



CANADIAN MENNONITE

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EDITORIAL

Where are we headed?

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

It is almost a cliché to say that the church is in the middle of mind-numbing changes, nearing a revolutionary scale. Anglican Bishop Mark Dyer calls the situation a “giant rummage sale,” as we take a look at all our old stuff and sell what we don’t need.

Michael King, dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., told incoming students this fall that the church is going through something not seen since the Reformation.

“One of the reasons our church structures are coming unglued is that we don’t know how to meet Jesus, much like those two men in the Emmaus Road story, who, until Jesus revealed himself, were in the dark and confused,” he said.

“We don’t know how to do this work, to reconcile opposing convictions of which stories Jesus meets us in,” he said. “Yet it may be that within these challenges is where we find him. The disciples and these two men finally recognized that Jesus was bigger than their preconceptions. Finally, after conversing on the road all day, and after Jesus reveals himself, do they honestly blurt out: ‘Did not our hearts burn within us?’”

King cited seven trends listed by L. Gregory and Nathan Jones of Duke University, Durham, N.C., that call for attention in our own faith community:

1. LOVE IT or hate it, we are in the midst of a digital revolution that is fundamentally reshaping much of our daily lives.

And too often we find ourselves caught between unreserved enthusiasts for the latest technological fads and Luddite fearmongers telling us that those fads threaten all that is good about life. We need to develop opposable minds that

can wrestle with the diverse blessings and burdens that the digital revolution offers.

2. IN OUR globalized age, traditional markers of identity and place are rapidly being renegotiated. With the proliferation of

Internet technology, efficient travel options, and interconnected commerce and institutions, people from diverse cultures now interact with ever-greater frequency and fluidity.

3. NO NORTH American institution can ignore the rising influence of immigrants from Central and South America. From linguistic and cultural considerations to issues of minority representation in places of power, the influx of immigrants has created a new set of institutional challenges. At the same time, however, ethnic diversity also presents Christian institutions with a new set of gifts. Immigrant communities not only bring fresh perspectives and ideas, but they often keep the church’s ear attuned to the voice of the poor and those on the margins.

4. MEMBERS OF the “emergent church” movement often see the institutional church as a barrier to reaching new places in society. A growing number of young Christians have become uncomfortable with the accommodated nature of the

institutional church to various political causes. And many sceptical secularists worry that “institution” is simply another word for “lifeless bureaucracy”

5. THE MOST vibrant Christian institutions are revisiting their basic economic models, developing new partnerships and networks to broaden the scale and scope of their activities and impact, and exploring new sources of revenue. The potential for experimentation and innovation to create sustainable economic development is great, but the danger is more readily obvious. And when danger lurks, it is often more tempting to try to keep the ship from sinking than to develop strategies to ensure that we don’t miss the boat that offers long-term life.

6. LAYPEOPLE INCREASINGLY ask questions like, “What does it mean to be a Christian lawyer?” “Does it really change anything about medicine or physics if you practise it as a Christian?” and, “What kinds of risks to my career should I be willing to undertake for the sake of the gospel?” Many laypeople, too, will expect their pastors, Christian institutional leaders, and Christian books and digital resources to help them articulate thoughtful responses.

7. ACCORDING to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, almost 70 percent of the world’s projected 9.3 billion people will be living in cities by the year 2050. Compared with the 30 percent of the 2.5 billion who lived in cities in 1950, it’s safe to say urbanization will likely lead to the explosive growth of congregations capable of attracting new urbanites, leaving many rural congregations bereft of members. This widening gap between bustling urban congregations and dwindling rural ones will force church leaders into difficult decisions.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Using these multi-coloured human cut-outs huddled together in the shape of a question mark to represent the multi-ethnic, multicultural, multi-generational Mennonite church, can we honestly ask, as Pastor Ryan Dueck attempts on page 4, ‘Are we one?’

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

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

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Are we one

Adapted from a sermon based on John 17:11, 20-23

BY RYAN DUECK

Can we come to any other conclusion than that we have utterly, completely and depressingly failed to be the answer to Jesus' prayer?

Jesus' Farewell Discourse, as recorded in John 14 to 17, is full of images of who Jesus is. These four chapters present Jesus as a shepherd; a gate; and the way, the truth and the life.

But this passage is about more than who Jesus is. It is also profoundly about what Jesus wants. We see this uniquely in Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in John 17, as he prays for his present and future followers.

The church has historically paid careful attention to how Jesus teaches us to pray; many recite the Lord's Prayer daily or weekly. But it's equally worth paying attention when Jesus himself prays. He prays for two things:

- **PROTECTION.**
- **THAT HIS** followers would be one.

He doesn't pray that his followers would be right, successful or even influential. He prays that they would be one. Nine times in John 17 alone, we find the word "one." Apparently it matters a



A portrait of Jesus' Farewell Discourse to his disciples by Duccio di Buoninsegna, circa early 14th century. During his talk, Jesus prays that his disciples—and their disciples after them— would be one.

great deal to Jesus that his followers be one.

How have we been doing with this?

One section of Willard Swartley's commentary on John 17 (*John: Believers Church Bible Commentary* from Herald Press) begins with this lament: "Church history is very disappointing."

We could be forgiven for laughing out loud . . . or weeping. This seems like the height of understatement. Jesus' last words before going the way of the cross for the salvation of the world were an impassioned prayer for the oneness and unity of his followers, yet at times it seems that his church has spent the next two or so millennia fighting and fragmenting.

Since the Protestant Reformation, we have become particularly good at this. Depending on which website you consult, who decides what counts as "Christian"

one, for those keeping score.

Can we come to any other conclusion than that we have utterly, completely and depressingly failed to be the answer to

In the past, unity was perhaps easier to attain when Mennonites lived in tight, close-knit communities with strong—sometimes toxic—structures of authority in churches and families.

and what doesn't, and who's doing the math, there could be as many as 41,000 different Christian denominations in the world right now. That's 40,999 more than

Jesus' prayer?

But it goes far beyond labels and denominations. We're getting better at working together across denominational

boundaries that were once rigid and impermeable. Mennonite churches participate in numerous initiatives with Anglicans, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists and others.

We may worship in different ways, we may have different understandings of certain aspects of theology or biblical interpretation, and we may have different histories, but in working and praying together we give voice to the conviction that we are one in Christ.

Considering that a few hundred years ago people were killing each other over the differences that these denominations were founded on, this represents real progress! But our lack of unity now seems to bleed across denominational lines and has become concentrated on social issues, politics and theology.

Let's narrow our gaze and think just about our own Mennonite denomination. Are we one? Many would say no, we are not.

Whether it is our views about human sexuality, as highlighted in the Being a Faithful Church process; our understandings of the implications of religious pluralism and the scope of salvation; our attitudes toward human-induced climate change; our disputes about worship styles; our understandings of peace and justice, and how these are to be attained, and what they require of us; our ideas about how best to move forward as a denomination (the Mennonite Church Canada Future Directions Task Force is wrestling with this now); or others, we are clearly not of one mind.

It is rare that I attend a provincial or national Mennonite gathering, or open the pages of *Canadian Mennonite*, and not hear or read some expression of anxiety about the future of our denomination based on a lack of theological unity on one or more of these issues.

Mennonites have always run into a bit of a conundrum when it comes to unity. We've obviously never had a centralized authority structure like a "Mennonite pope" or anything like that. This would run completely counter to our convictions about the "priesthood of all believers" and the imperative for all believers to interpret Scripture in community under

the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The problem is, what happens when we don't agree? Who decides then?

In the past, unity was perhaps easier to attain when Mennonites lived in tight, close-knit communities with strong—sometimes toxic—structures of authority in churches and families.

But we don't live in this kind of world anymore. We live in a culture that is increasingly characterized by individualism, consumerism and countless other nasty "isms," and we increasingly understand ourselves in these terms. We "shop" for churches that meet our needs and preferences, that suit our theological tastes, that reflect our political views or perspectives on controversial social issues, or that reflect our preferred approach to biblical interpretation. Very often, the sovereign self is the centre

around which everything else orbits.

So, given the realities of 21st-century western culture and a church that is, in many ways and many places in the postmodern West, in at least a numerical decline; that people increasingly view religion and church as kind of privatized options for those who are "into" spiritual things; that we always interpret everything, including the Bible, through the lens of our own histories and preferences, our own hopes and fears . . . how will we ever attain anything like the oneness that Jesus prayed for?

Re-examining the nature of unity

First of all, unity is not synonymous with uniformity. Among the dictionary definitions for "unity" are:

- **A CONDITION** of harmony, accord.
- **CONTINUITY WITHOUT** deviation or change (as in purpose or action).
- **TOTALITY OF** related parts: an entity that is a complex or systematic whole.

By contrast, "uniformity" is defined as "the quality or state of being the same, uniform or identical."

When we lament the lack of unity in the church, as we often do, we are, in fact, expressing our frustration that Christian denominations, our own Mennonite denomination or people in our local church, are not uniform. Which is to say, we are frustrated that not everyone thinks or acts like us.

American sociologist Christena Cleveland has recently written a book called *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Things That Keep Us Apart*. After pointing to countless experiments and data, she comes to the not very shocking—or flattering—conclusions that, as human beings:

- **WE TEND** to like being right.

Oneness does not—cannot—require uniformity. Indeed, this is not healthy, or even possible, in a world where all of us only see in part, not in full.

- **WE TEND** to like associating mostly with people who think like we do.

Put these two realities together, combine them with the inevitable anxiety that is produced when important existential, moral and social issues are on the table, and you have a recipe for trouble.

But Cleveland also says that we shouldn't expect uniformity. We shouldn't expect the body of Christ to be a collection of same-thinking, same-acting, same-looking automatons. This would, in fact, be spectacularly boring.

The church has always been characterized by differences of opinion. We see this even in the New Testament, with Peter and Paul having disagreements—sharp ones, even—about the nature of their mission (Galatians 2:11-14). We see it implicitly in the gradual, meandering trail that Jewish Christians traversed toward acceptance of the Gentiles and the stuttering process by which some people relinquished elements of the Jewish law as necessary for salvation.

We have seen this throughout church history. Not a word of theology or doctrine would have ever been written if the life of faith was a one-size-fits-all-for-all-time blueprint laid clearly out in Scripture. At every stage of the church's history it has been necessary to think, wrestle, argue, disagree and seek to persuade others. That's what it means to be in community and to be faithful to the way of Jesus in different social, historical and cultural contexts.

Oneness does not—cannot—require uniformity. Indeed, this is not healthy, or even possible, in a world where all of us only see in part, not in full.

Love and oneness

If we grant that unity, not uniformity, is what Jesus wants and has always wanted for his church, where does our unity lie? What is it that makes us one?

This is one of those cases where the stock “Sunday school answer” is actually the best, deepest and truest answer we could ever hope to give.

The answer is, “Jesus and our participation in the love he shares with the Father.” Jesus himself says this in John 17:23: *“I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*

If we back up just two chapters, we read these words: *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you”* (John 15:12-13).

So oneness is based on love shared between the Father and Son, love that is meant to spill out into and among the lives of Jesus' followers. The question then becomes, “So what does it mean to love one another?”

I regularly lament the fact that I Corinthians 13 is viewed by many as a wedding text about romantic love, because it isn't. At least not primarily. It's a manifesto for life together as the church.

I Corinthians 13:4-8a is among the most well-known passages in all of Scripture: *“Love is patient; love is kind;*

love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

I propose an experiment, then, as we think about love and oneness, and unity and uniformity, in the context of a church that struggles so mightily to agree.

Think of the Christian or group of Christians whose views on controversial issues you find most distasteful, difficult to understand, frustrating, incomprehensibly stupid or even offensive.

As a sister and brother in Christ, my posture towards this person or this group must always be characterized by patience . . . kindness . . . hope . . . endurance.

And when I am speaking about, or interacting with, these sisters or brothers in Christ with whom I disagree, sometimes profoundly, I must never be arrogant . . . rude . . . envious . . . boastful . . . resentful. I must not insist on my own way. I must not rejoice in wrongdoing, but in the truth. I must bear all things . . . even errors! And this posture of love towards them must not change, because love never ends.

No matter how much I might disagree

with them, I am to love them in this way for the simple reason that we are sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ, because each of us in our own ways, with our own errors and blind spots, our sins and struggles, our own triumphs and victories, our own hopes and fears, is clinging to Jesus Christ. If we don't love like this, Paul says, we are nothing more than a noisy, useless gong, because it doesn't matter how right we are or how wise we are if we fail to love like this.

But when we do love one another like this, Jesus promises that the world will begin to see and to know what God truly looks like, what love truly looks like, and to recognize that they, too, are invited into this love.

May God help us to be one. ☿



Adapted from a sermon Ryan Dueck, pastor of Lethbridge (Alta.) Mennonite Church, preached there on June 1, 2014, the seventh Sunday of

Easter. He writes online at www.ryandueck.com.



/// For discussion

1. What is the relationship of the various Christian denominations in your community? Are there formal contacts between congregations? In what settings do the denominations work together?
2. What does it mean to be “one in Christ”? Do you agree with Ryan Dueck that this was easier in the past when Mennonites lived in tight, close-knit communities? Why can it be disconcerting to associate with people who don't think like we do? Do we tend to aim for uniformity, rather than unity, in the church?
3. Do you agree that in our society “the sovereign self is the centre around which everything else orbits”? How does this influence our attitudes and our understanding of I Corinthians 13? Who are the people who have taught you how to love others in the church?
4. Who are the Christians you have the most trouble loving? Is it too much to ask that we love those whose views seem distasteful or offensive? How can we work at deepening the love between brothers and sisters in Christ?

