

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

August 18, 2014  
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From  
milk and  
honey to  
a land  
of rubble

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## EDITORIAL

## Helplessly watching Gaza

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

**W**e, in North America, watch helplessly as the human carnage continues in Gaza. The continuing struggle for control of a tiny piece of land on the Mediterranean Sea—a narrow, densely populated, coastal strip 40 kilometres long and a few kilometres wide—has held our attention for a month now.

This is not a new conflict. Since taking over the land in 1948, Israel insists it is only acting in self-defence as the rockets from Hamas fly willy-nilly into its territory. Until recently, world opinion seemed to have supported Israel, including our own Canadian government's un-nuanced and blind loyalty, but with the casualties climbing by the day, that support is fast dwindling in favour of the Palestinians, for whom the death toll, at this writing, is approaching 2,000, mostly civilians. Nearly 70 Israelis have died, only three of them civilians. In the minds of many looking on, this is not a fair fight.

Why is the war so intractable? In political terms, there are several reasons. For one, the power balance in the struggle is wildly disproportionate. Israel's superior fire power, comprising sophisticated military armaments mostly funded by the western powers' foreign aid, is overwhelming compared to Hamas's homemade rockets and untrained soldiers. The rules of war—if you subscribe to them—are being ignored despite the United Nations' description of them as “the breaking of international law on the

part of Israel.” The general secretary has called it a “moral outrage.”

Second, the justification for the fighting parties is anchored in competing narratives. The Israelis, resolving from the Holocaust to “never again” be without land and a state of their own, consider their conquering of Palestine quite legitimate and even rooted in the biblical promise to Abraham that God will give them a land. Hamas, considered an illegitimate and “terrorist” government, views the occupation as a colonial theft, leaving 4.3 million Palestinians—1.8 million in Gaza—as refugees, not citizens with full state and human rights. They will never forget the 416 Palestinian villages Israel wiped off the face of the earth in 1948. They feel like prisoners in their own space.

Third, the facts on the ground. Historically, writes columnist Haroon Siddiqui, “Hamas wants an end to the siege of Gaza, which dates back to 2007.” Most Gazans support that goal, he continues, because they feel trapped. “Gaza's entrances to Israel and Egypt are closed. [During the Arab Spring, Egypt had eased restrictions at its Rafah crossing, but the military junta that took power last year has re-imposed them.] On the Mediterranean side, Israel restricts Gazan boats to a few nautical miles from shore. It controls Gaza's airspace. It has maintained an economic blockade of Gaza. Though Israel evacuated Gaza in 2005, the UN considers the territory occupied by Israel.”

So what are Canadian Christians

living serenely in our peaceful enclaves to think and do? The first impulse for some of us with a compassion for justice is to react negatively to our government's entrenched, one-sided support of Israel in a conflict this complicated. We are tempted to say “not in our name!” Canadian support, as well as that of the U.S., seems to be under a stranglehold of the pro-Israel lobby.

Second, we can support our own ministries working behind the scenes there, as our feature writer Palmer Becker asks for in his historically oriented piece on page 4. “For its own good,” he writes, “Israel needs to be helped to be more just towards the people it has conquered.” He refers to such groups as Christian Peacemaker Teams, Mennonite Church Canada, Rabbis for Human Justice, the Holy Land Trust, Bethlehem Bible College, Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation, and the continuing work of Mennonite Central Committee and its representatives in the region.

What we do not want is to get bogged down in an unproductive, wearisome dispensationalist debate on God's special plan for Israel, that it is theologically more important than other nations—or nationalities—and that it will have our support, no matter what. Rather, we should direct our prayers and support towards those who are working for justice there.

We join in the mourning of the board, administration and students of Bethlehem Bible College and the local committee of Christ at the Checkpoint made on July 31: “Today God weeps over the situation in Palestine and Israel. Today God weeps over Gaza. With God our hearts are broken when we see the carnage in Gaza and Israel. We call on all our friends for an immediate ceasefire, followed by serious efforts to address the root of the problem, not the symptoms.”



## ABOUT THE COVER:

**A Palestinian resident walks beside a building destroyed by Israeli air strikes in Gaza on July 14. A temporary ceasefire, brokered by Robert Serry, UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, allowed civilians in Gaza to resume some daily routines and for repairs to start on essential electrical and water infrastructure. See feature story on page 4.**

PHOTO: SHAREEF SARHAN, UNITED NATIONS

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PEACE FEATURE

# From milk and honey

## to a land of rubble

*Is it possible to reclaim God's call for Abraham's seed to be a blessing to all the nations?*

BY PALMER BECKER

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

*God does not have two chosen peoples. He does not have one group of individuals—the Jews—who are chosen because they can trace their ancestry back to Abraham, and another group—Christians—who are chosen because of their faith in Jesus Christ.*

**W**hat is God's plan for Israel? It would be presumptuous for me to say that I have a definitive answer to that question. If I did, I would likely be appointed ambassador to Israel or special consultant to the United Nations!

But I did grow up in a family that believed God has a special plan for Israel. We believed that Israel was theologically more important than other nations. As a child, I relished the Old Testament stories I learned in Sunday school about how God helped Israel conquer the land of Canaan. Joshua and the people marched around the city of Jericho, and the walls came tumbling down! Gideon, with just 300 soldiers, sent the Midianites running. David brought down Goliath with a slingshot. I believed that God was certainly on the side of the Israelites!

### **A short history lesson**

When I was 11 years old, the modern nation of Israel was formed, and I was excited! I believed that God was giving the land of Israel back to his people.



UN PHOTO BY SHAREEF SARHAN



The establishment of the State of Israel seemed like the most significant event since the ascension of Jesus. I grew to believe that Israel was theologically more important than other nations.

The Jewish people have been grossly mistreated throughout much of history. During the Middle Ages, a belief arose in Europe that the Jews were directly responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. This led to the massacre and expulsion of Jewish communities during the Crusades and also at other times. Even the great Protestant reformer Martin Luther once encouraged his followers to burn Jewish synagogues and schools, destroy their prayer books, forbid their rabbis to preach, and to confiscate their homes and property. During the Second World War

and the Holocaust, more than six million Jews were imprisoned and executed in a variety of horrible ways.

In 1896, Theodore Herzl, a secular Jew, proposed that a nation be formed for the Jewish people. Herzl was less concerned with where that nation was located—it could be in Uruguay or in the Ukraine, for all he cared—as long as it was a place where the Jews could be safe.

Later, an Anglican pastor named William Hechler came to believe that Herzl had been sent by God to fulfill prophecy as he understood it. Along with many others of the time, he believed that the entire Bible should be interpreted through the eyes of Israel. This dispensational and Zionist view was popularized in the 20th century through the release

of the Scofield Reference Bible (1909), the founding of the Dallas Theological Seminary (1924), and the release of the Ryrie Study Bible (1978). Popular fictional authors such as Hal Lindsey (*The Late, Great Planet Earth*) and Tim LaHaye (the *Left Behind* series) have also influenced the minds of millions of people by interpreting the future of the world in light of present-day Israel.

These authors, scholars and theologians believe that God gave Israel a special tract of land and that Israel must repossess that land in preparation for the return of Christ. Under this model, those who help Israel in this endeavour will be blessed, while those who oppose her will be cursed.

To understand and evaluate these

views, four basic questions need to be answered:

### 1. What land did God give to Israel?

As I examine Scripture, I find three different sets of land boundaries.

The first description is found in Genesis 15:18, where God says to Abraham, *“To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt [the Nile] to the great river, the river Euphrates.”*

The second description of boundaries is found in Numbers 34:1-12, where Moses says that the land God is giving the people will stretch from the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea in the south to parts of Syria and Lebanon in the north.

The third description appears in Joshua 1, where Joshua divides up the land of Canaan between the 12 tribes. Those lands include not only present-day Israel, but also parts of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Given this variety in boundary descriptions, it is impossible to draw a precise map of the specific land that God would have promised to Abraham and his descendants.

Three further items need to be examined:

- **IN GENESIS 15:18**, God tells Abraham that he is giving the land to Abraham’s descendants, which would have included both the children of Ishmael and the children of Isaac. God blessed them both and promised that they would become great nations (Genesis 17:20). Might that mean that the land actually belongs to both the Arabs and the Jews?

- **GOD’S PROMISE** to Abraham and his descendants was part of a covenant, and therefore conditional. Time and again, Moses and the prophets warned that if

the Israelites were to remain in the land, they needed to live up to their part of the agreement to obey and honour God (Exodus 19:5, Numbers 32:11, Ezekiel 33:21-29).

Israel actually lost the land at least four times in their history due to their unfaithfulness: in 722 BC to the Assyrians; in 576 BC to the Babylonians; in 332 BC to Alexander the Great and the Macedonians; and in 64 BC to the Romans.

Finally, in AD 70, at the end of the First Jewish-Roman War, the Roman armies under Titus lay siege to the city of Jerusalem and destroyed its walls and Temple. The Romans ruthlessly drove nearly all the Jews out of the Holy Land and sold many into slavery. As a result, the Jews were without a homeland for nearly 2,000 years.

They were like us Mennonites, who have convictions but no particular country or location to call our own.

- **ABRAHAM ENTERED** the land peacefully. In Genesis 15:19-21, it says the land was already occupied by *“the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”*

Were these 10 nations or people groups to be driven out of the land? Were they to be slaughtered? No. Abraham came in and lived peacefully with them. In fact, his presence was a blessing to those who occupied the land. Rather than take away from the people, he added value to their lives. For example, when his wife Sarah died, he bought a burial site from the inhabitants (Genesis 23).

Hindsight says that if the Jews had entered the land peacefully in 1948, as Abraham had entered it 4,000 years

earlier, things would be very different today. The Jewish people, with all the skills they had acquired in Europe, could have been a great blessing to the Palestinians who occupied the land. Together, they could have made the country flow with milk and honey!

Unfortunately, this did not happen. The oppressed Jews of Europe had been enticed with the statement, “A land without a people for a people without a land.” But this was not true! There were some 800,000 Palestinians occupying the land of Palestine, and they had lived there for centuries, some dating back to the time of Pentecost!

When the Israeli forces entered the region that had been granted to them, they did not do so peacefully. They destroyed more than 400 villages and forced more than 700,000 men, women and children to run for refuge.

Palestinians call this the *Nakba*, or “the tragedy.” It’s their equivalent to the Holocaust. Ever since this time, the Palestinian people have been asking for justice in regard to the land and livelihood that were taken from them, but each day more of their land is taken by the Israelis to build illegal settlements.

Those who had been oppressed in Europe became the oppressors of the Palestinian people. While I do not support the violent actions of Hamas and other groups, I can understand why the Palestinians have at various times during the last 60 years lashed out against the Israelis with stones, suicide bombs and rockets.

### 2. Who are the Israelis and the Palestinians?

Even when the ancient Israelites lived in Egypt, they were a very mixed people group. Judah had married a Canaanite

*(Continued on page 8)*

*(PHOTO RIGHT PAGE) In Gaza City, Palestinians walk by the home of Abu Leila, which was hit by Israeli missiles on July 10. The family received warning of the attack and evacuated safely, as did all others in the largely ruined neighbourhood. Photographer Basel Yazouri, 18, said his family is sleeping in a small room in the basement for safety. As the conflict entered its second week in July, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)—through one of its long-time partners in Gaza, Al Najd Development Forum—began distributing locally purchased food to 230 families. MCC’s month-long, \$25,000 food distribution will reach the Gaza families, some of whom are displaced by the current violence. Malnutrition in Gaza, specifically in the MCC response areas, was already a problem prior to this latest flare-up in the conflict.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF BASEL YAZOURI



*(Continued from page 6)*

wife, Joseph an Egyptian, and Moses a Midianite. Later, Solomon married wives from many foreign countries. We also have records in the Bible of women such as Rahab, Ruth, and the 32,000 Midianite virgins in Numbers 31:35 who became mothers in Israel.

Intermarriage continued as the Jewish people scattered throughout the nations of the world. As a result, modern Israelis are a mixed group of people. They are largely Europeans living in the middle of the Middle East.

The Palestinians recognize this fact and rightly ask, “Why do we have to give up our land and rights to these Europeans? We weren’t responsible for the Holocaust!” The Israelites, on the other hand, say, “If we were surrounded by democratic Europeans, we wouldn’t be having all these problems!”

The Palestinians, for their part, also represent a mixed group of people.

Their ancestry can be traced back to the Canaanites, Moabites and Philistines of the Bible, and also to the Assyrians, Persians, Crusaders and Romans, who from time to time, invaded their land—and stayed there.

Some suggest that if DNA tests were taken in the region today, there would be greater similarities between King David and the Semitic Palestinians than between King David and the largely European Israelis.

All of this reveals that the Jews and Palestinians are cousins, yet people still say that the Jews are a “chosen” people and that they are special.

### **3. What does it mean to be God’s chosen people?**

In Deuteronomy 14:2, God tells the Israelites, “*You are a people holy to the Lord your God; it is you the Lord has chosen out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.*” Why did God select this particular people group to be chosen in this way?

God did not choose the children of Israel because they were better or more special than other people. No, they were chosen for a mission! In Genesis 12:2-3, God described that mission to Abraham

when He said, “*I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*”

Later, in Exodus 19:6, he told the people, “*You shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.*”

From the very beginning, God wanted all the peoples on the earth to be blessed and to be part of his family. These verses lead me to believe that in Abraham’s time God was already giving the Great Commission to people of faith! He called Abraham to the land of Canaan and gave him a worldwide mission.

Canaan—or Israel—is strategically located for just such a mission. The Middle East is where the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa come together. Over the years, Israel has served as a land bridge for travel, trade and communication to and from the known world. I would like to propose that the land to which God

to both Jews and Gentiles, “*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.*”

God’s plan is for the people of Israel—like the rest of us—to come into his family through faith, not by works or ancestry. Peter said to the church, “*You are a chosen race [chosen for a mission!], a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts [the Great Commission] of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*” (I Peter 2:9).

### **4. Is there a solution to the violence?**

Jews and Arabs lived together in Palestine in relative peace for hundreds of years, until 1948. The current conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians is

*Hindsight says that if the Jews had entered the land peacefully in 1948, as Abraham had entered it 4,000 years earlier, things would be very different today.*

was calling Abraham was to serve more as a base of operations than as a place to settle for all time.

