

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Volume 18 Number 21



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truth?’

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## EDITORIAL

# Lower the pointing finger

VIRGINIA HOSTETLER  
INTERIM CO-EDITOR

Several months ago, our editor heard complaints from someone who wanted *Canadian Mennonite* to stop carrying letters to the editor because letters often cause too much friction.

A small confession: We like to hear from our readers. As the main conversation venues for members of Mennonite Church Canada, our printed magazine and online presence offer opportunities for people across the church to weigh in on what matters to them. When you send us letters, leave thoughts on our website, and comment on our Facebook page, we know that you want to be engaged with others in our faith family.

But I've been wondering recently about certain types of responses—the finger-wagging kind, the kind that disparages the beliefs of another individual or enumerates the faults of the entire church. This kind of response suggests arrogance: So-and-so has an absolutely wrong belief and it is my duty to correct that belief; how stupid/sinful of so-and-so to think that way!

It's easy to carry out angry arguments on Facebook, and writers of strong opinions can hide behind anonymity in online comments. Uncharitable things get said and conversation gets shut down. Relationships are broken.

In this issue's feature article, Dave Rogalsky writes about paradigms that

inform how we see the world. He writes, "What we have found . . . are competing paradigms, each purporting to be the truth." Sometimes we lack the insight into another person's paradigm and simply respond out of frustration. Sometimes our opinions gain too much emotional intensity when a contrary point of view causes us to confront our own fears and doubts. How might we talk to each other—in helpful ways—from within our own worldviews?

There's the route of admonishment. The Apostle Paul instructs believers to "*admonish the idlers*" (1 Thessalonians 5:14) and to "*teach and admonish one another in all wisdom*" (Colossians 3:16, both quotes NRSV).

As it relates to Christian sisters and brothers, Jacob Elias defines the word "admonishing" as teaching, nurturing, instruction, offering moral guidance, and warning in *1 and 2 Thessalonians* from the Believers Church Bible Commentary series. Elias does not give as synonyms the words reprimanding, scolding or ridiculing. In fact, in many New Testament letters, believers are more often urged to encourage each other, to bear with each other in love, and to forgive each other.

If the early believers practised admonishing, likely they did it face-to-face, in households where they ate and

worshipped together. The admonishers and those admonished likely had an ongoing relationship with each other, and out of that relationship came (hopefully!) the needed teaching and moral guidance.

Jump ahead 20 centuries. We can now fire off an angry e-mail, leave a snarky comment on Facebook, send an anonymous letter or launch a written string of Bible verses at a person we don't know personally. It's easy to "admonish"—read "criticize"—a brother or sister one has never met.

A Facebook friend of mine recently posted a thought from author Philip Yancey. In the photo an accusing hand points at a cringing person who is trying to shield his face. The quotation reads, "I've yet to meet someone who found their way to faith by being criticized."

In his latest book, *Vanishing Grace: What Ever Happened to the Good News?* Yancey speaks of a "crisis of grace" in current North American Christianity. He points out that sometimes the ungracious way we treat others belies the beliefs we claim to hold.

The world is hungry for examples of grace. I challenge us to demonstrate ways of disagreeing with each other that offer hope to each other and to our cynical culture. Might we have a moratorium on long-distance admonishing? Let's us give up the impulse to correct any belief that we deem wrong. Let's encourage each other and learn what it means to bear with each other in love. Instead of criticizing, let's seek to listen deeply to each other's stories. Let's invigorate the practice of gathering around the Bible—together—to seek the Spirit's guidance.

We can lower our pointing fingers, trusting that the Holy Spirit will give insight even to the sisters and brothers with whom we most fervently disagree. May we also have the humility to realize that we, too, desperately need that wisdom from above.



## ABOUT THE COVER:

In this famous painting, Pilate presents a scourged Christ to crowds in Jerusalem. Eastern Canada correspondent Dave Rogalsky explores the meaning of Pilate's famous question, 'What is truth?' in his feature of the same name beginning on page 4.

ARTWORK: 'ECCE HOMO' (DETAIL) BY ANTONIO CICERI, 19TH-CENTURY

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GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

# “What is truth?”

*We have believed we can find the truth, have found the truth, and that this truth can be easily appropriated by others. . . . What we have instead found are competing paradigms, each purporting to be the truth.*

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

EASTERN CANADA CORRESPONDENT

“Pilate asked him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’ Pilate asked him, ‘What is truth?’ After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, ‘I find no case against him’” (John 18:37-38, NRSV).

One way of looking at this passage is to see Pilate as the cynical Roman, refusing to believe in Jesus who had just made his righteous claim to be the king who spoke nothing but the truth. Because of his cynicism, Pilate does not see the truth, does not receive Jesus’ message, refuses salvation, and, according to an early church document called “The Acts of Pilate,” loses any chance at salvation.

This is a dire message for all people: Believe the truth about Jesus, who is the Truth, or lose any chance at salvation. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. There is no other way, truth or life.

Another way of looking at this passage asks the question, “How did anyone know what Jesus and Pilate discussed?” Is this not a “sacred fiction” written by John or another early Christian trying to make a point about Jesus, using Pilate as a character? This text is not about Pilate’s or anyone else’s salvation, but is about Jesus’ eternal kingship as opposed to any earthly, in this case Roman, rule.

This fit the need of the early church as it faced persecution by the Romans. Jesus’ pushback against Pilate showed them how to live: Don’t give in. Here is a message for today as we face the powers of government, capitalism and society: Don’t give in. Jesus is the original anti-government, anti-culture martyr. We need to follow his example.

Each of these responses to the passage from John 18 comes from a way of thinking that is complete in itself. Such ways of thinking are often called paradigms. From inside a paradigm certain truths are true beyond doubt. They make sense to those who live within this paradigm. People build their lives on these truths and are willing to live and die for them. Anyone who challenges these ideas is either ignorant, naïve, witless or purposely dense. In

*This is a dire message for all people:  
Believe the truth about Jesus, who is the  
Truth, or lose any chance at salvation.  
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'ECCE HOMO' BY ANTONIO CICERI, 19TH-CENTURY



exasperation, those in the paradigm ask, “What is wrong with those people who don’t see things the way we see them?”

### **Understanding paradigms**

These belief systems are not only religious or philosophical. The book that popularized the idea of the paradigm was *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn looked at how and when scientific ideas were upset and changed. How did the earth-centred idea of the universe get changed to a sun-centred idea, and then to a universe with no real centre, where every place is relative to other places?

How did systems of belief, which led some to send others to their death for heretical beliefs in the wrong science,

change? Galileo was silenced by the church because he had come to believe that the moons of Jupiter did not circle the earth, but Jupiter, contrary to the belief of his day that reasoned everything



*A page from Galileo's notebook depicting the movement of Jupiter's moons.*

circled the earth. The earth was, after all, the home of humans who were made in God's own image. As the highest point in the creation, everything else must be subordinate to humans and their home. This made complete sense to everyone.

According to Kuhn's study of the history of science, the paradigm of a group of scientists in a specific area of science is not learned by memorizing rules and theories. Instead, newcomers to a discipline are given to repeat experiments whose outcome is already known, and are given problems which are already solved, to find again the known solutions. In this way, through practice, they learn the rules and theories.

In his book *Worship and Evangelism in Pre-Christendom*, Alan Krieder

describes how new believers in the early church were brought into the paradigm of the church out of the paradigm of the Greco-Roman world in which they lived. Through a multi-year process of learning the mysteries of the faith, they slowly came to think from within the belief system. This system saw the story of God in relationship with humanity written in the Scriptures and the history of the world. Finally, they would be baptized on Easter eve and then be allowed into their first communion service/love feast, a celebration only baptized adherents to the Christian faith were invited to.

In her book *A Mennonite Woman*, Dawn Ruth Nelson notes that it was the community that taught faith in the Mennonite church for generations. Family, work, church and the community at large taught faith less than modelled it, and brought children up into it through practice. In both the early church and Nelson's tight-knit Mennonite community, the faith made sense to everyone, just as scientific beliefs make sense to everyone in a scientific discipline.

### **When paradigms shift**

The early Christian process of bringing new converts into the paradigm, the mind-set of the church, broke down when, after Constantine, culture became "Christians in Christendom." No longer were Christians a minority with a different way of looking at life, but they became the majority living in a "Christian" culture.

The modern period of history—1400s to 1900s—believed that absolute truth could be found, clarified and articulated. This referred to philosophy, theology, sociology, psychology and all kinds of science. If human beings put their rational minds to work, they would discover truth such that everyone would come to believe it. Even theology became systematic.

As part of the Anabaptist stream, Mennonites are part of this modern belief system. Mennonites have believed that they can find the truth about God and humanity through a simple reading of Scripture and its application to life. We have believed we can find the truth, have

found the truth, and that this truth can be easily appropriated by others. But the multiplicity of Mennonite groups should give us pause and raise a flag of humility to such a claim.

When it has become apparent that we disagree about something, we tend to separate, hurling claims of heresy or lack of Christian belief at those whom we are leaving or who are leaving us. We have not found the truth, none of us, no group, no individual.

What we have found instead are competing paradigms, each purporting to be the truth. This is a hard pill to swallow because, from inside a paradigm, the beliefs hold together, make sense, are applicable and hold emotional power over those who believe.

The potential collapse of a paradigm is fraught with fear, grief, depression and hopelessness. This potential can keep sane and rational people believing what others around them see as nonsense. We witness this in the Americas and Europe, where Christians are transitioning to a post-Christendom society.

### **The collapse of the modern paradigm**

This year, in which we commemorate the centennial of the beginning of the First World War, can also be seen as a commemoration of the beginning of

the end of modernity. That Christian nations could send out soldiers against each other, to kill each other in the millions, using the best of science in their military hardware, and based on the best of philosophy, has led philosophers and theologians to wonder about the whole project of finding truth, especially in Europe, since 1914.

Progress in North and South America through the 20th century kept modernity

ILLUSTRATION: ©ISTOCK.COM/BENMOAT



alive for the next half century, grinding to a sputtering end when the greatest Christian and most powerful nation on earth, the United States, was stopped by a little atheistic, Communist Chinese-backed nation in Southeast Asia: Vietnam.

During this same period, Einstein's work on relativity (*see equation above*) shook the idea of there being a firm place to stand anywhere in the scientific world, and led philosophers to begin to question the idea of there being any objective truth.

Postmodern philosophers began to build systems of subjective truth. Much of what they developed looked relativistic to many, with no foundation for truth and no overarching story of human history.

*As part of the Anabaptist stream, Mennonites are part of this modern belief system. Mennonites have believed that they can find the truth about God and humanity through a simple reading of Scripture and its application to life.*

In terms of faith, some people have developed highly personal belief systems based on what they have gathered from many sources. David Lyon, professor of sociology at Queens University in Kingston, Ont., calls this a "bricolage faith." Like a collection of bric-a-brac, many have developed a faith and practice that is made up of bits of many philosophies and religions that work for them.

But this absolute subjectivity has not

caught the imagination of everyone. Some have fled into quasi-modern belief systems, which give them assurance that what they believe is absolutely true and cannot, in the end, be satisfactorily challenged.

Fundamentalisms of many kinds are found in all the major religions. Choosing some point in history, theology or practice to draw their line in the sand, these groups build a wall around their beliefs and declare that anyone outside that wall is lost. In extreme cases, often called cults, people are cut off from all other ways of thinking and from people who think differently, in an effort to shelter the group's paradigm from challenges. It is often the newest converts to a faith who are the most strident in their defence of it.

Others in modern culture have drifted into "infidelity": a lack of belief in anything revealed by any god/God or held by any religion. Some of these continue to hold to reason and science as the places to find truth. Seeing that use of force and violence have yet to solve any human problems, they look to empathic acceptance of all people as the solution to humanity's problems. It sometimes seems that the only people they cannot accept are fundamentalists.

### **When community-based faith breaks down**

Dawn Ruth Nelson tells the story of her work in Northern Ireland during the "troubles" there. When the small intentional community of which she was a part broke down, she found that her acculturated faith could not carry her through the interreligious troubles in Ireland, nor help her to understand how her own Christian community could act so badly.

Many Christians find that they need new ways of thinking about faith and new disciplines to grow and strengthen their faith in the absence of the old community-based faith. Trying to live out their inherited faith paradigm in the different paradigms of human cultures, many are going through crises of faith. Nelson turned to contemplative Christianity to support her faith and work.

It has become clear that there is a need



to have some truths upon which many can agree, and it has become clear that there are different ways of finding truth. These ways are not the old ways of an individual studying and developing truth, nor of an individual prophet receiving a revealed truth that all must obey.

Historians like Karen Armstrong have come to the conclusion that there is truth to be found by studying the wide

experience of many people over time and space. In her book *A History of God*, Armstrong proposes that mystics past and present, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and beyond, have come to truths through lives of contemplation. These truths include:

- **THERE IS** a god/God who can be approached, found and communicated with through contemplative prayer.

*In terms of faith, some people have developed highly personal belief systems based on what they have gathered from many places.*

• **THIS GOD/GOD** works to change people from the inside out into empathic and love-driven workers for change in society.

Because she finds this in many religions, she does not depend on outside influences like religious texts and practice, or hierarchies, to influence people. Instead, god/God works from the inside out to influence and change people no matter which religion nurtured and matured them. The Golden Rule—“*Do to others what you want them to do to you*” (Matthew 7:12)—is an example of this (see chart previous page). Jesus’ two great commandments—“*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength and with all your mind. And, Love your neighbour as you love yourself*” (Luke 10:25-28)—is a Jewish/Christian summary of the same.

At the Mennonite Church Canada biennial assembly in Winnipeg this summer, Betty Pries called on participants to turn to contemplative life, surrendering to God all of their lives; abiding in Christ, allowing God to free them from their attachments to anything other than God; and to incarnate Christ in their lives. This directly parallels Armstrong’s findings from her study of the Abrahamic faiths.

### Living truth

In his book *Fractured Dance*, Michael King looks at Hans-Georg Gadamer’s thinking about how to communicate when we disagree deeply, and how to find truth when we cannot rely on those in power to give it to us, nor can we depend solely on what has been revealed. All revelation is interpreted from within the paradigm of the interpreter, including the very act of translating a text from its original language.

