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EDITORIAL

When faith and politics intersect

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Among other shifting sands in the Mennonite world is how we view our relationship to the state, moving from a stance of a nonviolent witness but not participation, to one of entering its ranks to influence policies for its betterment in the areas of justice, creation care and peacemaking. We are becoming participants, not only witnesses.

In our main feature, I asked 10 different persons across the country who have either served in the varied roles as government officials or have run for election. To my surprise, this intersection of faith and politics has been ongoing for several decades, as shown by the experiences of Carl Zehr as mayor of Kitchener, Ont., and Ray Funk as a federal Member of Parliament from Saskatchewan. Both have served with distinction.

To a one, they say they bring their Anabaptist-Mennonite core values to the political arena and have the support of their congregations in doing so. Their claim is that their actions and political decisions are well-known to their constituents and colleagues, and that they are not “hiding their values under a bushel.” They insist that the public knows their agenda and, for the most part, are in step. Good for them.

However, when posed with the

questions, “How did you resolve the issue of being first and foremost a citizen of God’s kingdom and secondly that of ‘Caesar’s?’” and, “How did you resolve the conflict of using the sword, if necessary, to maintain order, as opposed to God’s rule of love in Romans 13:10?” there were mixed responses. Some struggled with the issue, some didn’t.

Which is a concern. If we, as a body of believers, have self-consciously moved from the Apostle Paul’s admonition in his Letter to the Romans, to use, instead, the Jeremiah 29:7 passage by the ancient prophet, who instructed the Israelite exiles to seek the welfare of the city—“*for in its welfare you will find your welfare as our guiding light*”—that is one thing. But if we, as an acculturated people, have unconsciously accommodated ourselves to the self-serving interests of the political structure, or worse, been lured into its self-glorification, this might be a slippery slope.

All of our interviewees seem clear that their character, their integrity in governing, their Christian values and their decisions, and the different way they conduct themselves in office, are rooted in their faithfulness as followers of Jesus and as members of a distinct faith community. Here’s hoping, too, that this self-identity includes the consciousness that, as often as not, we find ourselves as

“exiles” in a political structure that tends toward domination and force to bring about “order.”

The current Canadian government’s emphasis on law and order, rather than restorative justice; its downplaying of climate change, rather than a high consciousness of creation care; its sacrificing of medical and mental health and immigration matters to “economic development”; and its rush to arms in international conflict, are usually not a part of local municipal duties, but in joining the political establishment, these priorities can subtly become a part of the “order” to which they take an oath to protect.

It wouldn’t hurt for each of these Mennonite politicians or aspirants to have as their primer, if they haven’t already read it, the late A. James Reimer’s *Christians and War*, in which this former professor of religious studies at Conrad Grebel University College struggles with the church’s responses to war and peace, and can be understood only through the church’s changing relationship to culture.

And to pay attention to attention to the words of Ernie Regehr, founder of Project Ploughshares, whom Reimer quotes: “Churches are not prepared to say that it is never appropriate or never necessary to resort to the use of lethal force for the protection of the vulnerable. This refusal in principle to preclude the use of force is based not on a naïve belief that force be relied on to solve otherwise intractable problems, but rather on the certain knowledge that the primary consideration must be the welfare of the people, especially those in situations of extreme vulnerability.”

Our prayers of blessing go out to the many persons of our faith community who will bring their Anabaptist Christian values to bear in the halls of power across the country.



ABOUT THE COVER:

A child soldier in the Central African Republic holds a handful of spent shell casings. Read senior writer Will Braun’s article on Canada’s refusal, to this point, to sign a UN Arms Trade Treaty that seeks to better regulate the \$85-billion global arms industry and thus prevent weapons from ending up in the wrong hands, on page 16.

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GOD AT WORK IN THE HALLS OF POWER

'Seeking the welfare of the city'

BY DICK BENNER
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

[Recently retired Kitchener, Ont., mayor Carl] Zehr said he was conflicted when he had to lay a wreath at the cenotaph each Remembrance Day on behalf of all the people of Kitchener. 'The first year I did this, I was also asked to speak,' he said, 'and I chose to speak about "peace," rather than war. That may be why I wasn't asked to speak again.'

“**I**n the New Testament,” said Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, who ran unsuccessfully for the office of mayor of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, Ont., on Oct. 27, “the state is understood as part of God’s good ordering function in the world—but it is not the centre of God’s purposes in history; that distinction belongs to the church. The confession of Christ relativizes in important ways loyalty to any one configuration of state, to any leader or party.”



Arnold Neufeldt-Fast

In positing that view of the state, Neufeldt-Fast, 50, an ordained member of Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville and an associate professor of theology at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, represents a shift in the traditional biblical teaching on the Christian’s relationship to the state as articulated by such theological luminaries as the late Guy Hershberger in *War, Peace and Nonresistance* and John Howard Yoder’s *Politics of Jesus* in the mid- to late 20th century.

Hershberger, who held to a two-state kingdom theology, and Yoder, who moved the goalpost to one of nonviolent witness to the state but not participation in it, had been pretty much the standard position of the Mennonite church regarding the holding of public office. That goalpost was moved even further, though, by James Reimer, the late Canadian theologian, in his *Christians and War*, who believed “Christians should support policing, as a function in the secular order, even though the threat of lethal force may occasionally be necessary.”

It seems that Reimer’s position is echoed by all of the Mennonites interviewed by *Canadian Mennonite* across Canada who recently sought public office in Manitoba and Ontario, who are running in next year’s federal election, or who have served for many years, such as Carl Zehr, 69. Recently retired after 17 years as mayor of Kitchener, Ont, Zehr, a member of Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, said, “My belief of peace and

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS PHOTO BY BILL REDEKOP



Melvin Klassen, left, is mayor of Altona, Man., while his brother, Ted, serves as a city councillor. ‘Ted, 67, could be forgiven for thinking Melvin, 73, is engaged in some kind of ‘anything you can do, I can do better’ sibling rivalry’, writes Bill Redekop of the Winnipeg Free Press. ‘When Ted was hired as a teacher at W.C. Miller Collegiate, Melvin soon followed him there, but as principal. When Ted was elected to Altona council, Melvin followed shortly after, but—as if to do him one better—ran for mayor.’

peacemaking has been instrumental in helping me bring many diverse positions on issues to an amicable and acceptable resolution.”

As to the matter of policing, Zehr said that, “while I [did] sit on the [Waterloo Region] council that funds the police service, the council is prohibited by law in directing any matters of police force.” He did take an oath of office, though, to “uphold the laws of Canada and the province, but obviously individuals will bring their personal beliefs to each situation and may sometimes be in the minority.”

Zehr said he was conflicted when he had to lay a wreath at the cenotaph each Remembrance Day on behalf of all the people of Kitchener. “The first year I did this, I was also asked to speak,” he said, “and I chose to speak about ‘peace,’ rather than war. That may be why I wasn’t asked to speak again.”

And even in the United States, where the Hershberger/Yoder influence has been more keenly felt, there is movement towards a more inclusive view of faith and politics. Leonard Gross, a retired historian from Goshen, Ind., noted that the recently retired editor of *The Mennonite*, Everett Thomas, serves on the Elkhart

**Carl Zehr**

city council, as do many other Goshen Mennonite/Church of the Brethren members, such as Allan Kauffman, Goshen’s long-time mayor. “These persons take seriously Jeremiah 29:7, which says, ‘Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you . . . and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare,’” said Gross.