It is exciting to note that when God chose to come to earth in the form of Jesus Christ, he chose the exact same location: the land of Canaan or Israel!

While the children of Abraham failed to carry out the Great Commission, God did not totally reject them. He came as a Jew to the Jewish people. He chose twelve apostles from among them not because they were better or special, but because he had a mission for them to perform.

In Hebrews 11 we learn that, from the beginning, God has blessed people according to their faith. God does not have two chosen peoples. He does not have one group of individuals—the Jews—who are chosen because they can trace their ancestry back to Abraham, and another group—Christians—who are chosen because of their faith in Jesus Christ. In Galatians 3:28-29, the Apostle Paul said

not between the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths, nor is the conflict between two races of people.

The key reason behind the conflict is that two ethnic people groups who have the same ancestry are claiming the same territory as their homeland. In 1947, the United Nations gave a group of primarily European and American peoples—the modern-day Israelis—land that had for centuries belonged to another people group—the modern-day Palestinians.

The bigger issue is what can be done about the problem? Three solutions have been proposed.

- **THE “ONE-STATE” solution.** Many Palestinians, and even some Jews, feel that this is the best solution.

Under this plan, more than six million Jews and 4.3 million Palestinians who currently reside in Palestine/Israel would join together to become one democratic nation. Palestinians and Israelis would



have equal citizenship, equal rights and equal access to owning the land in this new nation.

This proposal would give the Palestinians a new livelihood and the Jews a safe place to live. However, it would require the Israelis to give up being a strictly Jewish state, which most are not willing to do.

♦ **THE “TWO-STATE solution.”** The two-state solution calls for Israel to withdraw to borders agreed upon by the United Nations and recognize the present occupied territories and Gaza as the State of Palestine.

The two states would exist side by side, with both having a seat in the United Nations. Jerusalem would be jointly administered as a centre for all three monotheistic faiths.

The problem with this solution is that there is hardly enough of the original Palestine left to establish a viable Palestinian state. In 1946, Palestinians owned 88 percent of the land. A year later, UN workers planned to divide the land 50-50. However, in 1948, Israel ended up with 78 percent.

Through the 1967 Six-Day War and the subsequent establishment of more than 260 illegal Israeli settlements on the Palestinian land that they have occupied, Palestinians today control less than 12 percent of their original land. This 12 percent is divided into so many parcels that it makes the map look like a piece of Swiss cheese.

Even if a State of Palestine could be established, could it function as a country?, as it would still be almost completely surrounded and controlled by Israel?

♦ **LEAVE THE** situation as it is currently and continue to do nothing to solve it. This is equivalent to committing genocide, as it will likely lead to the complete annihilation of the Palestinian people.

Many people compare the current segregation of the Israelis and the Palestinians to the racial segregation that existed in South African during the days of apartheid. The situation has even led to the rise of a movement called Boycott,

Divest and Sanctions.

Proponents of this movement ask banks, businesses, governments and churches to refuse to do business with Israel until it deals justly with the Palestinians and holds open elections, as Nelson Mandela did in South Africa.

### **Where do we begin?**

As people of faith, we need to find a spiritual solution to the violence between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Might we be reminded that it was through a prayer meeting that outgrew its boundaries that brought about the people power that toppled the Berlin Wall in 1990? Just as that wall came down, the present 700-kilometre wall of separation between Israel and Palestine also needs to be dismantled.

Might the process begin with prayer? I laughed with delight when I heard that Pope Francis had invited President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine and President Shimon Peres of Israel to come and pray with him. Can we join with the Palestinians and Israelis in praying for a transformation and renewing of minds, hearts and actions?

Today, there are approximately 220,000 Christians living in Palestine/Israel. Of these, 63,000 are Palestinians who live in the West Bank areas and 150,000 are Palestinians who live in the land that was allotted to Israel by the United Nations. In addition, there are 10,000 Messianic Jews living in Israel. What might happen if we all join together in prayer?

But what do we pray? Repentance is always a good starting place. Perhaps the first step is for Christians to say even more clearly to the Jews, “We’re sorry. We are sorry for the way we have treated you over the centuries, and especially during the Holocaust years.” Then, to the Palestinians we also need to say, “We’re sorry. We are sorry that we have not stood by your side and that we have refused to defend your human rights and your right to self-determination.”



*A factory in Sderot, Israel, burns after being hit by a rocket fired from Gaza on June 28.*

After repenting for our sins, we need to work at bringing justice to the region. There is much truth in the statement, “If you want to work for peace, you must work for justice.” Working for justice means removing the sources of conflict. The key source of the conflict is the occupation of Palestinian land.

The consequences of injustice are grave. For its own good, Israel needs to be helped to be more just towards the people it has conquered. A new attitude toward the Palestinians will reduce tension and help Israel gain respect in the eyes of both Arab and Western nations. If Israel does not act more justly, it will face even harder times in the future.

Through groups such as Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), we can move people towards justice. Its members walk frightened Palestinian children to school and, by reporting improper actions, attempt to hold Israeli soldiers accountable for mistreatment of Palestinians. Unfortunately, CPT workers have recently been forbidden entry into the region and Rachele Friesen, who has been a peace advocate with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Bethlehem for four years, was recently deported and told not to return to Palestine/Israel for at least 10 years.

Through organizations such as Mennonite Church Canada, Rabbis for Human Justice, Holy Land Trust, Bethlehem Bible College, Musalaha

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## Lord, in your mercy

*The following is an excerpt from a recent prayer from the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, calling on the world to pray for the people who live in Palestine and Israel, who face uncertainty, violence and injustice, and who yearn for the end of oppression.*

**G**rant Jerusalem your peace, O Lord. The past weeks have been full of unthinkable violence, unparalleled since the Second Intifada, in which women, children and innocent civilians have been targeted for violence based entirely on their ethnicity. Bring not only calm, but a true, just peace to Jerusalem and all its inhabitants. Lord, in your mercy.

Grant the Gaza Strip your peace, O Lord. The 1.7 million Palestinians imprisoned in the Gaza Strip bear the brunt of Israel's anger through incessant air strikes, the complete blockade of land, air and sea, and now a declared war under the name Operation Protective

Edge. We yearn for the day when trust, love and justice win over hatred, fear and discrimination. Let this day come quickly! Lord, in your mercy.

Grant Israel your peace, O Lord. Not a peace brought about by domination, oppression and occupation; the implementation of discriminatory laws; or the establishment of racial hierarchy. We desire a radical, all-encompassing peace which recognizes the image of God in each individual and encourages justice to be done. Embolden those Israelis who speak against such injustice and hatred, and let people of every nationality and ethnicity stand together for the protection of the oppressed, freedom for the captives, and the transformative power of peace with justice. Lord, in your mercy.

Inspire the people of the world, O Lord, to be peace-makers, in spite of the hatred, vitriol and violence around them. Let us stand for justice where injustice holds dominion, for hope where despair reigns, and for love where apathy keeps people silent. Lord, in your mercy.

*(Continued from page 9)*

Ministry of Reconciliation and MCC, we can help the Palestinians to also be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2). These groups teach principles of peace, model reconciled relationships, and seek to give support for creative resistance.

In all of this we need to seek God's love and compassion for both the Jews and the Palestinians and pray that these two cousins will be able to finally love each other. If we do the caring, we can be confident that God will do the curing one step at a time. ☞



*Palmer Becker of Kitchener, Ont., has spent a lifetime serving the church as a pastor, church planter, missionary, conference executive, author and educator. Becker*

*has travelled extensively on teaching assignments to various international locations.*

*The key reason behind the conflict is that two ethnic people groups who have the same ancestry are claiming the same territory as their homeland.*

### /// For discussion

1. What have been your personal experiences or connections with Israel/Palestine? What are your sources for news or information of what is happening there? Do Canadians tend to see the conflict from the Israeli or Palestinian point of view? Do you think worldwide attitudes toward Israel/Palestine are changing?
2. What were you taught about the role of the modern State of Israel in God's overall plan for the world? Has your congregation had dispensationalist pastors or teachers? How much have Christians in your community been influenced by the writings of Hal Lindsey or Tim LaHaye?
3. Palmer Becker says that people come to God's family according to their faith, not through their works or ancestry. Does lineage ever play a role in who belongs to God's family? How would you describe God's chosen people in today's world?
4. Since 1948, there has been ongoing violence in Israel/Palestine. What are the challenges to the proposed one-state and two-state solutions? What would a just peace agreement look like? What should Mennonites in Canada do to help bring about peace in the Middle East?

—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.*

## ✉ Young Voice paints true picture of life in Israel/Palestine

RE: "A CONSTANT terrifying threat," May 26, page 36, and "Altruistic young person 'taken in by propaganda'" letter, June 23, page 12.

Reading Chloe Bergen's Young Voices article we were both impressed with the thoughtfulness and care she took in writing about the situation in Israel/Palestine. Bergen carefully articulated many of the struggles Palestinians are going through today and how this is connected to actions of the Israeli authorities.

However, we were troubled by George Satory's response letter. It would be a mistake to assume that Bergen, or others who point out such problems, are somehow anti-Israeli or "taken in by propaganda." We have heard similar accusations when we have returned from the region and we are wearied of reading

*(Continued on page 12)*

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Musings on creation's final groan

JERRY BUHLER

**W**ill the day ever come when I will be able to look at the beauty of a flower in its original home without feeling the urge to pluck and pull and cut until it is firmly forced into a contrived bouquet, and nature is left bereft of its glory?



Will the day ever come when I will be able to look at the gold in the ground and resist the impulse to extract and refine and polish it for my own economic adornment?

Will the day ever come when I will be able to look at the passive serenity of a gentle bovine without being overcome with an aggressive appetite for meat and money?

Will the day ever come when I will be able to look at a beautiful, firm, young

body without a yearning to turn it into a commodity of competition and entertainment?

*Will the day ever come when I will be able to look at creation and hold it in a gentle and loving embrace without causing harm?*

Will the day ever come when I will be able to look at the divinely sanctioned lives of the least desirable of creatures without harbouring dark thoughts of how they intrude on my habitat?

Will the day ever come when I will share with an innocent mosquito a tiny portion of my blood without paying back a mild sting with a slap of death?

Will the day ever come when I will be able to look at creation and hold it in a gentle and loving embrace without

causing harm?

Must I really wait until I see the wolf living with the lamb, the leopard lying down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child leading them?

Must I really wait until all of this beauty can only be seen dimly in the mirror of a museum?

Must I really wait until my heart is pierced with the voices of my children's children wondering at my exploiting silence, when the earth needed an advocate?

Must I really?

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

(Continued from page 11)

them in print. Her truthful accounting of the past and the present is a fine example of the truth-telling required to bring peace to the region. Most Palestinians and Israelis agree, but their stories are not heard often enough.

We agree with the letter that propaganda is damaging to the prospect of peace. One of the greatest

examples of such damage is the claim that the evil suffered by the Jews in Europe during the Holocaust justifies the evil done to Palestinians by the State of Israel. Another example is the false tale told that Palestinians were not forced to flee villages in 1948 and that massacres of Palestinians did not occur. Read Elias Chacour's book *Blood Brothers* for just one example of an eyewitness account of these events.

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

# We need to regain our sense of wonder

PHIL WAGLER

We're at a fun and befuddling stage of life. We have little children, our youngest is just six months, and teenagers. I enjoy both, and the opportunity to escape one for the other at times.

I love the debates and conversation you can have with a teenager. You have to hit the right moment—and topic—but if you do, it can be inspiring. One of my teenagers messed with my conclusions recently when he asked a question that forced some deep searching. I liked that he could do that. Teenagers have the capacity to question everything. They stretch your intellect and patience. We've all been there, yet once we're through those years we rarely wish to turn back the clock.

I equally love hanging out with my youngest kids, where deeply intellectual discussion is no threat. There it's about im-

agination and tickle-fights. And it's about wonder. Teenagers aren't alone in asking questions, youngsters do too. Their questions, however, are more innocent and produce wonder, not eye-rolling.

Explain how a caterpillar becomes a butterfly and it's simply, "Wow!" And, their awe inspires your own. Children are

crucial to our maturing, for they keep the balance between wonderment and reason. It seems that if we lose either, we stay too childish or become too pompous.

Jim Davies, a Carleton University cognitive scientist and author of *Riveted: The Science of Why Jokes Make Us Laugh, Movies Make Us Cry, and Religion Makes Us Feel One With the Universe*, notes in an Aug. 1 *National Post* article, that there is "a pleasing tension between primitive wonderment and rational understanding. If you understand too much . . . the world becomes dull and predictable."

This is an interesting thought and it led me to wonder, rationally. We have come off a long period in which Christians—and particularly western Christians—

*We have come off a long period in which Christians—and particularly western Christians—have been fascinated with rationality.*

have been fascinated with rationality. We have become addicted to explaining everything. The sciences were born out of wonder, but can destroy them and occasionally seem intent on it. Davies admits as much.

Having applied the sciences to religion and the ways of the soul for longer

than any of us can remember, it seems we hardly know what to do now when a generation raised with the primacy of science seems equally comfortable in science-fiction. It's the perfect combination of precisely what Davies is saying, and is something Christians should pay attention to.

Could it be that what is missing in our witness is not rationality and intellectual prowess, but childlike wonder? Have we abandoned, or compromised, our capacity to marvel? Can we actually enjoy not knowing everything? Have we surrendered something of our humanity? And even more troubling, have we marginalized God only to find life dulled by our "brilliance"?

I wonder how Davies' insights shed light on the state of corporate worship? How do they call into question our need to suddenly explain away heaven and hell, and other things we sense are true or that Scripture points to, but will always have an element of mystery? How might this

also help us think through why so many young people are turning away from our churches—even when they have all the "right" answers?

*Phil Wagler lives in beautiful British Columbia where there is much to wonder at. He is author of Kingdom Culture.*





Furthermore, we are troubled by the notion of “balance” called for in the letter. We fear that too often the call for “balance” simply perpetuates the oppression of the marginalized in Israel and Palestine. The call of Jesus is to stand with the oppressed not simply for their own sake, but also for the sake of the oppressor. There is no finer gift a friend can give than to point out an error. We claim Israel as our friend and we

believe that the actions taken by the Israeli government described by Bergen are detrimental not only to Palestinians but also to Israelis.