Gadamer, a 20th-century Christian philosopher, believed that there had to be better ways to communicate in order to form communities. Instead of apologizing for our prejudices, Gadamer suggested that we offer them as a kind of gift to those with whom we disagree. We also receive their prejudices as a gift from them, given to help us grow in our

*Many Christians find that they need new ways of thinking about faith and new disciplines to grow and strengthen their faith in the absence of the old community-based faith.*

understanding of the truth, since no one can ever have all the truth.

Separating into camps the way Mennonites and other groups have done over the centuries deprives those in other camps from the knowledge and feelings of the separating group, impoverishing all. Ideally, everyone in the human family would take part in this conversation, adding to the harmonies and dissonances, not finding a final truth, but all working towards current approximations of truth that future conversation partners in future generations would continue to develop. This is very similar to what indigenous people are asking of settler people in Canada: Learn to listen to each other even with deep differences.

Willard Metzger, executive director of MC Canada, spoke passionately at this summer’s assembly of a unity that was not based on finding “the truth.” With individuals, congregations and area churches in very different places on the topic of full inclusion of practising

Christian homosexuals in the life of the church, Metzger wondered if unity were to be found in faithfully praying, worshipping and studying the Bible, even though we will not come to a corporate conclusion on the truth of the matter anytime soon, or perhaps not at all.

So what is truth? In the postmodern era, many have given up on finding absolute truth, but we still have truth to share with those around us:

- **GOD IS.**
- **GOD WANTS** to be in relationship with us.
- **GOD WANTS** to grow us in the image of Jesus.

We can’t claim to base this on revelation from the Bible alone, even though we continue to treasure the Bible as a source of truth. We have to be able to share from our individual and corporate lives how we know this to be true. We have to live it. ☘

### For discussion

1. Where would you place yourself and your congregation: believing in absolute truths, wondering if there really is any truth, or somewhere in between? Do you agree that many Christians are finding they need a new way to think about faith?
2. Can you live with the idea that, on many topics, truth might be hard or impossible to find? How do you feel thinking about this? If there is no universally recognized absolute truth, how does that change the church’s mission?
3. Karen Armstrong suggests that God works from the inside out to influence and change people. Betty Pries has called for contemplative surrender, abiding in Christ and incarnating Jesus. How are these approaches similar? Do you think Pries’s call for a contemplative life is the right direction for the church to go?
4. Willard Metzger says that we need to find a unity that is not based on finding “the truth.” Is unity without a common understanding of truth possible? What practical measures do you or the church need to take in order to have this kind of unity?

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY AND BARB DRAPER



## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

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

✉ **Communitas follows in the footsteps of L’Arche founder**

RE: “GOOD WORK” and “Differently gifted,” Sept. 1, pages 4 and 8.

I am writing to thank you for your recent articles by Jason Reimer Greig and Will Braun.

Jean Vanier has been an inspiration and mentor to many, including the staff and board at Communitas Supportive Care Society in Abbotsford, B.C. His philosophy of person-centred care and inclusion has guided our organization as we support families and people living with developmental and intellectual disabilities, mental health challenges and acquired brain injuries.

Braun indicated he had “found no evidence of church groups speaking out on this topic.” Communitas was, in fact, founded 40 years ago because of pastors who responded to families in their

*(Continued on page 10)*

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Connecting passions

VIC THIESSEN

Part of my role in overseeing Mennonite Church Canada’s assemblies includes reading every word on assembly feedback forms. As I reviewed the 128 forms we received this year—a record number—I was struck by how often people stressed the importance of being together as members of our national faith community. Despite the fact that most attendees were delegates, they did not come to Winnipeg to talk business, regardless of how important that might be. They came to be together.

I have had the privilege of attending many assemblies during the past four decades with MC Canada and her predecessor, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. I never went as a delegate. I went because I was excited to be part of this national church body and because I wanted to stay connected with the people I would find there, from friends to professors and church leaders who have taught me so much.



Assemblies have changed a lot over the years, even in this decade. Most people support our shorter biennial assemblies, but I miss having more time for conversation. Indeed, I even miss the once-frequent, heated debates from the floor. These debates may have sparked anger and tension, but they were also an indication of how passionately people felt about the work of the national church and its calling in the world. I still find people who are passionate about the church—many here at the office in Winnipeg—but that passion is usually expressed in restrained ways and in safe settings, like assembly feedback forms. Perhaps it is simply a sign of the times, but are we losing something?

Jesus’ passionate nature was revealed most clearly in his prophetic role as he challenged those who missed the point about what God’s calling for the people of God actually looked like. Do we in MC Canada allow room for that passionate prophetic voice to be heard today? Reading

through my favourite periodical, *Canadian Mennonite*, I would have to say “yes.”

Our MC Canada communications team also plays a role in sharing these voices through various media that connect our members and congregations with each other and with the work of the national church.

As I leave my work at MC Canada, part of which included oversight of communications and serving as the official liaison to *Canadian Mennonite*, I am convinced that it will remain a priority for the national church to help our members and congregations across Canada stay connected.

It has been an incredible privilege to work for MC Canada these past 12-and-a-half years, first as a Witness worker in the U.K. and then at the office in Winnipeg. Networking and a passion for God’s reign were central to that work. My prayer for each of you is that you stay connected to the friends and congregations that are part of your national church community and that you remain passionate about the extraordinarily vital call you have received to be faithful followers of Jesus. God bless you all!

*Vic Thiessen will leave his positions as MC Canada’s CAO and minister of Church Engagement on Nov. 28.*

(Continued from page 9)

congregations who asked, “Who will care for our children?” Their vision of faith-based, non-institutionalized care for their children has informed our vision to be “communities of fully human, interdependent citizens.”

One of my colleagues recently said that if we are truly modelling our lives after Jesus, then our churches

should have a population of people living with disabilities disproportionate to the rest of society. The church has an opportunity to be a place where there can be abundant life for people of all abilities.

We recognize that there are congregations who embrace this opportunity. Our prayer is that we can all experience the grace of which Reimer Greig writes, and we are grateful that your magazine has created

## GOD, MONEY AND ME

# That's a lot of money!

SHERRI GROSZ

I remember a special gift from my Grandpa: a \$20 bill in a Christmas card. It came with one instruction: Grandpa had to see my purchase. It was a lot of money for a 10-year old! It was the first time I'd had that much money, and I was a little concerned about using it wisely. It took a few weeks to decide, but eventually Grandpa was shown a sweater and a few books.

Although what we consider a lot of money will vary with age, stage of life and experience, receiving a sizeable gift of cash can cause headaches and stress not only for individuals, but also for churches. A bequest, which is a gift given through a person's will, is the most common way for churches to receive a large or unexpected amount of money.

An undesignated bequest is a gift with no strings attached or detailed instructions in the donor's will. Churches should have a bequest policy that will govern how undesignated bequests will be handled. By having such a policy, decisions are made in advance and there is a set process in place. In addition, having a bequest policy can lead to further bequests, as people may feel more comfortable leaving gifts to the church since they know how these gifts will be handled. Churches without policies are sometimes faced with trying to make decisions while a large amount



of money is waiting. This can lead to a rushed process or poor decisions, and has even caused battles in some churches when agreement can't be reached over how to use the legacy gift.

Bequest policies should indicate which council, board or committee can accept the bequest. Who makes the decision may vary depending on the size of the gift; perhaps the finance committee can accept a smaller bequest, while the board or council may need to approve larger gifts. The policy should also indicate types of gifts the church will not accept and who will have the final decision to refuse a bequest.

Designated bequests are gifts with strings attached. Generally, the gift

designated gift, you should ensure that the church will be able to meet the designation requirements both now and in the future.

MFC has an online bequest discussion paper available at [MennoFoundation.ca/downloads/bequests.pdf](http://MennoFoundation.ca/downloads/bequests.pdf) and our consultants are available to meet with churches that wish to create, update or review a bequest policy. Individuals, couples or families wishing to explore gifts to the church or other charities can also benefit from meeting with MFC to discuss their wishes and to receive free counsel regarding the best way to make the gift.

While receiving a lot of unexpected money—whatever the amount may be—can cause stress, it can also bring op-

*The policy should also indicate types of gifts the church will not accept and who will have the final decision to refuse a bequest.*

comes with instructions in the will and indicates the gift must be used for a specific purpose. If the church cannot—or decides not to—meet the designation requirements, it must refuse the gift. Neither the estate trustees, nor surviving family or church members can change a designation in a will. As the donor is deceased, only the courts can authorize an alternate use. If you wish to leave a

portunities, allow us to cast new visions and begin conversations.

*Sherri Grosz is a stewardship consultant in the Kitchener, Ont., office of Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC). For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit [MennoFoundation.ca](http://MennoFoundation.ca).*

space to tell these stories.

KARYN SANTIAGO, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

*Karyn Santiago is chief executive officer of Communitas Supportive Care Society.*

## ✉ Those who feel impulse to rape need to find help

RE: “END RAPE culture: a Mennonite perspective,” Sept. 1, page 36, and “Talk of ‘rape culture’ forces men to deal with their lust” letter, Sept. 15, page 13.

Thank you to Rachel Bergen for bringing up this  
(Continued on page 12)

## FAMILY TIES

# The deadly sin of pride

MELISSA MILLER

**P**ride goeth before a fall, I ruefully thought last month, as I limped away from the place where I had taken a nasty tumble.

I fell in the Detroit airport just before stepping onto the huge, four-storey escalator. Just after glancing at a slow-moving couple a decade or two older than me, who appeared to be heading to the elevator, and smugly thinking—I confess with embarrassment—“I am fit. I don’t need the elevator.”

Then kaboom, the tip of my sandal caught the floor and I pitched forward, falling hard on my left shin, so hard that I couldn’t readily stand and needed help to regain my balance. Help I received from that same older couple and a cleaning person, who insisted that I take the elevator. Chastened and stunned with pain, I complied. Yes, sometimes pride goes before a fall, literally.

Fortunately, the pain was short-lived and the injury didn’t interfere with my normal activity. I was heading to my mother’s that day. When I arrived and told her of the incident, she sympathized and then cheerfully offered, “I’ve got a knee brace if you need it, or a cane, or a walker.” My mother has experienced some mobility challenges, and her good humour reflected the humility that she has wisely cultivated.

Humility is the antidote to pride:

- Pride says I am better than others. Humility says I respect others’ qualities.
- Pride says I am the source of my accomplishments. Humility says I have been blessed with gifts that I use for the good of the community.
- Pride says I am self-sufficient. Humility recognizes the web of life-giving connections, of which I am a small part.

Pride is such a natural human tendency, and so deadly. “Pride is the first sin, the source of all other sins, and the worst sin,” said theologian Thomas Aquinas. Like other sins, pride draws us into ourselves and blinds us to the needs of others, and to our place of inter-dependency in the community. Humility

boastful in I Corinthians 13:4.

Of course, there are variations on pride and humility. We might recall examples of false pride and false humility. Some of us may be guilty of a kind of pride by hiding our gifts and refusing to take risks. We may couch it in humble terms, but really it’s borne out of misplaced fear, even pride. “I’m not showy, like Martha,” we might think. Or, “I’m not one to toot my own horn, like Ben does.”

I wonder about the stories of Esther and Mary in the Bible. Could Esther have thwarted the plot to kill her people if she had denied the power she possessed? Could Mary have birthed and nurtured Jesus if she had refused to use her physical and spiritual gifts? Or Jesus: Could he have accomplished what he did without a keen sense of his own abilities, and the courage to use them?

Paul’s advice to the Galatians (6:4-5) is worth pondering: “*Make a careful ex-*



*Our work—the way we are using our God-given gifts—done with humility and commitment can be a source of true pride.*

opens us up to remembering God as the source of all gifts. Humility frees us to claim our rightful place in God’s world, as beneficiaries of God’s gifts, to use in service to God’s purposes.

The Bible has quite a bit to say about pride. The oft-quoted phrase I recalled after my tumble is found in Proverbs 16:18. Jesus’ parables often touched on pride, including the one about the proud Pharisee and the humble sinner in Luke 18. And Paul reminds us that love is not

*ploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don’t be impressed with yourself. Don’t compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life” (The Message).*

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

(Continued from page 11)

important topic, for sharing her own experiences of sexual harassment and for giving other women an opportunity to do so as well. We need to listen to these stories.

It's important for me, as a man, to recognize that I am part of rape culture simply by virtue of being male in a society in which sexual violence against women is frequently normalized and excused.

I also applaud Marcus Rempel's honesty in acknowledging his complicity in rape culture and his willingness to be part of the solution.

But I think that the comment made by Rempel's co-worker in the letter reinforces a false belief. I agree with Rempel that the majority of heterosexual men experience sexual attraction towards women and that it's our responsibility to figure out how to channel that energy in ways that are positive and, above all, respectful towards women. But I don't believe there's anything natural about the impulse to act violently or coercively towards women.

To suggest that sexual violence is a natural male impulse perpetuates the myth that sexually stimulated men don't have full control over their actions—"boys will be boys"—and that the onus is on women to protect themselves from unwanted sexual attention.

Sexual desire is natural; sexual violence is not. Any male who feels an impulse to, in the words of Rempel's co-worker, "rape every attractive female [he sees]," needs to find help.

**JOSIAH NEUFELD (ONLINE COMMENT)**

### ✉ Reader inspired by Mennonite ministries, service agencies

I WAS INSPIRED once again as I was reading about the many ways in which the Mennonite church is involved in its various ministries/agencies, both in Canada and around the world. Thank you for providing these examples via *Canadian Mennonite*.

**MARGE UNGER, CAMBRIDGE, ONT.**

### ✉ Gender equality needed if we are to talk about rape

RE: "TALK OF 'rape culture' forces men to deal with their lust" letter, Sept. 15, page 13.

First, there is a huge difference between lust and rape. Both men and women experience lust, but as we mature we have learned not to "get carried away." Rape is something different. Rape is about anger and power.

Second, I take issue with Marcus Rempel's patronizing tone. He refers to women as "ladies," and then in the next sentence he refers to "us boys," as if boys will

be boys and just can't help themselves.

If we are going to have a conversation about lust or rape, there needs to be equality. Please refer to mature females as women and mature males as men.

**VIRGINIA REIMER, TORONTO**

### ✉ Generational, gender shifts good for Conrad Grebel

RE: "GENERATIONAL SHIFT at Conrad Grebel University College," Sept. 29, page 29.

Six men and one woman replaced by three men and four women: that's a positive sign also, indicating that not only is a generational shift occurring, but so is a balancing of genders. Good for Conrad Grebel.

