

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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and revolution

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EDITORIAL

A new leadership model

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

“We would benefit more if our leaders were leading more and following less,” lamented one reader in reflecting on the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) discussions at Assembly 2014 this past July. “It is very difficult to guide a scattering herd of sheep from the rear.”

Well, maybe. That sentiment reflects a style of leadership that might have been effective in the past, but is becoming more and more dated. It is apparently calling for more decisive action from the top, crafting statements that are black and white while leaving little room for nuance or grey areas.

If that style of leadership were so effective, why have Mennonites divided and splintered time and again over the more cultural issues of the time (often camouflaged and defended as deeply “spiritual” issues), so that we in North America represent 18 different major groups?

Many of these splinters occurred precisely because strong, egotistical leaders insisted on certain practices and made declarative statements that, in retrospect, seem archaic, narrow in scope and legalistic—issues of dress code conformity, the evils of Sunday school, young people’s meetings and higher education, and, more recently, divorce, women in leadership and sexual orientation.

Perhaps even more troubling is the metaphor of followers being “sheep.” Sheep are known to be passive and dumb, relying entirely on a shepherd (leader)

for their safety, protection, health and overall well-being—hardly descriptive of members of Mennonite Church Canada taking seriously the claims and directives of Jesus in the context of an Anabaptist/Reformation-inspired “priesthood of all believers.” The operational word for today is “discernment,” despite its mocking in good humour by a new Canadian keynote speaker at July’s assembly.



The task force for the BFC process over a five-year period is to be commended for a measured, biblically based approach to the present-day issues of human sexuality, taking a broad look at the subject and not one narrowly focussed on homosexuality or same-sex marriage, but also raising the issue of commitment and fidelity in heterosexual marriage, and the importance of faithfulness in all relationships. It is an approach that wisely avoids, not triggers, narrow-minded, divisive responses that lead to division within the body, rather than unity.

And unlike leading us like sheep, it assumes that we, as faithful members of a local congregation, are serious students of the Bible, are on a constant spiritually formative journey as Christians, and are studying and deliberating as one body, disagreeing and agreeing in love, and assuming openness and growth as normal dynamics in our worship and life as a congregation. The BFC-5 document puts it this way: “Discerning faithfulness is a normal and ongoing vocation of being the church in the world.”

Yes, good leadership of this culturally charged issue is very important. Congregational autonomy is recognized and respected. “Priesthood” is encouraged, meaning we congregants are encouraged to study and learn all aspects of the subject, taking into account scientific findings and sociological studies in the field of sexuality. Experts within congregations should be asked to provide new data objectively and without prejudice.

These, then, should be shared with the MC Canada body as a whole, to which we at *Canadian Mennonite* are committed. We need to share our stories, experiences and insights with others across the country.

This is the new paradigm of leadership. Even secular society and the corporate world are engaging in new styles of leadership. The new dynamic for the corporate executive officer is not one of producing the super, work-driven employee, but encouraging the skills of creativity, collaboration and working in groups, rather than emphasizing competitiveness and individual development. The leader is more of a coach than a “boss.”

Forming partnerships in your field is also part of the new paradigm, rather than working so hard at “beating the competition.” Development of new products and services is getting so complex and beyond the reach of any single organization that doing things together gets us all farther along.

In our own religious setting, this is tantamount to discernment—the process of consultation between denominational leadership and local congregations, the recognition anew that we are all “priests” wanting the spiritual best for ourselves and our faith community. That’s the new leadership model.

And it is not necessarily the shepherd leading the passive sheep. Far from it.

ABOUT THE COVER:

The Spirit Movers troupe rehearses in the Dayspring Chapel at L’Arche Daybreak, Richmond Hill, Ont., in 2009. Read Jason Reimer Greig’s feature reflection on the L’Arche movement, ‘Good work: Tales of disability, interruption and revolution,’ on page 4. Senior writer Will Braun offers his perspective in ‘Differently gifted’ on page 8.

PHOTO: MICHAEL SWAN, COURTESY OF THE CATHOLIC REGISTER

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at canadianmennonite.org

Senior writer Will Braun provides background and comment to his print pieces:

- Recent Supreme Court decisions concerning two indigenous communities. See "More viewpoints: Finding ways to share this land of plenty."

- Institutions serving people with intellectual disabilities. See "More viewpoints: Differently gifted."

Your online comments and suggestions are always welcome.

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FEATURE REFLECTION

Good work

Tales of disability, interruption and revolution

JASON REIMER GREIG
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



Beige cement walls intersect with light green shag carpet. The smell of sugar and over-brewed yet weak coffee mingles with bits of conversation and the clink of spoons on ceramic church mugs.

It's the social hour after the Sunday morning service at a mainstream Protestant church in Richmond Hill, Ont. I am here in the basement with Dan, a person with an intellectual disability. Dan and I live at L'Arche Daybreak, a home where people like Dan—known as core members—and assistants such as myself share life.

Although Dan is officially Anglican, he goes to this church because it is easily walkable. Dan and I are off to the side in the church hall, Dan sitting on his walker enjoying a coffee and donut, while I stand, wishing he would finish quickly so we can leave.



Then I see her, still 10 metres away but definitely coming toward us. Gray hair and in her mid-50s, she is a stalwart of her faith community. She is committed to social justice causes of all kinds. I know what she will say.

I steel myself. She arrives. After giving Dan a kind smile, she extends her hand to me and exclaims: "Thank you for coming to our church! I think L'Arche is such a great thing. You are doing such a good work!"

Hoping to cover my annoyance, I force

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The Spirit Movers performance troupe rehearses its 2009 show in the Dayspring Chapel at L'Arche Daybreak in Richmond Hill, Ont.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL SWAN / COURTESY OF THE CATHOLIC REGISTER



It would be easy to write L'Arche off as a good story of a 'specialized' community, but too idealistic for the 'real world.' ... Care for the weak is applauded, but things like peace, justice, international development and even personal devotion are given more attention.

(Continued from page 5)

a smile and a polite response before she departs to converse with another pod of parishioners.

She doesn't get it. People rarely do.

Dan's mission

I have heard similar comments from Christians of all stripes. Although spoken in kindness, the assumption behind the words betrays a typical assumption that only "saints" could have the patience to "care for" such pitiable, difficult and strange people.

I held this view, too, before I first came to L'Arche in 1999. While I would have simply stated that working at L'Arche was "not for me," in truth I could not have

imagined living life with people I viewed as defective and damaged. Yet God interrupted my plans and called me to this community in spite of myself.

It didn't take long after entering L'Arche Daybreak in Richmond Hill to arrive at a very different idea of people with intellectual disabilities. Living at L'Arche—sharing life and faith together in community—gave me a renewed purpose of being a Christian. But not because it enabled me to help the "unfortunates." Rather, entering into relationships with core members transformed my whole perception of what it means to be human. Living with Dan became much more than merely "taking care of him." Instead, I began to understand him

as a friend and teacher, with a God-given mission to reveal Jesus to me.

Years later, when I embarked on graduate theological studies, it was Dan and other core members I lived with over the course of 11 years who provided the inspiration for much of my reflection on Christian life and practice. I have come to believe that theological reflection needs the lives of people with intellectual disabilities to show old and new ways of being faithful. In this way, Dan continues to extend his mission to the wider church and world.

My story of transformation and mission could not have taken place outside of L'Arche, a particular and embodied manifestation of the gospel. Only such a

culture could transform my stereotypes and fears into the friendship and mutual-ity of the reign of God.

L'Arche dates back to the fall of 1963, when Jean Vanier, son of famed Canadian Governor General Georges Vanier, was wondering what to do with his newly minted Ph.D. in the ethics of Aristotle. He wished to follow Jesus, but remained unsure how to proceed. At the invitation of his spiritual director, Father Thomas Philippe, Vanier decided to visit the institution where Philippe was chaplain. The institution was one for people with intellectual and physical disabilities in Trosly-Breuil, France, where Vanier lived at the time. This visit changed Vanier's life.

The cries of anguish from the men he encountered during that visit deeply moved Vanier, eventually compelling him to respond not with money or expertise, but with his life. In the fall of 1964, Vanier purchased a small house in Trosly-Breuil and invited two men from the institution to live with him. He called it "L'Arche," French for "the ark," a refuge and location for the birth of a new covenant. As L'Arche grew, more people came to "assist" him in his vocation—hence the label "assistant" for non-disabled members.

Although Vanier may have begun L'Arche as a rescue movement to save people from institutional life, a new rationale for his growing community quickly arose. Instead of seeing his new housemates merely as poor unfortunates in need of Christian generosity, Vanier began to see them as teachers of the most profound lessons.

Earlier in life, Vanier's time as a naval officer had taught him to be strong and efficient. Then the academy formed him into a powerful intellectual. But people with intellectual disabilities taught him how to love and be in communion with others. He learned to accept his own vulnerability and weakness as part of his belovedness. Loving gently and tending to human fragility represented not romantic sentimentality, but the essence of the peace of Christ. When the intense anguish of others awoke in him an unconscious aggression, or violence, as he has called it, Vanier found a new

nonviolent path to happiness modelled by many of his new friends.

For Vanier, people with intellectual disabilities had to be at the centre and heart of the community's life. They were the "core members," drawing the others into deep friendships and transforming their worldviews into ones more faithful to the way of Jesus. L'Arche proved an ideal manifestation of the profound social reversals proclaimed by Jesus. In L'Arche, Vanier saw reflected the gospel's upturning of the hierarchical pyramid of society into Paul's body of Christ, where the poorest ones had the most honoured position. Crazy though this community appeared, the truth it carried meant that L'Arche grew into an internationally renowned federation of communities.

It would be easy to write L'Arche off as a good story of a "specialized" community, but too idealistic for the "real world." I have heard people say that L'Arche is nice for warming the heart, but irrelevant to the major global challenges that confront humanity. The same sentiment comes, either explicitly or implicitly, from many people in the church. Care for the weak is applauded, but things like peace, justice, international development and even personal devotion are given more attention.

Disabled theology

Those of us who identify as Anabaptist Christians often espouse a discipleship of the strong and able, needing to leap tall conflicts in a single bound or be the ever-generous donor. This kind of super-faith can often cohere with our culture's obsession with independence and effectiveness, values that cast long shadows on the people lost at the bottom of society. A theology of strength and ability simply can't work for them.

In my studies at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., over the past few years, I tried to interrogate this super-faith by introducing the perspective of my friends at L'Arche. This surprised and intrigued fellow students. For many of these bright future leaders, the mode of looking at personal faith mostly consists in rational decisions and forms of community based on individuals independently choosing their own faith

in a voluntary association with others. Encountering people who are limited in the ability to choose their own destiny seemed to blindside some students. Having grown up on a diet of individual spirituality, when these students were confronted with the lives of my friends they were forced to think for the first time that Christian faith is as much about what "we" believe as what "I" believe.

Christian faith is not just about my own beliefs, experience or good works, all done in combination with other like-minded individuals. It is as much a social reality as an individual one in which my own convictions and ability weigh less than the communion and faith that comes from being a body. When my friend Buddy from L'Arche comes to church less from personal intention than a longing to belong to a body of believers, his faith is just as legitimate as mine.

While some people at seminary ignored my attempts to interrupt theology with the lives of people with intellectual disabilities—which is okay—others expressed sincere gratitude. I believe the church needs people who can intrude on the faith of the strong with more vulnerable, and thus more human, reality. Bringing the lives of core members to bear on Christian theology and practice reminds us that notions of grace and community are not optional.

But what the church really needs is not people like me to tell stories and reflect theologically; rather, it needs people with intellectual disabilities in its midst, people who can draw us out of our heads and frenzied activities, and into our hearts and our bodies. Befriending these strangers of postmodern culture has the potential to reveal gifts that can convert us into disciples ready to follow and meet Jesus in the forgotten places and people of society.

Communities like L'Arche act as examples for the church by offering locations of revolution where unlikely people meet and transform one another into friends and truer human beings. If the church truly welcomes difference and diversity, it not only makes room for those people society devalues, but embraces them

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VIEWPOINT

Differently gifted

Emotional stakes high in closure of facilities for people with intellectual disabilities

WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

“I don’t want to remember it,” Hugo Unruh says of the grim spring day in 1972. He and his wife at the time pulled into the 40-hectare complex an hour west of Winnipeg, which then housed 1,000 people with intellectual disabilities, with Nick, their 13-year-old son.

“I just about died when I saw it,” he says of the stark 30-bed dorm room that would end up being his son’s bedroom for the next 15 years at the Manitoba Developmental Centre (MDC). “My wife was in tears,” says the retired United Church minister, explaining that they were simply not able to care for Nick at home

due to his cerebral palsy and complicated medical needs.

The feature article that surrounds this piece speaks

David Weremy told me how he once informed his mother of abuses he’d witnessed at MDC. After his mother asked staff about it, Weremy was locked up in solitary before he ultimately ran away.

movingly about the profound and historically overlooked gifts that people with intellectual disabilities can offer the church and world. Part of reconciling ourselves to these gifted people requires healing a lingering history of societal treatment that is anguished.