—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.

✉ Church needs to learn to ask the 'right questions'

I WASN'T AT Assembly 2014, so I enjoyed reading the summaries in the July 28 edition (pages 4 to 17) and the sharing of the experience by members from St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church, who attended.

It seems the disciples in the boat tossed by the storm in Mark 4 were asking the wrong question of Jesus and worried about the wrong things.

Likewise, I wonder if in our Being a Faithful Church (BFC) discussions, we have asked the wrong questions. When sincere, faithful Mennonite Christians discern a topic for years, and when trustworthy leaders analyse the results, only to determine we need to "agree to disagree," there can be two reasons:

- **SOME ARE** not discerning God's direction properly, so agreement isn't possible, and further discernment is needed.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Camp is only the beginning

ALLISON GOERZEN

Is it camp that needs its staff or is it the staff that need camp? Time and time again I have heard teens tell their faith story by beginning with, "I grew up in a Christian home, but camp is where it really all started." I have a hunch that the people who choose to work at a summer camp really need the community in order to grow, whether they are aware of that when they apply or not.



I have worked at Mennonite Church Alberta's Camp Valaqua for seven summers now and this past season I was the counsellors-in-training (CIT) director. My group of CITs were made up of 16- and 17-year-olds who were ready and excited to spend a whole summer in cabins with a bunch of kids.

I developed a program for them that

focussed on community building—getting to know God and themselves, and what it means to live in community—in order to become excellent counsellors and leaders. In their faith stories the theme of feeling close to God at camp was always present, and it was their hope that by working at Valaqua they can grow in their faith.

I worked hard this summer at creating a safe place for all my CITs. My group was eager, excited, passionate, fun-loving and ready for just about anything. Discussions usually wound up involving intense topics, but they took to it with enthusiasm, knowing they were all able to voice an opinion. It was incredible to see the way they began to form deep relationships, and care and encourage each other daily. I loved facilitating their learning and guiding them through their summer. It was an absolute joy to see teens starting down the path of

leadership in a ministry that I am so passionate about.

But I don't think their leadership role concludes at the end of August. Camp is only the beginning. Whether they know it or not, the seed has been planted and they will eventually start seeking out other avenues to get involved. "Community" is addictive and it leaves you searching and creating that in other places, like Youth Leadership Team, a group of teens that plan Alberta-wide youth events and for many years has consisted primarily of Valaqua staff.

Helping out with Sunday school/youth group or children's choir, or becoming more involved in church events, are other avenues that staffers begin to engage with. The ways in which a person is changed after working a summer at camp are numerous, and it is crucial for young teens to have that place to grow in order to find their role as a leader in the church.

Allison Goerzen grew up at Bergthal Mennonite Church near Didsbury, Alta., and spent many summers at Camp Valaqua as a camper, volunteer and on staff. She is currently working in Edmonton and attending First Mennonite Church, where she volunteers as a youth sponsor along with her fiancé, Kevin Stoesz.

• **WE'RE ASKING** the wrong questions and God isn't giving us a clear, common answer because we're worrying about the wrong things.

The Mennonite Church Canada Vision Statement reads: "God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and

hope flow through us to the world."

Where in this vision does sexuality come into play? Where did Jesus ever ask people about their sexuality before welcoming them? The core of the Christian faith—the two greatest commandments, the teachings of Jesus and the guidance of God's Spirit—have not led us to an answer to the current BFC questions, so let's

(Continued on page 10)

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Do you know you know God?

PHIL WAGLER

How do you know if you know someone?

To answer that, consider what it's like to shop for a birthday present with little kids. They see a gift not through the eyes of the recipient, but only through their own. On such an excursion, there is likely a conversation something like this: "Johnny, is that something you would like or is that something mom would like?" But Johnny is thinking, "This is what I would like, so of course it's what mom would like."

Is this a sign of natural selfishness? To a degree, but it's also an indication of not yet fully knowing the recipient. Think about it, five-year-olds have only begun to know their parents as anything other than the people who provide what they need.

Children this age are just beginning the discovery of knowing; a new step in maturity occurs when they shop for a gift and seek what the recipient would like, even if they don't like it, and give according to what would bring the recipient joy. In other words, you know you know somebody when you begin to choose to lay down your preferences for theirs. And

this is not a burden, but love, and you discover their happiness makes you happy too.

Now, how do you know you know God?

Many are confused by this question, but the answer is quite simple. In John 17:3 Jesus says, "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

Eternal life, according to Jesus, is getting to know God through Jesus Christ, who was sent to open up the front door to the relationship by his death on the

say, "This is for you. I finally realize this is what brings you joy: a life surrendered to the will of heaven."

The prophet Jeremiah took this beyond theoretical when he confronted the wayward royal sons of King Josiah: "Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 22:13-16).

Knowing is practical, active and earthy.



Eternal life, then, becomes the never-ending adventure of getting to know God in the same way children begin to know their parents.

cross, which paid for our sin and everything that kept us from even approaching the front porch. Hearing his call, we repent, turn around, finally come home and are born again into God's family.

Eternal life, then, becomes the never-ending adventure of getting to know God in the same way children begin to know their parents. And then we know we know God when we begin to lay down our own preferences for his. We offer our life as a gift to our Father in heaven and

This is why the most mature followers of Jesus are the most selfless and most fully produce the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. They have come to know God deeply and they are laying down their preferences for his. And it shows.

Phil Wagler (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca) keeps learning to lay down his own preferences for God's.

(Continued from page 9)

ask new questions. Let's come together to see how we can best live out our calling as Mennonite Christians in Canada and the world, and stop asking God the wrong questions.

I was inspired by the vision and hope in "The changing face of congregations" article on page 8. The Future Directions Task Force, in my opinion, is asking

the right questions. If that's what the next phase of BFC is also intending, then I'm on board!

I trust that God will lead us in the right direction and we will be united in our vision, our calling and our desire to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

BRENT HORST, ST. JACOBS, ONT.

NEW ORDER VOICE

My environmentalism is my spiritual ethic

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

A couple weeks ago I participated in an e-mail conversation with two friends about justifying the choice to have children in the wake of the earth's environmental crisis. I know. A heavy topic with difficult questions. Luckily these friends and I are close enough that we can wrestle with uncomfortable questions and share our opinions openly and honestly with one another.

What was the context? We're all socially conscious, eco-concerned Mennonites who wrestle with the state of the world as it stands; its devastated land and non-human life; and the cold, hard fact that this earth is not what it once was due to human influence. How can we choose to produce more children knowing that the human population is rising despite depleted resources, and that, because our children will be raised in North America, they most likely will use up more than their fair share of those resources?

The choice to have children is so personal. It's hard to imagine someone shaking a finger at a person for choosing to conceive and birth a child into the world. "None of your business," is the visceral response. In our society, it's also becoming increasingly controversial to question

the reproductive rights of women. So it's understandable that a conversation about the right to have children in an over-populated world isn't one typically had during morning coffee breaks.

So why did I want to even engage in this conversation? Because, for me, being eco-concerned, green or an environmentalist, or whatever else you want to call it, is part of my spiritual ethic. I choose to let my decisions be influenced by my concern for the environmental state of the world as a way of engaging with the Spirit.

So the question, "How do you justify having kids?" is not an insulting one, but one that makes me recognize the impact that having children has on the earth. The human population is sitting at a little over



It's hard to imagine someone shaking a finger at a person for choosing to conceive and birth a child into the world.

seven billion people, with more billions projected over the next century. With this fact, and the overconsumption of those living in developed nations, one could argue that not to have children is a more environmentally friendly choice.

Here we come to a larger question, one that I wrestle with often: "How do I balance my personal choices and freedom

with the beliefs I hold?" By recognizing both and that they are not mutually exclusive. I believe I can make the choice to have children, but that I also have a responsibility to raise them to care for the earth and its creatures, both human and non-human.

How does this allow me to engage with the Spirit? My evangelical roots tell me that everything I do—in word, thought and deed—needs to be in line with the Spirit. The Spirit that renews the heart and mind is the same Spirit that gives life to all creatures. It's the same Spirit that compels me to think hard about my choices and then to live gently after I've made them.

Of course, this eco-ethic can become a salvation game, with guilt settling in over the less environmentally friendly decisions I make: driving our car vs. riding the bus, using disposable diapers vs. cloth, or buying conventionally grown produce vs. organic.

In these moments I lean on faith that someone else is carrying the weight of the world, that there is a way to live cre-

actively in order to make a different choice next time, that God's love can be known despite the disasters we humans wreak on the land and ourselves, and that our children will do better than we have done to date.

Katie Doke Sawatzky (katiesawatzky@gmail.com) lives in Vancouver.

✉ **Blind optimism, religion the culprits for climate-change scepticism**

RE: “CLIMATE CHANGE is nothing new” letter, July 28, page 22.

The *Scientific American* uses a new term, “ClimeApocalypse,” to describe the looming crisis that G. H. Janzen treats with more than just a hint of sarcasm. And a few days ago the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that only 41 percent of Americans believe that “most scientists agree that climate change is happening now, caused mainly by human activities.”

Experts rank the reasons for this widespread scepticism as:

1: BLIND OPTIMISM.

2: RELIGION.

3: NARROWNESS IN scientific research.

The two most common grounds for ignoring our biblical prophets some 2,700 years ago were likely the same: blind optimism and religion!

KARL DICK, WATERLOO, ONT.

✉ **Life must come before bottom lines**

RE: “CLIMATE CHANGE is nothing new” letter, July 28, page 22.

“Oops. Never mind,” is hardly the right conclusion to draw from a 1922 news report on ice loss in one small part of the Arctic. Climate science acknowledges that such natural variations occur, but the climate changes which are happening now cannot be dismissed as natural fluctuations which will correct themselves. They are unique in human history, both in the rapidity with which they are occurring and in the truly global extent of change.

The findings of climate science are clear: steadily rising air temperatures; a steady warming of the oceans; a consistent rise in sea level; massive loss of Arctic sea ice over only 35 years; loss of land ice in Greenland, Antarctica and most glaciated mountain ranges; more droughts; more severe storms; more forest fires; less predictable weather patterns; and gradual acidification of the oceans. All of this fits the predictions from established scientific theory, which points to the human-derived emission of greenhouse gases as the dominant and decisive factor.

If Jesus is the truth, then we should value truth. We must face the grim fact that climate change is happening, that it is already killing people and threatens to kill many more, and that the science points unequivocally to our carbon emissions. Like Jesus at Lazarus’ tomb, we must not deny reality, but enter into healthy grief.

If Jesus is the way, then let’s repent of our society’s greed and abuse of God’s creation—the things which have gotten us into this mess in the first place—and embrace his path of simplicity and generosity.

And if Jesus is the life, we can move forward in active hope. God has something better for us if we choose life. We don’t know the shape of that yet. But initiatives all around the world show us that, if we don’t leave things too late, we could build a healthier society by transitioning to clean renewable energy and sustainable, mostly organic agriculture.

Let’s make sure that we are on God’s side by caring for God’s creation, demanding the political changes necessary to avoid cataclysm, and confronting those corporate interests that prioritize bottom lines above life.

MARK BIGLAND-PRITCHARD, SASKATOON

Mark Bigland-Pritchard is a consultant in sustainable energy, green building and architectural physics, and a member of Osler Mennonite Church.

✉ **Readers question placement of Yoder articles**

RE: “MORE EVIDENCE of sexual abuse uncovered” and “Works of John Howard Yoder now available online,” Aug. 18, page 28.

You really thought it was appropriate to put an article promoting Yoder’s theological works on the same page as the article about his predatory works: sexual violations of innocent women? Shame on you!

BARBARA TIESSEN AND HAZEL TIESSEN, LEAMINGTON, ONT.

✉ **Mennonite church sends out mixed messages on John Howard Yoder**

RE: “MORE EVIDENCE of sexual abuse uncovered” and “Works of John Howard Yoder now available online,” Aug. 18, page 28.

I was saddened to read that documentation of even more sexual abuse by John Howard Yoder has been discovered by Mennonite Church U.S.A.’s discernment group. I was then encouraged to read that this same group is “exploring ways to enable healing for those who have suffered sexual abuse,” and that “they have begun drafting a general statement on the nature and prevention of sexual abuse.”

While I am encouraged by these steps forward, I have to ask why this has taken so long? I also would add that we, the broader Mennonite Church, have a very, very long way to go in demonstrating that we

truly understand “the prolonged and devastating impact Yoder’s sexual abuse has had on many women”

I say this since the next article that appeared on the same page reported that Yoder’s works are now available online in a digital library. It also listed a number of groups and institutions, some of them Mennonite, that are responsible for this undertaking, and mentioned the thousands of dollars that have gone into this initiative.

Are you serious? Am I the only person who is angered by the contradictory—or at least confusing—messages given by the Mennonite church as it pertains to “lamenting” the actions of Yoder while, at the same time, continuing to find ways to celebrate all of the valuable contributions he has made.

The last thing survivors of sexual abuse need is confusing messages about the perpetrator or his actions. If the Mennonite church means what it says about “ways to enable healing,” then they need to stop glorifying the academic works of a man who committed so much evil.

SUE LAVERTY, KITCHENER, ONT.

Sue Laverty attends Pioneer Park Christian Fellowship, Kitchener, Ont.

✉ **A letter of support for ‘a letter of unsupport’**

RE: “A LETTER of unsupport for Canada,” July 28, page 25.

Wow! I am shocked and very pleasantly surprised to read the boldness with which a Mennonite pastor, David Driedger, has critiqued the present meaning of Canada. I fear what will happen to *Canadian Mennonite* when the government thought police read his well-written and direct Viewpoint column.

