

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

September 16, 2013

Volume 17 Number 18

## Holy contradictions

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## EDITORIAL

# A magazine is born

*The first of a series of editorials giving the case for Canadian Mennonite, beginning with its history*

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

The year was 1953. Mennonites scattered across Canada were a disparate group, having come to this land of freedom in several migrations from Europe, the first of which was of Swiss-German origin from the German Palatinate coming from Pennsylvania and settling in what was to become the Niagara Region of Ontario as early as 1786.

Later waves came from Russia, first in the 1870s, and later in the 1920s as an escape from the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, settling mostly in the western provinces and recreating the “colonies” of Ukraine, keeping their language of Low German and nurturing an identity as cultural Mennonites as they had under the tsars.

But by the 1950s a new restlessness was stirring. There was a sense among the more visionary leaders of these various groups that the many historical manifestations of the Anabaptist movement of 16th-century Reformation should find common cause and unite around core beliefs, rather than perpetuate mostly cultural expressions of a faith founded on a Christ-centred theology. Literature from the time shows deep concern that the churches were losing their young people to the wiles of the dominant culture.

Into this milieu came several visionaries, the first of whom, according to “*The*

*Story of the Canadian Mennonite*” by Ted Friesen, an Altona, Man., publisher, on Aug. 14, 1959, was K.H. Neufeld, well-known in Mennonite circles as a musician and choir director. Neufeld came to the Friesens “with the thought of starting a paper that would serve Canadian Mennonites of every branch and faith.” He urged the Friesens to make this a part of their publishing program.

The idea took root, according to Friesen, because of his father’s “deep and concerned interest in our Mennonite people of every confession.”

Friesen, reflecting Neufeld’s vision, had seven goals for the new publication:

- **TO PROVIDE** an inter-Mennonite paper that brings us closer together and transcends national boundaries in our coverage.
- **TO SPEAK** to the Mennonite witness in the current Canadian scene.
- **TO PROMOTE** faith in Christ as understood in the Anabaptist tradition.
- **TO PROVIDE** an English-language newspaper particularly for the young people.
- **TO SPEAK** prophetically to relevant church, community and state issues.
- **TO ADDRESS** ourselves in all walks of life, drawing all within the orbit of a dynamic Christian witness.
- **TO ACHIEVE** greater ecumenicity among



Canadian Mennonites, establish contact with other Protestant groups, holding up a clear witness to the rest of Christianity.

The Friesens then scouted around for someone to translate the dream into reality—“to be both midwife, father and mother of this brain-child.” Someone suggested Frank H. Epp, recently graduated from Canadian Mennonite Bible College.

It was no easy task for Epp to launch his English-language weekly. Many church services were still conducted in High German. He was going up against a very popular *Der Bote*, the weekly publication of the then General Conference Mennonite Church of Canada, which not only carried stories in German of churches in Canada, but in the United States, Mexico, South America and Europe. Epp himself had been editor of the youth section of *Der Bote*.

It was a bold and audacious venture, not only with the challenge of publishing in English, but in introducing new theological concepts emerging in the Mennonite confession both in the U.S. and Canada. In his first editorial of Oct. 16, 1953, Epp wrote, “In a dominion-wide Mennonite community which is multiply divided, and in a Canadian community which has not often felt the gospel testimony and the uncompromising peace position of a united Mennonite brotherhood, we believe this new weekly has an important part to play.”

The bold venture would last 18 years—until 1971—when financial troubles contributed to its demise, only to be picked up by the “eastern” Canadian Mennonites in a reincarnation called the *Mennonite Reporter*.

### Next edition

*Canadian Mennonite*: Independent or inter-dependent.

### ABOUT THE COVER:

**The San Francisco Basilica in Assisi, Italy, attracts both the faithful and interested tourists to its doors. In our feature story on page 4, senior writer Will Braun wonders why, ‘despite outlandish contradictions . . . Catholicism shows no signs of global decline.’**

PHOTO: DAVE ROGALSKY, CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Response to arts and worship: **MAX KENNEL, YOUNG VOICES**

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

# Holy contradictions

*Littered with scandal, inconsistency and pomposity, the Roman Catholic Church somehow remains the most popular religious body on earth*

BY WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER



*How does Catholicism do it?  
How does it weather its failures,  
contradictions and backwardness?  
How does it not crumble under  
the weight of its pomposity?*

**D**espite gaping holes in the biblical basis for its elaborate hierarchy, and despite relatively widespread pedophilia among its priests, the Roman Catholic Church holds on to roughly twice as many official adherents—1.2 billion—as all Protestant denominations put together.

Despite outlandish contradictions—the Vatican puts Mary on a pedestal while excluding women from leadership, and it condemns homosexuality although insiders say many monks and priests are gay—and despite a litany of unfashionable views—opposition to contraception and obsession with celibacy to, name but two—Catholicism shows no signs of global decline.

And despite the absurdity of an old boys club shrouding itself in Old World opulence to decide who among them will reign over the “sacred hierarchy,” papal conclaves have become religion’s World Cup, attracting media attention that would make presidents and soccer stars jealous.

Sure, Catholicism is shrinking in the Global North, but with gains in the Global South it continues to claim about 17 percent of the world’s population, just like it has since at least the 1970s.

How does Catholicism do it? How does it weather its failures, contradictions and backwardness? How does it not crumble under the weight of its pomposity? What does its resilience say about humanity, religion and God?

## **Anabaptist admiration**

The contrasts of Catholicism have a starkly personal dimension for me. Although my Mennonite ancestors were burned at the stake by Catholics, my aboriginal friends were violated by them at residential schools, and I can’t imagine Jesus of Nazareth strolling

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO



*St. Peter's Basilica pictured in the early morning.*

through the Vatican without picking up the first whip in sight, I owe Catholicism a great debt. By some holy irony, many of the most loving, grounded people I have met are Catholic monks, nuns and priests. I read more Catholic writers than Mennonite. I take my deepest questions to a Catholic mentor more often than to a Mennonite.

All I knew about Catholics growing up were the predictable Mennonite suspicions about Mary-worship, papal infallibility, prayers for the dead and prayers to saints, and all the motions those papists go through.

But in my early 20s, I found my way—I don't recall just how—to the writings of Henry Nouwen and Thomas Merton, two prominent Catholics. They wrote about silence, darkness, stillness, the interior life and intimate connection to God, although of a different sort than the evangelical striving I had also encountered. I felt drawn by something I had not found in my own tradition. Visits to monasteries and retreat centres followed. Along the way, I discovered the work of Jean Vanier, Caryll Houselander, Oscar Romero, Carlo Carretto and other Catholic writers, who all changed my life.

Such is my appreciation for Catholicism that I marked my 40th birthday last winter by spending a few days at the Trappist monastery near Holland, Man., a place of tranquility and hospitality.

But the blessings are jumbled up with all manner of other things. For instance,

*I am not baptized in the Catholic Church, so I do not qualify to partake of the body of Christ. I find that stricture petty.*

when those Trappists, like all Catholics, come to the heart of their religious practice, the eucharist, I become a second class Christian. I am not baptized in the Catholic Church, so I do not qualify to partake of the body of Christ.

I find that stricture petty. But I manage to stomach it, barely. After all, as popular wisdom would have it, in this life you have to take the good with the bad.

Catholics, it seems, are masters at just that. They are able to take an astounding amount of bad mixed in with their blessings. At the risk of pointing out a log in someone else's ecclesiastical eye, let me take a closer look at what Catholics are

able to withstand.

### **Crimes of ordination**

I'll skip the Crusades, Inquisition and initial wave of colonialism, the latter of which is an ironic contributor to the church's current size, and jump to Canada's Indian Residential Schools. For

decades, Catholic leaders, who operated about 60 percent of the residential schools in Canada, willingly removed tens of thousands of aboriginal children from their parents and communities. Many of the church's most devoted and trained members then abused these children physically, emotionally and sexually. Untold numbers died unnecessarily. This happened on a systemic basis over a long period of time.

I heard a Cree counsellor say that survivors sometimes recount the words of abusers who told them: "If you love Jesus, you'll let me do this."

How could Christianity, whatever the



denomination, go so unimaginably wrong? It's hard to imagine worse actions.

While Catholic dioceses and orders in Canada have paid a combined \$80 million as part of the 2007 government-led residential school settlement, and some of those bodies have issued apologies, the Vatican remained silent until 2009, when His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI expressed "sorrow" over the "deplorable conduct" of "some members of the church."

Compare his one-paragraph statement—extraordinarily concise for a Vatican document—with the statement by Prime Minister Stephen Harper the year before, in which he said "we are sorry" in five languages on national television from the floor of Parliament.

Compare Rome's response to serial pedophiles among its clerical ranks with the automatic and immediate excommunication it metes out to women who get abortions, regardless of their circumstances.

Compare Rome's response to the response at Penn State University, when assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky was arrested on charges of sexually assaulting minors on Nov. 5, 2011. He was fired and banned from the campus the next day. Two days later, the school rejected the resignation of storied head coach Joe Paterno, who concealed information related to the case, and fired him on the spot. The president of the university also resigned that day. Then the governing body for university athletics chopped the school's football program off at the knees. That was the response to one pedophile at a secular institution.

By worldly reckoning, the residential school atrocities, along with the broader and more recent pedophilia scandal among Catholic priests, should have sunk the whole show. The faithful should have left en masse. The pope should have resigned. At minimum, it should have led to a major revamp of a structure in which celibate men exercise inordinate authority with near impunity. But it didn't.

Sure, the Catholic Church has lost some credibility, priests and cash over the scandals, but, overall, as a global whole,

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*The Sedia Gestatoria (litter) of Pope Pius VII (1800-23), part of an exhibition of various thrones in the Galerie des Glaces of Château de Versailles.*

it has pretty much carried on, picking up new members to replace the ones it loses. I find that remarkable.

### **Code of Canon Law**

Ironically, the criminal indiscretions have happened despite an extravagant structure of church law and judicial authority, much of which is devoted to rooting out anything that might bring public shame to the church. A key component of this

"juridical-legislative" structure is the Code of Canon Law.

As I found out, the Code is a stuffy showcase of the elements of Catholicism that, like the scandals, one would think should have toppled the Catholic edifice long ago.

While the papal conclave gripped much of the world's attention last March, including mine, I found myself online at [vatican.va](http://vatican.va), and, as these virtual things go,

I soon landed upon the Code of Canon Law. By the time the cardinals had sent their final smoke signal out the roof of the Sistine Chapel a few days later, I had read all 1,752 canons, along with their innumerable sub-canons.

My motives for reading were murky. I wanted to see what should have happened to the people who committed residential school abuses; the last 441 canons deal with trials, sanctions and the like. I also wanted to see where it said I was not worthy to eat their communion wafers (Canon 844), that women can't be priests (Canon 1024), and why they can't be priests (nothing). I wanted a further glimpse into the bureaucratic bowels of the church to which many of the finest people I know devote themselves.

