the plaque could stay with him in the hospital.

"The symbol of the dove and olive branch reflect Jesus' life, baptism and ministry; the Holy Spirit; the biblical themes of creation, peace and hope; and the mission and values of Mennonite Church Canada," states the MC Canada website.

"I found it interesting as I travelled around that a lot of churches have hung the plaque very prominently and that people were pleased to have a nice plaque they could display publicly that declares their affiliation," said Dan Nighswander, general secretary at the time of the transition. ❧



*One of the plaques crafted by John Reimer.*



## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Folk harp tour goes around the world

BY EDUARD KLASSEN

**W**hen I was a little boy, living in the jungles of South America in the Menno Colony, I was told that the earth was square. Our parents told us that we should not go too far into the bush so that we would not fall off the earth. Now that I am older and have seen the world, I know that it is beautiful, big and round.

In the company of my family, I performed 88 concerts around the world over three months earlier this year, praising the Lord through traditional songs played on a Paraguayan folk harp. We travelled first to Los Angeles, then to the Fiji Islands in the Pacific Ocean. From there, we flew to New Zealand, where

we performed 35 concerts. Together, we flew 45,000 kilometres and drove another 15,000, sharing concerts in three different languages. It's amazing to see how God works in our lives.

New Zealand is a land where milk and honey flow. With a small bus we went through the countryside, travelling to the very north of Auckland, performing most every day. The money we collected went to Christian organizations like HCJB Global, Challenge Weekly and Prayer Chain.

Travelling with two teenagers and staying with a different family each night was both challenging and rewarding. On one of our few days off, we saw one of

the most beautiful beaches in the world. We travelled the sandy beach, which stretched some 100 kilometres, by bus. What an amazing day! New Zealand is truly a paradise on earth.

From New Zealand, we flew to Sydney, Australia, where we performed 23 concerts for HCJB Global, a new radio station that was built in northern Australia, where major new antennas have been installed. The money we collected helped share the gospel with those in Asia, as the station broadcasts in 26 languages, 12 hours a day.

Just like New Zealand, Australia was stunning. Here I saw peanut plants, cotton and water tanks, just like in the Paraguayan Chaco, where I was born and raised.

On March 28, we flew to Bangkok, Thailand. From there, we continued on to Israel, where we stayed for 11 days. In the holy land we had the privilege of giving five concerts, which was great. The first concert was held in a Baptist church in Jerusalem on Easter evening. King David played the harp here once, so having the opportunity to play in the country where it all began was indescribable.

Continuing our journey, we rented a van and drove through the Holy Land. It was here that we had the privilege to witness our youngest son being baptized in the Jordan River. What an amazing experience for him!

From Israel, we flew to Germany, where we have been many times in the past. This was, in fact, our 14th tour. On this particular tour, we travelled the country with Viktor Sawatzki to raise money for HCJB Christian radio and SW radio. In total, we played 25 concerts in Germany.

Throughout our travels, attendance was very good, and those who came were very supportive. I want to thank those who prayed for us on this tour, those who organized everything for us, and those who welcomed us into their homes. I would also like to thank my wife and children for taking this journey with me. May God bless you all. ☿

*Eduard Klassen is a member of Avon Mennonite Church, Stratford, Ont.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF EDUARD KLASSEN



*Brisbane, Australia, was one of the stops when Mathias, left, Christine, Sheldon and Eduard Klassen travelled around the world with Eduard's Paraguayan folk harp. Eduard performed 88 concerts in three months.*



## ARTBEAT

## BOOK REVIEW

# Fixing a 'spoiled biography'

*The Constructed Mennonite: History, Memory and the Second World War.*  
By Hans Werner. University of Manitoba Press, 2013, 205 pages.

REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER  
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

**H**ans Werner uses his father's stories to reflect on questions of autobiography and Mennonite identity in the 20th century. The stories of his father's (and mother's) experiences of growing up in difficult circumstances in Stalinist Russia, and their harrowing experiences during World War II, are told from the perspective of the son who is trying to understand his parents.

As a historian, trying to put his father's story fragments into the larger narrative of the war, Werner finds many of the stories have details that don't quite fit. Frequently, there are chronological

a German identity and was known as Johann. He later emigrated to Canada, where he used the name John, although he never became fluent in English.

The author wonders how his father was able to satisfactorily bring these identities together. He concludes that retelling the stories, while subconsciously editing them, allowed his father to construct an acceptable identity. He was able to "fix his spoiled biography."