The next step might be a shift towards a faculty that tries to represent global Anabaptism, and by that I do not mean to assume anything by the last names listed in the article.

**RANDOLPH HALUZA-DELAY  
(ONLINE COMMENT)**

### ✉ The church is alive around the world

RE: "WHERE ARE we headed?" editorial, Sept. 15, page 2.

There is no question that the church is changing. As I travel around the world, the Christian church and our beloved Mennonite church are alive. I often feel so blessed to participate in worship services in Ethiopia, Vietnam or Peru. The church is alive. I feel the Spirit of Christ. As I said to another tour member at a worship service in Vietnam, "Do you feel the Spirit of Christ in this place?"

We in Canada and North America have much to learn from our brothers and sisters in the global church. For many of them, their energy is used in facing persecution, harassment and imprisonment by their governments, or caring for other members of their church family who struggle for survival.

I grieve that our church in North America is spending so much energy on keeping members of our church family out, rather than focussing on welcoming them, as Ryan Dueck outlined so well in his feature, "Are we one?" on page 2 of the same issue.

**WILMER MARTIN, WATERLOO, ONT.**




**Do you know of someone in your congregation not getting Canadian Mennonite?**

Ask your church administrator to add them to the list. It is already paid for.

## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

## Faith vs. belief (Pt. 1)

TROY WATSON

A curious lyric caught my attention as I was listening to “Don’t Swallow the Cap,” a song by The National, a melancholic indie rock band: “I have faith but don’t believe it.”

What a strange concept: faith without beliefs. It sounds like nonsense on the surface, but could there be such a thing as faith beyond belief? I realize this type of postmodern “drive!” can be tiresome, even infuriating, for modern-minded believers. Yet, as the 21st century unfolds, I meet more and more people who share this kind of paradoxical faith unfettered by beliefs.

Why is this happening and what does it mean?

There is evidence that the decline of Christianity and church attendance in Canada is directly related to the rise in education levels over the past half-century. Education is one of the highest values of our society, and naturally this has affected how we view matters of faith and spirituality. We’ve been acculturated to question what we’ve been taught to believe, and this has clearly been a factor in the exodus of young people from the church. However, the people who most rigorously study church history, theology and the Bible struggle with their Christian beliefs as much as inquisitive teenagers.

Bart Ehrman, one of the leading New Testament scholars in the world, has been sharing his reasons for leaving the evangelical faith and becoming an atheist in most of his best-selling books over the past 15 years.

Another Bart made news recently by revealing he is no longer a Christian. The former pastor and son of Tony Campolo, the famous preacher, now serves as a humanist chaplain at the University of Southern California. His reasons for leaving Christianity were familiar; namely,

the obstacles to belief increased exponentially the more he studied the evidence.



Bob Ripley, a retired United Church minister and faith columnist, came out as an atheist a few weeks ago. You can read all about it in his upcoming book, *Life Beyond Belief: A Preacher’s Deconversion*.

The list goes on, but not all

post-Christians lose their faith entirely. Some describe their “new” faith as an evolution beyond the conventional Christian belief system.

One of my friends left the ministry more than 10 years ago for a number of reasons, including his struggle with the

*Two summers ago, I ran into a colleague and we decided to catch up over coffee. When I asked him about his faith journey, he responded, ‘I’m in total free-fall.’*

narrowness of Christian doctrine. He told me if he had to wear a label now, it would be “agnostic mystic.” He explained, “I’m mystic because I’ve experienced the ‘divine presence’ so deeply it remains the greatest truth in my life. But I’m agnostic because I don’t know. I don’t who or what this presence is—because I can’t know. ‘G-d’ is infinite, mysterious, beyond human comprehension. None of us can know.”

John Suk, a former Christian Reformed Church (CRC) pastor, recently retired as editor of *The Banner*, the official magazine of the CRC, in the wake of publishing a book in 2011 entitled *Not Sure: A*

*Pastor’s Journey From Faith to Doubt*. In it, he chronicles his long transition from answers and certainty to a “faith that wavers, faith that questions, faith that is not sure.”

For years, Frank Schaeffer, son of Francis Schaeffer, the famous 20th-century theologian, has been promoting a faith that simultaneously believes and doesn’t believe. The title of his most recent book says it all: *Why I am an Atheist Who Believes in God*.

Two summers ago, I ran into a colleague and we decided to catch up over a coffee. When I asked him about his faith journey, he responded, “I’m in total free-fall.” He had read a few books that knocked the theological ground out from under his feet. Since then, he has opted out of ministry. I was disturbed by this news. He was a fantastic pastor whom I looked up to and admired. I can’t help but wonder if doubting pastors like my colleague might have an important place and voice in the 21st-century church.

I’m no longer surprised when I hear about a mature Christian struggling with or abandoning certain Christian beliefs. What I find interesting and inspiring is that so many of them still have faith.

This growing reality has caused me to ponder certain questions:

- **CAN PEOPLE** have faith without knowing what they believe?
- **HOW CAN** believers engage in mutual faith exploration with people who have “faith beyond belief”?
- **HOW CAN** we “believ-ers” be hospitable and give voice to the “faith-ers” in our churches?

To be continued . . .

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

## REMEMBRANCE DAY REFLECTION

## Legacy of 'the clock'

DAWNE DRIEDGER

Some time ago, when my father-in-law was updating his will, he asked his children whether there was anything in the house that they would like to have after he was gone. My thoughts immediately went to a clock that has hung in his home ever since I can remember.

I married into this family, but this clock carries special memories for me. My husband grew up in a Russian Mennonite community of faith. I did not. I met him on a blind date.

At the time, I was serving in the military. You can imagine the discussions we had, him having grown up with a pacifist perspective. I can tell you that my faith was challenged in many ways by these discussions.

I met his pastor, who challenged me as well, in a loving and respectful way. Eventually, I met his family, and although they disapproved of my choice of employment, they were always loving and gracious towards me.

The clock hung above the fireplace mantle, its chimes adding a faithful song to the hospitality.

After a time of wrestling with the questions these Mennonites had proposed to me, I made the decision to leave the military. I left for a number of reasons, one being that I was unable to justify taking part in a system that might call me to participate in taking the life of another created in the image of God.

I heard the stories of the men and women who came to live in Ukraine due to a decision not to take part in the military. I listened to the pain of the revolution that scarred their memories and tore them from loved ones and their land. I heard the testimonies of both loss and restoration as they escaped to North America and eventually to Leamington, Ont., and the struggle to put down roots in a place where the culture and language was so strange. Throughout were threads of hope and faith in the midst of darkness and doubt.

Their legacy is the quiet faith of this

*The clock is part of that legacy, having come with a family from Ukraine as they fled. It was repaired by my father-in-law and now marks time faithfully.*

family who now mean so much to me. The clock is part of that legacy, having come with a family from Ukraine as they fled. It was repaired by my father-in-law and now marks time faithfully.

The unconditional love and peace offered to me in my husband-to-be's family home are the heritage of these faithful people—"faithful" not because they are so perfect, but because they faithfully passed on their love and devotion to the most Faithful One.

As a mom and a pastor, I do my best to share the gifts God has given to me and do my part to carry on this legacy. This family clock is witness to the best of what has sifted down to the next generation through the faith stories of the Russian Mennonite people.

I offer this poem to share with others who may have experienced what I have been blessed to receive from our Mennonite heritage.



*Dawne Driedger is currently interim minister of Milverton (Ont.) Mennonite Fellowship.*

## The Clock

BY DAWNE DRIEDGER

there is a clock that hangs by the fireplace at Opa's house  
it tells of hiding and fear . . .

held closely by victims of a revolution  
it tells of flight and hope . . .

carried with refugees on a boat to a strange land  
it tells of perseverance and gratitude . . .

embracing a new life despite the setbacks of a foreign  
culture and tongue

it tells of new generations . . .

moving forward, life from the  
ashes, including my story—  
a stranger welcomed in with kind-  
ness, patience, and more than  
enough love to share  
it tells the glory of God . . .

tick, tock, ticking the infinite faith-  
fulness of the One called Love,  
the reorienting mercy and grace of  
the perfect Friend,  
and restoring power of the Holy  
Life-Changer



## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Dwight**—Silas Chandran Edgar (b. Aug. 9, 2014), to Prabo and Shauna-Lee Dwight, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Grunau**—Annika Louise Schellenberg (b. Sept. 23, 2014), to Miriam Schellenberg and Brian Grunau, Langley Mennonite, B.C.

**Renwick**—Alexander Thomas (b. Sept. 20, 2014), to Justin and Jenna Renwick, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Schulz**—Brynlee Kait (b. Sept. 23, 2014), to Tim and Kaitlin Schulz, Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Ruthie Clark**—Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., Sept. 28, 2014, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, Ont.

### Marriages

**Braun/ Epp**—Terra-Lyn Braun and Jonathan Epp, Hague Mennonite, Sask., Oct. 4, 2014.

**Burdge/Tober**—Stacy Burdge and Jon Tober, Kelowna First Mennonite, B.C., Sept. 27, 2014.

**Doerksen/Rapchuk**—Kara Doerksen and Chris Rapchuk, Hague Mennonite, Sask., Sept. 20, 2014.

**Epp/Neudorf**—Cherisse Epp and Dakota Neudorf, Hague Mennonite, Sask., Sept. 6, 2014.

**Jorritsma/Wenger**—Stephanie Jorritsma (First Mennonite, Edmonton) and Tim Wenger (River of Life, Kitchener, Ont.), at Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg, Oct. 4, 2014.

**Klassen/Peters**—Kristen Klassen and Jeffrey Peters, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Sept. 19, 2014.

**McFadyen/Miller**—Dillon McFadyen and Bethany Miller, Hague Mennonite, Sask., Oct. 4, 2014.

**Olfert/Wiens**—Jill Olfert (Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon) and Curtis Wiens (Herschel Ebenfeld Mennonite, Sask.), at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim, Sask., Aug. 31, 2014.

**Petkau/Sieminska**—Justin Petkau (Carman Mennonite, Man.) and Sylwia Sieminska, in Carman, Sept. 13, 2014.

### Deaths

**Block**—Betty, 94 (b. Oct. 26, 1919; d. Sept. 24, 2014), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

**Dyck**—Sybil (nee Dubord), 87 (b. April 8, 1927; d. Sept. 1, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Grant**—Holly, 82 (b. Aug. 30, 1931; d. Aug. 11, 2014), Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite, Glenbush, Sask.

**Kasdorf**—Isaak, 96 (b. April 1, 1918; d. Aug. 3, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Martens**—Julius, 88 (b. Feb. 23, 1926; d. Sept. 5, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Pauls**—Peter, 91 (b. Aug. 8, 1922; d. July 2, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Schroeder**—Irmgard (nee Unger), 85 (b. July 11, 1929; d. Aug. 6, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Steinman**—Walter, 93 (b. Sept. 5, 1921; d. Sept. 30, 2014), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Wagler**—Lester, 79 (b. May 27, 1935; d. Sept. 29, 2014), Crosshill Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

**Wall**—Charlotte (nee Buller), 90 (b. April 30, 1924; d. Aug. 19, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Woelk**—Jakob, 82 (b. April 26, 1932; d. July 15, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

### Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

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

## Pontius' Pilgrimage



## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

## VIEWPOINT

## Lessons from those who left

*Conference considers ex-Mennos*BY WILL BRAUN  
SENIOR WRITER

Phil Kleinsasser urged the faithful to “sow” their money in the offering plate in order to “reap” abundance in all areas of their lives. Kleinsasser, of course, is a Hutterite surname, but his admonition came not in an austere colony chapel, but at Springs Church, one of Canada’s most successful and success-oriented mega-churches, where Kleinsasser—his suspenders, beard and plaid long gone—serves as an assistant pastor.

That was the image with which Kate Bowler, a professor at Duke Divinity School and author of *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (Oxford, 2013), began her presentation to the Ex-Mennonite/Near Mennonite Conference hosted in October by the chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg.

Bowler estimates that ex-Anabaptists form the largest ethnic minority in the well-padded pews at Springs, even though the church could hardly be less Anabaptist, with its rock star pastor up front and holy Starbucks look-alike at

the back. She told of people who found an antidote to legalism, permission to embrace the ever-changing urban ethos, physical healing and acceptance of nose rings—in short, a place of belonging. “Love, accept, forgive” is a Springs motto.

Not surprisingly, one person asked a question that presumed Springs does little to help the disenfranchised. His critical inclination matched my own initial impulse to mentally shun. My more considered response was to ask what posture we Mennonites assume, or ought to assume, in relation to other churches, other faiths, “the world” and those among us who opt for one of those paths.

The stories of those who leave us, either by choice or de facto banning, raise a more fundamental question:

• **HOW DO** we create and maintain community—one of humanity’s most basic and complicated endeavours—without hurting people, that is, non-violently?

As soon as a group identifies in some way, by definition it excludes certain

people. A pacifist Mennonite church will not draw Catholic war vets. But if you make your boundaries too porous, as conference organizer Royden Loewen noted in a later interview, you run the risk of losing your centre and identity altogether. This is the dilemma of community and identity played out in a thousand wars, reformations and excommunications, and in at least one Hutterite-farmer-turned-mega-church-minister.

How, for instance, do we identify as nonviolent without causing the pain experienced by the Mennonite Second World War vets who started Altona (Man.) United Church upon rejection by their Mennonite churches, as presenter Conrad Stoesz explained? How can we be distinct without being prideful?

Or perhaps distinction is the wrong goal. Paul Doerksen of Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, said we are preoccupied with defining what a Mennonite is and what makes Mennonites distinct. He implied we should get over ourselves.

In a related presentation, Paul Martens of Baylor University in Texas, argued that, as part of a process of consolidating Mennonite identity around the things we do that make us different, a string of Mennonite heavy hitters—specifically Harold Bender, John Howard Yoder and J. Denny Weaver—have over-simplified the rich Anabaptist history into a narrow and very human-centred focus, which includes discipleship, “brotherhood” and the politics of nonviolence.

Martens takes the argument further, to say that this circumscribed focus has made Mennonite theology superfluous, but the more basic point, identical to Doerksen’s, is that we should focus less on ourselves and more on God.

We’re not as unique as we think. The Mennonite legacy contains many interconnected, organic layers, not just a few star tenets. And the starting point should be what God does, not what we do. Realizing this should make us more open to reach out over the “social chasm” that Loewen says tends to separate Mennonites from those who have left us.