Despite mentions of love, grace and "a close relationship with Christ," what I found in the Code was an unrelenting concern for rules, discipline, jurisdiction, authority, the aversion of "scandal," and the ordering of power among dozens of church offices, from "apostolic provicars" to men of "cardinalatial dignity" (cardinals), to the "supreme legislator" himself.

Predictably, I also found much about the ordering of sexual life, "pelvic orthodoxy" as critics call it: laws about celibacy, adultery, "the evangelical counsel of chastity," "the order of virgins" and marital consummation, including the stipulation that only Rome can adjudi-

*In an age of individual freedom, equality, informality and change, [the Code of Canon Law] sternly holds to a structure in which mostly old white men unabashedly call the shots.*

cate "the fact of the non-consummation of a marriage," and only the "supreme legislator" himself can get you out of your marriage once his authorities have established said fact (Canon 1698).

It's hard to see the Code as an improvement on "Love the Lord your God . . . and love your neighbour as yourself." And, of course, each of their many references to the aversion of scandal is a reminder of their tragic failure to do just that.

Rules are necessary, and all denominations have them, but it's hard to imagine a reasonable person reading the Catholic Canons without repeatedly thinking something akin to, "You can't possibly be serious!" But if the Catholic Church is anything, it's serious.

In an age of individual freedom, equality, informality and change, it sternly holds to a structure in which mostly old white men unabashedly call the shots. And masses of people, including many sharp and sturdy-willed women, willingly submit to Catholic law. Indeed, in many cases, love and wisdom blossom under this system.

### Sacred monopoly

As the new pope endeared himself to the world, and to me, mostly by acting unpopo-like, the Canons were fresh in my mind, leaving me to wonder how a person as seemingly humble and human as Pope Francis could find his way to the top of the structure laid out in the Canons.

After the pope's honeymoon with the global press subsided and he settled down to writing encyclicals, I came upon a book by a Pulitzer Prize-winning author who has been a

Catholic for nearly 80 years. Published shortly before Pope Benedict's resignation, Garry Wills's book *Why Priests?: A Failed Tradition* examines the biblical and historical bases for the Catholic priesthood.

Despite the title of his book, Wills says he has "nothing against priests," and, in fact, "tried for a time to be one." Then he methodically dismantles their biblical and historical undergirding. While he makes a thorough, scholarly argument, some of his most compelling points are also the simplest. Consider the following two:

- **THERE WERE** no priests in the Christian communities of the New Testament. Only Hebrews mentions an individual priest, and that is Jesus, who is said to have no followers in that role. Of the 16 gifts and ministries mentioned in Paul's writings—prophecy, healing, etc.—priesthood is absent.

- **THE EARLY** church was "radically egalitarian and charismatic, not authoritarian or hierarchical." Jesus chastised the Sadducees and Pharisees for their elaborate rituals and self-important ways. Wills quotes Jesus' words about these religious leaders in Matthew 23: "*They enlarge their tefillins and lengthen their tassels. They like the most important place at meals, and the chairs of honour in the synagogues . . . and to be called by people 'Rabbi.'*" Jesus continues: "*Do not address any man on earth as father, since you have only one Father, and he is in heaven.*"

"What could be more against this teaching," Wills asks, "than popes who adopt the title 'Holy Father?'"

Then Wills goes on to test the contortions by which an early church with no priests turned into a later church in which priests are entirely indispensable.

Catholic priests are said to participate in the priesthood of Christ. That is the basis of their authority. But Jesus was not a priest. He was a Jewish lay person. Except in the Letter to the Hebrews.

Since Jesus was not of the Jewish line of priests, the writer of Hebrews creates a new priestly lineage based on an otherwise obscure minor character. Melchizedek appears for three verses in Genesis, where he is identified as a king and priest who blesses Abraham and receives a tithe from him. He appears again, momentarily, in Psalm 110: "*You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*" That's it.

But the writer of Hebrews takes that line, expands on it and applies it to Jesus. Wills questions not only the writer's use of Melchizedek, but the whole intent of casting Jesus as a priest, since Jesus never called himself a priest, didn't do what priests do and often clashed not only with priests but the whole system of religious overlords.

Even if one is not prepared, like Wills, to question the biblical writings, it would be enough to accept his critique of the later Catholic use of Hebrews as a basis for the ongoing priesthood, especially since Hebrews says that Jesus is the last priest, "whose onetime offering makes all other priesthoods obsolete."

Despite that, Catholicism cannot exist without priests. The church places fundamental significance in the sacraments—baptism, confirmation, penance, ordination, marriage, extreme unction and the eucharist. You can't be Catholic without them. And most of them can only be administered by priests. In a chapter titled "Priestly imperialism," which leads off a section entitled "Monopoly on the sacred," Wills both explains and largely debunks the sacramental system, including the eucharist as we know it, most of which also did not exist in the first-century church.

To reject priesthood is to delegitimize the entire Catholic hierarchy. Wills does not dwell on this obvious point, although he does, with one swift sentence, yank the lush Vatican rug out from beneath the papacy. A pope, who carries the title of Bishop of Rome, derives his authority from the belief that popes are successors of the biblical Peter, whom Catholics consider the first bishop of Rome.

Wills says simply, "[T]here is no historical evidence for Peter being bishop anywhere—least of all at Rome, where the office of bishop did not exist in the first century" after Christ. Then he adds that "the linear 'apostolic succession' is a chain of historical fabrications."

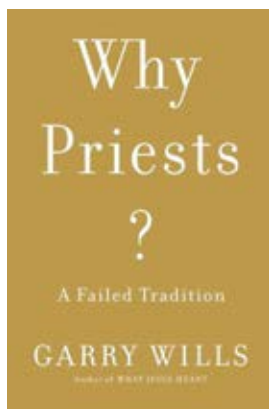
### Any good papist

To be fair, and to more fully make my point, I must also mention what I see as the best of the Catholic Church:

- **THE POPE'S** church has churned out some fabulous writers and exceptionally



Garry Wills



fine people. I mean people who are who they are not in spite of the church but because of it. They are Catholic to the core.

- **THE CATHOLIC** Church can claim a universality and global unity that no one can match. You can go into a Catholic church anywhere in the world and find a service that is familiar, even if you don't understand the language. Every Sunday, millions of Catholics read the same Scripture and go through the same rituals. Compared to the countless Protestant subgroups, factions and splinters, there is one Catholic Church.

- **RULES, STRUCTURE**, clear leadership and a geographic centre provide a strong sense of identity and belonging, two things humans need.

- **CATHOLICS ARE** much better at ritual, beauty and drama than Protestants. The papal conclave was a masterwork of theatre, with the perfect mix of mystique (the old guys sequestered as if between heaven and earth) and disclosure (a glimpse of the cardinals' living quarters), along with their get-up worthy of an Oscar for costume design. On a smaller scale, a typical Sunday service includes actions, smells, tastes and sights that engage the senses God gave us.

Ultimately though, none of this explains the resilience of Catholicism. I still don't get how so many people can stomach it, especially people like Garry Wills.

After an exhaustive argument against the whole Catholic apparatus, Wills settles himself right back into the arms of the church. The book contains no climactic call for priests to burn their vestments, or for ordinary Catholics to serve each other communion or baptize one another.

Instead, he wraps up like this: "I just want to assure my fellow Catholics that, as priests shrink in numbers . . . congregations do not have to feel they have lost all connection to the sacred. . . . [W]e have each other." Fellowship, scriptural instruction and support can happen without priests.

It's a meek ending to an unflinchingly bold book. Just when Wills had piqued my frustrated sentiments toward Catholicism, he explains why he doesn't

leave it: "It will hardly advance the desirable union of all believers if I begin by excluding those closest to me." That's either a cop-out or a word of grace.

"No believing Christians should be

Even more perplexing for me than Wills' ability to take the good with the bad is the fact that many residential school survivors now participate in the churches that ran the schools they attended.

*The pope's church has churned out some fabulous writers and exceptionally fine people. I mean people who are who they are not in spite of the church but because of it. They are Catholic to the core.*

read out of the mystical body of Christ," he writes, "not even papists. . . . All those acting in the name of Jesus are our brothers and sisters."

That makes good sense, but the combination of critique and acquiescence flabbergasts me. His concluding words sound wise, but would it not also be wise to call for radical changes, changes that would help avoid not only the theological flimsiness he exposes but also the human atrocities that have resulted?

People who were raped by priests in the name of Jesus need more than a mild call to unity. Or maybe not.

Religion doesn't make sense. I cannot possibly make sense of how so much bad and good can co-exist in the Catholic Church. Or in the Mennonite church. Or in myself, for that matter. The best I can do is to tell myself that it is okay to be confounded. Perhaps it is in that exact point of perplexity that religion maintains its foothold in humanity, providing transcendence when it is most needed.

"All believers in God," Wills says, "set off on broken and blind adventures into mystery." Seemingly, God honours this, proving every bit as able to tolerate folly and contradiction as any good papist. ❧

## ❧ For discussion

1. What have been your experiences with the Roman Catholic Church? Do Mennonites today still have the same suspicions about Catholic theology that Will Braun says he grew up with? What do you appreciate about Catholic worship? What are your questions about it?
2. Braun wonders how the Catholic Church has survived, given its inconsistencies and failures. Can we say the same thing about all religious institutions? If Protestant churches were as large in scope as the Catholic Church, would the number of scandals be the same? Does the Catholic hierarchical structure make it more susceptible to a misuse of power? How do you explain the ongoing popularity of the Roman Catholic Church?
3. As Garry Wills points out in his book, the early church was egalitarian and had no priests. Why do you think that over hundreds of years priests became so indispensable? What did the Protestant Reformation have to say about the role of the priesthood?
4. Braun points out that "Catholics are much better at ritual, beauty and drama than Protestants." How do these things enhance worship? If Jesus criticized the Pharisees and teachers of the law for their rituals and self-important ways (Matthew 23), what would he say about rituals used in churches today?

—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.*

✉ **Evil misdeeds, behaviour must be condemned for what they are**

RE: "BOXING UP the Old Colony Mennonites," Aug. 19, page 14.

Royden Loewen is correct in reminding us that we need to show respect and report sensitively when describing people with lifestyles that exhibit values different than our own ("Ministry in a very different world," July 8, page 4). Loewen helpfully reminds us of some of the strengths and remarkable community and economic successes Old Colony Mennonites have achieved in Mexico, Bolivia and elsewhere. It is important to be reminded that we ourselves may have a questionable lifestyle when scrutinized by someone with a different set of values.

That, however, should not prevent investigative reporters like Jean Friedman-Rudovsky from reporting

*(Continued on page 10)*

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Building on existing energy

ERNIE ENGBRECHT

With only 15 congregations, Mennonite Church Alberta is a small area church. What I find significant is that only 10 of our churches are of traditional European origin. We need to pay attention to this changing demographic.