Rather than patronizingly dismissing Bergen as an “altruistic young person taken in by propaganda,” we congratulate her for telling the truth when we would so often rather not hear it. Our prayer is that we give

*(Continued on page 14)*

## NEW CANADIAN VOICE

# Take time to listen

NOE GONZALIA

Canada has conscientiously gained a worldwide reputation as a donor country to a variety of humanitarian and beneficial causes. Private enterprises like nongovernmental organizations, churches and charities, as well as government institutions, steadily strive to make a difference in a variety of acute human crises that demand action around the world.

The guiding principles that motivate such efforts are mostly aimed at identifying the validity and effectiveness of our Canadian foreign aid: What is the actual need? What is the impact of our foreign aid on the lives of communities and recipient countries? To what extent are others contributing to such causes? And, most important of all, are we making a difference?

All of these questions are fundamental and necessary, but they alone don't guarantee our aid will achieve the intended consequences. An important factor usually overlooked is the correlation between the views of donors and the actual effectiveness of their contributions. People care more when they are better informed of the actual impact of their support.

For instance, on the public side, Canada's foreign aid spending totalled \$5.7 billion in 2012. This equates to about \$165.30 per Canadian. Although a modest sum within the context of the world's

needs, we must ensure it is being used effectively. We must diligently aim to have our aid reach the greatest positive social impact it can.

The good news is that we can gain some insight on this issue, at least from the perspective of the end receivers. One of the most compelling self-criticisms of First World aid is presented in the lines of a worldwide study-report known as “Time to listen: Hearing people on the receiving end of international aid,” which captures the experiences and voices of more than 6,000 people who have received international assistance.

The authors observe that, despite stark geographical and socio-cultural differences, there is a striking similarity in

*An important factor usually overlooked is the correlation between the views of donors and the actual effectiveness of their contributions.*



people's accounts of their interactions with the international aid system: “Their stories are powerful and full of lessons for those who care enough to listen and to hear the ways that people on the receiving side of aid suggest it can become more effective and accountable.”

For most traditional and new Canadians, it is the wisdom of the current government—and, more likely, the current administration—we rely on to be involved in the affairs of the world

representing our collective priority.

As “Time to listen” reveals, a handy but neglected tool is at our disposal. The challenge is reachable but evasive: We need to listen! Are we, in fact, listening and truly interested in knowing the implications and potential impact that billions of dollars paid on our behalf are having in the current state of world affairs?

In a nutshell, the study discloses “how assistance begins as a boost to people's spirits and energies, but, over time, becomes entrenched as an increasingly complicated system of reciprocated dependence.” It is within that mutually dependent trend that, quite often, donor agendas are in the driver's seat in setting actual policies for the receiving world.

The balance between effectiveness and accountability is what has been missing out in most international scenarios receiving foreign aid. “Time to listen” discloses our biggest impediment to align our values with the necessary effectiveness to help transform present human

crises in today's world.

Take time to listen, please.

*Noe Gonzalia is a Colombian pastor formed and trained in the Mennonite church. He moved to Canada with his family in 2000 and served for more than 10 years on the pastoral team at First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont. He graduated this summer from the master of peace and conflict studies program at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.*

(Continued from page 13)

more voice and attention to what young people such as Bergen have to say.

RAMON REMPEL AND JAMES FRIESEN,  
WINNIPEG

### ✉ Altruistic young person 'not' taken in by propaganda

RE: "ALTRUISTIC YOUNG person 'taken in by propaganda'" letter, June 23, page 12.

In an age when so much good information is available to us, it's tragic to find letters written that do injustice to the truth. George Satory's letter makes serious errors of fact in stating that "Israel is a result of the Holocaust in Europe," and compounds errors with fanciful fiction about Holocaust survivors returning to their own communities, and Arab citizens of Israel having "full rights." Such stories are not found in history books in Europe or in Israel, and certainly don't bear repeating in *Canadian Mennonite*.

The creation of a modern Zionist state began with the First Aliyah in 1881, in the hope of commercial and political union between the two peoples. These good aims failed to bear fruit after 1918, and Zionist immigration was balanced by emigration to the New World, taking opportunity and accommodation between Arab and Jew with it. There was little or no linkage from the Zionist state to the Holocaust before 1945, when Jewish leaders discussed how to bring Holocaust survivors and refugees to Palestine against British desires not to further alienate the land and legal rights of either the Arab or Jewish populations already living there.

Following the Second World War, Palestinians were indeed victimized by Jewish propaganda as part of the ongoing low-level conflict between the two communities that dated back to 1920.

Satory thinks Arab citizens of Israel have full rights, but he should see if one can vote or press a lawsuit without giving up title to Arab lands and any claim on the State of Israel for damages suffered. The exercise of other rights, such as serving in the military or in government or social service, is viewed with suspicion and sometimes denied for flimsy or no reason. Nor may Arab citizens visit another Arab country without written permission from the Ministry of the Interior, which is routinely denied. Such low-grade discrimination is the lot of every Arab in Israel, including Christian Arabs.

Israel still struggles to create a unique Jewish-only state in the Middle East. But in so doing, it has completely twisted the honourable values painstakingly lived out for 3,000 years under Torah. Israeli

historians, commentators, journalists and activists document this struggle for all to see. One merely has to look up from the real propaganda to see it.

ANDRE PEKOVICH, VANCOUVER

### ✉ With opposing conclusions, can either be from God?

RE: "WILD HOPE" assembly.

As a delegate, I found most presentations and seminars enlightening, but often lacked time for meaningful interaction.

"Discerning the Spirit's will" was a term used too glibly. Such a noble goal is more realistically attained within the context of a small congregation.

How do we find the "unity of Christ" when serious Christians read the same Bible and seek the guidance of the same Spirit, but come to opposing conclusions? When there are opposing conclusions, surely one or both of them are not of God. The Spirit of God fosters unity. The biblical image of the church as a body has many different parts that function to complement each other. Even the old Quaker principle of consensus requires that there be no opposing voice, even if there are some who cannot wholeheartedly support a direction.

These questions arose in the context of a major topic presented for "discernment," namely, the recent Being a Faithful Church discussion paper, "Biblical perspectives on human sexuality." I saw very little movement on this topic. It must be very discouraging for our hard-working leaders.

I offer several suggestions/requests:

- **WE WOULD** benefit more if our leaders were leading more and following less. It is very difficult to guide a scattering herd of sheep from the rear. With our Anabaptist history of individualism and schisms, we are reaping a cursed harvest. Organizational unity without spiritual, mental and emotional unity is a high price to pay.

- **COULD THE** sexuality discussions be focussed using well-defined terms? I believe the underlying tension has to do with sexual morality and the matter of cohabitation outside of a heterosexual marriage. That is not a uniquely homosexual problem. We all struggle with varied sexual orientations and urges, but do not always know how best to deal with them. How can we help each other?

- **CAN WE** take seriously the resolution to foster respect and graciousness for all people?

- **COULD WE** have more pro-active teaching regarding the depth of human intimacy, especially non-sexual? As an older male, I decry my ignorance through



young adulthood regarding the need for, and implications of, intimacy as expressed in non-erotic ways.

• **IF WE** still believe Jesus' people are to demonstrate countercultural values, I appeal to our capable leaders to guide us to that end.

IVAN UNGER, CAMBRIDGE, ONT.

### ✉ **Jesus, community, reconciliation: our core values**

AT THE "WILD hope" 2014 assembly we both wrung our hands and dreamed creative dreams in relation to the future of our church and faith.

As we look to the future, I suggest that we remember that structures, organizations, strategies and goals will likely change, but core values need to remain stable and unchanged. Core values are those that were present at the beginning and are what brought the organization or movement into being.

What were the core values of the Christian church and the Anabaptist movement at their beginnings? We might put them in different words or images, but in 20 years from now I hope that we will still be saying Jesus is the centre of our faith, community is the centre of our life and reconciliation is the centre of our work. A focus on these core values will help us develop new and appropriate structures and ministries.

PALMER BECKER, KITCHENER, ONT.

### ✉ **LGBTQ is not the 'core' issue**

WHEN I FIRST read "LGBTQ," I thought the phrase was some kind of sandwich. Funny, eh? Seriously, the one thing that all of us can count on is change. Often this change challenges what we think are core beliefs.

I am old enough to remember a big discussion about young women no longer wearing their Mennonite head coverings. I heard talk about introducing a pipe organ into the sanctuary: the church's first musical instrument. Not long ago, I heard whispers about a church member who was divorced and taking leadership in the congregation, and another about the ordination of women.

On either side, the debaters quoted Scripture and pronounced "tradition," and they argued that these issues threatened the core of our Christian beliefs. Today, where are all those who argued for and against? They are dead! Yes, most of those debaters and arguers have left this earth and moved on. In 20 years, the LGBTQ issue will be over. Most of those arguing now will either be dead or too frail.

With new understanding, and having grown up in a different world, the next generation will not share our

passion for this issue. Like the other great battles, it will just fade away.

So what is the real issue for our church today? Simply, who is going to climb the ladder in our sanctuary to change a light bulb? At my age, I ain't climbing that ladder and there are not many around who can!

DOUG DURST, REGINA

*Doug Durst is a social work faculty member at the University of Regina, Sask.*

### ✉ **Reader saddened by acceptance of same-sex unions**

I AM SADDENED to see the direction some of our churches and conferences appear to be heading in accepting same-sex unions.

In Genesis 2 didn't God ordain the most fundamental institution of society: the life-long union of a man and a woman? It matters not how much two men or two women love each other, their union is not a marriage in God's sight. Compromising by using the words "unity," "love" and "acceptance" out of biblical context will have deadly consequences.

In II Timothy 4:3-4, it says: "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itchy ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*"

Is this where we are today?

KAY NEUFELD, BOISSEVAIN, MAN.

### ✉ **Rewrite the Confession to include possibility of gay marriage**

RE: "JESUS TAUGHT equality, regardless of sexual identity," July 7, page 4.

Thanks to Norman Kraus for his article and bold statement: "Those who use the words of Jesus . . . to exclude committed gay partners . . . sin against the spirit of Jesus."

I would follow that trajectory and suggest what many would like to avoid: It's time to update our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. In addition to a blanket rejection of abortion, the confession limits "right sexual union" to a marriage between one man and one woman.

While dropping these statements might be offensive to some, it seems clear that they are becoming a problem to a growing number of believers. Removing these statements would not explicitly condone such behaviour, but would free congregations to make decisions

on these issue on their own, as Rudy Wiens suggested in the same issue (“Keep national, area churches out of LGBTQ decisions” letter, page 9). It would also bring the *Confession* more in line with what the church believes, remove a source of tension, and encourage equality and unity in the church.

DAVE NICOL, SUDBURY, ONT.

### ✉ The many-faceted body builds beautiful bridge

RE: “A BRIDGE to community,” June 9, page 23.

I was blessed, reading this story, by the creative thinking, the wide-reaching web of believers who contributed professionally and in volunteer hours, and the many who supported them. Especially that God was glorified, and the Spirit given credit for the many ways that the work was carried out. Building community/restoring community, indeed.

LINDA PETTY (ONLINE COMMENT)

### ✉ Another story of being set free from abuse

RE: “THE TRUTH about sexual abuse will set you free,” June 23, page 4.

Thank you to the anonymous writer who shared her personal story.

Looking back over my own life, I have been wounded/hurt three different times. The first time was when I was a child living in an unhealthy family. The second time, I hurt myself as I started to drink and became an alcoholic. The third time was by the family of origin again.

I first dealt with my alcoholism. I found a supportive program that helped me deal with alcoholism. I took the 12 steps that were suggested and this became the first real change in my life. I then found a program that dealt with family issues.

I was making some good changes when the dysfunction of the family of origin erupted big time. This affected our livelihood. The broken contracts, control, deceptiveness and putdowns also affected me emotionally. I was devastated. I was full of anger. My self-esteem was at a record low and I needed to make decisions. I now looked for more help with professional people and in groups, and by reading many books on these topics. I found help for my well-being and found many insights.

People can be very controlling and deceptive, and others can help protect them. There are two sides to these people’s character. We need to look at the family sayings and family secrets, which can make a very

powerful family system. This was hard to figure out, very confusing.

The other thing that hurts is that all of these people keep on covering up and denying the issues. This hurts just as much as the original injury or injustice, and this pain goes on and on. This part took much longer to heal. It has been a long journey.

Looking back now, it seems like a dream. I know I’ve come a long way. I have a loving family and friends, and a career that I never thought possible. I have experienced helping others and watching them grow. Today I wouldn’t trade my life with anyone. I know that God has been with me and carried me in the rough spots just like the poem “Footprints” states.

The truth about any abuse really will set you free.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

### ✉ Magazine loses credibility over ‘soap-box ranting’

RE: “SPORT IS not our saviour,” May 26, page 35.

It’s unfortunate this article was published. Soap-box ranting has a time and place, but not in a national magazine. *Canadian Mennonite* has lost all credibility by publishing Paul Loewen’s conflicted inner personal struggles, in which he fails to be able to reconcile a love for competition with his religious values.

Many of the rest of us don’t see the conflict. Our Mennonite schools obviously don’t, and if you ask a lot of student athletes they will name their coach as their most influential mentor for life, not just sports.

I would encourage the author and editors to think a bit deeper about content before publishing articles that further alienate your readers from your magazine that increasingly hits our recycling bin before being opened, largely due to the insistent negativity and critique of everything.

JONATHAN SCHMIDT (ONLINE COMMENT)

### /// Corrections

- Tym Elias left his position with the Winnipeg Remand Centre in June 2013. Incorrect information appeared in “Pastor’s credentials withdrawn,” July 7, page 23.
- Gertrude Nickel’s name was misspelled in the caption accompanying her photo on page 15 of the July 7 issue.

*Canadian Mennonite* regrets the errors.