Neufeldt-Fast, who said he was heavily influenced by Yoder’s *Politics of Jesus*, said this also “raised my awareness of the socio-political dimensions of the gospel. I am deeply convinced that Jesus’ message and ethic was neither ahistorical, meant only for the world still to come, nor simply for a faithful minority. Rather, they are relevant to questions of social ethics today, including the political questions with which we wrestle even at the municipal level.”

Neufeldt-Fast’s political dream was to “make Stouffville the most walkable, bikeable small town in Ontario.” As a candidate, he sought to ensure good transit for the youth, elderly and those with marginal income, because, he said, “it is good for the air we breathe, an antidote to traffic congestion, and it addresses the needs of more marginal members of the community.” His platform also called for an environmental advisory council, championing the town library, encouraging the arts and paying closer attention to heritage, and to promoting affordable housing and economic development while “standing with the poor.”

Another Community Mennonite

member, Jane Philpot, 53, a medical doctor for 30 years, is running next year on the Liberal ticket to become the Member of Parliament in the federal riding of Markham-Stouffville, which is populated by a large number of new Canadians. “Having listened to people as a doctor as to health factors determined by education, employment and income, I believe I can now accomplish the most good by influencing public policy through political leadership,” she said.

As to how her Anabaptist core beliefs would influence her political work, she said the values of generosity, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, looking out for the interest of others and respect for others “are woven into the fabric of my character and should always influence my thought processes, decisions and actions.” She said her faith community helps her by “being a place of refuge and restoration.”

Also in Ontario, Sandy Shantz, 57, moderator of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and a member of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, said she had no plans for any “big-sword” decisions in her run for mayor of the Township of Woolwich,

**Jane Philpot**

which she won on Oct. 27. Her hope, she said, is to “instill a respect for our many volunteers, staff and councillors; explore partnerships with other levels of government, business and residents; listen to constituents and, when issues arise, to take the many opinions and data, to help guide council in putting together the big picture so we can make wise decisions.”

“Isn’t it kind of subversive for a citizen of God’s kingdom to infiltrate the realm of secular politics?” she asked rhetorically when answering the question of how she would apply “kingdom ethics” to her position. “I will lean on God for guidance as the issues arise,” she said. “I tend toward solutions that encourage cooperation, rather than confrontation.”

In Manitoba, Melvin Klassen, 73, mayor of Altona for the past 12 years, was acclaimed for a fourth term on Oct. 22 in a town heavily populated by Mennonites, but which,

he said, is changing by “ethnic groups bringing in new ideas and values which the community is largely accepting.” He said the mundane issues of “the height of fences, speed zones, lot sizes, drainage and new development do not need to be viewed from a certain political or religious perspective.” But even in the more ethical issues, such as Sunday shopping or the opening of a liquor store, he has tried not to push his views, but to make them matters of personal choice.

As to using force to maintain order, Klassen said he feels strongly that those residents who insist on hurting others have to be contained by a police force to



Sandy Shantz

“allow our society to feel safe,” and that “the police and army are there to carry out the policies of democratically elected representatives.”

In nearby Steinbach, Chris Goertzen, 40, was also acclaimed on Oct. 22 for his third term as mayor of the city. Having gotten his political training as a councillor for four years prior, and following in the footsteps of his father, who was a councillor for 26 years, he sees his role as an Anabaptist Christian as definitely tending to the “welfare of the city.” His official roles were supplemented by a lengthy history of community service with his involvement in the Steinbach Arts Council and Ten Thousand Villages.

Goertzen takes particular pride in improving the city park and making its services available to all residents free of charge, and for working with Theresa Oswald, the provincial health minister, in getting a new emergency room at the local Bethesda Hospital. He said his training at the University of Montreal helped broaden his view of Canadian culture as well as to improve his French language skills.

He said his home congregation, Grace Mennonite Church, with its 252 members, is fully supportive of his role as mayor, with many of them saying they are praying for him in his political role. With his brother, Robert, he also owns a specialty grocery store and café in town that has become a favourite among the citizens of Steinbach.

One province west in Saskatchewan, Charlie Clark, 40, who grew up in



Chris Goertzen

the United Church but married into the Mennonite faith and attends Osler Mennonite Church, has been a city councillor for Ward 6 in Saskatoon for eight years. He said he ran for the position in a city that “was dominated by more conservative thinking and in need of ‘fresh blood’ for more progressive ideas in the midst of debates about tackling urban sprawl, racism, homelessness, relations between the Saskatoon Police Service and first nations community, kids not in school, environmental sustainability and more.”

Clark said that his exposure to Anabaptism has influenced his role in his political decision-making, maintaining the belief that the “best solutions emerge from bringing people of different world-views and backgrounds together around a problem to develop a path forward.”

“As a member of the Board of Police Commissioners, I advocate for any strategy or intervention that seeks to de-escalate conflict with words, rather than weapons,” Clark said, adding that he is pushing for the idea that the primary role of the police service is to “keep the peace by maintaining strong relationships within the community, as opposed to a ‘force’ that positions itself separate from the community and intervenes only to overpower.”

In the northern Saskatchewan community of Spruce Home, Ray Funk, a member of Grace Mennonite Church in Prince Albert, served one term as an NDP Member of

Parliament for Prince Albert from 1988-93. Motivated to get into politics by the candidacy of Tim Friesen for the NDP in Rosthern, and the leadership of David and Stephen Lewis in Ontario, he has been active in politics for some 20 years, running unsuccessfully in 1997 and 2000.

Funk said he was somewhat surprised



Melvin Klassen



Charlie Clark



Ray Funk

by the number of Mennonites across the country who interacted with him on a wide variety of issues, many of them seeming to feel that he was a kindred spirit. “And I stayed in close contact with Bill Janzen in the MCC Ottawa office, coming to value his wisdom and experience, and considering him the single most influential person in shaping my work.”

Recognized as a pacifist for his work in the House of Commons, Funk was validated in his belief by his colleague, Ian Waddell, who said Funk had spent his life “fighting for peace.” Funk had several opportunities to bring his beliefs to bear on legislation, such as his introduction of the Peace Trust Fund and participation in the Gulf War debate.

He championed the work of Mennonite Central Committee on the Hill and, through Janzen, brought that perspective to immigration legislation and international development. In the area of restorative justice, he said he was an advocate for women in the now-closed Kingston (Ont.) Penitentiary, Canada’s Indigenous Peoples, and for refugees in search of a home.

As to the tension of the two-kingdom theology, Funk said, “This tension exists in virtually all walks of life and needs to be an ongoing matter of discernment, including study, prayer and the interaction with a faith community.”

In British Columbia, Dave Loewen, 65, a retired high school teacher/administrator and a member of Level Ground Mennonite Church, is finishing his third three-year term as a city councillor in Abbotsford.



Dave Loewen

Like Mel Klassen in Manitoba, he said his political role is to address such mundane issues as variances, bylaws and the delivery of everyday services like water, sewer and roads to residents.