And awkward. Over its 124-year history, MDC has been called the “Home for Incurables,” “the Manitoba School for Mentally Defective Persons,” and the “Manitoba School for Retardates.”

Former residents speak of solitary confinement as a form of punishment, physical abuse, hunger, absence of privacy, lack of personal choice and a climate of fear. David Weremy told me how he once informed his mother of abuses he’d witnessed at MDC. After his mother asked staff about it, Weremy was locked up in solitary before he ultimately ran away. The 2008 National Film Board-sponsored documentary, *The Freedom Tour*, recounts many similar stories.

An Ontario judge recently approved a \$67-million

payment to survivors of the province’s last three MDC-like institutions, which closed in 2009. Premier Kathleen Wynne issued an apology to residents and families who, she said, were “deeply harmed and continue to bear the scars and the consequences” of the facilities. “Their humanity was undermined,” she said.

As recently as 2006, about 3,800 people with intellectual disabilities lived in 31 large facilities across Canada. Today there are about 430 people, divided between MDC and the St. Amant Centre in Winnipeg. The Alberta government is in the process of closing its last large residential buildings at Michener Services in Red Deer, and Saskatchewan says it will close Valley View in Moose Jaw by 2016.

That leaves only Manitoba stranded on the wrong side of history. But it’s complicated. Family members of residents at Michener are fighting hard to keep it open.

Unruh knows the complexity. As difficult as it was for his son to be at MDC, it was an improvement over Nick’s previous placement. There, he said, Nick was “so medicated he couldn’t hold up his head.” MDC staff reduced his meds and taught Nick to communicate using a system of symbols, something that transformed his life, and, ironically, allowed him to communicate his dislike for MDC.

Since 1987, Nick has lived at a group home in Winnipeg. Hugo and his wife Carol, whom he married in 1985, host Nick every weekend and are an intimate part of his life. Unruh says he sympathizes with people who have loved ones in MDC and choose to keep them there. He understands the emotional stakes.

Families whose loved ones have spent decades in these places presumably do not want to feel like they have done wrong by allowing this. Their concern must be applauded and given close attention.

But the stakes for people who suffered abuse in institutions are equally high. They deserve to see a clean break from that era. The knowledge that these institutions still exist consumes people like Weremy. Society owes these people a generous measure of healing.

And it owes an equally generous measure of grace to current residents and their families. Many families



say the institutions should remain open because their loved ones have lived in the facilities for decades, so a move would be traumatic, and because medically fragile residents cannot be cared for elsewhere.

Advocates for closing the facilities point out that thousands of people have been successfully transitioned from large institutions to group homes or individualized settings. A Brock University study found that, following the last round of closures in Ontario, 93 percent of families “reported they were satisfied with the placement” of their loved ones.

Experience and studies also show that medically fragile people can be well cared for in community settings. The Brock researchers made recommendations that focus not on whether community living is preferable to institutional life—that is no longer a question in most of the country—but on how to maximize the chances of smooth, gentle transition. Careful, proactive and highly individualized planning is a key recommendation.

Where does the church fit in? I have found no

evidence of church groups speaking out on this topic, although various faith-based organizations provide services for people with intellectual disabilities. An important and difficult reconciliation is happening with respect to the societal place of people with intellectual disabilities. The church should be there—informed by the spiritual attentiveness portrayed in “Good work: Tales of disability, interruption and revolution” on page 4—to provide accompaniment, practical support, wisdom and perhaps conflict-resolution services.

Renowned ethicist and author Margaret Somerville, whom I interviewed on the topic in 2010, says: “You test the ethical tone of a society by how it treats its weakest, most-in-need, most-vulnerable people.” That is the opportunity before us.

This article is based on interviews and research done between 2010 and the present, parts of which have been published elsewhere. For more on this topic, visit www.canadianmennonite.org/ differently-gifted.



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as those able to renew and refresh the gospel message.

A morning grace

People like Jane, for instance. Jane was an impossible-to-forget core member who transformed many lives with her indefatigable spirit, utterly unique personality and zest for life. By the time I lived with her, Jane also had dementia. Yet we didn't see her as "the person with dementia" manifesting "problematic behaviour" and living the "death sentence" most people associate with Alzheimer's disease. For those of us who lived with her, Jane was just Jane, and we delighted in her presence.

Jane's very non-normative gifts were many. She loved throwing things down the toilet when assistants weren't paying attention. ("Watch out for your backpack!") She had a fondness for books, especially when she could tear them to pieces. A full glass of water was never safe with Jane at the dinner table, and her "chair art" in the hallways was legendary.

Jane also gave remarkable hugs. Being institutionalized for many years before coming to L'Arche meant that she was often afraid of men, and thus the female assistants were the chief beneficiaries of her embraces. But sometimes the male assistants would get one, and they often came as surprisingly transformative graces.

One such day was a bright summer morning. It was my turn to be up at 6 a.m. when the overnight person went home and before everyone else woke up. Everyone except Jane. She had her own sleep patterns and was usually already up. Groggy and exhausted, I came up to the kitchen to make coffee.

Then I saw Jane come toward me. "Hello!" she said with that unmistakable I-am-going-to-give-you-a-big-hug look. Sensing the privilege, I knelt down—Jane was about half my height—and let her wrap her arms around me, gently patting my back the way she did when she hugged people. When I sensed it was time to finish, I released my arms, but Jane did not. She just kept gently patting my back, somehow caring me into existence. "Slow down," she seemed to be

saying through her hands, "slow down and receive this gift."

And for a moment I did. And as I did, I received a glimpse of the holy contemplative rest Jane had given to so many assistants throughout her years at L'Arche. Then Jane decided the hug was over and matter-of-factly walked back into the living room. I got up and made the coffee in a wholly different mode of being, interrupted and revived.

Jane, who has since passed away, never received a Nobel Peace Prize. She never gave an eloquent speech on peace. But she helped form countless men and women into true disciples of God's shalom. I was not the generous superior who gave out of my abundance to alleviate Jane's poverty. Instead, I received peace from one of Jesus' (un)usual friends and slowly moved closer to the radicalness of the gospel. Jane embraced, rather than eliminated, my difference. She perceived me as a stranger to host, rather than a

hostile "other" to fear.

What greater work of peace does the church have in our time than this hospitality? We dare not miss those people God has chosen to convert us to the gospel. We dare not miss the communities that embody God's friend-making mission to the world.

So the next time you see me in your church with Dan or Jane, extend to them your hand and exclaim: "I am so glad you are in our church! You are doing such a good work!" ❧

Jason Reimer Greig is a recent graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. He now lives with his family in Wissen, Germany, where he is pursuing potential doctoral studies.



[W]hat the church really needs is not people like me to tell stories and reflect theologically; rather, it needs people with intellectual disabilities in its midst: People who can draw us out of our heads and frenzied activities, and into our hearts and our bodies.

❧ For discussion

1. What contact have you had with individuals with intellectual disabilities? What qualities are necessary for those who work with these individuals? How does your congregation help those with intellectual challenges feel included? What blessings can these weaker members offer to a congregation?
2. Do you agree that we tend to have a theology of strength and ability? How much does your congregation value care for the weak? Do you agree with Jason Reimer Greig that Christian faith is not just personal, but comes from being a body? What can the weak among us teach us about friendship, community and peace?
3. What are some of the big challenges facing families who have members with intellectual disabilities? What services are available in your area? How are the churches plugged into these services? Is there a role for institutions in caring for those with disabilities?
4. If society tends to see people with intellectual disabilities as "defective and damaged," what does it take to change that view? How can the church better learn to see the weakness of strength and the strength of weakness?

—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.

✉ 'Whatever happened to forgiveness?'

RE: PASTOR'S CREDENTIALS withdrawn," July 7, page 23.

When I read the short release regarding Tym Elias, I was reminded of similar situations where church leaders have been put out to pasture without food and water. I fail to see how this judgmental way of dealing with persons in leadership who have crossed sexual boundaries reflects who we should be as a faithful church. The tone of the release seems to imply that there is a note of achievement, that everyone has washed their hands of Elias and the crucifixion is complete.

It is obvious from my comments that I am disturbed, having related personally to several persons who have experienced this type of judgment and how destructive it is.

My question is: Whatever happened to forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration?

WALDIMAR NEUFELD, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Creating child-friendly worship

ELSIE REMPEL

As your advocate for children in the life of the church, I continually encourage others to offer child-friendly worship services. Assembly 2014 worship planners offered a fine example of doing just that by inviting children to help out with the closing service on July 3, and making them feel at home. The elements were simple and may offer some ideas that you can incorporate into your congregational worship.



Children's activity tables positioned at the front of the gathering place provided an area where they could comfortably observe the service and visuals, while keeping busy with thematically chosen picture books, activities and quiet board games. Crackers offered something to nibble on. Ribbon sticks, used for liturgical dance, were supplied by Irma Fast Dueck and

used with increasing ease as children began to feel at home in the space.

During the children's story, the stage was set so that the children faced the storyteller, rather than the audience. Doing so made them better able to focus on the story. Telling the story from Mark 4 through the eyes of a disciple prompted an awestruck three-year-old to repeat the phrase, "Peace, be still." It touched my heart and moved me to invite all of the children to repeat it several times.

The children took a collection with their mission project buckets—and raised about \$1,000 for the support of a sustainable agriculture ministry in the Global South—a project with which they could identify.

A children's communion table was set up right next to their activity station, making it more comfortable for them to approach the table. The words of invitation were inviting and focussed on God's

abundance. Children whose attention span allowed them to hear the words felt verbally welcomed to the table of a loving, blessing God.

At the children's communion station, Kathy Giesbrecht offered personal and affirming words of blessing. When I noticed how many children and youth approached, I feared they would run out of supplies, so, like the boy in John 6, I approached with a basket of fish (crackers) to supplement the alternative elements. As Giesbrecht accepted my crackers, she gave me an incredible gift; she invited me to help serve the children. My joy in serving and blessing these young members of our church family was almost too full to contain. Just before the service ended, children enjoyed the creative buzz that erupted as adults folded boats of Wild Hope from paper provided. It seemed almost as if the adults were entering into the holy work of play that is usually reserved for children. All of us were blessed and happy children of God that Sunday. Thanks be to God!

What ideas might these inspire to bring the same blessing into your home congregation?

Elsie Rempel is MC Canada's formation consultant.

✉ When climate-change models don't reflect reality

RE: "CLIMATE CHANGE is happening" letter, July 7, page 14.

Most sceptics agree that the climate is changing and that increasing carbon emissions should result in an increase in the earth's temperature. When debating

climate science with a sceptic, providing a long list of climate-change examples only shows a misunderstanding of the issue.

The sceptic is concerned with the forecasting abilities of the climate models—more than 100 of them—which universally produce too much warming when compared with actual observations. Even worse, when the models are given actual data, they still produce

FAMILY TIES

The deadly sin of greed

MELISSA MILLER

On a perfectly lovely summer day last month, I joined a couple hundred people for a worship service on the edges of a wheat field. The crop on the field is dedicated to the work of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Each year, individual farmers from Catholic, Lutheran and Mennonite churches join with local seed, fertilizer and insurance businesses to produce a crop. When it's harvested and sold, and matched four-to-one by the Canadian government, the funds are directed to the Foodgrains' mission of ending world hunger.

On that Sunday, the sun warmed us and a gentle breeze sweetened the air, as we sang of our faith, prayed and listened to God's Word. We reflected on the feeding of the five thousand from Matthew 14, with its reminder of the miraculous abundance that happens when we turn our resources over to God, ask God's blessing on them, and share them with open hands and hearts. In such a gracious and fertile setting, it was easy to imagine a peaceful world where all have enough.

But the world isn't peaceful, nor do all have enough. At the service, we heard heartbreaking stories of people desperately in need of food and food security—the kind of people served by the Foodgrains Bank. Sitting on the ripening wheat field, with our full bellies

and full wallets, we were mindful of the abundance of God's blessing in our lives, even as we heard a compelling call to live generously in response to God's love.

A few days later, working on this column in a public library, I noticed on the table beside me two books about Bernie Madoff, the infamous thief now serving an interminable 150-year prison term for engineering the largest financial fraud in U.S. history. Skimming them, I couldn't help but contrast the greed and destructiveness of Madoff with the good will and charity present in the Manitoba wheat field.

Charity and greed are opposites, or, more accurately, charity is the antidote to greed. Greed is a term of excess: an extreme, even insatiable hunger for more stuff, more than one needs, more than one deserves, especially when considering the poor and the hungry. Synonyms

Greed . . . separates us from our fellow travellers on the road, and from the generous, freely given love of God.

include avarice and covetousness; terms like piggish and ravenous may expand its meaning, but seem to judge unkindly both the pig and the raven.

Greed is rightly named one of the Seven Deadly Sins because of its power to separate us from our fellow travellers on the road, and from the generous, freely given love of God. When we are

blinded by greed, we miss seeing the needs of others and the perfectly adequate, even abundant, resources that drench our lives. In our world of excessive buying, consuming and wasting, it is greed that drives much of our economy. I wonder how conscious we are able to be of the greed and entitlement that we carry as privileged North Americans.