## VIEWPOINT

# More than meets the eye about conflict

BY VERN NEUFELD REDEKOP

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

**C**onflict is a normal human phenomenon. We become aware of conflict when there is a clash between individuals or groups. Differences butt up against one another. The clash may be over positions taken, things, ideas, relationships, events, actions, interpretations, policies or norms.

Some clashes are over minor things. Either one person changes or both change somewhat, to come to a compromise or a new position with which both are satisfied. However, some clashes prove to be particularly emotional and hard to deal with.

Whenever there are strong emotions expressed in a clash, there is evidence that not only underlying issues—memories, interests, desires, imagination—are present, but that personal identities are on the line. Identity has to do with the core of who we are. It is derived from relations with other people: those like us with whom we form an identity group, and those who are different and become the “other.”

At the level of identity there is a polarization between us and them. At an extreme, the “other” becomes dehumanized and demonized. The identity rift may be based on structures of dominance, different beliefs and values, gender definitions, ethnicity, faith or religion. It entails conflicting ways of meeting identity needs for meaning, action, connectedness, security and recognition. When these are threatened, we may feel anger, depression, sadness, fear or shame.

Let us look at the issue of sexual minorities and the church, in order to see if these categories of analysis help to make sense of the dynamics:

• **POSSIBLE MEMORIES:** “I remember a church being split over issues.” “I remember homosexuals who had to leave the church because they felt excluded.”

“I remember having questions about my own sexuality.” “I remember stories of homosexual abuse.” “I remember knowing loving, creative, spiritual people who happened to be homosexual.”

• **POSSIBLE INTERESTS:** “I have an interest in the church to be united.” “I have an interest in keeping the church in the conference.” “I have an interest in having the church filled with members.”

• **POSSIBLE DESIRES:** “I desire a church that is inclusive.” “I desire a church that follows biblical teaching.” “I desire to not be bothered by this issue.” “I desire peace and quiet.” “I desire a healthy debate or dialogue.”

• **POSSIBLE IMAGINATIONS:** “I have some friends who will come to the church if my position is accepted.” “I know of people who will leave the church if my position is not accepted.” “I will not feel comfortable if my position is not accepted.”

The stakes may be higher for some than others, since it may affect their identity-need satisfiers:

• **MEANING (INCLUDING beliefs, values and sense of justice):** “This is an issue of justice, fairness, love and compassion.” “This is an issue of biblical interpretation.” “This affects my core understanding of what it means to be a Christian and to follow Christ.”

• **CONNECTEDNESS:** “It tears me up to feel alienated from my friends over this.” “People I feel close to are suffering because they cannot be open about who they are.” “I fear a rift in the church.” “I

would hate to see anyone leave over this.”

• **ACTION:** “It seems futile to expect change, I’ll just give up.” “I can’t say anything without being judged, so I might as well keep quiet.” “Why can’t they just leave it alone for a while?”

• **SECURITY:** “What will happen to our church if there is a major conflict?” “People will get hurt.” “We have a hard time meeting our budget as it is.” “What if people leave?” “I am afraid to come out of the closet.”

• **RECOGNITION:** “The others don’t respect me or my position.” “I feel judged for what I do and say.” “I said some things I wish I could take back so that I’ll be liked again.” “I feel misunderstood.”

When a conflict involves emotional hurt and underlying baggage there is a need to manage it well and to eventually adopt reconciliation as a process and a goal. Reconciliation is a big topic, but here are a few points to consider:

• **RECONCILIATION STARTS** with someone having a vision for reconciliation and receiving a mandate to do something to move in that direction. Sometimes practical gestures of goodwill—not necessarily even related to the issue—help move the process along.

• **IN DIALOGUE** we are attentive to the emotions of others and to our own emotional reactions. As we communicate compassionately we can identify underlying issues that might have links to identity.

• **EMOTIONAL AWARENESS** can also lead to increased trust and sensitivity. Often when there is an exploration of underlying and identity issues one can see the complexity of the “other” and can find areas of shared interest, experience and desire.

• **AS IMAGINATIONS** and understandings are modified, positions can change or at least soften. One of the results of reconciliation is an in-breaking of the Spirit so parties experience love, joy, peace . . . %

*Vern Neufeld Redekop is a professor of conflict studies at St. Paul University, Ottawa.*

## VIEWPOINT

# As long as the rivers flow

*Coming back to the treaty relationship in our time*

BY JIM SHANTZ

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

When Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta asked Adrienne Wiebe and me to attend the May 31-June 1 conference on the Alberta oil sands and treaty rights in Fort McMurray, it was with mixed feelings.

The timing coincided with a debate in *Canadian Mennonite* regarding its editorial stance on divestment and a reactionary disquiet, at least among some constituents, that the issue is becoming too politicized.

Add to that my own personal feelings. I am a proud Albertan, a moderate supporter of the oil-sands industry—I have one small investment in an Alberta oil company—and have felt it unfair that Fort McMurray and Alberta have received a disproportionate amount of attention given its relatively small contribution to fossil-fuel emissions.

Additionally, I don't think it comes as any surprise how supportive the majority of Albertans are of the oil industry, including the oil-sands projects. We all have friends and family members who have worked at "Fort Mac" supporting their families while paying off their mortgages, with an additionally larger number of our work force employed in oil-related services.

As interim pastor of one of our southern Alberta rural congregations—Bergthol Mennonite in Didsbury—I am also aware how "loaded" an issue this can be.

The conference, "As long as the rivers



PHOTO BY ROSS W. MUIR

*One repeated theme at the conference was an abysmal lack in the regulatory system. Would a slowdown or moratorium be in order while nature is given a chance to 'catch its breath'?*

flow: Coming back to the treaty relationship in our time," jointly sponsored by the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and the Olthius Kleer Townshend (OKT) law firm, was both a great opportunity to hear well-known pundits like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as well as an eye opener to the complexities of the moral and social issues raised by the oil-sands industry.

The title of the conference best describes the issues. When the agreement for Treaty 8 was signed, it was with the expectation there would be equal and fair sharing of resources for all across this vast northern boreal forest. Many feel that those agreements were not conducted in good faith. Yet others have been beneficiaries of the oil-sands industry.

Treaty agreements and environmental concerns were a major focus of the conference. Tutu, humble enough to say that he did not come as a "know it all,"

was clear in his assessment, based on his travels, of how serious a threat climate change poses, asserting it is the "moral issue of this century"

Allan Adam, chief of the Chipewyan First Nation, said, "Without our land, we are nothing. . . . We said we would share, not surrender."

Bob Rae, a senior partner at OKT who works with first nations and who was a former premier of Ontario, noted that he is not anti-development, and emphasized the need for much more stringent regulation of the industry.

A lot could be covered in describing the conference. It was a packed two days of addresses, seminars and panel discussions. Perhaps what is more important is personal impact. MCC learning tours can be life-changing events. That was certainly the case with tours to Palestine/Israel and Colombia! One to the oil sands may be a "harder sell"!

But I will make the following observations:

- **UNFETTERED DEVELOPMENT** in the name of progress: This needs a new look. One repeated theme at the conference was an abysmal lack in the regulatory system.

Would a slowdown or moratorium be in order while nature is given a chance to "catch its breath"?



*A map of the Alberta oil sands.*

♦ **LIFESTYLES:** To use Tutu's phrase, "the insatiable hunger" for oil both domestically and globally will continue to ensure that bitumen will find a way to reach its destination whether by pipeline, rail or freighter. Until alternate renewable energy sources are taken seriously, the oil will continue to flow.

♦ **STEWARDSHIP:** OUR indigenous brothers and sisters remind us that the Creator has given us this planet as a precious gift for our use, not its exploitation as a dollar-value commodity.

I am sure, given our God-given

*Many feel that those agreements were not conducted in good faith. Yet others have been beneficiaries of the oil sands industry.*

creativity and resourcefulness, there are small—and maybe even large—things that we can do to show we care. As people of Christian faith, what may be even more important is the question of the gospel. As those who believe in the centrality of the risen Christ, how can good news be both proclaimed and lived in the context of the issues of the day? ❧

*Along with his church ministry, Jim Shantz works part-time for MCC Alberta in constituency relations and indigenous communities.*



## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Bauman**—Nicholas (b. July 5, 2014), to Phil and Kate Bauman, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Derksen**—Hudson Daniel (b. Feb. 4, 2014), to Dan and Tracy Derksen, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Eggert**—Milena Lucia (b. July 11, 2014), to Daniel Eggert and Mara Eggert-Altamirano, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

**Estabrooks**—Eleanor Grace (b. June 13, 2014), to Stephanie and Josef Estabrooks, Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Janecek Baergen**—Sybil Anne (b. July 12, 2014), to Rene Baergen and Anna Janecek, First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Klassen**—David Addison (b. April 14, 2014), to Jonathan and Angela Klassen, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Koch**—Joshua Thomas (b. June 26, 2014), to Jamie and Rose Koch, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

**Pankratz**—Jack Huxley (b. June 28, 2014), to Stephen and Kim Pankratz, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Thiessen**—Tobiah William (b. April 23, 2014), to Brent and Amber Thiessen, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., in Tanzania.

**Tiessen**—Bethany Agatha (b. July 8, 2014), to Levi and Sherrie Tiessen, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

**Whitcombe**—Benjamin Moses (b. Feb. 27, 2014), to Dan and Melissa Whitcombe, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., in Zambia.

**Wynette**—Reid Michael (b. May 25, 2014), to Kyle and Julie Wynette, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Monica Chita, Michelle Struthers, Michael**

**Whitehead**—Brussels Mennonite, Ont., July 6, 2014.


**Jesse Bergen, Kent Klostreich**—Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg, June 15, 2014.

**Maria Braun, Wilhelm Braun, Elijah Finlay**—Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., June 1, 2014.

**Alexandra Baergen, Melissa Teichgraf**—Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., June 8, 2014.

**Sabrina Froese**—Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., May 18, 2014.

*(Continued on page 20)*

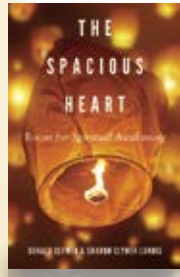


# Books

## to expand

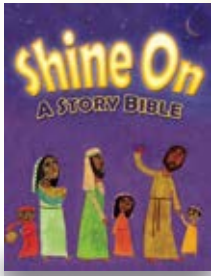
### one's thinking

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(Continued from page 19)

**Amber Peters, Kristin Driedger, Raena Penner, Mason Unrau, Mark Friesen, Logan Hildebrand, Dane Wiebe, Noah Bergen, Austin Bergen**—Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., June 22, 2014.

**Jelene Fletcher, Heather Knechtel, Chantelle Sparling, Anthony Winfield**—Tavistock Mennonite, Ont., June 15, 2014.

### Marriages

**Dick/Wiens**—Greg Dick, Vineland United Mennonite, Ont., and Katiana Wiens, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., at Niagara United Mennonite, May 31, 2014.

**Dyck/Lavallee**—David Dyck and Sara Lavallee, at Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, July 18, 2014.

**Fehr/Hagerman**—Helen Fehr and Geordie Hagerman, Breslau Mennonite, Ont., at Whistle Bear Golf Club, Cambridge, Ont., July 5, 2014.

**Heinrichs/Wiebe**—Justina Heinrichs, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., and Dio Wiebe, in Plum Coulee, July 19, 2014.

**Lowrey/Wilson**—Alvin Lowrey and Carolyn Wilson (First Mennonite, Edmonton), June 28, 2014.

**Reis/Wiens**—Fabian Reis and Stephanie Wiens, both of Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., at Niagara-on-the-Lake, June 14, 2014.

**Siemens/Wiens**—Victoria Siemens, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., and Eric Wiens, in Reinfeld, Man., June 14, 2014.

### Deaths

**Berg**—Herb, 95 (b. Oct. 21, 1918; d. July 9, 2014), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Dyck**—Eva, 94 (b. Jan. 22, 1920; d. July 4, 2014), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Dyck**—John, 89 (b. Sept. 30, 1924; d. July 9, 2014), Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Ediger**—Will, 61 (b. Dec. 11, 1952; d. May 20, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Friesen**—Annelie (nee Penner), 87 (b. Feb. 1, 1927; d. June 9, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Friesen**—Frieda (nee Steffen), 88 (b. April 14, 1926; d. July 11, 2014), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

**Harms**—Joan (nee Miller), 74 (b. May 23, 1940; d. June 22, 2014), Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Janzen**—Henry, 85 (b. Dec. 19, 1928; d. June 16, 2014), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Lichty**—Olive Emma (nee Schram, Shantz), 94 (b. Oct. 18, 1919; d. July 13, 2014), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**MacKrith**—Sara, 56 (b. April 4, 1958; d. July 9, 2014), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Maust**—Wilbur (Bill), 80 (d. July 2, 2014), Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Riesen**—David, 79 (b. Nov. 21, 1934; d. June 21, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Schwartzentruber**—Mildred (nee Drudge), 88 (b. Sept. 5, 1925; d. May 29, 2014), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

**Sieloff**—Erwin, 84 (b. May 6, 1930; d. July 1, 2014), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Tate**—Sara (nee Rempel), 95 (b. Sept. 16, 1918; d. Feb. 26, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Tjart**—Jacob, 91 (d. July 7, 2014), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

**Wiebe**—Henry J., 91, (d. Jan. 21, 2014), Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Wiebe**—Margaret, 99 (d. March 27, 2014), Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

### Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

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

## Poncius' Puddle



## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

PHOTO BY MOSES FALCO



*The land at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers in downtown Winnipeg was too important as an inter-tribal meeting and trading place to be held by any one people, says Clarence Nepinak, a learning tour leader at Native Assembly 2014.*

## Ears to earth, eyes to God

*Native Assembly 2014 takes place on Treaty 1 land*

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

An early morning fire and smudging ceremony started each day of Native Assembly 2014 that met from July 28 to 31 at the edge of the Assiniboine Forest on the Canadian Mennonite University campus. A tepee and several tents served as their backdrop, and although the sound of traffic never let up, participants could watch a raccoon or a fawn nursing from its mother or hear the birdsong amid the bustle.

"We gather as spiritual people with our ears to the earth and eyes to God," was the call to worship every morning following the assembly fire and prayer time.

Every morning and evening worship time focused on the theme, "Ears to earth, eyes to God," and featured a speaker who

told stories, offered teachings and challenged listeners.

