

CANADIAN MENNUNITE

June 9, 2014

Volume 18 Number 12

A bridge to
community
pg. 23

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'community'
stories inside

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EDITORIAL

Community at its best

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Once in a great while along comes a classic literary work that gets our attention like no other, not necessarily intended or viewed at the time of its publication, but touching our minds and spirits as a rallying point in our continuing Anabaptist story.

Coming to mind for recent generations are *The Politics of Jesus*, by John Howard Yoder; *Anabaptist History and Theology*, by C. Arnold Snyder, and its companion piece, *Anabaptism in Outline*, edited by Walter Klaassen; and *The Upside Down Kingdom*, by Donald B. Kraybill, to name a few. These enduring gems are to be regarded as the “keepers” of the Anabaptist story as they instruct and identify us in imaginative and enduring ways.

While it may be too early to tell, Paul Born's just-published *Deepening Community* may soon be seen as joining these works in its compelling probing of what we consider both one of our theological and practical touchstones, or “talismans,” as used as a literary device by writers. What gives strength and authenticity to Born's words is that not only is he rooted in the Mennonite faith, but as a community organizer he has literally put his words into action around the globe.

Our understanding and practice of community, while not exclusive to our communion, is deeply rooted and part of our spiritual DNA. As part of our parlance, with its many assumptions, it hardly needs to be spoken; it often finds

its way into our vocabulary as non-verbal communication. Born takes us beyond these surface perceptions to a world that is unfamiliar with these dynamics, honed over time, in our tightly knit, culturally safe enclaves.



“I believe we can deepen our experience of community as the alternative to falling into, or even embracing, dysfunctional forms of community: shallow community, based on selfish or even lazy or bewildered individualism; and fear-based community, in which people derive their sense of belonging from anxiety or hatred,” he writes.

Born reckons with what he calls the Mennonite fear-based community coming out of the refugee experience of his forbears in the last century, but observes a kind of redemption that gave birth to Mennonite Central Committee in 1920. Instead of staying stuck in our sadness from the harshness we experienced, “our conviction came not from our biblical understanding of service, but also from our own need to make sense of the atrocities that had been committed against us.”

He calls this a form of collective healing: “Fear can pull us apart or it can bind us together. It can cause hatred and genocide or reflection and altruism. Fear is a huge motivator for community. It can bring people together to destroy each other or to make the world a better place.”

In defining community at its core, Born

draws on the African wisdom of their widely used term, *ubuntu*, which means “I am human because I belong.” Nelson Mandela explained it this way: “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in yours.” Born rephrases this as, “We gain our identity and sense of purpose in the context of our community.”

Sharing stories is another important component of community, writes Born, hearing from persons of various ages and backgrounds. It is a way of nurturing and sustaining our lives. The book contains many individual stories, not the least of which is a story of 10,000 pies being unloaded by young people from a large tractor-trailer at the local MCC relief sale, an event bringing tears to his eyes when seeing those 50 persons joyfully working together.

The event symbolized for him the “celebration of community that nurtures and cares.”

While he doesn't articulate it in so many words, “deepening community” is good for our health—both physical and spiritual. Forming communities at a deep and sustaining level is an indicator of that health.

But Born wants us to give this gift of community to a troubled and violent world—an antidote to so much madness in so many locations—something he calls developing social capital. To accomplish this he is engaged in large-scale community initiatives globally to bring together the poor, existing community organizations, government at all levels, and private and public businesses.

It is time we export “community,” rather than weapons and failed political strategies. We who know it best and have experienced it, can now give it as a gift to our struggling planet. Born is showing us the way.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Josephine and Garcie Cogar of Webster Springs, W.V., test out their new walking bridge that connects their home to the community. It was built by Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers as part of the organization's efforts after Hurricane Sandy devastated the eastern seaboard of the U.S. in 2012. MDS and community volunteers can be seen in the background. See cover story on page 23.

PHOTO: PAUL HUNT, MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE

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FEATURE

Deepening community

The joy of togetherness

BY PAUL BORN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

“I really do not want more community than we already have at this church,” shared a congregant during a Sunday morning adult Sunday school discussion. “What I like about this church is that no one judges you for not being more involved or attending regularly. If we had more community, people would expect too much from me.”

I remember being dumbstruck when I heard these words, especially in this church context, having never considered that a Mennonite congregation—or any of its members—would not embrace community as one of its central organizing principles.

I need to admit, though, my afterthought was, maybe he is right. If community means I am expected to be present every Sunday, give money, sit on at least one committee, join a smaller fellowship group, contribute to monthly potlucks, and provide meals and support to congregational members who are sick or in need, who has the time or energy for all that?

Maybe this is the same reason so many people do not know their neighbours. Do we really want to know when they are sick? Do we want to help them seed a new lawn or dig up one to plant a garden? Do we want to trust them enough to lend them a car or even our favourite kitchen tool?

Is it worth the investment?

Some days I think it would be so much easier to be anonymous in the crowd, to come and go as I like, to care only for those I choose and when I choose. I love this feeling of being free, anonymous, of living life on my terms. Besides, my days are so full, I am constantly with people and exhausted most days when I get home. I deserve that glass of wine by myself, in the backyard with that “keep your dog inside” and “only cut your lawn from 11-12 Saturday morning” kind-of-quiet all around.

Alone

I often feel alone and I do not like it. I find this feeling especially troublesome when I am in the midst of a crowd. You know that feeling you get when you go to a restaurant alone, or you are at

MCC PHOTO BY NINA LINTON



Perhaps the best reason to pursue more community in our lives is that it has proven to make us happier.

MAISON DE L'AMITIE PHOTO



During a recent interview, a young man just out of high school shared, 'When I am in community, I do not feel alone.'

a reception and there is an awkward moment when everyone is talking to someone other than you? You stand there alone, feeling left out, isolated, self-conscious . . . feeling like you want to hide or just walk away.

I am not talking about the introverted side of me that loves time alone to read, to re-energize, and to sit in the quiet of my own thoughts. I am talking about this deep-pitted feeling that it is all up to me. In the midst of the crowd—people all around, even people that love me—I get this anxious feeling and hear this recurring voice that reminds me to “take care of yourself because no one else will.”

I recently had a conversation with a friend who reminded me that we die alone. Therefore, as we age, this pervasive sense of alone is an evolutionary preparation for death. That may be the most depressing thought anyone has ever shared with me.

What I find most curious is that this alone feeling I get is not related to the loneliness I feel at various times. Loneliness might happen when I am missing someone or wishing I was with others. I actually like the feeling of loneliness if for no other reason than that it indicates that I still love and want to be around those others who are dear to me. By viewing loneliness through this lens, it means I am very much alive. It is a part of living in community.

Community

During a recent interview, a young man just out of high school shared, “When I am in community, I do not feel alone.” He was clearly an introvert, shy and self-conscious. But for him, this feeling of belonging was the antidote to feeling alone.

Community has many benefits and feeling a sense of belonging is most likely the most important. To feel a sense of belonging means that we feel we are in the right place, that we feel welcomed and embraced in a place or with a group. To belong is to be cared for and to reciprocate that caring, to know that “I am home.” It is a willingness to extend our identity to a group of people or to an experience.

Having others in your life whom you trust can help you make sense of who you are, and they can help shape your identity and recognize the gifts you have to offer. The African term *ubuntu*, often used by Nelson Mandela, means “I am human because I belong. My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in yours.”

Community can better your economic prospects. Those in your community—family, friends, fellow church members and neighbours—can help you find a job, or lend you money for a business or to buy a house. They can also teach you to garden or help you learn a new skill. They can support you when you are unemployed and help you choose an educational direction. They can bind together to create a credit union, a school

or community foundation, which all enhance your economic prospects.

Community makes us healthier. Heart surgeon Dean Ornish wrote a book entitled *Love and Survival*. In it, he shares his observations of patients with many supportive relationships and how they were more than twice as likely to recover well and live longer when compared to those who had fewer or no close relationships. Therefore, the love, emotional support and positive healing energy others bring to us during times of illness contribute to our healing just as much as medical science and procedures.

Perhaps the best reason to pursue more community in our lives is that it has proven to make us happier. A whole body of thinking is now catching on, known as the “economics of happiness.” At its core is the argument that our gross domestic product is not a very good measure of human progress; instead, we should be measuring those things that enhance our collective quality of life.

One of the leading scholars advancing this idea is John Helliwell, a world-renowned professor at the University of British Columbia who concludes his talks by leading the audience in the song, “The More We Get Together, the Happier We’ll Be.”

A missed opportunity

Our Mennonite churches are struggling to maintain membership growth. Many are losing their young people to other

denominations or they are stepping away from church altogether. Most of our Mennonite institutions have opened up to “non-Mennonite” membership, not so much to enhance their mission, but to survive.

Most blame this decline in church attendance to shifting priorities in the larger society and to people moving away from a faith identity.

What has contributed to my own Mennonite identity has been both a belief system that forms my faith and the historical Mennonite community I belong to. This identity certainly includes borscht and shoofly pie, but also peace and service. My Mennonite identity and the people who have shaped it make up an important core of our sense of community for me and many others in our congregations.

Have we taken the importance of our identity as a community for granted? Have we downplayed the community aspect of our faith in order to emphasize the religious or spiritual dimension? I believe we have, and that this certainly must be considered when we look to determine the reason for struggling churches.

The imbalance between the community life of a congregation and the spiritual or faith life of a congregation may be contributing to a loss of commitment and membership. Young people, adults in transition or anyone struggling in faith and questioning their faith need their community identity and a deep sense of belonging.

I know there are those who now will immediately say that the two are inseparable for them. Their spiritual and church lives are one and the same. To this I would say, try just for a moment to separate them and to recognize the ceremonies we use to strengthen our faith and those which strengthen our community life. Yes, they are connected, but it might be helpful to view them as separate in order to consider how we might strengthen each.

Our spiritual life is enhanced through studying the Bible, prayer, sermons, communion, singing and generally worshipping together. These also support a communal life, as singing and praying

together bind us in a common experience, although their primary purpose is to strengthen our spiritual life.

Our communal life is enhanced by small group gatherings in our homes or through potlucks where we sit together and visit; through gathering to celebrate a wedding or mourn together at a member’s funeral; through bringing meals to the sick or visiting each other in the hospital; through organizing peace walks, credit unions, foundations, schools and service projects; or joining together at the Mennonite relief sale. And these actions all build faith as we act on our beliefs, but their primary purpose is to strengthen the well-being of the community and community life.

Deepening community

At my home congregation, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., we are taking four Sunday adult education hours to explore the role of community in our congregational life. The goal of this exploration is, first of all, to celebrate our communal life by sharing our stories, and, second, to consider the importance of and restore our commitment to a communal life together.

We are exploring community by considering these four concepts:

• **SHARE OUR STORY:** The journey towards community begins as we share our stories, be they stories of fears or of joy. Sharing helps us to open up, to become vulnerable and to hear other people’s stories. Thus do we begin to work together to distinguish truth from untruth and rational fear from irrational fear, to determine what we might do together. When we really hear one another, the bond of community is forged between us. We smile at each other; we feel warmth and joy as if we are home. In these times, we must make it a priority to take time for community. We need one another now, and we will need one another even more as times become more difficult.

• **ENJOY ONE ANOTHER:** As we continue to share our stories, and do so with the same players over time, reciprocity and trust grow between us. This is an

investment in deepening community, and the dividends this investment pays will be crucial to us in times of need. When we enjoy one another in a community we have invested in, we become a collective witness to the events around us. We can celebrate our achievements and those of our children together. How sweet are the victories and even failures that are experienced in community!

• **TAKE CARE OF ONE ANOTHER:** Reciprocity and trust have a wonderful effect when reaching out to help one another becomes as natural as breathing. We take care of one another not only because it is the right thing to do, and not only because people will help us if we help them, but primarily because the bond of love that has grown between us moves us to do so. Mutual acts of caring that happen often forge a sense of belonging. When we feel we belong, we feel safe and fulfilled; and when we feel safe and fulfilled, we can dare to develop hope and common purpose. Together, we have the strength to overcome almost any challenge that comes our way.

• **BUILD A BETTER WORLD TOGETHER:** The first three acts of community give us energy for the fourth act of deepening community: building a better world together. In fact, we become a force for change that is unstoppable. The work of restoring our communities feels light and possible. We no longer feel alone in our fear or hopeless in our dreams; rather, we have the courage to see our dreams become real.

Each Sunday, we share a Bible verse and introduce the topic for exploration; then two members of the congregation share their experience of community. Next, we take time to share our own experiences in small groups.

During the four Sundays, we are able to answer these questions: How do we come to know each other’s stories? When do we have fun together and why is this important for our congregational life? When have we felt cared for by this congregation, and when have we had the opportunity to give or express our caring

to others in our community? What do we do together to make the world a better place and how has working together this way deepened our commitment to our congregational life?

Investing in community

Like any investment, our faith community takes time and effort. We spend years investing for our retirement, setting aside dollars in order to live a good life in our old age. Our financial advisors tell us to start this process early, when we are young, in order to have enough when we're old, although they're always quick to add that it's never too late to start.

Investing in relationships to deepen community reaps a similar benefit. A strong family, a faith community or club, neighbours we can rely on, and friends who make the hours pass quickly: these are equally worthy investments. The skills we learn by seeking and living in community, and the network of relationships we build, will provide us with the joy and security we need, especially should we experience times of loneliness, financial insecurity or failing health.

Our congregations can be places of community and, in turn, strengthen people's lives. Our faith will not always be strong, but the community of believers will hold us up at these times. They, of course, can only do so if they—we—are strong. ❧

Paul Born is a community activist and best-selling author, who has just released a new book, Deepening Community: Finding Joy



Together in Chaotic Times. He is also president of Tamarack—An Institute for Community Engagement; a faculty member of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute; and a senior global fellow of Ashoka, the world's largest network of social innovators. Learn more at www.deepeningcommunity.org.

PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/SIMPLYCREATIVEPHOTOGRAPHY



What has contributed to my own Mennonite identity has been both a belief system that forms my faith and the historical Mennonite community I belong to.