Charity is a Christian virtue to cultivate, an alternative to the empty, unsatisfying hunger of greed. An old-fashioned term, charity speaks to us of caring for the poor, of sharing with those in need, of almsgiving. More broadly, it mirrors agape love, the kind of love that God pours out unconditionally on all people, on the whole world—probably even on pigs and ravens. Charity turns us outward,

away from our greedy selves and toward the goodness and fulfillment of caring for others. May we lean into charity and away from greed.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) lives in Winnipeg. She is wrapped in the family ties of daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend and pastor.



more warming than what was actually observed.

The question posted by Stephen Kennel in his “Where is the global warming?” letter, May 26, page 12, is not to suggest that there is no climate change. Rather, this is a recognition that all of the models used to project global warming were not able to predict the current 17-year “pause” that has been observed.

Natural variability is now widely accepted as the

reason for this pause. Shouldn't this bring into question the ability of existing climate models to reliably project future trends?

There are Ph.D. climate scientists who question the assumptions used in the current climate models and the reliance placed on these models for developing public policy. Things like the earth's climate

(Continued on page 14)

GOD, MONEY AND ME

Beware of 'undue influence'

KEVIN DAVIDSON

Back in 2011, I met with an elderly person to assist her with will and estate planning. “Maggie’s” intentions were to name a couple of friends as executors and give her entire estate to a lone surviving family member with whom she didn’t have much contact.

Just recently I received a call from her. Maggie was clearly upset and had been unable to sleep. She had finally gotten around to finalizing her will, but was very unhappy with the results. She asked to set up a meeting to review her will and fill me in on the details.

Over the past year, Maggie told me that someone had befriended her at a church function and gradually earned her trust. Over time, this new friend pressured/coerced Maggie into naming her the executor and sole beneficiary of Maggie’s estate. This so-called friend even scheduled an appointment and drove her to the lawyer’s office. When the lawyer asked who would be the alternate beneficiary—if this friend predeceased her—the friend suggested naming her own husband. Maggie adamantly refused.

Maggie’s situation had many of the signs of “undue influence.” This occurs when the person making the will is not

acting independently. Instead, the will-maker is being influenced into making a decision he/she might not otherwise make.

The British Columbia Law Institute has produced a guide that deals with recognition and prevention of undue influence.

The guide includes some red flags to look out for:

- **UNUSUAL GIFT** to a beneficiary; a sudden change for no apparent reason; frequent changes.
- **INFLUENCER INITIATES** instructions which also benefit influencer; beneficiary speaks for will-maker.
- **INFLUENCER IS** overly helpful.
- **INFLUENCER INSISTS** on being present during interview with lawyer/notary.
- **INFLUENCER HAS** negative and/or controlling attitude to will-maker.

After our discussion, Maggie decided to revise her will, this time naming an actual trusted friend as executor and a charity as the beneficiary of her estate. She was relieved and happy with her new decisions. Within a week, she had signed off on her revised will, which now reflected her true intentions.

We can learn a number of lessons from

Maggie’s experience.

Don’t wait until tomorrow to get your will and incapacity documents updated and finalized. You can’t predict when your life will change temporarily or permanently. Be sure to communicate your plans with your representatives and beneficiaries, even giving them a copy of the documents.

Review your documents every three to five years—or anytime there is a life-changing event—to ensure your wishes are current and reflect your estate goals. Good intentions are not a substitute for a will, regardless of how outdated it is.

According to one lawyer, it is not uncommon for a single older individual to name the same person as executor and beneficiary. Single individuals have greater opportunities to consider charity as a significant beneficiary in their will.

If you or someone you know feel that you have been unduly influenced into making unwise changes or decisions in your will or incapacity documents, please seek out a second opinion from an independent source or other trusted friend. Mennonite Foundation of Canada provides this third-party perspective at no cost to you. We also have a legal fee rebate program to encourage up-to-date will and estate planning.

Kevin Davidson is a stewardship consultant in the Calgary office of Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC). For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit MennoFoundation.ca.



(Continued from page 13)

sensitivity—which is the most important climate factor in determining how much warming will result from greenhouse gas emissions—is not well understood, and, in fact, there is a growing body of peer-reviewed research that this sensitivity is much lower than previously thought.

Here is the crux of the matter. Based on current climate models that over-estimate warming, completely stopping all carbon dioxide emissions in the U.S. between now and 2050 and keeping them at zero, will only reduce the amount of global warming by just over a tenth of a degree.

The social injustice of climate change might well be relying on existing climate models that don't reflect reality, and spending trillions of dollars on existing technologies having little to no impact on climate change. Meanwhile, the poor among us will continue to suffer.

MATTHEW VAN SINTERN-DICK,
CHATHAM, ONT.

✉ **Embracing the Word of God is nothing like idolatry: B.C. pastor**

RE: “FINDING FAITH for an unknown season” feature, July 28, page 4.

David Driedger's comment that “claiming to have the final revelation of God's truth is something ‘like idolatry,’” is unsupported and dangerous. Believing that the Holy Bible is the verbally inspired truth from God is nothing like idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of something or someone in place of worshipping God. To embrace the Word of God is an act of worship of God. On the other hand, to reject it as the Word of God and truth, and launch out into embracing self-proclaimed modern men as superior purveyors of truth is more like idolatry.

As for the report from the Being a Faithful Church Task Force saying that most congregations want to be “more compassionate and welcoming of those individuals who are same-sex attracted,” our congregation believes in having compassion and welcoming all people to attend our service and hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

The Bible is clear in its instruction that, as Christians, we are to truly love all people and have compassion on them in their need. That love is expressed by seeking the eternal welfare and blessing of those people. The greatest harm that could come to people is to be judged by God and condemned to eternity in hell for their sin, while the greatest good is to be saved from their sin and to receive the free gift of eternal life by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we are to have compassion on all people

because all people are equally sinners, and to invite them to repent of their sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

STEVE SWIRES, BURNS LAKE, B.C.
(ONLINE COMMENT)

Steve Swires is pastor of First Mennonite Church, Burns Lake.

✉ **The real meaning of ‘Anabaptist’**

RE: “NERDING OUT,” July 7, page 34).

I am confused. What does the ubiquitous word “Anabaptist” mean? I see it frequently attached to other words and phrases such as “tradition,” “conference,” “studies,” “resistance to Christendom,” “history,” “theology” and “convictions.”

In “Nerding out,” we had “Anabaptist MennoNerds!” Is this a cult within the Mennonite church?

The word originated in the Reformation. Roman Catholics who were infant-baptised were encouraged to be baptised again, hence “Anabaptist.”

FREEMAN ROTH, GLEN HURON, ONT.

✉ **Canadian Mennonite articles, letters, offer little hope of church reconciling**

AS MUCH AS it is good to hear the widely divergent views on some controversial issues from Mennonite church congregants across Canada, recent articles and letters leave me seeing very little hope for reconciliation for our national and area churches, and even in our congregations:

1. GOD'S NOT Dead: Vic Thiessen's review, “Film doesn't prove ‘God's not dead’” (April 28 page 27), and C. Neil Klassen's letter, “God's Not Dead is alive with gospel truth” (June 9, page 11).

2. HOMOSEXUALITY: CONNIE Martens' letter, “Homosexuality is ‘clearly’ named a sin in the Bible” (July 28 page 21), and Julie Bond's letter, “Homosexuality not a priority of Jesus” (both July 28, page 21).

3. THE BIBLE: Artur Esau's letter, “Christians must continue to call all sins ‘sin’” (May 12 page 9), and Mark Morton's letter, “Bible can't be ‘crystal clear’ when it's self-contradictory” (June 9, page 11).

VICTOR HUEBERT, LEAMINGTON, ONT.

Victor Huebert attends North Leamington United Mennonite Church.

✉ 'Global caliphate' a Muslim goal, not a myth

RE: "DECONSTRUCTING MUSLIM myths," July 28, page 10.

I read with great interest the summary that Dick Benner made of the workshop led by Donna Entz. I certainly applaud the efforts that Entz makes in Alberta to reach out to the Muslim immigrants.

As followers of Jesus, we need to reach out to Muslims. What better way to do it than in our country, where we have rights and freedom. Most Muslims come from countries where Christian missionaries are not allowed and Christians are persecuted. People gifted in reaching out to this rather closed culture need the support of all Christians. I hope that Entz receives a lot of support from fellow believers in Alberta.

Having said that, I still have a concern with one of her comments: "[The] fear that they are wanting to take over with a global caliphate. 'Nothing could be further from truth,' she said."

I don't know how any informed person could make such a statement. Just observing the latest situations in Iraq and Syria with Isis should be an eye-opener. The new rulers are committed to erasing national borders and forcefully converting all the inhabitants, including all Christians, to Islam; if they refuse, they face death or having to flee.

This has been the normal procedure throughout history. Islam recognizes only two types of people: the faithful and the infidels. The faithful ones have the duty to convert all infidels or kill them. This pleases Allah.

The large majority of Muslims are peaceful and very ignorant of the teachings of Islam. It is the fundamentalists that cause the concern, but they are peace-loving in countries where the Muslim population is a minority. As soon as they are in a majority, the picture changes 180 degrees. Sharia law and dictatorship by a few become the norm. Can you find one Muslim country where real democracy and freedom exist?

Let us be faithful in carrying the gospel of Jesus to the Muslims as we have opportunity. Only love will conquer these people enslaved by their religion.

ISAAK EITZEN, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

Isaak Eitzen attends St. Catharines United Mennonite Church.

✉ Israel/Palestine conflict must be viewed through the lens of history

MOST OF THE public opinion seems to assume Hamas as the aggressor and Israel as the victim who

has to defend itself. On the surface, any sane person would agree.

But it is difficult to understand the situation without the historical perspective. This is an ancient part of the world, inhabited by humans since they migrated out of Africa (about 200,000 years ago).

Generally, the people of the Eastern Mediterranean are considered Semitic. Eventually Abraham and Moses showed up about 4,000 years ago and most of the people living there became followers of the Jewish religion. Two thousand years ago, Jesus showed up, and some of them became Christians. Fifteen hundred years ago, Mohammed showed up and some became Muslims. Since then, many of these people migrated to other parts of the world, taking their religion with them. They lived together everywhere—including the Eastern Mediterranean—more or less peacefully.

Fast forward to the Second World War (1939-45) and the terrible Holocaust against European Jews. Worldwide sympathy resulted in European Jews moving to Palestine after the war and establishing the "Jewish State of Israel." Most of the people living there at the time were displaced, either forced out or ending up in refugee camps. These are considered Palestinians and they resent Europeans moving in and displacing them.

In my opinion, this historical information is critical to being able to begin to understand what's going on there now.

RICHARD PENNER, CALGARY

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Cassels—Rowan (b. May 26, 2014), to Ben and Kendyll Cassels, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Dueck—John Emmett (b. July 21, 2014), to Shara and Joe Dueck, Sterling Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Eldridge—Twins Arwen Clare and Cassia Gwen (b. July 23, 2014), to Julie and Patrick Eldridge, First Mennonite, Calgary.

Ens—Julia Anneliese (b. July 10, 2014, to Heather and Joel Ens, Eigenheim Mennonite, Rosthern, Sask.

Goertzen—Naomi Schellenberg (b. July 2, 2014), to Chris Goertzen and Annalee Schellenberg, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Guenther—Joel Richard (b. Aug. 4, 2014), to Danny and Kathy Guenther, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Jakobs—Jonathan David (b. July 5, 2014), to Laura and Jason Jakobs, West Hills Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Johnstone—Evan Earl (b. July 22, 2014), to Damon and Tanya Johnstone, Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Lauzon—Carter James (b. July 31, 2014), to Steve and Julie Lauzon, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Lichti—Clara Helen (b. July 20, 2014), to Tim and Annie Lichti, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

McLean—Sarah Carol (b. June 19, 2014), to Robert and Rachelle McLean, West Hills Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Metzger—Dylan Alexander (b. May 28, 2014), to Shawn and Sarah Metzger, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Rueb—Samuel (b. June 12, 2014), to Julia and Simon Rueb, Eigenheim Mennonite, Rosthern, Sask.

Stubert—Emmett James (b. July 23, 2014), to Stephan and Cherry Stubert, Hague Mennonite, Sask.

Schwartzentruber—Nathan Ryan (b. Aug. 7, 2014), to Graham and Kara Schwartzentruber, Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Warkentin—McKinley Lehn (b. June 29, 2014), to Brad and Ashley Warkentin, Nordheim Mennonite, Winnipegosis, Man.

Wiebe—Dominic John (b. June 16, 2014), to Kent and Erin Wiebe, Hague Mennonite, Sask.

Baptisms

Hannah Friesen, Benjamin, Schulz, Mercedes

Windels—Eigenheim Mennonite, Rosthern, Sask., June 29, 2014.