Driedger has hit several nails on the head. He places responsibility for his four points on Canadian governments that pass legislation. But aren’t these governments doing the bidding of the wealthy and powerful resource-extraction corporations, which also operate outside of Canada in many developing countries to perform the same kinds of resource thefts, leaving the residents with a destroyed environment from which they can no longer make a living?

Isn’t present-day Canada the direct descendant of the first resource extractor, the Hudson’s Bay Company, which gave title for land it did not own to the emerging government? Is not Canada a part of the western world’s neo-conservative/liberal project to make a few people rich at the expense of the many, contributing to the present economic inequalities highlighted by the Occupy movement and the

exposing of theft from indigenous people highlighted by the Idle No More movement?

In Canada, people’s lives take a backseat to resource extraction and its transit. Witness the deaths of 47 innocent people in Lac-Mégantic, Que., a year ago because explosive oil had to be delivered by rail through a town at a rock-bottom cost achieved through deregulation by an unholy alliance of the federal government and corporations.

As I write this, Canada’s petro prime minister is visiting Canada’s North, where devastating climate change is visible to all. His response: Melting Arctic ice is an economic opportunity.

Where is the voice of the church, and the voice of the one who loves all of us equally? I give thanks for David Driedger’s voice.

MURRAY LUMLEY, TORONTO

✉ **What about healing and reconciliation?**

RE: “PASTOR’S CREDENTIALS withdrawn,” July 7, page 23.

My question is: What makes people “credible” in the first place? Maybe the notion that we have not sinned, at least openly? But we have all failed, we are all broken. If I need the right credentials to be loved and wanted, then I would say, “Time is up.”

I know that this is not the message that Mennonite Church Manitoba is trying to convey. I recognize the need for accountability and good relationships.

We must be aware of the process of life by which we cannot move forward effectively without addressing the messy issues that arise. It’s these situations that give us opportunity to cultivate and prepare for a new beginning.

It isn’t important for me to know whether Tym Elias’s credentials have been revoked. More importantly is the story told of a journey towards healing and reconciliation.

JOHN GASCHO, WARMAN, SASK.

✉ **Prison visitors make for safer communities**

NOT UNRELATED TO the recent courageous letter by Ken Hinton regarding funding for the M2/W2 Association (“Church should fund prison visitation,” July 28, page 18), I am trying to make the case for more M2/W2 volunteers in British Columbia.

Currently there are some 200 active M2/W2 volunteers visiting inmates in the 12 Correctional Service Canada (CSC) facilities in the Lower Mainland

and Fraser Valley. However, there are 95 additional inmates, men and women, who have applied for, and are awaiting, volunteers to visit them. The goal that the 2006 M2/W2 board set was zero, deeming it very feasible. Let's not give up on the race to this goal.

The challenge and the travesty is that here we have the neighbour right next door, a mission field ripe unto harvest. I am reminded of Matthew 9:37-38: *"He said to his disciples, 'The harvest is so great, but the workers are so few, so pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more [M2W2 volunteers] for his fields.'"*

I am sure you will agree that Jesus was, in his day, the ultimate M2/W2 volunteer for prisoners like you and me. It is tantamount to blasphemy to denigrate inmates; they, too, are made in the image of God.

Where are the Daniels, Josephs and Pauls of today who will enter a CSC institution where they are most welcome by inmates, prison staff and wardens. I have personal letters from all who welcome M2W2 missionaries, who bring a welcome tone and spirit when they visit and conduct Bible studies.

Upon the release of each prisoner, the M2/W2 volunteers continue their friendships and help them find housing and jobs. I might say that these friendships endure for a lifetime. And many of the prisoners come to faith, and what joy that triggers in heaven when even one sinner repents (Luke 15:7).

And let's not forget that all of this makes for safer communities.

GEORGE H. EPP, CHILLIWACK, B.C.

✉ Talk of 'rape culture' forces men to deal with their lust

RE: "END RAPE culture: A Mennonite perspective," Sept. 1, page 36.

It is tempting to say, "Most of us aren't like that!" when faced with stories of men expressing sexual interest in such aggressive and frightening ways.

The painful truth is that these men are verbalizing thoughts that the rest of us struggle to suppress on a daily basis. A male co-worker once asserted to me that men would rape every attractive female they saw if they knew they could get away with it. I still think that's pushing it, but far closer to the mark than I want to admit.

Somewhere in this conversation there needs to be space to be honest about the natural male experience of lust, and the struggle to sublimate it. Men have an intense physical reaction to the sight of female beauty. Advertisers know it and nail us with it time and again.

None of this can normalize the culture of rape or

blame its victims. But when you hear a man singing, "You don't know what you do to me," he is saying something more truthful than one is generally allowed to say in mixed company.

So tell your stories, ladies. It will help us boys process what is going on with the parts of our brains not driven by lust. (We do have some grey matter dedicated to compassion and remorse.) We will try to sensitize ourselves to the impact we have been having on you for so long.

If you could try to reciprocate that a little, even while holding us accountable, I think we could go a long way towards a more peaceable and reconciled togetherness.

MARCUS REMPEL (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ Finding God's word in troubled times

RE: "FROM MILK and honey to a land of rubble," Aug. 18, page 4.

Who likes war? None of us. I do believe we all need to strive for peace with all mankind. And we need to pray for peace in all the troubled areas.

Some other verses to consider are:

- **IN GENESIS 17:20**, God said, *"I will make [Ishmael] a great nation."* And in verse 21 we read, *"But my covenant will I establish with Isaac."* In Genesis 21:12, God spoke to Abraham, *"[I]n Isaac shall thy seed be called."* And in verse 13, God said of Ishmael, *"... will I make a nation."*

- **IN ROMANS 9:7**, God said, *"Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called."* And verse 8, *"That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."*

- **GOD'S WORD** to us is found in Romans 12:18: *"[L]ive peaceably with all men."*

KATHLEEN REMPEL, CARMAN, MAN.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Baker—Harrison Paul (b. Aug. 2, 2014), to Graham and Sarah Baker, Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

Cressman—Broden William (b. March 27, 2014), to Chris and Janna Lynn Cressman, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Cressman—Ezra Emmanuel (b. May 28, 2014), to Jesse and Stephanie Cressman, Nith Valley Mennonite, New

Hamburg, Ont.

Cressman—Simon Bruce (b. May 2, 2014), to Dan and Kathryn Cressman, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Frey—Pascal Malachi (b. May 2, 2014), to Nick and Jocelyn Frey, Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont., in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Gammon—Kai Matthew (b. July 1, 2014), to Braden and Jessica Gammon, Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

Keller—Zachary Randall (b. May 28, 2014), to Mark and Stacey Keller, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Lauzon—Addison Kate (b. June 14, 2014), to Nicole Fischer and Troy Lauzon, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., in Calgary.

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

Lichty—Cody James (b. Feb. 17, 2014), to Trevor and Jennifer Lichty, First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Lichty—Keelan Rhys (b. July 16, 2014), to Blaine and Tara Lichty, First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Martin-Carman—Justin, 14, and Caleb, 11 (adopted Aug. 18, 2014), by Sherri and James Martin-Carman, Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont.

Neufeld—Drew Jason (b. July 27, 2014), to Jason and Brianna Neufeld, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Neufeldt—Twins Olivia Reed and Brooklyn May (b. July 9, 2014), to David and Kat Neufeldt, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

Baptisms

Brent Bauman, Katherine Bauman—Elmira Mennonite, Ont., Aug. 10, 2014.

Justin Friesen—Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., Aug. 10, 2014.

Marriages

Greville/Seyler—Joshua Greville and Rachel Seyler

(Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.), at Steinmann Mennonite, Aug. 16, 2014.

Hoehn/Trach—Emily Hoehn (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.) and Brett Trach, in Melfort, Sask., Aug. 9, 2014.

Kelly/Seyler—Scott Kelly and Candis Seyler (Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.), at Shakespeare Gardens, Stratford, Ont., Aug. 2, 2014.

Klaassen/Winiarz—Aaron Klaassen and Kate Winiarz, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., in Winnipeg, July 5, 2014.

Lobach/Waddell—Alexandra Lobach (Toronto United Mennonite) and David Waddell, in Toronto, Aug. 2, 2014.

Deaths

Cressman—Willard, 89 (b. April 30, 1925; d. Aug. 13, 2014), Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Driedger—Henry, 95 (b. Oct. 16, 1918; d. Aug. 18, 2014), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Gingrich—Doris, 83 (b. May 4, 1931; d. Aug. 10, 2014), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Horst—Mary Ann, 83 (b. July 12, 1931; d. July 30, 2014), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Martens—Henry, 82 (b. Sept. 15, 1931; d. Aug. 3, 2014), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Martin—Louisa, 98 (b. March 16, 1916; d. Aug. 12, 2014), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

McDowell—Arlotta, 89 (b. Feb. 24, 1925; d. July 21, 2014), Wideman Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Metzger—Moses, 80 (b. Dec. 4, 1933; d. Aug. 15, 2014), Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

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

Pontius' Puddle



VIEWPOINT

The 'preferred model' not the reality for all

RUDY PETERS

I have appreciated the call of Mennonite Church Canada for a dialogue on the subject of sexuality and the comments and views expressed on the subject in the pages of *Canadian Mennonite*. The subject has great significance for us and I am still trying to discern the best way forward for myself and that of my community on the related issues.

For me, a profoundly significant passage in Scripture is the story in Genesis of the "tree of knowledge." It suggests that God did not create us as sentient beings. God gave us a choice. The choice our ancestors made, to eat the fruit and thereby become sentient, had dramatic and far-reaching consequences. We became aware of ourselves, and we became like God, able to know, create and choose different ways forward, which has brought us to our present being or condition.

On the positive side, the choice meant that we human beings could enter into a meaningful relationship with God. I expect God knew what our choice would be, but his foreknowledge does not negate the necessity of our having the freedom to choose our destiny whether or not to have a meaningful relationship with God.

On the negative side, the choice has meant that we evolved into beings who are competitive, aggressive, lustful and prone to violence, among many other negative human characteristics. Of significance is Mark 7:20-23, which has Jesus saying, "*What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.*"

Because of wrong choices, humans have evolved into flawed beings, prone to a host of misbehaviours that are more destructive than constructive. We are all sinners and no one is a better sinner than anyone else! So people are not rejected because of who they are or what they did, but only for professing values or engaging in behaviours in opposition to those espoused by the group or church. The key to acceptance and inclusion in the group should be an undertaking to seek to abide by, and conform to, its espoused values and practices, not necessarily strict adherence to them or to perfection.

We are born with, or acquire in later life, many kinds of inclinations or orientations. One may be inclined or oriented towards generosity, addiction, sports, intellectual pursuits, music, jealousy or greed, for example. We also have all kinds of sexual inclinations or orientations, including pedophilia, homophobia and heterosexuality, and their opposites. I don't think it is helpful to say one should not have a particular orientation. It simply is, and it is best to acknowledge the feeling or inclination.

But this does not mean that every inclination or orientation can, or should, be indulged. Some individuals may be fortunate to have this ability or inclination, others may be unfortunate to have that ability or inclination. The life we now have is not fair. What matters is how we deal with what we encounter in the light of what we believe to be right behaviour.

How we have come to be what we are is really not all that relevant. Our concern must be for the way forward, and, while our options are unlimited, I believe we can and should look to Scripture to point the way. Without question, Jesus is that way. And while he was accepting of everyone,

knowing their afflictions and how they came to be, he was not accepting of every kind of behaviour or lifestyle. On the basis of what I have read and experienced, I am persuaded that God's preferred model for us is the monogamous mating of a man and a woman, for life. That isn't to say that other relationships cannot coexist, but that was the original plan.

I believe the answer Jesus gave the Pharisees when they questioned him about divorce in Matthew 19:8 is instructive for us: "*He said to them, 'It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.'*"

Divorce represents a failure of the preferred practice of a mating of a male and a female for life. Divorce is accepted, but not something to glory in. And so it is with many human practices that fall short of what we believe was intended and what we see as appropriate in the better world we are called to build.

Because of our hard-heartedness, "family" today has many shapes—single-parent, multiple-parent, legal, common-law, same-sex, broken and blended—and people engage in all manner of sexual practices. Accepting this reality, and giving support to individuals within these relationships or who are caught up in wrong behaviours, is not the same as proclaiming these relationships and practices to be good, or that they are all equal. We can serve notice that we aspire to a higher ideal without condemning anyone or being judgmental.

I believe a model for addressing inappropriate sexual practices may be found in how we deal with military matters. Mennonites attempt to practise peace. Yet some of our members have joined militias or national armies for various reasons, and killed others in the line of duty. When they returned to their church in humble fashion, they were often accepted back into the fold. When they gloried in the practice of militarism, they seem not to have found a welcome, and likely joined another church more in tune with their values and practices.

And that's okay. As Mennonites, we do not honour our soldiers, distancing ourselves instead from anything military. We

see war as a failure, not something to take pride in. But there are many Christian denominations who see things differently.

Having come to our belief in a better way to a better outcome, we need to give witness to that belief, knowing full well that we will be vilified and rejected by

those not of our persuasion. But are we not called to be different and to follow a different way? ॥

Rudy Peters is a seeker, philosopher, debater and retired teacher who grew up in the West End of Winnipeg. He is a

long-time member of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, which he has served in many capacities, including singing in the choir.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

A 'moving' Mennonite story

CINDY WALLACE

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

You could say that moving made me a Mennonite.

First, the obvious: When my husband Josh and I relocated to Chicago to begin graduate school in 2006, we happened to move into an apartment a block away from Living Water Community Church. Little did we know that, when we ventured a visit, Living Water was part of Mennonite Church U.S.A., a plant of Reba Place Fellowship just a few kilometres north in Evanston.