This year's agenda primarily focused on building relationships with God, with each other and with God's creation. This simple agenda was reiterated in many ways and set the tone for a moving and powerful exchange between first nations and the "Mennonite nation," as speaker Thelma Meade chose to call the non-native participants.

Stan McKay, former moderator of the United Church of Canada and director of the Dr. Jessie Salteaux Spiritual Centre, said, "We are in desperate times. Many signs indicate we are not caring for each other and for the earth, but we still have

PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU



*Steve Heinrichs, director of indigenous relations for Mennonite Church Canada, leads in singing during one of Native Assembly 2014's worship services.*

strawberries," an important traditional medicinal/healing plant.

"We don't own the earth, but we are called to protect it," he said. In talking about right relationships, he said, "Laugh at ourselves and each other. It's about humility and respect. I invite you to risk laughter."

Niigaan (James) Sinclair said, "When you receive a gift, you carry the responsibility of it." In the past, he said the relationship Christians had with indigenous people was one of hierarchy and abuse, and the residential schools created a legacy of mistrust. "Now it is hard to accept that the church has any gifts to give us. Gifts can, however, teach us patience and responsibility, but we need to spend every day—our entire life—at it, so that maybe we can rectify the relationship."

That work was clearly the focus of Native Assembly 2014, as approximately 250 indigenous and (mostly) settler people



from across North America gathered to learn from each other and listen to each other's stories.

In his workshop, Vincent Solomon, an Anglican priest and Aboriginal Neighbours coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, offered many illustrations of points of agreement between Christian teachings and indigenous belief. "If early missionaries would

have presented Jesus Christ in a way that allowed the aboriginal teachings to be infused with the gospel, you would have found that aboriginal people today would not be in the state that many of us are," he said.

Solomon sees a growing interest in indigenous spirituality, "in wanting to understand it through a Christian perspective. For me, that is a very encouraging

thing," he said. "One of the things that the Mennonite church has to offer is their ability and desire to serve. Their faith perspective throughout history is a gift that can be used for first nations people, acknowledging that there were a lot of mistakes made. Reconciliation involves more than just saying 'sorry,' though. It involves action, whatever that might look like individually or corporately, and it involves an ongoing dialogue. It is time to dialogue on how we can live together, not the way we used to. I am very grateful for events like this."

Adrian Jacobs, keeper of the circle at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre in Beausejour, Man., a ministry training school that combines Christian and traditional indigenous teachings, said, "If the love of God does not translate into love of people, I'm not sure what you've got."

In his gentle way, Jacobs called listeners to reconnect with the land. "The Creator is talking," he said. "Are we listening, listening to what creation is saying and ready to change in response to this? Mennonites have a farming background, but many have forgotten it in their modern way, but the earth is still calling, talking to us."

Steve Heinrichs, director of indigenous relations for Mennonite Church Canada, and part of the MC Canada and the Partnership Circle of MC Manitoba planning committee, said, "The gospel calls us into the marginal places as privileged people, and so in this critical time we need to hear from diverse voices."

"Let's share our gifts," he said, "as long as we are also willing to share gifts from the indigenous. We have entered into a relationship, engaged in dialogue and profound theological sharing. I think we need to move beyond our existing relationships with indigenous people."

Jacobs echoed that sentiment: "I would hope that at the next assembly [in Alabama in 2016], Mennonites and native people will be able to share stories of a relationship that has developed. Engage the first nation people who are your neighbours and begin a relationship with them. A good sign for the next assembly would be if all the Mennonite churches would know on what treaty territory their local community is and what is the story of that community." ❧

PHOTO BY MOSES FALCO



*In the Blanket Exercise, quilts covering the floor are Turtle Island—aka North America. The blankets are folded and removed to represent the insidious ways that land and control were taken from Indigenous Peoples through colonialism. Participants are crowded into smaller and smaller areas, or sent back to their seats to represent those who died from disease or imposed malnutrition.*



PHOTO BY DAN DYCK



Native Assembly 2014 participants share communion at the final worship service of the week. The elements consist of sweet grass tea, bannock, fish and blueberries.

2014 Native Assembly Snapshots

PHOTO BY MOSES FALCO



Brander—Strongraven/Standing Bear—McDonald, one of the workshop leaders at Native Assembly 2014, adds some wood to the fire that burned throughout the week at Canadian Mennonite University.

PHOTO BY MOSES FALCO



The Summer Bear Dance Troupe, founded by Barbara Nepinak, performs its final dance at the opening ceremony of Native Assembly 2014. The troupe members have performed across Canada, as well as in Adelaide, Australia; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Mexico City; Sweden; and Ylan, Taiwan.

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

## In another skin

DEBORAH FROESE

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

**B**rander McDonald is soft-spoken. He moves about the room with quiet dignity, avoiding eye contact while he presents a workshop exploring indigenous worldviews at Native Assembly 2014. He admits to being a shy youngster, but there is more to his demeanour than being reserved. “My grandmother taught me that I shouldn’t look someone in the eye when I first meet them,” he says. “She told me to look at their feet until I got to know them.”

It’s a sign of respect, rather than avoidance, and it certainly has nothing to do with strength or lack thereof. Further into the workshop, McDonald relays a story using “white” approaches to attentiveness. His posture changes. His movements become swifter and more direct, and his gaze bores into mine with unnerving intensity. I am intimidated and, for a moment, the tables are turned. I glimpse what it might have been like to experience colonialism as an indigenous person, perhaps a child at an Indian Residential School, immersed in a frightening, completely foreign world without parents to protect me.

McDonald, the indigenous relations coordinator for Mennonite Church British Columbia, says the indigenous perspective is about harmony between body, mind, soul and our relationships with others. It places an emphasis on relationships, just as the Bible does, and it’s rooted in the land, a gift of the Creator, designed to provide all we need.

In another workshop exploring the loss of Turtle Island—the indigenous term for North America—I experience a disturbing fast-forward account of indigenous history with the Blanket Exercise, led by Sue and Harley Eagle, Mennonite Central Committee Canada indigenous work coordinators. An array of blankets cover the floor in a large conference room to represent the continent. Roughly 30

participants stand barefoot on the blankets. We’re the indigenous population before the arrival of Europeans and settlers. We each hold a card detailing our fate: skulls, trains and buffaloes, residential schools and medicine wheels.

Recalling an earlier outdoor workshop, I stand on my blanket and imagine a prairie clearing with tall grass and sage beneath my feet. I’m surrounded by whispering aspen, the smell of wood smoke, and the broad, blue sky above.

The history of Canada’s relationship with its Indigenous Peoples is read. After we encounter the intricate, fully functional, matriarchal structure of indigenous societies, the Europeans arrive. Elaborate words enact treaties and proclamations, espousing our nationhood. It sounds good and promising, but then more laws are imposed. The British North America Act puts “Indians and lands reserved for Indians” under the control of the federal government. Spiritual practices are forbidden. Women are relegated to non-entities.

Corners of blankets—our land—are folded up, forcing us closer together, some onto foreign territory. The blankets feel different beneath our feet.

Other blankets are drawn apart, separating us with arbitrary borders. People with skull cards are sent back to their seats; they died of smallpox, tuberculosis

or other diseases brought by Europeans, and were sometimes spread by the distribution of infected blankets. Those who hold train and buffalo cards die too, from malnutrition, having been forced off homelands and away from traditional hunting grounds.

The Indian Act is imposed. We’re forbidden to take action or make decisions on our own. We must turn to the government as a child turns to his parent. Our blankets are folded again and again, growing smaller and further apart. Those of us holding residential school cards are crowded together on a single blanket separated from the others.

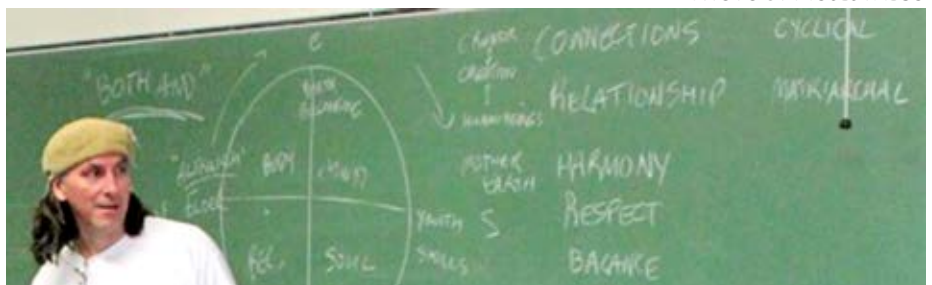
We look around. There are far fewer of us standing. Only remnants of our Turtle Island blanket land remain. A handful of participants hold cards of the medicine wheel. They are the survivors.

When the exercise is complete, we sit in a circle and take turns sharing our thoughts. This simple exercise brought history to life in a new way for the settlers, who form most of the group. They express rage, sorrow, confusion, anxiety and despair, with glimmers of hope for the future. The indigenous among us speak softly, quietly. Their experience is even more profound because they are reliving what they already know.

In Harper Lee’s novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch tells his daughter Scout, “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

Who among us can truly walk in another person’s skin? The best we can do is try. I haven’t gone far, but I’m beginning to get the picture. ☘

PHOTO BY MOSES FALCO



*Brander—Strongraven/Standing Bear—McDonald shares insights into the indigenous worldview at Native Assembly 2014.*



## PERSONAL REFLECTION

## Searching for harmony

DAN DYCK

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

PHOTO BY MOSES FALCO

There's an imbalance here. Of the 250-ish gathered for Native Assembly 2014, indigenous participants are overwhelmingly outnumbered by non-native folks.

A few months ago, planners were concerned that not enough white church folks would attend. But this turnabout troubles me. Dominant people can often become dominant voices. So I'm trying to listen more and say less.

The theme for the gathering is "Ears to earth, eyes to God." I'm learning a lot about the many references in Scripture that tie people to creation and land they occupy, and the implications this holds for people of faith. To say that this teaching was not part of my faith formation during my childhood and young adult years would be an understatement.

In Vince Solomon's workshop, "Where do aboriginal beliefs and teachings intersect with Scripture," I realized that I've too often understood my faith through the lens of culture, rather than trying to understand my culture through the lens of faith. This topples my worldview and identifies the ease with which Christians write off each other's belief systems in the guise of culture.

Solomon, the Aboriginal Neighbours coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, says, "There's only one reason I became an Anglican priest, and that is Jesus Christ."

It's a profound revelation considering that his chosen profession has been such an isolating experience. Even as he underwent religious training, Solomon was rejected by white society. Fellow students marked his dorm room door with an "X," warning others not to associate with him. Many of his own people have rejected him, asking why he chooses to be part of a church that hurt his people, and why he is perpetuating that hurt. But



*Vince Solomon's dorm door was marked with an "X" to indicate his race when he was enrolled in religious studies.*

in the midst of all that, Solomon recalls hearing God say, "I don't think I ever told you to stop being native."

Since then, Solomon has been recovering the theology of the land he grew up with. At the same time, he is studying Scripture to understand where Christianity lost the knowledge that the created order is the "stage of God's revelation in history. . . . *If you don't take care of it, the earth will vomit you out*" (Leviticus 20:22).

"We see creation in everything," he says. "This does not mean animism, monism, polytheism or pantheism." It was the Creator's intention for first nations to understand God through the attributes revealed to them through the land, he says.

During the question-and-answer time, Solomon is asked what bugs him most about western non-native culture. "Individuality," he declares. "It should not supersede or get in the way of community." Individuality, he adds, exists in every culture at some level. But he is stunned by the way it trumps community and caring for one another in settler societies.

I remember Solomon's comment later during a learning tour of the historic Forks area in downtown Winnipeg, where the Red and Assiniboine rivers meet. Many first nations used this location as a meeting and trading place for thousands of years. Its waters connect with the Mississippi to the south and Hudson Bay to the far north.

Tour leader Clarence Nepinak tells the group that this land was no man's land, saying its value as a meeting and trading place made it "too important to be held by any one people."

Too important to be held by any one people?

Perhaps all land is too important to be held by any one people: "*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers*" (Psalm 24:1-2).

Today, I meet my indigenous brothers and sisters at Native Assembly 2014. Many were robbed of their dignity by the Indian Residential School system and relocated to impoverished reserves in rural and remote areas, while my home and office are constructed on Treaty 1 land. Their land. In many of the areas where they live, government-sanctioned resource extraction has poisoned water and stripped timber, probably to build the 1950s' era home I live in. Lands where indigenous people once hunted and fished were flooded by hydro dams constructed to power the computer I'm writing on.

None of this is news to me. But it hits home in a new way when I sit beside them and sing the theme song for this event: "Creation is a song, a song that we can see / A sacred gift from God, let's join the harmony." ❧



## VIEWPOINT

# Finding ways to share this land of plenty

WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

Indigenous issues are charged, complex and unappealing to many Canadians. Understandably so.

Competing histories and intricate legalities combine with strong sentiments to create a sort of national quagmire. No one feels comfortable about the situation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, but meaningful change often seems impossible.

That is the context into which the Supreme Court of Canada issued two recent decisions. In June, the Court ruled that the Tsilhqot'in people of B.C. have title to 1,750 square kilometres of land. Essentially those lands are no longer Crown lands, but are owned collectively by the Tsilhqot'in.

Governments can still impose development—as they can in anyone's backyard—but they have to meet specific criteria. The Tsilhqot'in were not given a veto over development, but their bargaining position was bolstered considerably.

In a statement, Kairos Canada called the decision “an encouragingly positive step for reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.”

The decision is most relevant for parts of the country in which treaties were never signed. That includes most of B.C., roughly 40 percent of Quebec, points east of Quebec, and possibly the two-thirds of northern Ontario covered by the dubious James Bay Treaty.

Indigenous reaction to the decision was jubilant. The federal government was not. In this era of supposed reconciliation, Ottawa sent lawyers to court to line up against the Tsilhqot'in people. If the feds had gotten their way, the court would have denied the Tsilhqot'in title to their traditional lands, sent them back to

court and entrenched the status quo.

Fortunes were flipped on July 11, however, when the same court decided, again unanimously, in favour of the Ontario government's right to allow logging in territory of the Anishinabe people of Grassy Narrows in northwestern

Ontario.