Werner tells his father's action-packed stories with interesting detail. He helps the reader to understand why a young man with Mennonite ancestry would join

*The title and the cover design suggest that our memories sometimes show a distorted picture, with pieces that don't quite fit together properly.*

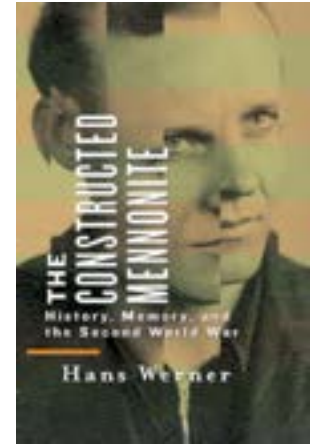
inaccuracies, where the places and times his father remembers are not possible. He finds gaps in some stories, especially when the details are not politically or socially acceptable for post-war Steinbach, a staunchly Mennonite town in southern Manitoba where the Werner family lived during the author's growing-up years.

Throughout his lifetime, Werner's father had four different identities and he used four different names. In his early life in a Mennonite community in Siberia, he was known as Hans. As he began identifying himself as a Soviet worker, later serving in the Red Army, he used the name Ivan, the Russian version of his name. After his capture by the German army, he adopted

the Red Army, and as a historian he explains how his father's experiences fit into the larger narrative of the war. A survivor who managed to adapt to circumstances, his father became a naturalized German citizen and was eventually called up to serve in the German army.

The stories suggest that he had almost no Mennonite identity until the end of the war, when he established relationships with other refugees receiving help from Mennonite Central Committee. Yet wherever he found himself, he was accepted as a Mennonite because he spoke "Mennonite Low German."

There are theories that men and women tell their autobiographical stories



from different perspectives, says Werner. Men are more apt to see life as a journey and to talk about the trials that they encounter and overcome. Women, on the other hand, are more apt to focus on how outside forces acted on them. Werner's parents certainly fit that theory; his father's stories are a series of adventures, while his mother's stories are about suffering and the painful challenges of trying to keep the family together and alive. Werner points out that her stories are also told from a faith perspective.

This book is a great read. Werner puts his father's stories and his own reactions to them together in a way that shows insight into his own growing-up years and his reactions to his father. He sees his father's flaws, but also sees that his father's difficult childhood experiences had a lasting impact. I was left wondering how the Mennonites of Steinbach reacted to this man who had served in two armies.

The title and the cover design suggest that our memories sometimes show a distorted picture, with pieces that don't quite fit together properly. When the pieces don't fit, our memories use creative reconstruction. Perhaps all our Mennonite communities are products of such creative reconstructions, and if we look closely we will discover there are flaws we'd rather not see. ❧

## BOOK REVIEW

# Response to violence reconsidered

*Mennonites in Ukraine Amid Civil War and Anarchy (1917-1920).*

John B. Toews, ed. Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, Calif., 2013, 200 pages.

REVIEWED BY HENRY NEUFELD

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

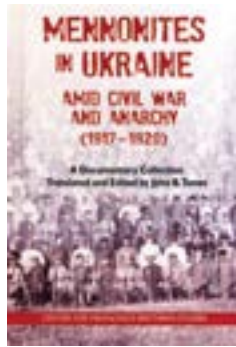
In compiling documents, many not previously translated, editor and translator John B. Toews provides personal insights into the turbulent and tragic times experienced by Mennonites in Ukraine during the second decade of the last century.

Diaries and journals are written by individuals in moments of inspiration, in times of hardship or as part of a daily routine. The recorded events—personal as well as what happens in the world around them—are valuable in historical research. These are personal, not private texts. One writer simply recorded the names of men murdered in Blumenort so they would not be forgotten.

But few historical texts are as compelling to read as this collection. The intimate detail, insight and commentary are painfully honest, as the following passage on page 134 attests:

“Martens’ . . . wife was concerned about his safety. . . . This time she persuaded her husband to hide in the garden in the back of the farmyard. . . . The burning houses, the scream and tumult made him restless. Slowly he crept toward the house . . . before he reached it, he stumbled over a body. It was his wife. His heart cried out. Suddenly he thought of his children. Horror of horrors! All five mutilated bodies were scattered throughout the room.”

For many years, Mennonites in Ukraine were known for their agricultural productivity and innovation. Conscripted in the 1870s resulted in almost one-third of Russian Mennonites leaving their country. With the 1917



Bolshevik Revolution and collapse of the Czarist regime, Mennonites were often seen as wealthy oppressors and foreigners who kept to themselves. And they spoke German.

The civil chaos that followed the 1917 upheaval resulted in Mennonite villages being pillaged by bandits and armies. The new Soviet gov-

ernment was weak, inexperienced and not able to maintain law and order in the large Russian empire. Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno took advantage of this situation and organized bandits who robbed, raped and murdered at will.