Last March at our annual general meeting, we received Calgary Chin Mennonite Church as a member into MC Alberta and listened to a group of men from Edmonton South Sudanese Mennonite Church sing as the membership hummed along. These two powerful and emotional moments are indications of our area church's future. We could not help but be impacted by their energy, humility, commitment and thankfulness.

A number of years ago, I had the privilege of visiting my mother's birthplace



north of the Sea of Azov in southern Ukraine. The fields looked much like a prairie scene at Rosemary or Boissevain. As I quietly sat in that field and looked at the richness of the soil, the rolling hills and green bluffs of trees, I wondered about the turmoil there nearly a century ago. My ancestors fled that land of conflict and violence to live in a place where life would be difficult but where there was always hope and faith. I can remember my mother singing with thankfulness as she worked to build a new life in a strange land.

I see many similarities in these two stories nearly a century apart.

We have a responsibility to help our brothers and sisters in the same way as our ancestors were helped when they came to this country. We have a mission field right here in our front yard. We can build on the energy these newcomers have brought with them. We can assist

them not only with their physical needs, but also support them as they learn more about the Anabaptist faith. Witnessing the commitment of these new congregations can renew a spirit within us.

Other exciting MC Alberta news comes from Camp Valaqua, which has experienced two consecutive years of more than 10 percent growth in camper numbers. Although encouraged by the numbers, the camp leadership has not been content to rest on its success. Eighteen months ago, the area church commissioned a committee to find ways to talk to all the stakeholders of Camp Valaqua in the hope of helping us form a vision for its future.

I believe that it might be helpful for our area church to carry out such an exercise as well. Perhaps we need to imagine what our work would look like if we were to start from scratch and work at filling needs within our churches and in the mission fields right here in our local communities.

This is an exciting time to be God's people and we need to take advantage of all opportunities to build our church and further God's kingdom.

*Ernie Engbrecht has been moderator of Mennonite Church Alberta since 2012; he is a member of Lethbridge Mennonite Church.*

(Continued from page 9)

on horrible acts of crime and misconduct within any community. In “The ghost rapes of Bolivia: The perpetrators were caught, but the crimes continue” ([canadianmennonite.org/articles/ghost-rapes-bolivia](http://canadianmennonite.org/articles/ghost-rapes-bolivia)), she portrayed a horror story with sympathy to the women who were the victims.

This Manitoba Colony community in Bolivia

apparently does not have the leadership resources with the will to end these atrocities. In such a report, it would have been inexplicable for the reporter to highlight the cheese and community economic successes, given the horrors the women in the story have endured for a number of years.

This is a very sad story indeed. It is an extreme example of how many generations of people—who have

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

# Our unchecked blind spot

PHIL WAGLER

The average Canadian child is among the most blessed, nurtured—and entitled—in the world. Imagine if such a child announced it has decided to leave the family because it just isn't getting fed! Now, imagine the parental response. A child who would leave an otherwise nurturing family because it is “just not getting fed” would be scoffed at. It would be seen as immature and flighty.

There is an unchecked blind spot in our disciple-making and it shows up every time someone says of church, “I'm just not getting fed here.” The blind spot is our failure to deconstruct the wider culture's insistence that personal happiness and “having it our way” are how you measure the meaning of everything, including church. As the North American church is responding to secular humanism—the idea that humanity is the centre of all things, with God/god/the gods deemed irrelevant—many Christ-followers are unaware they are recovering secular humanists themselves.

But in the end, secular humanism, with its insistence that human reason and rights alone should govern life, leaves us alone with ourselves, or with small bands of others who think like we do. It results in little authentic and respectful wrestling

over truth, a lot of wrangling over who likes what, and often shouting matches about how who is right and who is wrong, with the loudest protest winning the day.

We seem most interested in forming churches we like, rather than being the church. But the church is the body of Christ in the world, God's missionary. She is God's, the bride of Christ in this time and place; you are part of her and God will use her even if you don't think he can, so get over yourself.

This blind spot is noticeable in every denomination and theological expression whenever we hear grumbling about “the church not meeting my needs.” Christians are infamous for trading churches (about 70 percent of North

aided by their parents, even as prayer is uttered before dinner, for they are learning that wants and likes are the chief decision-maker in life. We begin viewing church like those streets lined with restaurants where we pick and choose what we feel like today. “Restaurant row” tends to produce obese, lonely, narrow souls deceived by the “pursuit of happiness,” who no longer know how to cook. Try as we may, we can't seem to find what we're looking for until we come to the slap-up-side-the-head realization that happiness based upon a life of my own choosing is actually a blatant untruth.

The good news of Jesus confronts this cultural lie and presents an unsettling alternative: “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). These words must always challenge the world I want. I am not the way, my way of seeing things is not the truth and I am really incapable of defining life. This confession ushers in a world redefined by the lordship of Jesus. In the words of Lesslie Newbigin, the formation of our wants and likes is then “under a new and critical light.” This light



*We seem most interested in forming churches we like, rather than being the church.*

American church growth is attributed to either transfers or newborn babies). Or we begin finding it more “meaningful” to do what we like, chase what pleases the kids and slip into a spiritual wasteland, rather than be disappointed by the hard work of Christian community.

Many “churched” children are increasingly becoming disciples of humanism,

alone can reveal our unchecked blind spot and save us from all our endless, self-satisfying choices.

*Phil Wagler (phil\_wagler@yahoo.ca) serves the church in wonderful multicultural Surrey, B.C. Consider joining him on a TourMagination trip to Israel in February 2014.*

practised avoidance and separation from the larger society in which they live—have become so disconnected. The story also demonstrates tragically how the lack of a meaningful education system in the community is very evident.

It is not always easy or attractive to report, but evil misdeeds and behaviours such as rape must be reported and condemned for what they are. It is a matter

of promoting human rights and preventing further abuses. I would expect *Canadian Mennonite* to do just that.

PETER PETERS, WINNIPEG

## NEW ORDER VOICE

# How a bicycle can be a sacrament

AIDEN ENNS

I have what may appear to be an irrational aversion to cars. When you are desperate to find hope for the future, it's easy to turn to something near at hand and obsess about it. I'm not saying I totally hate cars. I happen to co-own an old clunker camper van and find it terribly handy and, well, even fun.

It's just that cars are so not the future. They feel like hulking tanks dropped on a tenuous landscape, anachronistic lugs bequeathed to us from an ignorant century.

One Sunday morning last month, I rode my bike north out of Winnipeg to the edge of Birds Hill Park. It was 30 degrees and humid; I had cycled 25 kilometres, drank two-and-a-half litres of water and was still thirsty. I stopped at the "59er" gas station for a drink.



I sat against the wall in the shade of the building and watched a stream of cars and recreational vehicles re-fuel at the pumps. Drivers stepped out of their climate-controlled capsules, flicked switches, wiped windows, twisted caps. Engines started, cars idled, then rolled away to make way for another in the endless line.

At the risk of sounding like an old curmudgeon and knee-jerkingly judgmental, I have to disclose the dystopic feelings I had at that time: We are on a smooth

road to our collective death. That's chipper, eh? I don't often ride my bike for a weekend getaway; we usually take our van and go to the beach. I implicate myself in this assessment.

But wait, I've found a path to salvation. The way to lessen despair is to heed your moral compass, find a positive yet difficult alternative, and take initial steps. In the grand scheme of things, this small act is insignificant, but as a symbol of hope, it has the power to change the world.

For example, when I commute with my bike alongside a motorcade of traffic I don't save the environment, not even

*Riding my bike has become a sacramental experience for me.*

a blade of grass. But—and this is the irrational part—in spite of appearances, I am irrefutably becoming a better future. I don't exactly know what a better future is or will be, but by my aspirations and my actions I am already a part of some kind of glory which is unfolding.

This is the power of sacrament, when an ordinary thing or action affords access to the sacred. Riding my bike has become a sacramental experience for me. Others cling to different things and activities for similar inspiration. Arthur Paul Boers

describes the liberating potential of physical engagement in his book, *The Way is Made by Walking: A Pilgrimage Along the Camino de Santiago* (IVP, 2007).

I noticed that Pope Francis also has an aversion to cars, or at least pretentious fuel guzzlers. In an address to more than 6,000 seminarians on pilgrimage in Rome, the pope advised them to "avoid fast cars and ride a bike instead," according to the *Catholic Herald*.

Lutheran priest Nadia Bolz-Weber in Denver, Colo., holds an annual service for bicycles. "As a way of acknowledging the inherent goodness of God's gifts of life and health and the humble but elegant bicycle, we decided to conduct a Blessing of the Bicycles for the entire Denver cycling community," she writes in her online journal, "Sarcastic Lutheran: The cranky spirituality of a postmodern gal."

In Bogotá, Colombia, the city closes 120 kilometres of roads to cars every week. On Sundays, 1.8 million people cycle, walk or skate in a festival atmo-

sphere called Ciclovía. Wikipedia has scores of entries on its page for "car-free places." Around the world each September cyclists celebrate car-free day.

My love of the bike is inordinate. It's way more than eco-friendly transportation. It has become a narrow gate through which a better future unfolds.

*Aiden Enns is co-editor of Geez magazine. He is a member of Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, and can be reached at [aiden@geezmagazine.org](mailto:aiden@geezmagazine.org).*



## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Klassen**—Brayden (b. Aug. 2, 2013), to Gordian and Nathalie Klassen, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Klassen**—Calvin Ellwood (b. Aug. 3, 2013), to Kris and Jennifer Klassen, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Loewen**—Simon David (b. June 17, 2013), to Kristoffer Loewen and Susanne Guenther Loewen, Toronto United Mennonite.

**MacDonald**—Elijah James Alan (b. Aug. 10, 2013), to Luc and Elizabeth MacDonald, Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

**Penner**—Sofia Larissa (b. Aug. 9, 2013), to Ivo and Christa Penner, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Schachowsky**—Ruby Grace (b. July 6, 2013), to Mark and Lisa Schachowsky, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., in Toronto.

**Siemens**—twins Ryder John and Reid Allan (b. Aug. 10, 2013), to Cale and Carolyn Siemens, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Tar**—Naia Alev (b. June 29, 2013), to Leah Bock and Ovunc Tar, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Weaver**—Naomi Catherine (b. Aug. 15, 2013), to Trisha and Andrew Weaver, Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Wiens**—Eva Rosalynn (b. Aug. 17, 2013), to Devin and Jimmee Wiens, Herschel Ebenfeld Mennonite, Sask.

### Marriages

**Ballantyne/Wiens**—Jonathan Ballantyne and Rebecca Wiens (Herschel Ebenfeld Mennonite, Sask.), on the Wiens family farm, Herschel, June 29, 2013.

**Bowman/Wiens**—Cody Bowman and Karen Wiens (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.), at North Star Mennonite, Aug. 3, 2013.