/// For discussion

1. What are some examples of things you do to support others in your family, congregation, team or club? In what situations have you received support from others? In what groups do you feel a strong sense of belonging? Have Mennonite congregations tended to take the importance of community for granted?
2. Why do some people feel ambivalent about community? According to Paul Born, what are the positive aspects of belonging to a community? Are there also negatives? What are the challenges of trying to strengthen a sense of community where people don't feel connected to each other? What is the relationship between a strong community and strong faith?
3. Are solid community bonds important to your congregation? How much time do people spend together outside of worship time? Do some people feel stronger bonds to other groups? Why might that be? How could your congregation specifically work at strengthening community?
4. Born says that we need to invest in strong relationships and communities so that they "will provide us with the joy and security we need." Do you agree? How did our parents and grandparents invest in community? How can we help our children do so?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

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

✉ Pretty girls can be a distraction

RE: "GETTING BACK on track" by Aaron Epp, May 12, page 37.

We need to read the Bible for personal nourishment, and to learn how to follow God in our daily walk. Pretty girls are often more of a distraction, if that is our sole motive. Hang in there, and God bless you for your honesty!

RYAN CARNEY (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ What will it take to change?

RE: "TIME TO divest" editorial, April 28, page 2.

I can't express how good it feels to read Dick Benner's editorial.

Working in the world of science, these words of warning have been going out for years. Yet I have seen only small voices shouting out this warning within the church.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Nurturing the wildness

MARIANNE MELLINGER

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed . . . it is the smallest of all the seeds, but grows into the greatest of shrubs" (Matthew 13:31-32).

We Christians take heart from this parable, which suggests large growth from small beginnings. But the mustard shrub, while providing spice and some medicinal benefits, was, for first-century farmers, invasive and pesky, with a tendency to take over where it was not wanted. Might Jesus be suggesting to his hearers that there is an unpredictable wildness to God's kingdom?

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada has been privileged to experience some of this unpredictable wild kingdom growth over the past number of years, as congregations from Latin America, Southeast Asia and East Africa, as well as small urban church plants, have sprouted up among us. At the same time, we have been challenged to find ways to equip and form the leaders of



these faith communities.

As we listened to the needs of these leaders, we began exploring and dreaming of new models of training, and we began to experiment. Our goal is not to tame the wildness, but to nurture and support it.

One recent training experiment was our Hispanic Leadership Training Program. Rather than gathering leaders together in one place for training, we have sent teachers to various locations. While arguably less efficient in terms of time and resources, it offers, in addition to study, an opportunity to build relationships in small groups, and makes it possible for leaders to attend who work unpredictable hours or have limited resources for travel. The program is not without challenges, but the grateful response of the participants has been overwhelming.

More recently, MC Eastern Canada and Conrad Grebel University College

have begun to dream about a Ministry Certificate Program for pastors and lay leaders. This program would focus on one- and two-day seminars taught primarily in the evenings and on weekends. The intent would be to foster an intercultural learning community in which participants engage each other and learn from each other in areas such as Bible study, leadership concerns, Christian living, Mennonite beliefs and practices, and ministry in a secular culture, among others.

Our dream is that the program will draw not only new Canadian leaders, but also pastors and lay leaders from MC Eastern Canada's historic congregations. We dream of a moveable classroom with sessions taught in places such as Montreal, Toronto or Leamington.

Supported in part by a gift to the Lebold Endowment Fund for Leadership Training from MC Eastern Canada's Legacy Initiative Fund, it is our hope that this dream will become a reality within the next year. And we hope that the unpredictable growth of God's kingdom will continue to challenge us to dream and experiment.

Marianne Mellinger is Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's coordinator of leadership formation.

These voices have been doing a good job, but they are hardly mainstream within the Mennonite community.

So what will it take for us to change? Benner starts his editorial by saying this is a justice issue, an issue to which Mennonites feel closely aligned. Could that finally be the hook that gets Mennonites to respond?

HENRY J REMPEL, WINNIPEG
(ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ Fossil-fuel divestment is not the answer

RE: "IT'S TIME to divest" editorial, April 28, page 2.

I will not be signing the open letter to the leadership of Mennonite Church Canada that calls for fossil-fuel divestment. I don't believe that this approach will result

(Continued on page 10)

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Be hospitable by faith, not by sight

PHIL WAGLER

Jesus told his disciples to make disciples. He was very clear. He promised his Spirit would enable us and would do the work of convicting and opening hearts and minds. Our part is quite simple.

How well do you know your neighbours?

Do you know the names of their kids or grandkids? What about their pets? Do you know what their favourite team is?

Are they vegetarians? Recent immigrants, perhaps? Are they divorced? Are they finding it hard to make ends meet? Do they fight? Have they survived cancer?

What do they think about religion? Do they believe in God? Do they know you follow Jesus? Do they even know his name?

What are their political views? Would they vote for Trudeau, Harper or Mulcair? What do they do for a living? Do they have a claim to fame?

Have you ever done an act of kindness for them? Have you trusted any of them with the keys to your house? Have you been trusted by them that way?

So many questions, I know. It's just that, well, we can be like birds of a feather flocking together with people just like us.

It can be scary to take these people risks. Where do you even begin?

Have you ever thought of how your neighbour feels about getting to know you?

Someone has to bridge the gap. We know God bridged the gap when he sent his Son, and as the Father sent him, so he sends us. It may simply be across the road, but he sends us.

Reflecting on Jesus' Great Commission charge, Oswald Chambers says, "Therefore go. . . . Go simply means live."

Live. Just live. Live out the work of

Live. Just live. Live out the work of Christ in you in the sphere of your influence. Just live, love and look like Jesus.

Christ in you in the sphere of your influence. Just live, love and look like Jesus. Just live with a holy curiosity—not nosiness. Just live to seek the good of the other. Just live by carrying your cross.

Here's a three-dimensional challenge for us as we head towards summer:

• **FIRST**, IF you don't know a neighbour, take even a small step in that direction. Ask a question. Even—egad—talk in the elevator. If you can't already do it, make it your goal to know between five and

10 neighbours by name by the end of August.

• **SECOND, PRACTISE** hospitality and open your home. Watch a game. Have tea. Talk inside your front door. Let them see the real you. Let them see your chipped plates and what hangs on your walls. Let them hear you correct your kids. And be open to go their way too, and eat or drink what they set in front of you. Pray that this step of reciprocal neighbourliness occurs and watch how the Spirit is at work. Be hospitable by faith, not by sight.

• **THIRD, DON'T** hide Jesus. This gives many of us the heebie-jeebies because we think that means downloading some awkward presentation or critiquing faults. This is not what Jesus meant when

he said we'd be his witnesses. It's really less about him, not you. Remember, "go" means live, and Jesus said that we make disciples by teaching people to obey all that he has commanded us. In other words, live out your growing Christ-likeness and don't be ashamed to give him the credit he deserves.

Phil Wagler lives in a neighbourhood where people are busy and rarely talk about God positively. This is where he must simply go and live.



(Continued from page 9)

in one less drop of oil on the market or the slightest diminishing of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

This is not really a supply-side problem. Fossil fuels are available because they are in demand. When this demand diminishes, supply will diminish. And this will happen regardless of who holds shares in this market.

What is needed—desperately needed—are

alternative energy sources other than fossil fuels. It's time to hear a great deal more on that front.

And who better to lead the demand for this discussion than faith-based communities. That is, we who believe that the planet, the abundant and diverse life forms on it—including ourselves—are a special gift from God.

As far as fossil-fuel investments themselves, I am surprised—even amazed—that MC Canada would

NEW CANADIAN VOICE

Equal opportunity

KUEN YEE

“Hey, Chink! Go back to China!” Derogatory as it was, this was the racial slur directed at one of my Vietnamese college parishioners in a gym recently. Racist remarks of this nature haven't changed from the time when I was going to school.

I immigrated to Edmonton from Hong Kong when I was 6, back in the 1960s. During those years, there were only a handful of Chinese in my entire school. Racist remarks and derogatory name-calling plagued my childhood years, making me feel unwanted and unwelcomed. Yet my people, the Chinese, endured racism because we believed that our new home in the West was the land of golden opportunity and wealth, the land of the gold mountain (金山 *gam saan*).

Although ethnic discrimination has affected every people group, historically the Chinese have been selectively targeted as a visible minority. Many Chinese workers died building Canada's transcontinental railway, but after the railway was completed the Chinese were no longer welcomed. A \$500 head tax was imposed on all new Chinese immigrants. That was two years' wages in those days. My father-in-law paid that tax in 1921 when he immigrated as a 12-year-old. After that, the Chinese Exclusion Act was enacted to prevent Chinese immigrants from entering

altogether and, as a result, my father-in-law was prevented from bringing over his young bride in the 1930s. Only after this Act was repealed after the Second World War were families reunited and my mother-in-law was able to immigrate to Canada.

I am very proud of the Chinese in Canada because, although we faced discrimination, we never dealt with it through militant retaliation. Our parents taught us to walk away from confrontation, and through hard work we became an integral part of Canadian society and won the right to be called Canadians.

Through a children's crusade, I was introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to a local church. Christians made me feel very welcome and I slowly developed a sense of belonging within the family of God.

[A]s I matured in the faith I came to experience a second source of discrimination as a woman in ministry.

However, as I matured in the faith I came to experience a second source of discrimination as a woman in ministry. After I sensed the call of God into ministry, I found that it was very difficult for a woman to enter and then advance in it. Within the local church, it was acceptable for women to oversee the nursery and preschoolers, and children's and women's ministries, as well as hospitality ministries. However, it was not acceptable for a woman to preach or teach the Word of God to adults.

One person told me that I would have to be twice as educated as a man to achieve the same position in ministry. With the support of my husband, I worked very hard to obtain a doctor of ministry degree before formally entering into ministry.

Since joining the Mennonite denomination two years ago and serving as English ministry pastor at Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite church, I have found the Mennonites to be very welcoming to an ethnic woman in ministry. Pastor Thomas Pham, our senior minister, has been very supportive, and encourages me to develop ministry skills. He has coached me in the area of preaching and officiating communion and baptismal services, which I would not be allowed to do in other denominational churches.

The very fact that Mennonites are open to women's ordination and women becoming lead pastors means that the glass ceiling has been removed and there is equal opportunity for women. Mennonites have always aimed to

achieve peace and reconciliation with various groups and minorities. They have certainly done an admirable job with women and visible minorities.

Kuen Yee holds a bachelor of science degree in pharmacy, a master of theological studies degree and a doctor of ministry degree. She has recently been named to the Canadian Mennonite board of directors, representing Mennonite Church Alberta.



have any. But since the anonymous group has called for divestment, I assume they know such investments do exist. But why call for a time-consuming study when a simple delegate motion can direct MC Canada to go ahead with divestment.

Global warming is here and it is very serious, many orders of magnitude more serious even than the FossilFreeMenno letter describes. And the outcome, if not reversed soon, will be another mass extinction, of which Earth has already had five. But this time the extinction will include the human race.

The task of the churches' prophetic voices now is to join others in convincing the world that alternate sources of energy must be found—and they can be.

As Stompin' Tom used to sing, "If you don't get at it when you get to it, you won't get to it to get at it again."

And too late really will be too late.

BILL BRYSON, TORONTO

✉ **God's Not Dead is alive with gospel truth**

RE: "FILM DOESN'T prove 'God's not dead'" review, April 28, page 27.

Having read Vic Thiessen's film review, I was wondering why anyone would waste their time and money watching it.

I, however, have seen it twice, and was totally captivated and impressed by it. The film is a powerful presentation of actual university life. One freshman, Josh, is determined not to deny his Lord, facing a professor's ridicule and tough class questions on the beginning of God, and why there is evil, violence, hatred, sickness and pain in the world.

In three gruelling sessions, one by one he wins the class's support. Philosophy is dead. God is alive. The rest of the film proves the reality and existence of an almighty God.

The minister and black man in the film show the necessity of faith and trust in God. The lady with cancer accepts the Lord. The lady with dementia utters gospel truth.

The men's quartet in prayer before a concert with thousands in the audience; many classmates, including a Muslim woman who became a Christian (after suffering physical abuse from her father) all stand with outstretched arms, praising and thanking God for his love, grace and salvation.

Even the atheist professor, when struck in a stormy traffic accident, is led to faith in Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour, in his dying seconds.

A remarkable film and a "must see" for all young people and university students.

C. NEIL KLASSEN, ROSEMARY, ALTA.

✉ **Bible can't be 'crystal clear' when it's self-contradictory**

RE: "CHRISTIANS MUST continue to call all sins 'sin'" letter, May 12, page 9.

While fulminating against "homosexual sin," Pastor Artur Esau wonders "why for heaven's sake do we have to have dialogue about things that are crystal clear and obvious to begin with in the Word?" His assumption, though, is flawed. Nothing in the Bible is crystal clear. Every passage requires interpretation.

Indeed, one might say that the key impetus of the Protestant Reformation was the desire to allow individuals to interpret the Bible as they saw fit, rather than have it construed for them by dogmatic priests.

Esau's assumption, too, begs a further question regarding translation. I doubt that he and his congregation in Hague, Sask., are worshipping from the original Hebrew Old Testament and the original Greek and Aramaic of the New Testament. Any translation is an act of interpretation. That's why translations of the same text differ. This fact also makes any claims about biblical texts being "crystal clear" rather suspect.

Finally, it's hard to see how Scripture can be "crystal clear" when it is self-contradictory. This pertains even to the most basic aspects of Christian doctrine. As a single example, Acts 13:39 says that all sins can be forgiven; yet Mark 3:29 says that blaspheming against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. If the Bible was really intended to be "crystal clear," then surely God would have ensured that it is free from internal contradictions.

In short, it seems to me that it diminishes the Word of God to see it as nothing more than a handbook of immutable, black-and-white rules. Instead, Scripture invites and impels us to interpret it, and those interpretations will—and should—change as people and cultures change. That's what keeps Scripture alive, and that's why ongoing dialogue is necessary, even when it makes pastors and congregations uncomfortable.

MARK MORTON, KITCHENER, ONT.

Mark Morton is a member of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener.

/// Correction

History of the Defenceless Anabaptist Churches from the Times of the Apostles to the Present was published by the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan. Incorrect information appeared in the first paragraph of "Translation breathes new life into old history" article, April 28, page 28. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

✉ Just what practices are 'sexually immoral'?

RE: "CHRISTIANS MUST continue to call all sins 'sin'" letter, May 12, page 9.

Writer Artur Esau asked, "Why should we now accept sexual immorality . . . as not being sin anymore? Could someone explain that to me, please?"

I don't think anybody is trying to not name sexual immorality as sin. I think people are questioning what specific practices we lump under the phrase "sexual immorality."