Mennonite estate owners and villages were frequent targets. Mennonites faced unprecedented violence, as the following passage describes:

“There was a loud pounding at the door. Grandfather opened it and some 20 bandits stormed in. The robbing began. . . . Grandfather said ‘take everything.’ Uncle Willy held the lamp for the robbers. . . . Grandfather knelt and prayed loudly. Two shots were fired. . . Both were shot in the head.”

There was a lull in this carnage when German troops arrived in the spring of 1918, bringing law and order. German theologians had preached in Ukraine, bringing spiritual renewal with German nationalist overtones. The German troops were welcomed by the Mennonites.

The response to the wanton rape and killing led to the establishment of the *Selbstschutz*, an armed Mennonite self-defence militia. Trained and armed by the German soldiers, one battalion had 4,000 Mennonites and Germans.

The 400-year-old belief in non-resistance was suspended in the name of self-protection. Those who promoted nonresistance were ridiculed, mocked and sometimes beaten.

In one situation, starving Russians came at night to a Mennonite village for food. They were shot by Mennonite militiamen; some lay wounded until morning, when Mennonites came and killed them.

The German soldiers left in November 1918, creating a power vacuum. Makhno’s bands returned with greater violence, seeking to avenge the injustices peasants had suffered at the hands of Mennonites. Raids by the Mennonite militia resulted in swift retaliation by the Machnovites, who left 146 dead in a number of villages, 84 of them in Muensterberg.

At a time of unprecedented civil disorder, violence and terror, many saw the *Selbstschutz* as essential to protect lives and possessions. The prophetic voices of the spiritual leaders weakened as many joined the new militia. Some believed things would have been much worse without the *Selbstschutz*.

B.B. Janz saw it differently, stating, “We have sinned . . . all the murders . . . all the conflagrations, all rape resulted from Mennonite armed resistance.”

“Many a . . . poor servant and Russian neighbour have rightly complained about our selfishness and God heard their complaint,” wrote Abraham Kroeker. “We have not sought God’s kingdom.”

Toews does not comment extensively on these documents, but allows them to speak for themselves. The depictions of what Mennonites did when faced with unbridled violence force us to consider our reaction in similar situations, rather than judging our forefathers.

The book is available from the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C., 211 - 2825 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford, BC V2T 6S3, or by e-mail at archives@mhsbc.com. ☞

# Dispelling myths

*New academic book documents Amish life*

Goshen College  
GOSHEN, IND.

America's enchantment with the Amish—in romance novels and on reality TV—has left many wondering what Amish life is really like. A new book entitled *The Amish*, co-written by Goshen College history professor Steve M. Nolt, looks to dispel the myths and document Amish life across North America.



**Nolt**

Nolt, along with co-authors Donald B. Kraybill and Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, offers a comprehensive study of the growing religious group in *The Amish* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), which is a companion book to the American Experience documentary of the same name that premiered on PBS in February 2012.

“Mainstream Americans are fascinated by the Amish, but despite the rise of Amish-themed tourism, television shows

among other topics.

“Although there are books about the Amish in specific locations or particular practices, there was no book that provided a comprehensive picture of the enormous diversity of Amish life,” Nolt says. “There are more than 40 types of Amish in 460 commu-nities across North

America. We’ve spent more than a quarter-century getting to know these people, and wanted to share the remarkable diversity and resilience we’ve found.”

Known for their simple clothing, plain lifestyle and horse-and-buggy mode of transportation, the Amish are often misunderstood and appear to be at odds with the modern world. According to Nolt, though, the Amish have learned to deal creatively with the world around them. This includes many families that have shifted from farming to home-based small

*‘Mainstream Americans are fascinated by the Amish, but despite the rise of Amish-themed tourism, television shows and romance novels, there is surprisingly little authoritative information out there.’  
(Steve M. Nolt)*

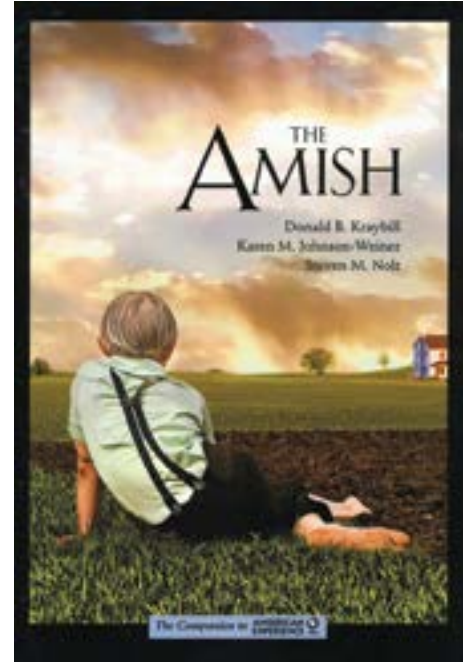
and romance novels, there is surprisingly little authoritative information out there,” Nolt says. “Many Americans would probably be surprised by their friendliness and humour when you learn to know the Amish, as well as how generally satisfied they are with life even without the latest household conveniences and online technology. They’re not dour folks left over from the 19th century.”