As per Treaty 3, indigenous populations were given relatively small reserves for their exclusive use, as well as rights to pursue their way of life over far larger tracts of land until such time as those lands were “taken up for settlement, mining, lumbering or other purposes” authorized by the Government of Canada.

Grassy Narrows started blocking logging trucks near its community in 2002 because clear-cutting was preventing members from hunting and fishing. Christian Peacemaker Teams has worked closely with the community since then.

The recent court case was about whether Ontario, as opposed to Canada, which is mentioned in the treaty, has the right to “take up” lands for logging. The Court said it does, so long as it fulfills the legal obligation to consult and accommodate Grassy Narrows.

What the Supreme Court acknowledged—but did not weigh in on directly—is the fact that the “take up” clause in Treaty 3 is of questionable legitimacy. While it is in the government's written version of the treaty, there was often slippage or outright fraudulence involved in the translation services provided during treaty-making. The Court

acknowledged that indigenous people entered Treaty 3 with the understanding that they could “retain their way of life, particularly their traditional hunting, fishing and trapping activities,” indefinitely, but that was not the central question before the Court and the judges did not make an issue of it.

Katy Quinn of Kairos raises a further issue. “Free, prior and informed consent is the appropriate standard” when development will affect indigenous rights, she wrote in an e-mail. This is indeed the standard set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to which Canada was a reluctant and belated signatory. The Court did not go that far in either case and certainly the federal government does not act as

*In this era of supposed reconciliation, Ottawa sent lawyers to court to line up against the Tsilhqot'in people.*

though the consent of indigenous people is required for development.

While lawyers don't consider these matters particularly complicated, for most Canadians they are. But at the core of it all are three simple points:

- **WE ARE** all here to stay.
- **WE LIVE** in a huge nation of tremendous abundance; there is plenty to go around, even if not every major development proceeds.
- **WE NEED** to learn to share.

This 147-year-old arrangement called Canada has worked much better for the settler population than for this country's Indigenous Peoples. With or without treaties or Supreme Court directives, the honourable thing to do is to act generously and compassionately so that the God-given abundance of the land is shared equitably.

Of course, it is all a trifle more involved than that, but if we root ourselves in that premise, I suspect the sense of intransigence would lift. We'd find a way out of the narrative quagmire. Whether or not we adopt the narrative of sharing abundance is a decision not for the courts, but for individuals, governments and the church. ❧

# Young entrepreneurs donate profits to Matthew's House

BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

Communitas  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Every summer the enterprising children of the Wickens family set up a lemonade stand. It's a fun way to earn a little extra money and to quench the thirst of someone passing by. But last summer, Taylor, 11, Ella, 9, and Ayden, 7, decided to do something different.

"We just thought of the idea to raise money for Matthew's House instead of keeping the money to ourselves," said Taylor.

Matthew's House is the vision of Doug and Andrea Froese, and was built as a legacy to their son. It is a respite home for families with children who have complex healthcare needs. Matthew's House opened its doors last November and many families have already used this important resource.

Taylor, Ella and Ayden knew Matthew Froese, and have good memories of spending time with him.

"We hung out with Matthew at our house a couple of times," Taylor recalled. "We were a lot younger then, but we remember laughing with him."

This connection became the impetus behind the change from a for-profit enterprise to an opportunity to bless others. They set up their lemonade stand at the end of their driveway and sold lemonade for 50 cents a glass. To their surprise, they



*Ayden, Ella and Taylor donated the money earned at their lemonade stand to Matthew's House.*



found that most people were willing to give much more than that for a refreshing drink. In a couple of hours they managed to raise a total of \$37.23. Their success made quite an impact on the children.

"My heart felt happy that we were doing a nice thing by not keeping the money to ourselves," Ella said.

Ayden reflected on the spiritual nature of their enterprise. "I felt like we were doing what Jesus would want us to do," he said.

Alan Cavin, resource development coordinator for Matthew's House, was moved by their efforts. "Stories and efforts like this that just warm my heart," he said. "It's so wonderful to see children helping children."

The Wickens' lemonade stand will go up again this summer and they're considering expanding on their success by selling Rainbow Loom bracelets that they have made along with the lemonade. No matter how much money they make, they know that they're making a difference and that their own lives are enriched for their efforts.

"It felt really good to help out in the community and to be able to help out the kids that are like Matthew," Taylor said. ☘

## /// Briefly noted

### MCC Saskatchewan celebrates refugee sponsorship

REGINA—Mennonites in Saskatchewan have a rich history of welcoming refugees. That history was recounted recently at an event focused on Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan's work in the area of refugee sponsorship. The July 13 event, which was part of the organization's 50th-anniversary celebrations, brought former refugees and sponsors together at Grace Mennonite Church in Regina.

Dana Krushel, MCC Saskatchewan's refugee assistance program coordinator, said that, while "sponsorship of refugees happens throughout our province, we were honoured that a passionate group of people [in Regina] were willing to host such a wonderful celebration." About 90 people, many of whom had been sponsored by MCC in the past, attended the festivities. Their countries of origin included Eritrea, Laos, Colombia, Burma and South Sudan. Former sponsors from Regina and other parts of the province also attended. Krushel brought greetings from MCC Saskatchewan and read an article by Elaine Harder outlining the history of MCC's involvement in refugee sponsorship. Four school-aged children (pictured above) entertained the gathering with their singing. The children are part of a growing Karen community in Rosthern, who have been sponsored by an interdenominational group. Rose Graber, Grace Mennonite's co-pastor, discussed how sponsorship has impacted her congregation, and four former refugees shared their stories of sponsorship.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

PHOTO BY CHAI BOUPHAPHANH



## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# More evidence of sexual abuse uncovered

*John Howard Yoder sexual abuse discernment group planning 2015 convention service of lament*

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

**A** Mennonite Church U.S.A. discernment group addressing sexual abuse by the late theologian John Howard Yoder has reported finding additional evidence of abuse.

After a June 3 meeting in Elkhart, the group said it had found more documentation of Yoder's abuse of women, including fondling and sexual intercourse. The many women Yoder wronged included students, missionaries and church workers.

The group accessed previously unexamined institutional and personal files, including memos by Yoder.

In some instances, the group reported, women who engaged in sexual encounters were persuaded, at least initially, by Yoder that such behaviour was permissible between Christian "brothers" and "sisters." Many others resisted his unwanted advances, and were perplexed and distressed by his pursuit.

"We are also learning how long it took church leaders to intervene effectively," the group reported.

An issue of *Mennonite Quarterly Review* planned for early 2015 will focus on sexual abuse in Mennonite contexts. It will include an article by historian Rachel Waltner Goossen on the topic the group appointed her to research: "Mennonite church institutional responses to Yoder's sexual abuse in the 1970s, '80s and '90s."

While a four-year accountability process for Yoder began in 1992, doubt lingers about its outcome, since little about it was communicated to the public. When the process concluded in 1996, recommendations were made for "the continuing use of an accountability plan" and that "the

church use [Yoder's] gifts of writing and teaching." Yoder died in 1997.

Very little has been communicated about the prolonged and devastating impact Yoder's sexual abuse has had on many women. MC U.S.A. is now committed to transparency in this matter. In 2015, all written materials made available for this historical documentation process will be deposited at MC U.S.A.'s

## Works of John Howard Yoder now available online

Goshen College  
GOSHEN, IND.

**A**n online digital library containing nearly 250 unpublished, informally published and popular works by theologian John Howard Yoder is now available for scholars and students around the world.

A collaborative project undertaken by Goshen College's Mennonite Historical Library, the Mennonite Church U.S.A. Historical Archives and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., the digital library is freely accessible through the Private Academic Library Network of Indiana and Indiana Memory websites, and can be viewed at [tiny.cc/JohnHYoder](http://tiny.cc/JohnHYoder).

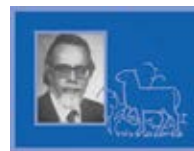
The library also includes the full text of the "Concern" pamphlet series, articles written by young American Mennonite intellectuals from 1954-71.

Historical Archives.

The group is planning seminars and a service of lament during the 2015 MC U.S.A. convention in Kansas City, Mo., during which time a report and discussion of the group's findings are planned. In addition, the group has begun conversations about what the service of lament might include and who will plan and lead it.

The group is exploring ways to enable healing for those who have suffered sexual abuse. "We are particularly interested in healing for those who have suffered abuse by church leaders, such as Yoder, who were not brought to account in a timely manner by the church," it reported.

On behalf of MC U.S.A.'s Executive Board, the discernment group has begun drafting a general statement on the nature and prevention of sexual abuse. The statement will be presented to the Constituency Leaders Council for approval as a study document and then for approval by the 2015 delegate assembly. ☞



Jamie Pitts, assistant professor of Anabaptist studies at AMBS, says the digital library "gives unparalleled access to Yoder's unpublished and hard-to-find writings, from early essays in the *Gospel Herald* to later grapplings with philosophical issues."

The John Howard Yoder Digital Library was funded by a \$12,000 grant from the Indiana Institute of Museum and Library Services. The Shalom Foundation, created to distribute the royalties of Yoder's publications, recently awarded an additional \$2,000 grant to continue to build this digital library. ☞



# Our present future

*Ideas on how to be an intercultural learning community*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

**H**agerman Mennonite Church in Markham, north of Toronto, is home to three congregations: Markham Chinese Mennonite Church; Markham Christian Worship Centre, a Sri Lankan church worshipping in Tamil; and Hagerman Mennonite, a traditional Mennonite congregation.

Roberson Mbayamvula, a Congolese Mennonite pastor and bishop who arrived in Canada as a refugee in 2007, is pastor of this last congregation.

In his presentation at the 2014 Ralph and Eileen Lebold Endowment Dinner on June 26 at Conrad Grebel University College, Mbayamvula said he once preached the gospel in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where he is from, denouncing the government for refusing to deal with poverty and corruption, and for enrolling children in the military, in his sermon. Two days later, the pastor of the congregation where he had preached was murdered by men in uniform, thinking they were killing Mbayamvula.

A few years later, while at a conference in Michigan, Mbayamvula's wife, Caris Bango, contacted him to tell him that it was not safe to return home. Thus began a separation of five years.

A Mennonite leader working on his Ph.D., Mbayamvula ended up in a shelter in Toronto, working at low-paying labour jobs. Contact with Andrew and Joanna Reesor-McDowell from Hagerman Mennonite led him to attend there and become a member. He was soon preaching and leading Sunday school. When Hagerman found itself without a pastor, the search committee contacted him. In 2012, he was able to bring his wife and their three children to Canada, meeting them at the wintery airport with coats and embraces.

Using his personal story, he made three points about being an intercultural learning community:

- **LISTEN, LISTEN, listen:** Both newcomers to Canada and the long-time residents

need to become vulnerable to each other and listen to each other's stories, opening homes and tables to fellowship, he said, noting that this is a risky business, but necessary for mutual learning and trust.

As a leader in Congo, he said he was expected to do everything himself. But his first funeral at Hagerman taught him that the grieving family and congregation had much to do with the process.

- **COLLABORATE: LIVING** and working as three congregations in one building takes much collaboration, he said, as Chinese youth begin to attend the English service, not speaking either Mandarin or Cantonese. The three congregations share Sunday school and fellowship activities.

- **DREAM TOGETHER:** After listening and collaborating, he said dreaming together means developing a future together. Citing I Corinthians 12:27-30, he said, "A church should remain a sanctuary offering healing and hope of God's reign for families, a family of faith which recognizes the principle of unity in diversity, and where our differences are respected."

The dinner, raising funds for the joint Grebel and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada endowment, also heard from David Martin, the area church's executive minister, that the goal of \$1 million had been achieved this year. The fund will be used to support the development of a certificate program in leadership for lay people, new Canadian leaders and traditional Mennonite leaders. MC Eastern Canada is putting an additional \$30,000 into this project this year from its Legacy Initiative Fund from the Harold and Enid Schmidt estate. Harold was on the committee that originally began the endowment.

Sean East, a 2014 grad from Grebel's master of theological studies program and pastor of West Hills Mennonite Fellowship near New Hamburg, said of his studies that he found he "had not been taught what to believe about the Bible, but was empowered to read the Bible; had not been taught what to think, but had been given tools to think; and [was] not given the answers, but was helped and trained to ask myself and the situations around me the right questions." ❧



*Roberson Mbayamvula, keynote speaker at the 2014 Lebold Endowment Dinner, left, visits with David Martin, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's executive minister, centre, and Ralph and Eileen Lebold, for whom the fundraising dinner is named.*



*Scott Brubaker-Zehr, left, Clayton Kuepfer, David Armes, Geoff Wichert and Hidden Acres staff person Patrick Singh discover at a June retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp near New Hamburg, Ont., that doing their own dishes is part of male spirituality.*

## Men retreat to explore manhood from an Anabaptist perspective

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

**A**ged 18 to 71, 20 men gathered at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp from June 20 to 21 to explore what it means to be a Mennonite man in the 21st century. “Under construction: Reframing men’s spirituality” featured Gareth Brandt from the biblical/theological studies faculty at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B. C. Cramming four sessions into just over 24 hours, Brandt led three discussions on what it means to be a man and a spiritual man, “pouring a foundation” for men’s spirituality and working out that spirituality. A fourth session involved a discussion between a therapist, a pastor and Brandt about what they are seeing in men in the Mennonite church today.

Key to Don Neufeld, a family counselor from St. Catharines, Ont., Pastor Scott Brubaker-Zehr from Rockway Mennonite Church in Kitchener, and Brandt, was the establishment of a comprehension by men of the love of God for them as they are, and not only for what they can do. Brandt and Brubaker-Zehr both spoke of contemplative spirituality as their entry into this, while Neufeld spoke of a significant

professional/personal crisis that resulted in him focussing on Brandt’s book.

All three spoke to the contrast between what was happening at this Mennonite Men-sponsored retreat and what happens at many other Christian men’s events. Instead of re-establishing some kind of male-run hierarchy or hegemony, the call at “Under construction” was for men to get in contact with their often-suppressed emotions, that can negatively affect their ability to nurture and be nurtured in their marriages and families.