To be honest, little did we know who Mennonites even were.

Home is in the hands that lift and carry boxes and babies, literally bearing our burdens.

But second, and less obvious, it was someone else's move that awakened my attraction to an Anabaptist way of being in the world. After a few weeks at Living Water, we recognized some church members' voices in the alley behind our building one morning. A peek from the fire escape showed lines of sweaty Christians passing boxes and mattresses up four flights to another apartment in our building. They welcomed my offer of lemonade in a way that made me feel part of something very solidly good.

I was soon to find out that these back-alley scenes were not uncommon at Living Water. City life meant frequent apartment changes, and it wasn't unusual to find a gathering of church members cheerfully sacrificing their Saturday morning to schlep Ikea furniture from one third-floor walk-up to another with astonishing efficiency. They called them urban barn-raisings.

I should say we called them urban barn-raisings because I found myself wooed by the faith and practice at Living Water. There is a theology to such serv-

ice: a deep Anabaptist commitment to mutual aid, a humility in asking others to help you, a practical and communal sense that love implies action. It's a skin-on sort of spirituality, and it revived my faith at a time when I was yearning for revival.

I write these reflections just days after the people of Warman (Sask.) Mennonite Church carried all my earthly possessions out of one place and into another—for the second time in a little over a year. And let me just say that after all that time at grad school in Chicago, Josh and I have

a lot of books, and books are heavy.

But as more than a dozen people from four different generations lugged our boxes, I heard laughter. As they manoeuvred baby Miriam's crib and filled their trucks with our dishes, I felt the weight of another move lifting off my shoulders. And the next morning, no one would admit to sore muscles; they just flirted with Miri and filtered past to sing hymns.

Warman Mennonite is not full of nearly professional movers the way Living Water was. We're in a community where people tend to settle in for longer, where many have lived in the same house for decades. And since Josh is their pastor, you could say that all the help we received was the special kind reserved for ministers. But I believe Warman Mennonite would help anyone who asked. Indeed, asking is often the hardest part. It's the sort of people they—we—are, and while most would shrug it off, the service that comes so naturally is not just a habit. It is a gift of the Spirit.

Josh and I are far from the families we grew up in as we make a home on the Prairies, but as I unpack our books, cups and clothes, I realize again that home is not so much the roof we're sleeping under. Home is in the hands that lift and carry boxes and babies, literally bearing our burdens. It's in the hello on the sidewalk, the berry crisp slipped into our kitchen, the cucumbers left by our car.

Moving made me a Mennonite. But this week I'm realizing that, more recently, Mennonites made me a home.

Cynthia R. Wallace is assistant professor of English at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Ways we warm each other's hearts

BY LIZ KOOP

On July 4, following the Mennonite Women Canada annual business meeting in Winnipeg, more than 80 women gathered for a program of choral music and inspirational talks by three Manitoba women, Sandy Hung, Anne Heinrichs and Lora Braun, who focussed on the Mennonite Church Canada assembly theme, "Wild hope: Faith for an unknown season." The program was a highlight for many and featured an original song, "Wild Hope," by Lora Braun, the lyrics of which are posted at: <http://bit.ly/1swMBvD>.

As MW Canada moves into that "unknown season," our hope is to continue encouraging women to nurture their life in Christ, share their gifts, and to hear and support each other across the street and around the world.

One way of doing this is through the Spiritual Growth Assistance Fund, which assists applicants financially with academic or applied study costs at the master's level in church-related ministries such as seminary, theology, and peace and conflict resolution. This fund, formerly known as the Travel Assistance Fund, was begun in 1983, "to assist women from smaller outlying congregations to attend spiritual development events," and is now designated for women preparing for ministry. (*For further reading of an interesting history, see Esther Patkau's book Canadian Women in Mission, 1895-1952-2002.*)

Since 2002, 22 women from across Canada have received financial assistance from this fund. A recent e-mail survey discovered that 15 are currently working in pastoral ministry, serving as lead, assistant, youth, interim or community pastors—12 in Canada and three in the U.S.—and one is a spiritual care director at a rehab and long-term-care facility.

It was encouraging to read many expressions of gratitude for financial aid received, as well as the joy and commitment the women experience in their ministry:

• **LOIS SIEMENS** (2004-05 recipient), pastor at Superb (Sask.) Mennonite, wrote: "One gift of this fund was it helped alleviate stress of finances. When one is trying to study, it is hard to also be worrying about how to put food on the table. Another gift was receiving notes from a few women encouraging me in my studies. It warmed my heart to know that women across Canada thought about me once in a while."

• **LEAH BUECKERT** (2004-05 recipient), spiritual care director at Deer Lodge Centre, Winnipeg, commented: "One highlight for me is having the opportunity to talk



with people from many different denominations and faith groups other than Christian, as well as [with] people who would describe themselves as spiritual but not religious."

• **KARA CARTER** (2008-10 recipient), pastor at Wellesley (Ont.) Mennonite, noted: "Exposed to rich diversity, I experienced formative reflection, which pushed me to go deep within and encounter anew how the Anabaptist faith perspective resonates deeply within my spirit."

• **LYDIA CRUTTWELL** (2011 recipient), pastor at First United Mennonite, Vancouver, wrote: "Receiving the fund was not only beneficial financially, but emotionally and spiritually as well. It was one more confirmation that I was supposed to be pursuing this degree, and that the Mennonite denomination was a place that affirmed and supported women in ministry."

• **DEBORAH-RUTH FERBER** (2012 recipient), who is slated to begin youth work at a Chinese church in Barrie, Ont. this month, exclaimed: "Thank you, MW Canada, for your support and for making funding available to women. It is a great testimony for general equality, working towards justice and equipping all people for the work and ministry of Christ."



Lora Braun, a music therapist and member of Morden (Man.) Mennonite Church, standing with guitar, sings her 'Wild Hope' song at the Mennonite Women Canada annual general meeting in Winnipeg on July 4, as part of MC Canada's Assembly 2014.



Liz Koop is president of Mennonite Women Canada and an active member of Vineland United Mennonite Church, Ont.

May God grant each of us a measure of the gratitude, excitement, support and affirmation of calling expressed by these women, as we, too, continue to "warm each other's hearts" and walk the path of faithfulness with a "wild hope in an unknown season," as so many women have walked ahead of us. ☸

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Changes coming to MC Manitoba

Henry Kliewer reflects on his time as director of Leadership Ministries

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

Much time and energy at the Mennonite Church Manitoba office was directed this summer to helping host the MC Canada general assembly and Native Assembly 2014. With these two significant events now history, MC Manitoba is looking at critical changes in its own structure, programming and staffing.

Henry Kliewer, director of Leadership Ministries, will be retiring Sept. 30, after serving in this capacity for six years.

"The quality of pastors we have leaves me with a sense of optimism," he says. "Their training, the experiences and reflections they bring to the positions and the quality of the people are an indication to me of God's spirit being present and leading."

"I have found congregations and pastors to be welcoming," reflects Kliewer of his extensive work with search and evaluation committees, and responding to requests for help from congregations. "There has been a graciousness and willingness to engage with the leadership office here," he adds. "It has been rewarding interacting with welcoming and warm congregations, and there has been a lot of learning with the issues that have arisen, including ministerial misconduct and sexuality issues."

Kliewer completed a doctoral ministries program over four years of his tenure with MC Manitoba.

"The studies have served to provide a focussed and disciplined way to process and keep perspective," he says. "I would encourage all pastors to continue formal studies."

Kliewer has accepted a two-year pastoral leadership assignment with the Niedergoersdorf Church in Germany.

Of the vacancy, Ken Warkentin,

executive director of MC Manitoba, says, "Our plans are to fill the director of Leadership Ministries with a term position primarily because the entire system is in flux. In the Future Directions Task Force we are in conversation about some significant national changes and so we want to be able to respond to potential changes in ways that make sense for us. Having said that, I am absolutely convinced that this is a position that will always be available from the Mennonite church in whatever shape it takes in the future."

Norm Voth, director of Evangelism and Service Ministries, is on a three-month sabbatical from the position he has held since August 2001. He will return on Oct. 1.

"He has served here for 13 years without any sabbatical and we all felt it was a good time for him to recover, recuperate, rest and rejuvenate," says Warkentin.

Rianna Isaak is the new associate program director for Camping Ministries, replacing Kate McIntyre. Isaak most recently worked as dean in the Rosthern Junior College girls' residence in Saskatchewan.

"It is a term position again, pending potential changes in our programming and the way we deliver MC Manitoba ministry," says Warkentin.

A request for proposals for the camping program has gone up on the MC Manitoba website. At the February annual delegate

gathering, a decision was made to begin the process of transferring ownership of camps Moose Lake and Koinonia. This is the first step in that process. Dec. 1 is the deadline for proposals.

Warkentin reports that this year's summer camp program went very well. "We have had some unique challenges this year, but there was a lot of development and growth of faith," he says.

Camp Koinonia had to be closed for a week-and-a-half due to an outbreak of illness, and flooding at Camp Assiniboia aggravated the mosquito problem and caused the ropes course to be closed for the entire summer.

"But we did have a very good summer," Warkentin concludes. ☿

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Naomi Woods as Golde and Bruce de la Cruz as Tevye sing "After 25 Years, Do You Love Me?" during the Ontario Mennonite Music Camp's closing program on Aug. 22. Held yearly at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., this year's campers performed on piano, strings, voice, wind instruments and guitar, under the direction of Linnea Thacker and Liz Rogalsky Lepock. Excerpts from *Fiddler on the Roof* formed the second half of the closing program.



Rianna Isaak

Anabaptist starter kits aid new congregations

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

Waterloo North Mennonite Church celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2013. As part of the celebrations, the congregation asked Mennonite Church Eastern Canada if there was a project with which it could challenge itself to support. A dream of MC Eastern Canada staff had been to support new congregations that were seeking a better understanding of what it meant to be Anabaptist and Mennonite, but might not be able to afford the resources to do so.

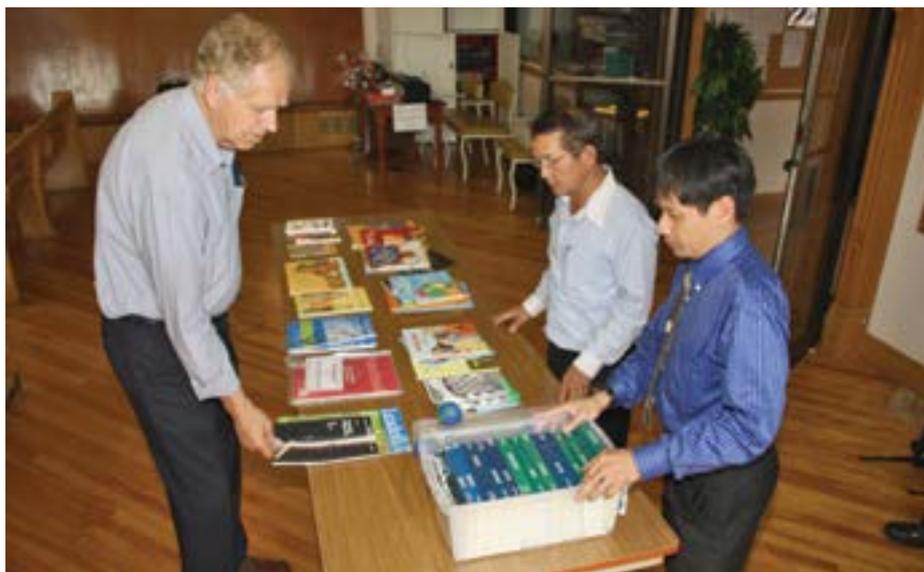
Born of this happy confluence was the Anabaptist Christian Resource Starter Kit. A \$9,000 donation from Waterloo North funded nine kits containing MennoMedia's multi-age Sunday school curriculum, some key books from the Believers' Church Bible Commentary Series to support preachers and teachers, and "establishing the beginnings of a children's peace library" with books for children. Listowel Mennonite Church gave an additional \$5,000 on its

50th anniversary, also in 2013.

A further dream of Brian Bauman, the area church's missions minister, and Jeff Steckley, congregational ministries minister, is to send resource people to the congregations to help them learn how to use the material.

The multi-age curriculum was chosen, as many of the new congregations are small with many ages in one class. Along with the material comes a suggestion to have the sermon and worship service, as well as the adult study, based on the same Bible passage and material as the children. Perhaps if new congregations have children assimilating into Canadian culture they are not that different from traditional Mennonite congregations in their needs.

The ninth kit is going to Freedom Gospel Ethiopian Church in Toronto. It also contains information on how to subscribe to *Canadian Mennonite*, as well as



Palmer Becker, left; Sririsack Saythavy, pastor of Grace New Life Mennonite Church (Laotian) in Hamilton; and Kuaying Teng, pastor of Lao Christian Fellowship Mennonite Church in St. Catharines, examine the contents of an Anabaptist Christian Resource Starter Kit. Becker's congregation, Waterloo North Mennonite, contributed \$9,000 to donate nine kits to 'new' Mennonite congregations. Saythavy's congregation received a kit last fall.

a one-year subscription to *Leader* magazine, jointly supported by MC U.S.A. and MC Canada. ❧

/// Briefly noted

MC U.S.A. will not recognize pastors in same-sex unions

SCHILLER PARK, ILL.—Following three days of meetings this past summer, the Executive Board of Mennonite Church U.S.A. approved a report from a church task force appointed in March to look into the decision by Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) earlier this year to license Theda Good, a pastor at First Mennonite Church in Denver who is in a committed same-gender relationship. The task force emphasized that, should MC U.S.A. want to change its current covenant or documents, that change must be led by the delegate assembly and is not one that the Executive Board or an area conference can make on its own. Regarding MSMC, the Executive Board statement acknowledged that, in granting credentials to a pastor in a same-gender relationship, the area conference failed to honour the relational covenants it made to the broader church when it became an MC U.S.A. area conference in 2005; the board invited MSMC to renew the commitments it made to affirm those foundational church documents. The board also asked MSMC not to consider a request to ordain Good unless the MC U.S.A. delegate assembly changes the stated polity on same-gender relationships. As well, the Executive Board requested that no area conference license or ordain a person in a same-gender relationship, and noted that such credentials—including Good's—would not be recorded in the national ministerial database unless the delegate assembly takes action to change the current polity. —Mennonite Church U.S.A.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

'People can do this'

Breslau Mennonite Church family produces only one bag of garbage in 12 months

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
BRESLAU, ONT.