**Kroeker/Wiens**—Katelyn Kroeker and Ben Wiens, Leamington United Mennonite, Aug. 17, 2013.

**Kulchar/Zavitz**—Matthew Kulchar and Megan Zavitz (both Niagara United Mennonite), at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Aug. 10, 2013.

**Luzny/Peters**—Brian Luzny and Dinah Peters, at Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg, Aug. 17, 2013.

**Metsa/Teichroeb**—Erik Metsa and Katrina Teichroeb (both of Niagara United Mennonite), at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Aug. 17, 2013.

**Wall/Zacharias**—John Wall and Susana Zacharias, Leamington United Mennonite, Aug. 10, 2013.

### Deaths

**Braun**—John C., 73 (b. Oct. 21, 1939; d. July 28, 2013), Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Burgetz**—Florence, 95 (b. July 20, 1918; d. July 29, 2013), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Ediger**—Hilda (nee Janssen), 88 (b. July 29, 1925; d. Aug. 4, 2013), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Rempel**—Margarete (nee Loewen), 86 (b. April 18, 1927; d. Aug. 18, 2013), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

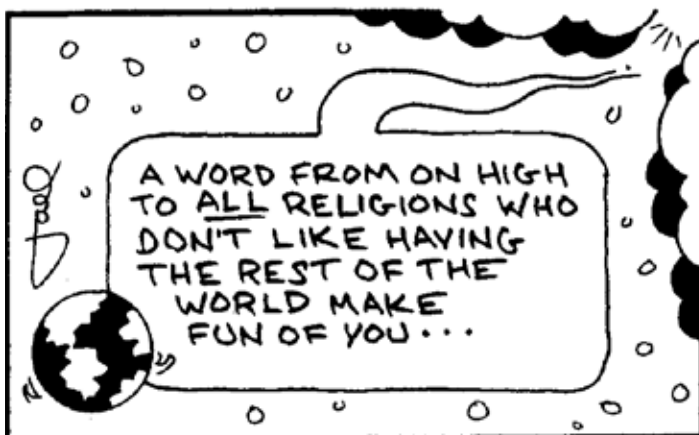
**Schroeder**—Johann (John), 93 (b. Nov. 17, 1919; d. Aug. 18, 2013), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Wall**—Maria, 89 (b. June 23, 1924; d. Aug. 6, 2013), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

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

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

## Pontius' Puddle



## WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

# Miracles of love and care



BY LINDA WIENS

No matter what language you speak, romantic love is one of the greatest gifts to give or receive. When it's new, it's fireworks, warm fuzzies, pure electricity! As you mature, that love encompasses honour, respect, devotion, unity and even mutual caregiving.

Remember those vows which come straight from I Corinthians 13:4: "Love is patient; love is kind"? Often they are followed up with "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health . . ."

Thankfully, two men of faith in my life took those vows and commitments to heart when illness struck down their spouses and traditional care-giving roles were reversed.

• **IN 1955**, when Uncle Cornie and Tante Irma repeated those vows, they had no idea what was before them. When Cornie suffered a near-fatal heart attack, Irma was by his side. Time and prayer allowed him to regain his health.

Nowadays, Cornie tends to Irma, who has Parkinson's disease, a thief that steals your life away, bit by bit. He cared for her at home for many years, but as the disease progressed and she became wheelchair-bound, the time came for her to move into a personal-care home.

Even so, Cornie remains her constant companion and caregiver. He spends most of his days with her, helping her dress and do her hair, assisting her at mealtimes, praying and reading with her, taking her for visits to their former shared home, and tucking her in at night. He brings her to church on Sunday and to special events, and when a one-bedroom apartment became available in her complex, he jumped at the chance to live nearby.

• **MY OWN** story begins with a feeling I've always had: God sent Ron, my husband of 40 years, to me. Who else could have brought together two people who hadn't seen each other in years and who didn't even travel in the

same social circles?

Our love is for life. However, our life together was almost cut short when I suffered a major life-event 21 years ago. That October Sunday morning, my husband and our son David went to church as usual. They left me at home because I had taken ill during the night. While at church, Ron had a "nagging" feeling that something was really wrong with me. (We believe that was God's message.) So he and David left the service to go home, only to find me unconscious, lying on the floor.

*God sent Ron, my husband of 40 years, to me.*

For three months, I was in a coma on life support. During that time, Ron spent some time with me every day, travelling 45 minutes each way, all while maintaining a job. He also kept a journal for me to read upon waking, since he, my man of faith, always believed that God would restore my health. Prayer circles were set up for both of us.

Rehabilitation began immediately upon my "awakening." Again, Ron continued to be by my side every day!

Six months after that fateful Sunday, I was allowed to move home, but only after our house had been adapted for my needs. Two more years of therapy lay ahead of us. But finally, after learning to walk, talk and process all over again, I was able to return to work. We continue to have challenges related to my health, but we manage, giving thanks to God for the gift of life while firmly convinced that miracles of love and care still continue to take place! ☸



Irma and Cornie Neufeld



*The Wiens family includes, from left to right, back row: Linda and Ron and son David; and front row: daughters Danielle and Keira.*

*Linda Wiens is a member of St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, Ont. She is the new communicator for Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and a member of the executive of Mennonite Women Canada.*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# Music festival brings Mennos together

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KARIN FEHDERAU

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATOON

It was the perfect way to spend a summer afternoon on the Prairies. Saskatchewan Mennonites gathered in a park near Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon on Aug. 18 to listen to local musicians and get updates on different area church programs.

Sheltered under the blazing sun by a large, white tent, young people sat around on blankets while adults relaxed on their lawn chairs. Cold drinks—available by donation—helped to offset the heat.

Connecting with old friends was also on the mind of Jerry Buhler, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's area church minister. He described the reason for the "day in the park" as "just what's happening here."

The area church has planned similar events in previous years, but no two are ever the same. "Each year it has a slightly different flavour," said Buhler. One year, there was a connection to Mennonite Central Committee. Another year, the

focus was a tribute to a long-serving member of the provincial prison ministry known as Person 2 Person.

The focus for this day was music and there was a wide range of musical tastes represented. With an obvious affection for her guitar and soulful ballads, Val Wiebe of Langham Mennonite Church sang solos, while Gordon Allaby, pastor of Osler Mennonite, sang with his 14-year-old daughter, Katherine.

Allaby enjoyed it. "It was a good idea. I wish more churches beyond Saskatoon would engage," he said, adding, "There was a good blend of different ages."

As a father, he was pleased with the environment that his daughter sang in. "It felt safe, very supportive," he said. "It was a very positive experience for her."

Laura Buhler, who recently completed a term with the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization, enjoyed the event. "I was impressed that there were that many different kinds of musical acts," she said.



Gordon Allaby, pastor of Osler Mennonite Church, performs with his 14-year-old daughter, Katherine, at a Mennonite Church Saskatchewan gathering in Saskatoon on Aug. 14.



Val Wiebe of Langham Mennonite Church, left, prepares to sing at a Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's 'day in the park' in Saskatoon on Aug. 14. She is accompanied by Carole Epp and Anna Rehan (on flute).



*'It was a good idea. . . .  
There was a good blend  
of different ages.'  
(Gordon Allaby)*

This type of event is attractive for young people, she noted, because it gives them a chance to perform.

Some of the groups that performed on Aug. 18 may not always feel welcome in a traditional morning service, but have ideas they want to express and share with the broader church community.

"Oh, absolutely," said Renate Klassen. "It was good to have people of all ages acknowledge and support them. It stretches us to hear different genres. We don't always have to hear four-part harmony."

In the end, the "day in the park" was about celebrating community. "No-one was coerced," said Klassen. "People came because they wanted to." ❧



*Saskatchewan Mennonites of all ages gather in a park near Mount Royal Mennonite Church on Aug. 18 to listen to local musicians and get updates on different area church programs.*



*To kick off Conrad Grebel University College's 50th-anniversary celebrations on Aug. 23, president Susan Schultz Huxman, centre, and board chair Susan Taves prepare mortar to lay a date stone in a wall of the institution's new \$8.7-million addition. More than \$6.2 million has been raised already for the project that is to be completed late next spring.*

## A golden weekend for Grebel's 50th

BY FRED W. MARTIN

Conrad Grebel University College  
WATERLOO, ONT.

Conrad Grebel University College celebrated an anniversary last month that many in the Mennonite world thought would never happen.

More than 50 years ago, "radical" visionaries—including a group of progressive young ministers, two university professors and a handful of forward-looking

early visionaries were young people—in their 30s and early 40s—who diplomatically rejected the naysayers in Canada and the U.S. who said we should not accept the invitation to join the University of Waterloo as a 'church college,' and be responsible for creating a vibrant residence community and a values-added rigorous

*More than 600 people signed up for the weekend, or parts thereof, coming from as far away as England, California and Winnipeg.*

businessmen—dared to boldly dream of a Mennonite college in Ontario.

Susan Schultz Huxman, the institution's current president, observed during the Aug. 23-25 festivities: "We forget that these

liberal arts education."

More than 600 people signed up for the weekend, or parts thereof, coming from as far away as England, California and Winnipeg.

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PHOTOS BY JENNIFER KONKLE

Aug. 24 activities included a brunch for 1960s-era alumni hosted by Ed Bergey ('67); alumni shared about the impact that Grebel had on their lives, be that in volunteering or the careers of service that were pursued. Other decades gathered in the afternoon sun for reminiscing or playing Ultimate Frisbee.

The weekend ended with a celebration service on Aug. 25 that featured a reunion of Chapel Choir members directed by recently retired director Leonard Enns. An alumnus from each of the five decades reflected on the spirit of the times and the impact of Grebel. Stories of pranks, weekly sheet changes and attempts at composting elicited much laughter. However, the Theatre of the Arts held a quiet hush when these alumni reflected on the impact Grebel had on their growth, friendships, values and faith.

This weekend celebration kicked off 50 events during the college's 50th-anniversary year. ☘



*A Bow Tie Gala was held at Grebel's 50th-anniversary weekend last month to honour founding president J. Winfield Fretz, who usually wore a bow-tie. Four of the remaining living presidents were in attendance. From left to right: past presidents Ralph Lebold, John Toews and Henry Paetkau, and current president Susan Schultz Huxman. The gala was co-hosted by the Mennonite Savings and Credit Union, an institution in which Fretz played a key role at its inception.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSTHERN MENNONITE CHURCH



*Author and professor Marlene Epp launches Bridging Mind and Spirit: Conrad Grebel University College 1963-2013 at Grebel's 50th-anniversary weekend last month. The colourful 92-page retrospective, created with the assistance of archivist Laureen Harder-Gissing and graphic designer Jen Konkle, was well received by alumni and friends.*



**Paula Dyck, left, Amanda Friesen and Anna Rahier have at least two things in common. They are all members of the Rosthern (Sask.) Mennonite Church and they are all centenarians. Dyck was born Feb. 6, 1913, and still lives in her own home. Friesen was born Sept. 2, 1912, and lives on her own. Rahier was born Feb. 3, 1913, and is in the Mennonite Nursing Home in Rosthern.**



# 'Continuing what Jesus began'

*Canadian Lao Mennonite churches gather to study evangelism 'from an Anabaptist perspective'*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

Scents of spicy and savoury food wafted through the building whose interior was covered with Mennonite peace dove symbols, quotes from Menno Simons, and large banners proclaiming "Pray for peace, act for peace."