Karl Dyck, a retired teacher from Waterloo, spoke of appreciating the emphasis on spirituality being a “24/7” thing and not on just Sunday mornings. “Spirituality is more than devotional life,” but affects all of life, including work, he said.

Five young adult men, all with connections to Conrad Grebel University College, talked about a men’s group at Grebel that does more than sports and games. Instead, members discuss what it means to be a Christian and Mennonite man in a feminist society. But this group’s existence

highlighted the difficulty men often have sharing about their feelings and spirituality. One young man’s father who was at the retreat didn’t know of his son’s involvement, nor did the young man know that his father has been part of a male spirituality group that has been meeting monthly for 12 years.

The gathered men agreed that such retreats need to be repeated, and that men need small groups in their professions, congregations and community in which they can feel safe to share their struggles, joys and experiences with God. ❧

### /// Briefly noted

#### Pastor in transition in Manitoba

Michael Pahl began as lead pastor at Morden Mennonite Church on July 1, 2013. Prior to moving to Morden, he taught theology at Cedarville University in Ohio from 2011-13 and was pastor at Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church in Edmonton from 2009-11. Pahl received his doctorate in theology from the University of Birmingham, U.K., and grew up in Coaldale, Alta.





# Grebel celebrates 50 years with new building dedication

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

Outgoing academic dean James Pankratz called Conrad Grebel University College's relationship with the University of Waterloo (UW) "the Oxford model," as it is a Christian liberal arts college affiliated with, and on the campus of, a leading technology school.

In a candid conversation with *Canadian Mennonite* as Grebel nears the completion of its 50th-anniversary year, Pankratz, president Susan Schultz Huxman and board chair Fred Redekop noted that this comes with benefits and challenges.

Redekop said that Grebel has opted out of the UW residence program since that would mean prioritizing first-year students. Grebel prefers a mix of students in its residences, since this allows for the passing on of the culture which the school hopes to promote. Second- and third-year students in the residence influence first-years on community life and involvement, instead of paid leaders having to instruct them and enforce the culture.

But this has required the staff to be more proactive in attracting students, and in trying to maintain 50 percent Mennonite residents, mostly Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, since Grebel does not appear as a residence

option for students applying to UW.

Grebel has remained part of the application process, meaning that students need an 80 percent average or better to enter the arts programs Grebel offers, higher than any other university in Ontario except Queen's in Kingston.

"I'm sure we're missing some good kids without the marks," said Huxman.

There are many positives to the relationship. Pankratz said that life for Grebel students mirrors the real lives of Mennonites better than a stand-alone parochial school. Students face all the questions of society in their classes "across the creek" at the university, and bring those back to the Grebel community and classes, where the conversations are enriched. "We learn from, and are influenced," he said. In return, Grebel gets to influence many UW students in the peace and conflict studies and music programs, since the college functions as the music department for the university.

Grebel's two graduate programs in theology and peace studies also benefit from the connection. Degrees are granted by UW, accredited as if they were UW courses, and government funding of the programs means that Grebel can offer

tuition scholarships to all full-time students. The entrepreneurial attitude UW has also got the peace and conflict studies program to think about how to advance peace in the world.

Pankratz said that Grebel sees itself as "a school of the church." Professors are expected to be in congregations preaching and teaching on a regular basis, along with publishing, going to conferences, working on committees, and teaching and guiding students. Being in congregations also means that the questions and ideas of the church come back to the institution to influence courses and thinking.

Redekop said that the board is nearing the completion of a new strategic plan, focusing on authenticity in both academic and non-academic components of Grebel's life, pointing out that the residence program is a significant part of shaping students for lives inside and outside the church.

"The new building space was shaped to be welcoming," said Huxman, focussed on people first—students, visitors, supporters. The large atrium, new entry area, community education room, a library that allows for beverages, and the continued work on peace advancement all focus on relationships.

The new building was dedicated on June 22 with tours and an official ceremony. Quoting from Natilie Sleeth's song, "In the Bulb There is a Flower," Huxman said, "from the past will come our future," referring to the past 50 years and the new building that will serve the church. ☼



*Standing at nearly the same place where ground was broken on March 16, 2013, board chair Fred Redekop, left, president Susan Schultz Huxman, director of development Fred Martin, 2014-15 student council president Kenny Hildebrand, director of operations Paul Penner, librarian/archivist Laureen Harder-Gissing, and Rick Martin of the Next Chapter fundraising committee, cut the symbolic ribbon to open and dedicate the new 2,200-square metre, four-storey building at Conrad Grebel University College on June 22.*



## ARTBEAT

## FILM REVIEW

# Don't hail Caesar

*Dawn of the Planet of the Apes.*

Directed by Matt Reeves. Written by Mark Bombback, Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver. Starring Gary Oldman, Keri Russell and Andy Serkis. A 20th Century Fox release, 2014. Rated PG.

REVIEWED BY VIC THIESSEN

The big blockbuster of the summer is the critically acclaimed *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, the sequel to 2011's *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*. It is set in the near future, in which an epidemic—created by the same retrovirus that made apes as intelligent as humans—has wiped out most of the world's human population. Ten years later, the apes, assuming the humans are all gone, have built themselves a village in the woods north of San Francisco.

But one day two young apes bump into a small group of humans looking for a dam which they hope will provide power to what's left of San Francisco since they have run out of fuel for their generators. Both sides react with fear and surprise, and one of the unarmed apes is shot.

Fortunately for the humans, the apes are led by Caesar, who has many fond memories of humans. Unlike his closest aide, Koba, who has experienced only violence at the hands of humans, Caesar is inclined to trust the intentions of the humans and even helps them with the dam.

Meanwhile, Koba goes behind Caesar's back to scout out San Francisco and discovers that the humans have amassed a huge arsenal that they are readying for possible use against the apes. Matters quickly deteriorate from there, with the inevitable major battle looming just around the corner.

*Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* is a predictable, but well-made, intelligent and entertaining film deserving much of its acclaim. The special effects and cinematography are amazing, the acting is strong by all involved (a special nod to Andy Serkis as Caesar), the score by Michael Giacchino is good if at times overwhelming, and the direction by Matt Reeves is tight.

*Dawn* has been praised for its humanistic statements and its social commentary

20TH CENTURY FOX PHOTO



*Fortunately for the humans, the apes are led by Caesar (pictured), who has many fond memories of humans.*

on issues faced by many conflict-ridden nations in our time. It's true that the film attempts to do exactly that. There is an emphasis on the power of inter-species cooperation and we are meant to sympathize with both sides in the developing conflict. The battle, when it comes, is appropriately depicted as stupid and evil, and as the work of a leader who manufactures a pretext for war by attacking his own

species.

Ultimately, however, I believe *Dawn* fails in its attempts at moral engagement by giving us a violent dehumanizing ending that undoes most of the humanizing anti-violence messages that have gone before.

Earlier this year, Disney's *Maleficent* did

the same thing. Both of these films exhibited huge potential, but displayed an incredible lack of imagination at the end.

This lack of imagination is shared by three of the other four blockbusters of 2014, all of which are rated PG and thus aimed at young people. What makes this so worrisome is that these violent films suggest to our children that, in the end, major conflicts can only be resolved with violence, which is usually "necessary" to overcome evil in our world.

Like *Dawn* and *Maleficent*, *The Lego Movie* was also full of mixed messages. It ended with a wonderful challenge to the redemptive power of violence, but before that it gave us 85 minutes of toy violence and the non-stop promotion of violent Lego toys.

Still, all three of these films are much better than the 2014 blockbusters *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and *Transformers: The Age of Extinction*, neither of which have any redeeming qualities and both of which feature endless violent action to "edify" our children.

The only 2014 blockbuster exception to the trend I just described is *X-Men: Days of Future Past*. This amazing film also features far too much violence not appropriate for children, but its entire plot is a challenge to the myth of redemptive violence. *X-Men* posits instead that acts of violence only result in an endless cycle of violence, ultimately destroying the world, whereas the ripples of even one nonviolent act have the potential to transform the future and prevent countless acts of violence, saving billions of lives.

All tolled, this year's blockbusters give us reason to hope that Hollywood has not lost its moral compass entirely and that many

*Dawn has been praised for its humanistic statements and its social commentary on issues faced by many conflict-ridden nations in our time.*

filmmakers are seriously trying to engage with the issues haunting humanity in 2014.

The bad news, however, is that the nine highest-grossing films of 2014, all rated PG, are full of violent action, indicating a justifiable perception that violent action is what people—especially young people—want to

see when they go the theatre.

This does not bode well for our future. I don't know how we have allowed this trend to develop, but I think it's time for a wake-up call, the kind of wake-up call Jesus issued 2,000 years ago in another world dominated by violent conflict. ❧

*Vic Thiessen, Mennonite Church Canada's chief administrative officer, is Canadian Mennonite's regular film reviewer.*

### ❧ Briefly noted

#### Aug. 31 first Sunday for new 'Shine' curriculum

The new Sunday school curriculum called "Shine: Living in God's light" begins on Aug. 31 for the 2014 fall quarter. It is now available from publishers MennoMedia and Brethren Press. The two publishing houses, long-time collaborators, began almost three years ago to prepare a successor to their current Sunday school curriculum, "Gather 'Round." Designed for children aged 3 through Grade 8, "Shine" incorporates the latest understandings of the ways children learn. "Shine" covers much of the Bible in a three-year outline, available online at [www.shinecurriculum.com](http://www.shinecurriculum.com). The Primary and Middler stories of "Shine" are found in a 320-page story Bible called *Shine On*. The Bible stories in *Shine On* move from Genesis to Revelation with a strong overview of the Old Testament and a heavy emphasis on the gospels. "We are pleased to offer our congregations a user-friendly, enriching curriculum that grows out of our distinct beliefs as Brethren and Mennonites," notes Wendy McFadden, publisher of Brethren Press. "We dream of raising a generation of children who are inspired to shine God's light in the world around them," says Amy Gingerich, editorial director for MennoMedia.

—MennoMedia



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British Columbia

MCC is a church-based agency that serves in the name of Christ by providing relief, development and peace initiatives in over 60 countries. MCC British Columbia supports the international work of MCC and operates several local programs that serve needs here at home. MCC BC has an operating budget of \$10 million with 75 staff and 3,000 volunteers who work in 10 thrift shops and a range of other activities. We also own several subsidiary enterprises that operate local programs and hold legacy investments.

## Employment Opportunity

### Advancement Director

The Advancement Director reports to the Executive Director and is responsible for all fundraising, marketing and communications activities including direct mail, monthly giving, major donors, fundraising events, media, church relations, planned giving, marketing a wide range of MCC activities, and creating new initiatives to engage our constituency and expand the donor base.

**Qualifications include:** proven track record as a leader in fundraising and communications, experience with related best practices, passion for networking and constituency relations, effective communicator in various mediums, proficiency with fundraising software, aptitude for creating innovative strategies for growth, and the ability to work effectively in a collaborative team environment.

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and this job posting.



# 'If I read more, I get more out of it'

*Four 'Year of Reading Biblically' participants share their experiences with Scripture*

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Co-editor

**A** Year of Reading Biblically (YORB) continues, and if you are following the reading schedule, you're somewhere in Jeremiah by now. The year is more than half over, and I thought it would be fun to speak with some fellow YORB participants to hear about their experience so far.

It's difficult for me to know for sure how many *Canadian Mennonite* readers are participating in YORB, but I know there are a handful across the country. Some are on track, some are not; some started in January, some joined in later; some will finish the readings in December, and some have already finished them. Here are four stories: two from "young voices," and two from some not-so-young voices.

If anything, these stories show that many people struggle with the same things when it comes to reading the Bible. They also show that there's a lot you can get out of reading Scripture, and it's not too late to join in if you haven't already.

## **Lori Guenther Reesor**

Lori Guenther Reesor, a self-employed

she graduated from Tyndale University College and Seminary, Toronto, with a doctor of ministry degree. Before YORB, however, the 47-year-old had never attempted to read the Bible from cover to cover.

Guenther Reesor says she has enjoyed coming across stories she was not familiar with before. For example, in I Chronicles 21, David asks Araunah for his threshing floor, so he can build an altar to the Lord. David tells Araunah that he will pay full price for it. When Araunah says that David can have it for free, along with oxen and wheat for the offering, David responds, "*No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.*"

For Guenther Reesor, whose graduate work involved researching why Mennonites give away their money, and who spends her time working with churches and charities to make fundraising a joy, the idea that David insisted on making an offering that cost him something stuck out for her.

*'If you don't read through the whole Bible, you're not going to see all those things.'*  
(Lori Guenther Reesor)

fundraising consultant from Mississauga, Ont., has spent a lot of time with Scripture. She has a master of theological studies degree from Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., and this past April

"If you don't read through the whole Bible, you're not going to see all those things," she says.

(Continued on page 36)

PHOTO COURTESY OF MC CANADA



*Kirsten Hamm, pictured at the Mennonite Church Canada 'Wild hope' assembly in July, is reading through the Bible in part so that she is better equipped in her work as a leader in MC Canada.*

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### **Kirsten Hamm**

Kirsten Hamm, 24, is the area church youth minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan. She recalls being in Sunday school as a child and memorizing chunks of Scripture in exchange for chocolate. Now, as an adult, her YORB participation isn't motivated by sweets, but by a desire to become a better leader. To that end, she feels that being more familiar with her Bible will equip her in her work.

Hamm studied the Bible at the Christian high school she attended, so when YORB began she was worried that certain parts of the Bible would seem boring because she

was familiar with them. That has not been the case.

She also felt that, because Christians base their faith in belief in Jesus Christ, whose life and teachings are recorded in the New Testament, the Old Testament would seem boring because it is less applicable to her life.

"[As I read] those first five books of the Bible, I was just reminding myself that this is part of my story too," she says.

Hamm adds that part of what keeps her motivated is knowing that there are other YORB participants out there. That includes Ian, her fiancé. The two discuss what they are reading and sometimes text each other questions: "Did you read this?" "Does this make sense to you?"

What Hamm wonders most about is, why God would spend so much time and effort on the Israelites, working them through the growing pains of becoming God's people, only to eventually make God's salvation available to all through Jesus Christ?