But he also has opportunity to address

such social issues as homelessness, providing housing for single moms with children and for recovering addicts, all this with the support of senior government and private partners. He said he feels badly, however, that efforts to provide a “housing-first” model facility for Abbotsford’s downtown homeless failed to get council approval, “squandering a golden opportunity to address the issue in some small measure, but also relinquishing any shred of moral authority to address the issue in the public forum.”

Since Abbotsford has a high percentage of Christians and those of other faiths who share his spiritual values, Loewen doesn’t find it difficult to speak out on issues such as allowing zoning for slot machines in Abbotsford’s bingo hall. “My position from the start was that the potential social costs were too great to ‘gamble’ on the question,” he said, “primarily because those of low socio-economic standing are known to spend their money on slots—the people least able to afford it.” In the end, council approved the slot machines by a 5-4 margin.

In such highly politicized and publicized issues, Loewen said, “my task is to act as transparently and with as much honesty and integrity as possible, to rebuild any semblance of trust. It’s at times like this that I remind myself of the words

in Micah 6:8. Beyond that, I trust entirely in God’s leading and pray for wisdom as I apply those words in my deliberations.”

Perhaps the most cogent reason for an Anabaptist Christian getting directly involved in politics was articulated by Rene de Vries, 49, also a member of Community Mennonite in Stouffville, who withdrew his bid for a city council seat in August: “The reason I want to be involved in the political process is to have a say in how decisions in the larger world beyond my household are being made, mainly because I often see so many wrong decisions that would benefit from a different approach . . . war and peace issues; proper environmental management of groundwater, my area of expertise; and cooperation versus polarization.”

Thus, Mennonites in Canada at least have come full circle from being content with only “witnessing” to the government, to full participation in seeking the welfare of the city to which they are sent (Jeremiah 29.7) ☞



Rene de Vries

☞ For discussion

1. How long ago did Mennonites in your community begin holding public office? Was there a time when local/municipal offices were deemed appropriate for Mennonites, but not provincial or federal ones?
2. Carl Zehr felt conflicted when he had to lay a wreath at the cenotaph on Remembrance Day. If Mennonites believe in peace and nonviolence, is it appropriate to support those who use violence to keep Canadians safe? Is it ever appropriate for Mennonites to be involved in the use of lethal force?
3. What does the creation of Mennonite Central Committee offices in Ottawa and Washington, D.C., say about the Mennonite church’s relationship to the state? Do you agree with Dick Benner that Mennonites in Canada are now fully involved in public life?
4. What rationale do Mennonite politicians give for standing for public office? What are the dangers in getting involved in partisan politics? Is public office the best way to work at improving our communities?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

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

✉ If lesbians can't be ordained is there still a place for ordination?

RE: "MC U.S.A. will not recognize pastors in same-sex unions," Sept. 15, page 19.

The controversy as it relates to the ordination of a lesbian woman has relevance for us here in Canada. It is only a matter of time before a similar incident will emerge among us. Will our Canadian leaders be tempted to argue the same way as their American counterparts are doing and deny ordination to a qualified candidate who also happens to be lesbian?

The MC U.S.A. Executive Board has concluded that it has no choice but to bring down the strong arm of Mennonite church law on Pastor Theda Good's head. Until the delegate assembly changes the rules of church polity guiding ordination, the Board argues that it is obligated to carry out the will of the assembly. It argues further that the Mennonite conference, of which Denver First Mennonite Church is a part, has

FROM OUR LEADERS

The only ways forward

JEFF STECKLEY

I had the privilege of spending the first week of October on a learning tour in the United Kingdom with eight young adult leaders from Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. The learning tour's purpose was to provide an opportunity for these young adults to become better acquainted with the ministry of Urban Expression U.K., a group of Anabaptist church planters who are living in and establishing faith communities in socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods.



Each of the eight young-adult leaders will most certainly bring their own perspectives and wisdom to questions related to the value of the learning tour. It would be presumptuous of me to speak on their behalf. However, what I am able to do is offer my own reflections as tour leader of this experimental pilot initiative, made possible in part by MC Eastern Canada's Legacy Initiative Fund, along

with support from participants and their home congregations.

Not all of the i's need to be dotted and t's crossed before doing something new. Planning conversations with Urban Expression U.K. staff assured us that the risk was well worth taking, yet we didn't know quite what to expect. It's interesting to note that, in retrospect, participants would have preferred not to have received an itinerary in advance, but to simply have let themselves be drawn into the experiences.

Unexpected interruptions can provide the most formative moments. We planned to take a city walking tour the day we arrived in London. As we prepared to leave our college dorm for the city tour, a church that met at the college asked if they might pray for and with us. They chose to let our group interrupt their worship, an interruption that resulted in us missing the city tour, yet receiving the gift and blessing of prayer together.

At times, we, as leaders, need to get out of the way and just marvel and pray. We spent many hours walking and travelling by train and underground. Informal conversations among participants and fellow travellers popped up regularly. I came to appreciate that my engagement in these conversations was neither helpful nor necessary. My role was to simply delight in these often unlikely exchanges, trusting in the growth and learning that was most surely happening.

Young adult leaders can and will lead, if we let them. Initially, I felt obligated to thank the Urban Expression U.K. staff at the conclusion of a tour or table conversation. I quickly discovered that this wasn't necessary, as participants offered their own thanks, and, in some cases, very astute and sincere prayers for a particular ministry.

No doubt, there will be additional reflections to add to the list as the learning tour experience integrates more fully into my ministry. What I've become even more convinced of as a result of this experience, is that risk, experimentation and ongoing learning are the only ways forward for us as a church.

Jeff Steckley is MC Eastern Canada's congregational ministries minister.

“covenantal obligations” to the delegate assembly and should obey its decisions as well.

Unfolding before us is a disconcerting spectacle, considering that the leaders on the Executive Board are spiritual heirs of the 16th-century Anabaptists, who placed at the centre of their convictions the foundational premise that faithful people of God choose to follow God, rather than the dictates of humans, and

many paid the ultimate price for their defiance of acceptable church protocol.

At Denver First Mennonite, where Good has been a licensed minister, the Holy Spirit has led the believers to seek confirmation of her as their pastor through ordination. Neither her faith and her commitment to God and the church, nor her competence, appear to

(Continued on page 10)

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Why we need to follow the leader

PHIL WAGLER

Do you remember playing Follow the Leader? Do you recall the squabbles over who got to lead? Most everyone wanted to set the pace and be the example at some point. I’m intrigued by how that changes over time.

Have you ever considered how the growth and maturity of the church depends on us continuing to play Follow the Leader?

Let’s examine this from a New Testament perspective, starting near its chronological end.

In II Timothy 3:10-11, one of Paul’s last letters, the apostle writes to his protégé: “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.”

Paul is inviting a younger believer to recall a life lived in full view. The faith is not private, nor is the idea of declaring one’s life exemplary thought odd. It seems, rather, to be expected. Paul has drawn Timothy near. The younger man has seen how the wizened apostle handled day-to-day life. He saw him

respond to success and failure, abundance and poverty, sickness and health. And lest we think this is simply a study in leadership development, consider that Paul says something even more direct to those crazy Corinthians: “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (I Corinthians 11:1).