The book takes a look at Amish history, beliefs and values, family life and gender roles, community systems, relations with local government, education and schooling, work and economics, and tourism,

business or factory work. They have also learned to adapt to technology, selectively using it or dismissing it based on whether they believe it threatens the welfare of their community.

“The regulations on technology vary widely among the various Amish groups,” Nolt says. “Many Amish shops adapt mainstream technology to make it fit within the rules of their church. For example, finding other power sources if their church forbids tapping into public utility electricity.”

Despite the fact that they forego many modern conveniences and do not evangelize, the Amish population continues



to grow. In North America, the number of Amish has grown from around 6,000 people in the early 1900s to nearly 300,000 today.

“The Amish population doubles about every 20 years, both because Amish families are large and because most Amish children join the church as adults,” Nolt says. “This population growth has meant that Amish families are more often moving and starting new settlements elsewhere. Amish society is less compact and more dispersed.”

In a review, *Publisher's Weekly* wrote, “The authors successfully address the seeming exoticism of the Amish without sensationalism. The scholarship is enlivened with quotes and personal anecdotes, and the final section on the future of the Amish raises fascinating questions, even for casual readers.”

Kraybill is a cultural sociologist and professor at Elizabethtown College, Pa., and Johnson-Weiner is a professor of linguistic anthropology at the State University of New York at Potsdam.

The book is available online at [press.jhu.edu](http://press.jhu.edu). ▄



## FAT CALF FESTIVAL

# Learning to live life with God

*Discontent, wandering, returning and celebration  
predominant themes at biennial youth assembly*

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Co-editor

**G**od loves you and he wants you to live life with him. That was the message youth from across Canada were left with at the Fat Calf Festival, Mennonite Church Canada's 2013 youth assembly.

More than 230 youth and 80 youth leaders gathered at MC Manitoba's Camp Assiniboia outside Winnipeg, from July 29 to Aug. 2, to explore the themes of discontent, wandering, returning and celebration in the "lost and found" parables of Luke 15, particularly the story of the Prodigal Son.

During one of the final worship sessions,

keynote speaker Iona Snare told the youth that the father in the Prodigal Son story recklessly squandered love on a son who didn't deserve it because he valued his son.

And "he's willing to be recklessly wasteful with his love [for you]," added Snare, director of Lifeteams School of Urban Youth Outreach, a program of the Greater Vancouver Youth for Christ ministry. "Our God loves you. . . . He wants you to be with him. . . . He wants you to move in. He wants you to live life with him."

It was a touching message given during

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO BY MOSES FALCO



*To complete a Crazy Big Games challenge, a team of youth and youth sponsors formed a circle and sang. The games took place on the opening night of Mennonite Church Canada's Fat Calf Festival.*



MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO BY MOSES FALCO



*Slushies from the Tiki Bar turned tongues blue at Mennonite Church Canada's Fat Calf Festival at Camp Assiniboia.*

an emotional worship session that concluded with youth leaders marking the hands of youth who wanted to come forward and mark their journey with, and faith, in God.

The themes of discontent, wandering, returning and celebration influenced not only the worship sessions, but the workshops and activities as well.

On July 30 and 31, youth attended a variety of seminars that explored biblical stories of being lost and found, loving one's neighbours, indigenous relations, creation care, sex, food justice, social justice, leadership, relationships and sports.

Youth also participated in a variety of enjoyable activities that included games, swimming, climbing on the camp's ropes course, a performance by comedic hypnotist Jerry Enns and an evening at Winnipeg's Fun Mountain Waterslide Park.

Fat Calf event coordinator Dorothy Fontaine led a nine-person organizing committee made up of volunteers from MC Manitoba and MC Canada faith formation staff that ran all aspects of the gathering. She said many of the activities were planned to invite youth into the story of the Prodigal Son.

On the first evening, one of Camp Assiniboia's buildings was outfitted as though it were a night market, similar to a market that would have existed in Jesus' day. Youth bartered for goods like Fat Calf T-shirts and snacks in the market, and

watched performances by a variety of entertainers.

During the festival's final evening, youth were invited to a square dance in the camp barn to echo the celebration at the end of the Prodigal Son story.

Organizers had a number of goals for the assembly, according to Fontaine. "We wanted to contribute to the faith formation of youth and bring them into the wider community of the church," she said. "The assembly is also another way for youth leaders to facilitate their work. We can do larger activities in this setting that they might not be able to do on their own."

Music and worship played a large role throughout the week, and included a worship session at the Trappist monastery ruins in St. Norbert.