Johan Piera, Jordan Mendez, Jana Klassen—Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, June 8, 2014.

Rebeka Schroeder—Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man., June 8, 2014.

Jillian Friesen, Jaxon Funk, Drake Neudorf—Hague Mennonite, Sask., July 27, 2014.

Peter Reesor—Hamilton Mennonite, Ont., July 27, 2014.

Tawnia Kay Quinn—Pioneer Park Christian Fellowship, June 8, 2014.

Marriages

Bueckert/Calle—Joan Bueckert and Luis Enrique Calle, at Ottawa Mennonite, April 19, 2014.

Dyck/Epp—Sean Dyck and Heidi Epp (Eigenheim Mennonite, Rosthern, Sask.), at Eigenheim Mennonite, July 26, 2014.

Enns/Ernst—Jeremy Enns (Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.) and Katherine Emily Ernst, at Niagara-on-the-Lake, June 29, 2014.

Gould/Quiring—Kyle Gould and Jennifer Quiring (Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.), at Wheatley Baptist Church, Ont., July 12, 2014.

Hrabets/Wiens—Jonathan Hrabets and Nicole Wiens (Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.), at Faith Mennonite, April 26, 2014.

MacDonald/Sawatzky—Graham MacDonald and Michelle Sawatzky, Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon, Aug. 9, 2014.

Martens/Neufeld—Benjamin Martens and Gabriella Neufeld, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man., July 11, 2014.

Deaths

Blatz—John, 78 (b. Sept. 24, 1935; d. Aug. 2, 2014), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Cairns—Bill, 80 (b. June 22, 1934; d. July 19, 2014), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Hall—Samuel, 84 (b. Dec. 5, 1929; d. Aug. 5, 2014), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Heide—Jacob, 91 (b. June 21 1923; d. July 3, 2014), Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite, Mayfair, Sask.

Klassen—Lillian (nee Epp), 74 (b. April 15, 1940; d. July 12, 2014), Eigenheim Mennonite, Rosthern, Sask.

Martens—Evelyn, 73 (b. Sept. 15, 1940; d. May 26, 2014), Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite, Glenbush, Sask., and Hope Mennonite, North Battleford, Sask.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

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

Pontius' Puddle



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

'New Coke' church

TROY WATSON

In the spring of 1985, Coke decided to change the recipe of its flagship beverage for the first time in 99 years. The intensity of consumer rejection was unprecedented. Protesters took to the streets. A group called Old Cola Drinkers of America gained national coverage by pouring new Coke down the drain and began organizing a class-action lawsuit against Coca-Cola in an attempt to get the old recipe revived.

Within a month, the Coca-Cola hotline was receiving more than 1,000 angry calls a day. Within two months it was more than 8,000. New Coke was quickly labelled the marketing blunder of the century. Coca-Cola quickly reintroduced the beloved old recipe under the name Coca-Cola Classic a mere 79 days after the launch of New Coke.

Why did Coca-Cola mess with its iconic cola when it was still the best-selling soft drink in the world?

Coca-Cola sales had been dropping since 1970 and the beginning of the '80s marked the dawn of the "cola wars." In 1976, Pepsi had launched the Blind Taste Test Challenge, inviting people to taste unlabelled samples of Coke and Pepsi and choose which one they preferred. By the 1980s, Pepsi was claiming more than 50 percent of the millions of people who took the test preferred Pepsi over Coke.

Coca-Cola began its own market research to investigate. A few versions of Coke were developed, including one that was sweeter than both Coke and Pepsi, and after performing blind taste tests with more than 200,000 people the results seemed conclusive: 62 percent preferred the new, sweeter version of Coke. Yet strangely, this new Coke people had preferred in the controlled taste tests



was rejected by the public at large. Clearly, market research has its limitations.

Author Malcolm Gladwell, in his best-selling book, *Blink*, suggested the blind taste test research was flawed because the samples were so small. He reasoned that people would naturally choose the sweeter option between sips, but this didn't mean

consumers would prefer a whole can of the sweeter beverage.

Another explanation for the dismal reception to New Coke was America's emotional attachment to traditional Coca-Cola. They were messing with a piece of Americana.

Whatever the reason, people preferred—and still prefer—the old Classic

Another explanation for the dismal reception to New Coke was America's emotional attachment to traditional Coca-Cola. They were messing with a piece of Americana.

Coke recipe over New Coke and Pepsi. Coke Classic—now simply called Coke, once New Coke was discontinued—currently claims 42 percent of the carbonated soft drink market, compared to Pepsi's 30 percent.

There are plenty of insightful parallels here with the current state of the church:

- **THE CHRISTIAN** church is like Coca-Cola in that it currently holds the "largest market share" of all religious institutions in the world.

- **THE CHURCH** also finds itself in the midst of a few wars: the "culture war," the "worship war" and the "civil war" over the issue of homosexuality. These church wars are going to seem as silly as the "cola wars" to future generations of Christians, and already do to many.

- **THE CHURCH'S** "market share"—attendance—has been dropping for decades in the West.

- **THE CHURCH** has embraced market research on a grand scale over the past 30 years and produced countless "how to" manuals to help churches rebrand, re-grow, revive, reinvent and revision, in order to get people back in the pews.

Confronted with declining numbers, most churches are consumed with reinventing and rebranding themselves, although we often use more spiritual or theological language for the process. The temptation to reform and revive our churches, based on the latest statistics and data collected from various "spiritual taste tests" in North America, is resulting in an outbreak of "New Coke" churches trying to offer people what church market research has concluded non-Christians, ex-Christians, young people and other "key" demographics are looking for.

It was foolish for Coke to try to become more like Pepsi. I believe it's just as foolish for churches to try to resemble whatever we think Canadians prefer today: support groups, TED talk commu-

nities, nongovernmental organizations or polished Broadway productions, to name a few.

A final piece of insight from the "New Coke" fiasco is that there has been a 16 percent decrease in overall cola consumption due to the increase in health-conscious consumers over the past 15 years. Instead of trying to find a sweeter cola recipe, Coke should have been preparing for the growing health movement now motivating millions of consumers to reject cola altogether.

Striving to catch up with what is trending today is a terrible way to plan for the future. ❧

Troy Watson (troydw@gmail.com) is pastor of Avon Mennonite Church, Stratford, Ont..

VIEWPOINT

Blessings of dependency

TIM FROESE

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

An aging parent firmly—but with appreciation—rejects her adult child's invitation to come live with their family, saying, "I don't want to be a burden on anyone," and continues to live independently and alone.

A local pastor confesses to feeling "low" and apologizes, since pastors shouldn't feel down or be in need of support, should they?

National and area church leaders are challenged by concerns about the future sustainability of shared ministry programs. And our congregations are asking themselves whether anything beyond their local church—be it another congregation in their province or a wider church structure—is needed to help them fulfill their mission.

Independence, privacy, sustainability, viability and "do-it-yourself" capacity are all values North Americans hold highly. At the 2014 Toronto Theological Centre graduate student conference, Jason Reimer Greig, a recent Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary graduate, confirmed this in his presentation, saying, "Few things appear as self-evident and unquestionable for the moral life in western late modernity than the absolute good of independence and autonomy."

And it appears our hyper-individualism is aided and abetted by numerous supports. We enjoy dual-income comforts, a country with a multitude of freedoms plus accessible healthcare, the cushion of investments and pensions when needed, do-it-yourself books and websites, and, of course, "an app" for everything else.

Our perceived independence really belies the fact that we humans are remarkably dependent beings. Consider the easily recognizable dependencies illustrated by our transportation habits, Internet usage and personal spending

practices. Then there are those dependencies that we struggle to acknowledge, such as racial or class privilege; a natural environment that provides healthy food, safe water and clean air; and treaties and trade arrangements that, unfortunately, benefit us at the significant expense of others.

We are dependent persons, and, as every funeral reminds us, finite beings, too. Greig continues in his paper to say that our understanding of faithfulness to Christ "centres human identity in dependence, primarily on God, and secondarily on others and the natural world."

How do we, as Christians, choose our dependencies? Do the challenges of unprecedented societal, environmental and global change tempt us toward embracing supports that are inconsistent with our faith? To what extent do our practices of dependency reflect the Creator, the earth we live on, and the families and communities that nurture us?

It is instructive that in Scripture, the wilderness, exile and life in the diaspora are important theatres for training God's servants and God's people in faithfulness. Often stripped of comforts, entitlements, physical security, food preferences and even community, these future leaders—including Jesus—were tested and tempted in how they met their needs and dependencies. The early church was similarly challenged with food distribution, insider/outsider language, divisions and persecution.

Greig suggests

that the believing community might repeatedly emphasize the priority of God's initiative in our congregational practices. We are not choosers or makers—but receivers—of God's grace, whether that be through conversion, baptism or foot washing.

Furthermore, the church community reminds us that we comprise the body of Christ, not as a group of individuals with intellects, but individuals with soul, mind, body and spirit in communion with one another. In this dependent community, prayer and fasting can give voice and vehicle to remind God of our needs and our thanks.

Mutual submission to one another, especially the weak, serves to remind us of who we are: the family "village" in which we are raised. Embracing our own individual and collective weakness allows us to reclaim the power of the cross and the activity of God's Spirit among us. And being obedient to God allows us to worship God daily by not only transforming our minds, but also by making our bodies into living sacrifices.

God's story is ultimately woven from those who are dependent on God. ❧

Tim Froese is executive minister of Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW VEITH



The interdependency of God's people is celebrated during a worship service at the 2014 Mennonite Church Canada assembly.

VIEWPOINT

Children and the future of the church

ELSIE REMPEL

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

As a child, I understood that being Mennonite made me different from my urban non-Mennonite neighbours. By age 16, baptism brought me and most of my peers into the congregational fold. We were glad to be part of God's unique Mennonite family. But my children and now grandchildren experience a weaker sense of Mennonite distinctiveness and belonging.

Many aspects of this change are both positive and irreversible. Our faith community is learning to be focussed outward and less ethnic. As a result, rich and varied relationships with God's wider family bless our lives, even as God blesses others through us.

However, many young people are less rooted in faith communities than my generation was. They live with greater devotion to their hand-held devices than we ever had to the pocket-sized Gideon Bibles we received in Grade 5! As a result, their identity and sense of community may be shaped more directly by a virtual community than by church life or Bible reading.

This raises questions. "Will our children have faith?" and, "Will our faith have children?" are concerns addressed by John Westerhoff in his classic, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* How can the church contribute to shaping their lives when it is often on their periphery? Will our children be part of the future Mennonite church?

As Anabaptists, we often stress the importance of learning facts about faith. Constructing a solid foundation of understanding inspires active discipleship and believer's baptism. But that approach may not be adequate for nourishing and nurturing faith among the young in today's church families. We need to

support belief and lives of following Jesus with ritualized, contemplative practices of faith in our homes as well as in our congregations.

This fall, preschool children who use the new MennoMedia Shine curriculum in our churches will meet the Good Shepherd through contemplative spiritual practices like carefully pouring water over stones as they pray, "Loving God, we listen for your voice." This is not returning to the kind of "meaningless ritual" that our ancestors railed against. These spiritual practices give vocabulary and hands-on expression to children's intuitive awareness of the divine. They build body knowledge, identity and spiritual roots. And these practices can also be done at home.

Providing spiritual nurture for children's hearts and bodies, and informing their minds, extends a natural invitation to know and follow Jesus. The time we invest builds their faith and the future of our church.

Congregational life must also support children and youth on an integrated spiritual journey. Recent research confirms that multi-generational relationships are essential. These are best developed as we worship, fellowship and serve together in church, at camp, and in the local thrift store or food bank. Children and youth grow stronger spiritual roots when they relate with adults who are authentic, affirming and available.

However, the heart of church life beats most strongly during Sunday morning worship. Here are a few guidelines to help congregations include children and youth in worship-service programming:

• **CHOOSE WORSHIP** language that is

PHOTO BY MATTHEW VEITH



Congregational life must also support children and youth on an integrated spiritual journey, says Elsie Rempel.

understood by all who are present.

- **STIMULATE THE** senses; symbols reinforce the spoken message.
- **KEEP SERMONS** short, or break them into sections with an audience response, such as a song.
- **GIVE ACTIVE** young bodies a chance to move in non-disruptive ways, preferably with a repeated ritual, such as coming forward with offering contributions.
- **ENSURE PRAYERS** refer to issues concerning people of different ages and across life stages.
- **KEEP SPECIAL** worship bags of quiet, engaging activities available for pick-up as children enter the sanctuary or provide children's bulletins.
- **INCLUDE SONGS** that are accessible to children and other untrained voices.
- **CHOOSE WORSHIP** leaders who encourage the congregation to understand what to expect from children of different ages.
- **SHOW GRACE** in the face of minor disruptions caused by children as they grow into worshipful behaviour.

Will our faith have children? Practise faith rituals with young people and embrace them within your congregation. God's answer will grow in your heart. ✎

Elsie Rempel is the formation consultant for Mennonite Church Canada and a strong advocate for young people in the church. She is the author of Please Pass the Faith and she writes "Faith Bytes: Elsie spins a blog" at elsiehannahruth.wordpress.com/.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Camp Valaqua builds for the future

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
WATER VALLEY, ALTA.