This version of Follow the Leader is more than a first-century mentorship program. Keep in mind Paul is a second-generation disciple addressing a third-generation disciple. Paul had not been with Jesus like the other apostles,

Be with me in the temple, with your drinking buddies, at a wedding, in the face of opposition and as I pray and handle the Scriptures.

but he had been with Peter and the gang. Timothy was one step further removed. Clearly, a way of life deemed worthy of imitation was central to the life of the early Christians.

Let’s back up even further. Peter and John, who embraced Paul following his conversion, are arrested. Their opponents are frustrated and want them to cease and desist ministry in Jesus’ name. They can’t do it. The colour commentary of this stalemate goes like this: “When

they saw the courage of Peter and John, and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:12-13).

What is noted? They had been with Jesus. Which, of course, was Jesus’ plan all along. “Come follow me,” he had said in Matthew 4:19. Be with me in the temple, with your drinking buddies, at a wedding, in the face of opposition, and as I pray and handle the Scriptures. Be with me and become like me. And this becomes, essentially, what Paul ultimately says: “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” This is discipleship’s modus operandi.

Which begs the question: Whom have

you asked to follow you lately? I wonder what might change in our church discussions and debates if this was our practice? Would it not raise the bar of our own discipleship? Might it not focus our ministries on who we are becoming, rather than on only what we are doing?

Phil Wagler lives in Surrey, B.C., and is thankful for those faithful saints across the country who invited him to follow them as they follow Christ.



(Continued from page 9)

be an issue for anyone. It is her being lesbian which has become the sole issue disqualifying her. For MC U.S.A., ordination has taken on sacramental significance, superseding issues of faith, spiritual gifts and leadership competencies.

The Executive Board is in the unenviable position of making a choice between the dictates of a fallible

delegate assembly and the leading of the Holy Spirit. One would think the decision would be an easy one and Good would soon have “Reverend” before her name. Odds are this is not likely to happen.

Perhaps the time has come to do away with ordination. Can an ordinance used in part as God’s divine stamp of approval on gay discrimination be used with integrity by a Mennonite church claiming an

NEW ORDER VOICE

Local worship

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

For most of my life, I’ve driven to church. Growing up in Regina, the Alliance church I attended was a 15-minute drive away. In Winnipeg, while living at Canadian Mennonite University, I drove with friends to Charleswood Mennonite Church, which is a five-minute trip. I kept attending there after my partner and I moved to the central neighbourhood of Wolseley, turning that five minutes into 20.

We now live in Vancouver, on campus at the University of British Columbia. Before we moved last fall, we made plans to go to First United Mennonite Church, where my brother and sister-in-law attend. But the commute there is a 30-minute drive or an hour transit ride. Needless to say, I’ve become wary of the church trek, not only because it’s a hassle with a small child, but because driving to church is something I don’t want to do anymore.

These days, an argument for keeping church attendance local could be considered a trendy one. “Support local x” is already deeply embedded in pockets of our society’s consciousness: small-scale farmers, local grocers, credit unions, the struggling independent bookstore. But perhaps it’s a bit novel when “stay local” is applied to a non-consumption-based community like church.

I understand the reasons why people travel far to go to church: they move or

the church moves but they still attend; they’ve attended their whole lives; family members and friends attend; the specific church body is comfortable and nurturing for spiritual growth. Not long ago, I would have argued that a weekly drive to a community in which I felt spiritually nurtured and accepted was justifiable. But I’ve come to a point where I want my spiritual growth to be inherently detached from the guzzling of a resource whose extraction has destroyed, and continues to destroy, communities, both human and non-human. In short, I don’t want to drive to church because it is the last place I feel I should drive to.

I know this seems like I’m pitting church communities against ecological concerns. Rather, I just want to ask what church communities would look like if congregants decided not to get into their cars on Sunday mornings. You wouldn’t

only requires a walk down the street.

What’s also exciting about worshipping nearer to home is that we might become more rooted to our place. And rootedness is the beginning of a new ecological awareness. As American poet, essayist and environmental activist Gary Snyder explains, “It is not enough just to ‘love nature’ or to want to ‘be in harmony with Gaia.’ Our relation to the natural world takes place in a place, and it must be grounded in information and experience.” When we know our place—our geological and social landscape—we care not only for the people who gather there, but the land we gather on as well.

For some people, driving to church is necessary, especially those who live in rural settings or those who are mobility-challenged. But for many others, getting out of the car is a real possibility.

As a result of our choice to stay put, our family is casually splitting our time between University Hill United Church, which is a three-minute walk down the street, and Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, which is a 10-minute bus ride away. We enjoy the worship and children’s programming at University



In short, I don’t want to drive to church because it is the last place I feel I should drive to.

only have people deciding to bus or bike to church, but there would be an influx of new faces from around the neighbourhood. Churches would become community hubs, with community gardens and green spaces growing over abandoned parking lots. Relationships between church friends might grow more deeply simply because the lunch invite

Hill and the familiarity of the Mennonite church at Point Grey. But what we also enjoy is giving our neighbourhood the chance to shape our spiritual community. Giving up the car on Sundays has definitely been worth it.

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

Anabaptist heritage?

VICTOR FAST, LONDON, ONT.

✉ Who sets the standard for faithfulness?

DURING THIS YEAR, we, as a national church, are focussing on the task of being a faithful church. Letters and articles written in *Canadian Mennonite* show a determined group of writers whose goal it is to wear down the opposition to homosexuality until the national church is willing to bless homosexual unions. Is the church a democratic institution in which we determine what is acceptable in the sight of God, or does God set the standard?

With the level of education of our church members, we have become experts at splitting hairs. We are able to twist Scripture to our liking, so that it says what it didn't say for nearly 2,000 years. And what Scripture said very clearly for thousands of years is now attributed to the "ignorance of previous generations" by some.

We need to stop following one step behind a worldly culture and show those who are lost what God wants for his children who supposedly live in a counter-culture. The Apostle Paul teaches very clearly: "*It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality*" (I Thessalonians 4:3).

When Norman Kraus writes in "Jesus challenges essence of marriage union," Sept. 29, page 15, that "[t]he whole purpose of marriage was to legalize and protect the purity of the sexual propagation of Jewish society," I'm surprised that, as a learned man, he ignores the fact that marriage was not a Jewish invention. In fact, from the time of Adam each culture has had a form of marriage, whether monogamous, polygamous or polyandrous. However, it was only the people of Israel who received divine revelation on the framework of marriage.

One of the most important functions of marriage in all cultures has been the protection of the next generation and the safety of women. In our pleasure-seeking western society, most people don't seek the will of God. As a result, we end up with the sad reality of single-parent families, children living in dysfunctional homes, abused and confused children, and often open warfare in families.

We need to turn away from the highly complicated religious ways developed by the Pharisees throughout history, and return to our roots: "It's the old-time religion that is good enough for me."

ISAAK EITZEN, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

✉ Church needs to get back to the business of salvation

RECENTLY I PICKED up a *Canadian Mennonite* and was reading a few of the letters. I can't believe how distracted we have become and are neglecting the business of the church. Shouldn't we be out saving souls from an eternity in hell?