In attempting an answer to that question, I find Tony Campolo's definition of sin—"anything that dehumanizes"—a fairly good place to start.

KYLE PENNER, STEINBACH, MAN.

Kyle Penner is associate pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach.

✉ Expecting crystal clarity disrespects church dialogue process

RE: "CHRISTIANS MUST continue to call all sins 'sin'" letter, May 12, page 9.

Regarding the discussion about homosexuality and the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered/queer (LGBTQ) community, the author asks why "do we have to dialogue about things that are crystal clear?"

I was recently in a meeting in which we were discussing our church's response to this very topic and someone who would be on the opposite side of the issue from Pastor Artur Esau made a similar statement, that clearly we know where Jesus would stand on this. Someone else replied that it is clearly not clear.

To say that this is clear and obvious minimizes and disrespects the very intentional and prayerful thought that has been focused on this topic by many sincere and spiritual people. This is something that continues to be a difficult topic for much of Christendom and has caused much pain on many levels and to all kinds of people.

I wonder if we cannot trust each other's sincere desire to be followers of Christ and to do the right thing while we humbly and lovingly continue in this dialogue.

CAROL GAEKE FRANZ, WINNIPEG

Carol Gaeke Franz is a member Grain of Wheat Church/Community in Winnipeg.

✉ MC Saskatchewan moderator defends assembly process

I WOULD LIKE to correct some misinformation in Ray Mutlow's letter to the editor, "Reader feels MC Saskatchewan misled delegates," May 12, page 12.

First, the relevant item in the Mennonite Church Saskatchewan Safe Church Policy is misquoted. It should read, "No person will be granted a position or prohibited from a position on the basis of age, gender, cultural background, physical appearance or sexual orientation."

Second, all the relevant information regarding the Safe Church Policy and a resolution put forward by one member church pertaining to that policy were included on page 17 of the report book. Churches that took the time to read and discuss the report book and to prepare delegates were well aware that a "controversial matter" would be on the agenda.

As moderator, I was well aware of what the gist of the concern entailed: namely, that most people were quite comfortable with inclusiveness regarding participation in camps and worship, but that some members and member churches were not ready to assume a similar position regarding employment of personnel. The resolution to refer the "preventing discrimination" section back to council for further study was representative of this concern.

I take responsibility for the handling of the resolution to adopt the Safe Church Policy as printed in the assembly report book, as well as for conducting the debate on its approval and on the amendment to refer Section V back to council. As moderator and council, we decided to put the decisions into the hands of the membership delegates, who decided, after a time of courteous debate from both sides, to adopt the policy without referring Section V for further study.

Two things occur to me as I contemplate the experiences to which Ray Mutlow refers:

- **OUR ASSUMPTIONS** sometimes jump ahead of actual cases. The only item in Section V that was challenged in my conversations with the movers of the referral motion was on the question of employment. In practice, following the MC Saskatchewan Safe Church Policy means that personnel committees will not reject an application for employment outright on the basis of sexual orientation. In other words, a personnel committee's first question to an applicant will not be, "Are you gay, straight or bisexual?"

- **LEADERSHIP IS** sometimes seen as conspiring to promote positions on which there is not broad consensus in the membership. Mutlow's letter exemplifies this: "a deliberate attempt to hide this from our church and possibly the delegates we might have sent." The

tendency to attribute motives to people before approaching them for dialogue represents a real danger. How can progress be made on vital issues if false assumptions prevail, and why would anyone consent to assume a leadership role under those circumstances?

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Cressman—Hugh Benjamin (b. April 8, 2014), to Anna Marie and Ben Cressman, Ebenfeld Mennonite, Herschel, Sask.

Kirkaldy—Miles Erich Taylor (b. May 17, 2014), to Jennifer and Owen Kirkaldy, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

Kradko—Nickolas (b. March 8, 2014), to Evgeny and Anna Kradko, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont. (Correction to April 28 announcement.)

Krahn—Lara Elisabeth (b. May 9, 2014), to Emily and Caleb Krahn, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Wiebe—Emery Faith (b. March 22, 2014), to Jesse and Rachel Wiebe, Ebenfeld Mennonite, Herschel, Sask.

Baptisms

Madison Hamm, Jessica Epp—North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., May 4, 2014.

Minnie Mansfield, Michelle Holst, Karissa Kliever,

Colin Eby—St. Agatha Mennonite, Ont., May 25, 2014.

Marriages

Janz/Krahulic—Emily Janz and Jeremy Krahulic, at Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, May 10, 2014.

I would echo Mutlow's opinion that, "[t]rust and integrity . . . are two main character ingredients for people and organizations."

GEORGE EPP, ROSTHERN, SASK.

Deaths

Bergen—Elma (nee Friesen), 86 (b. April 6, 1928; d. May 8, 2014), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Falk—Eva (nee Schwartz), 92 (b. Oct. 3, 1921; d. April 30, 2014), Altona Mennonite, Man.

Friesen—Mary, 101 (b. Jan. 13, 1913; d. May 20, 2014), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Heinrichs—Susanna (Schmidt) (nee Rempel), 102 (b. March 20, 1912; d. May 1, 2014), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Kuepfer—Mary (nee Gingerich), 58 (b. Feb. 29, 1956; d. May 3, 2014), Brussels Mennonite, Ont.

Niessen—Anna (nee Giesbrecht), 92 (b. Oct. 12, 1921; d. May 21, 2014), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Peters—Herbert, 89 (b. Dec. 2, 1924; d. May 15, 2014), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Ramer—John, 65 (b. Oct. 14, 1948; d. May 7, 2014), Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Steckley—Merrill, 85 (b. July 25, 1928; d. May 10, 2014), Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

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

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

Ponius' Puddle



VIEWPOINT ON COMMUNITY

Poverty, violence and the promise of healing

DEREK COOK

I saw him coming as I approached the C-Train station. It was a cold January morning when we tend to keep our heads down as we make our way to work in the dark. He was walking against the flow of commuters heading to the train, walking away from, rather than towards, the station.

"Excuse me, sir," he said. I am, of course, familiar with the approach. Most of us are. I usually do keep a few coins in my pocket ready for those who might ask, as I am inclined to help with spare change for people who request it. Usually, however, these are relatively wordless transactions, relatively faceless. A furtive request, sometimes accompanied by an apology, head down, change offered and little more.

"Do you have a bit of change for a coffee?" he asked. "I've just been released from the hospital."

"Do you have any place to go?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "I've been sleeping outside. It's okay 'cause I've got this great sleeping bag, but the other night I left my hand outside the bag and I got frostbite."

He showed me his hand, and the thumb and forefinger were all blistered and black. "That's why I was in the hospital."

"Do you know about the shelters downtown?" I asked.

He said he knew about them, and had stayed there when he was first homeless, but found them to be too dangerous. "After I just about got murdered down there, I swore I wouldn't stay downtown again," he said, adding, "Usually it's okay, but a few nights ago it was so cold, I went into a C-Train station to get warm. I wasn't there that long when the security guards came along and kicked me out. I asked them, 'Aren't you supposed to be



I gave him the dignity of asking and learning his name, and he gave me the gift of hearing and sharing his story.

protecting people?' They said, 'Yeah, we protect people; you're not a person.'"

In Calgary, media are now reporting a new activity called "creature hunting," that involves people taking humiliating pictures of those who are homeless and then posting them online. Others can then rank the pictures based on how humiliating they are.

It is, of course, a danger that once we dehumanize people to "creatures," to be humiliated for our amusement, it can be a slippery slope to violence. Indeed, a disturbing trend in recent years involves attacks on homeless people being

perpetrated by those who consider this fun, who even film such attacks for enjoyment by themselves and others.

In the case of the person I was speaking with, he told me that after being kicked out of the C-Train station, the guards threw golf balls at him as he left the station and headed off into the night.

While the situation of people who are homeless is perhaps stark and extreme, it

operates at many levels. Poverty in all its forms is more often than not blamed on the poor themselves. The poor are seen to deserve poverty, which both justifies great wealth and inequality, while diminishing our sense of responsibility to others, as the idea of shared community erodes.

Paul Born is executive director of Tamarack, a national institute whose aim is to build community. I had the chance to speak with him recently, and he made this poignant observation: "Every time we

walk down the street and see a homeless person and we do nothing to respond, it damages us." It damages us. This reminds me of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assertion that the structures of oppression bind both the oppressed and the oppressor; liberation of one is bound up with the liberation of the other.

What we need, Born suggested, is a process of healing. He spoke of the "Out of the Cold" program in Waterloo, Ont., where churches take turns preparing meals daily for those who may be isolated or unable to provide meals on their own. The unique aspect of this project is the

fact that the distinction between those serving and those being served is blurred. Everyone eats together, and the meals become an opportunity to build and share community, rather than for one privileged group to provide an act of charity to an "other"

As I chatted in the dark with this stranger by the C-Train station, I learned that he, of course, hadn't always been homeless. In fact, not that long ago, he had been a practising nutritionist. Then, unexpectedly, mental illness struck and spiralled him into an abyss that first saw him lose his job and then, eventually, his marriage. The spiral continued and, without a job, he also lost the ability to pay for his medication. Homelessness soon

followed. He has a daughter the same age as mine. She's a dancer, like my daughter. He tries his best to stay in touch and be a dad. Of all the losses, I can hear in his voice that this is the hardest.

In the end, I gave him a bit of change to buy some coffee and a little bit more. More importantly, we took time together. I gave him the dignity of asking and learning his name, and he gave me the gift of hearing and sharing his story. In that moment I believe both our mornings were transformed and we both became "persons" to each other. Seeking that transformation gets to the root of poverty, and is ultimately why we do what we do. We do it because we dream; we dream of something bigger, of a city and a


community where we all belong.

So perhaps I'm not all that interested in "solving poverty," as much as I am in healing it. For what we need is not to solve the problems of others, but to heal ourselves by building communities where distinctions between "us" and "them" cannot take root, where we are all "us" and simultaneously "them." And only then will we no longer be able to justify what we do to each other, and what is done to us. ☸

Adapted from a blog post by Derek Cook, executive director of the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative.

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PERSONAL REFLECTION

Chastised by the chief

The awkward complexities of indigenous issues

WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

Over the past 20 years I have dedicated much effort to advancing the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the rest of us. I have lived in, worked with and written about various aboriginal communities. Currently, I work part-time for the Interchurch Council on Hydropower, which advocates for fair treatment of first nation communities affected by dams in Manitoba.

So it was ironic, in a way, that Chief Marcel Moody of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation wrote an article for the *Winnipeg Free Press* last month in which he accused me of having a “paternalistic” attitude and “creating turmoil” in his community.

Employing a well-used refrain, he said, “We find it outrageous that Braun represents the people whose residential school policies helped to destroy the fabric of our communities.”

His comments demonstrate that indigenous issues, like all important issues, are unavoidably messy.

Chief Moody was responding to an article in which I noted that the \$1.7-billion hydropower dam, of which his first nation is part owner, is expected to lose many millions of dollars in the coming decade contrary to past predictions. I questioned our provincial utility’s line that its series of new dams are a path to prosperity for northern Cree people. I was, on behalf of the Interchurch Council, presenting vital information not generally available to northerners or others.

It wasn’t the first time I—or our Council, of which Mennonite Central Committee is a member—felt compelled to say things that would irk some



indigenous leaders. In 2012, I wrote in the *Free Press* about a hydro-affected community that received \$92 million in negotiation costs from Manitoba Hydro, but was still mired in poverty, with little indication the money had helped the majority of the community. Our organization deliberated over that piece, compelled in the end by a duty to reflect concerns we heard from community members. There was no direct response that time.

Earlier that year, I wrote about an unusually quiet \$58-million agreement between Manitoba Hydro and another Manitoba first nation. I questioned the secrecy and timing of the deal. Again, I

We need to have the tough conversations. And all governments must be subject to public accountability.

was responding to concerns our group had heard from members of that first nation.

In all these cases we directed our critique more at Manitoba Hydro than the first nations, but the latter will have surely found the attention unwelcome.

I also got reprimanded for my essay in *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry* (Herald Press, 2013), in which I pointed out that, while many aboriginal people consider themselves defenders of Mother Earth, many others are active proponents of massive oil sands, hydropower, mining and liquefied natural gas projects. The piece also discussed the aggressive push-back I and others received from first nations with hydropower interests a decade ago. It’s all awkwardly unavoidable stuff. The aboriginal responder in the book accused me of being closed-minded and simplistic.

Supporting Indigenous Peoples does not mean reserving all scrutiny. Supporting any cause should not come at the cost of glossing over nuances, complexities and contradictions. We need to have the tough conversations. And all governments must be subject to public accountability.

There will always be arguments against open critique of marginalized people: that such critique fuels prejudice, that official indigenous voices should never be contradicted, that historic power imbalances should inhibit settler folk from saying anything.

These are worthy of consideration. The difficulty is that I just don’t see avoidance of messiness as an ultimate good to Indigenous Peoples or the wider society. Silence is not the solution.

And people who disagree are, of course, free to say so, as Moody did. That is part of the point: freedom of speech, freedom of the press and open exchange of ideas.

It will be messy, but that’s okay. And it’s okay for the church to be in the middle of it.

I certainly don’t enjoy getting slammed in front of tens of thousands of *Free Press* readers—especially given the way I was associated with things said by unnamed others—but there is something much bigger at play: vigorous and open grappling with essential issues. These things simply have to be aired and, if someone sees fit, refuted.

Some of the critique I received back was instructive, as always. And as a result of speaking up, our Council has learned considerably more about the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and the dam it has a stake in. Some people in the community and public have, too. That is critical.

The take-home lesson for me is this: Life is messy, jump in. Do so with appropriate trepidation, genuine care and openness to correction, but jump in. ❧

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Prioritizing ministry

MC Manitoba invites congregational feedback as it plans for the future

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

Two topics were front and centre when the board and staff of Mennonite Church Manitoba travelled the province in April for face-to-face conversations with congregations in seven regional meetings.

Being a Faithful Church

The aim of the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) dialogue was not to talk about the actual issues around human sexuality, but to give congregations an opportunity to talk with each other about how they are experiencing the process and learn from each other, explained Peter Rempel, area church board chair. Another purpose for bringing congregations together in the various regions was to share possibilities of how MC Manitoba might shape its ministries to best suit the needs of its congregations.