Camp programs were in full swing alongside Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) hammers at Camp Valaqua this summer. MDS teams are usually found on disaster sites, helping to rebuild homes, so why are they building cabins at a thriving church camp? And why are there children wearing hardhats, pounding nails and using staple guns?

Project director Glen Kauffman is keen on MDS's recent foray into family building projects. In 2013, family teams built six cabins at Camp Evergreen, a Mennonite Brethren facility near Sundre, Alta. The project went well, and in 2014 MDS worked on four cabins for Camp Valaqua, the Mennonite Church Alberta camp.

Kauffman feels it is crucial for the future of MDS to help young people understand what it does, and the best way to do that is to have them help with the work. Work on church campsites was a natural fit. "A disaster setting is not usually conducive to children," he says. "A camp project is a

safer and more defined type of project for children."

Children work alongside their parents, doing whatever fits with their individual abilities and age. "It is a win-win situation," he says. "[We are] supporting churches that support MDS."

In addition to learning about construction and MDS, children who helped build now will be able to attend camp in the future and feel they are a part of its history.

Ben Jowett-Stark, a 13-year-old builder, said the project was "awesome. I flipped, like, three or four walls! Flipping the floors was scary and fun. . . . Mom has done some [MDS work] before, but I didn't know what it would be like till I tried it."

Nine-year-old Kobe Friesen thinks that he'd like to do MDS work in the future, "to help build things for people to have a place."

Willie and Jacquie Friesen from La Crete, Alta., have done MDS projects before, but "we've never been on a site where we were

/// Briefly noted

Pastoral transition in B.C.

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Josh Willms is the new pastor of student ministries at Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford. He replaces Robin Mauthe, who is now pastor of worship and young adults. Willms graduated from Columbia Bible College earlier this year. He previously served as volunteer youth leader at Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church and South Abbotsford Mennonite Brethren Church. He and his wife Alisha are also house parents at Babich House in Abbotsford, caring for special-needs youths.



Josh Willms

—BY AMY DUECKMAN

not the only ones with kids," Jacquie says. "We're very glad [MDS] decided to do this."

Val Jowett-Stark was thankful for the family-build opportunity for her children, "because of what the kids learn from working with really good, godly men. They had a great time!"

Over the course of four weeks, the



Samuel Friesen, left, Levi Jowett-Stark, Kobe Friesen and Asher Warkentin are hard at work pounding nails for the foundation of a new cabin at Camp Valaqua.

Valaqua project involved approximately 80 adults and children, ranging in age from 2 to 69. MDS was self-contained, with its own cooking and bunk trailers set up on Valaqua's basketball court, along with camping trailers families brought for themselves. Participating families came from a wide area, encompassing La Crete to the north, Lethbridge to the south, Chilliwack to the west and Winnipeg to the east.

Involving children, changing crews weekly and dealing with wacky Foothills weather meant that hard targets were difficult to set.

"It is important to have the children involved," Kauffman says. "Efficiency is not our first concern. It is to promote family involvement. . . . It is a seed-planted project. That is what camps are about. This project is about planting seeds in children as well."

MDS plans to continue doing family building projects, with the next stop at MC Saskatchewan's Camp Elim next summer. ❧



It takes a lot of hands to raise a cabin wall! Families work together on the Mennonite Disaster Service cabin-building project at Camp Valaqua.

Taking fun and faith on the road

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan brings Vacation Bible School to five churches

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
EYEBROW, SASK.

The pews are pushed together along the walls while in the middle of the sanctuary children play an energetic game of Duck, Duck, Goose. Vacation Bible School (VBS) is in session at Eyebrow Mennonite Church.

For several years, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan has employed a travelling VBS troupe to bring summer Christian education to rural and urban congregations alike.

Emily Hamm, a Canadian Mennonite University student from Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, led this year's troupe, having applied for the job

after members of her congregation encouraged her to give it a try.

Although the troupe can accommodate up to seven weeks of VBS, this year it only visited five churches. In addition to Eyebrow, the troupe presented VBS at Osler Mennonite Church, Hanley United Church (co-hosted by Hanley United and local Mennonite churches), Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon and Fiske Mennonite Church.

Even though this is the first year Eyebrow Mennonite Church has hosted the troupe, VBS has been an annual event for the congregation. Pastor Sharon Schultz said

that, although the church is small, it offers VBS each summer as a ministry to the community. Some children who have attended VBS in previous years have begun attending Sunday school at the church during the winter months. "It's a form of outreach for us," she said.

VBS is outreach in the guise of fun," said Hamm. "One of the goals of the VBS troupe is to get kids who don't necessarily attend church regularly to associate being in church with having fun." A typical day at VBS includes worship, singing, prayer, hearing Bible stories, doing crafts, playing outside and having snacks.

But it isn't all fun and games. Hamm and her troupe can attest to the challenges. "Some kids are troubled, loud or antsy, and you want to help them focus and be quiet, but still encourage them to express themselves," said Hamm. "It's challenging to find a balance between encouraging self-expression and encouraging them to be quiet."

And there are rewards along with the challenges. Witnessing the growth of faith in young children is one of them. "It's really

(Continued on page 22)



Having fun is an important part of Vacation Bible School. Pictured, children participating in an outdoor relay race take a break as they await their turn to run.

(Continued from page 21)

cool to hear a six-year-old say, 'I think this is what that story means,' Hamm said.

She spoke of "meeting kids who come from different places and have different struggles, but are making their voices heard. It's really cool seeing faith through the eyes of someone really young and comparing it to your own faith." Hamm noted that, as she has seen faith grow in the lives of the children, her own faith has grown as well. ❧

For a video of the VBS troupe and children at Eyebrow Mennonite Church in action, visit www.canadianmennonite.org/vbs-troupe.



The Mennonite Church Saskatchewan Travelling Vacation Bible School Troupe sings with the children at Eyebrow Mennonite Church.

Police attack Mennonite church gathering in Vietnam

By LUKE MARTIN
Mennonite World Review

Security police assaulted a large group of pastors and theological students gathered in their church centre in Ben Cat, a provincial town just north of Ho Chi Minh City, on the eve of a renewal conference and graduation ceremonies for students of the theological training program that ran from June 9 to 11.

After the people had retired for the night on sleeping mats laid out on the floor, around 11 p.m. police loudspeakers called

for Le Thi Phu Dung and Tran Minh Hoa to open the door for an "administrative investigation."

Phu Dung, a pastor, is president of the church and wife of former president Nguyen Hong Quang, who now heads the training programs of the church. Hoa is the pastor of the congregation that meets at the centre.

A few minutes after the order was given, security police broke down the door and

demanded that the lights be turned on. Large numbers of uniformed and ununiformed men stormed the building, assaulting students and church leaders. Each of the 76 in the building was led by two policemen to waiting trucks to be taken to the local police station, where they were all booked.

According to extensive reports by Hong Quang, the police produced no arrest warrants and gave no reason for the beatings or arrests. By 6 a.m. the next morning, all had been released. Taking stock of the situation after the group returned to the centre, 20 of those who were beaten required medical attention. Most of those arrested were summoned to the police station later for further investigation.

Hong Quang was summoned on June 12 to appear at the police station to face charges of “resisting administrative investigation and slandering authorities carrying out their duties.” Trained in law, Quang recognized this was an illegal order and ignored it. The next day he was ordered to appear on charges of “resisting administrative investigation and local disorderly conduct.”

Religious groups are required to inform local authorities of meetings, and Pastor

Hoang had reported to the local ward the evening before the raid that 29 pastors were coming, and he was planning to submit a complete report the following morning of those who had gathered for the conference.

With no resolution at the local level, church leaders petitioned higher authorities about the alleged abuses of their rights under Vietnamese law. They sent a “petition of accusation” signed by 58 church leaders to the public security minister and

to the head of the Peoples’ Investigative Bureau. It details five major charges against local police, including entering without a warrant, arresting and abusing children, using guns to terrorize defenceless students and pistol-whipping people within the confines of a church building. ❧

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Celebrating summer fun together

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan members enjoy a ‘day in the park’

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

The sun shone, the air was warm—but not too warm—and there were no mosquitoes. It was, in fact, a day perfect for a picnic.

On Aug. 10, people of all ages gathered at Scott Park, adjacent to Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, to enjoy Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s “day in

the park.”

The MC Saskatchewan Vacation Bible School troupe provided games and face-painting for the children. Others enjoyed volleyball and an intergenerational game of Ultimate Frisbee under the direction of Kirsten Hamm, area church youth

minister. Still others appreciated the opportunity to sit in the sunshine and visit with friends.

While not typical North American picnic fare, young and old alike savoured spring rolls and a Vietnamese noodle dish prepared by members of Saskatoon Vietnamese Mennonite Church. The meal was a fundraiser for the congregation and meal tickets were available by donation.

An informal concert followed, with musicians Becky Reesor, Sam Dlugokecki and Danielle Miller performing a selection of cover tunes and original compositions for the crowd’s entertainment. ❧

For more photos, visit www.canadianmennonite.org/celebrating-summer-together.



Ten-month-old Miriam Wallace isn’t too sure she likes having her face painted at MC Saskatchewan’s ‘day in the park.’ Miriam’s father, Josh Wallace, is pastor of Warman Mennonite Church. The painter is Kelsi Siemens of Nutana Park Mennonite Church, a member of the area church’s VBS troupe.



Sometimes one needs to step over the line in order to score a hit, as this youngster discovers at MC Saskatchewan’s ‘day in the park’ in Saskatoon last month.

LEAMINGTON MENNONITE HOMES PHOTO



The youngest participating team—Ladon Janzen, left, Derek Towes, Nick Tiessen and Paisley Janzen—in this year's 12th annual charity golf tournament organized by the Leamington Mennonite Home at the Erie Shores Golf & Country Club on June 14 received the best-dressed team award. Perfect weather and great course conditions prevailed as 144 golfers raised \$49,000 for a new walk-in cooler for the home's kitchen. Over the past 12 years this tournament has raised \$372,000.

God at work in the Church Snapshots

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO BY DEBORAH FROESE

Construction managers Herb Schaan, left, and Gerry Harms stand in the renovated sanctuary of Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. Improvements to the sanctuary, including opening up the pulpit area and adding new stonework, were part of the large renovation project that also involved work in the church basement. In addition to the approximately \$300,000 raised for the building project, a \$30,000 tithe was donated to Mennonite Church Canada for a global building project. Fundraisers included a music evening, perogy lunch and a prime rib barbecue lunch.



GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Listening to those being served

Kitchener's House of Friendship celebrates 75 years of listening and serving

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

KITCHENER, ONT.



Executive director John Neufeld, left, and board president Trent Bauman stand with the Joseph Cramer cut-out at House of Friendship's 75th annual meeting on June 17. Behind them is a quilt designed by Judy Martin and sewed by Arlene Martin, to be auctioned off to help fund House of Friendship.

When John Neufeld took the reins as director of Kitchener's House of Friendship (HoF), he was confused by the 19 separate programs it was running: shelters, a food bank, addiction programs, a youth program, work in community centres, and on and on. How to make sense of it all?

To try to understand, he started reading Ferne Burkhardt's 1989 book, *A Mighty Flood: The House of Friendship Story*. There he found the stories of the beginnings of the programs he now directed. In each case, a program was developed in response to some group expressing a need that no one else was meeting, a need which HoF and its supporters thought they could tackle. Less an organization following a flow chart, HoF is an organic entity, growing as space and resources become available.

That was true in 1939, when the doors first opened. Joseph Cramer, a Jewish Christian immigrant from Ukraine, was hired as HoF's first director by an ecumenical group that included many Mennonites, to oversee a shelter for men—hobos and immigrants—seeking work. The original impetus came from an ecumenical women's Bible study group concerned with these homeless men.

Bishop C. F. Derstine, pastor of First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, worked on building a stronger relationship between HoF and the Ontario Mennonite Conference. The 75th anniversary calendar notes that "Ilda Bauman [Erb Street Mennonite Church] and Ruth Dahmer [Bethany Mennonite Brethren in Christ

Church] provided meals, and made hundreds of hospital and home visits, sharing religious writings along the way."

A recent visioning process has underlined the need to keep on listening to those being served. Just because a program has been around for a long time does not mean it continues to meet needs. Two programs—Live and Learn for women and children, and the Kiwanis House for youth—have recently been terminated because they did not mesh with HoF's strengths or core mandates of housing, food security, addiction and mental health services.

Programs were evaluated as to whether they are actually helping, or perhaps perpetuating the need. With the recent government-run study that showed that "shelter first" was an important way to help homeless people, an overwhelming proportion of whom suffer from addictions and mental health needs, HoF has seen its government support continued.

But Trent Bauman, board president, and Neufeld are concerned that, along with this support comes a government-mandated push to work more exclusively with the very ill and addicted. HoF has worked at having a balance of higher- and lower-need clients in its residences to begin to build community, rather than being only a service centre.