I am not advocating being reckless with the environment, but I believe a person in right relationship with God would respect creation enough to care for it. Regarding "My environmentalism is my spiritual ethic" column (Sept. 15, page 10), about deciding if it is responsible to have children, would Christ not return before the earth could not sustain all of us? And with the way we want to preserve the earth forever, don't we believe Jesus is coming back? Besides, aren't there enough secular agencies fighting the climate battle?

The thought comes to me sometimes that maybe God is even using evil men to set the stage for the end times. That is how the plan of salvation came about, at the hands of evil men. Judas was one of those evil men who was doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled, which is hard for me to understand because we all benefited from the end result of that betrayal.

Yet Scripture tells us God desires all the rest to be saved. That leads me to ask: Why would he make some people innately homosexual and thus disqualify them from salvation? We need to get back to the business of Christ's church: Praying for the lost and bringing people to reconciliation to God through Christ.

MYRON DERKSEN, WINKLER, MAN.

✉ 'MFC does not recommend individual charities to clients'

RE: "DID STEWARDSHIP consultant subtly influence client?" letter, Oct. 13, page 13.

Della Lee raises a very valid concern whether a stewardship consultant with Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) might be exerting an undue influence when assisting clients with estate planning. In their wisdom, the founders of MFC determined that MFC would be "donor advised," which means we distribute charitable funds to any registered charity in Canada chosen by the donor. They also decided our consultations would be free and confidential.

We certainly hope to influence decisions for generosity in will planning! At the same time, MFC consultants provide will and estate counselling to anyone regardless of their ability or choice to make a gift to charity in their current circumstances. MFC does not

recommend individual charities to clients, but we do encourage them to support causes that align with their passions.

We are pleased and humbled when we are invited to assist with the significant task of estate planning as part of our mission to encourage faithful joyful giving.

JESSE HUXMAN (ONLINE COMMENT)

Jesse Huxman is MFC's director of communications.

✉ **Clients need personal involvement in dealing with memory pain**

RE: "BEARING THE burden of memory pain," Sept. 29, page 4.

The concept of "memory pain" is a perfectly useful and accurate term that depicts a specific malady. In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual No. 5, this phenomenon is included under the syndrome pertaining to post-traumatic stress disorder. As a counsellor and clinical therapist, I have seen many clients with this diagnosis.

The cause of memory pain is an historical event, a fact that causes pain because of emotional components. The emotional part could result from injustice, false accusation, the client's own mistake, abuse, anger, shame, humiliation, guilt or physical suffering. The unresolved, emotionally laden event automatically can enter as a daytime flashback, as a part of a dream or as the cause of nightmares or sleeplessness. These intrusions can be so undesirable that forced wakefulness is sometimes deemed as more desirable than sleep.

These memories should probably not be thrust into forgetfulness because they can burst forth at the most inconvenient times. The duration of these memories are variable; some people take them and the pain with them to the grave.

Many of the first-nation clients I have seen in therapy mentioned that after they left their Indian Residential School, the memory pain was unbearable. Sleep disturbance was the most common complaint. Many of them reported that alcohol or other drugs blocked the pain of memory on a temporary basis, but that their attempts at solving the problem made things worse and led them into addictive behaviour.

Once in treatment, I ask how long the emotional upset lasted after the most recent memory pain event. Clients will clearly tell me when the memory event no longer engages their emotions. The goal of the professional treatment is to help clients work through the emotional factors, be released from their overworked feelings, and be liberated in order to constructively deal with the present and to productively plan for the future.

Treatment should include scientific methods delivered with kindness. In my experience, client-centred cognitive behaviour modification with unconditional positive regard is a treatment choice. I think that the most successful treatment is the kind in which clients feel they have personal involvement during therapy and learn how to help themselves after the treatment is over.

WALTER DRIEDGER, COQUITLAM, B.C.

✉ **Mennonites guilty of patriarchy, paternalism, sexism, misogyny**

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Helen Dueck of Winnipeg made a passionate plea to end the publishing of the John Howard Yoder situation. I would like to echo her plea. Yoder died 17 years ago, but his surviving family lives on and does not deserve this continual public shaming.

The public has not been given all the facts. We have been expected to accept all accusations against Yoder as fact without knowing what the process was for establishing the validity of the claims against him.

The 2015 lament service that is being planned by the Mennonite Church U.S.A. discernment group would do well to focus on the social structure of the Mennonite church that allows for a situation like this.

The Mennonite church has historically prided itself on being separate from the world and its sinfulness. At the same time, the Mennonite community embraced and solidly embedded the sins of patriarchy, paternalism, sexism and misogyny into the church, institutions and family life. All of these beliefs were thought to place the man in a "superior" position in relation to women, and have had serious consequences for women, whether or not they had the experience of an unwanted sexual approach from a man.

Hopefully, the lament will also focus on how to free women from the victim role. A case in point is Marcus Rempel's "Talk of 'rape culture' forces men to deal with their lust" letter, Sept. 15, page 13. The ideas expressed epitomize the worst in male attitudes toward women, and, as the writer admits, are regrettably close to the truth. Why is it that an attractive woman inspires a man to think of rape? Appreciation of beauty and violent urges are, I believe, mutually exclusive.

It is not the responsibility of women to correct men when they go astray in their thinking or actions. Men are responsible for this themselves. The first step is for men to have respect for women, their values and their sexuality.

SUSANNA KLASSEN TORONTO

✉ ‘Global caliphate’ letter full of ‘fearmongering mistruths’

RE: “‘GLOBAL CALIPHATE’ a Muslim goal, not a myth” letter, Sept. 1, page 15.

Canadian Mennonite has an ethical and legal obligation, I think, to reject letters to the editor that contain claims purporting to be facts, but which are actually hate-provoking untruths.

Isaak Eitzen claims that “faithful [Muslims] have the duty to convert all infidels or kill them. This pleases Allah.” As my mother used to say, Eitzen is talking through his hat. I have dozens of Muslim friends, and have worked with hundreds of others in Saudi Arabia, all of whom are faithful Muslims, and yet none of them have tried to kill me. In fact, I know that my Saudi hosts would give their lives for mine, if mine were threatened in any way while in Saudi Arabia.

Eitzen also claims that “the large majority of Muslims” are “very ignorant of the teachings of Islam.” This, too, is a ridiculous claim. The truth is that a far-greater percentage of Muslims have read the Qur’an many times than the average Christian has read the Bible. It is the goal of many Muslims, in fact, to memorize the entire Qur’an.

The magazine should not publish fearmongering mistruths about Muslims. They are our brothers and sisters in faith, and are as committed to peace as we are. The few who espouse violence and hatred are no more Muslim than Reverend Fred Phelps—the pastor behind the “God hates fags” website—was a Christian.

MARK MORTON, KITCHENER, ONT.

Mark Morton attends Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener.

✉ Native Ministry laid foundation for indigenous-settler relations

THANKS FOR INCLUDING Will Braun’s reflection on Mennonite-Indigenous relations, “Can we talk?” as the feature article in the Oct. 13 issue of *Canadian Mennonite* (page 4).

The relationship is truly one of the defining issues of our time, and for those of us who have participated in this interaction over the last several decades, it is deeply gratifying to see the new surge of attention and concern, the new commitment towards acknowledging our role as settlers and to walking alongside indigenous communities as we jointly seek a better way.