Of 48 congregations, more than 27 churches were represented.

"In the end, over 150 people participated, which exceeds what we usually have at the fall delegate assemblies," said Ken Warkentin, area church executive director.

While many congregations have found the BFC process to be very helpful and positive, some found the documents difficult to understand, said Rempel.

"We learned most of the churches are dealing with the discussion in small groups, not at a congregational level, but many have addressed sexuality in sermons," said Warkentin. "One of the other surprises for some people was the openness to talk about the issue of same-sex attraction, which would not have existed 20 years ago. We heard regularly that for many young people this is a non-issue.

"There is a recognition that we need to expand our understanding of the issue of sexuality, and include more biological and scientific evidence than limit

our understanding to tradition. And we learned that there are many other topics than just homosexuality that fall under the rubric of human sexuality. Most frequently mentioned was co-habitation," he said.

Structural changes

"We anticipate a window of opportunity to initiate changes in our structure," said Warkentin, with significant changes happening in camping ministry and with Henry Kliewer retiring from his position as director of leadership ministries.

"As a board, we asked Ken to prepare a paper on the changing context of the church and test some options for what MC Manitoba's priorities might be and some thoughts on its structures," said Rempel.

This "state of the church" address was presented at each of the meetings and congregations were invited to respond. "We asked, 'Does this reflect your congregation and, if so, how then should we organize the broader church to address these needs?'" said Warkentin.

What they heard from the congregations is still being reviewed by the board, but some things came through clearly. "We heard a desire to continue to be Mennonite," Warkentin said. "There is a sense that youth and young adults are very deeply engaged in their faith, but not in congregational life in the way that we usually understand. There is also the reality of aging congregations and how this affects volunteerism and pastoral expectations. It appears that worship in many congregations has turned a corner and we are not having the same battles over style that we experienced in the past. There is a desire on the part of many congregations to be more directly engaged in missions on a local level, and less of a desire to send money abroad."

Warkentin tested one option for structural change: "I proposed that we put energy into two areas: congregational health, which would include putting resources into pastoral and congregational leadership training and development; and second, missions, service and evangelism with an Anabaptist orientation that allows community to relate to community, individual to individual. I think it was probably premature to get an assessment of whether this was the direction to go."

The board will review what it has heard and consider more specific ways that MC Manitoba might prioritize its ministries. ❧

❧ Staff change

Navigate announces inaugural program director

SAUBLE BEACH, ONT.—Jonathan Moyer has been hired as Navigate @ Silver Lake Mennonite Camp's inaugural program director. Moyer will work alongside Leah Martin, program developer, and in partnership with Silver Lake's Leadership Team. Moyer and Martin bring a combined 14 years of camp programming experience to Navigate, and have thoroughly enjoyed designing a program that actively engages with young adults at such a pivotal time in their lives. For more information about Navigate, visit www.slmc.ca/navigate or Facebook (facebook.com/slmc.navigate), or call the office at 519-422-1401.

—Silver Lake Mennonite Camp



Jonathan Moyer

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GEORGE DYCK



Exterior roof repairs to the former Mennonite church in the former village of Schoensee—now Snegurovka—are visible.

COMMUNITY ACROSS DENOMINATIONS

‘The fruit of renewal’

Greek Catholics restore former Ukrainian Mennonite church building

BY RON REMPEL

Mennonite World Conference

A former Mennonite church building in Ukraine is being restored and transformed with the help of Canadian Mennonites into a Greek Catholic church.

According to observers, this development is an example of Mennonite-Catholic collaboration in the spirit of other exchanges over the past decade or so.

The Mennonite church in the former village of Schoensee—now Snegurovka—was originally built in 1909. During the Soviet era after the October 1917 Russian Revolution, when Mennonites were forced to leave, the church building was used for storage and then fell into disrepair.

Recently, the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine secured ownership of the building and a retired Catholic priest from the Czech Republic, Father Peter Trenzky, is giving leadership to the restoration as well as to the congregation, which has started to worship in the building.

In learning about the restoration project, individuals associated with the Mennonite Centre in nearby Molochansk—formerly Halbstad—offered to help. The Centre was established in 2001 in the former

Mennonite Girls School to provide a range of community services.

“Initially, Father Peter was afraid that Mennonites wanted to take back the church,” said George Dyck, treasurer of Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine, a Canadian-based charity

providing partial funding to the project over the past year.

(Visit www.mennonitecentre.ca or the “Mennonite Centre Ukraine” Facebook page for more information about the Friends organization.)

Dyck describes the involvement as a “mutual embrace of returning Mennonites with their former fellow villagers,” adding that the official opening of the restored church will be held in July or August of this year.

According to Darrin Snyder Belousek, the renovation of the former Schoensee church “is the fruit of the renewal of the Catholic Church in Ukraine.” Snyder Belousek is executive director of Bridgefolk, a North American-based movement of Mennonites and Catholics that holds an annual gathering to learn from each other’s traditions.

He further pointed out “a parallel of sorts” between the experiences of Ukrainian Catholics and that of Russian Mennonites. The Catholics lost their churches, had no legal protection and survived as an underground church during the Soviet era. Russian Mennonites also were not officially recognized by the Soviets and they assimilated with the Baptists.

“Both churches faced repression under similar circumstances from the same oppressor,” commented Snyder Belousek, “and had to make costly choices to keep faithful.” ❧



The sanctuary of the Greek Catholic church today.

COMMUNITY GROWTH THROUGH BAPTISM

Burkina Faso church swells by 12 percent

BY LYNDA HOLLINGER-JANZEN

Mennonite Church Canada/Mennonite Mission Network

Recent baptisms have swelled the membership of Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso) by more than 12 percent.

Siaka Traoré, national church president, was surprised and pleased when he was informed about the large number of baptismal candidates this year. “I cannot explain [this wave of interest, other than to say] that I believe God wants to grow the church,” Traoré said.

In the three Sundays surrounding Easter, 63 new Mennonites joined five different congregations in Burkina Faso. The national church had a membership of about 500 at the beginning of 2014, with 44 of these members baptized in the weeks around Christmas.

Because of a shortage of pastors in these rapidly blossoming congregations, baptisms are often scheduled to coincide with special events—holidays or ordinations—that bring church leaders from more densely populated areas to village churches that don’t have their own pastors.

Baptism by immersion has special significance during the Easter season, as believers act out their desire to follow Jesus’ example to die to the world’s standards. Emerging from the water, they rise into newness of life.

“I wanted to identify with Jesus in his death and resurrection as I abandoned my old life and begin to live a new life,” said Lydie Yougbaré after her Easter baptism in the city of Bobo Dioulasso. “When I came out of the water, I felt light, like all my burdens had slipped off.”

According to Burkina Faso’s most recent government census (2006), more than 60 percent of the population practises Islam while 4 percent belong to a Protestant denomination.

In a context where Muslims make up the

majority of the population, the decision to be baptized is not to be taken lightly, as it may result in derision and even persecution. Traoré said that he rejoices when people count the cost and still want to be baptized into the Mennonite church. “[Those who choose baptism] are people fully conscious of what they want,” Traoré said. “Praise the Lord for faithful work and witness over years in each of the locations that have laid the groundwork for these decisions for Christ.”

Preparation for baptism usually takes

place over a three-month period and includes basic Bible knowledge; an understanding of church life; and instruction in evangelism, ethics, practical aspects of Christian living and Mennonite history.

The church is in the process of standardizing a curriculum for baptismal candidates.

“Numerous Canadians have accompanied the church in its growth,” said Hippolyto Tshimanga, director of Africa ministry for Mennonite Church Canada. “More recently we have been building the capacity to train entrepreneurs in small business development in the Burkina Mennonite church. We pray this work will lead the church to its full self-sustainability.”

Currently, Nancy Frey of St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church and Bruce Yoder of Martinsburg (Pa.) Mennonite Church carry on the ministry in Burkina Faso. They blog at freynyoder.wordpress.com/. ☞

PHOTO BY FRANK NACANABO



Lydie Yougbaré emerges from her baptism and into the fellowship of the Bobo Dioulasso congregation of Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso.

THE CHURCH IN COMMUNITY

Gathered to grow . . . scattered to serve

Hillcrest Mennonite Church celebrates 50 years of ministry

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

Things moved fast 50 years ago. On May 14, 1963, East Zorra Mennonite Church near Tavistock decided that it needed to plant a daughter church to alleviate crowding in the mother church. A building committee met the next day to plan where the new congregation's building would be and what it would look like. Members of East Zorra and daughter churches Cassel and Tavistock Mennonite were canvassed and funds gathered.

On Easter Sunday, March 29, 1964, just nine months later, the first service of Hillcrest Mennonite Church was held in its new building. The congregation began with 158 members and 243 in Sunday school. The congregation averages 140 adults and children these days.

Although the congregation had deep roots in the Amish Mennonite settlers

in the area—later the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference—under the leadership of Pastor Henry Yantzi, it immediately began to consider how it would do things more effectively, always trying to serve God best.

From the first Sunday, families sat together, rather than the traditional seating of men and women on separate sides. Soon a discussion about the “prayer covering” worn by all baptized women led to that being discontinued.

Current members remember that a discussion about divorce and remarriage a few years later led some in the Mennonite community to remark, “Anything goes at Hillcrest.”

Fiftieth-anniversary events began in April with the musical *It's Cool in the Furnace*, first performed by the youth and

Sunday school in 1974. Other musicals have also been used over the years to teach the Bible and Christian life to younger members of the congregation.

An anniversary service project was the tying of 50 comforters by men and women, young and old.

A celebration weekend on May 24 and 25 included historical displays; an evening of music and video to dedicate a DVD of the stories of the congregation; a catered dinner; Sunday morning worship with Jeff Wright, a Mennonite pastor and urban mission strategist from California, preaching; and a potluck.

On Oct. 11, a concert featuring musicians who formerly attended the congregation and who have moved on in professional careers will be held. Included are Dan Lichti, Charlene Nafziger, Ben Bolt-Martin, Brandon Leis and Charla Nafziger.

Lay and pastoral leaders continue to think about where God is acting and how to join God in that work. While the original church was based on the 1960's “build it and they will come” model, leaders now think about how to support members serving in the community, and how to be a presence of God in New Hamburg.

As a diverse group of people, Hillcrest's congregants are united in taking time to listen to where and how God will lead them into the future. As the world around them changes, they do not want to panic, but rather trust in God, who is the foundation and head of the church.

In dedicating a new wall hanging on May 24, pastors Jan Steckley and Kevin Peters Unrau prayed: “May the deep roots sent out over the years continue to draw nourishment from your life-giving stream. And may we continue to be a people, attentive to your Spirit, open to innovative practice, and loving life together as we embody our faith here and in the world.” ❧



Recent member Donna Bentz and founding member Ron Zehr look at photos from Hillcrest Mennonite's 50 years at the anniversary celebration on May 24. Behind them are the 50 comforters knotted this year as an anniversary service project.



For more photos of the celebrations, visit canadianmennonite.org/hillcrest-50th.

THE CHURCH IN COMMUNITY

Following Jesus for 75 years

Niagara United Mennonite celebrates documentary about church life

BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONT.

A final event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Niagara United Mennonite Church was the viewing of the documentary *God in our Space* on April 27. Including events of the church's 75th year, the production touches on the lives of founding families, immigrant families of post-Second World War Europe, and individuals joining currently.

Edwin Janzen, a media arts major from Sheridan College, did the interviewing himself, gathering 80 hours of footage, which was condensed into a two-hour documentary. He felt it was important to document the life journeys of some of the older members. The complete interviews and detailed stories will be available in the church archives.

After seeing the documentary, 18-year-old Mitchell Glass said it changed his view of older people because he could see the seriousness of what they went through to get to Canada, specifically to Niagara. He agreed with how today's young people were portrayed and the difficulties they have in expressing their faith in a culture that does not want to hear it.

Long-time church members Arno and

Martha Bartel were interviewed for the video. Arno talked about his experiences coming to Canada, while Martha talked about a few highlights of church life over the years, particularly the choir and candlelight services. They both felt they were able to exercise what they believe within the framework of the church. Church programs were more the focal point of family life in the earlier years than they are now, they said.

Glass recommends *God in our Space* to those who do not understand Mennonite history. He was struck by the power of some statements by members who came to Canada with much difficulty and hardship, and how God interacted with them and how he interacts with his generation, making him think and ponder his own answers.

The Bartels see the documentary as a glimpse into the past, so rich in history and church life. They believe nothing is static, not even the church, and there have been many changes over the years. They said that one thing must remain constant: Following Jesus and continuing to look for God in the church today. ❧

PHOTO BY EDWIN JANZEN



The Andres family prepares to be interviewed for God in our Space, a documentary about Niagara United Mennonite Church's 75th anniversary.

❧ Pastors in transition

HERB SAWATZKY began as lead pastor of Bethany Mennonite Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., on April 1. He was most recently pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.



KAREN SCHIEL began as pastor of Harrow Mennonite Church, Ont., on March 1. She was most recently pastor of Rainham Mennonite Church, Selkirk, Ont.



TROY WATSON began as lead pastor of Avon Mennonite Church, Stratford, Ont., on April 1. He was most recently pastor of Quest Christian Community in St. Catharines, Ont.



DAVE TIESSEN began as pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church near Elora, Ont., on April 1. He was most recently pastor of Community Mennonite Fellowship, Drayton, Ont.



JOHN DOCHERTY was licensed for ministry at Montreal Mennonite Fellowship on May 25. He has been half-time interim pastor there since February 2013—shar-



ing the position with Gary and Lydia Harder. His other half-time job involves coordinating a network of therapists working with survivors of torture, that he helped found in 1990, and he has provided counselling to some of the people referred to the network. Docherty was director of Maison de l'Amitié (House of Friendship) in Montreal from 1989 to 2001, when he left to earn a master's degree at Université de Québec à Montréal.

COMMUNITY IN CYBERSPACE

Bearing Witness website gathers Anabaptist stories of struggle

BY ELIZABETH MILLER

Goshen College
GOSHEN, IND.

A Congolese pastor who forgave the armed men who had forced him to dig his own grave. A Ukrainian Mennonite Brethren family displaced to labour camps throughout the Soviet Union and finally reunited in Kazakhstan, only to face further resistance from the government in their new home. A missionary who accompanied Christian communities in China during the Second World War, even though she had to be in hiding much of the time.