Bauman thinks that society has changed over the past 75 years. People are more willing to share about their needs and those needs are not only "out there," but in the churches as well. Mental-health needs are no longer taboo to be discussed, he says, noting the recent death by suicide of

Robin Williams.

The visioning review also challenged HoF to stop being "the quiet in the land," and to do more advocacy work. Trusted in the community by both donors and governments, the report said that HoF needs to speak more about how society makes things worse for some members of society and how those needs can be alleviated.

At its annual meeting on June 17, the one-person drama, *Myra's Story*, depicted an Irish street person dependant on hand-outs to support her addiction to alcohol, painting her as a person with a history of pain and loss leading to mental illness, rather than a problem to be hidden away or solved.

According to Bauman and Neufeld, HoF continues to find strong support, both financially and with volunteers, in the local church community. But such support also comes from the wider community and other religious groups. A significant portion of the food handed out by HoF is halal, fit for the immigrant and refugee Muslim users of HoF's services.

Neufeld believes that by listening to those served—residents in housing, participants in addiction programs, women in shelter and food bank users—HoF has a long future ahead, citing a recent capital campaign to house all of the women's programs under one roof that did not result in a decrease of donations to other programs. ☺

Read more about Ilda Bauman's role in HoF online at www.canadianmennonite.org/righting-historical-wrong.



Building friendship through music

Saskatchewan folk festival raises awareness of landless bands in the province

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SPRUCE HOME, SASK.

It may be a blip on the radar compared to other events of its kind, but what it lacks in size the Spruce River Folk Festival more than makes up for in heart.

The fifth annual festival was held on Aug. 16 at Spruce River Farm, north of Prince Albert, Sask., which is home to Ray Funk and Shirley Falstead of Grace Mennonite Church, one of the event's sponsors, along with Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, MC Canada and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan.

The event began as a means of funding a \$25,000 genealogy project for the landless Young Chippewyan First Nation. The project will trace the band's ancestry in order to prove its entitlement to the land that was taken from its members. After five years, enough money has been raised to complete the project.

Now, Funk revealed that, under the auspices of MCC Saskatchewan, festival organizers are working towards establishing a land trust in order to purchase land for the first nation.

But in his response to the announcement, George Kingfisher, hereditary chief of the Young Chippewyan First Nation, responded: "It is not your responsibility to give us back our land. It is the government's responsibility. But I thank you."

The festival opened with a time of storytelling. Sol Sanderson, former chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, told of how, in the 1830s, European powers implemented a policy of detribalization that is still in effect today. The policy included plans for the assimilation, integration, civilization, Christianization and liquidation of indigenous peoples around the world. It targeted family units and the destruction



Prince Albert singer/songwriter Violet Naytowhow performs traditional and original compositions at the Spruce River Folk Festival.

of indigenous societies, he said, as well as outlawing their governments, traditions and practices.

Today, Canada still refuses to acknowledge first nation governments, said Sanderson. This detribalization policy stripped indigenous people of power in every area of their lives, resulting in a poorly educated population with high crime and suicide rates.

Healing needs to come from within, however. "We need to set up our own justice system with our own laws and jurisdictions," said Sanderson, admitting, though, that "if we're going to heal as a people, it's going to take generations."

Roland Ray spoke on behalf of another landless band, the Mathias Colomb First Nation, of Sandy Bay, Sask. He said the community lost its land when the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company built the Island Falls hydroelectric plant to power its mining operations near Flin Flon, Man. The band is using ancient rock paintings to try to prove its occupancy of the land prior to the dam being built. "We were here 8,000 years [before white settlers arrived]," said Ray. "How do you legitimize that a people are not here?" Although Ray's question was challenging, he urged, "Let us be friends."

Few activities build friendship more effectively than music. As the storytelling ended, both first nation and Mennonite performers took the stage. Delicious food, including fried fish from the Wollaston Lake Fish Plant and soup and bannock from Kookum's Kitchen on the Muskoday First Nation, satisfied festival-goers' appetites all day long.

About 75 people from three Prince Albert congregations—Grace Mennonite, Cornerstone Free Methodist and Covenant Bible churches—attended an ecumenical worship service the next morning.

Then an afternoon of storytelling and reflection commemorated MCC Saskatchewan's involvement with first nation communities through its Aboriginal Neighbours Program.

Stories reflected how MCC's relationship with indigenous communities has evolved over the years, and focussed on "how to do that kind of work effectively and reflectively," said Funk. He added that it was a time suffused with gratitude and warm feelings toward MCC Saskatchewan.

The afternoon was one of 12 celebrations in 2014 marking MCC Saskatchewan's 50th anniversary. ❧

To view more photos and a video of traditional dancing, visit www.canadianmennonite.org/friendship-through-music.



God at work in the World

Snapshots

PHOTO BY JESSICA BUHLER



Lois Mierau and Jake Friesen serve 50th-anniversary cake to attendees at the 2014 Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan Relief Sale held in Saskatoon in mid-June. The sale of food, plants and auction items—plus Change Counts (formerly Penny Power) proceeds—raised around \$100,000. The Change Counts proceeds will go directly towards water projects in Kenya, while the rest of the proceeds will go towards MCC projects where needed most.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RYAN DUNHAM / CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE



Campers at the Conrad Grebel Peace Camp play a game called Nine Square in the Air, a King's Court-type game in which players must keep the ball from touching the ground inside their square by hitting it over the crossbars into other squares. In addition to structured peace-learning time, the Waterloo, Ont., camp also included games and activities.

GOD AT WORK IN US

OBITUARY

'Helplessly in love with music'*Wilbur (Bill) Richard Maust, 80
April 1, 1934 – July 2, 2014*

BY HILDI FROESE TIESSEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

On a Wednesday evening in early June, Waterloo musician and musicologist Wilbur (Bill) Maust was seated in the chapel of Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., among some 170 family and friends, to attend a concert organized in his honour by Stephanie Martin. Performers included Schola Magdalena, a six woman vocal ensemble; and Kirk Elliot, a former student of Maust's from Queen's University, Kingston, Ont.

The concert, featuring Machaut's "La Messe de Nostre Dame," was a fitting tribute to Maust's infectious appreciation of medieval music, and was offered to him as a grateful farewell. Maust, who had survived various forms of cancer for over two decades, died exactly four weeks after that event.

The program for the Maust family's July 6 visitation featured a photograph of Maust reading Marcus Aurelius and a quotation from the second-century Roman emperor/philosopher: "Spend therefore these fleeting moments on earth as nature would have you spend them, and then go to your rest with good grace, as an olive falls in its season, with the blessing for the earth that bore it and a thanksgiving to the tree that gave it life."

At an Aug. 9 memorial worship service in celebration of Maust's life, a service punctuated by glorious music including a choir and a string quartet performing Anton Bruckner's "Locus Iste" and Franz Schubert's "Kyrie" from his *Mass in G*, family and friends said their final farewells to the man who had planned much of the beautiful, warmly liturgical ceremony.

Maust was neither boisterous nor bold, but he was always palpably there: a noble and invigorating presence. And he didn't lack humour, taking pleasure, for example, in the fact that border officials were always intrigued by his birthplace—Bad Axe, Mich.—and his birthdate—April Fool's Day, 1934.

"Bill Maust established the groundwork for the liberal arts music program at Conrad Grebel University College," said his friend and colleague Len Enns, music professor emeritus at Grebel. "Hired to shape and chair the fledgling program and to teach music history, he took only one year before forming a chamber choir whose focus was, initially, largely early music. This integration of academic studies and performance was soon extended to include a vibrant and enthusiastic emphasis on cultural studies, as Bill developed the much-loved annual Music in Vienna travel course. It became his trademark. Added to this was his career-long interest in music as a response to war, now reflected in new program initiatives at the college exploring intersections between music and peace and conflict studies.

"Bill was gentle, but fiercely determined, when he had a plan; and he did; and he leaves a noble, inspiring and challenging legacy. He was helplessly in love with music, with art, architecture, literature,



Bill Maust

cuisine—with life lived gracefully and joyfully. I miss him deeply," Enns concluded.

Among the youngest of nine children of Richard and Elizabeth (Gunden) Maust, Bill was predeceased by all but one sibling. While attending college in Virginia, he was led to the life-defining experience of working in Europe for two years with post-Second World War refugees under the auspices of Mennonite Central Committee.

"The friendships he developed then, along with his love of the city of Vienna, shaped the trajectory of his vocation in music, most notably the 30 years during which he offered to students and others memorable summer music seminars in Vienna," noted his family in his obituary.

"Bill's interest in early music and monastic life found expression in other formative experiences, such as his pilgrimage on the Camino to Santiago [Spain] in 1984, long before the current hordes of walkers who travel there. Along the way, he introduced other pilgrims to early music notation and led them in song in chapels and monasteries along the way."

Maust, who earned a Ph.D. degree from Indiana University, conducted choirs and taught vocal studies and music history at Eastern Mennonite University, Virginia; Earlham College, Indiana; and Queen's University and Conrad Grebel University College, where he served as chair of the Music Department for 20 years, beginning in 1977, and where he established the curriculum that remains at the base of the music program.

"In retirement, he had more time to pursue his love of gardening, house renovation, furniture building, bread baking—and watching the Blue Jays," said the family.

Maust had been grateful for the successful management of his several cancers for a 23-year period that spanned the lives of his grandchildren. During his later years, some friends joked that he must have had nine lives, since he seemed to prevail through every new diagnosis and treatment.

But he finally succumbed to cancer in his 81st year. Maust passed away at home in Waterloo, with his family around him: wife Miriam (Pellman), son Chris (Liz Albertson), daughter Janice (Tim Hedrick), and his grandchildren. ❧

Spring rolls and wedding cake

Couple have 'official' wedding for 40th anniversary

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Peter Nguyen and Kim Bui received an anniversary gift on Aug. 10 that they never got at their wedding 40 years ago: a church ceremony with a marriage licence.

The pair had been married in Vietnam on April 30, 1974, but post-war conditions in that country, combined with Nguyen's inability to produce a birth certificate, meant that they could not be issued a government marriage licence. Instead, they pledged their vows in a commitment ceremony outside on the grounds of their church.

They emigrated to Canada in 1984 and went on to have five children. Eventually they settled in Abbotsford and, until recently, were active in the local Vietnamese Christian Church.

In July, they moved to Campbell River to help start a Vietnamese church there, returning to Abbotsford in August to celebrate 40 years of marriage with their children.

But Bui had always felt something was missing. She never had a "real" wedding, and, although the Canadian government recognized the couple as married when they moved to this country, they wanted the piece of paper to prove it. Could the church help?

Since Vietnamese Christian Church is part of Emmanuel Mennonite, Bui and Nguyen asked April Yamasaki, Emmanuel's pastor, for assistance. They decided on a simple wedding ceremony during the Aug. 10 worship service, with Yamasaki officiating, with the marriage to be registered with the province.



Peter Nguyen and Kim Bui celebrate 40 years of marriage with an official church wedding ceremony officiated by Pastor April Yamasaki on Aug. 10.

It was pointed out that this wedding was a return to Mennonite tradition. Years ago, weddings sometimes took place following Sunday morning worship so the entire church community could take part.

The congregation enjoys a refreshment fellowship time after Sunday worship in the summer, so the coffee hour was turned into a wedding reception, complete with guest book and wedding cake. The Nguyen-Bui family also provided spring rolls as part of their cultural tradition.

For the couple, repeating their marriage vows in a church ceremony made their anniversary complete.

"The pastor has the authority to bless us," said Bui, adding that they felt it was important "to stand in front of the church and get the blessing from the Lord Jesus." ❧



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'My name is Ron and I fix things'

Long-time volunteer has become part of the Camp Valaqua family

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
WATER VALLEY, ALTA.

Ron Janzen has been a fixture in the Mennonite Church Alberta camp scene since before Camp Valaqua existed.

"The very first camp was in Didsbury," recalls Janzen, who was a camper there in 1957, when Walter Paetkau was the director.

One of the first years he was a camper on the Valaqua site, Janzen remembers a lean-to kitchen and rough outhouses, and sleeping in tents with trenches dug around them to funnel away the frequent rains. Campers brushed their teeth and washed in the small creek that runs through the chapel area because there was no other running water. Camp activities back then included archery, volleyball, baseball, swimming and Bible study.

Of his early camp experiences, he says he liked "the counsellors and all the kids, the nature. It's a nice place to come for camp. I enjoyed it and the learning about the Word of God."

More than 50 years later, Janzen still goes to Camp Valaqua for the same reasons. "I love the nature, the kids, the counsellors and staff," he says. "They are all friendly and nice to talk to, and I can serve God."

With his camper years behind him, Janzen began volunteering to do maintenance work at Valaqua for a week every summer once the haying was done in his hometown of Pincher Creek, Alta. Since 2000, he has come for the full two-month camping season, to chop wood, clean the lodge, build trails, paint benches and generally do whatever needs doing.