However, we cannot fully move forward until we take stock of the entire journey we have already taken. Alongside the story of Mennonite Central Committee

Canada’s historic Native Concerns program and the prophetic voice of Menno Wiebe, we must also acknowledge and understand the decades of community relationships built up through the work of staff and administrators of Mennonite Church Canada’s Native Ministry.

Native Ministry’s presence in certain specific communities in Manitoba and several locations across Canada since the 1950s was certainly not without its tensions and problems, but it did help to create a relationship between peoples that still endures through the Partnership Circles now administered through MC Manitoba. Without these decades of close community relationships in specific locations in Manitoba and elsewhere across Canada, we would have no foundation for even beginning the work of healing relationships across our country today.

Braun has done a great job of reminding us of part of our story, but the rest of that story still remains to be told.

NEIL FUNK-UNRAU, WINNIPEG

✉ Faith remains when beliefs fall away

RE: “FAITH vs. belief (Pt. 1),” Oct. 27, page 13.

So glad to see this important issue raised here. As one who concerns herself with early childhood spirituality, I have found it helpful to separate faith and belief as follows:

- **YOUNG PRE-RATIONAL** children have a sense of relational awareness of the divine—or faith—long before they think in terms of beliefs and doctrine. Faith forms a bedrock for belief and stays with seniors who have dementia, even when beliefs fall away.
- **BELIEFS, INCLUDING** all our precious and beleaguered doctrines, intersect with, and inform, our faith during our rational years. However, it seems that, especially in the uncertainties of our current context, it is also important for rational adults to value and uphold faith, which is deeper and more relational than belief. Even while uncertainty swirls around in our brains, we can worship, become still and be known by our mysterious God.

ELSIE REMPEL (ONLINE COMMENT)

/// Correction

Author Mary Christner Borntreger’s name was misspelled in the first line of the “Borntreger books on growing up Amish relaunched” article on page 28 of the Oct. 27 issue. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

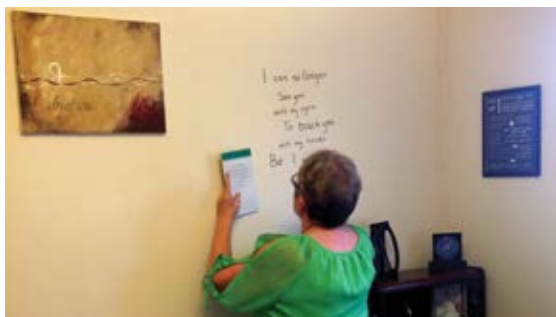
Writing on the walls of my little room

BY PHYLLIS RAMER

My mother sternly warned me against doing such a thing, and I'm sure I echoed her feelings to my children and grandchildren as they grew up. Yet, as the years flew by, I had a growing urge to just do it: to write on the walls of the little room beside our master bedroom.

The tiny room with barely enough space for a single bed and dresser was little Jana's room when we moved to Walnut Street. Her "Precious memories" poster that hung on the wall became our bedtime prayer: "Jesus watches over me and hears me when I

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PHYLLIS RAMER



Phyllis Ramer writes on the walls of her little room.

pray. He always keeps me in his heart and loves me every day."

As she grew up and then moved on, the little room became the place where the littlest grandchildren slept during afternoon naps or sleepovers, until they, too, needed larger spaces and left that

little room beside the master bedroom behind.

After that, eclectic things moved in, things that didn't have a permanent place, things that belonged elsewhere, things that needed to be protected from the growing number of grandchildren. It gradually evolved into a place to "temporarily" store my things: professional development manuals, study guides, future and unfinished projects, keepsakes, greeting cards and pictures. Still, it remained a room without a sense of order, just a collecting point where, if you couldn't find something, it might be located in the little room beside the master bedroom.

Then by chance one day I found the original cupboards from my first childhood home, complete with the breadboard that my mom used for rolling pies and cookies. It was an amazing find—a desk of memories just for me, I thought, as an idea for the little room beside the



**Mennonite
Women
Canada**

master bedroom began to bloom in my mind.

And so the walls of the room became a place to hang my diplomas and a couple of bulletin boards to tack on quotes and songs I didn't want to lose. The cupboard became my workstation, and the breadboard, a perfect tray for my laptop, while a high stool to sit on as I worked was a chance to move up in the world! Also, it was a quiet place for my morning devotions and to bask in my seasonal affective disorder (SAD) light in the winter.

But still this urge to write on the walls kept bubbling up in my mind, a place where, with abandon, I could leave my mark. Should I actually do it? Could I? What was holding me back? What if I made a mistake? What if it didn't turn out like I imagined? What if writing on the walls didn't fill this need within my soul?

But how could I go wrong by jotting down Scripture texts, quotes from books I'd read or heard from seminars or sermons, nuggets of truth that resonated within my soul, or greeting-card quotes offering words of encouragement from friends and family?

And so at last I began by writing that text from Deuteronomy, which simply had to be there, since it encourages writing on your walls and makes it biblical: "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. . . . Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.*"

Since this is a work in progress, I'm not sure what will end up written there. But just as this little room beside the master bedroom has changed as our family grew and changed, so too will the writing on the walls. And I have faith that these words will give me courage to stretch and grow into all God created me to be, as I pray that childhood prayer and perhaps even write it on the wall: "Jesus watches over me and hears me when I pray. He always keeps me in his heart, and loves me every day. Amen." ❧



Phyllis Ramer is the coordinator of Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and serves on the Mennonite Women Canada executive. She attends Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite Church in Zurich, Ont.

What if I made a mistake? What if it didn't turn out like I imagined? What if writing on the walls didn't fill this need within my soul?

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Hansen-Lange—Ira Banff (b. Aug. 9, 2014), to Debbi and Dave Hansen-Lange, the Commons, Hamilton, Ont.

Janzen—Luke Jacob (b. Sept. 3, 2014), to Ericka Wiebe and Tim Janzen, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

Loewen—Tait Charles (b. Aug. 28, 2014), to Paul and Jeanette Loewen, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg. (Correction to Sept. 29 Milestones announcement.)

Tiessen—Zachery Nolan (b. Sept. 22, 2014), to Greg and Amanda Tiessen, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Vis—Kiera (b. Sept. 10, 2014), to Jason and Elysia Vis, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Baptisms

Nicholas Schuurman—The Commons, Hamilton, Ont., in Lake Ontario, Sept. 28, 2014.

Marriages

Benton/Kellner—Peter Benton and Jennifer Kellner (both from the Commons, Hamilton, Ont.), at Waterfront Banquet Centre, Hamilton, Sept. 6, 2014.

Derksen/Shewchuk—Jessie Derksen and Eric Shewchuk, at Hague Mennonite, Sask., June 7, 2014.

Enns/Parravano—Paul Enns and Sandy Parravano, First Mennonite, Edmonton, Aug. 3, 2014.

Epp/Warkentin—Erik Epp (Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.) and Cara Warkentin (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.), at North Star Mennonite, Oct. 11, 2014.

Hers/Schuurman—Meghan Hers and Nicholas Schuurman (both from the Commons, Hamilton, Ont.), at the Schuurman family residence, Brownsville, Ont., Aug. 9, 2014.