These stories are part of a major story-gathering initiative called the Bearing

collaborative endeavour with a steering committee that includes representatives from six different Anabaptist-related groups.

The website invites users to read the stories, while also providing opportunities for deeper and broader engagement. Stories can easily be shared via a variety of social media platforms, and a comment forum follows each story, allowing for further conversation.

John D. Roth, professor of history and director of the Institute, hopes that the

The website invites users to read the stories, while also providing opportunities for deeper and broader engagement.

Witness Stories Project, an online collection of testimonies of Anabaptist believers primarily from the 19th- and 20th-centuries who have lived out their faith despite significant opposition and suffering.

For centuries, *Martyrs Mirror*, Thieleman van Braght's 1685 collection of martyr stories, has been the main source for Anabaptist stories of costly discipleship. While it remains inspiring and relevant, it does not include the testimonies of the Anabaptists who have also suffered for their faith in the years since 1685. Building on the spiritual legacy of *Martyrs Mirror*, the Bearing Witness Stories Project's new website—www.martyrstories.org—will gather and circulate these stories of costly discipleship within the Anabaptist global communion, extending from the 1500s to the present.

Bearing Witness aims to encourage faithfulness to the way of Jesus, while also strengthening relationships within the global Anabaptist church. Initiated by Goshen College's Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism, the project is a

website will inspire people who are already deeply committed to a Christian ethic of peace as well as those who have been disappointed by more institutional forms of Christianity.

Roth also anticipates that the website will be helpful to churches. "I hope that the site could become a useful resource for teachers at church-related schools, Sunday school teachers, pastors looking for sermon illustrations, perhaps individuals looking for weekly inspiration/devotional material," he says.

The website also hosts a blog, which will explore issues of spirituality, gender, inter-religious and ecumenical relationships, political advocacy and other themes that relate to the website's growing story collection.

The stories originate with Anabaptist faith communities from all over the world. One of the main purposes of the site is to elicit further storytelling, especially from communities that may not have yet had the chance to share their stories beyond a local or regional level.

"One Guatemalan church leader noted that the generation of Christians who lived through the Contra Wars of the 1980s is now aging," says Roth. "His hope was that the project could provide a framework for his church to gather the stories of ordinary people who suffered deeply during those years."



Anyone with a story to tell can submit it via the "share a story" form on the website. In this way, the project is more than simply a story collection; it is also a tool for churches to explore their own histories through storytelling in a global context. ❧

❧ Staff change

New consultant hired for MFC's Calgary office

Peter Dryden is the new stewardship consultant in the Calgary office of Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC). Dryden has a background in sales and customer service. He will work alongside Kevin Davidson providing serv-



Peter Dryden

ices to Alberta. In his new role at MFC, Dryden will provide private consultations with clients, deliver presentations on biblical stewardship and faithful generosity, and conduct workshops on topics related to faith and finance. Prior to joining MFC, Dryden served nine years as a project/program manager consultant for Dell Inc.; in this role, he worked with global teams to support global and regional customers. Dryden has lived in Calgary since 1996.

—Mennonite Foundation of Canada

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

COVER STORY

A bridge to community

'I saw God's Spirit leading in this job so many times': Larry Stoner

Mennonite Disaster Service
WEBSTER SPRINGS, W.V.

Thirteen metres isn't a long walk, but it can be a difficult journey when the creek between your house and the rest of your community is running high and the bridge across it is out.

Almost a year-and-a-half after their link to the road—and the rest of the world—was destroyed by Hurricane Sandy, Garcie and Josephine Cogar are happily traversing their new bridge that was built by Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteers.

The Cogars' plight was brought to the attention of Larry Stoner, MDS disaster response coordinator, by the Red Cross of West Virginia. After several calls and visits to the local authorities to confirm the logistics of permits and inspections, a plan began. Since the creek is only 13 metres

The project had an unusual shopping list for MDS, which primarily restores buildings, as it included two welded steel towers, cables, clamps and lumber for the bridge's 36.5-metre walking deck.

"I saw God's Spirit leading in this job so many times," Stoner says. "When it came time to actually take volunteers for the building of the bridge, we started to wonder who would be willing to go."

A few calls were made to long-time volunteers, and friends called friends. When people heard about the need, the numbers grew. Fourteen volunteers left early one morning to build a bridge.

A small crew of volunteers from Lancaster, Pa., and Harrisonburg, went to dig the foundations and pour the footers for the towers. The plan was to drive the

When people heard about the need, the numbers grew. Fourteen volunteers left early one morning to build a bridge.

wide, it was determined that the bridge wouldn't need a centre support, and that a "swinging bridge" was the solution.

Bridges aren't the norm for MDS, so Johann Zimmerman, an engineer from Harrisonburg, Va., was brought in. Zimmerman has designed swinging bridges in the past and was very interested in the project. He made a visit to the site, met the family, saw the need and volunteered to design the bridge pro bono.

It took several months to complete the design, and the Cogar family was a little apprehensive that this would really happen.

Stoner also wondered the same thing. But, as he relates, "The Lord provided answers each time we had a question."

concrete truck through the stream to get the concrete to the far footer. But when that day arrived, it was too wet and snowy, so a contact in Harrisonburg who had a concrete pump was called and the concrete hose was pulled through the stream to complete the job.

The week of the build, the weather was perfect. "We thought it would take from Monday to Friday [to finish the bridge]," Stoner says. "They finished Thursday at noon and that night a huge thunderstorm went through the area."

The family and community were great supports for the project. The family helped clean up the debris from the old bridge and cut down two trees that were too close to



MDS volunteers construct the footers for a new swinging bridge that provides safe passage between the home of Josephine and Garcie Cogar and their community of Webster Springs, W.V. The original bridge was washed out during Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

the new bridge.

Meals were served to the volunteers by the extended Cogar family and local churches in Webster Springs.

"We have a good working relationship with the local Baptist and Methodist churches, where our volunteers were fed and lodged," Stoner says, adding, "Another example of the Spirit's involvement."

With this bridge completed, MDS has been asked to check out another one that needs replacing. ❧

MDS PHOTO BY PAUL HUNT

COMMUNITY ACROSS HISTORICAL DIVIDES

Fostering a 'culture of remembering'

Acknowledging past conflicts seen as a path to future peace

BY JULIE BELL

Mennonite Central Committee Canada

It may seem like a strange backdrop for a conversation about peace.

The Vraca fortress on the outskirts of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is crumbling, marked with graffiti and overtaken by weeds and litter.

The building—the site of executions and battles that claimed thousands of lives during the Second World War and the siege of Sarajevo in the 1990s—dates back to 1898. Tamara Šmidling, program coordinator of the Peace Academy Foundation in Sarajevo, sits on a bench near the ruins and talks about the history of her region.

“World War II was a war between people of different ethnic backgrounds,” she says. “We should have listened to the lessons of that time. Many people believe the conflicts in the 1990s were vengeance for that war.”

With funding from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the Foundation is implementing “The culture of remembering,” whose goal is to achieve a lasting peace not by denying or ignoring history, but by acknowledging and talking about it.

Šmidling says that while most people in Bosnia and Herzegovina live peacefully alongside their neighbours, many

still identify strongly with one of three groups: Bošniak, Serb or Croat. She says each group has its own horrific memories of past atrocities.

“We have a lot of discussion about our own victims, but when it comes to thinking about what one side has done to others, we don't want to talk about it,” she says.

Šmidling says nationalist governments and other groups enable or promote ethnic divisions, but she believes the focus must shift to talking about what people have in common.

“So memorialization, or remembering, is really about telling the story from the point of view that everyone suffered, that everyone has victims,” she says.

Initially, the project will bring together people from three communities for educational workshops on how memories influence people's views of the world, and how sharing those stories can contribute to unity and peace.

Šmidling says those lessons are relevant even now, as burial sites from the 1990s war are still being discovered.

“Every victim has the right to be recognized, identified and named,” she says. “And to be buried appropriately.”

MCC PHOTO BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY



Tamara Šmidling is program coordinator of the Peace Academy Foundation in Sarajevo. MCC is supporting a Foundation program called 'The culture of remembering'. The goal is to promote lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the sharing of past conflicts by various ethnic groups.

Eventually, the goal is to research and publicize memorial sites to encourage open public discussion about the past.

The site of the Vraca fortress is one of those places of remembering. A wall in the adjoining Vraca Memorial Park lists the names of 11,000 people who died during the Second World War.

The park was declared a national monument in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2005, but the site has been virtually abandoned to the elements.

“You cannot just skip over these terrible things and say, okay, from now on we are all brothers and sisters,” Šmidling says. “We are striving to have a constructive way of remembering, which doesn't follow ethnic divisions and lines. This is our main challenge here.” ❧

PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN



Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) in Canada continues to thrive, attendees at the B.C. MDS banquet in Abbotsford heard on March 8. Guest speaker Janet Plenert, the Canadian MDS director of operations, said that 1,250 Canadians served with MDS for one week or more in 2013. Quoting I Peter 4:10, Plenert said, 'We can use many different gifts,' as she shattered the stereotype of MDS being mainly for older, retired men. Currently, a third are female and 30 percent are under age 26, with 57 percent either short-term or first-time volunteers. Pictured, Plenert, right, greets Sue Kaethler, 85, of Abbotsford, who, with her husband Fred, has served on more than 20 MDS projects since retirement.

FINDING COMMUNITY AMIDST THE PAIN

Tired of the violence

In bombing aftermath, MCC Nigeria sees signs of peace

BY LINDA ESPENSHADE
Mennonite Central Committee

When Mugu Zakka Bako arrived at the scene of twin bomb blasts on May 20 at a busy market in the city of Jos, Nigeria, he saw more than the destruction and injured people.

He saw Muslims and Christians working shoulder to shoulder helping to rescue people from the debris. They consoled and talked with each other, said Bako, peace coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Nigeria.

“If not for the peace work that has been taking place in Plateau State [whose capital is Jos] over the last number of years, this kind of incident could easily have erupted into religious violence,” said Matthew Tangbuin, MCC Nigeria’s program advisor and business manager.

Tangbuin is referring to intensive peace-building work that many groups in Jos, including MCC partners, are doing to diffuse violence and encourage connections between Muslims and Christians.

Plateau State lies in an area between Nigeria’s largely Muslim north and the predominantly Christian south, and is home to diverse religious and ethnic groups. The attack that killed 122 people was the first large-scale incident of violence in Jos over the past two years.

MCC staff and its partners are safe, although several witnessed the explosion. Others were close enough for debris to fall on them outside the MCC office, which is about a half-kilometre from the explosion. Many people connected with MCC knew someone killed or injured in the blasts, some spending hours searching through charred bodies to find loved ones. Seven volunteers working for MCC’s partner, Faith Alive Clinic, were killed or are presumed dead.

Although no group has claimed responsibility for the attacks, people in Jos commonly attribute it to Boko Haram. This

group of Islamist militants, who oppose education for girls and other western influences, got worldwide attention in April after abducting and threatening to sell more than 270 school girls in northeast Nigeria.

For the past 20 years, however, the periodic violence that plagued Plateau State was not commonly tied to Boko Haram, but to a complex set of factors based on the way people polarize religious and ethnic groups to advance their political purposes in Nigeria, said Mary Lou Klassen, a peace theology teacher.

“Whenever there was an attack in a particular place, people from other areas started killing innocent ones without verifying the cause of the conflicts,” noted Bako.

But Dave Klassen, MCC representative in Nigeria, said people are tired of the violence, which may make them more determined to work for peace and more open to listening to their friends who discourage a violent response. “People have a united front against Boko Haram,” he said.

One of MCC’s largest partners, Emergency Preparedness Response Teams, has created a web of volunteers across Plateau State trained to recognize growing tensions and diffuse them. At the bombings in Jos, volunteers were there, many in an official capacity as first responders, Dave said. Yet even as they worked to save lives or direct traffic, they were alert for signs of follow-up violence.

MCC’s peacebuilding work has been a priority in Nigeria since 2001. Primarily, MCC works behind the scenes, and has sent more than 35 Nigerians for peacebuilding training to learn about topics such as conflict prevention, trauma healing, restorative justice and advocacy.

“Many have come back dramatically transformed,” Dave said.

No one can draw a definitive line between the ongoing peacebuilding work of



MCC Nigeria peace coordinator Mugu Zakka Bako speaks at a meeting for Emergency Preparedness Response Teams in Barkin Ladi, Nigeria. Bako and response-team volunteers were at the scene of the recent bombing in Jos, ready to address signs of violence.

many organizations and the lack of violence following the bombings, Dave said. Yet the peaceful response is hopeful for Nigerian peacemakers. ❧

MCC PHOTO BY DAVE KLASSEN

GOD AT WORK IN US

RADIO COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE PRAIRIES

Broadcaster brings his faith to the airwaves

One of Golden West's first employees, Elmer Hildebrand has now been leading the company for a half-century

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
ALTONA, MAN.

As a young boy, Elmer Hildebrand enjoyed selling greeting cards and garden seeds to his neighbours in the farming community near Altona. He had no idea where these interests and skills of his would lead. All he knew was that he didn't want to farm.

When he finished high school, he knew that he needed to do something and so he approached the little radio station that was being constructed in Altona, to see if he could be a salesman for it.

"They didn't think I could sell, but they asked if I'd be willing to be an ad writer," he recalls. On March 4, 1957, nine days before Golden West Broadcasting Ltd.'s first station—CFAM—went on the air, Hildebrand became one of its first employees, banging out commercials on a manual upright typewriter. By 1964, he was the station manager.

CFAM was launched specifically to serve the rural southern Manitoba population.

"The only time Winnipeg stations would talk about southern Manitoba was when there was a big crisis of some kind," he says. "The concept was to provide local news coverage and information, as well as Christian programming. That concept really hasn't changed. We still do that, only more professionally. We still have the same philosophy to provide quality local service. People will get national and international stories other places, and so we focus on local stories."

When Hildebrand became manager, he took this commitment to serve the local community even further.



"One of the first things I did when I became manager was hire and train local staff," he says. "Up until then, the people that we hired were coming and going because they were coming from across the province. Once they had experience, they would move on to bigger centres."

Under Hildebrand's management, the company has grown to become the largest

independent radio broadcaster in the country, with more than 40 radio stations and 500 employees across the Prairies, from Kenora, Ont., to High River, Alta. Today, Golden West continues the practice of hiring local employees in whatever community they are based and training them.