Friends would apologize for throwing things out when they visited. People posted nasty notes on the CBC and CTV websites in response to “the challenge.”

But Matthew and Stacey Vandermeer of Breslau Mennonite Church on the eastern edge of Kitchener were not doing this to shame anyone or to seem holier-than-thou. Instead, they were trying to reach the goal they had set from themselves and their two children to produce only one 77-litre bag of garbage from July 1, 2013, to June 30 of this year.

“Didn’t it smell?” asked friends.

“There were no organics in the bag,” Stacey would reply. Organics went into the weekly green bin, “kraft” paper bags for yard waste or the backyard composter.

What went into the garbage bag was packaging, plastic foam, tooth brushes and toothpaste tubes, vinyl, plastic, firm vegetable bags, broken toys, “holey” socks and dental floss. They had saved a large bag of plastic film that Waterloo Region did not recycle and that would have either been garbage or sent to another municipality for recycling had the Region not changed the rules in early 2014.

“Reduce, reuse and recycle,” says Matthew, adding, “The order is important.”

Hamburger was bought from a butcher, who wrapped it in butcher paper—that went into the green bin—instead of the grocery store, where the plastic wrap, blood sponge and plastic foam are all not recyclable. If they ate out and the material

came home in the car, it had to be dealt with at home, but they didn’t bring home materials from other people’s homes, restaurants or events. Yogurt was bought in one-litre containers since the pull-off tops on single-serving sizes are not recyclable. Stacey learned how to make granola bars for Matthew’s lunch.

Their children, now 9 and 7, were in favour of the challenge. In stores they would ask about whether the packaging was recyclable or suitable for the green bin. Their grandfather had been gathering aluminium pop cans to sell as scrap to fund a church club for boys for years, so it was not uncommon to have pop cans get picked up on the way back from school or church. The children’s school was already focussing on “boomerang lunches,” meaning everything brought to school had to go home again. Teachers at school had them tell their fellow students about the challenge.

“As Christians, we are stewards of the earth,” says Stacey. “‘Subdue’ comes from a different time. We’re called on to take care of God’s creation.” This was her theology long before the family challenge took shape.

Matthew agrees. “We need to take care of what we have,” he says. “As humans, God has given us a brain to think. We can make a plastic fork: mine the oil, process it into plastic, form a fork and get it to the restaurant. Can’t we take a metal one and rinse it off?”

Ideally he’d like to see manufacturers take care of their products from start to disposal. He notes that Sweden has to import garbage. Its diversion has been so successful that the country needs more garbage than its citizens produce to run its incineration power plants.

“It can be done,” Matthew says of their successful challenge. “We wanted this to be something normal people could do.”

It takes time to sort, to plan meals, to not buy as much that goes straight into the garbage, but it can be done. The Vandermeers proved that. On the first week in July the family put out one 77-litre bag of garbage, their first in a year. And the bag weighed only 14.5 kilograms, well under the 23 kilograms allowed by Waterloo Region. ❧

Stacey and Matthew Vandermeer stand in their backyard with a 77-litre garbage bag like the one they filled from July 1, 2013, to June 30 of this year.



Homes from dirt are typhoon-safe

By DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Safe, sustainable, low-cost homes for Typhoon Haiyan survivors in the Philippines are rising from the soil. Literally. And Mennonite Church Canada worker Darnell Barkman is helping to lead the way.

The Balay Kublihan—“safe house”—project erects homes from earth-filled bags. Similar to the sandbags commonly found in flood-risk areas of Canada, earthbags are filled with local soils, creating relatively inexpensive building materials with minimal or non-existent shipping costs. Empty rice bags are often recycled for this purpose.

Once packed with damp soil, the bags are stacked with barbed wire between the layers and act like Velcro® to hold them in place. When the soil dries, the bags harden into solid bricks which may be plastered over. No special tools or skills are required for construction, and the resulting



In May, Darnell Barkman, back row right, taught others how to construct a safe, sustainable, low-cost earthbag home.

buildings are resistant to severe weather and natural calamities.

Balay Kublihan was the initiative of Peace Church Philippines, the church plant of Barkman and his wife Christina Bartel Barkman; the Stargrass Coalition, an Asia-wide house church movement;

and the Asian School of Development and Cross-cultural Studies. Together, they are responding to the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan as Operation Hope.

In May, a farmer in the rural area of Babatngon on the island of Leyte allowed Operation Hope to use his land for the construction of a test project. With years of construction experience in Canada and consultations with Owen Geiger, an Earthbag Technology pioneer, Barkman was able to teach locals how to do the construction.

The earthbag model could form a permanent housing solution for the Philippines because of the low cost, Barkman says. “Our model house was around \$2,000 to build and has more stability in earthquake situations than the average concrete house, which costs closer to \$5,000.”

Traditional homes are constructed to flex with the wind, but the connecting points are often not strong enough to resist breaking under severe conditions. Roofs fly off and buildings collapse. Earthbag homes are sturdy enough to resist high winds and earthquakes. Excess water flows through them without washing away. And they can be more easily reconstructed, or even added to, should something unexpected happen.

Now that the first home is nearing completion, plans are underway for more. The new building model is providing partnership opportunities with many other relief organizations, Barkman says, adding, “Once everything is ironed out, I think we can complete a full 42-square-metre building in one to two weeks with 10 people working eight-hour days.”

Earthbag building is slowly growing globally. The Barkmans say they envision such construction flourishing once a critical mass of people get on board. “We’re in the early adopter phase so things are moving slowly,” Barkman says. “But I hope and pray that during the next few years of typhoons we can avoid the use of tents and other expensive and temporary shelters, and instead build quick and stable earthbag houses, which can be added to and turned into safe permanent housing.”



Darnell Barkman's selfie shows that by mid-June the earthbag home in Babatngon on the island of Leyte has a completely different appearance.

A Mennonite light in isolated Albania

BY WALLY KROEKER

Klementina Shahini admits she didn't know what she was getting into when she raised her hand at an evangelistic meeting.

"My husband raised his," she says, "and like a good Muslim wife I did the same."

From that reflex gesture some two dozen years ago, she and husband Dini became the first Mennonites in Albania and went on to form the first Mennonite congregation in the notoriously isolated nation.

Today she has become an educational entrepreneur, founder and principal of the Lezha Academic Center in Lezha, Albania, which used to be the most isolated country in the world, known as a hard-core Soviet satellite. "For 50 years everything was controlled, even who one could marry," she says. "People could be jailed just for saying a wrong word. Some were killed for nothing. Our dictator learned from Stalin, but was worse."

Her own family was persecuted. "My sister was put in jail for 10 years and I spent many years in labour camps," she says.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, communist control in Albania eased and doors opened to Christian visitors. One group included Mennonites from Harrisonburg, Va. Although the Shahinis were Muslim, they decided to attend one of the group's events, which, she says, was when "we became Christians."

Then in her early 30s, she got a job in a library and studied English. More Mennonites showed up and she helped them hand out Bibles. When a local group was created, the couple were asked, "Can you keep this group together?"

Before long, they became the first baptized Mennonites in Albania and a Mennonite church was formed. "Our lives changed completely," she says. "We were getting blessing after blessing, every day."

Another abrupt change followed during



Klementina Shahini

the civil uprising in 1997. As Christians from the north who were now planting a church in the south, the Shahini family suddenly found itself in danger.

The parents and children fled to Greece, then moved to the U.S., settling on the eastern seaboard where they connected with local Mennonites. She got a job in a private Christian school and

enrolled at Regent University in Virginia Beach, where she obtained a master's degree in educational leadership. Her thesis on how to start a Christian school would serve her well when a mentor urged her to go back home and start a Christian/Mennonite school. Her husband and children supported the idea.

So in 2011 she gave up her English department chair position at Portsmouth Public School and Dini left his job at the Christian Broadcasting Network. "We moved back to Albania, and I became principal of a school that was not yet established," she says. "They were crazy days. We had nothing, just the vision and the people who supported us."

One day an e-mail arrived from a Christian school in Florida. "We have some books," it said. Then a Mennonite school in

Germany offered furniture. Don Steiner, a professor at Eastern Mennonite University and chair of the Lezha board, had more good news: "I think we have found some teachers, just graduated."

"The pieces fell together," she says. "By the end of June 2011 we had four teachers, books and furniture. But we had no licence to operate. People were coming from the U.S. for the inauguration and we did not have a licence."

Two days before the opening ceremony the government education department called to say the licence had been granted.

"I screamed," she says. "By the first day of regular school we had 31 students. . . . We started by teaching them English."

None of the students were Christians, but they sensed an opportunity for a better education. They started with Bible clubs, which most of the students attended despite being Muslim.

"Classes are overcrowded in Albania," she explains. "They lack materials. The quality of teaching is poor. . . . We build relationships. We build trust. In Albania, people don't trust easily."

The school now has 85 students in grades 7 to 12. Besides the perpetual need for finances, a big need is teachers. Last year, 15 students were turned away because of a teacher shortage.

Winnipeg businessman Arthur DeFehr, who, with his wife Leona, founded Lithuania Christian College—now called LCC International University—in the 1990s, heard about the Lezha school and came to visit. That encounter sparked connections not only with the college, but also with Canadian Mennonite University

A recent album cover of a recording by the Lezha Academic Center Chamber Singers.



(CMU) in Winnipeg. Seven Lezha students have been accepted at CMU this fall.

Lezha Mennonite Church, the only Mennonite congregation in the country, now numbers about 50 people. It meets in a converted bar.

Both the school and church have their work cut out for them. The continuing struggle with Islam and communism is not to be taken lightly.

She says the Mennonite emphasis on peace and justice is sorely needed in her

country: “People came out of communism with so much anger. We don’t have churches and counselling services to deal with this. We have no tradition of that kind of resource.”

But she is determined to make a difference. “We are there to change the culture and to change people’s lives,” she says. ✎

Wally Kroeker interviewed Klementina Shahini during her recent visit to Winnipeg.



Daniel Awshek, left, and Mark Tiessen-Dyck hope their respective congregations—Philadelphia (Brotherly Love) Eritrean Church and Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church—will continue to work together on refugee sponsorship projects.

Shared history leads to shared ministry

Churches with refugee backgrounds team up to help current Eritrean refugees

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

While two Winnipeg congregations share a place of worship and a history of being refugees, they have had little to do with each other over the past six years. Philadelphia (Brotherly Love) Eritrean Church of Winnipeg and Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church hold their worship services in the same building, but until recently were quite separate from each other.

The Eritrean church is largely made up of refugees who came to Canada over the last decade. Congregants have a deep passion and concern for the plight of their fellow Eritreans, who suffer growing political and religious persecution and imprisonment at the hands of the government.

Daniel Awshek, a former member of University Christian Fellowship in Eritrea, who fled the country in 2002, says Eritrean refugees make up 80 percent of African refugees, “and yet we are only a population of six million people.”

In 2007, he and his pregnant wife came to Canada. Since then, they have been active members of the quickly growing Eritrean church, and he volunteers much

of his time working with the Eritrean Canadian Human Rights Group. Awshek says the church has sponsored hundreds of individuals, many through private sponsorships, in the past few years.

Sargent Avenue had its beginning in 1949 as a ministry to German-speaking immigrants who were refugees coming to Canada after the Second World War, says Mark Tiessen-Dyck, associate pastor. “That history continues to inform us.”

The congregation decided years ago to shift to an all-English worship service, but still continues to sing one German hymn every Sunday to remind congregants of their refugee roots.

Perhaps it was this recognition of themselves as a refugee people that spurred them to readily accept an invitation last year to work with the Eritrean congregation in sponsoring a refugee family.

“For us, it was a wonderful opportunity to work together and build a relationship with the congregation with whom we share our church building,” says Tiessen-Dyck. “But we wanted the partnership to be different than us just giving them the money and them doing the work.”

For a year, the two congregations made preparations and then they waited together. For its Mission Sunday last fall, Sargent Avenue invited one of the Eritrean refugees to share his story with the congregation.

“That really connected with us, inspired us and brought us closer together,” says Tiessen-Dyck. “I think for those of us more involved in the hands-on work of the sponsorship, it has been good to work with people from the Eritrean church and to experience a little about how they do things and learn about the situation in Eritrea. Personally I feel I and my family have made new friends.”

In June, an Eritrean refugee family consisting of two parents and seven children arrived from a refugee camp in Sudan.

“We are very grateful the Sargent [Mennonite Church] agreed to collaborate with us on this sponsorship,” says Awshek. “We would like the relationship to continue and we are hopeful that it will continue.”