But the scents and the accents were from southeast Asia, and not those of Germany, Ukraine or Switzerland generally associated with Mennonites. Lao Christian Fellowship Mennonite Church in St. Catharines was the site of another in a series of seminars training Lao Mennonites in Anabaptist perspectives in community, faith and evangelism. While invitations had gone out across Canada, the group taking in these scents and flavours on Aug. 17 consisted mainly of Lao Mennonites from across Ontario plus a few participants from Calgary.

Palmer Becker of Waterloo, Ont., who has taught Anabaptism in many countries around the world, was closer to home this time, teaching a broad understanding of evangelism to both young and older adults. He taught that "your church can offer fellowship in the place of loneliness," focusing on community life as part of Christian evangelism; "forgiveness in place of guilt and shame," recognizing that not all cultures are guilt-focused; "meaning to life in place of emptiness," noting that salvation is not just about some future heaven; and "peace in place of conflict and fear," including both peace with God and with fellow human beings.

Kuaying Teng, pastor of the host church, said that for Lao Mennonites the name "Mennonite" is an attraction. "We don't look like Mennonites to people" he said, giving room for questions and for discussion about who they are as Christians.

He strongly emphasized the wide perspective Becker was teaching, drawing attention to the poster of Menno Simons' words on "true evangelical faith," which every member of his congregation has been given, and which Sunday school-aged children and youth are encouraged to memorize. "We have a similar history to [ethnic] Mennonites, having lost

everything because of persecution and war," he said.

The St. Catharines' congregation, which worships in English more and more, is attracting not only Laotians but others from Asia to both worship and faith in Jesus.

Youth were pulled aside into a separate seminar on "worship art." Sompheth Songseng, a Lao Mennonite Brethren pastor, taught the youth, who often form worship bands and lead in both adult and youth worship, practical and spiritual perspectives on preparing for and leading worship.

Tommy and Bobby Phommaseng, band and youth leaders, respectively, at Lao Christian Fellowship Mennonite Church, together with Jenny and Jody Nokeo, youth members, were excited to learn what worship really is, as well as what it involves: being prepared with songs, the need to practice and technical know-how. ❧



*Sompheth Songseng, a Lao Mennonite Brethren pastor, right, leads the youth in studying worship at the Lao Canadian Mennonite Conference seminar on 'Continuing what Jesus began from an Anabaptist perspective,' on Aug. 17 in St. Catharines, Ont.*



## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

PHOTO BY CHAD NEUSTAETER



*The Cedar Valley Mennonite Church mission team members (dressed in orange T-shirts) from Mission, B.C., play in the streets of Santa María de Jesús, Guatemala, to attract neighbourhood children to the VBS program at nearby Bethel Church, a local congregation.*

## B.C. church takes VBS to Guatemala

*Many children 'stood up to pray to know Jesus more'*

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent

An ongoing discipleship and partnership program with a Guatemalan congregation led a team of 12 from Cedar Valley Mennonite Church in Mission, B.C., to travel to the Central American country for two weeks in July, putting their faith into practice while learning about missions and making new friends.

Chad Neustaeter, Cedar Valley's associate pastor of student ministries, led the trip with his wife Sandy and their four children. The other participants included young adults, youths and two other parents.

Cedar Valley members have made

short-term mission trips to Guatemala 10 times since 2001. The relationship with Bethel Church in Santa María de Jesús, where the group volunteered again this year, began in 2006. While past trips have included various activities such as home-building projects and supporting a dental team, this year's trip focused on a Vacation Bible School program.

With the help of a local Spanish translator, VBS proved to be an overwhelming success. Originally planned for 125 children between ages 4 and 10, it drew in more than 150, including community

children.

"We presented a VBS called 'Creation station: You are God's masterpiece' that our church developed last spring using Mr. Potato Head body parts," says Neustaeter. "At the end of our four-day program, we asked if any students would like to make Jesus their special friend and most of the kids stood up to pray to know Jesus more."

At Cedar Valley's own VBS held earlier this summer, participants had made and decorated bags to send with the Guatemala group, instead of doing take-home craft projects for themselves. The local Guatemalan VBS participants were thrilled with their new bags.

Additionally, the Cedar Valley group visited Kairos House, a ministry by a family that has opened its home to care for families of children with cancer. Here, they sang songs and presented gifts of blankets, New Testaments and the decorated bags.

Visiting the city dump in Guatemala City was an eye-opening experience for the Canadians, as they observed people sifting through the garbage, trying to salvage discarded items to make a living. Next door is Potters House, which ministers to these poorest of the poor by helping adults with microloans, and marketing their hand-made jewelry to help them support themselves and give their children a chance at an education.

Sydney Hinchcliffe, who graduated from high school last spring, found her visit to Potters House to be such a highlight that she hopes to continue supporting it from afar. "I'm going to be an ambassador for Potters House [here]," she says, "speaking to schools and churches." The trip also cemented Hinchcliffe's desire to be a teacher, and she enrolled in Columbia Bible College's Quest program as soon as she returned.

Undoubtedly, the ongoing partnership between the Mission and Santa María de Jesús churches will continue in future summers.

"Our goal is to provide an opportunity for youth to have a significant encounter with God, practise being a witness, learn about missions and another culture in order to expand their worldview," Neustaeter says. "God doesn't disappoint." ❧

# God at work in the World **Snapshots**

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



Ron Janzen, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba, speaks at the Sargent MCC Thrift Shop in Winnipeg on Aug. 29. During the course of six days, Janzen covered more than 600 kilometres by bicycle to visit all 16 MCC thrift shops in Manitoba. The purpose of the trip, dubbed 'Thrift shop re-cycle: Journey for justice,' was to celebrate the thrift shops as well as raise awareness about MCC Manitoba's restorative justice programs. Staff and volunteers in these programs are encouraged to walk alongside clients on their life journeys and live out their faith by working through the values of human dignity, peace and integrity. Janzen says the idea for the trip arose out of his desire to connect his passion for cycling with his work at MCC. "These programs really give people a chance to turn their lives around," he says. Each shop donated an average of one day's sales to the cause. Together with funds donated by local individuals and corporations, the initiative was expected to raise more than \$45,000.

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



In the early hours of Sept. 2, the main building of the well-known St. Jacobs Farmers' Market on the northern edge of Waterloo, Ont., burned to the ground. Valued at around \$2 million and home to around 60 vendors, the building, along with the rest of the market, is owned and operated by the Mercedes Corporation, a privately held company controlled in part by various members of the Milo and Ross Shantz families who belong to a variety of Mennonite churches in the area. Plans began immediately to renew the popular tourist and local shopping destination. A temporary solution for the indoor vendors is being sought while the outside market continued on Sept. 5 as usual.



# Born at the border

*Palestinian refugees describe their journey to freedom*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

Omar Alawasaje's story of being invited by his Canadian sponsors to "go camping," and his immediate and reactive response of "No!" led to general laughter in the group gathered at the "Torn from home: My life as a refugee" exhibit at the Waterloo Regional Museum in Kitchener this summer.

The display closed on Sept. 2, but before it did Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario used the location for a presentation about and by some of the Palestinian refugees resettled in Canada over the past three years. The event at which a number of the refugees told their stories was emceed by Alawasaje with the support from Moses Moini, MCC Ontario's refugee program coordinator.

Torn from their homes in Palestine in 1948, and then from their refugee camp homes in 1967, some of them had moved to Iraq and Kuwait to live and work. But they were never allowed to become citizens in the countries through which they passed.

With the Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq, they became *personae non gratae* in the countries in which they were living. In some cases, family members were killed by Shi'a Muslim militias, while, in others, they were only threatened.

Fleeing to the Iraq/Syria border, they hoped for refuge in urban Syria, but soon found themselves living in camps in the desert along the border. Officially "countryless," they endured the summer's heat; the winter's punishing snow, which collapsed their tents; the flooding rains; a lack of medical support; and poisonous snakes.

The Government of Canada cleared a number of them for an immediate move to Canada. A local task force was set up in the Waterloo Region. Working with MCC, which has a sponsorship agreement with the government, local congregations from many denominations and several local mosques sponsored a number of families.

Khaled Abunasar, another former refugee, told the group, "I was born the day I arrived in Canada." With immediate permanent residency and the potential to become a Canadian citizen after three years, he and many of the others emotionally reported their feelings of finally being treated as

human beings when they arrived in Canada.

In the question-and-answer time that followed, Assam Alawasaje asked, "What can we do to thank our sponsors?" Ray Schlegel of Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, replied, "Keep in contact. Take the initiative." Lester Kehl of Floradale Mennonite answered, "Become a citizen. Help form Canada." Moini responded with, "Become a sponsor yourself."

Issues still exist for some, as highly trained individuals have had trouble finding work in their fields until they pass English proficiency exams and get follow-up training in Canadian schools. ❧



*A dinner of Palestinian food was provided by Mamduh Saedam, left, who opened a restaurant in Hamilton only three years after being sponsored as a refugee to come to Canada. Helping out is Moses Moini, MCC Ontario's refugee program coordinator.*



# Building peace through sharing wealth

By DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

**A**n historic wealth-sharing agreement signed by the peace negotiating panels of the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front on July 8 provides reason for optimism, according to Daniel Pantoja, a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker who leads Peacebuilders Community Inc. in the Philippines with his wife Joji.

The agreement is designed to help bridge the gap between the economic needs and resources of the Bangsamoro territory as

its inhabitants struggle to recover from decades of conflict surrounding longstanding issues of land distribution.

By signing the agreement, Pantoja writes, the two sides “led our country into a new horizon where conflicts borne by historical injustices, unfair allocation of resources, and cross-cultural misunderstanding can be settled through negotiation, and that the conflicting parties can be transformed from being adversaries to being peace and development partners.”

## /// Briefly noted

### MEDA women’s empowerment project in Libya sees first graduates

Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) recently celebrated the graduation of its first training group from the Libya Women Economic Empowerment Project. The 20 entrepreneurial women who completed the month-long business training course are now excited about moving forward with their business ideas. While the demand is great, traditionally business opportunities for women in Libya have been quite limited. MEDA received 300 applications for the 20 spots available for this first training session. Grateful for the opportunity to be part of this program, the women wanted to create a lasting icon of their appreciation. “They planted a tree in the garden of the office premises and call it Hope,” Intissar Rajabany, MEDA’s project manager in Libya, explained. “It symbolizes their hope in improving their life and achieving success as Libyan women entrepreneurs following the fundamental training they received.” Another 180 women are expected to graduate by the end of the two-year project. Staff will provide ongoing mentorship and networking to keep in touch with program graduates; through a business plan competition, the project will provide matching grants to fund some of the top ideas submitted.