"The biggest thrill for me is seeing local young people hired and then making a career for themselves in our organization," he says, adding, "Trying to provide wholesome family programming [across four provinces] is what we do, and that concept is directed from here and from Steinbach [Man.]."

Hildebrand, who currently lives in Winnipeg and attends Bethel Mennonite Church with his wife Hilda, says he cannot separate his faith from his work. It is integral to his business how programs are selected, how the stations support and build community, and how staff are treated.

"We are not a Christian station, but a station that operates on Christian principles," he explains. "When you think of Christian stations, you think of gospel programs 24/7. We have some gospel programs, but not just that. We are a community radio station that gets involved with all aspects of the community and that



Elmer Hildebrand, left, chief executive officer of Golden West Broadcasting Ltd. in Altona, Man., is pictured with Brad Fehr, an on-air radio host/producer.

We are a community radio station that gets involved with all aspects of the community and that includes church."

includes church"

In its earlier days, Golden West had a ministerial committee to help the board discern which religious organizations' programs would be aired. Since 2005, though, all company shares have been held by Hildebrand, his family and senior staff, and Hildebrand now describes himself as the "gatekeeper" for religious programming.

"As an organization, we have tried hard to . . . be faithful to our listeners and that whole process has involved the church throughout the years," he says. "We, as an organization, make sure that we reflect the church across the area. We have done this since the beginning. We carry church broadcasts."

There are a few Mennonite programs that are regularly aired, but Hildebrand laments that "the Mennonite programs have almost disappeared. Personally, I try very hard to have a strong Mennonite presence, especially on a Sunday morning, but it is harder to maintain because the programs aren't available. I'm very committed to providing time for those kinds of radio broadcasts."

Today, at age 77, Hildebrand is still chief executive officer of Golden West and maintains an office at the headquarters in Altona, commuting from Winnipeg about once a week. He is currently giving time and energy to leading the fundraising campaign for the major building expansion underway at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). He was instrumental in convincing CMU to offer a communications course and continues to underwrite the program.

"We hope that communications students at CMU will have some spiritual grounding that will bring a different perspective to their stories," he says.

Last year, Hildebrand, who is well respected for his broadcasting acumen, received the Order of Canada. ❏

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ARTBEAT

Faith explored through literature

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan hosts continuing education seminar

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ
SASKATCHEWAN CORRESPONDENT

“I’m hoping it’ll be like a three-day book club,” said one participant of the continuing education event offered by Mennonite Church Saskatchewan recently. Seventeen participants representing 12 congregations gathered at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon to learn about “Faith and literature.” Cindy Wallace, assistant

professor of English at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan, and a member of Warman Mennonite Church, led the May 20-22 seminar.

Wallace, who teaches courses on Catholic and post-colonial literature, asked participants to define “Christian literature.” Suggestions included popular fiction marketed by Christian publishers, works containing Christian morals or values, and pieces intended to teach Christian truths. But she suggested that, in order to be termed “literature,” a work must be imaginative and its form should matter as much as its content.

Outlining why Christians should read, Wallace said cognitive scientists have discovered that readers of fiction are more empathetic than non-readers. “Reading

Wallace, however, suggested that Christians . . . should not limit themselves to particular genres, or even to Christian authors.

helps us understand others,” she said. Reading also challenges people’s notions about God and their place in the universe, she said, adding that they should also read to discover beauty and richness, and for fun, rest and enjoyment.

Not everyone enjoys reading, so how can avid readers share their enjoyment without implying judgment on non-readers? Wallace said she has come to view her own reading life as a sort of “quiet monasticism, rather than zealous evangelicalism.”

Many readers prefer formulaic writing because it is familiar and doesn’t demand as much of them.

Bruce Jantzen, pastor of Laird Mennonite Church, said he enjoys reading westerns, but admitted, “You can read Louis L’Amour and watch TV, carry on a conversation . . . It doesn’t require as much of you.”

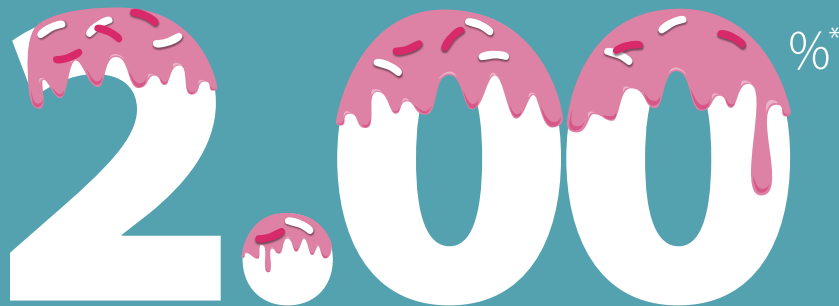
Wallace, however, suggested that Christians should read works that challenge them, make them think and expand

(Continued on page 30)



Participants at Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s continuing education seminar, ‘Faith and literature,’ held recently at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, explore the transformative nature of literature through Toni Morrison’s novel A Mercy.

We turned **50** this year. Not bad for a local credit union that started out with \$22 in a cashbox. That got us thinking, "We need to thank our members for 50 awesome years!" So what did we do? We *sweetened* our 1 year GIC with **0.50%** extra interest and we want to share this with you! Come in and celebrate our anniversary with some *icing* on our rates.



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Rooted In Faith  Growing the Future

(Continued from page 29)

their horizons. They should not limit themselves to particular genres, or even to Christian authors. She cited Madeleine L'Engle, who, in her book *Walking on Water*, writes, "There is nothing so secular that it cannot be sacred, and that is one of the deepest messages of the incarnation."

How, then, should Christians read? According to Wallace, they should read with attention and humility, being open to receiving the text without preconceived notions. Wallace cited C. S. Lewis, who, in *An Experiment in Criticism*, wrote, "The first demand any work of art makes upon us is surrender."

Literature, said Wallace, is representational. It may mirror a person's life, providing encouragement in one's faith journey, or it may offer insights into the lives of others. But although it gives insight, she cautioned that literature does not give expertise. There is always more to real life than what one finds in fiction, she said.

Literature can be redemptive. Suffering or sacrifice that brings about goodness characterizes many works of fiction. It can offer readers encouragement, but may also cause them to stumble, as in the "myth of redemptive violence," she said.

When read with attention, literature can be transformative, according to Wallace. This is especially true of poetry, where a writer hones in on metaphor and sound. "Poetic language," she said, "can change the way we see the world; it can even change the world itself."

With a view to exploring how literature can be all of these things, Wallace had participants study several literary works, including poetry, a short story and Toni Morrison's novel *A Mercy*.

Ray Friesen, co-pastor of Emmaus Mennonite Church, Wymark, said reading and discussing the novel "helped me to think about reading for different reasons."

The final question participants wrestled with was, "Where do we find time to read?" "We won't find the time," Friesen said. Instead, "we make time" for reading.

And Larry Epp, a retired English teacher from Rosthern, quipped, "We're an odd people who think that reading is necessary for survival." ❧

PHOTO BY MONIQUE PEARCE



High school students at this year's CAMS Music Festival rehearse with director Malcolm Edwards, right.

COMMUNITY THROUGH MUSIC

Bound together in perfect harmony

Menno Simons Christian School hosts 2014 Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools Music Festival

BY BYRON THIESSEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
CALGARY

Three-hundred-and-fifty Mennonite students from across Canada swelled the halls of Calgary's Menno Simons Christian School for the 2014 Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools (CAMS) Music Festival over the first four days of May, bringing energy, enthusiasm and incredible musical talent with them.

The music festival, which occurs every three or four years, is an opportunity to foster community among Mennonite schools students, staff and parents. The love of music and the opportunity to worship and fellowship together were gifts that everyone experienced.

This year, nine of the 11 CAMS schools participated in the festival. Five were from Manitoba: Mennonite Collegiate Institute, Gretna; Steinbach Christian High School; Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg; and the Bedson and Agassiz campuses of Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary Schools. Other participating schools were Rosthern Junior College, Sask.; Mennonite Educational Institution, Abbotsford, B.C.; Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener,

Ont.; and Menno Simons Christian School.

The theme for this year's music festival was "Building harmony: Connecting, worshipping and celebrating," based on Colossians 3:14: "Put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

Erica Phare-Bergh directed the junior choir of elementary and junior high students, accompanied by Faye Klassen. The high school students sang in the senior and mass choirs, directed by Malcolm Edwards and accompanied by Audrey Janzen. Mike Gardner directed the high school student concert band.

Ed Kaufman, pastor of First Mennonite Church in Calgary, opened the festival on May 1 with a devotional based on the event's theme. Afterwards, the audience was treated to music from The Blue Imperials, a Calgary jazz band, and Winnipeg comedian Matt Falk, before being challenged to have a voice for the voiceless by Harmony Through Harmony, a Calgary choir.

The following evening, choirs and bands from each school showcased their

musical talent, bringing their own sounds and energy to the festival. Throughout May 2 and the morning of May 3, the choirs rehearsed together in preparation for their performance at Ambrose University College on May 4.

Besides the music, the students got to ride the city's Light Rail System and city buses and experience the Calgary Zoo.

The students gathered together for morning worship on May 4 at Menno Simons Christian School, where Olympic speed-skating gold medalist Cindy Klassen was interviewed by students. Doug Klassen, pastor of Foothills Mennonite Church, spoke on Colossians 3:12-17.

The culminating event of the festival was the May 14 afternoon performance. With all of the participants singing in either the junior choir, concert band or senior choir, the Ambrose University College gymnasium was filled with song. The final number, sang by the mass choir, was a powerful way to end the weekend.

Isabella MacDonald, a Grade 5 student at Menno Simons, who participated in the festival, stated with great joy, "I loved it. The harmony and everything else! The entire music festival was amazing."

Students, staff and parents look forward to the next CAMS Music Festival, bringing Mennonite school students together to build harmony in the musical sense and as a community of believers united in the body of Christ. ❧

Byron Thiessen is principal of Menno Simons Christian School.

BOOK REVIEW

From the neighbourhood out

Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times.

By Paul Born. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2014. 169 pages.

REVIEWED BY HENRY PAETKAU

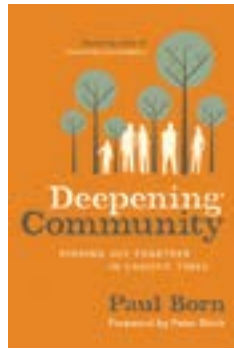
When asked, “What is the most important thing people can do to make a difference in the world?” Paul Born often answers, “Bring chicken soup to your neighbour.”

Chicken soup or some other culturally appropriate meal is a significant act of community building, Born observes, because it requires knowing and interacting with your neighbour. And deep community “is built from the neighbourhood out, from knowing your neighbour to sharing your life with your neighbour to caring for one another in your neighbourhood to building social capital by forming associations, clubs, faith communities, and so on.”

Deepening Community begins with an invitation “to invest yourself in deepening community—to discover or rediscover the joy of being together.”

That need to belong and form community are expressions of a deep human yearning, the author observes, and are essential to living joyfully. Each of us is connected to a series of communities, whether defined by family, neighbourhood, faith community, club or social activity. But not all interactions have the same meaning and impact. The deeper the community, the greater the joy in our lives.

For many, the experience of deep community is increasingly difficult to find in our complex and chaotic times, defined as we are by individualism, ideology, busyness, fear and isolation. The experience of deep community has become elusive and unfamiliar for many. It requires intentional action.



Born’s book reflects the responses of more than 500 people to an extensive survey undertaken by the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement, of which the author is cofounder and president, regarding the meaning and experience of community today. The conclusion? Community can be vibrant—and it has the power

to change everything!

“Community shapes our identity and quenches our thirst for belonging,” he writes. “It helps us put life into perspective and sort out real danger from perceived danger. Community has the capacity to improve our physical, mental and economic health, as well as our sense of happiness and fulfillment. It has the power to unite us in a common bond as we work together for a better world.”

The author identifies three types of community: shallow, fear-based and deep. Shallow communities are unable to fulfill our innate need for belonging, while fear-based communities set people against each other and keeps them apart. Born recounts his own family story, the experience of Mennonite refugees from the Soviet Union, to illustrate the power of fear and how many in this community have overcome it by working together to make the world a better and safer place for themselves and others. Most of the book is a primer of sorts for deepening the experience of community.

Going deeper and finding the joy of community involves four acts of interpersonal engagement that will sound familiar to many readers. It involves sharing our stories, enjoying one another,

caring for one another and working together for the well-being of others. Perhaps too few of us have thought consciously about how we do this in our families, friendship groups, or the churches and organizations we take for granted. Without them, we risk losing the very essence of what has given our lives meaning and purpose. And we watch with puzzlement and amazement as younger generations discover and recreate it using social media!

Still, the essential characteristics of these communities are the same, the author maintains. And they involve four distinct and identifiable acts of community building.

Deepening community begins by sharing our stories. It grows through spending time together and enjoying one other. Deepening community expresses itself naturally in the care shown for one another. (The writer argues here for “the survival of the kindest”!) And it grows deepest when that community joins together in common cause for those beyond itself.

The book recounts many individual experiences of seeking and finding meaningful community. Born is a captivating storyteller, whether it’s his own or another’s. Each story is followed by helpful and practical observations about how community is built and deepened. These summaries offer a veritable smorgasbord of practical suggestions to inform and equip those seeking to deepen their own experience of community.

Born has dedicated his life to building healthy neighbourhoods and vibrant communities. Not surprisingly, the book concludes with the invitation to discover the joy of deeper community by joining with others in a virtual community of shared experiences at DeepeningCommunity.org.

Is deep community possible in our chaotic times? Not only is it possible, Born asserts, it’s imperative. The challenge is to go from knowing it is possible to making it so. This book provides an essential connection between knowing and doing. ❧

Henry Paetkau is area church minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

It's up to us to create community

"I'm really enjoying reading the book – Deepening Community. As a Mennonite pastor I'm always thinking about building community, and since we recently moved from one community to another, this book is giving me lots of food for thought. Thanks for writing this Paul."

- Carol Penner

**Deepening
Community**
FINDING JOY TOGETHER
IN CHAOTIC TIMES
Paul Born
Foreword by Peter Block

ABOUT THE BOOK

Community shapes our identity, quenches our thirst for belonging, and bolsters our physical, mental, emotional, and economic health.

But in the chaos of modern life, community ties have become unravelled, leaving many feeling afraid or alone in the crowd, grasping at shallow substitutes for true community.