Tiessen-Dyck expresses the same hope. “I’m hoping this will be a stepping stone,” he says. “I think there is much for us to learn from their church. There are quite a few differences between our churches, but this is a wonderful opportunity for us to grow in our understanding of the gospel. Just as our history is one of adjusting to a new language and culture, they will face similar challenges in the years ahead as a people and as a church.” ✎

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROB WIEBE



With the help of youth and leaders from Sardis Community Church, Church of the Way conducted Vacation Bible School from July 7 to 11 for children from the Granisle and nearby Lake Babine communities.

Small town + small church = big influence

Granisle congregation witnesses year-round

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Church of the Way in Granisle, British Columbia, may be small, but as the only church in town its witness in the community is large.

Located on Babine Lake in B.C.'s northern interior, the village of Granisle has a population of about 300. Most of the local residents are seniors, with only a handful of young people. Of those residents, about 10 percent come to weekly services at Church of the Way, which has the distinction of being the northernmost Mennonite Church Canada congregation in the country.

According to Pastor Rob Wiebe, this small congregation is front and centre in the community. Even locals who don't attend, or attend only occasionally, refer to Church of the Way as

"our church."

In July, Church of the Way ran a successful "Jesus Camp" Vacation Bible School (VBS) program that included up to 30 children and youth. A Mennonite Brethren youth group from Sardis Community Church in the Lower Mainland came up for the sixth consecutive summer to help run it. Wiebe's wife Tammy prepared and adapted a curriculum from various online resources on the Book of Esther. Many of the VBS children came from the nearby Lake Babine Nation community.

One of those who attended classes was a young woman from the first nation with a six-month-old baby. Wiebe gave pre-marital counselling to her and her fiancé, and officiated at their wedding at Church of the Way this summer. He noted that there were only four Caucasian people at the wedding; the



Rob Wiebe

rest were indigenous.

For Wiebe, who grew up in Burns Lake, ministering among indigenous people feels natural. "I've grown up with [them]," he says. "It's not a strange thing for me. These are people fearfully and wonderfully made by God. Building personal one-on-one connections with the first nations people is so rewarding."

The Wiebes live just outside of Burns Lake, where Rob is employed in a sawmill, and make the 88-kilometre drive to Granisle every Saturday. They lead youth group sessions in the evening, then stay overnight in the church building before conducting the Sunday morning service.

When he spoke to *Canadian Mennonite*, Wiebe was looking forward to baptizing his teenage son at Babine Lake in early September. It would be the first baptism of a young person since 2010, when several seniors were baptized.

Church of the Way is active in the community all year round. Wiebe is often asked to take part in November Remembrance Day ceremonies in the community and at the local school. He sees this as an opportunity to witness to an Anabaptist peace presence while recognizing those who have served in war.

The town nativity scene is yet a further example of community involvement. Wiebe was asked to have a prayer at the dedication of the town park just across the street from the church in 2012. He noted that the bandstand would be an ideal location for a nativity scene. Later that year, a couple in Prince George offered a nativity scene to the church because they had no room for it.

"God does work in mysterious ways," notes Wiebe. "We now have a nativity scene and are able to publicly share it with the community in a very prominent place."

Church of the Way continues to focus on building rapport among the local population and being a loving, welcoming presence to anyone who comes in the door. "We are praying for God's blessing on church and relationships being built," says Wiebe. ❧

'An energizing event'

MCC Manitoba executive director bikes for restorative justice

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
CARMAN, MAN.

It only took a few seconds for Ron Janzen to catch his breath as he dismounted his bicycle and entered the Carman Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Thrift Shop to greet volunteers and shoppers.

Janzen, executive director of MCC Manitoba, was on a 600-kilometre bicycle tour of all 16 thrift shops in Manitoba in six days. From Aug. 25 to 30, each shop hosted Janzen for a celebration of MCC's restorative justice programming in the province. Each shop donated an average of one day's sales to the cause, with some making substantial donations beyond that.

Several individual and corporate donors are adding their financial support to the cause, including one foundation that has agreed to match donations up to \$25,000, said Christina Van Niekerk, community events and engagement coordinator for MCC Manitoba.

Peter Rempel, interim director of Initiatives for Just Communities (IJC) since mid-June, was also at the Carman store to explain some of the restorative justice programs that MCC supports through IJC:

- **OPEN CIRCLE**, a prison visitation program.
- **CIRCLES OF Accountability and Support**, which provides assistance for offenders with a high risk of re-offending.
- **TOUCHSTONE**, a program directed at young people affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
- **DAD RANCH**, a residence and day program for men with mental disabilities who are in conflict with the law.
- **STRIDE**, a new program of Open Circle that began a year ago to connect volunteers with female inmates.

MCC Manitoba still provides about \$200,000 to IJC, with the plan of gradually decreasing that amount by 5 percent over

seven years and then reviewing where to go from there. "Our intention is to broaden the support base and invite other denominations to join," said Rempel. "The United Church and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada have already become members of IJC."

Each store was given a refurbished bicycle to raffle off during Janzen's visit.

"The bicycle is symbolic of the network of MCC's restorative justice programming," said Janzen. "Three different groups came together to donate and get the bicycles ready. The thrift shops donated the bikes; a group at Canadian Mennonite University, Sanctoral Bicycle Co-op, rebuilt the bikes; and a company in Winnipeg stripped and repainted them."

This is the second year that Janzen has donned his cycling gear and hit the highway to raise awareness in communities

about the local work that MCC is engaged in.

"Many people know about the work that MCC does abroad, but the local involvement is often not as well known," he said. Like a tree with its vast network of roots that support and feeds the visible part above ground, "there is a network of hundreds of volunteers and thousands of hours of volunteer work that support the work in over 60 countries."

Last year, \$55,000 was raised from this event. This year, Janzen is anticipating raising at least that much again.

Janzen began his bicycle tour in Brandon, where the thrift shop had just suffered a fire that caused significant smoke damage to the building and all of its merchandise. In Portage, Janzen was there to help celebrate the store's expansion.

The longest stretch of the tour was the trip to the thrift shop in Riverton, 135 kilometres north of Winnipeg.

But Janzen said he was undaunted. "This is an energizing event. It gives me great energy for the rest of the year. It gives me opportunity to combine my passion for cycling with my passion for my work," he said as he mounted his bike and headed off to Winkler. ❧

Frank Elias, left, president of the Carman Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Thrift Shop, welcomes Ron Janzen, director of MCC Manitoba, as he arrives on his 600-kilometre bicycle tour of the 16 thrift shops in Manitoba. Each store was given a rebuilt bicycle to raffle off during the celebrations when Janzen arrived.



MCC PHOTO BY BRENDAN TUTTLE



Food purchased by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) through a partner, the Sudanese Relief and Development Agency, is unloaded in Awerial, South Sudan. MCC provided supplementary food for 7,539 children displaced by the conflict.

Relief and relationships in South Sudan

By EMILY LOEWEN

Mennonite Central Committee Canada

When conflict displaced more than 1.5 million people in South Sudan, some 70,000 of them sought refuge at an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Awerial County, where they could find people who spoke the same language.

But adjusting to life in this new community has not always been easy. Many need food and shelter, and when thousands of people are suddenly dislocated and arrive under strained circumstances, it's easy for conflicts to arise.

A food distribution project by the Sudanese Relief and Development Agency (SUDRA), supported by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), met the basic need for food and also helped provide a place of stability where people could begin to create community.

"The MCC-SUDRA feeding program has restored the hopes of the community, brought a good number of pastors together, and increased reconciliation as people meet and interact together," says Andrew Biar, a supervisor at one of the feeding centres.

The project provided two months of

food for 7,539 displaced children under 5 in Awerial County from mid-February to mid-April. Because food was distributed primarily at church compounds, it encouraged people to join church activities and meet each other.

"The feeding programs provided people with a place to gather and talk, and learn first-hand that in settings marked by common hardships, cross-cultural, religious and linguistic differences can turn out to be no more important than the differences that exist among individual human beings," says Brendan Tuttle, MCC's country representative for South Sudan and Sudan.

Since conflict in the country erupted again last December, MCC has allocated more than \$1.1 million in funding and resources, including relief kits and canned meat, for displaced South Sudanese people both inside the country and in Kenya and Ethiopia.

In addition to the food distribution in Awerial, MCC is supporting the distribution of food baskets or vouchers to more than 21,000 IDPs in Budi and Mundri counties in South Sudan through its

account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

MCC is also supporting a project with Lutheran World Federation to provide supplementary food, such as fruit, to children, new and expecting mothers, seniors and people with disabilities or illness, in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. And refugees in Gambella, Ethiopia, will receive MCC relief, hygiene and school kits, as well as blankets and canned meat.

Beyond meeting basic needs, MCC is continuing to support education, peace-building and agricultural projects in South Sudan. This includes funding two training sessions on dealing with trauma for 80 women and youth church leaders, and support for a similar program for South Sudanese refugees in Kenya.

And in Sudan MCC is starting a three-year program providing meals at school for children, some of them displaced by conflict in South Sudan. The meals increase students' attendance and ability to focus.

"Emergency relief is necessary," says Tuttle, "but we have also tried to ensure that our longer-term projects continue and embody the kind of world that we hope to live in: one where discussions about peace, schooling, libraries and farms have a useful place." ❧

PHOTO BY SIMON MIKANIPARE



Children wait in line for food distribution at an internally displaced persons camp in Awerial County carried out by the Sudanese Relief and Development Agency with support from Mennonite Central Committee.

Emergency bedding provided in Gaza

By ED NYCE

Mennonite Central Committee

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), through one of its long-time partners in Gaza, Al Najd Development Forum, provided emergency bedding supplies to about 2,000 displaced people, or 150 households, in east and north Gaza in late July.

The \$35,000 project included items such as mattresses, sheets, pillows and plastic mats.

By the fifth week of the Hamas-Israel conflict, BBC reported that the Palestinian death toll had risen above 1,900, the majority of them civilians. More than 60 Israelis, most of them soldiers, have died in the fighting.

Earlier in July, MCC and Al Najd completed a \$25,000 food distribution of locally purchased items to 230 families in Gaza. MCC is assessing another potential food response.

Additional needs abound in Gaza, according to a July 23 report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Among these are water and sanitation services. Six sewage pumping stations and 15 wells are not operating, meaning that 1.2 million people, more than two-thirds the population of Gaza, have limited or no access to water and sanitation.

"MCC continues to communicate daily with MCC partner Al Najd in Gaza," says Joanna Hiebert Bergen, an MCC representative for Palestine and Israel. "They are exhausted, yet work tirelessly to get food and supplies out to families who have had their homes and livelihoods destroyed, and often are grieving the loss of relatives as well. . . . The situation is absolutely desperate, yet all of MCC's partner connections continue to work to assist those most affected."

PHOTO COURTESY OF AL NAJD DEVELOPMENT FORUM



Volunteers wearing Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Al Najd Development Forum vests deliver mattresses to families who opened their homes to other Gazans displaced by the Israel-Hamas conflict. MCC provided \$35,000 worth of bedding and related supplies that were distributed through partner organization Al Najd in late July.

MCC has worked with partners in Palestine for more than 60 years and with partners in Israel for more than 40 years. MCC opposes violence against all people who live in the region and is committed

to walking with Palestinian and Israeli partners as they continue to address root causes of conflict while working for justice, peace and reconciliation for all. ☸

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GOD AT WORK IN US



Ruth Klahsen, left, and Francis Evans stand at the counter of the Monforte on Wellington osteria in downtown Stratford, Ont. Klahsen is fond of saying that she would not open the restaurant until Evans signed on as hostess.

A good Mennonite?

Cheese maker builds her business on openness, sustainability, and local products, source materials and jobs

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent
STRATFORD, ONT.



“I’m not a very good Mennonite,” says Ruth Klahsen as she sells her Monforte cheeses at the New Hamburg (Ont.) Mennonite Relief Sale, where all sales go to support Mennonite Central Committee relief projects.

From a Mennonite Brethren background—her grandparents and parents were missionaries in India—Klahsen has been featured in several Mennonite Savings and Credit Union articles for her unique use of community shared agriculture (CSA) techniques and for being one of the first new members who joined the Credit Union by agreeing to the Mennonite World Conference’s “shared convictions” instead of by belonging to a Mennonite or Brethren congregation.

When pressed, Klahsen notes that she is not worshipping as a Mennonite and has

some concerns about Mennonite business practices. When she founded her first cheese factory (www.monfortedairy.com) in Millbank, Ont., a few years ago, she leased space in a building that housed several other factories like hers producing cheese with milk from Old Order Mennonite and Amish farms.

Beginning with a \$167,000 loss in her first year there, she went on to make \$150,000 in profit on \$1 million in sales by her fifth year. Then her lease was not renewed with just a few months’ notice and she had to relocate. But cheese factories have specific building requirements for health reasons, and the abrupt cancellation drove her into bankruptcy.

After a year off, Klahsen reopened in Stratford using monies raised through a CSA offering. Investors contributed



Cheeses cure at the Monforte Cheese Factory in Stratford, Ont.

money upfront to be paid back over five years in product worth 150 percent of the investment; they also accepted the risk that the project could fail and they would not be paid back.

Four years later, she is grossing \$2 million annually, aiming toward \$2.2 million, her “sweet spot,” as she calls it, where she can afford to pay herself as much as her full-time employees.

With her books open to investors and staff alike, she speaks openly about the business: 30 percent each of the gross goes



Rosy Neale removes cheeses from their moulds at the Monforte Cheese Factory in Stratford, Ont.

to labour, food costs and fixed costs, and, hopefully, 10 percent to profit.