—Mennonite Economic Development Associates



*One of the graduates from the project breaks ground in the project office gardens. The tree, called ‘Hope,’ was purchased by the grads to act as a symbol of how they now feel about their futures.*

Murad Ebrahim Al Haj, chair of the Islamic peace panel, acknowledged the involvement of the Pantojas’ ministry and several other civil society organizations, stating, “We are very thankful for the civil society groups . . . who have been very active . . . in the ground during the peace process. You are also very active in monitoring and trying to push the process to move forward.”

Since that agreement was signed, however, Pantoja reports that a bombing in Cagayan de Oro City on July 26 killed eight people and wounded 44, and a car bombing in Cotabato City on Aug. 5 killed another eight people and wounded 30.

“Given the kind of police capabilities and justice system we have, there is general scepticism whether these bombings can really be given closure based on justice,” Pantoja writes. “But, instead of giving up on hope and allowing fear to paralyze us, it is time to be honest about our anger against injustice. We can harness the energies of this righteous indignation into positive, concerted, active, nonviolent movements towards justice and peace. The future of Mindanao is not in the hands of the people behind these bombings. The future of Mindanao belongs to the majority of us who seek justice and peace.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF PEACEBUILDERS COMMUNITY INC.



*Daniel Pantoja, sixth from left, a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker in the Philippines through Peacebuilders Community Inc., lauds the signing of an historic wealth-sharing agreement by the peace negotiating panels of the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front on July 8. The agreement is designed to help bridge the gap between the economic needs and resources of the Bangsamoro territory, as its inhabitants struggle to recover from decades of conflict.*

## ARTBEAT

# War Requiem to cap off peace conference

BY DICK BENNER

Editor / Publisher  
WATERLOO, ONT.

At a time when the world is once again gearing up for war, its horrors will be dramatized and brought home in Waterloo Region through an annual three-day international peace conference ending Oct. 19 with a rousing rendition of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* by a mass choir and symphony.

"The performance is a great testament to the [Second World War] and the peace that has come out of it," Mark Vuorinen, conductor of the Grand Philharmonic Choir, told a small gathering of friends in the living room of Laura Shantz recently. "The music is extraordinary, taking the ancient Latin text and matching it with nine poems written by soldier/poet Wilfred Owen about his experiences of war.

"The music is so extraordinarily vivid that you feel the coldness of the front lines—making it very visceral and not comfortable with war," he said. "It's an eloquent call for peace."

Vuorinen, newly appointed to the music faculty of Conrad Grebel University College in addition to his conducting duties, will lead a total of 250 choristers in this rendition, including the Conrad Grebel and Laurier Singers and a children's choir singing from the balcony. A youth choir and an extra chamber orchestra and organ, along with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, add other layers of music to the performance.

Three well-known soloists will also accompany the choir/orchestra: baritone Russell Braun, tenor Thomas Cooley and soprano Leslie Ann Bradley. All are high-profile performers in operatic roles.

The idea for capping off the peace conference with a grand musical finale was born about a year-and-a-half ago, Vuorinen told the gathered group, when

Edmund Pries, a local realtor/professor, suggested that the *War Requiem*, thought by many to be the greatest choral work of the 20th century, would be the perfect ending to the event as a way to engage the whole community on the issue of war and peace.

The peace conference, jointly hosted by Conrad Grebel University College and Wilfrid Laurier University's Department of Global Studies, includes sessions from across a wide range of disciplines, professions and perspectives on issues such as the innovative use of social and communications technology in the promotion of peace, the use of unconventional or unorthodox peace promotion strategies by long-established actors in the field, and the comparative accomplishments of new-versus-old actors in the field of peace and justice studies.

Keynote speakers include: Nobel peace laureates Jody Williams, 1997, and James Orbinski, 1999; George Roter of Engineers Without Borders; Rhoda Howard-Hassmann, Canada Research Chair in international human rights; Sylvia McAdam, an Idle No More activist; Deborah Ellis, Governor General's Award-winning author; and Howard Zehr of Eastern Mennonite University, who will conduct a pre-conference session on mediation and restorative justice on Oct. 17.

"It will be an occasion for teaching teachers how to teach peace in high school," said Lowell Ewert, director of peace and conflict studies at Grebel.

Tickets for the Oct. 19 concert, to be held at the Centre in the Square in downtown Kitchener at 7:30 p.m., are available by phoning the Grand Philharmonic Choir office at 519-578-6885. For online registration for the peace conference, visit [peacejusticestudies.org/conference](http://peacejusticestudies.org/conference).

Two weeks before the concert, on Oct. 6, the choir will present a screening of *Benjamin Britten: Peace and Conflict*, a British-produced docudrama that explores the pacifism that influenced Britten's life and work, at the Princess Cinema, Waterloo, at 2 and 7 p.m. The screenings will be the film's first in North America and are open to the public. ☘

GRAND PHILHARMONIC CHOIR PHOTO



Mark Vuorinen rehearses with his 250-voice mass choir in preparation for the performance of the *War Requiem*.



# What to do with all those notes?

*Long-time pastor and chaplain self-publishes devotional book*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

**G**erald Schwartzentruber, pastor, church planter and chaplain, was approaching his 80th birthday and he lay awake wondering what to do with all his sermon notes.

In the 27 years (1972-99) that he had been pastoral care coordinator at Nithview Home in New Hamburg, he had preached

more than 900 sermons and more than 1,000 chapel meditations to the gathered seniors in the community.

While the home is Mennonite, through the years Schwartzentruber, now a resident of the Nithview community himself, noticed that many of the seniors he ministered to and knew “were not as concerned about ‘peripherals’; rather, they saw the value of sharing their common faith in Christ together,” he said.

The 200 meditations he chose for *Pilgrims on a Journey: Meditations for Older Adults*, his self-published book, are organized into groups, some with sub-headings, others by subject or texts. His hope is that as people either read the meditations contemplatively in order, or dip in at random, they will be blessed on their journey and that they will also read the Bible verses to which he refers.

The 200th meditation, “Hearing God’s gentle whispers,” based on I Kings 19:1-19, suggests that Elijah’s life could be a model for seniors, with the time of battling the prophets of Baal and Asherah as their younger years and the time in the desert in the silence as their old age.

Schwartzentruber acknowledges that, although technically in “old age,” he finds life in all its aspects, including faith development, exhilarating.

To order a copy, e-mail Schwartzentruber at [gmschtruber@gmail.com](mailto:gmschtruber@gmail.com). ☞

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



*Gerald Schwartzentruber signs a copy of his self-published *Pilgrims on a Journey: Meditations for Older Adults* at the book launch, which coincided with his 80th birthday party, on Aug. 25 at Wilmont Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.*

**Isaac Thiessen and Anna Kuepfer** play the roles of Rolfe and Liesl in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Sound of Music* at the Ontario Mennonite Music Camp’s final concert on Aug. 23 at St. Jerome’s University on the University of Waterloo campus. The music camp celebrated its 30th anniversary just as Conrad Grebel University College celebrated its 50th, precipitating the move from its usual location in Grebel’s Great Hall.



# A soul's journey home

*Mission singer/songwriter Cathy A.J. Hardy's CD release concert to support women's organizations*

BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

Mennonite Central Committee B.C.  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

In the gospel of Luke is found the story of the bent-over woman, a woman whose body was so crippled that she could not stand up straight for 18 years. When Jesus sees her in the temple, he calls to her and tells her that she is free of her ailment and he lays hands on her. She immediately rises up and begins praising God. The temple leaders criticize her for being healed on the Sabbath, but Jesus condemns them, naming her as a daughter of Abraham and

defending her right to be healed on any day.

It is this story that forms the core of a new album by Mission, B.C., singer/songwriter Cathy A.J. Hardy, entitled *I Am She . . . a Soul's Journey Home*.

"The 'I am she' song is the essence of the woman who now knows that deep healing love and has been transformed," Hardy says. "This is my story. It is a very personal album in that all of the songs arise out of

the story of my personal journey, but I trust that they are songs we can all relate to in our stories of transformation."

Hardy will release the CD with a concert on Oct. 19, at 7:30 p.m., at the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium in Abbotsford, that will support three organizations that are close to her heart: Mennonite Central Committee's End Abuse program, the Fraser Valley Women's Resource Society and Mark Centre.

"It has been my experience that many women tend to lose their voice, in many symbolic ways," Hardy says. "There are a lot of women like the bent-over woman in the gospels. It is my desire to help us return to that invitation of being named, being healed, being set free. . . . I would like to support organizations that are helping bent-over women to become women of dignity and beauty, and know their full worth as human beings."

Elsie Goerzen, MCC's End Abuse program coordinator, is excited that Hardy is sharing her music and her journey. She has known Hardy for several years, inviting her to bring her music to the women's support groups offered by the End Abuse program.

"Cathy has come to our group several times to do a drumming circle, or to sing and do some storytelling," Goerzen says. "Women in our groups have experienced deep soul wounding and Cathy's music brings hope for healing of those wounds."

Hardy's own journey with hurt and hardship enables her music to resonate with others also experiencing difficulties. When her last album, *Love Shines*, was just being released, her 24-year marriage was coming to an end, leaving her devastated and heart-broken.

"I had to let go of how I hoped life would turn out and I also had to let go of how I had wanted to share that album with the community at that time," she recalls. "I allowed myself these past two-and-a-half years to process and heal the closing of a long-term marriage. I am so grateful for this journey and all the gifts that have been discovered along the way. I waded through intense grief and the frightening realities of being alone. Through it all, I have received an invitation from God not just to survive, but to live, and to live fully and deeply from the heart." ❧

PHOTO BY DARRELL LECORRE



*Mission, B.C., singer/songwriter Cathy A.J. Hardy will be releasing her latest CD, I Am She . . . a Soul's Journey Home, with a release concert on Oct. 19 in Abbotsford to benefit organizations that support women and those seeking soul care.*

# Fifty Shades of Grace offers counterpoint to best-selling novel

Mostly Mennonite/Anabaptist authors contribute 50 compelling stories

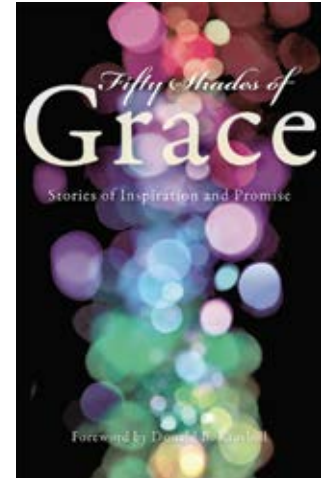
MennoMedia

A smoke-filled hookah bar in Syria. A tense meeting with Israeli soldiers on a “Jesus Walk” in Nazareth. A classroom in the deep south of the U.S. in the 1970s. Standing by a hospital bed. On the streets of Calcutta. In a park full of playing kids.