The Mennonite tendency to stake out a unique identity is understandable. We

PHOTO © BY COLIN VANDENBERG



*Springs Church in Winnipeg is one of Canada’s most successful and success-oriented mega churches, where an ex-Hutterite, Phil Kleinsasser—his suspenders, beard and plaid long gone—serves as an assistant pastor.*



are scattered across the globe in an era of dizzying change, held together by neither a geographic nor an administrative centre. No Pope. No Mecca. The pressures of assimilation—the ultimate enemy of distinctiveness—pull on us with a force as inescapable as gravity.

That's what makes the Springs case interesting. It is the apex of assimilation, with the possible exception of complete non-belief. Anabaptist participation at Springs represents one logical conclusion of the gradual path of acculturation on which the majority of us—whether black bumper or buffed bumper types—find ourselves.

How do we respond? With defensiveness, judgement, fear, grace, openness?

If distinct identity is the bottom line, there is little to be said about Kleinsasser, or the esteemed Muslim leader Elma Harder, who spoke of her path from a Mennonite farm to Islam, other than that they are wrong. The conference, by its nature, invited a softer, more engaged response.

The original Anabaptists most certainly set themselves apart from the dominant religious practice of their day. But what they critiqued, in large part, was the claim made by a segment of the church to a corner on truth. They critiqued the blind guarding of a legacy.

Our calling is not to guard the Anabaptist legacy or claim theological high ground. Our history and character are gifts of God, but not ecclesial trump cards. We must be open to the gifts God has given others, which can serve as correctives for us.

To allow Yoder back into the discussion, we need to believe that weakness, not distinctiveness, wins. We must resist the urge to try to steer the Mennonite legacy toward a particular position or end.

After the one conference attendee asked the question about Springs' presumed neglect of the marginalized, Harold Janz, a Mennonite Brethren elder, gently encouraged us consider the megachurch's sizeable donations to Mennonite Central Committee and the admirable work it does in Winnipeg's personal care homes. He did not condone the prosperity gospel preached there, but he didn't let us get away with sitting too smug. ❧

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# 'I can't give God any less than my best'

*Speed skater, hockey player and basketball coach speak of the roles faith and sport have played in their lives*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

**“W**hen I run, I feel his pleasure,” said Eric Liddell in the 1981 movie, *Chariots of Fire*.

Cindy Klassen, six-time Canadian Olympic speed-skating medallist, echoed Liddell when she said, “I can't give God any less than my best,” at Waterloo's RIM Park on Oct. 4 as part of a panel discussion on sports and faith co-sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Klassen, together with Brad Schlegel, a former NHL player and Olympic hockey medallist, and Suzanne DeGroot, a University of Waterloo and Athletes in Action basketball coach, answered questions from mediator Greg Yantzi of MCC Ontario and a crowd of sports and faith enthusiasts.

All three expressed the perspective that, while winning is great, as Christian athletes doing their best every time they compete is actually more important.

Schlegel, who played for the NHL's Washington Capitals and Calgary Flames, as well as the 1992 and '94 Canadian Mens Olympic Hockey teams, spoke of losing as having played his best against someone else who had played his best as well.

DeGroot, who works for a Christian organization as well as the University of Waterloo, was not alone when she talked about the opportunities to share faith with others, both on her team and with other teams, particularly when planning Christian worship for sports events.

Schlegel also noted that sports has great opportunities to develop both good and bad habits. Some of the lifestyle possibilities practised by professional athletes don't suit Christians, but learning

discipline, how to deal with failure, and how to be a servant leader do, he said.

Klassen spoke of how family and faith have kept her grounded in her career as an amateur athlete. She is now finishing her undergrad degree that she began in the mid-1990s before dedicating herself to her sport. But throughout, she has maintained a regular prayer and Scripture-reading practice, as well as at-



*Canadian Olympic speed-skating medallist Cindy Klassen responds to a question from moderator Greg Yantzi of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario during a panel discussion on faith and sports at RIM Park in Waterloo, Ont., on Oct. 4.*

would not be missing both worship and Sunday school in order to play hockey as children, although this rule was loosened up as they reached their mid-teens.

At the end of the presentations and

*All three expressed the perspective that, while winning is great, as Christian athletes doing their best every time they compete is actually more important.*

tending worship when she could.

Both she and Schlegel spoke of their parents making it clear that their children

panel discussion, youths, parents and grandparents crowded around Klassen for autographs and photos. ❧

## ❧ Staff changes

### **Bergen to take on CAO role following Thiessen's departure**

WINNIPEG—Staffing shifts at the executive leadership level at the Mennonite Church Canada offices in Winnipeg will see Dave Bergen, executive minister of Christian Formation, take on the additional responsibility of chief administrative officer (CAO) while retaining his key responsibilities in Formation. The shift was prompted by the departure of Vic Thiessen, CAO and executive minister of Church Engagement, effective Nov. 28. Thiessen says that he and Willard Metzger, MC Canada's executive director, mutually agreed to end Thiessen's employment. “I have greatly appreciated Vic's work, and support and wish him well in his new endeavours,” Metzger says. “I admire Vic's forthrightness and his conscientious work ethic.” Metzger adds that he will be working with executive staff in the coming weeks to determine the implications on the program areas of Christian Formation and Church Engagement. —Mennonite Church Canada



**Vic Thiessen**

# Sexuality is about more than just sex

*Rockway Mennonite Collegiate focusses on sexuality in chapel series and public meeting*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate decided that not only did it need to focus on sexuality for its students in grades 7 to 12, but it needed to invite the community, including *Canadian Mennonite*, to hear what was being presented and to have an opportunity to respond.

Keith Graber Miller, a professor of religion and sexuality at Goshen (Ind.) College, began his Oct. 1 public presentation by giving a synopsis of what he had said in two earlier school chapels, including “faithful, inclusive and shameless sexuality,” gender, sexuality, sexual practice and

ranking parents and church 9th and 10th out of 10, respectively.

He reminded the crowd that “sexuality is, of course, far more than what we do with our genitalia. It’s about our full-body selves, about embracing or critiquing gendered expectations, about living in and with our bodies, about love and connection and attachment and friendship. It’s about men and women respecting the other sex as well as their own sex.”

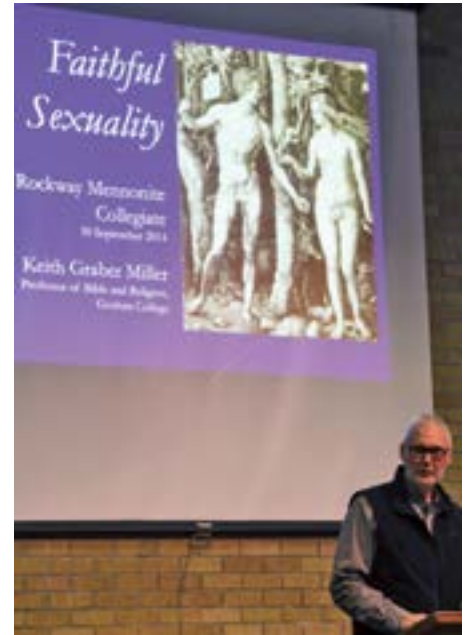
Parents wondered what the children at Rockway had been asking and, while Graber Miller did not “out” any individual,

*[M]any youth do not see oral/genital sexual practice as ‘sex,’ reserving that for genital/genital sexual experiences.*

today’s sexualized society. He bemoaned the early and depersonalized start to sexual practice in today’s society with the easy availability of dehumanizing pornography and the ubiquity of relationless sexual practice.

Throughout, he practised a relaxed and open attitude towards any question that the gathered parents, pastors and students raised, leavening the evening with self-deprecating humour. Expressing an “inclusive sexuality” towards lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer individuals, he spoke of the need for both ethics and inclusion. Using an encyclopedic knowledge of current trends and statistics, he answered each question with sincerity and clarity. For him, the key to “faithful sexuality” is open communication between parents, church and people of all ages, from toddlers through adulthood. Most teens tell surveys that they get most of their knowledge about sex from peers and the media,

he noted that questions were asked about when to begin dating, what expressions of sexuality were appropriate, and a sense from students about being different from those in the public school system in regard to the practice of genital sex. He noted also that many youth do not see oral/genital sexual practice as “sex,” reserving that for genital/genital sexual experiences.



*Keith Graber Miller, a professor of religion and sexuality at Goshen (Ind.) College, speaks to the public on ‘Faithful sexuality’ at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont., on Oct. 1.*

His advice to parents is to begin talking about sex with toddlers and teaching that masturbation is good, but not public.

Car rides are his preferred place and time for talks about sex; not just “the talk,” but many talks. His description of going in the same direction, eyes forward, a healthy space between the two in the conversation, and a captive audience, raised an appreciative laugh from the gathered group. ✻

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## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# 'They are not alone'

*Manitoba Mennonites remember missing and murdered indigenous women*

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

On a very windy, cold and dark Oct. 3 night, Steve Heinrichs, director of indigenous relations for Mennonite Church Canada, and a few others strung 20 dresses on fishing line on both sides of the Esplanade Riel pedestrian bridge that spans the Red River near The Forks in downtown Winnipeg.

"We lifted up prayers before, during and after, and hung the dresses as visible prayer signs that say, 'Someone hears the cries of those mourning the missing and murdered indigenous women; someone will honour it,'" Heinrichs said.

"What if there were 100 missing Mennonite women in Canada?" he wondered aloud. "What if there were 200 murdered Mennonite girls? How would our church community respond? What would we ask Mennonite Central Committee to do? What would we demand of our governments?"

In June, a report released by the RCMP

stated that 1,182 indigenous women have gone missing or have been murdered since the late 1980s or early '90s. Heinrichs wants Mennonite churches to sit up and recognize that these murdered and missing girls and women are their sisters and daughters too.

Tina Fontaine, who made national news when her body was discovered in August, lived in Heinrichs' neighbourhood. Heinrichs and his wife Ann have two adopted indigenous daughters and a biological son. The issue hits home for him. "They are my neighbours," he said. "They look like my girls."

Melanie Kampen, a member of Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, said she joined the effort because "I wanted to do something to raise awareness and act in solidarity with those who are mourning and grieving the loss of their loved ones."

"I wish that the Mennonite community would pay a lot more attention to things

like this, and would empathize with people and their suffering," she said, noting that "Mennonites have their own stories of so much suffering, coming from Russia and Ukraine, that it is hard for me to understand why there is not more empathy, especially for something like murdered and missing indigenous women and young girls."

Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach is one church that responded to the open invitation put out by the Sisters in Spirit, a group from the Native Women's Association of Canada, that has held annual vigils across Canada on Oct. 4 ever since Amnesty International shone a light on the number of missing and murdered indigenous women.

"This year, nine of us from Grace attended the vigil at the legislative buildings," said Kyle Penner, associate pastor. Grace Mennonite has partnered with the Pauingassi community in northern Manitoba, and he said that relationship has prompted church members to look at ways of "standing in support and solidarity because we believe that something in this relationship between settler and indigenous people is broken."

"Often you feel paralyzed by the enormity of an issue," said Heinrichs. "We need to nurture some kind of hope, so we don't go into despair. This act of hanging dresses is not going to change much, but if there are some people that see and know that it is non-native people responding to

PHOTO BY CHRIS SWAN



*Melanie Kampen camped out at the Native Women's Protest site near the Manitoba Legislature in Winnipeg earlier this month, to protest the government's lack of response to the 1,182 missing and murdered indigenous women from across Canada.*

PHOTO BY KIRA BURKETT



*Flowers are laid out on the Manitoba Legislature steps in Winnipeg in the pattern of a butterfly at the annual Oct. 4 vigil honouring the 1,182 missing and murdered indigenous women from across Canada. It was one of 130 vigils held this year.*

indigenous cries for justice, that can be encouraging. They know they are not alone.”

“As treaty people, we are a covenanted people,” he continued. “I would like to see the church make indigenous concerns its concerns. We need to find ways of putting

the issues that we hear today of missing and murdered women, a lack of a real treaty relationship and ongoing questions of jurisdiction over land at the core of our work. . . . It begins with awareness and deep lamentation.” ❧

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# Making the 'Corner Connection' in Carman

*Carman Mennonite Church offices become a downtown ministry*

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

CARMAN, MAN.

Seven hundred metres makes all the difference for Carman Mennonite Church. Four years ago, the church decided to move its offices out of the church building to a downtown location on one of the busier intersections in Carman. They have aptly named the building “the Corner Connection.”

Carman is a rural community of 3,000 people. In the 1940s, Mennonites moved to this Anglo-Saxon area from Mennonite communities to the south, looking for work or farmland. In 1945, when the families were looking to purchase a church building or property on which to build a church, the town was less than welcoming. Hard feelings toward this group that refused to go to war—while the rest of the community suffered significant loss—meant that Mennonites were banished to the outskirts of town to build their church.

Today, that property lies within town limits, and while the downtown area is a very short distance away, the church continues to feel removed from the hustle and bustle of weekday activity in town.

Several events have worked to change the community’s attitude into one that embraces and welcomes Mennonites. In the 1970s, Carman suffered two major floods. Many homes and businesses were flooded, but each time when the waters receded Mennonite Disaster Service moved in and mucked out the basements. During that decade, the Mennonites from Carman and surrounding communities opened the Carman Mennonite Central Committee Thrift Shop that today has volunteers representing a diverse cross-section of the community.

Bob Pauls, pastor of Carman Mennonite Church since 2000, says, “When the offices were at the church, it was a good week

when two or three people would drop by the church.” Today, the offices receive anywhere from 15 to 45 visitors a week, with an increasing number of non-members and non-attenders dropping by. “We knew the numbers would increase, but we had no idea by how much.”

With the extra traffic, Pauls says, “the challenge is to get our sermons written sometimes.” The church has given Pauls and Karen Schellenberg, the church’s other pastor since 2012, permission to work on their sermons at home on the Friday before they preach. “We try to manage it by one of us taking care of traffic while the other works with the door closed for awhile,” says Schellenberg, “but we are both ‘people people.’ It is our nature to want to be with the people.”

For Pauls and Pat Wiens, the administrative assistant, who remember working in the offices at the church, which were scattered into the far corners of the building, this downtown office “has enhanced and

strengthened the team ministry aspect. Before, there was very little communication between the three of us, but here communication flows easily,” says Pauls.