"We had hoped to set a space to meet God and each other, in a way that touched our minds and our hearts," said Kathy Giesbrecht, associate director of leadership ministries at MC Manitoba, who led worship with Phil Campbell-Enns, associate pastor at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. "[The week] probably went better than we imagined, and we had very high hopes going into it."

The assembly's first worship session included a welcome from Willard Metzger, executive director of MC Canada.

"This is your church," Metzger told the youth, before inviting them to contact him any time they'd like. "Don't just stand by

*(Continued on page 34)*

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



*Youth sing and dance enthusiastically during the opening worship session at the Fat Calf Festival.*

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO BY MOSES FALCO



*On Aug. 1, Fat Calf Festival youth packed boxes with hygiene kits for Mennonite Central Committee as a youth assembly service project. In just 20 minutes, they exceeded their goal of 2,500 kits.*

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



*Keynote speaker Iona Snare tells youth at the Fat Calf Festival that God loves them. 'He wants you to be with him,' she said. 'He wants you to move in. He wants you to live life with him.'*

**(Continued from page 33)**

and watch. Grab a hold of [the church] and make it into what you think God is wanting us to be."

Later in the week, he posted on his Facebook page: "Feeling so encouraged after spending two days at the Fat Calf youth assembly. I have yet to meet a youth I am not proud of. The church is in good hands!"

Cole Froese, a 15-year-old youth from First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, said that he was struck by the power of the story of the Prodigal Son. "The father loves [a son] who many would think isn't worth [that love]. But to the father, the son is worth it," Cole said, adding that he enjoyed the balance of worship, workshops and

activities at the assembly.

Emily Bauman, a 14-year-old youth from Elmira Mennonite Church, Ont., added that Snare's messages caused her to look at the story of the Prodigal Son in new ways. "I didn't link the story as much to God [before coming to Fat Calf]. I thought it was a story about people loving each other," she said, adding that attending the assembly "was a great experience."

Fontaine said that she and her fellow organizers were happy to see the level of engagement at the assembly: "It feels like we really struck a chord on so many levels. People really put their hearts and souls into this week, and it showed." ❧

## VIEWPOINT

# Change wisely, dude

*A young writer has some advice for church leaders trying desperately to attract and retain young people: change carefully and wisely.*

BY ANDREA PALPANT DILLEY

**W**hen I came back to church after a faith crisis in my early 20s, the first one I attended

regularly was a place called Praxis. It was the kind of church where the young, hip pastor hoisted an infant into his arms and

said with sincerity, “Dude, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

The entire service had an air of informality. We sat in folding chairs, sang rock-anthem praise and took clergy-free, buffet-style communion. Once a month, the pastor would point to a table at the back of the open-rafter sanctuary and invite us to “serve ourselves” if we felt so compelled.

For two years, my husband and I attended Praxis while he did graduate work at Arizona State University and I worked as a documentary producer. As someone who had defected from the church at age 23, I thought it was the perfect place for me: a young, urban church located four blocks from Casey Moore’s Irish Pub, an unchurched church with a mix of sacred tradition and secular trend.

I’m not the first person ever to go low-

are abandoning their religious attachments. Our complaints against the church know no bounds: We don’t like the politics. We want authenticity and openness. We demand a particular worship aesthetic.

Churches often leap to meet these demands, and yet the arc of my own story suggests that chasing after the most recent trend may not be the answer. As I’ve written elsewhere, I was raised in a small Presbyterian congregation, but left and later returned to the church for reasons too complex to summarize here.

When I slipped back in, I wanted what my own parents had wanted in their hippie youth back in the 1970s: an anti-institutional church that looked less like a church and more like a coffee house. But after two years at Praxis, the coffee tasted thin.

I felt homeless in heart. I missed inter-

*In my 20s, liturgy seemed rote, but now in my 30s it reminds me that I’m part of an institution much larger and older than myself.*

church, and Praxis isn’t the first institution to pursue that hard-to-get demographic: young people. Across America today, thousands of clergy and congregations—even entire denominations—are running scared, desperately trying to convince their youth that faith and church are culturally relevant, forward-looking and alive.

For some, the instinct is to radically alter the old model: out with the organ, in with the Fender. But as someone who left the mainstream church and eventually returned, I’d like to offer a word of advice to those who are so inclined: Don’t. Or at least proceed with caution. Change carefully, change wisely, with thoughtfulness and deliberation. What young people say we want in our 20s is not necessarily what we want 10 years later.

Churches, of course, are right to worry. They’ve been losing young people like me for years. A study released last fall by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that not just liberal mainline Protestants, but also more conservative evangelical and “born-again” Protestants

generational community. I missed hymns and historicity, sacraments and old aesthetics. I missed the rich polity—even the irritation—of presbytery.