"What was going on in God's mind when he was putting in all this effort?" Hamm muses. "That's something that's consistently blown my mind a little bit. I'm hoping by the time I reach the end of

Revelation, I will know."

### **Alfred Penner**

I wanted to talk to my mother's brother for this story after his wife, my Aunt Vernelle, revealed to me that he had started reading the Bible in January and had already finished it before June was over.

This wasn't his first time reading through the Bible, though. He estimates that he has read through the entire thing each year for the past decade.

"I like reading it and I know I get a lot out of it," says Penner, 55, who works as the retail shipping supervisor at a Winnipeg company that manufactures hardwood mouldings. "If I read more, I get more out

*'What was going on in God's mind when he was putting in all this effort? ... I'm hoping by the time I reach the end of Revelation, I will know.'*  
*(Kirsten Hamm)*

of it."

He started reading through the Bible out of a need to stay more in touch with God.

"It was a discipline at first," he says. "Like a lot of things, you know it's good for you, so you keep going at it, but there's a lot of benefits to it, [like] learning what it was like for all these people 4,000 years ago, what their relationship was with God and how that still is so much the same today."

When he first read through the Bible, Penner grappled with how a loving God could condone so much violence in the Old Testament. That doesn't bother him as much today.

"I came to terms with that, thinking, these were very simple people [in the Old Testament] ... that, combined with the fact that I don't know all of how God works. God is the big boss up there. I'm a little ant down here and I ... will never know everything about him and how he works."

Penner is now reading through the New Testament again, but at a slower pace than he read from January to June. Doing the readings each year has slowly kept him in touch with God, as he hoped it would 10 years ago.

"You're never going to feel close to God all day long," he says, "but this is one step in

that direction of trying to be in tune with him in your daily walk with whatever you do.”

*Full disclosure: Alfred Penner is the author's uncle.*

### **Jonas Cornelsen**

Jonas Cornelsen didn't start the YORB reading plan in January, but joined in when the schedule got into books he hadn't read before. He started in May with I Chronicles and has been keeping up ever since.

Personal daily Bible reading wasn't a part of Cornelsen's experience growing up. It was more important to take part in church and learn about the Bible in community with others. The Bible often seemed like a “mysterious and complex book,” he says, and when he did pick it up, parts of it

“Now I see [that] more as part of the mystery of Scripture,” he says. “I think that's part of the beauty—that unknown aspect.”

Cornelsen has also realized that not everything he reads needs to be immediately relevant to his life. Rather, he finds it's more important to reflect on the overall arc of the story and where he sees himself fitting in. Reading the Bible is also a way to build familiarity with the text, so that he is better able to talk about the Bible with fellow believers.

“Having been more involved in the church in the last few years . . . knowing what's [in the Bible], I can come to those conversations a little more equipped. I don't have to have my opinions sorted out before I go to that interpretive community.”

Cornelsen says he is not typically ritual-

*Cornelsen has also realized that not everything he reads needs to be immediately relevant to his life.*

would confuse him. That turned him off from Bible reading for a time.

As a result of classes he's taken at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, the 20-year-old says he is now more comfortable with the unfamiliarity and strangeness of the Bible: the violent narratives that challenge him as a pacifist, and the mysterious language and metaphors that we don't encounter in 2014.

oriented when it comes to making time for God in his day, so reading for the last three-and-a-half months has been a good way to allow that to happen.

“Sometimes just picking up the Bible and reading those pages for however long it takes is that time where I can invite the Spirit in,” he says. “The act of reading itself has become a spiritual discipline that often transcends the words that are there.” ❧

## **The invisible poor**

**BY RACHEL BERGEN**

Young Voices Co-editor

**A**licia Good and her family lived below the poverty line for more than three years. That is, until last year.

The 32-year-old currently serves as a pastor at North Leamington United Mennonite Church, in Leamington, Ont., while her husband Billy attends law school. They have a young daughter together.

Their struggles began when Billy lost his job during the recession. At that time, Good was a stay-at-home mother. Both of them had student debt and neither could

find full-time work with benefits. They decided to go back to school, even though none of their family members were able to support them financially.

“It was a choice between OSAP [Ontario Student Assistance Program] and welfare,” Good explains.

The couple were so desperate that they put their house up for sale. They didn't have first- and last-month rent to pay for an apartment, and going back to school

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PHOTO BY MATTHEW RYAN PHOTOGRAPHY



*Jonas Cornelsen joined A Year of Reading Biblically in May as a way to read books of the Bible he was unfamiliar with.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALICIA GOOD



*Alicia and Billy Good with their daughter.*





Alicia Good

*(Continued from page 37)*

seemed foolish to many people.

“We realized that if we went back to school, we would have hope for the future,” Good says. “We would be better role models for our daughter.”

Good managed to get through her master of divinity degree at the University of Toronto’s Wycliffe College theological seminary thanks to a generous Mennonite Church Eastern Canada grant in her first year, and scholarships and bursaries in her second.

But everyday living expenses and the thought of one day having to pay off an incredible amount of debt were significant stressors for the Goods while she was working on her degree.

“I remember one month we were late getting our rent and were considering going to the food bank,” she says. “We also really needed a new snowsuit for our daughter. There’s a real sense of shame and stigma about poverty. I think it’s important for me to talk about it so people feel less of a sense of shame.”

of Windsor.

The recession and unemployment rates are affecting people in Mennonite churches and beyond, so some organizations and churches are taking steps to support them. Some Mennonite churches have emergency funds for the neediest in their congregations. They can lend them money to pay rent, buy groceries or fill prescriptions.

Mennonite Savings and Credit Union is also working to support the needy. According to Pamela Fehr, the vice-president of marketing, one of the Credit Union’s newest initiatives involves partnering with local organizations to find ways to support impoverished people who are stuck in the “vicious cycle” of payday loans. The idea came about after a collaborative brainstorming day when financial institutions, social services organizations and community representatives came together to talk about practical solutions to financial problems.

“We hope to build a solution to help break the cycle, so we can support them in moving above the poverty line,” Fehr says.

*The couple were so desperate that they put their house up for sale. They didn’t have first- and last-month rent to pay for an apartment, and going back to school seemed foolish to many people.*

The Goods are not alone in their struggles. According to Statistics Canada, 10 percent of Canadians live below the poverty line. Minimum-wage jobs barely cover basic needs, and even jobs that pay a “living wage” sometimes don’t cut it.

According to the Living Wage for Canadians Campaign, a living wage is the hourly amount a family needs to cover basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and transportation in their region. In British Columbia, a living wage is \$20.10 per hour, almost \$10 more per hour than minimum wage. A living wage is a bare-bones calculation and doesn’t account for additional expenses such as a credit card, debt and interest payments, or owning a home.

Good and her family don’t own a home, and they are wracked with student debt. They are accumulating more as Billy works on his law degree at the University

But Good says families like hers sometimes slip through the cracks. Student loans at MSCU have a cap of \$26,000, in order not to overwhelm people with debt, but the ceiling would barely get Billy through one year of law school.

She also says many people aren’t aware of the implications of socio-economic differences. “Sometimes we didn’t have the \$9 that it costs to get to and from church on public transit,” she says. “That’s something that’s not easily apparent in my church community. I’m grateful for the help we’ve gotten, but there needs to be more done.”

This coming month, the Goods will likely have to start paying off their student loans. Alicia says the monthly payments are as much as mortgage payments. While they have managed to get above the poverty line, their struggles are far from over, she says. ❧

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Sept. 12-13:** MCC festival sale and auction, Tradex, Abbotsford.

**Oct. 2:** MC B.C. fundraising dessert night at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, 7:30 p.m.

**Oct. 6-8:** MC B.C. pastor/spouse retreat at Camp Squeah.

**Oct. 16:** MC B.C. Fundraising dessert night at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond, 7:30 p.m.

**Oct. 18:** Sto:lo history and culture learning day—details to follow.

**Oct. 17-19:** MC B.C. women's ministry fall retreat at Camp Squeah. Theme: "Unwrap your gifts: Romans 12," with speaker April Yamasaki. From 6 p.m. on Friday to 2 p.m. on Sunday. Visit [www.mcbc.ca](http://www.mcbc.ca), e-mail [waltrude@shaw.ca](mailto:waltrude@shaw.ca) or call 604-756-0707 for more information.

**Oct. 30:** MC B.C. fundraising dessert night at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack.

### Alberta

**Sept. 27:** MC Alberta fundraiser at Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary, at 6:30 p.m., featuring comedian Matt Falk and music by the Foothills Flat Footers. Hosted by CTV's Chris Epp. For reservations, call 403-289-7172 or e-mail [foothillsmennonite@nucleus.com](mailto:foothillsmennonite@nucleus.com)

### Saskatchewan

**Sept. 19-21:** SMYO junior high retreat at Youth Farm Bible Camp. Speaker: Autumn Dueck from Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man. Contact Kirsten [youthminister@mcsask.ca](mailto:youthminister@mcsask.ca) or 306-249-4844 x 223 for more details.

**Sept. 26-28:** Quilting and scrapbooking retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim.

**Nov. 8:** Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, hosts *Peace, Pies and Prophets* presented by Ted and Co. Theater Works, at 7 p.m. Fundraiser for Christian Peacemaker Teams. For more information, e-mail [canada@cpt.org](mailto:canada@cpt.org).

### Manitoba

**To Sept. 13:** Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery summer exhibitions.

"Moved by the Spirit," a multi-artist exhibit inspired by the life of Jesus, curated by artist Louise Tessier, and Awakenings, paintings by Faye Hall.

**Sept. 20:** Brandon MCC Relief Sale at The Keystone Centre. For more information go to <http://www.westman.wave.ca/~hila/>.

**Sept. 26-27:** CMU Fall Festival for students, alumni, friends, donors and community members. Connect, learn, play and celebrate with the CMU community. For more information, visit [cmu.ca/fallfest/](http://cmu.ca/fallfest/).

**Oct. 14-15:** JJ. Thiessen Lectures at the CMU Chapel. Speaker: John Swinton, professor and chair in divinity and religious studies at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Topic: "Becoming friends of time: Disability, Timefulness and Gentle Discipleship." For more information, visit [cmu.ca](http://cmu.ca).

**Nov. 6-9:** MEDA convention, at the Fairmont Winnipeg Hotel, Winnipeg. Theme: "Human dignity through entrepreneurship."

### Ontario

**Sept. 5-7:** Building Community retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp for people with disabilities, their family, friends and supporters. Theme: "True community: Many gifts, many colours." Keynote speaker: Karen James-Abra. For more information, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail [info@hiddenacres.ca](mailto:info@hiddenacres.ca).

**Sept. 6:** 25th-annual community corn festival, at Wanner Mennonite Church, Cambridge, at 5:30 p.m. (rain or shine). Music with No Discernable Key, food and activities. Bring your own lawn chairs. Admission by food bank donation. For more information, call 519-658-4902 or visit [www.wannerchurch.org](http://www.wannerchurch.org).

**Sept. 19-21:** Men's Meat Retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. For more information, call 519-422-3200 or visit [www.slmc.ca](http://www.slmc.ca).

**Oct. 3-4:** Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada host an MW Sister Care Seminar at the Cambridge Hotel and Conference Centre. Facilitators: Rhoda Keener and Carolyn Heggen. For more information and registration forms, contact Phyllis Ramer at 519-236-7332 or [peramer@hay.net](mailto:peramer@hay.net).

**Oct. 17-18:** 5th annual Festival of Biblical Storytellers at Richmond

Hill United Church. Learn and experience the joy and power of biblical storytelling. Keynote speaker: Cynthia Maybeck. For information and registration go to [www.biblicalstorytellingCAN.ca](http://www.biblicalstorytellingCAN.ca) or (514) 694-0214.

## Classifieds

### Employment Opportunities

## Stewardship Consultant Ontario & Eastern Provinces

Mennonite Foundation of Canada, a donor-advised charitable foundation committed to helping others live generously, is seeking a Stewardship Consultant for Ontario and eastern provinces.

As the ideal candidate you will:

- promote biblical stewardship of financial resources and provide charitable gift and estate planning services,
- support and incorporate MFC's core values of stewardship in your personal life,
- communicate effectively with individuals and in public presentations,
- have knowledge of, or ability to learn, charitable gift and estate planning,
- be creative, organized, and self-motivated in balancing multiple projects,
- be willing and able to contribute as part of an inter-dependent staff team, and
- have the ability to travel within Canada and the USA.

MFC offers a competitive salary and benefits package. This is a full-time, salaried position. Please submit resume by September 2, 2014 to:

**Milly Siderius, Director of Stewardship Services**  
Mennonite Foundation of Canada  
207-50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1  
519-745-7821 | [msiderius@mennofoundation.ca](mailto:msiderius@mennofoundation.ca)

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



# ***Mennonite leaders call for justice and peace in Gaza***

Mennonite Church Canada

**I**n response to escalating violence in Gaza, Willard Metzger, Mennonite Church Canada's executive director, added his signature to four other Mennonite leaders on a Mennonite Central Committee letter to the Prime Minister of Canada.

The letter calls for greater efforts toward "an end to violence in and around Gaza, and for international support to address the underlying causes of this conflict."

Stated Metzger of his reason for signing, "I think it is the responsibility as global citizens for church leaders and individuals to express their concerns and contact their elected officials."

On July 28, MC Canada received a report from Alex Awad, the dean of students at Bethlehem Bible College, stating that the situation in Gaza had become intolerable. He noted that the first Christian victim in the latest round of violence was Jalele Ayyad.

Fatin Ayyad, a relative of the deceased and a member of the Shepherd Society, a ministry of Bethlehem Bible College, told Awad that the woman was killed when an Israeli missile hit her house. Ayyad said the family was warned to leave the house, but before they could respond, a deadly missile struck, killing Jalele, injuring her husband and crippling their son, who may require amputation of both legs.

According to Ayyad, Israeli statements about giving Gazans enough time to leave their homes before shooting at them was absolute propaganda: "Some got killed under the rubble of their homes without ever receiving a warning, some got slain on the way out and others got killed on the streets after they left their homes. The tragedy is that some ran to what they thought was a safe shelter and the indiscriminate bombings followed them and ended their lives inside the shelter."

Awad's report closed with a prayer: "May God have mercy on those who are still alive."