Ingrid Janssen, who shares the camp manager position with her husband, Jeff Schellenberg, appreciates Janzen's work. "It's so nice to have someone who doesn't wait to be asked to do something, he just

away all summer, getting to the jobs that otherwise would go undone, causing Olfert to exclaim, "Valaqua has benefitted enormously from all his work."

Janzen has also become a fundraiser extraordinaire for Valaqua, consistently earning the title of top fundraiser at the annual spring hike-a-thon. This year, he brought in \$6,000 to go towards the building of new cabins. (See story on page 20.) Since this was \$1,000 more than 2013, Janzen's goal for 2015 is \$7,000.

'A comment we consistently get is how beautiful our camp is. Ron has a lot to do with it.'
(Jon Olfert, Camp Valaqua director)

jumps in," she says. "He really loves the counsellors. . . . They like him too, and he's become part of the camp family."

When camp director Jon Olfert once asked Janzen to introduce himself to a group of parents, Janzen said, "My name is Ron and I fix things."

"A comment we consistently get is how beautiful our camp is," says Olfert, adding, "Ron has a lot to do with it." Janzen putters

The secret to his success is persistence. "The day of [the hike-a-thon], Ron is already starting for the next year," Janssen says.

Wherever he goes, he asks people if they are willing to help him support the camp. This year, he dropped in on farms all around Pincher Creek, talked to former co-workers from the school where he had served as a janitor, and approached every



Ron Janzen repaints a bench at Camp Valaqua. For the last four years, he has volunteered his whole summer—July and August—to do maintenance work at the camp.

church in town. Many of the donations he received were small, between \$2 and \$40, but they added up.

And Janzen doesn't forget the donors. After the hike-a-thon, he delivered thank-you notes to all the Pincher Creek churches, as well as putting one in the local newspaper, the *Echo*.

"I enjoy doing it and it goes to help kids come to camp," Janzen says of all his efforts on behalf of Valaqua. ❧

❧ Obituary


Gospel Herald editor dies at 85

QUAKER - TOWN, PA.—John M. Drescher, 85, known as the "preacher editor" of *Gospel Herald* from 1962-73, died July 10. Also known as a prolific writer and well-known speaker, teacher and pastor, he wrote one of Herald Press's best-selling books, *Seven Things Children Need*, that sold 130,000 copies and was translated into 15 languages. Successor to the late Paul Erb, the "professor editor" of *Gospel Herald*, Drescher was seen as a reconciler of Mennonite Church U.S.A. through the pages of the publication during the turbulent 1960s and '70s. "They told me I'd have to spend at least half-time in the churches," he said in an interview in 1988, reporting that he preached as many as 20 times a week. In one instance, he performed an ordination while attending a district conference meeting in northern Alberta. Weekly editorials were often written "on the run." Circulation under his watch reached 27,000, the highest since the founding editor, Dan Kauffman (35,000). The publication merged with *The Mennonite* in 1998. A member of Finland Mennonite Church, Pennsburg, Pa., he is survived by his wife Betty (Keener) Drescher, three sons, two daughters, 14 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.



John M. Drescher

—BY DICK BENNER



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ARTBEAT

BOOK REVIEW

A family in need of a fresh start

The Wittenbergs.

By Sarah Klassen. Turnstone Press, 2013.

REVIEWED BY MARGARET LOEWEN REIMER
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



“The only safe place is inside the story,” reads an epigraph to this first novel by Sarah Klassen of Winnipeg. This story moves through a momentous year in the life of the Wittenberg family, and it unfolds within the larger narratives of family history and coming of age in 21st-century Canada.

The Wittenbergs are going through troubled times: Mother Millicent’s “tendency towards joylessness” has developed into serious depression, tempting father Joseph to stray from his marriage vows; daughter Alice struggles to cope with two sons who have a genetic disorder; and grandmother Marie is growing infirm. Younger daughter Mia, in her last year of high school, finds inspiration and solace in her grandmother’s stories of her Mennonite family in Ukraine and their immigration to Canada.

Mia is the rock in the family, holding

“past and present in her steady gaze,” in the words of one critic. She brings to mind another memorable teen, Nomi Nickel, from Miriam Toews’s *A Complicated Kindness*.

The family name, of course, evokes another troubled time and place: it was in Wittenberg that Martin Luther nailed his 95 complaints to the church door and launched the Reformation. This Winnipeg family, too, is in need of a fresh start, a new synthesis between its Mennonite past, untended relationships and contemporary urban life.

One of the delights of this book is its specific setting in North Kildonan, the home of many Winnipeg Mennonites. GranMarie lives on Edison Ave., while Mia jogs along Kildonan Drive, attends graduation at the Fort Garry Hotel and shops at Polo Park Mall.

Another treat is the interplay between literature and life—or between

different stories. Mia’s high-school life intersects with the tumultuous past of her grandmother, both framed by the novels of Jane Austen. The presence of Chekhov hovers over events, and there is even a “cool” comparison between God and Pygmalion. Klassen weaves in the Mennonite material without allowing it to become pedantic or overwhelming. It seems to Mia that her ancestors “lived always close to death.”

We see Mennonites also through Millicent’s “English” eyes. She can’t identify with their “narratives of escape and loss,” but neither can she seem to find her own story; she observes that Mennonites like to travel, especially to poverty-stricken places where they can donate their skills and money, and “come home feeling satisfied with themselves.” Ironically, Millicent finds a salvation of sorts by working at a thrift shop, to which she gives many of her possessions, and by caring for her needy grandsons.

Hedie, one of Mia’s teachers, has her own story of immigration and tragedy.

A dramatic trip to the past proves to be a turning point for the Wittenbergs, leading to “rebirth” and a new ability to face the future. While some reconciliations seem a little too rosy, there are no easy answers and the ending is muted.

I had a few quibbles with this book. Mia’s versions of her grandmother’s stories, done as a creative writing project for school, seem a little too precocious for a teenager, good student though she is. And I found it unlikely that she would support her friend’s drug habit and forfeit a significant school trip without her parents’ intervention. I thought grandmother and son both entered extra-marital relationships rather too easily for church-going Mennonites. Stylistically, Klassen chose to forego quotation marks (except for GranMarie’s stories), which I find “flattens” the text a bit, both visually and cognitively.

Overall, though, I found Klassen’s first novel an impressive venture in blending worlds and stories. I look forward to reading more. ❧

Margaret Loewen Reimer is the former managing editor of Canadian Mennonite.

/// Briefly noted

New study options in ‘Kids Can’ and ‘With the Word’ series

• **MENNO MEDIA HAS** released new children’s studies and activities called *Kids Can Speak Up* and *Kids Can Celebrate*. These lessons and activities are designed for club and after-school programs or other children’s study and activity opportunities. New Bible studies for adults include the “With the Word” series on the books of Genesis and Mark.

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—MennoMedia



'Along the Road to Freedom'

Art exhibit honours women who brought their families, often without men, out of Russia to safety in Canada and Paraguay

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

Seeking to honour the faith of Mennonite mothers who single-handedly brought their families through difficult and challenging experiences to safety, Winnipeg artist Ray Dirks has created "Along the Road to Freedom," a travelling exhibit currently on display at Conrad Grebel University College's new gallery in Waterloo, Ont.

The women depicted lost their husbands in Russia and were left alone to raise their families during a time of great turmoil, suffering and violence in the 1930s and '40s.

"They were people who felt utter despair at times, people who clambered through war, but who still, in the end, held onto their faith in God and family," says Dirks, who is also curator of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery in Winnipeg.

In 1998, many of those children who emigrated with their single mothers from Germany after the Second World War decided it was time to unite in a celebration of thanksgiving for "50 years of peace, prosperity and freedom," says Hans Funk, one of those children. This gathering was followed by the publication of *Road to Freedom*, a book that illustrated many of the hardships experienced by this immigrant group.

"But we missed one very, very important item in these two projects," says Funk. "The courage and faith of the mothers who were left with the children with no means of feeding them, forced to leave their homes and all their basic assets confiscated."

In late 2008, Dirks says that Funk, along with Nettie Dueck, Wanda Andres and Henry Bergen, came to him, "looking for advice on how to create something to honour mothers like theirs. After many meetings and wide-ranging discussions on

what kind of artwork would best suit, I suggested that I could create a series of paintings that could fit the budget we discussed, could tour and therefore be seen by many more people than just [in] Winnipeg, and could become a book once I was finished painting."

In early 2011, they began to look for families to sponsor paintings.

"At first, finding sponsors was difficult, but I was always confident that once people would start hearing about and understanding the project, sponsorships would pick up," says Dirks.

By 2012, more than 20 sponsors were on board.

Funk's eyes well with tears as he recalls his mother, Maria, who died in 1978 at the age of 81. "It was a simple faith that sustained her," he says.

He vividly recalls their flight with four other single-parent families from Poland to Germany, following the retreating German army and ahead of the advancing Russians. Travelling in horse-drawn wagons with ammunition flying overhead, Funk, under 10 at the time, says he and his family "were just outside the city of Lask when it was totally destroyed. From a distance we saw Dresden in flames. Not everyone made it," he sadly reflects.

But the strength of the mothers "who spent time on their knees in prayer left an indelible impression on him. It is stories like Maria Funk's that Dirks is depicting.

"I paint from photos as much as I am able," Dirks says. "From the outset, I decided I wanted the paintings to tell the subject's story in a collage of images and

(Continued on page 34)



Artist Ray Dirks, seated, and Hans (John) Funk looking over his easel.

(Continued from page 33)

words. I wanted each painting to be a journey along their roads to freedom. For each painting, I would meet with family members, listen to stories, . . . do more research.”

Funk’s oldest sister, Ilse, was born in 1924 with a congenital heart condition. “What she lacked in health, she gained in knowledge,” says Funk. Ilse is the only woman in this project who was not a mother. She gave up her medical studies in Russia to support and care for her family after their father was taken away, working tirelessly to help her family escape and to support them. She died during open-heart surgery in Winnipeg in June 1960 at the age of 35.

“The most powerful one moment for me was attending the unveiling of the Katja Goerz painting at the Tabor Home in Morden and holding the hand of one of the

only two surviving subjects,” says Dirks, adding that both are now deceased. “Katja, 96 at the time, told me she wasn’t worth all the fuss. I was very happy to be able to hold her hand and tell her she definitely was worth the fuss.

“The most powerful painting for me is of the one woman who lost everything, all her children and her husband, finally arriving in Canada alone, the poorest of the poor in many ways,” Dirks continues. “Yet she was best known as a lovely, forgiving woman when she passed away in 1974. With no immediate family, I was happy and honoured to create an un-sponsored painting of that woman, Katherine Peters, my great aunt.”

“We want this so that our children and grandchildren will know our story,” says Funk. Dirks adds that this was done in the

hope “that people remember—or get to know—their own stories, Mennonite or otherwise. That they honour the people who are responsible for our being able to have good lives lived in safety and peace . . . and to herald their faith.”

The paintings that are finished were featured at the 1894 Art Centre in Boissevain, Man., and this summer they were displayed at the Gallery in the Park in Altona, Man. The Grebel exhibit will run until late January 2015. The tour will continue for a few years. Eventually the project will consist of 28 paintings.

A central large painting, that Dirks calls the “signature piece,” is sponsored by Hans and Elsie Funk, and “will focus on Funk’s mother’s journey, but will include a central image that will speak for all the paintings.” ☞

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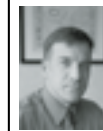
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VIEWPOINT

Uncomfortably evangelized

Taking into account the personhood of the one being evangelized is key when spreading the gospel

JAMES DEGURSE

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

I used to think I'd be flattered if evangelists targeted me. When someone tried to convert me to their belief system, I would surely see it as a selfless act borne out of genuine concern for my eternal destiny.

I never understood people who felt discomfort when people witnessed to them. "Religion is all right," these people would say, "but you shouldn't shove beliefs down people's throats!" I blamed such statements on our culture's worship of tolerance.

But my feelings changed the day I got "evangelized."

I was at a Winnipeg library scanning the spines of Christian books when a young man struck up a conversation with me. His presence in the religion section suggested that he was a fellow theology nerd, and I thought perhaps he wanted to be friends. After exchanging pleasantries, he asked, "Do you know Jesus?"

I was taken aback. I half-heartedly said, "Yeah, I guess so." I'm a follower of Christ, but saying "I know Jesus" makes it sound like he's a friend of a friend of mine. ("Jesus? Yeah, I met him at Steve's party. He's a pretty cool guy.")

My evangelist asked if I attended church, and I told him I did. He said there was a potluck at his church that night, and he mentioned the time and the address. It seemed like an invitation, but I didn't take

the hint. I told him, "It was nice to meet you," and I escaped with a book.

To my surprise, the encounter had been uncomfortable. It took reflection to figure out why it was uncomfortable, but it boiled down to one reason: he made me feel like a potential convert, rather than as a person.

The divine drama we call Scripture begins with a kind of anthropological theory, declaring that we are persons created in the image of God. This is one crucial element that separates Christianity from competing philosophies. A person has hopes, fears, dreams, insecurities, interests, talents, and, most importantly, inherent dignity and worth.