In 2007, when my husband and I moved from Arizona to Austin, Tex., and went in search of a church, we skipped the non-denominational and went straight to the traditional. We found an Anglican church where every Sunday morning we now watch clergy process up the aisle wearing white vestments and carrying a two-metre cross.

We take communion from an ordained priest who holds a chalice of blood-red wine and lays a hand of blessing on our children. We sing the Lord’s Prayer and recite from the Book of Common Prayer, in which not once in 1,001 pages does the word “dude” ever appear.

In my 20s, liturgy seemed rote, but now in my 30s it reminds me that I’m part of an institution much larger and older than myself. As the poet Czeslaw Milosz said, “The sacred exists and is stronger than all our rebellions.”

*(Continued on page 36)*



Andrea Palpant Dilley



*(Continued from page 35)*

Both my doubt and my faith, and even my ongoing frustrations with the church itself, are part of a tradition that started before I was born and will continue after I die. I rest in the assurance that I have something to lean against, something to resist and, more importantly, something that resists me.

Critics might say I'm an anomaly. My story, they would say, isn't typical of most young people.

But that's not the point. I can't alter statistics or trends. I can't tell congregations or their pastors what they need to change, if anything. I can't speak to church marketing or survival strategy, nor can I enter the fraught—and important—theological debate between liberalism and conservatism, which drives some of the attrition of young people.

What I offer instead is a word of encouragement that reminds the church to take the long view.

For more traditional congregations that struggle to keep youth in the pews, take heart. The old model isn't necessarily lost. Praxis and churches like it have a place; they draw people who would otherwise never set foot in church, people who have a legitimate contemporary aesthetic that appreciates informality and mainstream music. But your church has a place, too.

Consider the changes that people go through between age 22 and 32. Consider that some of us in time renew our appreciation for the strengths of a traditional church:

- **HISTORICALLY INFORMED** hierarchy

that claims accountability at multiple levels.

- **HISTORICALLY INFORMED** teaching that leans on theological complexity.
- **LITURGICALLY INFORMED WORSHIP** that takes a high view of the sacraments and draws on hymns from centuries past.

Some of us want to walk into a cathedral space that reminds us of the small place we inhabit in the great arc of salvation history. We want to meet the Unmoved Mover in an unmoved sanctuary.

So as you change—or as change is imposed upon you—keep your historic identity and your ecclesial soul. Fight the urge for perpetual reinvention, and don't watch the roll book for young adults.

We're sometimes fickle. When we come, if we come, meet us where we are. Be present to our doubts and fears and frustrations. Walk with us in the perplexing challenge of postmodern faith.

Even so, your church—and your denomination—might die. My generation and those following might take it apart, brick by brick, absence by absence.

But the next generation might rebuild it. They might unearth the altar, the chalice and the vestments, and find them not medieval, but enduring. They might uncover the Book of Common Prayer and find it anything but common. ✎

*This article was first published in Faith and Leadership ([www.faithandleadership.com](http://www.faithandleadership.com)). Reprinted with permission.*

## ***An accessible heart***

*Even those who intend to help are ignorant to what physically disabled people truly need, says man born with spina bifida*

BY MICHAEL WIEBE

**D**isrespect is nothing new for Michael Mifflin, who was born with spina bifida. In high school in Winnipeg, he was shoved into lockers and had his canes stolen and hidden by other students.

Now, as an adult, he navigates public transit with canes and a wheelchair, an effort sometimes greeted with impatient eye-rolling and complaints from comfortably seated transit users.

Mifflin's birth defect left several spinal vertebrae deformed, consequently exposing and damaging parts of his spinal cord. This resulted in limited brain signals to muscles and body organs below the damaged area. Mifflin is paralyzed below the waist, a condition that does not improve with age.

"With age, it gets you," he says. "It's catching up to me. Most doctors are surprised to hear that I'm 27 and I'm still around. Doctors said that I shouldn't have made the age of two because of my disability"

Frequent bullying in high school prompted Mifflin to drop out before

environment or on the streets, it's important to understand that they're pursuing that independence."

The pursuit of independence is evident with Mifflin, who asks little of others—besides respect—and is highly active in the local power wheelchair hockey scene. Mifflin plays power forward for the Red Bulls in the Manitoba Power Wheelchair Hockey Association, and has been a significant part of the team's success over the last eight seasons. He has also taken part in wheelchair basketball and sledge hockey. These modified sports provide a sense of independence for participants, and illus-

*'People need to change attitudes towards people like myself if disabled people stand a chance to be properly integrated into society.'*

*(Michael Mifflin)*

graduation. He is currently taking the remaining classes required to obtain his high school diploma that he was denied by a misinformed student body.