These are the kinds of settings where grace is found, as readers will discover in a new inspirational book from Herald Press. *Fifty Shades of Grace: Stories of Inspiration and Promise* is filled with short, true-life accounts from Jim Wallis, Lovella Schellenberg, Marty Troyer, Ron Dueck, Joanne Klassen, Owen Burkholder and many other writers, mostly from the Mennonite/Anabaptist tradition.

The stories of this inspirational book tell of grace moments related to occupation, parenting, family relationships, grief and death, ministry and difficult life situations. It can also be discussed in small groups using a brief study guide at the back of the book.

In his foreword, Donald B. Kraybill, an authority on Anabaptist groups and co-author of *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*, writes, “The stories compel, mesmerize, and strike again and again with wonderment for the many colours of God’s lavish love. These contemporary stories of grace all rub against the grain of popular culture. They offer a redemptive counterpoint to the darkness



and oppression lurking in the shadows of bestseller *Fifty Shades of Grey*.”

Dennis Hollinger, president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, and author of *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life*, writes, “Unlike the book with a similar title, *Fifty Shades of Grace* portrays the divine reality that meets the greatest need of humans, and their deepest longings.” ❧

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## The least of these ... even more so

*Paralyzed Burundi immigrant 'has been an incredible blessing to the community,' says pastor*

BY NOLAN KEHLER



*Dieudonne, left, plays checkers with author Nolan Kehler.*

In Dieudonne's small apartment in Altona, Man., there is a colourful menagerie of crocheted animals: elephants, frogs and cats. He sells them for \$15 each because crocheting is one of his few options for a livelihood. He is paralyzed below the waist.

Dieudonne, 40, is an immigrant from Burundi, a small country in central Africa and one of the five poorest nations in the world. He was sponsored to come to Altona by the Build a Village organization, which partners with Mennonite Central Committee in bringing refugees to Canada.

Darlene Enns-Dyck is a member of

Dieudonne grew up on his parents' farm in Burundi, never going to school. After he left home at the age of 18, he was imprisoned by the government for eight years during ethnic violence in the early 1990s. He felt fortunate to be imprisoned.

"If you were in jail and you didn't do anything wrong, you were fine," he says, adding with a chuckle, "I washed clothes for the rich. Rich people can't wash their clothes themselves."

He was released from prison in 2002, but he didn't return to his family.

"I haven't seen my parents since I left home," he says without remorse. "They don't think about me."

*'I washed clothes for the rich. Rich people can't wash their clothes themselves.'*

*(Dieudonne)*



Nolan Kehler

the organization, and also the pastor of Dieudonne's home church, Seeds of Life Community Church, a Mennonite Church Manitoba congregation of about 150. She recalls the process to bring Dieudonne to Canada as being difficult.

"We were asked many times, 'Are you sure? Do you have the community support?'" she says, "but we really needed to step into this."

She points to a Bible verse from Matthew that guides the organization: "What you did for the least of these, you did for me."

"Dieudonne is the least of these, even more so," she says. "We were sure God would come alongside him."

He does not talk about his father. His friend Marlous Fehr explains how Dieudonne's father was murdered when his neighbour poisoned him last year.

Dieudonne was in a refugee camp in Tanzania when he was paralyzed. He climbed a tree to get firewood, but fell out of the tree, landing on his neck. He was rushed to a hospital, which became his home for six years.

"I wanted to do something," he says of learning to crochet. "I decided to find a way to use my hands."

It was a result of his paralysis that he came to Canada.

"The doctor asked me if I want to go



to Canada, and I said, 'Yeah, sure,'" says Dieudonne. "I didn't plan anything."

Fehr explains that the doctors said, "Go to Canada. They can help."

Dieudonne tells about receiving his first winter clothing when he arrived in Canada from the refugee camp in Tanzania. "They gave me a big jacket and a big hat," he recalls. "They tried to put boots on, but my feet didn't work."

He has been in Canada now for five years, and the doctors have told him that they can't cure his paralysis.

"All he wanted was to fix his back," says Fehr. "We can just bring him food and play games. We're not doctors."

"He's had to deal with some dashed hopes," Enns-Dyck acknowledges.

However, Dieudonne hasn't given up on a cure. During our interview, he displays a

new business card that he acquired for a spine specialist in Germany. "I am going to walk soon," he says with a huge grin on his face.

Dieudonne has had a positive impact on those around him since he arrived in Altona.

"It's been fun to watch him experience new things," says Enns-Dyck. "He likes to eat with people and throw parties. He has been an incredible blessing to the community. I'm glad we took the plunge." ❧

*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.

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Eating less, moving more

BY AARON EPP

YOUNG VOICES CO-EDITOR

*"To love our neighbours as we love ourselves means also to love ourselves as we love our neighbours. It means to treat ourselves with as much kindness and understanding as we would the person next door who is in trouble. Little by little then we begin to be able to look at each other's faces, and at our own faces in the mirror, without the intervening shadows that unaided secrets cast."* (Frederick Buechner, *Telling Secrets*)

"**Y**ou're disappearing on us." That's what the woman working at the Big and Tall clothing store said to me as I paid for my purchases at the end of April. As a result of my weight loss, none of my old dress clothes fit, so I needed something new to wear to my brother's wedding.

For the past few years, the store has been one of the only places I can find clothes in my size, and I guess I'm in there frequently enough that they recognize me when I come in.

"Yeah, I've lost 70 pounds," I told the woman, thinking to myself, "Ultimately,

my goal is to not have to shop here."

### **Numbers don't tell the whole story**

In the four months since that visit to the Big and Tall store, I've lost another 30 pounds. The number on my bathroom scale indicates that, since I started my health and fitness journey in November 2011, I've lost a total of 100 pounds.

What the number on my scale won't tell you is that getting more active has allowed me to do things I only dreamed of when I wasn't taking care of myself.

I've competed in two cyclo-cross bicycle  
(Continued on page 28)

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY DYCK



*Me on Nov. 15, 2011, six days before I started working out and paying attention to my diet.*

PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY GERHARD EPP



*Me shortly after reaching the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro on July 13. Two years ago, I could have only imagined going on such a trip.*

*(Continued from page 27)*

aces, appeared on a local television station's morning news program and participated in an exercise demonstration, competed in a five-kilometre obstacle/adventure race, and flew to Tanzania this past July to climb Mount Kilimanjaro with my father.

The number won't tell you those things, but they're all true. The number also won't tell you how I have a lot more

became fascinated with the way my body works. I identified my reasons for getting healthier, including, "I want to honour the body God gave me," and, "I want good health so I can serve and be an encouragement to others." I wrote them on a recipe card and carried it around in my wallet. I wrote out a plan for how I was going to achieve my fitness goals and I did my best to stick to it.

To get inspired, stay motivated and to

*Sometimes I made the same mistake two or three or 19 times before I finally learned from it and did something different.*

energy and don't crash at work in the afternoon like I used to. The number won't tell you how, at least in my estimation, I'm a better son, brother and friend now.

So how did I do it? How did I go from a sedentary couch potato to someone who's 100 pounds lighter, enjoys working out and participates in athletic competitions? People ask me that, and I tell them, "I ate less and I moved more." And then I feel like maybe they think I'm being glib, but really, that's kind of the answer: I ate less and I moved more.

A longer answer to the question, "How did you do it?" goes something like this: I started thinking about joining a gym; four years later, I joined a gym.

I went to the gym three or four times a week. I went to the gym when I felt like it. I went to the gym when I didn't feel like it. I did squats, mountain climbers, push-ups, ground zero jumps and burpees (a combination of squat, push-up and vertical jump)—a lot of burpees.

A few months after that, I slowly started changing my diet. I focused on consuming three meals and two snacks consisting of protein, produce and water every day. I gave up drinking alcohol for long periods of time and stopped eating sugary desserts except on special occasions, like birthday parties or holiday celebrations.

I started working out at home. I went running with a friend and I went boxing with another friend.

I fell in love with movement and

learn, I listened to music, read books and articles, listened to podcasts, watched TV shows and movies, and followed pages on Facebook and Instagram that were health-related, be it physical health, mental health, spiritual health or emotional health.

When I lost a significant amount of weight and found I was still unhappy, I started seeing a counsellor. I prayed. I laughed. I cried. I felt sorry for myself. I snapped out of it.

I made mistakes. Sometimes I made the same mistake two or three or 19 times before I finally learned from it and did something different.

I journalled. I had honest conversations with family and friends. I started thinking long and hard about the kind of man I want to be. I got scared. I pretended to be brave, and sometimes I actually was brave. I thought about what I think I deserve in life, and how I want to treat myself and the people around me.

I prioritized myself. I worked to improve my work/life balance. I gave up some volunteer commitments so I could focus on my health. I got more sleep.

I went on Facebook less. I tried to stop comparing myself to other people. I eliminated the word "should" from my vocabulary in an effort to place fewer demands on myself. I became okay with being uncomfortable. I explored anything I was feeling that was unpleasant, and instead of numbing those feelings with food, I sat with them so I could find out what they had to teach me.



*Me on July 13 at Uhuru Peak, the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro and the highest point in Africa.*

I got curious about my fears and the things that were holding me back. I tried new things. I questioned almost every habit in my life, both good and bad. I learned to forgive myself. I learned about procrastination, perfectionism and shame. I learned how to assert myself, as well as how to be open and honest about my thoughts and feelings. I read, thought and had conversations with people about building confidence and esteem.

I took responsibility. I asked for help.

I trained myself to think in new and different ways, in an attempt to change the narrative in my head. I let people know about my goals. I celebrated my successes with family and friends.

I surprised myself. I chose to be happy.

Sometimes I was spending so much time thinking about myself that it felt self-indulgent, and sometimes it felt like I was becoming too serious about everything in life. Sometimes I forgot why I was doing it, and sometimes I would have an identity crises, unsure of who I was becoming.

Sometimes I thought that maybe the November 2011 version of Aaron (*see photo of me on page 27*) was all I was ever meant to be, and I was foolish to think I could be, or deserved to be, anything else.

Sometimes the “Who do you think you are?” phantom—that shaming voice inside my head that creeps in, withers the accomplishments and progress I’m so proud of, and questions my worth as a human being—almost won out.

But that’s not a voice I was meant to give in to.

Sometimes changing felt easy, occasionally it felt natural, and every so often it felt like the changes happened overnight.

But most of the time, it was extremely difficult. Little about it felt natural at all, and my body and mind screamed for me to stop pushing myself in new ways.

It hasn’t been easy, but it’s been worth it.

Becoming physically fitter has had benefits that extend far beyond the digits on my bathroom scale. The number on my scale won’t tell you how powerful and confident I feel today, and how, for the first time in a long time, I’m proud of myself and

actually feel good about being me.

The number on my scale won’t tell you that, but it’s true.