In this thoughtful and moving book, Paul Born describes the four pillars of deep community: sharing our stories, taking the time to enjoy one another, taking care of one another, and working together for a better world.

To show the role each of these plays, he shares his own stories – as a child of **Mennonite refugees** and as a long-time **community activist**.

It's up to us to create community. The opportunity is right in front of us if we have the courage and conviction to pursue it.

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Nurturing Community Spoke by Spoke

By Tamara Sandor

A community centre is like a bicycle wheel. At its axis, we find the mission or vision around which all the action turns. It is a vision of the kind of public life we want to help create for ourselves and for each other. Each program is a spoke that extends out into the community in a different direction.

At the Maison de L'Amitié, a Mennonite community centre established in 1974 in the Plateau neighbourhood in Montréal, these spokes have changed and multiplied over the years so that, today, the centre offers to the public a rich variety of entry-points for engaging in community life.

The largest year-round program at the Maison is its language program, which offers affordable second-language courses in French, English, and Spanish. In 2013, the 9,000 plus hours donated by volunteer teachers benefited more than 1,300 students.

In a city like Montréal, with a multicultural population and two dominant languages, it isn't a coincidence that language classes are one of the centre's

most important programs. The challenge of becoming proficient in both English and French can present a huge barrier to newcomers wanting to participate in the cultural life of the city.

But not only does the Maison strive to give its students the linguistic tools they need to go out and make connections, it also aims to frame the classes themselves as opportunities for sharing and connection. Fabienne Garlatti, former volunteer teacher and current pedagogical consultant at the Maison says, "For many students, the classroom is as much a space for learning as it is for meeting others. I've had classes where the majority of students had arrived in Montreal less than a month previously and the classroom was their first chance to meet other people!"

The Maison emphasizes this organic relationship between learning and socialising in its curriculum, and follows up with events like weekly community lunches where students, volunteers, and staff can mingle and eat together.

Food is a recurring theme in the

Maison's approach to community-building. Another of the centre's superb projects is the farmer's market held every Thursday and Sunday from June to October. In 2013, the market attracted almost 10,000 customers. Plateau-dwellers love the freshness of the produce and the convenient location, but over 93 percent of them listed the relationship with producers as among their top four reasons for shopping there. Like all the initiatives at the Maison, the glue that holds the market together consists of human relationships.

There are, of course, activities other than eating that have the power to bring people together. The Duluth en'Arts festival, which last year featured more than 33 free outdoor musical performances over the course of eight weekends, brings the neighbourhood together to appreciate local artists. Meanwhile, the Intercultural Outdoor Recreation program organises tours in which Montréalers old and new can discover the green spaces in their city.

A musical performance or a hike up Mount Royal offers an opportunity to connect in a way that seems impossible when just passing as strangers on the street. As Duluth en'Arts organiser, Gilles Bédard, puts it, "Les gens viennent en famille, ils se parlent et se rendent compte qu'ils sont voisins..." ("People come out with their families, they start talking to each other and





realise that they're neighbours....")

Dialogue on Duluth, an initiative that hosts peace-building workshops, focuses less on the sweet things in life (like food, music, and nature) that have the power to transcend culture, and rather works to explore conflict and the role of dialogue in reconciling the ideas and opinions of people with different religions, philosophies, and cultural references.

The Maison de l'Amitié is, at its core, a work initiated and supported by Mennonites. The building is home to the Mennonite Fellowship of Montréal. But its reach is much wider. The current director, Luke Martin, sees the Maison as an extension of the church. Religious community can be healing. Sharing a common language and tradition can help one to deepen and develop one's faith. But, as Martin explains to me, "the language and form of religion can also create barriers to understanding." Thus, in addition to one's own religious practice, it becomes necessary to reach out and cultivate more inclusive and diverse spaces in which to practice the Christian values of mutual support and sharing within community.

Martin sums up his faith in the power of inclusivity in this way: "Regardless of the religious beliefs of the participants, congregating gives meaning to people's lives. When people are together, working

and sharing, God is there."

2014 marks the Maison de l'Amitié's 40th anniversary. The celebrations taking place over the next few months will include an open house, a 10-year reunion, and a potluck gala, all of which will work to renew existing bonds and partnerships as well as to foster new connections.

As with any community, the Maison contains a center and a periphery, but

what the organisation does well is to keep the lines (or spokes!) of possibility open for movement between different levels of engagement. By hosting a diverse range of accessible events and programs, and by tirelessly reaching out to residents, businesses, and like-minded organisations, the Maison de l'Amitié lets its neighbourhood know that it is a place where old faces and new faces are always welcome.



Montreal's Maison de l'Amitié offers various entry points into community life: language classes, community performances, a farmers' market, and music events.



Supporting our neighbours, a lifestyle choice

“The importance of service within Christian life is very central to our identity and our calling,” says David Leis, director of communications and donor relations for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada. “In service we are not only faithful to our Creator, but we also build our community.”

That desire to serve was always part of Frank and Carolyn Elias’s retirement plans. When their adult daughter became seriously ill with Lupus, they looked for a place to serve locally. “We couldn’t leave her,” says Carolyn.

The MCC Thrift Shop in nearby Carman, Man., provided them the opportunity for which they were looking. Carolyn began volunteering at the shop even before being fully retired from her job as postmistress, and Frank joined her several years later when he retired from his high school teaching career in 1995.

They have continued to be very actively involved in every aspect of the store, spending two or three eight-hour days every week at the store. That does not include the time at home when Frank is repairing donated computers, typing up agendas for the monthly board meetings he chairs, or when Carolyn is searching online for information about antiques that she places on silent auction or framing the pictures and paintings that will sell for a better price once they are properly framed.

What compels people like the Elias

to give so much of their time in service when they are also devoted grandparents, gardeners and church members?

“We were looking for an opportunity to put our faith into action,” says Frank. “As long as God gives us good health, we want to serve,” adds Carolyn.

“This call to service ministry is quite astounding,” says Leis. “MCC is a service ministry on behalf of our churches that doesn’t just occur in 63 countries but right here at home. Thirty-thousand volunteers are directly involved in MCC service projects in North America; 10,000 of those are in the thrift shops.”

Volunteers also work at Ten Thousand Villages, relief sales, meat canning, material resource centres and other MCC programs. Last year, those volunteers were responsible for shipping 439,000 cans of meat, 2,100 kilograms of bath soap, nearly 55,000 quilts and almost 200,000 school kits, reports Leis. “I don’t know of many church-based charities that would come close to that.”

“There’s a lot of people who

are very alone and on the margins of society,” says Leis. “So when you think of serving others, that is a very powerful Christian witness in a society where Christianity is often pushed to the margins. Christ’s ministry began with meeting people’s basic needs and then the conversations and relationships followed. Today, that ministry is needed more than ever, I think.”

The Carman MCC Thrift Shop is a place where that ministry happens. It has become a significant vehicle through which the Mennonite churches in the area work together in Christian witness. At least on four occasions fires have destroyed the homes of local families.

“I remember when a woman escaped the fire in her home without any shoes,” says Frank. “She came here to the Thrift Shop because she knew we would help provide her with the basics. It’s a place where we build a relationship with the community.”

“That transformation is all in the name of Christ,” Leis stresses. “It is a powerful way to underline our identity. We do this because Christ calls us to do it. It is truly amazing because we have an opportunity to build on that strength of service. When we get to know the needs of others, we can’t help but



Frank and Carolyn Elias

*‘It’s a place where we
build a relationship
with the community.’
(Frank Elias, Thrift
Shop volunteer)*

develop relationships with them. When someone comes into the thrift shop they don't just become a consumer, they become our neighbour over time, and that is a profound ministry."

The mission doesn't just touch the lives of people who are in need, but it also touches the lives of those who serve. A community is built among the 60 volunteers who work together at the Carman Thrift Shop. The volunteer application process requests only that they "serve in the name of Christ."

"It has brought us together," says Frank. "We share stories and lots of laughter."

Leis was told by one store volunteer, "I serve here because I get joy out of being here in an environment that is so positive while my home is a disaster."

The Carman Thrift Shop donates \$20,000 to MCC every month. "MCC recognizes that it is important for the store to participate in its community," says Frank, so 5 percent of its gross can be donated to local causes.

On the other hand, people from all walks of life often come to the store to make a donation when a disaster happens somewhere in the world. "They say they trust MCC," Frank says.

MCC began with the purpose of helping other Mennonites who were suffering famine and violence in Russia. That purpose has expanded to help others around the world in the name of Christ. "MCC has direct impact on seven million people worldwide in a very direct way," says Leis.

'Walking together, creating community'

Anna Vogt, from Dawson City, Yukon, is a service worker with MCC Colombia partner Justapaz, serving in communications for political advocacy in the city of



Community leaders from Mampuján, Colombia, Juana Alicia Ruiz and Alexander Villarreal with Anna Vogt (Right to left)

Bogota. She shares her story:

"I arrived in Mampuján, Colombia, ready to idealize the community leaders. But working there taught me about the challenges of leadership: juggling meetings with family commitments, dealing with gossip and small-town politics, and speaking with courage and wisdom in unsafe spaces.

"Working for change is exhausting! There were press interviews and prizes, but also frustration and confusion as the community engaged in a reparations process. However, through everything, these community leaders remain ordinary people.

"I remember apologizing to one of the leaders, Juana Alicia Ruiz, in my first month for some little thing. She stopped hand-washing clothes, answering phone calls and directing her children, and laughed. 'Anna,' she said, 'you know that we, and you included, are only human beings, right? That none of us are perfect, and none of us are expecting perfection, right?'"

"Throughout my two years, there were many moments of frustration alongside my admiration. But only the admission that we were all humans working together allowed us to develop

a trusting relationship. They would mock my Spanish and tell me to relax, and I would make fun of them for being late, and tell them to stop talking on their phones while driving motorcycles. And then we would get down to work.

"Conclusion: life is complicated and there is no right action or ideal person to create perfect change. Rather, change involves small steps taken together with a group seeking to make a difference in local community.

"I am slowly getting over my hero worship and learning to see beauty in everyday people, including myself. As I enter relationships with people, not because they are my heroes, but because they are my friends, I see my own potential to love and to take small steps. Not because I am great, but because I am human."

"The key is to never forget our identity," says Leis. "Our identity in Christ is the foundation of our values and those values are the reason why we do this work. We are not a secular organization. We are a Christian organization and that is why we do what we do."



David Leis

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MEDA Community



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Through their new enterprises, men and women discover opportunities for collaboration

with their neighbours: They form cooperatives to buy supplies in bulk and sell the fruits of their labours. They create village saving and lending associations to better finance their small businesses and save for the future. And they experience the exhilaration of working for a common goal.

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With success and security for themselves and their families, they reach out to their community in the hopes of creating a better world.

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We have seen the pride of women in Afghanistan and

Pakistan who have earned the respect of their families and communities through their new economic activities.

And we have experienced the joy that comes from new hope in the eyes of parents as they see bright new opportunities for their children's future.

Respect and empowerment bring lasting change, lifting communities out of poverty.

“There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community.”

—Scott Peck



Caring with your finances

Benjamin Janzen

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At Mennonite Savings and Credit Union (MSCU), we’ve built a cooperative on the principles of faithful finance through integrity, compassion, and responsible stewardship. After 50 years of balancing one member’s deposit with another member’s loan we continue to put mutual aid at the forefront of our thinking in service to the communities we serve. We strive to be a place where members find they are cared for through secure transactions, excellent advice, and financial solutions that build our faith community.

This is no easy task in practice. The financial system is heavily regulated and structured to value low institutional risk over individual needs. The competition for business is fierce and it can be a challenge to find pricing that meets both of these aspects in a cooperative and sustainable way.

Despite these pressures, we have been able to offer our members choices to care for their faith community in unique ways. Many of these choices have developed because our members asked for, then helped their credit union operate

differently than the rest of the marketplace. Socially responsible investments, charitable giving, and green loans have all been part of this development.

Two products of note are, to our knowledge, not found anywhere else in Canada. They are practical ways we partner with our members to extend caring, compassion and faithfulness to our broader community.

Member Assistance Services (MAS) is a program that often prompts

astonishment from our financial peers – banks and credit unions alike. In simplest terms, the program has two streams: one for those in crisis and one for matching the needs in our community. When a member is in crisis – after a job

loss, fire, significant death in the family etc. – MAS provides relief to loan agreements for up to a year in the form of no or low interest and deferred payments.

It is our belief and experience that, with time, members are able to regain their footing and rebuild their financial life.

The second stream directly connects member loans and deposits, helping relationships be strengthened without concerns for money being owed that can cause rifts. We have supported all kinds of relationships: grandparents with grandkids,

...we have been able to offer our members choices to care for their faith community in unique ways.

...it is the day-to-day working of our staff that makes compassion come alive.

churches with members, friends with each other. When MSCU takes on the responsibility of managing the process, members are relieved and can work together in mutual aid.

We also offer a product that helps care for the broader church community called Church Builder GICs. How does it work? In June and July of each year, when our members invest in a 36-month guaranteed investment certificate (GIC) earning a competitive interest rate, MSCU donates an additional 0.5% bonus interest to the church or church-based organization of the member’s choice.

This unique product has led to over 170 churches and church-based organizations receiving over \$312,000. Some churches have even invested money and designated themselves, essentially getting the extra percentage in cash each year for three years. We feel Church Builder GICs make a clear demonstration to our members that we care about their churches and want to follow their voice by giving them the opportunity to control some of MSCU’s charitable giving.

While having products like these is important to our members, it is the day-to-day working of our staff that makes compassion come alive. We have developed a culture where ‘sales’ is often an uncomfortable word but

‘member-service’ is embedded in all that we do. That’s easy to say but hard to live out when a member becomes demanding or has made decisions putting themselves or others in financial risk. Because finances impact all our lives so

closely, sensitivity and patience with a spirit of volunteerism are needed, all while working within strong regulations. We are grateful for those who choose to lead members through this complexity.

As part of celebrating our 50th anniversary of serving our extended faith community, we gathered stories from the MSCU archives, our members and our staff and stitched them together into a book – **Quilting a Credit Union: Stories of Mutual Aid** (available for free, digitally on our website or physically by request). From the last of the twenty-five stories, here is an excerpt that describes our dream of being a caring faithful financial institution.