“It feels like we are a team,” says Schellenberg in agreement. “We are more available to each other.”

The church building, which sits at the north end of town on a busy highway, is used by several community groups during the week, but mostly it sits empty. The activity is all happening downtown at the Corner Connection.

“People have gotten used to this as a place to stop in, whether they are members . . . or not,” says Schellenberg. “Sometimes they come with specific concerns; sometimes they just want a listening ear; sometimes they come to meet each other.”

The coffee pot is often on and the large foyer with a table and chairs is a welcoming space. A large boardroom hosts many meetings and discussions. Not only is the building more accessible, but, Pauls says, “being a small town, if you parked your car or truck outside the church, everyone would know you were there, but here you’re not on public display. For non-church people it is sometimes intimidating to enter a church building. This is less threatening.”

“I think the issues of the past no longer exist,” Pauls concludes. “Being a Mennonite in Carman has become more acceptable. We have become more of an integral part of the community.” ❧



*Carman Mennonite administrative assistant Pat Wiens, left, and pastors Bob Pauls and Karen Schellenberg stand outside the Corner Connection, the church’s new office space in the heart of town.*

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



*Violet Wakaba, left, Judy Shantz, Carla Helmuth and Tim Mbugua cook for a joint West Hills Mennonite Fellowship/Kenyan Global Church fundraising dinner on behalf of Pan African Christian Exchange (PACE) on Oct. 4 at Steinmann Mennonite Church in Baden, Ont. The \$2,534 raised will be used for a church/school plant by PACE in Kenya for a nomadic tribal group. Helmuth, supported by West Hills in New Hamburg, Ont., has volunteered for PACE three times over the past four years, working at providing a retreat for PACE staff, doing office work, building a website and staffing a kids camp. Funds were raised through the dinner, a silent auction and through the sale of crafts from Kenya.*

PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN



*The Common Place Café opened for business on Oct. 8 in the new Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C. Centre in Abbotsford. Open from Monday to Saturday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., the new restaurant features various breakfast items and a lunch menu of signature borscht and other soups and sandwiches, along with muffins and desserts. The café and the staff offices for MCC B.C. were the first to open, with the thrift shop and Ten Thousand Villages retail outlets scheduled to open before the end of October. An official grand opening is scheduled for Dec. 6, pushed back from the original announced date of Oct. 25.*

God at work in  
the World  
**Snapshots**

## CARE FOR THE LAND

# 'Shaping a sustainable future'

*AMBS conference grounds Christian discipleship to the land*

**RANDOLPH HALUZA-DELAY**

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

ELKHART, IND.

Even urban Mennonites lay claim to an agrarian heritage. According to many speakers at *Rooted and Grounded: A Conference on Land and Christian Discipleship*, held last month at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), this is important despite the urbanity of most Mennonites and North Americans in general.

More than 170 academics, farmers, pastors and laypeople gathered for dozens of presentations and three keynote lectures, during which they discussed ways that agrarian and rural backgrounds need to be recovered and rethought, for reasons of faithfulness to God and care of the environment.

According to Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, co-pastor of First Mennonite in Edmonton, the final keynote lecture by Barbara Rossing, professor of New Testament at Lutheran Theological Seminary, brought it all together for him. Rossing emphasized that Christians do not aim for a future world, but to seek how God's kingdom is entering this world. It does so like the "tree of life" in Revelation, she said, growing from roots continually being nourished in solid ground. Christians need to be grounded simultaneously in both "place" and God, to be most faithful.

Rossing drew on scholarship that emphasizes how the New Testament was written in times of Roman Empire. "The counter-imperial vision of communities deeply grounded and rooted" in the radical new relationship with Jesus was a counter-cultural message even then, Rossing said.

The first keynote address also emphasized the counter-cultural aspects of being "rooted and grounded." S. Roy Kaufman, a pastor who has served rural Mennonite churches for three decades, challenged



**S. Roy Kaufman**

listeners with the idea that being "unrooted, ungrounded, is essential for consumptive capitalism," with all of its community-destroying characteristics. He emphasized the gifts that agrarian communities have "to shape a sustainable future for the human family and to bring healing to this earth of God's creation."

In between, Ellen Davis, a professor of Bible at Duke Divinity School in North Carolina, reminded listeners that Scripture repeatedly points out the expectations of a partnership between land, people and God. This three-way relationship proved central to other presentations on topics such as local food, reclamation of damaged environments, human-animal interactions, and even hymn-singing in the local congregation.

Several presenters pointed out how political boundaries are often ecologically nonsensical.

"Thirteen political jurisdictions need to work together to protect the stream that flows near my house," pointed out Matt Humphreys of Campbell River, B.C. This idea caught the attention of a Church of the Brethren pastor, who pointed out that churches in his denomination are often named after local rivers because they baptize new members in rivers. "What does it mean to baptize in polluted water?" he asked.

Given the conference focus, several sessions explored the thoughts of Wendell Berry, a Kentucky farmer, author and environmental advocate. One speaker referred to him as "St. Wendell," jokingly highlighting the prevalence of his thought

in contemporary Christian thinking about the troubled relationships of agriculture, environment and community in contemporary North America.

According to Joanne Moyer, who spoke about her postdoctoral research at the University of Toronto on the relationship between faith and environmental activism, *Rooted and Grounded* was one of the most enjoyable academic conferences she'd attended. "There's really nothing sillier than sitting in a classroom talking about the land and never going outside," she said. Besides the classroom lectures, participants could pick from one of 11 afternoon field trips, including an Amish hydroponics farm, Goshen College's Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center, examples of urban agriculture projects and a canoe trip on the Elkhart River.

Sarah Thompson, the executive director of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), was surprised to hear CPT referred to as having an environmental element to its programs. "We are just realizing this ourselves," she declared in her own session. When Palestinians return to their homes and find decades-old olive trees uprooted, it is an issue that combines environment, peace, and the deepest spiritual and material needs of people. Thompson said CPT is starting to consider whether "undoing ecocide" needs to be included in the organization's training programs.

The practical matters of stewardship of the land can be complicated. During an evening storytelling session around a campfire, two presenters disagreed on the best way to deal with the urban decline and empty houses plaguing Detroit. One emphasized the good work being done by a wealthy businessman buying land and planting trees to be harvested, which also brings nature into the urban spaces. But another reminded listeners that this process privatized the land and consolidated decision-making power into one person. The latter speaker highlighted community land trusts as a collective way of doing stewardship.

Opportunities for exploring ways that AMBS has been greening its campus—including native flower and prairie grass areas, and energy-efficient buildings—seemed to be appreciated by participants. ▮



## CARE FOR THE CLIMATE

PHOTO BY MATT THOMPSON



*Under the yellow flags of 20 different denominations and faiths, a dozen Mennonite church members walk with the People's Climate March in New York City on Sept. 21.*

## 'Choose hope' for climate

BY RANDOLPH HALUZA-DELAZ

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
NEW YORK, N.Y.

**B**efore 120 political leaders gathered at the request of the United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-Moon for a summit on climate change, and before more than 300,000 people marched through the streets of New York for the People's Climate March, religious leaders from around the world gathered to consider the threat posed by climate change.

They met on Sept. 21 and 22 in New York for an Interfaith Summit on Climate Change organized by Religions for Peace and the World Council of Churches (WCC), that culminated in signing "Climate, faith and hope: Faith traditions together for a

common future," a statement to highlight the importance of religious engagement with climate change.

In a speech to the Interfaith Summit, Christiana Figueres, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the organization that oversees international negotiations, called on religious groups around the world to tackle the issue. Figueres urged religions to "find their voice on climate change" and to mobilize against what is increasingly being called the "greatest moral issue of our time."

The climate march and signing of the

Interfaith Statement fell on the UN's World Day of Peace, Sept. 21, pointed out Doug Hostetter of Mennonite Central Committee's United Nations Office in New York. Climate change "is linked to conflict as we have abused this planet," he said. "It has affected water, grazing lands, resources all over the world, so peace and climate change is a link we have tried hard to make."

It was those consequences and the shared sense of duty that characterized the gathering, which ended with a spectacular multifaith ceremony on the evening of Sept. 21 at the Episcopal Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. Many of the participants had been on the massive People's Climate March that afternoon in New York City.

"The twin sides of my faith [are] doing and worshipping," said a Christian leader from the Pacific Islands, which are experiencing storm surges from sea-level rise and saline encroachment on fresh water.

"We stand together to express deep concern for the consequences of climate change on the earth and its people, all entrusted, as our faiths reveal, to our common care," read Bhai Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia, a Sikh leader from the United Kingdom, from the first paragraph of the Interfaith Statement on Climate Change. More than a dozen leaders read successively from the document.

"We acknowledge the overwhelming scientific evidence that climate change is human-induced," the statement acknowledged. (*To read the full text, visit [interfaithclimate.org](http://interfaithclimate.org).*)

The question of hope came up frequently at the Religions for the Earth conference that took place at Union Theological Seminary from Sept. 19 to 21. A sense of urgency was prevalent for many as the scientific evidence continues to mount, and natural conditions upon which human societies depend begin to change in ways attributable to human-originated fossil-fuel emissions, deforestation and land practices.

"I waver between the rising balloons of optimism and the brick bats of cynicism," said a participant.

Another speaker responded by drawing on her heritage as an African-American:

“This is the gift of faith. For us, tragedy and hope exist. There’s honesty in grieving, but we learned through that horror of our history that we have a choice. So, choose hope!”

No Anabaptist leaders were present at the Interfaith Summit as signatories or observers.

Smaller climate marches happened around the world and in many Canadian cities. Mark Bigland-Pritchard of Osler Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan said climate change is pretty abstract, but people hear about it a lot. “So a march is a step people can take,” he said. “They can take other steps, like changing light bulbs, but then they wonder what’s next.”

Other Mennonites have begun a climate fast the first day of each month.

A campaign run by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. is the Faith Climate

Petition to urge political leaders there to take action.

Citizens for Public Justice has suggestions for churches on a climate page on its website (cpj.ca).

### **Fossil-fuel divestment encouraged**

Religions for the Earth ended with a web-based campaign to encourage the world’s religious citizens to speak up by visiting [www.ourvoices.net](http://www.ourvoices.net).

The most far-reaching proposals include efforts to divest from fossil fuels. Several charitable foundations, led by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, announced at the event that it was divesting from fossil fuels.

Figueres gave a speech in May to the WCC with the same call for divestment. In July, the WCC central committee voted to eliminate its investments in fossil-fuel

companies, news which received no media coverage in Canada.

“When the organization that accounts for half a billion Christians makes such a significant step, one would think someone would notice in a fossil-fuel-dependent country,” said blogger David Climenhaga from Alberta.

Other churches and seminaries have begun divestment processes. At the Mennonite Church Canada assembly this summer in Winnipeg, a resolution was passed for the church to study the climate-change issue and make recommendations to local congregations and the national church.

Organizers of Fossil-Free Menno are hopeful that this will lead Mennonites to think about the issue and take steps in the wake of the WCC decision and attention to events like the Climate Summit. ☸

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## GOD AT WORK IN US

## Encouraged to keep working

*Saskatchewan community developer wins award for service to others*

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

“Everything I’ve done has been a team sport,” quips Ray Funk as he reflects on his life’s achievements.

The community developer and former Member of Parliament was awarded Goshen (Ind.) College’s Culture for Service Award at the college’s fall convocation and homecoming on Oct. 3. The award is given annually to two or three alumni who exemplify the college motto, “Culture for service,” having distinguished themselves through lifelong service to others.

Funk was nominated for working at justice issues on behalf of Canada’s Indigenous Peoples during his years in federal politics and also for building bridges through economic development in northern Saskatchewan’s first nation communities. He didn’t think there was much chance he would win, though, because he hadn’t published papers or written books, as some other nominees had. Nevertheless, when told he would be receiving the award, Funk says, “I was delighted.”

Funk doesn’t see himself as a self-made man. He says receiving the award “made me grateful for all the people who mentored me along the way,” from pastors and Sunday school teachers at Tiefengrund Mennonite Church, where he grew up, and teachers at Rosthern Junior College, where he attended high school, to professors and classmates at Goshen College, where he earned his undergraduate degree in sociology in 1969.

“It’s important to stay rooted in community,” says Funk, and he speaks with warmth of the various communities he has been part of in his adult years. After his time at Goshen, Funk moved to Ontario, where he worked in adult education and community development. He later returned to the United States to earn a master’s degree in adult education from

Michigan State University.

Eventually, he returned to Saskatchewan, where, in 1985, he and his wife, Shirley Falstead, established Spruce River Research. The non-profit organization fosters economic development in indigenous communities through feasibility studies, strategic planning and implementation, adult education, and negotiations between communities and government or communities and industry.

In 1988, Funk was elected as a Saskatchewan MP for Prince Albert-Churchill River, a seat he held until 1993. During his time in office, Funk worked at numerous peace and justice

issues, including introducing a peace trust fund bill, which was not passed.

“Everything I’ve done,” says Funk, “[whether it was working with] the first nations, politics, Mennonite Central Committee, all of it has been a team effort.”

In his acceptance speech, Funk reflected on his understanding of the “Culture for service” motto. “The culture is not there to fuel the war machine, . . . to power the corporate empire, . . . to feed the fame factory,” he said. “The culture is there to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, to build community and to take care of Mother Earth for our children and grandchildren.”

Funk, a member of Grace Mennonite Church in Prince Albert, says, “I still have lots of energy, and, hopefully, good years in front of me,” adding that he sees his award as “an encouragement to keep working,” particularly in the area of relationships between the Mennonite community and Canada’s Indigenous Peoples. ❧

GOSHEN COLLEGE PHOTO BY BRIAN YODER SCHLABACH



*Goshen (Ind.) College president Jim Brenneman, left, presents the Culture for Service Award to alumnus Ray Funk at the college’s fall convocation and homecoming on Oct. 3.*

## FOCUS ON BOOKS &amp; RESOURCES

## BOOK REVIEW

# Helping us not to forget

*The Winter We Danced: Voices From the Past, the Future and the Idle No More Movement.*

Edited by The Kino-nda-niimi Collective. Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2014, 440 pages.

*Islands of Decolonial Love: Stories & Songs.*

By Leanne Simpson. Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2014, 112 pages.

REVIEWED BY DAVID DRIEDGER  
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

After getting a coffee I sat down to read *The Winter We Danced*.