Mifflin says that even those who intend to help are ignorant to what physically disabled people truly need. He says those who wish to assist him when his wheelchair is stuck, or when he is trying to fit his wheelchair into the locks on a bus, do not understand that people with disabilities require a degree of independence.

"Many people just assume that I need the help when I don't," he says. "All I want is a little respect. If you see I'm having trouble, it's okay to help, but ask first."

Cory Funk, former respite worker and summer program director for Mennonite Church Manitoba's Camps With Meaning, affirms Mifflin's desire for independence. Funk describes working with a man with cerebral palsy, and quickly learned that his cognitive abilities were fully functional. It was important to let him do what he could for himself, allow him to speak without interruption, and lead by example to inspire others to treat him with respect.

"Respecting their autonomy is huge," Funk says. "A lot of people with disabilities, their goal is to be as independent as possible. When interacting with someone with a physical disability, whether in a working

trate that physically disabled people are capable of doing things for themselves.

Mifflin claims that attitude changes are the main force in achieving respect for disabled people. "Attitudes are truly the biggest disability of all," he says. "People need to change attitudes towards people like myself if disabled people stand a chance to be properly integrated into society."

Although there is legislation and other structures in place to help the physically disabled in Winnipeg, Mifflin's girlfriend, Emily Wiebe\*, says the most important aspect of accommodation is the acceptance of others. "You can modify a building to be accessible all you want, but if you have a negative attitude toward the disabled, then it isn't really all that helpful," she says. "The biggest barrier is not an inaccessible building, it is an inaccessible attitude." ❧

*The Voice of the Voiceless articles were written for Canadian Mennonite University's Journalism: Practices and Principles course during the Winter 2013 semester. Teacher Carl DeGurse is vice-chair of Canadian Mennonite's board of directors and assistant city editor of the Winnipeg Free Press.*

*\* Emily Wiebe is the sister of author Michael Wiebe.*



*Michael Mifflin and his girlfriend, Emily Wiebe.*



**Michael Wiebe**

## Calendar

### British Columbia

- Sept. 6-7:** MCC Festival for World Relief, at the Abbotsford Tradex.
- Sept. 18-22:** Truth and Reconciliation Commission gathering, in Vancouver.
- Sept. 28:** Mennonite Fall Fair, in Prince George.
- Oct. 7-9:** MC B.C. pastor/spouse retreat.
- Oct. 10:** Columbia Bible College annual general meeting, at 7 p.m.
- Oct. 17, 23:** Mennonite Church B.C. dessert fundraising evenings; (17) Level Ground Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, and Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack; (23) Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond.
- Oct. 18-20:** MC B.C. women's retreat at Camp Squeah, Hope.
- Oct. 26:** Columbia Bible College annual fundraising dinner. For more information, [development.events@columbiabc.edu](mailto:development.events@columbiabc.edu).
- Nov. 2:** Mennonite Church B.C. special delegate session, at Langley Mennonite Fellowship.

### Saskatchewan

- Sept. 20-22:** Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization junior high retreat at Youth Farm Bible Camp. Guest speaker: Joe Heikman.
- Oct. 18-19:** Saskatchewan Women in Mission annual retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre. Theme: "I heard her voice: Courageous women in the Bible."

### Manitoba

- Until Sept. 14:** Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, hosts the 81st-annual Open Juried Exhibition of the Manitoba Society of Artists. Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Monday to Friday), Noon to 5 p.m. (Saturday).
- Sept. 14-15:** Charleswood Mennonite Church 50th-anniversary celebrations include a concert, family activities, worship and food. For more information, call the church at 204-837-7982 or e-mail [cwoodmc@mymts.net](mailto:cwoodmc@mymts.net).
- Sept. 21:** Brandon MCC relief sale at the Keystone Centre. For more information, visit [home.westman.wave.ca/~hila/](http://home.westman.wave.ca/~hila/).

- Oct. 18-20:** Scrapbookers retreat at Camp Moose Lake. For more information, e-mail [camps@mennochurch.mb.ca](mailto:camps@mennochurch.mb.ca).

### Ontario

- Sept. 6-8:** Building Community Retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp for individuals with disabilities and their supporters. Theme: "Calm in the Storm," with Kristan Graham-Seymour. For more information, visit [hiddenacres.ca](http://hiddenacres.ca), or call 519-625-8602. Register by Aug. 23.
- Sept. 7:** MCC Ontario "Barn-raising in the city" to celebrate the new building at 50 Kent Ave. with the raising of a timber frame outbuilding. Watch and join the celebration with lunch and entertainment.
- Sept. 7:** Wanner Mennonite Church 24th annual Corn Fest with food, fun and games for the whole family, 5 p.m. to dusk. Food bank will be on-site for any donations. For more information, call 519-658-4902.
- Sept. 22:** Fourth annual *Sing the Journey/Sing the Story* event, at the

Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., led by Mark Diller Harder. For more information, call Will Stoltz at 519-696-2805.