We hope our credit union will be the place to go to unpack questions and curiosities about living out faith and finances and that we are seen foremost as a true partner. We hope that we will have developed relationships deep enough to know what each member values and have the knowledge to offer ideas and suggestions in their best interests.

It isn't about growth, it's about relevance. What good are retained earnings and larger assets if our service isn't improving and our members are burdened with larger debts instead of living out faithful lives?

We hope each member will embrace the view that when they are successful – every member, church, business, and farm – in governing their faith and finances, only then does the credit union see itself as successful. When God's provision and guidance are acknowledged and joined with individual responsibility, only then is mutual aid made possible in the interconnectedness of our faith communities.

What do you think about your banking now? Can it be part of how you care for your community?



PERSONAL REFLECTION

This is 30

‘What have I accomplished?’ might be the wrong question

AARON EPP

YOUNG VOICES CO-EDITOR

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



‘What have I accomplished?’ is a common thing people ask themselves as they approach ‘milestone’ birthdays our society has drenched with importance.

PHOTO BY GERHARD EPP



Ultimately, it’s my faith in God and my relationships with the people I care about—like my brothers and sister-in-law—that are most important to me.

I was anxious in the weeks leading up to my 30th birthday. I didn’t expect an encounter with a tall, lanky Winnipeg musician I barely know to give me peace of mind about the situation.

If you asked me at 20 what 30 would look like, I probably would have told you something about a house, a wife, a few kids and being further along in my career than I am now, although I’m not sure I would have been able to define “further along in my career.” I probably would have told you that by 30 I would have “accomplished a lot,” although again I’m not sure I would have been able to concretely define what “accomplishing a lot” means.

I think “What have I accomplished?”

A conversation with a musician far less known and revered than Bono and The Edge helped put things in perspective for me.

One Friday evening in March, I met my cousin Joey for drinks at Cousin’s, a popular watering hole in Winnipeg’s West Broadway neighbourhood. As we chatted with Joey’s friend Bobby, turning 30 was the topic of conversation.

“I’m not stressed about it,” said Bobby, the front man in a local rock band. “I have a good job that gives me the freedom to keep playing in my band. I’m surrounded by people I care about, and I’m more available for my family and friends than I ever have been before.”

I find myself at a point in my life where, now more than ever, I am available to God and the people I love.

is a common thing people ask themselves as they approach “milestone” birthdays our society has drenched with importance.

When I ask myself that question, at first it seems the answer is, “Not much.” I think of how, by the time they were 30, the members of U2 had released their classic album, *The Joshua Tree*, and they were already writing and recording *Achtung Baby*, another multi-million-selling, seminal rock record.

I’m not sure how I think comparing myself to millionaire Irish rock stars is fair, but that’s where my mind was going as I thought about 30.

Bobby wasn’t concerned about what he had or hadn’t accomplished in the first 29-and-a-half years of his life. Instead, his focus was on the relationships he has with the people he cares about. That focus wasn’t on what he was getting out of his relationships. Rather, his focus was on what he can give of his time and energy.

Thinking about this in the weeks leading up to my April 10 birthday calmed me down. Life at 30 might not be what I expected, but as I focused more on the relationships in my life and less on what I had or hadn’t accomplished, I became less anxious.

Ultimately, it's my faith in God and my relationships with the people I care about that are most important to me. I find myself at a point in my life where, now more than ever, I am available to God and the people I love.

Getting to this point hasn't been easy, and has included asking myself a lot of hard questions and doing a lot of intense work to better myself, much of which

has been documented in the pages of this magazine: for example, the articles "Come to prayer, come to well-being," and "Eating less, moving more."

The work has been worth it, though. Ultimately, whether or not I ever accomplish something on par with *The Joshua Tree*, my most important desire is to love and serve God and other people. ✎

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Are we 'the worst generation'?

RACHEL BERGEN

YOUNG VOICES CO-EDITOR

Just a few days ago I graduated with a master's degree from the University of British Columbia (UBC). My future? It's a terrifying thought.

The past two years of my life were planned and I liked it that way. In 2012, I began attending the UBC Graduate School of Journalism, a small program with about 30 people per class. The professors—all veterans in the business, with impressive résumés—were dedicated and supportive, and my class was a cohesive, tight-knit group. I spent my days studying, writing and, more recently, working on my thesis.

Today, I don't have classes, assignments or thesis work to complete, and I don't know what to do with myself.

I pictured these days after graduation differently when I began grad school. I imagined employers would be impressed by my month-long newsroom internships and educational background.

Newsflash: They aren't.

I wasn't deluded, but I was definitely optimistic about my chances of working in my field. Unfortunately, I've been out of classes for weeks now and I'm not gainfully employed full-time in a media newsroom working alongside Peter Mansbridge, nor am I likely to be, at least

not anytime soon.

Many millennials are facing similar uncertainty with their futures. Our generation is more educated than ever and many employers are now hiring college and university graduates for jobs that used to only require a high-school diploma.

Therefore, many graduates are settling for jobs that haven't traditionally required the level of training they've attained. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there for the higher-tier jobs.

I'm lucky—and happy—to be employed part-time in my field by *Canadian Mennonite*, but my financial situation is nowhere near where it needs to be to live in Vancouver. I have to take freelance marketing jobs promoting products and other odd jobs to pay my bills. By 25, previous generations often owned homes and cars. For me, that seems like a far-off dream.

This is the case for the bulk of my classmates, including those who graduated from the UBC journalism program last year. In fact, several people I graduated with founded a media start-up called WORST: Required Reading for the Worst Generation, for something to do while they
(Continued on page 44)

PHOTO COURTESY OF RACHEL BERGEN



Young Voices co-editor Rachel Bergen is pictured with Frank Dyck, her grandfather, after she graduated from the University of British Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

(Continued from page 43)

search—sometimes fruitlessly—for work.

I used to think that a degree, some drive and determination would land me a journalism job. Turns out even a master's degree doesn't guarantee you a job, even if you get good grades, make it a point to get along with your professors, hand in all your assignments on time and attend

The journalism landscape is changing rapidly and I can't expect to have the dream job I envisioned five years ago. That job is already completely different than what I imagined.

Some things do stay the same. I believe that fair, balanced, gutsy journalism is a pillar of democracy. I also believe there's a job for me where I can contribute to the

Unfortunately, I've been out of classes for weeks now and I'm not gainfully employed full-time in a media newsroom working alongside Peter Mansbridge, nor am I likely to be, at least not anytime soon.

every class.

All right, that was depressing.

I confess that I'm rather downcast about my situation in life right now, but I need to check my privilege. I work part-time in my field, I've attended two universities at which I've met lifelong friends, and I'm debt-free.

I need to recalibrate and get creative.

journalism landscape, advocate for truth and hold those in power to account.

Maybe it's just different from the job I envisioned for myself. Maybe the same is true for the other young adults who are struggling.

Stay positive, fellow millennials. We won't make any progress if we get in our own way. ☺

VIEWPOINT

Beyond Trinity

Different ways of naming the Godhead can reflect our contemporary experiences of the divine

SUSIE GUENTHER LOEWEN

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES



Susie Guenther Loewen

The Trinity is the central way that Christians throughout history have expressed who God is to us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Many Mennonites view the Trinitarian nature of the divine as crucial. One such person was my uncle, the late theologian A. James Reimer, who was concerned that, as Mennonites, we tend to reduce God to Jesus, and thereby overlook the mysterious otherness of the divine as well as the “diversity” of the Trinity.

While I agree that God is not reducible to Jesus, I take his impulse even further: We tend to reduce God to the Trinity

as well. After all, there are many more biblical names for God than just these three. These include God as “Woman Wisdom” in Proverbs 8 and elsewhere, God as a whirlwind in Job 38, God as a fierce mother bear in Hosea 13:8, Jesus as a mother hen in Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34, and the Holy Spirit as fire, instead of a dove, in Acts 2.

If you're sensing a pattern in the neglected biblical names I've identified, you're right. They're all either female or non-anthropomorphic (not people-based) names and images for God. One of the dangers of reducing God to the

Father-Son-Spirit Trinity is that we overlook those names for the divine that are not confined to maleness or even to humanness. We need both of these other kinds of names to remind us that, while both maleness and femaleness are in God's image, God is ultimately beyond gender.

Remembering and making use of female and non-anthropomorphic biblical names for God can help us to avoid

mutual indwelling of the different members of the Trinity.

The Trinity is a wonderfully profound way of thinking about God, and represents and communicates a number of key truths about who God is for Christians.

For one thing, it's a kind of shorthand for key Christian ideas of linking the Creator God of the Old Testament to Jesus Christ as God Incarnate or God-with-us, as well as to the Holy Spirit as

While I agree that God is not reducible to Jesus, I take his impulse even further: We tend to reduce God to the Trinity as well.

literalizing the traditional, male-biased Trinitarian language, which makes it idolatrous language for God.

There is also the problem of misunderstanding the paradoxical three-in-oneness of the Trinity. As my uncle pointed out, we sometimes overemphasize the "oneness," making Jesus the sum of the divine. However, I think the problem is more often that we overemphasize the "threeness," so that God and Jesus Christ become separated, especially at the moment of the crucifixion, when God supposedly hands Jesus over to be killed.

"The idea that God is a Trinity composed of three personalities who are able to carry out transactions among themselves is certainly not biblical, nor is it congenial with the best of the Christian tradition," John Driver points out in his book *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*. "The Nicene creed points toward the oneness of the Godhead (the deity of Christ and the Spirit), not in the direction of threeness. So the idea of the Father and Son as having separate wills and identities to the point of being able to hold transactions with each other has no grounds in the New Testament, nor is it the best of the church's doctrinal heritage."

We have to be careful that our thinking about the Trinity doesn't treat each part as three distinct gods, who are able, for example, to hand one of the persons of the Trinity over to death while the others remain detached from the situation. This line of thinking neglects the notion of the

the aspect of God which is among us, empowering us.

Relatedly, it also speaks to us about God's multiplicity—the fact that no one name or image can contain God's mystery—and that we therefore need the "threeness" of the Trinity, as well as all the other names for God, biblical and beyond, to name the bits and pieces of what we humans can understand about God.

Another interpretation of the Trinity that resonates with me is the idea that the Trinity is God imaged as a loving community, encompassing diversity and unity. This means that when we human beings are in community, we're in the image of the divine Trinity.

For all these reasons, I don't want to do away with the Trinity. But that doesn't mean we have to abide rigidly by the terms Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I think we can celebrate many different, contemporary ways of naming the Trinity, such as the more gender-neutral Trinity of "Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer" and theologian Sallie McFague's Trinity of "Mother, Lover, Friend."

In these ways, we can renew this ancient Christian way of thinking about God, allowing it to speak to our time and to resonate profoundly with our understandings and experiences of the divine today. ✎

Susie Guenther Loewen is a doctoral student in theology at the University of Toronto. She recently moved from Toronto to Winnipeg with her husband Kris and their son Simon.

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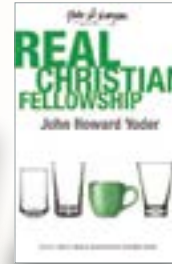
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View the complete job description on our website at serve.mcc.org/positions/general-manager-et-cetera-shoppe-mcco.



Mennonite Central Committee
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CANADIAN MENNONITE

Calendar

Manitoba

July 5-6: Mennonite Heritage Village 50th-anniversary celebration in Steinbach. (5) Schmeckfest Jubilee featuring traditional cuisine, a dessert bar and entertainment by improvisational violinist Rosemary Siemens; (6) Worship, guided tours of the village, a traditional saengerfest and faspas/vesper table meal.

Ontario

June 15: *Laughter is Sacred Space* by Ted and Co., at Hespeler Memorial Arena, Cambridge, at 7 p.m. Co-sponsored by Preston and Wanner Mennonite churches. For more information, call 519-658-4902.

June 16: MCC Ontario 17th annual networking conference, at the University of Western Ontario, from 8:15 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Keynote speaker: Kathryn Edmunds. Topic: "We are tired of thinking and working with poverty." For more information, e-mail Lily Hiebert Rempel at lilyhr@mennonitecc.on.ca.

June 18: Fairview Mennonite Home, Cambridge, hosts its annual strawberry social, "In God's holy presence." The program—at 2 and 7 p.m.—features the Fairview vocal and hand bell choirs. For more information about advance tickets, call 519-653-5719.

June 20-21: Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp hosts "Under construction: Reframing men's spirituality," with Gareth Brandt of Columbia Bible College, who will speak on his book of the same name. For more information and to register, visit www.mennonitemen.org.

June 20-22: Silver Lake Mennonite Camp hosts a "Skills retreat: Building skills, building community" with Paul Born of the Tamarack Institute and food prepared by John Bergen of City Café Bakeries. For more information, or to register, call 519-422-3200 or visit www.slmc.ca/retreats.

June 21: Family barbecue and car show, at Fairview Mennonite Home, Cambridge, beginning at 2:30 p.m. Musical entertainment, face painting, cars, tractors and motorcycles to view. For more information about advance

barbecue tickets, call 519-653-5719. **June 21:** MennoHomes annual fundraising bike-a-thon, Out-spok-n for Affordable Housing IV. For more information, call Dan Driedger at 226-476-2535 or visit www.mennohomes.com.

June 21: Nithview Community strawberry social, New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6:30 to 8 p.m.

June 22: Grand opening of the "Next Chapter Building Project" at Conrad Grebel University College. For more information, visit grebel.ca/events.

June 26: Ralph and Eileen Lebold Endowment for Leadership Training Banquet, in the Conrad Grebel University College dining room, at 6:30 p.m. Speaker: Roberson Mbayamvula, pastor of Hagerman Mennonite Church, Markham. Topic: "Our present future: Being an intercultural learning community. Tickets available at grebel.ca/lebold.

June 27-29: Family Camping Weekend at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. For more information, or to reserve a cabin, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

June 29-July 1: Mini-camp for campers aged 6 to 10, at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. For more information, call 519-422-1401 or visit www.slmc.ca.

July 25-27: Family camp weekend—for all ages—at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. For more information, call 519-422-1401 or visit www.slmc.ca.

U.S.

July 24-27: Bridgefolk—the Mennonite-Catholic ecumenical organization—annual conference at St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn. Theme: "Mennonites and Catholics: Service—An overflow of Christ's love." Keynote speakers: Vincent Guider and Elizabeth Soto Albrecht. For conference schedule and registration, visit www.bridgefolk.net.

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

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