On the table next to me I noticed a book someone left behind. On the cover was a bold notice stating “2.5 million copies sold.” The book was a contemporary work of fiction re-telling the conquest narrative of America expanding into the West doing battle in “Indian country.”

I turned my attention back to *The Winter We Danced* and thought also of *Islands of Decolonial Love* that I had recently finished. Both are stand-out contributions from Winnipeg-based Arbeiter Ring Publishers. These books will not sell 2.5 million copies. This fact is a

tragedy and a reminder. It is a tragedy that these unique and impactful works will not receive the audience they deserve, and, conversely, it is a reminder of the sorts of stories we prefer to tell ourselves.

*The Winter We Danced* will make it more difficult to write some future bestselling novel of Canada’s brave resistance to the potential terrorist actions of the indigenous people in the years 2012-13. It is an archive, a vast collection of stories, poems, songs, editorials, blog posts, tweets, images and histories that explore the people and events that came to be identified with the Idle No More Movement. This is a primary resource of



accounts as they unfolded and the reflections that emerged in the wake of these events. The collection is not only important for future generations, but a present reminder of how quickly these events can vanish from mainstream media.

As I read through these accounts I was struck again by the importance of Chief Theresa Spence’s hunger strike and how quickly I had forgotten it. There are many stories competing to occupy our memory and imagination.

*Islands of Decolonial Love* is a collection of poems and short stories by Leanne Simpson, an indigenous theorist and storyteller. The title is acutely accurate, as this collection moves among the registers of love, isolation, experimentation, abuse and hope.

This book is work to read. It is the necessary and at times painful work of emerging from another story—one that has also sold millions—a story of love that was never meant for indigenous bodies and souls. Simpson’s stories swirl with dirt and blood, water and whisky, red and white, and if there are connections among these islands—and even bones are broken into islands—it is by threads of love. Simpson writes: “i want to pick you up, and i’m going to stitch every one of your broken bones back together with kisses.”

These books challenge our imagination. They put in bold contrast many of the stories we are more comfortable with, especially for those of us immersed in the history and story of the West. I can only remind readers of the two images cast by the titles: love and dance. These forms are often closely related. We would do well to learn some new steps. ❧

David Driedger is associate pastor of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

## /// Briefly noted

### Borntrager books on growing up Amish relaunched

Mary Christner Borntrager was 67 when her first book, *Ellie*, was published in 1988 by Herald Press. When *Ellie* began to sell well, Herald Press asked her to write another book, and then another. In all, she penned 10 novels over the next 10 years, all with one-word, one-name titles, concluding with *Annie*. The Ellie’s People series grew to more than 500,000 copies in print. Now the series is being relaunched by Herald Press with new covers and slight textual updates. In *Ellie*, readers meet Ellie Maust, an Old Order Amish girl growing up in the early 1900s. She wishes she could wear bright dresses like her English friend, Missy, and face cream and perfume like their fancy Amish hired girl, Susie Glick. Borntrager’s heirs are pleased to see the books brought back into print. “If more children and adults in a new generation can get pleasure from reading them, that is great,” says Kathryn Keim, her oldest daughter. One of Borntrager’s goals in writing the books was “providing a true window into Amish family life,” says Keim, recalling that her mother had read two misleading books on the Amish that also propelled her to continue the series. Borntrager died in 2002 at 81.

—MennoMedia



## FOCUS ON BOOKS &amp; RESOURCES

## BOOK REVIEW

# Pastor's first novel invites discussion

*A Pie Plate Pilgrimage.*

By William Loewen. Privately published by Wordly Lion Press, 2014, 226 pages.

REVIEW BY BARB DRAPER  
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

William Loewen has written a theological book disguised as a novel. This makes it challenging to classify, but it also opens new possibilities for how it can be used. I would recommend this book for a book club or other group discussion, especially for young adults who are exploring their own spirituality.

Loewen, pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church in Calgary, provides an interesting and believable story with engaging characters. Lydia Phillips, the main character, is given the task of compiling a Christian self-help book, forcing her to ask important questions about Christian faith. Her problematical work environment forces her to face deep questions about her vocation. Meanwhile, the old friend she has recruited to help her with the book project brings his own complicated relationships into the picture. Those who enjoy something of a love interest in their stories won't be disappointed.

Although the writing may not be as polished as that of a seasoned author who submits to a rigorous editing process, Loewen's book is a compelling read. The story carries itself, even while it begs to be discussed along the way. Loewen provides some discussion questions in the back and indicates that conversation was his intention. He wants to make theological discussion more accessible, especially for young adults.

As I was reading, I found it slightly ironic that a self-published book with a style that had some rough spots was describing the making of a book that



was to be thoroughly edited and revised by a professional publishing company. The book and its cover look quite professional except for the fact that the page margins are very narrow. I found the long text lines a bit distracting. There were only one or two places where I

wanted to quibble with the editing.

The strength of this book is in the everyday-life questions it raises in the midst of the story. Readers are pushed to explore their own views about the Christian message and how it plays out in the church. It raises questions about a wide variety of issues, including feminism, intimate relationships, issues in the work environment, respect for others, the meaning of love, and even death and funerals.

Although the story might not win a prize for excellence in literature, Loewen has provided a good resource for promoting discussion about things we face in our lives every day. Although he never mentions Mennonites, he writes from an Anabaptist perspective and invites readers to sincerely think about what it means to follow Jesus.

*A Pie Plate Pilgrimage* is available in paperback or Kindle versions at amazon.ca. ☘

PHOTO COURTESY OF JANE ANN MCLACHLAN



**Waterloo author Jane Ann McLachlan presents a cheque for \$1,205 to Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario, half of the royalties from the sale of her book *Connections: Parables for Today*.**

**The other half is going to Canadian Lutheran World Relief. She chose these organizations because of their work in the Third World. Published by Pandora Press of Kitchener, Ont., McLachlan's book is a collection of 10 short stories that show people often have more in common than they initially realize. *Connections* can be purchased by e-mail to [marilyns@mennonitecc.on.ca](mailto:marilyns@mennonitecc.on.ca).**



# 2014 Fall list of Books & Resources

## Theology, Spirituality

*Good News: The Advent of Salvation in the Gospel of Luke.* Darrin W. Snyder Belousek. Liturgical Press, 2014, 140 pages.

As the executive director of Bridgefolk, Snyder Belousek brings together the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition with the Benedictine prayer tradition in looking at what salvation means for life on earth. Snyder Belousek teaches religion at Bluffton (Ohio) University.

*Living the Christian Life in Today's World: A Conversation Between Mennonite World Conference and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2011-2012.* Carol E. Rasmussen. Mennonite World Conference, 2014, 300 pages.

This collection of papers is from two years of inter-denominational conversations held in the U. S. and Switzerland. Canadian participants from Mennonite World Conference included Robert J. Suderman and Tom Yoder Neufeld. The book is available at [kitchener@mwc-cmm.org](mailto:kitchener@mwc-cmm.org); an electronic version is available at [www.mwc-cmm.org/article/interchurch-dialogue](http://www.mwc-cmm.org/article/interchurch-dialogue).

*Pilgrimage Through Loss: Pathways to Strength and Renewal after the Death of a Child.* Linda Lawrence Hunt. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Ky., 2014, 200 pages.



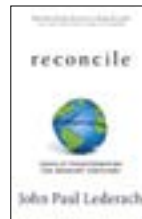
Linda Hunt writes about the loss of her daughter, Krista Hunt Ausland, who was killed in a bus accident while on assignment with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Bolivia in 1998. The book is designed to provide understanding and a path to renewal for those who have experienced deep grief or those want to accompany someone else's grief journey.

*Real Christian Fellowship.* John Howard Yoder. Herald Press, 2014, 210 pages.

This is the third and final volume in the Yoder for Everyone series. It is a collection of essays and speeches from the 1950s and '60s that have never before been published, but have been edited for modern readers.

*Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians.* John Paul Lederach. Herald Press, 2014, 192 pages.

Using dramatic examples from his own life, Lederach reflects on how reconciliation is rooted in the teachings of Jesus and how it can happen in the midst of conflict. He explains how to work at reconciliation in military and church conflicts. The book also includes resources for working at reconciliation.



*The Spacious Heart: Room for Spiritual Awakening.* Donald Clymer and Sharon Clymer Landis. Herald Press, 2014, 240 pages.

Using lots of stories from their personal experiences, this brother-and-sister team explain their spiritual journeying. They invite the reader to also explore doubts and longings, to see the world with new eyes, and to strengthen spiritual life and practices.

*Visions and Appearances of Jesus.* Phillip H. Wiebe. Leafwood Publishers, 2014, 224 pages.

Phillip Wiebe, who teaches at Trinity Western University in B.C., has collected stories of people who have seen a vision or an appearance of Jesus. Wiebe also includes his comments about each of these sightings, including his view of the Shroud of Turin. In the first half of the book, he outlines

appearances of Jesus from the early church to the 20th century.

## History

*Called to be a Soldier: Experiences of COs at Alternative Service Camps during WWII.* Darrell Frey. Vineyard Publications, 2014, 519 pages.

The author uses creative storytelling to describe the experiences of Mennonite conscientious objectors, primarily at Montreal River near Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., in the early 1940s. The appendix includes copies of many documents, letters and lists of COs from Ontario. Available at Vineyard Publications, 7277 Third Line, RR 2, Wallenstein, ON N0B 2S0.

*It Happened in Moscow: A Memoir of Discovery.* Maureen S. Klassen. Kindred Productions, 2013, 210 pages.

Klassen describes how she and her husband Herb were able to discover more about the early history of the C.F. and Mary Klassen family while they lived in Moscow in the 1990s. They were surprised to learn about a whole new dimension to the Klassen family, a discovery that was possible because they lived in Moscow at just the right time.

*Your Faith Will Sustain You and You Will Prevail: The Life Story of Jacob and Elisabeth Isaak.* Helmut Isaak, translated by Jack Thiessen. Self-published, 2014, 200 pages.



Previously available in German, this book tells the story of the Isaaks who fled Russia in 1929, settling in the Paraguayan Chaco and serving as church leaders in the Fernheim Colony. Although it is a family story, it is also set within the context of the church and colony in 20th-century Paraguay. The book is available at Amazon.ca.

*Together in the Work of the Lord: A History of the Conservative Mennonite Conference.* Nathan E. Yoder. Herald Press, 2014, 551 pages.

The Conservative Mennonite Conference, with its headquarters at Rosedale, Ohio, can trace its roots to 1910, when a group of Amish Mennonite ministers met together. This volume is part of the Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History series. The author is

## FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

an archivist at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and teaches church history at Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

### Other Books

*Bonnet Strings: An Amish Woman's Ties to Two Worlds.* Saloma Miller Furlong. Herald Press, 2014, 337 pages.



In this memoir, Furlong describes her struggle in deciding to leave her Amish community. After several months in Vermont, she returned to her Amish home in Ohio, but then again decided to leave. She feels torn between two worlds, but finally chooses to leave permanently. Furlong has also written *Why I Left the Amish* published in 2011.

*Chasing the Amish Dream: My Life as a Young Amish Bachelor.* Loren Beachy. Herald Press, 2014, 195 pages.

Loren Beachy is an Old Order Amish schoolteacher and auctioneer. With wit, humour and warmth, he tells short stories, often arising from his own experiences in an Amish community in northern Indiana. This book is part of Herald Press's Plainspoken series of "Real-life stories of Amish and Mennonites."

*Extending the Table, revised edition.* Joetta Handrich Schlabach. Herald Press, 2014, 344 pages.

This revised edition looks very different from the original *Extending the Table* published in 1991. Most of the recipes are the same, but the layout is more pleasing to the eye, with lots of colourful photos. This collection of international recipes was commissioned by MCC; many of the contributors spent time overseas, where they picked up the recipes. Also available as an e-book.

*A Pie Plate Pilgrimage.* William Loewen. Privately published by Wordly Lion Press, 2014, 226 pages.

This novel tells the story of Lydia Phillips, a young adult who is given the task of choosing a writer for a Christian self-help book and finds it challenging. Loewen, the pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church near Calgary, also provides

a group study guide, as the story raises many questions that young adults and others should find lead to stimulating discussion.

*What Lies Behind.* Luanna Hiebert. Turnstone Press, 2014, 93 pages.

This collection of poems is written by Luann Hiebert, who teaches at Providence University College in southern Manitoba.

### Children's Books

*Ellie.* Mary Christner Borntrager. Herald Press, First published 1988, reprinted 2014, 193 pages.

This is Book 1 in the 10-book series, *Ellie's People: An Amish Family Saga*, being reprinted by Herald Press. This book, set in an Amish community in Ohio in the early 1900s, is designed for a juvenile audience.

### Resources

*Living Thoughtfully, Dying Well: A Doctor Explains How to Make Death a Natural Part of Life.* Glen Miller. Herald Press, 2014, 180 pages.

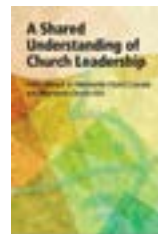
Author Glen Miller is a retired physician who wrote this book to help people deal better with the dying process. He writes from his own experiences, including his own brush

with death. The book includes exercises to encourage reflection and discussion about end-of-life issues.

*Practicing Presence.* Terri J. Plank Brennenman. MennoMedia, 2014, 77 pages.

This collection of worship resources in 13 sessions was commissioned by Mennonite Women Canada and Mennonite Women U.S.A. It can be used individually or in groups.

*A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership: Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church U.S.A.* MC Canada and MC U.S.A., Herald Press, 2014, 79 pages.



This revised polity manual is a working document until it is formally accepted by the MC U.S.A. delegate body. It explains such things as the Mennonite understanding of ordination and who holds pastoral credentials, and outlines how pastors and congregations can have healthy relationships.

—Compiled by Barb Draper,  
Books & Resources editor

### /// Briefly noted

#### Read your way to PA 2015

HARRISBURG, PA.—“We should be well informed hosts,” said Richard Thomas about PA 2015, the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly to be held next July 21-26 in Harrisburg. Thomas, who chairs the National Advisory Council for the event, is urging all North American Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren and Brethren in Christ to honour their guests next summer by starting to prepare now. “Most of us probably can't become fluent in Indonesian or Amharic or French between now and next July,” he said. “But we can certainly learn to know more about our sister churches around the world before we're sitting next to their members at next summer's assembly!” commented Thomas. MWC commissioned the writing of a five-volume Global History Series, one for each continent, which reflect the perspectives, experiences and interpretations of the local churches. “I'm reading these books as one way to get myself ready for PA 2015,” Thomas said. He is also reading *What We Believe Together: Exploring the “Shared Convictions” of Anabaptist-Related Churches*. Said Thomas, “This common reading material can be one of our global glues. And we'll be talking about our ‘Shared Convictions’ when we're together next summer.”