**Sept. 27-29:** 200th-anniversary celebrations and homecoming weekend at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener. Special anniversary service in the afternoon of Sept. 29 with guest speaker Janet Plenert of Mennonite World Conference. For the latest details, visit [www.firstmennonitekitchener.ca](http://www.firstmennonitekitchener.ca).

**Sept. 30, Oct. 1:** Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp fall seniors retreat. The same program of worship, learning and fellowship will be offered each day. Speaker: Sue Steiner. Topic: "Telling our stories." For more information, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail [info@hiddenacres.ca](mailto:info@hiddenacres.ca).

**Oct. 3:** MC Eastern Canada pastors spiritual retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp.

**Oct. 5:** "Doing worship differently": an MC Eastern Canada workshop with John Bell at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

**Oct. 16:** "The multi-staff team:



**Deadline extended!**

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Developing healthy practices": an MC Eastern Canada workshop at Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo.

**Oct. 17-19:** Ten Thousand Villages festival sale at Hamilton Mennonite Church; (17, 18) 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., (19) 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Enjoy homemade soup and dessert in the Villages Café.

**Oct. 20:** 10th annual Gospel Vespers at the Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, with a focus on *Life Songs II*. Leader: Bob Shantz. For more information, call Will Stoltz at 519-696-2805.

**Oct. 30:** "Healthy pastoral relationships: Caring for self and others": an MC Eastern Canada workshop at Hamilton Mennonite Church.

**Nov. 1:** Acoustic Advent carols at the Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, from 2:30 to 4:40 p.m. Featuring the PMS Singers and No Discernable Key. Leader: Fred Martin. For more information, call Will Stoltz at

519-696-2805.

**Nov. 3:** MC Eastern Canada's "Junior Youth Make a Difference Day" at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener.

**U.S.**

**Nov. 7-10:** Mennonite Economic Development Associates annual convention, "Cultivating solutions: Harvesting hope," in Wichita, Kan., For more information, or to register, visit [medaconvention.org](http://medaconvention.org) or call toll-free 1-800-665-7026.

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

## Classifieds

### Announcement

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For special awards sale see:

[www.mysteriesofgrace.com](http://www.mysteriesofgrace.com)

### Employment Opportunities

**Lead Pastor:** Highland MB Church (Calgary, AB), following transitional renewal, needs a Lead Pastor-Teacher who will be a discipler-equipper to build up the Church. More details: [www.hmbc.ca/employment](http://www.hmbc.ca/employment).

**Wildwood Mennonite Church** in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan is inviting applications for a part time **Youth Pastor**, a person who has a passion for youth ministry, building relationships among peers and with God. This person will be committed to Anabaptist theology and will be a strong supporter of the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization (SMYO), and Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and Canada. Start date is negotiable. Inquiries, resumes, and letters of interest may be directed to the Wildwood Search Committee at [secretary@wildwood-mennonite.org](mailto:secretary@wildwood-mennonite.org), 1502 Acadia Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7H 5H8 (306) 373-2126.



## Vice-President Academic

Canadian Mennonite University invites applications and/or nominations for the position of Vice-President Academic.

Applications will be reviewed starting **October 15** until the position is filled.

A full position profile and other details can be found at [www.cmu.ca/employment.html](http://www.cmu.ca/employment.html)

Applications and/or nominations should be addressed to:

Director of Human Resources, [hrdirector@cmu.ca](mailto:hrdirector@cmu.ca)  
Canadian Mennonite University  
500 Shaftesbury Blvd.  
Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2 Canada | [www.cmu.ca](http://www.cmu.ca)




We invite nominations and applications of articulate, passionate, and excellent leaders for the position of **Dean of Conrad Grebel University College**, to begin **July 2014**. The successful candidate will support Conrad Grebel faculty and inspire them to be strong leaders in their field. The Dean will join a healthy institution, with additional prospects to nurture and secure new partnerships and commitments for innovative educational opportunities; mentor many new faculty in the next decade to collectively extend a vibrant identity of the College; offer bold vision about how to grow a "state of the art" centre for peace advancement; lead the College in articulating a new academic plan; and continue to provide sound administrative direction that has led to a healthy academic bottom line, two signature graduate programs, steady enrollment growth, above 4000 students, and academic salaries commensurate with the University of Waterloo. Review of applications begins **October 1, 2013** and continues until the position is successfully filled.

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[www.uwaterloo.ca/grebel/dean](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/grebel/dean)



*Don't look down! A youth cautiously proceeds across a rope course at Camp Assiniboia during a Fat Calf Festival activity time. Story and more photographs of the biennial youth assembly begin on page 32.*