Instead of feeling like he saw me as a complex, messy, nuanced person, as Christians believe all persons are, I felt like the library evangelist saw me as another potential notch in his belt, a trophy he could bring to his potluck. It seemed that, to him, my defining attribute was not my personhood, but the fact that I may not share his specific religious beliefs.

If I am correct that this well-meaning evangelism to strangers is subtly dehumanizing, the obvious follow-up question is: How then do we preach the gospel?

Like many young people, I'm an expert at pointing out problems and clumsy at

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PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES DEGURSE



James DeGurse

(Continued from page 35)

finding solutions. However, let me suggest two potential solutions:

- **EVANGELIZE BY** example. There is a quote popularly attributed to St. Francis of Assisi that puts it succinctly: “Preach the gospel always; use words if necessary.” If people witness the transformative power Christ can have in the lives of individuals and in oppressive power structures, they’ll see Christ as a real, living Saviour.

- **EVANGELIZE WITHIN** the context of genuine, long-lasting friendships. Friendship is the great embrace of someone in the fullness of their personhood.

These suggestions have shortcomings.

It’s hard to quantify the results of preaching by example, and we can only take on a few deep, meaningful friendships at a time, so neither method can be shown to get the results of, say, door-knocking Mormons.

My intention is not to mindlessly complain—or to disparage the library evangelist—for we’re on the same team, but rather to spark a discussion about evangelism. Until we take into account the personhood of the one being evangelized, we are sacrificing Christian doctrine while preaching Christian doctrine. ☸

James DeGurse, 18, lives in Winnipeg. He begins his first year of studies at Canadian Mennonite University this month.

PHOTO BY CHASE CARTER/
CREATIVE COMMONS.ORG (CC BY-ND 2.0)



March against rape culture and inequality.

End rape culture: a Mennonite perspective

BY RACHEL BERGEN
Young Voices Co-Editor

On May 23, 2014, Elliot Rodger killed six people at the University of California Santa Barbara before he turned the gun on himself. In his manifesto, he stated he did so because women wouldn’t sleep with him.

The murderer was active on men’s rights awareness forums, where women are often highly objectified. They are seen as non-human by many in such groups, and, at the very least, less human than men.

What many people don’t realize is the sexism that women endure on a daily basis. Women are blamed for being raped and harassed, and taught that male sexual violence is relatively normal.

Many women within Mennonite churches have experienced sexual violence and harassment, but they often don’t have a forum of their own to discuss these issues. So here goes:

Rachel Bergen

Several weeks ago I posted an article called “A gentleman’s guide to rape culture” on my Facebook timeline, whose general

premise is that, if you’re a man, you’re a part of rape culture, whether you’re a rapist or not. I know it sounds awful, but try being on the other side.

Most of the responses I received were positive, many of them from male friends. Unfortunately, I received some negative comments from a friend and a cousin. What these two don’t understand is what I go through on a regular basis.

I doubt my cousin would be so selfish if he knew how many times I’ve been sexually harassed. I would like to think that if my friend knew that a stranger asked me for oral sex when I was 15 years old at a youth car-wash fundraiser, he would be more compassionate.

When I posted the article, I had hoped people would take a moment to reflect on rape culture from a woman’s perspective: the fear, vulnerability and blame that we experience regularly. But, unfortunately, my cousin and friend couldn’t see past their own bruised egos.

This has been my experience on many occasions. The same is true for my friend



Rachel Bergen

Melanie Kampen.

Melanie Kampen

Kampen, 26, attends Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. She is a recent graduate of Conrad Grebel University College's master of theological studies program.

She says that nearly every day for several months on her walk to school she was harassed by men: "They would say things like, 'Hi, beautiful,' 'Hey, sexy,' and, 'Want to f***?'"

Although she was offended that the cat-callers reduced her humanity to her sexuality, Kampen often didn't feel safe enough to confront them and tell them so. But one day she got up the nerve to tell off three of her regular cat-callers.

"I turned around, marched straight up to the building they were standing in front of," she says. "Two of the older guys ran inside. I talked to the younger guy who was standing there. I asked him, 'Did you whistle at me?' He said, 'No, those two other guys did.' I said, 'That's very disrespectful. Next time can you tell them not to?' He said 'yes.' I said 'thank you' and it never happened again."

Unfortunately, most situations aren't resolved that easily, and Kampen continues to deal with sexism.

Hannah Goossen

Hannah Goossen, 26, attends First United Mennonite Church in Vancouver. In her

case, being objectified and treated with disrespect didn't stop when she dismissed the person. One day she was out with a friend when a man approached her with a rude opening line.

"The conversation only got worse from there and no matter what I said, he would not leave me alone," she recalls. "He was forcing his attentions on me when I hadn't sought them and continued after I told him I wasn't interested. It was as though he felt entitled, that just because he approached me I should feel obligated to give him my time."

Through initiatives like Hollaback, (www.ihollaback.org) women are supporting one another. The movement to end street harassment works through a network of local activists around the world.

But this often doesn't happen within churches.

Kampen suggests hosting regular forums for storytelling on a community level. There, women could share their stories, support one another, and educate others within the church, including those who may be perpetuating the cycle of sexism.

Goossen agrees that awareness and education are key to addressing the issue. "Men have held most of the power for so long, the imbalance is written into our lives in ways that, even as women, we don't always recognize," she says. "The church would benefit from teaching women their value and building them up." ❧



Melanie Kampen



Hannah Goossen

PERSONAL REFLECTION

A world of diverse Mennonite faith

MELANIE KAMPEN

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

Last year I was asked if I was interested in serving on the planning committee for Mennonite Church Canada's Native Assembly 2014. Taking a directed reading course on aboriginal theology at the time, I had no idea what

Native Assembly was, but I was starting to ask serious questions about the history of Mennonites in Canada and the U.S., and the cultural particularity of their/my theology, so I agreed to take part.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF MELANIE KAMPEN



Melanie Kampen and Brander McDonald, indigenous relations coordinator for Mennonite Church B.C., at Native Assembly 2014 in Winnipeg.

(Continued from page 37)

I learned very quickly that there are many indigenous Christians who, all across Canada and the U.S., are Mennonite. I was ashamed of my ignorance.

Mennonites, like any denomination, are a diverse identity group. Indeed, I think my ignorance reflects how quickly many Amer-European Mennonites (North American Mennonites of European descent) forget that we do not constitute the largest demographic of Mennonites/Anabaptists globally speaking. We know this in theory, but we often fail to attend to this in our particular contexts.

Native Assembly 2014 was my first one, and my experience on the planning committee was a journey into a world of diverse Mennonite faith. Our theme for the assembly was “Ears to earth; eyes to God,” based on Job 12:7-10. The theme emerged out of questions at the intersection of place and identity: “Where are we? Who are we?” We recognized that these questions inform each other.

We considered our various identities as settler, immigrant, indigenous, Mennonite, Christian, created by God and so on. We considered these in relation to the ecological destruction happening all across Canada through oil and chemical spills into water, tar sands, fracking, deforestation and more.

The question of place was not simply a geographic question, but a theological one. Asking the questions of place and identity are important because they cause us to reflect on what we really believe about creation, about the Creator, and about our role as disciples who are also part of creation.

Many of the presentations and workshops focussed on cross-cultural learning and how to live more respectfully with the land and all of creation. Most importantly for me personally, however, were the spaces that these presentations and workshops opened up for people to further discuss a variety of issues and to share their stories with one another. It was by listening to others talk about who they are, where they are from, what they are passionate about and what they struggle with, that relationships of deep respect began to form despite some

significant differences in worldviews and theologies.

This was not simply a gathering of native and non-native Mennonites in Winnipeg, but a dynamic interplay of complex identities and locations. Or one could also think of the assembly as a gathering of gift giving—offering each other the gifts from our places and thereby also offering each other the gifts of our identities—extending relationship and kinship to each other.

Indeed, many people brought symbols from the places they were coming from to the assembly, and shared their identity with others through stories, worship, tears and laughter. A sense of family was palpable at the closing worship session as we celebrated joys, wept together through struggles, and shared in a communion feast of sweetgrass tea, bannock, fish and blueberries.

I attended Assembly 2014 because I was invited. Granted, the invitation I received as an organizer was more formal, but the invitation is one that is extended to us all, especially to Amer-European Mennonites.

“Come and be with us”: This is the most common phrase I hear spoken by indigenous people in Canada to others, both Christians and traditional peoples. I’m often asked by my fellow Amer-European Mennonites what they can do in light of Canada’s colonial history, ongoing discrimination against indigenous people groups, and their complicity in systems of power that are much greater than any one of us.

At Native Assembly 2014 I learned something that I had heard for years already, but which struck me in a new way: that being with one another is a gift. I think it is important for the church to make more space, to have more time, to hear the stories of one another, and to simply walk alongside one another, to be with one another. ☸

Melanie Kampen, 25, graduated this past spring from Conrad Grebel University College with a master of theological studies degree. She lives in Winnipeg, where she attends Springfield Heights Mennonite Church.

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO



Cross-cultural learning and how to live more respectfully with the land and all of creation were the foci of many of the presentations and workshops at Native Assembly 2014 in Winnipeg.

Calendar

British Columbia

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.

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

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 or

306-249-4844 x 223 for more details.

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

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://home.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/.

Sept. 27: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate cyclathon at Bird's Hill Park, Oakbank. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

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.

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.

Sept. 20: Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, is open for public tours beginning at 10 a.m. as part of Doors Open Waterloo Region 2014, a free architecture and heritage open house event. For more information, visit www.regionofwaterloo.ca/doorsopen. ☘

Classifieds

Piano Lessons

Piano lessons for all ages in Kitchener-Waterloo. Creative solutions driven by my passion to see students achieve their piano-playing goals. Julie K.

Armes, B. Ch. Mus. (CMU), B. Mus. (WLU), B. Ed. (Nipissing). Call (226) 791-1231 or see <https://james.musicteachershelfer.com>.

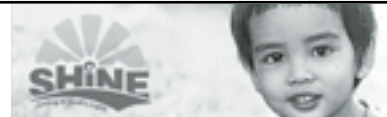
Announcement

ABNER MARTIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

This annual scholarship is awarded by the Menno Singers to a student who is affiliated with a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation and is, or will be, in a full-time program of music study, graduate or undergraduate, during 2014-15.

Applications must be mailed by Sept. 15, 2014. For application documents or further information, contact: Lewis Brubacher, 16 Euclid Avenue, Waterloo, ON N2L 6L9; phone: 519-884-3072; email: lbrubacher@sympatico.ca.

Employment Opportunities



Shine: Living in God's Light, the Sunday school curriculum produced by MennoMedia and Brethren Press, is accepting applications for writers. Details are available at www.ShineCurriculum.com/Write. Application and sample session deadline is December 15, 2014.



Mennonite
Church
Eastern
Canada

Lead Pastor

Community Mennonite Fellowship in Drayton Ontario is seeking a lead pastor for our vibrant rural congregation.

Rooted in our local community and our Anabaptist faith tradition, we strive to live out our mission to be "Enthusiastic followers of Jesus Christ, spreading his Good News in our community and around the world".

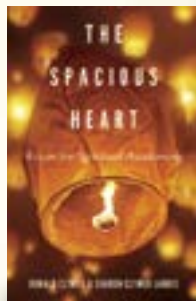
Contact Henry Paetkau, MCEC Area Church Minister at hpaetkau@mcec.ca or visit communitymennonite.com



New!

THE SPACIOUS HEART

Weaving together theological reflection and story, authors Don Clymer and Sharon Clymer Landis serve as guides who have walked this unsettling journey, and gently give permission for readers to ask the hard questions to ultimately have greater intimacy and connection with God, themselves, and others.



- Offers 12 keys or insights for unlocking the heart for greater intimacy with God
- Great for spiritual directors, pastors, college chaplains, small group leaders, religious counselors, retreat leaders, or those searching for deeper connection

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MC Canada biking for Botswana

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Last October, five Mennonite Church Canada office staff decided to try something new to raise money for ongoing ministries in the Philippines by partnering with Ride for Refuge on a one-day bike-a-thon that raised \$6,000, triple the original goal. This fall, congregations from across Canada are invited to join MC Canada for the inaugural national church bike-a-thon for Ride for Refuge on Oct. 4 and cycle five, 10, 25 or 50 kilometres. This year, the ride is in support of Witness workers Nathan and Taryn Dirks, helping to fund their work with at-risk youth in Botswana. For more information, or to register, visit www.rideforrefuge.org (team name: Mennonite Church Canada), or contact Daniel Horne at dhorne@mennonitechurch.ca or 1-866-888-6785 ext. 107. Pictured from left to right: Gordon Janzen, director of Asia, Europe and Middle East ministry; Dan Dyck, communications director; Karen Martens Zimmerly, denominational minister; Elsie Rempel, formation consultant; Willard Metzger, executive director; Vic Thiessen, chief administrative officer; and Daniel Horne, partnership development director.