—Mennonite World Conference



## FOCUS ON BOOKS &amp; RESOURCES

## BOOK REVIEW

Suffering under  
the Soviets*Other Side of the River.*

By Janice L. Dick. Helping Hands Press, 2014. 370 pages.

REVIEWED BY ELMA MARTENS SCHEMENAUER  
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Village houses face the main street with barns attached behind and fields beyond that. Young people gather for “singings.” A bone setter relieves headaches by carefully manipulating the neck. These are all aspects of Mennonite life in Russia as presented by Janice L. Dick in her new novel, *Other Side of the River*.

They resonate with me because I remember them from stories told by my Mennonite ancestors.

*Other Side of the River* begins in 1926 and centres on Mennonites of the Siberian village of Alexandrovka. Sadly, their orderly, provident, faith-based lives are disturbed, frustrated, and, in some cases, crushed by officials of the ruling Communist regime.

The government demands more and more of the villagers’ wheat and other farm products. It tries to prevent them from speaking German, the language of their hearts. Schools aren’t allowed to give religious instruction and parents are warned about teaching the Bible at home. Mounted members of the Soviet secret police run women down in the street, and rape them or threaten to. People who openly oppose the regime are imprisoned, exiled to work camps in the far north or simply shot.

Caught in the turmoil are young Luise Letkemann and Daniel Martens. They’re in love. They hope to marry and live peaceful, fruitful lives among their people. They do manage to marry, but then political, social and personal crises force them to grapple with physical suffering, bereavement, uncertainty, a long separation and divided loyalty. Through it all, the couple cling to their faith in God, although it sometimes

shrinks to almost zero.

An aunt of Luise’s, Tante Manya, is a spiritual mentor for the young woman. At one point, Tante Manya says, “Do not hide from sorrow, my child. When it comes—and it will—embrace it and believe the rainbow will come after. That is the promise of our Lord, and he never fails.”

“Never, Tante?” Luise asks.

“Only in our limited understanding,” the aunt replies. “We see our path in the light we have; he sees the whole road right to the end.”

For Luise and other Alexandrovka Mennonites, that road includes moving far east in an attempt to escape the attention

of the authorities. However, Communist officials pursue and persecute them there too. It seems the beleaguered Mennonites will never escape. Or will they?

A number of other novels feature the experiences of Mennonites in Russia, including *My Harp is Turned to Mourning* by Al Reimer, *The Blue Mountains of China* by Rudy Wiebe, and *The Russländer* by Sandra Birdsell. Dick’s *Other Side of the River* stacks up well in comparison with these. In some ways, it’s *The Russländer* with more action, suspense and Christian impact.

The first chapter of *Other Side of the River* can be read online at [bit.ly/1rWD7LE](http://bit.ly/1rWD7LE). ❧

## ❧ Briefly noted

## Canadian Bible Society introduces digital children’s ministry tool

TORONTO—With recent study results revealing concerning trends in Bible reading and engagement, the Canadian Bible Society is launching a series of national initiatives to help churches effectively reach their neighbourhoods with the Bible. Its second initiative, “Incredible Islands,” is a customizable, digital ministry tool to

strengthen Bible engagement. “In a world where 80 percent of children as young as 3 are already using the Internet for an average of four to seven hours each day, the need for a safe and productive online environment that brings kids closer to God has been evident for some time,” says Don Miller, the Bible Society’s director of Canadian ministry. Compedia, the developers of edutainment brands “Bob the Builder,” “Lassie” and “Postman Pat,” offered its expertise in combining fun and games with educational content to build a Scripture-rich virtual world for children. Canadian Bible Society is offering free 30-day trials to children’s ministry workers, available at [www.incredibleislands.ca](http://www.incredibleislands.ca).

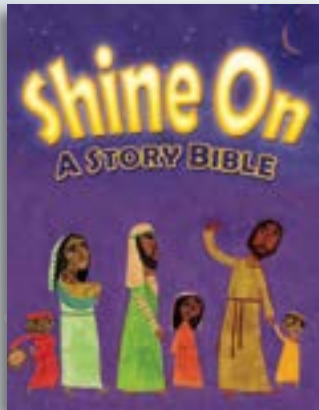
—Canadian Bible Society



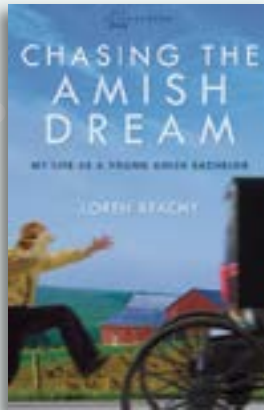


# GREAT CHRISTMAS IDEAS

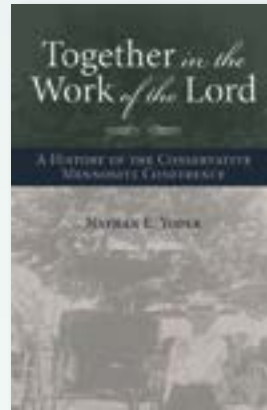
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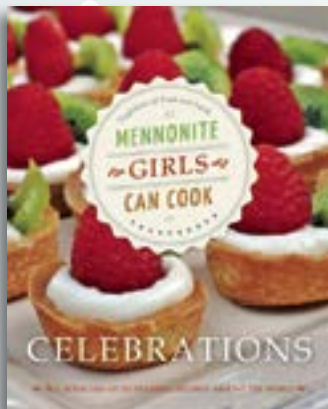
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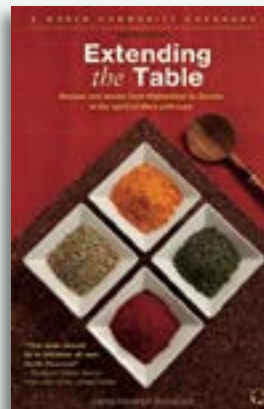
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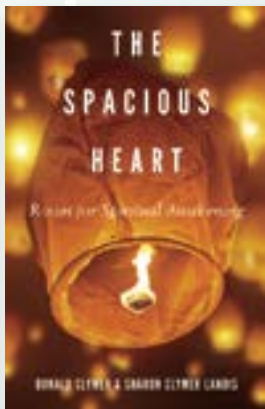
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## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Values, views and visions

*Young Manitobans discuss Mennonite church issues at September event*

KALYNN SPAIN

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

The morning begins with many hugs, some handshakes and the hearty, infectious laugh of Kathy Giesbrecht, or “Kathy G.” as many refer to Mennonite Church Manitoba’s energetic associate director of leadership ministries. There is a sense of reunification as we tell stories of our summers and new things that are happening in our lives this fall.

We have gathered for Making Connections, an event aimed at young adults from MC Manitoba to connect with one another and discuss our ideas for the local and wider church.

suggesting that Mennonites worldwide share a desire to be fulfilled and that they do this through communion. He challenges us to consider the other things that unite us as Mennonites, both religiously and culturally.

He concludes by saying that his goal is to find 25 young Mennonites who will represent Manitoba at the Mennonite World Conference in Pennsylvania next July, an idea that spurs much debate about who should attend and a burst of excitement as someone shouts, “Road trip!”

The next speaker is Rianna Isaak, the

*As young Mennonites who attend, or are members of, Mennonite churches, we share not only an Anabaptist history, but a desire to have a voice in the church.*

At 10 a.m., Giesbrecht calls us together, her hands spread out in front of her as she welcomes us all and then says a prayer for the day. She introduces the plan for the morning: a roundtable format that will invite us to discuss four different ideas presented by four different speakers, followed by discussion.

The first speaker is Gerald Ens from Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. He talks about the connection we have to Mennonites in other parts of the world,

new program director of MC Manitoba’s Camps with Meaning ministry. Her experience working in areas of peace and justice, specifically with indigenous communities in northern Manitoba, brings insight to the idea of Mennonites as active peacebuilders and justice-seekers in the world around them. She asserts that, as young Mennonites, we share a stubbornness in our work that helps us in this field, which can be discouraging at times, and insists we need to support each other



Kalynn Spain

as this work is done.

I am the third speaker. I tell two stories of when my faith was challenged immensely, the first being my time in the Katimavik volunteer program and the second being the time I spent living in India during a practicum as part of my undergraduate degree in international development. In both situations, I found myself time and again explaining to people I met what a Mennonite was. While each time became easier, I could not help but wonder how others would answer this question.

I invited those listening to think about what values connect us as Mennonites and how these values shape our everyday lives as we encounter those who do not know anything about our story.

The fourth speaker is Don Rempel Boschman, lead pastor at Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, who shares some statistics about young Mennonites attending churches in Manitoba, in order to highlight how our churches are shifting and changing to suit the interests of younger generations.

He notes that this is not the case in every church, as it can be difficult for some congregations to go through transition when they have been worshipping the same way for so long. However, he adds that it is exciting to see how at least the dialogue is happening and that young Mennonites are participating in the conversation.

As the morning unfolds, I think about

how God has called us together:

- **WHAT REASONS** do we each have for being here?
- **WHAT BINDS** us to each other?

I come to the conclusion that the two questions are interdependent. As young Mennonites who attend, or are members of, Mennonite churches, we share not only an Anabaptist history, but a desire to have a voice in the church. This voice is diverse. It is not always in agreement with other voices, but it is present and vital nonetheless.

This voice is growing louder, thanks to events such as this one, and will continue to be heard this winter and in the coming year.

One day, this voice will be ready to proclaim the values, the views and the visions that young Mennonites in Manitoba have, not only for the churches we attend here at home, but for the church we are a part of around the world. ❧

*Kalynn Spain, 26, is a member of Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. She works casually at MC Manitoba's Camp Assiniboia and full-time at Zinn Farms in Springstein, Man. Young adults in Manitoba can follow ongoing conversations by joining the Young Mennos of Manitoba Facebook group at <http://on.fb.me/1D1k8UR>.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Supplementary reading

*A Year of Reading Biblically spreads its wings*

AARON EPP

YOUNG VOICES CO-EDITOR

**D**id you know that there's an illustrated Bible that retells the stories in Scripture using Lego? The Brick Testament is a series by a man in California named Brendan Powell Smith,

who has spent thousands of dollars using those small, colourful bricks recreating biblical stories and then photographing them.

*(Continued on page 36)*

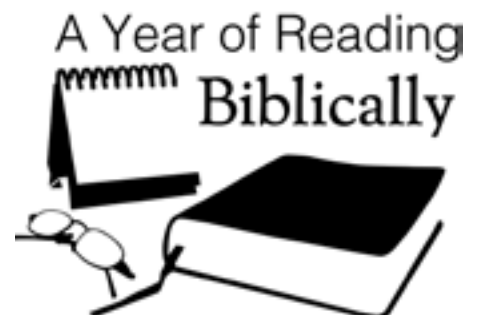


PHOTO BY CRAIG TERLSON



*The Brick Testament is one of the many intriguing titles I've come across as this Year of Reading Biblically has progressed. (Aaron Epp)*

**(Continued from page 35)**

"While there is really no substitute for reading the Bible itself, The Brick Testament endeavours to come as close to that experience as possible for people who wouldn't normally read the Bible all the way through on their own," Smith writes on TheBrickTestament.com. "For those already familiar with the Bible, it offers the chance to brush up in a fun way, or to reconsider what they have read before."

The Brick Testament is one of the many intriguing titles I've come across as this Year of Reading Biblically has progressed.

I love books, and perhaps unsurprisingly, I've found myself gravitating toward books that have to do with the Bible over the past year. I've dug a few off my bookshelves that I've had for years, and also picked up a few new ones over the past 10 or 11 months that I've come across while perusing the stacks at various bookstores.

Here are three of the books I've picked up and flipped through in the last few months. I have not read all three of these cover to cover, but have read parts of them from time to time, to supplement my Bible reading:

- *Know Your Bible for Kids* by Donna K. Maltese (Barbour Publishing, 2013).

I came across this title at a store in Lake of the Woods, Ont., while heading to a fishing trip this past summer. The store had a small rack of Christian books, and this was one of them. I was drawn to the small, 128-page volume because it reminded me of the illustrated children's Bibles I looked through when I was young, but also because it gives a brief, two-page overview of each book in the Bible. Each entry discusses who wrote the book, when it was written and what the book is about; it also identifies an important verse from each book, what that verse means, and what the book's key message is.

- *The Year of Living Biblically* by A.J. Jacobs (Simon & Schuster, 2007).

I first read this book a number of years ago, and its title inspired the name my

*[P]erhaps unsurprisingly, I've found myself gravitating toward books that have to do with the Bible over the past year.*

editors and I chose for A Year of Reading Biblically. Jacobs, an editor-at-large at *Esquire* magazine, has made a name for himself by taking on different projects and writing about them. In his 2004 book, *The Know-It-All*, for example, he wrote about reading the entire 2002 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, all 33,000 pages of it.

For *The Year of Living Biblically*, Jacobs, a secular Jew, read the Bible, wrote down every rule he came across, and then spent a year following those rules. It's an entertaining read that documents Jacobs' spiritual transformation. He has no dramatic conversion experience, but by the end of his year of living biblically, he defines himself as a "reverent agnostic," someone who believes in the idea of sacredness, and that rituals, the Sabbath or prayer can be sacred. Jacobs offers many fascinating insights along the way.

- *Good Book* by David Plotz (HarperCollins, 2009).

When I first spoke with my editors about A Year of Reading Biblically late in 2013, one of them suggested that a book might come of it. David Plotz, an American journalist, beat me to it. In *Good Book*, Plotz—who starts the book by writing, "I've always been a proud Jew, but never a very observant one"—writes about reading through the book on which his religion, his culture and his world are based. He offers summaries of each Old Testament book that are both incisive and humorous. Flipping through *Good Book* from time to time has been a good way for me to make sense of what I'm reading in the Bible and has also brought my attention to some of the things I've missed along the way.

Finding books like the ones listed above has made for a richer Year of Reading Biblically. ☸



## *MCC Manitoba celebrates 50 years with a play*

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor

A 50th wedding anniversary traditionally calls for a gift of gold, but Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba got something a little different for its 50th anniversary. Theatre of the Beat wrote and presented a play in honour of the relief and development organization.