### ***No hocus pocus involved***

Looking back to that brief conversation with the sales clerk at the Big and Tall store in April, it’s interesting to me that she used the word “disappearing,” because sometimes I don’t like to call it “losing weight.” Sometimes I like to pretend I’m a magician doing the world’s slowest disappearing act. It feels more intriguing that way.

A few pounds here, a few pounds there. I haven’t disappeared completely, but almost half of me has.

Really, though, there’s nothing magical about what I’ve done. There was no sleight of hand or hocus pocus involved.

For years, I looked for some magic trick that would lead to weight loss, as if I could get your attention and ask you, “Are you watching closely?” then maybe say a magic word or two and suddenly lose 100 pounds in mere seconds, right before your eyes.

But weight loss, or achieving any goal, can only happen when you make the decision to change.

Most people reading this don’t need to lose 100 pounds, but my guess is that there is some area in your life you would like to improve. Maybe you’d like to eat less, or compete in some athletic event, just for the thrill of participating or in hopes of placing. Or maybe you want to improve your relationship with a family member or a friend, or you want to start treating yourself better in some way.

If there’s anything I’ve learned about change in the 20 months since I started this process, it’s this:

- **CHANGE CAN** only happen when you formulate a plan, work hard and allow yourself to be uncomfortable.
- **CHANGE CAN** only happen when you ask for help, are disciplined and develop the ability to learn from, and forgive yourself for, the mistakes you make along the way, as well as the mistakes you made in the past before you decided to change.
- **CHANGE WON’T** always be easy, but it will almost always be worth it. ❧

PHOTO BY CRAIG TERLSON



*Me today.*



## Calendar

### British Columbia

- 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](http://development.events@columbiabc.edu).

[columbiabc.edu](http://columbiabc.edu).

**Nov. 2:** Mennonite Church B.C. special delegate session, at Langley Mennonite Fellowship.

### Saskatchewan

- Oct. 18-19:** Saskatchewan Women in Mission annual retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre. Theme: "I heard her voice: Courageous women of the Bible."
- Oct. 19:** Mennonite Disaster Service Saskatchewan fundraising dinner and information evening, at Cornerstone Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, at 6 p.m.
- Oct. 26:** MC Saskatchewan Equipping Day, at Rosthern Mennonite Church.

### Manitoba

- Sept. 28:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate fundraising cyclathon at Bird's Hill Provincial Park, north of Winnipeg.
- Sept. 28:** CMU fall festival. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/fallfest](http://cmu.ca/fallfest).
- Oct. 9:** CMU Take and Read Book Conversation with CMU faculty Paul Doerksen. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/takeandread](http://cmu.ca/takeandread).
- Oct. 18-20:** Peace-It-Together (PIT) at CMU, featuring Shane Claiborne on the theme "Pursue peace, seek justice." For more information, visit [cmu.ca/pit](http://cmu.ca/pit).
- Oct. 18-20:** Scrapbookers retreat at Camp Moose Lake. For more information, e-mail [campsm@mennochurch.mb.ca](mailto:campsm@mennochurch.mb.ca).
- Oct. 22-23:** CMU presents the JJ Thiessen Lectures with Travis Kroeker. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/publiclectures.html#jit](http://cmu.ca/publiclectures.html#jit).
- Oct. 24:** IDS Esau Public Lecture Series, with Shirley Thompson, at Menno Simons College, Winnipeg. For more information, visit [mscollege.ca/esau](http://mscollege.ca/esau).
- Oct. 26:** CMU hosts Bachtobefest. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/programs/music.html](http://cmu.ca/programs/music.html).
- Oct. 30:** CMU Face 2 Face | On Campus. Topic: "When cheap is costly: Sweatshops and the clothes I buy." For more information, visit [cmu.ca/face2face](http://cmu.ca/face2face).
- Nov. 1:** MCI soup and pie fundraiser and fall concert, Gretna. For more information, visit [mciblues.net](http://mciblues.net).
- Nov. 2:** New Songs for Worship workshop, in the CMU Chapel, Winnipeg, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., led by CMU prof Christine Longhurst. For more information, or to register, call 204-487-3300 or e-mail [clonghurst@cmu.ca](mailto:clonghurst@cmu.ca).
- Nov. 8:** CMU hosts Going Barefoot IV Communications Conference. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/events.html](http://cmu.ca/events.html).
- Nov. 15:** CMU dessert fundraising evening, in Steinbach. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/events.html](http://cmu.ca/events.html).
- Nov. 17:** Mennonite Community Orchestra concert at CMU. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/programs/music.html](http://cmu.ca/programs/music.html).
- Nov. 19:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's Evening of the Arts, at the school, at 7 p.m.
- Nov. 21:** IDS Esau Public Lecture Series,

- with Patricia Allen, at Menno Simons College. For more information, visit [mscollege.ca/esau](http://mscollege.ca/esau).
- Nov. 22,23:** Canadian Foodgrains Bank presents "Singin' in the Grain," a musical grow project fundraising concert: (22) Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m.; (23) Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler. With the MCI Chamber Choir and the CMU Women's Chamber Choir.
- Nov. 28:** CMU Face 2 Face | On Campus. Topic: "On being good neighbours: Urban reserves in Winnipeg." For more information, visit [cmu.ca/face2face](http://cmu.ca/face2face).
- Nov. 25:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate annual general meeting, at the school, at 7 p.m.
- Nov. 28-30:** Cottonwood Community Drama presents Parfumerie, a dramatic comedy by Miklos Laszlo, in MCI's Buhler Hall, Gretna, at 7:30 p.m. each evening. For more information or tickets, call MCI at 204-327-5891.
- Nov. 30:** Christmas@CMU, at 2 and 7 p.m. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/Christmas.html](http://cmu.ca/Christmas.html).
- Dec. 5-7:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate presents its senior-high drama.


### Ontario

- 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. 1:** Deadline for grant proposals to the J. Winfield Fretz Publication Fund in Mennonite Studies. For more information, visit [mhso.org/events](http://mhso.org/events) and follow the "Fretz Award" link.
- Oct. 3:** MC Eastern Canada pastors spiritual retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp.
- Oct. 5:** "Doing worship differently": an

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MC Eastern Canada workshop with John Bell at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

**Oct. 6:** Pax Christi Chorale presents the "Great Canadian Hymn Competition II" winning entries at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto, at 3 p.m. For tickets, call 416-491-8542 or e-mail [boxoffice@paxchristichorale.org](mailto:boxoffice@paxchristichorale.org).

**Oct. 11:** New Hamburg area churches host Theatre of the Beat's *Forgiven/Forgotten* play at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, at 8 p.m. For more information, contact Hillcrest Mennonite Church at 519-662-1577 or [hillcrest@golden.net](mailto:hillcrest@golden.net).

**Oct. 16:** "The multi-staff team: 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. 19:** Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario meets at Rouge Valley Mennonite Church, Markham, with George Reesor and Lorne Smith presenting "The role of the shoebox historian," at 1 p.m., followed by a visit to the old Reesor church and cemetery. A bus will leave Waterloo Region at 10 a.m. For information, contact Sam Steiner at 519-884-1040.

**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. 25-27:** Marriage Encounter weekend at Jericho House, Port Colborne. For more information, visit [marriageencounterrec.com](http://marriageencounterrec.com) or call Marjorie Roth at 519-669-8667.

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

**Oct. 30:** MennoHomes' benefit concert at Calvary United Church, St. Jacobs, at 7:30 p.m., featuring Jim and Jean Strathdee, internationally honoured hymn and song writers, worship leaders and concert artists.

**Oct. 26:** Menno Singers presents "Explorations: Concert No. 1—West," with Willem Moolenbeek on saxophone, at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, at 7:30 p.m.

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

**Nov. 4:** "Keep your fork: The best is yet to come," a dinner celebrating the 70th anniversary of Fairview Mennonite Home and the 50th anniversary of Parkwood Mennonite Home, at Bingeman Park, Kitchener, at 6:30 p.m. Keynote speaker: Michael "Pinball" Clemons. Live and silent auctions. For tickets, call 519-653-5719 x367. Proceeds for the renovation of the Fairview kitchen.

**Nov. 6,13:** MC Eastern Canada's "Tackling tough texts: Violence and vengeance": a two-session preaching seminar with bag lunch forum at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

**Nov. 9:** MCC Ontario fall conference, "Sharing God's love and compassion," with guest Sarah Adams, MCC representative for Syria and Lebanon.

**Nov. 16:** Handicraft sale at Fairview Mennonite Home, Cambridge, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Featuring Santa's Sweet Shop, fresh baking, tea room, crafts, preserves and used books. For more information, visit [www.fairviewmh.com](http://www.fairviewmh.com) or call 519-653-5719.

**Nov. 30, Dec. 1:** Pax Christi Chorale presents "A Frosty Christmas Eve," featuring Finzi's 'In Terra Pax' and Willan's 'Mystery of Bethlehem,' at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto; (30) 7:30 p.m.; (1) 3 p.m.). For tickets, call 416-491-8542 or e-mail [boxoffice@paxchristichorale.org](mailto:boxoffice@paxchristichorale.org).

**Dec. 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.

**Dec. 8:** Menno Singers presents "Explorations: Concert No. 2—North," with the Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir and the Menno Youth Singers, at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, at 3 p.m.

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

## Classifieds

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#### Canadian Word Guild AWARDS

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For special awards sale see:

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### Event Announcement

75th anniversary of Springstein Mennonite Church (Manitoba)  
October 13, 2013

Please join us for a 10:30 worship service followed by a fellowship meal.

204-735-2758 for more information

### Employment Opportunities

The **MCC Furniture Thrift Store** in Winnipeg is seeking additional personnel. Dedicated volunteers are needed for interesting and rewarding positions including:

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Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, is inviting applications for a FULL TIME LEAD PASTOR to commence in summer 2014.

We are seeking a person with a strong Anabaptist theology as well as ability to engage the congregation through worship and preaching. This person will have strong administrative skills and the ability to work with and lead a multi-member pastoral team. Our desire is that the successful candidate, along with the pastoral team, enable and nurture the gifts of the congregation in order to enhance the overall mission of the church. Pastoral experience, along with a Masters of Divinity or equivalent is preferred.

Please send resumes to [hhpeters@shaw.ca](mailto:hhpeters@shaw.ca) or contact Hugo or Jake Peters at 204-256-9545 or 204-889-5094. For additional information about Bethel Mennonite church go to: <http://bethelmennonite.ca>.

### Advertising Information

Contact : D. Michael Hostetler  
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# A new tree from **old roots**

EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY PHOTO BY JON STYER



*Eastern Mennonite University supervisor of grounds, Will Hairston, left; Eldon Kurtz, physical plant director; and James Hershberger, a Mennonite history buff, stand next to a sapling on campus nurtured from an acorn collected from beneath a 200-year-old French 'peace oak.' The parent tree stands in Salm, France, where a Mennonite bishop planted it to commemorate the exemption of Mennonites from military service during the French Revolution.*