Her cheeses are bought by high-end restaurants in Toronto and qualify for a “100-mile diet” there, as well as by delicatessens all over southern Ontario. When the location of the cheese factory in an industrial area of south Stratford did not get enough local sales, she opened Monforte on Wellington, an osteria (an eating establishment modelled after rustic Italian wine bars) in the downtown area. Along side serving dishes made from cheese and other local products, the osteria also sells Monforte cheeses to regular customers who stop in.

Between the cheese factory—which makes cheeses from sheep, goat, water buffalo and cow milk—and the osteria,



The Monforte Cheese Factory in Stratford, Ont.

Monforte currently employs 28 staff, seven of them full-time.

But Klahsen has further plans. A 16-hectare farm has been purchased between Stratford and Shakespeare. There, young farmers will be encouraged to try out sustainable farming and business practices in specialty crops of organic grains, fruit, hops for beer, honey, vegetables, nuts and milking animals. A house on the property

will be reworked into a store where local artists and artisans can sell their creations. Another CSA fundraiser has been begun to raise another \$500,000 to get this project off the ground.

Openness, sustainability, and local products, source materials and jobs make up Ruth Klahsen’s business practices. Do they make her a good Mennonite? ✎

/// Briefly noted

Pastor in transition in B.C.

STEPHEN SWIRES was installed as pastor of First Mennonite Church, Burns Lake, in a service on June 15. Garry Janzen, executive minister of Mennonite Church B.C., and Church Health Committee chair Linda Matties travelled to Burns Lake for the service of installation, at which Janzen preached. Swires has been serving the Burns Lake congregation part-time since January. Previously, he served in ministry in the Yukon and in the Kootenay Region of B.C.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN



Stephen Swires

Pastors in transition in Ontario

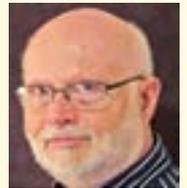
SARA ERB joined the First Mennonite Church family in Kitchener in August to cover Christina Edmiston’s maternity leave. This is Erb’s first pastorate. She ministers primarily in the areas of worship, music and Christian formation, including youth formation. Erb is a recent graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind. Before that, she graduated from Emmanuel Bible College in Kitchener. Erb has led worship in a variety of contexts spanning various ages, denominations and socio-economic locations. She sees music as the beating drum of her spirituality, saying, “It is in the words we sing that we confess our faith and recommit ourselves to God.”



Sara Erb

GARY KNARR began as interim minister at Erb St. Mennonite Church in Waterloo on July 1. He spent 10 years as pastor of First Mennonite in Kitchener and a year at Harrow Mennonite Church as intentional interim pastor, and did supply ministry for a few congregations. He has a Ph.D. in history from Queen’s University in Kingston, Ont., a master of divinity degree from AMBS, and a bachelor’s degree in history from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Gary Knarr

Pastor in transition in Manitoba

WES GOERTZEN began his position as lead pastor of Whitewater Mennonite Church, Boissevain on March 1. Goertzen, who grew up in Henderson, Neb., and his wife Heather worked for approximately five years in Bolivia under the Word Made Flesh organization, assisting female prostitutes and their families. From 2010-13, Goertzen studied at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., while Heather was residence director at Goshen College. They moved in early 2014 with their one-year-old daughter, Maeve, to the small rural community of Boissevain. Goertzen lost no time in serving and leading the grieving congregation through three deaths in the first weeks of his pastoral duties. A devastating house fire in late winter took the lives of Wally and Martha Kroeker, two very active members in the congregation and community. “It was a tiring but very rich start [to my ministry],” reflected Goertzen.

—BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU



Wes Goertzen

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Presented by:



/// Briefly noted

Sabbatical for executive minister

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Garry Janzen, executive minister of Mennonite Church B.C., began a sabbatical on Aug. 4 that will take him and his wife Diane to several countries. Following a family wedding celebration in Turkey, the Janzens will visit other biblical and historical sites in Turkey. In September, they will head to England to connect with the Mennonite Trust, an Anabaptist group based in Birmingham, and Wood Green Mennonite Church in London. They will also spend time at the Iona community in Scotland for refreshment and learning. The Janzens will then travel in October to South Africa, where they previously served a term with Mennonite Central Committee. The last month will be spent in Petitcodiac, N.B., where they will volunteer with Ten Thousand Villages. Janzen will return to his position on Dec. 1. Assuming Janzen's duties in his absence are Dave Friesen, a retired pastor, and Sven Eriksson, former MC Canada denominational minister.



Garry Janzen

—BY AMY DUECKMAN



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ARTBEAT

BOOK REVIEW

Finding a sense of place

The New Parish.

Written by Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens and Dwight J. Friesen. InterVarsity Press, 2014.

REVIEWED BY HENRY NEUFELD

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

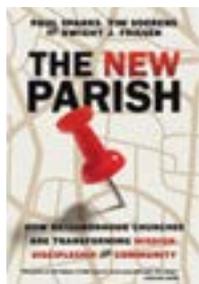
Churches should be rooted in neighbourhoods or parishes. That's the claim of the authors, who represent Pentecostal, Anabaptist and Reformed traditions. Our lives and churches are fragmented, and many Sunday commuters pass other churches to meet with people who support their views and where everyone looks and acts similarly.

The church has left the neighbourhood; it is individual-, consumer- and commuter-oriented. Some scholars call it "evangelical consumerism." Despite evangelistic crusades, missional language, church growth and seeker-sensitive movements, attendance still declines. New techniques are not needed, but a return to the neighbourhood is, according to Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens and Dwight J. Friesen.

Historically, the parish—or local—church was the centre of community activities, but today it is removed from engagement in real-life struggles in the neighbourhood. The church has shifted from love of neighbour to developing systems of belief, doctrines and power.

Modern evangelicals redefined the meaning of being a Christian by emphasizing individual salvation. Church-growth strategy tends to be based on the idea that people like to hang out with others who are more or less like them. Meanwhile, house churches and emerging churches seek to organize around relational principles.

Either way, the church has lost its sense of place. Faithfulness needs to encompass more than worship to include the mundane activities of everyday life, according



to *The New Parish*. In prophetic tones the authors suggest that if the church cannot be present and involved in its neighbourhood, it has lost its way.

These theologically trained authors all propose a new parish: Follow Jesus into your neighbourhood with other followers of Jesus. This means "taking your bodies, your locations and your community very seriously, as seriously as God in Christ took them." If a church is in, and for, the parish, everything changes, and might result in what they call "slow church."

While calling the church to a neighbourhood base, a "faithful presence," they decry the obsession with results. Donors, denominations and conferences want results. "The modern western church is addicted to the next technique," they charge. The challenge, they suggest, is to hold community, formation, mission and worship together.

Sparks was pastor of a rapidly growing Seattle church with worship bands and lots of pop-culture references. But he sensed a growing infatuation with stagecraft and putting on performances. During his six-month sabbatical—a 2,600-kilometre walking pilgrimage of the U.S. Pacific northwest—he would walk for four days, then stop for the rest of the week to visit local ministries and churches.

Much later, his church decided to move into a downtown area and congregants seemed supportive of the new vision. But once the shift towards parish ministry started, the crowds that had been attending began to shrink from hundreds to handfuls.

The New Parish does not provide church-growth techniques. Instead, it calls us to develop relational communities in our neighbourhoods: "If the church cannot be present in life-affirming ways in its neighbourhood, it has lost its calling."

This book would be an excellent resource for small-group study. ✎

Henry Neufeld attends Point Grey InterMennonite Fellowship in Vancouver.

/// Briefly noted

New women's Bible study guide released

How can women support each other with compassion? How can women be present with each other when making life transitions? Terri J. Plank Brenneman, Ph.D., takes a look



at these and other scenarios in the latest women's Bible study guide, *Practicing Presence*. Jointly commissioned by Mennonite Women Canada and MW U.S.A., the Bible study guides are written annually to provide solid resources for women's groups, retreats and inspirational readings. In *Practicing Presence*, Brenneman examines Scripture and its meaning alongside present-day realities, to encourage women to be a companionship presence with each other. Biblical characters provide illustration and are examined to learn how women can best show care, concern and presence. Twelve sessions highlight topics such as the creation story, Jesus and Mary grieving when Lazarus died, and Ruth being present with Naomi during a transition to a new homeland, among others. A 13th session is designed as a worship service. Brenneman is a clinical psychologist residing in Goshen, Ind. —MennoMedia

Radical Jesus conveys social message of Christ

Cartoonists form creative team to produce 'graphic history'-style book

MennoMedia

Creating artwork that tells the story of Jesus' life, death and purpose on earth is nothing new. Think of the many paintings and illustrations in museums, homes and Bibles. Now add to this list a new 128-page fully illustrated comic art book, *Radical Jesus: A Graphic History of Faith*, released by Herald Press in 2013.

Paul Buhle, editor of the book, says, "In *Radical Jesus* you will find 'the greatest story ever told' narrated, illustrated and explored afresh in comic art, and yet still rooted in the centuries-old history of illuminated text."

He says the book is aimed at people between 15 and 30; he envisions the typical reader as "a teenager who is not particularly religious, but trying to figure out his or her values."

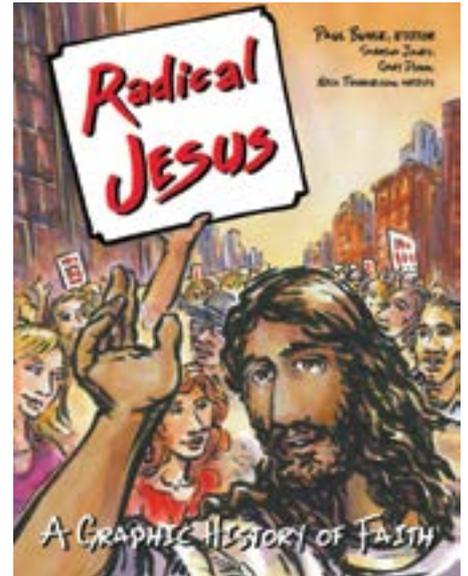
Co-editor Sandra Sauder, who describes herself as a "Mennonite by choice," worked

on this project with her Grade 7/8 Sunday school class in mind. "I will absolutely be using it in future classes and I think a lot of other people will, too," she says.

Featuring illustrations by Sabrina Jones, Gary Dumm and Nick Thorkelson, *Radical Jesus* is a modern effort to convey the meaning of Jesus and his social message through comic art.

In addition to the story of Jesus, the book includes stories from the early church to the invention of the printing press, which allowed people to read and discuss the Bible for themselves. This section draws on sources like *Martyr's Mirror* (see right page), *Through Fire and Water: An Overview of Mennonite History*, *Writings of Menno Simons*, and *John Roth's Stories: How Mennonites Came to Be*, all published by Herald Press.

Stories of people in modern times living



out Jesus' teachings include major figures like Martin Luther King Jr., as well as ordinary people, such as those in Alternative Service or working with the disadvantaged.

Janine Giordano Drake, writing on the "Religion in American History" blog, says of *Radical Jesus*, "This newest graphic history seems to be as good or better than any graphic history I've ever read. The Sermon on the Mount is set in its cultural and historical context, and we learn how unusual Jesus would have seemed to people of his day." ❧

Planning 'a good death'

New book helps elderly and families make better end-of-life decisions

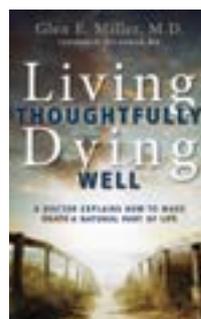
MennoMedia

A new book, *Living Thoughtfully, Dying Well: A Doctor Explains How to Make Death a Natural Part of Life*, is designed to help elderly people and their families complete the practical and spiritual groundwork necessary to have a good death.

As a survivor of two heart attacks, a cardiac arrest and bypass surgery, author and medical doctor Glen E. Miller of Goshen, Ind., writes from his medical work in internal medicine, hospital administration, and personal experience in the United States and several other countries. He also holds

a master's degree in theological studies.

Miller wanted to write this book because he saw family members often called on to make crucial end-of-life decisions with limited medical knowledge, befuddled by countless necessary choices, and under the tension and emotional pain of a father or mother nearing death. In the midst of this, elderly patients often feel isolated and alone. He contends that dying is a natural part of life and that advance



planning can vastly improve the end-of-life experience for patients and their families.

In addition to stories of difficult passings, this book tells the stories of people who die well, leaving their families with good memories and without remorse for the decisions made. In the book, one man said after the death of his father, "Insofar as one can accept the final outcome of the death of a beloved father, it could not have been a better experience."

"I often witness the heart-wrenching uncertainty of family members who must make treatment decisions for a critically ill loved one who has never expressed their own preferences for end-of-life care," says Dr. Douglas R. Smucker, a palliative care physician at The Christ Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio. "Dr. Miller offers an extraordinarily personal reflection on ways

(Continued on page 34)



DIRK'S IMPRISONMENT HAD LEFT HIM MUCH LIGHTER THAN HIS HEAVIER PURSUER WHOSE WEIGHT CAUSED HIM TO FALL THROUGH THE ICE.



HELP ME!



IN GOD'S NAME, I SAVE YOU.

BY TURNING BACK TO RESCUE HIS PURSUER DIRK WILLEMS'S OWN FATE WAS SECURED.



HE WAS BURNED AT THE STAKE ON MAY 16, 1569, EVEN THOUGH THE GUARD HE RESCUED WANTED TO LET HIM GO.

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(Continued from page 32)

that thoughtful preparation for a 'good death' can be part of a life well lived."

Living Thoughtfully, Dying Well includes practical instruction on preparing for a good death, a final checklist of tasks to adequately prepare, a glossary of common terms, role-playing resources to help churches and families, and study questions at the end of each chapter. The book reclaims dying and death as a spiritual—not just mechanical—experience, and emphasizes the importance of creating positive memories for those who remain.