Called *The Forks and the Road*, the play celebrated MCC Manitoba's journey over the past half-century. Through the stories of Anne, Campbell and Perry, themes of thrift, refugee resettlement, creation care, indigenous relations and mediation came to life, the relationships between the characters becoming a portrayal of people working for justice and dignity. While fictional, it was based on true MCC Manitoba stories.

Rebecca Steiner, 25, did the bulk of the writing and dramaturgy for *The Forks and the Road*, and then the Theatre of the Beat team got together over Skype for brainstorming and edits.

She said the play was meant for everyone: staunch supporters of MCC's relief and development work, and those who aren't familiar with it. "It takes the audience on a journey into the lives of three very different people who learn about what doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly means in their contexts," she said.

*The Fork and the Road* was the first time Theatre of the Beat, which is based in Ontario, exclusively produced a play for Manitoba. Steiner said their main goal was to share what good work MCC Manitoba has been doing for the last half-century. "One way to make history relevant—especially to younger generations—is to remember the past, while also looking into the future," she said. "We hope people of all ages will see themselves in the characters

and that the play will newly inspire people to get behind MCC Manitoba."

Originally from Stouffville, Ont., Steiner moved to Winnipeg in July with her husband, and just started attending Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship.

Before moving to Manitoba, Steiner got to know MCC Ontario well by volunteering at a thrift shop, participating in international learning tours and serving on an MCC board. "Getting to know MCC Manitoba through working on this play has definitely given me an appreciation for Manitoba's character and interests," she said. "It's been a nice way to get to know this new province I'm learning to call home."

And working on the play has helped Steiner feel more at home. "It's been like getting to know a family member who has a familiar personality and character," she said. "It's neat to see some of the unique programs that have emerged in Manitoba reflected by the prairie context."

*The Forks and the Road* featured local Manitoba Mennonite actors and stage hands. Many of them are young adults.

Terri-Lynn Friesen, 25, one of the actors, was excited to celebrate MCC Manitoba's good work while acting with other believers. She played three characters in the play, including Anne, who manages an MCC thrift store. Most of Friesen's experiences with MCC Manitoba revolve around thrift shopping. "So many of [Anne's] monologues speak directly of what I experienced in real life," Friesen said of this role.

*The Fork and the Road* played in four Manitoba communities—Gretna, Winnipeg, Stienbach and Brandon—over four nights in late October, where patrons also got to experience unique music, poetry and choir performances from local artists. †



*'Getting to know MCC Manitoba through working on this play has definitely given me an appreciation for Manitoba's character and interests.'*  
(Rebecca Steiner)

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Nov. 29,30:** Abendmusik Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir; (29) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (30) Knox United Church, West Vancouver; both services at 8 p.m.

**Dec. 6:** MCC Centre grand opening at 33933 Gladys Avenue, Abbotsford, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Ribbon cutting, food, open house, live music.

### Alberta

**Nov. 21:** MCC Alberta hosts "Breaking down the walls... relief, development and peace," at Foothills Alliance Church, Calgary; at 7 p.m. Keynote speaker: Joe Clark, former Canadian prime minister. For more information, visit [www.mcccanada.ca/get-involved/](http://www.mcccanada.ca/get-involved/) events.

### Saskatchewan

**Nov. 22:** RJC corporation meeting, at

5 p.m., and appreciation/fundraising banquet, at 6 p.m.

**Dec. 6,13:** A Buncha Guys' Christmas concerts: (6) at Knox United Church, Saskatoon; (13) at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim; both concerts at 7:30 p.m.

**Dec. 14:** RJC choir concert, at Knox United Church, Saskatoon, at 7:30 p.m.

**Dec. 19:** RJC Christmas choir concert, at RJC, at 7 p.m.

### Manitoba

**Nov. 7:** Mennonite Collegiate Institute soup and pie fundraiser and fall concert; meal at 5 p.m., followed by choir concert at 7 p.m. For more information, visit [www.MCIBlues.net](http://www.MCIBlues.net).

**Nov. 9:** *Peace, Pies and Prophets* presented by Ted and Co. Theater Works, at Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m. Freewill offering and pie auction fundraiser for Christian Peacemaker Teams. For more information, e-mail [Canada@cpt.org](mailto:Canada@cpt.org).

**Nov. 13:** Face2Face community discussion: "Restorative justice: Soft on crime or building community

security?" featuring Wendy Kroeker and Jae Yung Lee from Seoul, South Korea; at CMU's Great Hall, at 7 p.m.

**Nov. 15:** "MCC matters" at CMU, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Spend a day exploring restorative justice, affordable housing, peacebuilding, global hunger and more. For more information or to pre-register, visit [mccmanitoba.ca/mccmatters](http://mccmanitoba.ca/mccmatters).

**Nov. 15:** MCC Manitoba's 50th-anniversary benefit concert with local choirs, at Immanuel Pentecostal Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m. Keynote speaker: former prime minister Joe Clark. For more information or to reserve free tickets, call 204-261-6381 or visit [mccmanitoba.ca/50](http://mccmanitoba.ca/50).

**Nov. 18:** Evening of the arts at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

**Nov. 20-22:** Cottonwood Community Drama present Pollyanna, at Mennonite Collegiate Institute's Buhler Hall, Gretna, at 7:30 p.m. each evening. For more information, visit [www.MCIBlues.net](http://www.MCIBlues.net).

**Nov. 22:** MCC Manitoba annual Christmas craft and bake sale, at 134 Plaza Drive, Winnipeg; from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Nov. 23:** Mennonite Community Orchestra presents its fall concert, featuring Rossini's Semiramide Overture, Mozart's Clarinet Concerto and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5; at CMU's South Campus Chapel, at 3 p.m. Tickets available at the door.

**Nov. 24:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate annual general meeting. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

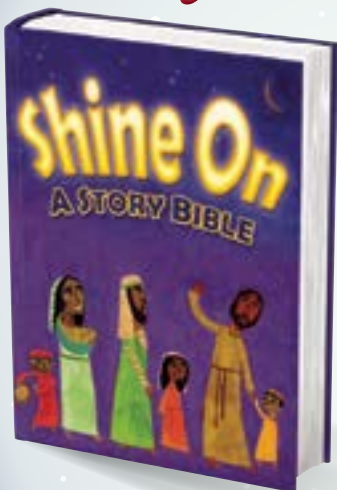
**Nov. 29:** Grand opening and dedication of CMU's new library and learning commons, at 1:30 p.m.

**Nov. 29:** Christmas at CMU, at 2:30 and 7 p.m.

**Nov. 30:** Winnipeg First Mennonite Church Choir present Schubert's Mass in G and Bach Cantata BWV 61 with orchestra under the direction of Yuri Klaz, at the church at 7 p.m. An offering will be taken.

**Dec. 8:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Christmas concert at Westminster

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## UpComing

### Submissions sought for second annual Krahn Contest

NORTH NEWTON, KAN.—Bethel College and *Mennonite Life* announce the opening of the second annual Cornelius Krahn Mennonite Multi-Media Contest for High Schoolers. The contest is open to any secondary-school student in the United States and Canada, with awards of \$200, \$150 and \$100 for the first-, second- and third-place entries as decided by a panel of judges. Contest entries may take the form of essays, creative writing, multi-media (film or web), or original pieces of art or music on topics related to Mennonite and Anabaptist history, identity or theology. All works must be created during the 2014-15 academic year. Award winners will be published in the 2015 online edition of *Mennonite Life*. Submission deadline is April 1, 2015. Submissions must be made electronically to [mennonite-life@bethelks.edu](mailto:mennonite-life@bethelks.edu). To see the full submission guidelines, visit [ml.bethelks.edu](http://ml.bethelks.edu) and click the "Krahn Contest" link at the top. Historian Cornelius Krahn, 1902-90, spent a career teaching at Mennonite colleges in Kansas, and was the founding editor, in 1946, of *Mennonite Life*. The children of Cornelius and Hilda Krahn established the Mennonite Life Endowment Fund in 2012 in honour of their parents, which provides the contest prize money.

—Bethel College

United Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

**Dec. 17-18:** Mennonite Collegiate Institute Christmas concert in Buhler Hall; performances at 7:30 p.m. each evening.

**Ontario**

**Until Jan. 18, 2005:** "Along the road to freedom" art exhibit by Ray Dirks, at Conrad Grebel University College Gallery. For more information, visit [uwaterloo.ca/grebel/grebel-gallery](http://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/grebel-gallery).

**Nov. 9:** Third annual Male Chorus Sing, at 2:30 p.m., at Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville. Former and current male quartet or chorus members, or want-to-be members invited. Leader: Bob Shantz. For more information, call Bob Shantz at 519-745-4524.

**Nov. 10:** "Peace quest: Remembering for peace 2014-18" event at Conrad Grebel University College Chapel, at 7 p.m. Speaker: Jamie Swift, co-author of *Warrior Nation: Rebranding Canada in an Age of Anxiety*.

**Nov. 13-14:** Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies, at Conrad Grebel University College, at 7:30 p.m. each evening. Speaker: Jeff Gundy of Bluffton (Ohio) University. (13) Topic: "Poetry, the sleeping king and creative doubt"; (14) Topic: "Circling defiance." For more information, visit [grebel.ca/bechtel](http://grebel.ca/bechtel).

**Nov. 14:** Mennonite/s Writing, a free public reading series with celebrated Mennonite authors, at Conrad Grebel Chapel, at 7:30 p.m.: Jeff Gundy will read from his new book of poetry, *Somewhere Near Defiance*. For more information, visit [grebel.ca/mennolit](http://grebel.ca/mennolit).

**Nov 14:** "Spirituality and Aging" seminar at Conrad Grebel University College's Great Hall, at 7:30 p.m. Speaker: Kenneth Pargament, professor of clinical psychology at Bowling Green University, Ohio. For more information, visit [grebel.ca/sa](http://grebel.ca/sa).

**Nov. 15:** Fairview Mennonite Home presents its annual Christmas Handicraft Sale of crafts, decorations, stocking stuffers, wearable items, wreaths, woodworking, baby quilts, used books and much more; from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Home in Cambridge. Plus Santa's Sweet Shop, fresh baking and tea room. For more

information, call 519-653-5719 or visit [www.fairviewmh.com](http://www.fairviewmh.com).

**Nov. 15:** Mennonite Mass Choir featuring Brahms' *Requiem*, at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, at 7:30 p.m.

**Nov. 21-22:** 23rd annual Spirit of Christmas music and craft show at Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig; features include live music, Ten Thousand Villages, craft sale, tea room. (21) 6:30 to 9 p.m.; (22) 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, visit [www.nairn.on.ca/mennonite.net](http://www.nairn.on.ca/mennonite.net).

**Nov. 22:** Nithview Christmas tea and bake sale, at Nithview Community, New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m.

**Nov. 22:** MennoHomes annual general meeting and fundraising concert featuring The Deacons of Jazz, at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit [www.mennohomes.com](http://www.mennohomes.com).

**Nov. 22,23:** Soli Deo Gloria Singers present their fall concert, "Sing Praise!"; (22) at UMEI, Leamington, at 7:30 p.m.; (23) at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For more information about tickets, call UMEI at 519-326-7448.

**Nov. 26:** Mennonite/s Writing, a free public reading series with celebrated Canadian authors, at Conrad Grebel Chapel, at 7:30 p.m.: Miriam Toews will read from her bestselling new novel, *All My Puny Sorrows*. For more information, visit [grebel.ca/mennolit](http://grebel.ca/mennolit).

**Nov. 28-29:** Oct. 24-25: "Reading the Bible with Jesus" retreat at Willowgrove, Stouffville, with Bryan Moyer Suderman: sponsored by MC Eastern Canada, the Markham-Stouffville Mennonite Ministerial and Willowgrove. Pt. 2: "Mark: Have you never read?" For more information, e-mail [miriam@willowgrove.ca](mailto:miriam@willowgrove.ca).

**Nov. 30:** Third annual Welcoming Advent event, at 2:30 p.m., at Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville. Welcome Advent by hearing and singing old and new Christmas music led by Lifted Voices. For more information, call Sam Steiner at 519-884-1040.

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

/// Classifieds

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PHOENIX (Arizona) MENNO Guest House Bed and Breakfast welcomes guests coming to the Phoenix area. (Web site [www.hscserves.org](http://www.hscserves.org)). Email [phxmennoguest@gmail.com](mailto:phxmennoguest@gmail.com) or call 623-847-0314.

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# Books show Old Order Mennonite culture from the inside

BY BARB DRAPER

Books & Resources Editor  
YATTON, ONT.

**A**msey Martin, an Old Order Mennonite deacon and long-time parochial school teacher, loves books. While most people in his community are farmers, he says that sitting in his study surrounded by books is “a dream come true.”

The idea of making a book has also appealed to him, and when a writer from his Old Order community asked him to publish some of her stories, he was ready to take up the challenge. Vineyard Publications, which produces books “by the plain people for the plain people,” has now been around for more than 10 years and has published more than 30 books.

The goal of Vineyard Publications is to provide wholesome reading material for those who have old-fashioned morals. Many of the books are designed for children, to reinforce the values of the Old Order Mennonite community.

The Vineyard catalogue identifies *Ruth, Girl of the Conestoga* and *Joy in the Valley* as books for youth. The books portray the everyday life of Ruth Weber, a girl in her late teens who lives and works in the Conestoga River Valley including the village of Hawkesville. Unlike typical Amish romances, these books are true-to-life for the Old Order community. Readers will get a genuine view of Old Order culture and beliefs from the inside.

*Called to be a Soldier* is another book recently published by Vineyard. It describes the experiences of Old Order Mennonite conscientious objectors at Alternative Service camps in the 1940s. Author Darrell Frey provides a great deal of information, especially regarding the Montreal River Camp in Ontario. He also includes copies of letters, documents and lists of COs from Ontario who served in the camps. Frey’s writing style could be described as creative non-fiction, as he anchors his story in facts but is creative in his storytelling.

Vineyard books are available in local small-town Ontario stores owned by conservative Mennonites, including Busy Bee Quilts in Elmira. Vineyard Publications, located in Yatton, does not use the Internet, but its books can be ordered online through Living Water Christian Bookstore ([www.lwcb.org](http://www.lwcb.org)) in Linwood. ❧