Over 25 years Miller played a key role in elevating the local hospital in Bellefontaine, Ohio, to the top rung of small hospitals in the state. He spent 11 years with Mennonite Central Committee in medical care, teaching and development activities in Haiti, Egypt, India and Cambodia. Along the way, he found encouragement and inspiration from many people, including Mother Teresa in Calcutta. ☸

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PHOTO ESSAY

Engagement, debate and building relationships

Three pages of photos illustrate student learning tour to historically, culturally and theologically rich Iran

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CECILLY HILDEBRAND

Special to Young Voices
IRAN

This past May, I was part of a group of 10 students from Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg and Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., that travelled to Iran to observe the sixth Shi'i Islam-Mennonite Christian dialogue.

This ongoing interfaith dialogue between Mennonite and Muslim scholars provides a safe place for academics and theologians to speak about their respective beliefs and build relationships with each other.

We spent 10 days in the city of Qom, a holy

site for Shi'i Muslims and a significant centre for Shi'i study and scholarship, attending the dialogue as well as an academic conference and an introductory course on Islam. The remaining 10 days were spent in the cities of Isfahan, Shiraz and Tehran, travelling to significant sites to learn more about Iran's history, people, beliefs and culture. ✎

Cecilly Hildebrand, 26, graduated from CMU in 2012 with a degree in psychology. She lives in Winnipeg, where she works part-time as a photographer along with her husband, Matthew Dueck.



The Saint Sarkis Cathedral is one of about 200 Armenian churches and temples located in Iran. We attended an Armenian service in Isfahan and visited the Armenian Prelacy in Tehran. Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism are the three recognized minority religions in Iran.

The ruins of Persepolis, literally translated as "City of Persians," is located northeast of the city of Shiraz and dates back to 515 B.C. The site of Persepolis is believed to have been chosen by Cyrus the Great, built by Darius I, completed by his son King Xerxes the Great, and later destroyed by Alexander the Great. With one of the world's oldest civilizations, to learn about Iran and its people is to become immersed in history.



PHOTO ESSAY



The Bazaar of Isfahan, located in the Naghsh-e Jahan Square, is one of the largest and oldest bazaars in the Middle East, with a maze of more than two kilometres of vaulted covered streets. Shoppers can find pots, earrings and art pieces made of out of copper, spices such as saffron and cinnamon, hand-painted tablecloths and bedspreads, and hand-woven world-famous Persian carpets, along with great conversations with local shopkeepers and even a cup of 'American' coffee.



The International Conference on the Philosophical Thoughts of Murtada Mutahhari took place in Qom on May 28 and 29. The conference included plenary presentations and panel discussions with both Iranian and international presenters.



The sixth Shi'i Muslim-Mennonite Christian dialogues on the topic of ethics took place from May 30 to June 1 at the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute (IKERI) in Qom. We had the opportunity to observe these dialogues and engage with both presenters and local Iranian students who were also attending.



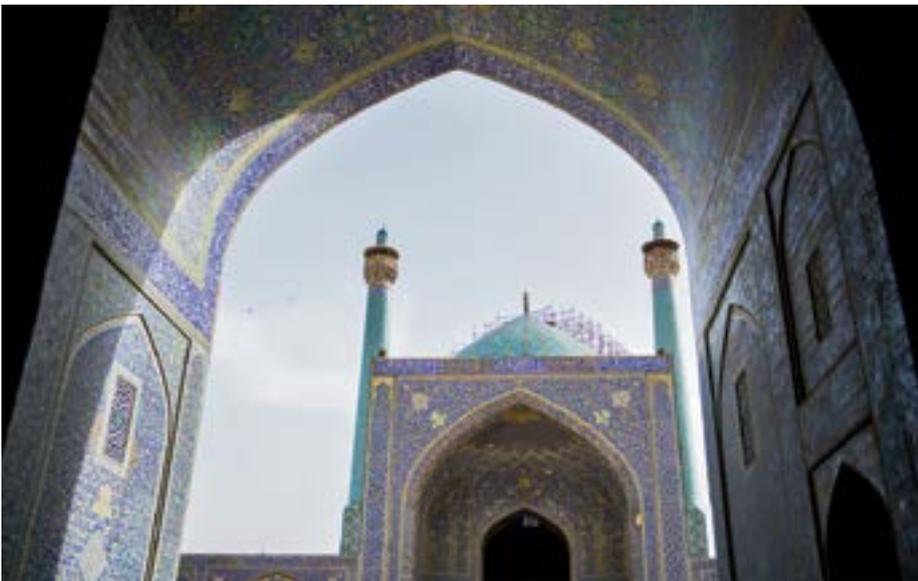
IKERI arranged a four-day Introduction to Shi'i Islam course. Local clerics and professors delivered lectures on theology, anthropology, the imamate, Islamic mysticism, ethics, and Islam and Christianity. Local Iranian students also attended, providing further opportunities for engagement, debate and relationship-building.

PHOTO ESSAY



PHOTO TOP LEFT: Aboulhassan Haghani, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at IKERI, was our country host for the duration of our stay in Iran. We had the privilege of being invited to visit his country home in the mountains.

PHOTO BOTTOM LEFT: We visited various mosques, including the Imam Mosque, also known as the Jaame' Abbasi Mosque. Located on the south side of the Naghsh-e Jahan Square in the city of Isfahan, construction of this mosque began in 1611 during the Safavid period and has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The stunningly beautiful and detailed use of mosaic tiling and Persian calligraphy is a common form of art and is found extensively throughout Iran.



Located on the hillside of Mount Khidr, a shrine to the unknown and anonymous martyrs can be seen amidst the dusty haze and sprawling cityscape of Qom.

Hearing the music of the open road

BY RACHEL BERGEN
Young Voices Co-editor

Choruses of bullfrogs, birds and rushing water greeted Jami Reimer and Thomas Krause on their 20-day cycling trip from Bemidji, Minn., to Waterloo, Ont., earlier this year. These melodies stood in stark contrast with the thunder of cars and trucks on the highways.

The two band mates travelled around the Great Lakes through the United States to Conrad Grebel University College in order to attend the Sound in the Land 2014 music conference this spring, at which participants explored music and

(Continued on page 38)

PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMI REIMER /
THOMAS KRAUSE



Musicians Jami Reimer and Thomas Krause are pictured en route to Waterloo, Ont., earlier this year for the Sound in the Land 2014 music conference.

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the environment through new Mennonite perspectives.

Reimer and Krause, who play together in a band called Alanadale, contributed an experimental music composition entitled “Listening Exercise No. 1.” They created it along their trip by recording as they cycled and when they stopped to take in the scenery.

“We took all these sound samples and mixed it into a soundscape,” Reimer, 23, explains. “It was a musical project. We took pitch and rhythm from the soundscape to make something that was cohesive.” Reimer, of Grace Mennonite Church in

to listen to,” says Reimer. “The keynote speaker, R. Murray Schafer [a well-known Canadian composer], came out to our presentation and really liked it, which was encouraging.”

Their journey itself was an ear- and eye-opening experience. Krause and Reimer decided they wouldn’t listen to any recorded music for their nearly three weeks on the road, so they could focus on the sounds around them.

“It’s really refreshing to not have things distracting you all the time, and just being present with all these beautiful sounds,” Krause says. “I found myself being more irritated by anthropogenic noise than I was

*‘We took all these sound samples and mixed it into a soundscape. It was a musical project. We took pitch and rhythm from the soundscape to make something that was cohesive.’
(Jami Reimer)*

Brandon, Man., is a recent graduate of the Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) music program.

Krause, 25, whose home congregation is Langley Mennonite Fellowship in B.C., graduated from CMU’s communications and media program last spring. His background in audio production and editing, as well as his interest in cycling and the environment, got him excited about the project.

Krause is interested in making original, experimental music. He was involved in performing a piece called “Geräschbiest” at the New Music Festival in Winnipeg two years ago. The piece was written for instruments that were built by his brother and him. Krause also writes original music with Alanadale.

The new seven-minute soundscape was another opportunity for Krause and Reimer to do something different together.

“It’s not a two-minute song in 4:4 time that’s 120 beats per minute,” Krause says of “Listening Exercise No. 1.” “It’s recognizable and hasn’t been written a million times already. It doesn’t fit into a box.”

The duo received positive feedback for their project at the conference.

“People found the soundscape moving

before. I think I became more mindful of the noise that’s polluting the sounds I want to hear. . . . I was concerned the trip was going to be really boring, but I didn’t even notice it.”

Another requirement of their journey was relying on their ears and their audio recorders, instead of cameras, to capture the experience. “Listening Exercise No. 1” became not only a meditation on the environment, but a musical souvenir of their cycling trip.

“We have sounds of waves lapping on the shore in Bemidji . . . and it takes me back there,” Krause says. “I don’t think it would be significant to anyone but Jami and I.”

“We wanted the journey to be the musical artifact, a sound testimony in and of itself,” Reimer says, adding that the quiet and the intentional listening made the trip a prayerful experience: “Cycling and intentional sound awareness and exercise gives way to a lot of meditation. It was an exercise in meditation and stillness, which comes in contrast with the busyness of life and school.”

Reimer and Krause hope to present “Listening Exercise No. 1” in Winnipeg this month. ❧

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.
- Oct. 18:** Sto:lo history and culture learning day—details to follow.
- Oct. 17-19:** MC B.C. women's ministry fall retreat at Camp Squeah. Theme: "Unwrap your gifts: Romans 12," with speaker April Yamasaki. From 6 p.m. on Friday to 2 p.m. on Sunday. Visit www.mcbc.ca, e-mail waltrude@shaw.ca or call 604-756-0707 for more information.
- Oct. 30:** MC B.C. fundraising dessert night at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack.
- Oct. 30:** MCC Centre official opening in Abbotsford, at 11 a.m. Dedication, welcome and prayer followed by lunch. For more information, call 604-850-6639.
- Nov. 29,30:** Abendmusic Advent

Vespers; (29) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (30) Knox United Church, West Vancouver; both services at 8 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.
- Sept. 27:** MCC Alberta annual general meeting, at Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church, Edmonton; at 10 a.m. For more information, visit www.mcccana.ca/get-involved/events.

Saskatchewan

- Sept. 26-28:** Quilting and scrapbooking retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim.
- Nov. 8:** Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, hosts *Peace, Pies and Prophets* presented by Ted and Co. Theater Works, at 7 p.m. Fundraiser for Christian Peacemaker Teams. For more

information, e-mail canada@cpt.org.

Manitoba

- 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.
- Oct. 3-4:** "Ex-Mennonite/Near Mennonites: Liturgical, non-denominational, secular," an academic and community education conference hosted by the chair in Mennonite studies at the University of Winnipeg. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/1ruYZAE>.
- Oct. 14-15:** J.J. Thiessen Lectures at the CMU Chapel. Speaker: John Swinton, professor and chair in divinity and religious studies at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Topic: "Becoming friends of time: Disability, Timefulness and Gentle Discipleship." For more information, visit cmu.ca.
- Nov. 6-9:** MEDA convention, at the Fairmont Winnipeg Hotel, Winnipeg. Theme: "Human dignity through entrepreneurship."

Ontario

- Sept. 19-21:** Men's Meat Retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. For more information, call 519-422-3200 or visit www.slm.ca.
- 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.
- Sept. 21:** Fifth annual Contemporary Hymn Sing, at 2:30 p.m., at Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville. Explore the music of *Sing the Journey and Sing the Story*, led by Mark Diller Harder.
- Sept. 21:** MSCU Centre for Peace Advancement at Conrad Grebel University College is holding an interactive community celebration to advance peace, at 2 p.m. Bring a "personal peace offering" and help build a work of art.

- Sept. 25:** Free public lecture to celebrate International Day of Peace, at Conrad Grebel University College Great Hall, at 7 p.m. Topic: "Taking peace to the Pentagon." Speaker: Lisa Schirch, winner of Grebel's 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award. For more information, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/grebel/events.
- Sept. 27:** Conrad Grebel University College is hosting a 1960s-era alumni reunion with host Eric Friesen, in the college dining room, at 6 p.m.
- Sept. 29,30:** Fall seniors retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, with the same program each day. Speakers: Jess Huxman and Ron Rempel. Topic: "Sipping from the fire hose: Media literacy for 2014." For more information, contact the camp at 519-625-8602 or by e-mail at info@hiddenacres.ca.
- Oct. 3-4:** Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada host an MW Sister Care Seminar at the Cambridge Hotel and Conference Centre. Facilitators: Rhoda Keener and Carolyn Heggen. For more information and registration forms, contact Phyllis Ramer at 519-236-7332 or peramer@hay.net.

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

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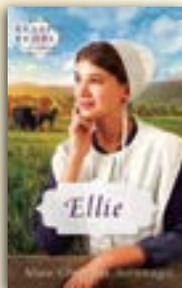
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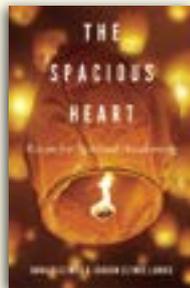


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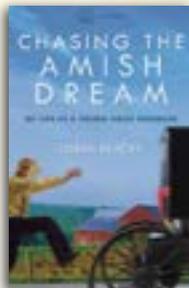
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A photograph of a classroom setting. In the center, a man with glasses and a red and black striped shirt is speaking and pointing upwards with his right hand. To his right, a woman with glasses and a blue shirt is listening attentively. In the foreground, the back of a person's head and shoulders is visible, looking towards the speaker. The background shows a whiteboard with yellow sticky notes.

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