Mierau/Vanden Heuvel—Julia Mierau and Rob Vanden Heuvel, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, Alta., at St. Mary's Cathedral, Calgary, Oct. 11, 2014.

Deaths

Bender—Earl, 94 (b. April 16, 1920; d. Oct. 12, 2014), Crosshill Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Friesen—Jacob (Jake), 82 (b. Nov. 29, 1931; d. Oct. 7, 2014), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Hildebrand—Sarah (nee Krahn), 89 (b. Jan. 31, 1925; d. Oct. 16, 2014), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Klassen—Charles, 95 (b. Sept. 26, 1919; d. Oct. 10, 2014), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Konrad—Hildegard, 91 (b. June 12, 1923; d. Oct. 13, 2014), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Letskeman—Robert, 61 (b. June 23, 1953; d. Oct. 5, 2014), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Neudorf—Selma, 89 (b. Sept. 16, 1925; d. Oct. 10, 2014), Toronto United Mennonite.

Neufeld—Edna, 99 (b. July 29, 1915; d. Sept. 18, 2014), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Neustaedter—Helen, 90 (b. Feb. 5, 1924; d. Sept. 29, 2014), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Peters—Frieda, 96 (b. May 22, 1918; d. Oct. 10, 2014), First Mennonite, Calgary.

Roes—Clayton, 86 (b. July 10, 1928; d. Sept. 16, 2014), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Toews—Darryl, 43 (b. Sept. 13, 1971; d. Sept. 25, 2014), Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Warkentin—Agnes, 87 (b. April 14, 1927; d. Oct. 15, 2014), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Wiens—Abram (A.C.), 91 (b. Oct. 10, 1922; d. Sept. 27, 2014), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

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

Poncius' Puddle



GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

COVER STORY

Canada sidesteps UN Arms Trade Treaty

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

Canada is not among the nations to ratify the new United Nations Arms Trade Treaty that seeks to better regulate the \$85-billion global arms industry and thus prevent weapons from ending up in the wrong hands.

The treaty will come into effect in December, now that more than 50 UN member states have ratified the document. Countries that have agreed to the treaty are prevented from authorizing any transfer of arms if they have any knowledge that the weapons would be used on attacks against civilians or otherwise used in contravention of the Geneva Convention.

Canada has neither signed nor ratified

the treaty. The United States, which supplies arms to 170 countries, has signed the treaty—a precursor to ratification—but has not yet ratified it. Half of the 10 largest arms exporters—France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Great Britain—have ratified the treaty.

Canada's position is unclear. While the website of Canada's mission to the UN states that "Canada supports, in principle, the negotiation of a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty under UN auspices," Ottawa refuses to sign on.

François Lasalle—spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada—told *Canadian Mennonite* in an e-mail that "Canada already has some of the strongest export controls in the world," and that signing the treaty would bring other countries up to Canada's export-control standards. Lasalle also said, "It is important that such a treaty should not affect lawful and responsible firearms owners, nor discourage the transfer of firearms for recreational uses."

The U.S. government, which contends with a powerful gun lobby, has said the

treaty would have no effect on domestic arms use.

Ottawa says it will "continue to consult with Canadians and the provinces," and will ensure that any treaty it signs is "good for Canada, and good for Canadians."

Under the treaty, signatory states enforce their own compliance.

In a joint article in the *Ottawa Citizen* in September, representatives of Project Ploughshares, Amnesty International and Oxfam wrote: "It's hard to fathom why the Government of Canada has failed to act on a treaty aimed at preventing weapons from falling into the hands of human-rights abusers, criminals and terrorists."

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada has urged Ottawa to sign the treaty. In an Oct. 10 letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper regarding the current conflict with Islamic State militants in Syria and Iraq, the non-governmental organization called on Ottawa to take "immediate steps to sign the Arms Trade Treaty," drawing a link between the under-regulated international arms trade and the violence in the region.

The 2014 MCC Canada Peace Sunday Packet includes a sample letter Canadians can send to the prime minister regarding the treaty.

According to a Project Ploughshares report, in 2010-11 Canada exported arms to Colombia, Nigeria, Thailand, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and South Africa, all states hosting armed conflicts or serious human rights violations. ❧



/// Briefly noted

Refugee-sponsoring churches face political barriers: CPJ study

OTTAWA—A new report reveals the political barriers churches face in resettling refugees in Canada. Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) surveyed and interviewed church-connected sponsorship agreement holders (SAHs) from across Canada, including those from Mennonite Church Canada. SAHs are organizations that have a signed agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to submit applications to sponsor refugees. The report shows widespread frustration with long wait times, cuts to healthcare, limited consultation and changes to the age of dependency. The "Private sponsorship and public policy" study is available at www.cpj.ca.

—Citizens for Public Justice

PHOTO COURTESY OF MCC ONTARIO



Larry Bearss, left, and Mike Henderson replace light fixtures on the Attawapiskat First Nation as part of a joint MCC Ontario/Mennonite Disaster Service initiative that also involved Ontario Power Generation and the Mushkegowuk Council.

Wiring for Jesus

MCC Ontario and Mennonite Disaster Service send electricians to northern first nation communities

BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Larry Bearss of Niagara Falls, Ont., thought he would use his master electrician skills to help with the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) project in Staten Island, N.Y. But when he approached MDS, it was suggested that he respond to the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario request for electricians to work in first nation communities in northern Ontario.

Bearss found himself with another master electrician, Mike Henderson, from Penetanguishene, Ont., working with Ontario Power Generation and the Mushkegowuk Council installing energy-efficient lighting in small businesses in Port Albany and Attawapiskat as part of a “Conservation on the Coast” of James Bay project. They had planned to go to Kashechewan as well, but flooding there

meant the community was evacuated and no one could work. They headed north again on Nov. 3 to complete the work.

This multi-organizational partnership means small businesses get the work done for free, including the new fixtures. Living in the North is very expensive and hard to make a living, so any savings are a help to the people living there. The Mushkegowuk Council, an umbrella political group for a number of first nation communities in the North, made the initial request and Lindsay Mollins Koene, coordinator of MCC Ontario’s Aboriginal Neighbours program, made the connections. She also helped translate cultural differences for them, says Bearss.

Bearss remembers walking around the berm that surrounds Kashechewan and worshipping in a Pentecostal church there.

/// Briefly noted

Foodgrains Bank projects to help 169,000 in 11 countries

More than 169,000 people in 11 countries will benefit from 16 projects worth \$5.5 million that Canadian Foodgrains Bank committed to in September. The projects are being implemented by six organizations, including Mennonite Central Committee, in collaboration with their local partners. One project, implemented by World Relief Canada and worth \$431,000, is part of the Foodgrains Bank’s continuing response to the civil war in South Sudan. Through the project, World Relief’s local partner, Tearfund, is providing food such as sorghum, lentils, oil and salt to 750 female-headed households each with at least one malnourished child. Through another project, worth \$387,000 and implemented by World Renew in Syria through its local partner, the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development, people displaced by the ongoing conflict are receiving food baskets containing rice, pasta, lentils and canned meat. Projects supported by Canadian Foodgrains Bank are undertaken with support from the Government of Canada.

—Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Except for a few songs, the whole service was in Cree, but he enjoyed the atmosphere of being with Christian sisters and brothers. He was amazed at the price of food in the North: four litres of milk cost \$9, and green peppers were \$31 a kilogram.

People were very friendly and supportive he reports. The motel in Attawapiskat, which usually charges \$100 per night, reduced the fees to \$25 for room and board when it found out what the electricians were there to do.

Now retired, Bearss says he’d rather “wear out than rust out,” and wants to do something of service, having worked his whole life in the electrical field, mostly in commercial/industrial work, like his father and grandfather before him. //

PHOTO BY JIM SHANTZ



The community in Linden, Alta., got together on Oct. 18 to harvest grain for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Eight combines and one old-fashioned thresher, pictured at left, harvested 113 hectares worth of grain, finishing by 4:30 pm. The harvest was followed by a celebratory beef-on-a-bun supper.

God at work in the World Snapshots

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PHOTO



Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., marked the International Day of Peace on Sept. 25 with a lecture by Lisa Schirch, right, a 1990 grad who won this year's Distinguished Alumni Service Award. From a human security perspective, Schirch shared challenges and opportunities in her quest to bring peace to the Pentagon. 'Every person in society has an active role in promoting human security,' Schirch said. 'We need to learn new skills, moving from protest to proposal, changing security forces from predators to protectors.' Schirch is a research professor at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and director of human security at the Alliance for Peacebuilding. Presenting the award is Susan Schultz Huxman, left, Grebel's president.

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Six-time Canadian Olympic speed skating medallist Cindy Klassen, seated, talks with Kiera Gallian and her parents Heather and Shane on Oct. 4 at the Ride for Refuge. Heather is the manager of Thrift on Kent, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario's Kitchener-Waterloo thrift store. Funds raised by MCC Ontario participants in the ride will be divided between MCC Ontario's six program areas after Ride for Refuge takes a percentage for administering the fundraiser. More than 700 donors contributed \$42,397 towards 207 riders on 22 teams in eight locations across Ontario.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Response to a sad day in Ottawa

WILLARD METZGER

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

Like many Canadians, I find myself in a place of sadness following the senseless violence in our capital city on Oct. 22, two days after a similar incident in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que., south of Montreal.

I resonate with the voices that lament the sense of loss of our peaceful context. I share the anxiety of how this act of violence might result in our day-to-day affairs being weighed down with new forms of fear through heightened security measures.

I feel sad. I feel a loss.

I mourn that the life of another can be disregarded so easily, and an innocent father is gunned down.

I mourn that the rhetoric of revenge is seen as the best way to re-establish a sense of calm and confidence.

I mourn that religion has become so tainted that the loving Creator can be grossly misrepresented by acts of violence.

I mourn that our global family is divided by systems of defence and self-interest, rather than a common commitment of seeking the good for all.

I pray for mercy. I pray for healing. I pray for peace. I pray that the good in all of us may triumph over the tendency for evil in each of us.

I don't want people to die having to defend me. I don't want people to die trying to get the public's attention. I don't want people to die seeing each other as enemies. Surely, as a global family we can find new and better ways of working for the common good of the earth and all of its inhabitants.

I will mourn for awhile. My prayers will feel heavy for awhile. My heart will ache for awhile.

May the light of God's love blind

hatred and revenge, and give us all a vision for the dawn of a new day filled with the power of a love for all our neighbours.

This reflection was originally published on Willard Metzger's blog, Church Guy.

A prayer in response to the events on Oct. 22 in Ottawa

Our God, we call you Light of the World, but today we feel the weight of night. We call you Wisdom, but today we have so many unanswered questions. We call you Prince of Peace, but today we feel surrounded by violence. We call on you

in our fear, our disbelief, our sadness and our helplessness.

Hear our cries.

Hold us as we remember the sounds, images and experiences of Oct. 22. Hold the families of all those killed and injured in our capital city.

Hold families around the world who experience violence and instability.

Remind us to hold each other as we gather in our homes, schools and workplaces in the coming days.

May we seek your wisdom as we try to respond to the questions of our children, which echo our own question: Why do people kill each other?

We are people shaped by your story of peace. May our responses to the events in our capital city be formed and informed by this identity.

May we seek your light as we find our way through the dark.

In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayers. Amen. ☩

Adapted from a prayer by Pastor Carmen Brubacher, Ottawa Mennonite Church.

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GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Being a Faithful Church 6

Unity, Christ's love and faithfulness in discerning matters of sexuality

General Board, Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite Church Canada's General Board offers BFC 6 in a follow-up to delegate discussions at Assembly 2014, which took place in Winnipeg from July 3 to 6.

Background

The calling/vocation of the church is to seek to understand the desires of God for our times and share this good news. MC Canada is now in the seventh year of a discernment process to strengthen our capacity to be the church even while we consider difficult issues that face congregations. At this time the BFC process is considering sexuality in broad terms, and, more specifically, same-sex committed relationships. The documents and the assembly affirmations in the BFC process to date can be found on the MC Canada website at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1930. At Assembly 2014 delegates considered a paper on biblical perspectives on sexuality (BFC 5) as well as the feedback summarized in BFC 5.1, in which the following trends were identified:

1. In spite of congregations not being able to reach consensus, responses stated a deep desire for unity and that challenges of same-sex relations should not cause divisions at congregational, area or national church levels.
2. A significant majority of responses reflect the historical affirmations as implied in the Resolution on Sexuality (1986 and 1987), or Article 19 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995). At the same time, the responses express a desire to be more compassionate and welcoming of those individuals who are same-sex attracted.
3. Beyond this majority of responses, there were two contrasting sets of significantly smaller numbers of submissions:
 - a. Responses that oppose any visiting of the historical understanding of biblical sexuality.
 - b. Responses that call for more inclusion



of persons in same-sex relationships, including welcoming them as members, leaders and as committed same-sex partners.

From the beginning of the BFC process we have prayed for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We have invited congregations to surround their discernment in worship and prayer, and we have seen much evidence of that. Although BFC 5 did not request a specific response to same-sex relationships, many comments were received. The responses have revealed significant differences of understanding of the will of God relating to same-sex relationships even while Scripture has been the foundation. The responses also clearly indicate that the Spirit of God has placed a deeply felt desire for unity in our hearts. We yearn to be together in congregations, area churches and the national church. Is the same Spirit leading us to differing understandings of faithfulness in regards to same-sex relationships? Is the challenge for us now to see the fruit of this discernment as also being led by the Spirit of God?

Delegates at Assembly 2014 affirmed (90 percent in favour) that three important questions emerged from the feedback received. Processing these questions will be the work of BFC 6. Responses also requested that additional resources be identified to enhance congregational discernment.

This BFC 6 discernment guide identifies each of these three questions with additional comments and sub-questions to enhance your discussions. The full BFC

6 discernment guide, which can be found on the MC Canada website, includes a list of resources.

Discernment questions

Question No. 1

God's gift of unity is not invalidated by our disagreement. How shall we maintain our unity in Christ as congregations, area churches and national church while understanding matters of same-sex relationships differently?

This question probes the essence of unity.

In his Letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to "make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond [chain] of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

We can presume that this appeal to unity was needed because there was disagreement in the communities that received this letter. In the face of disagreement, their task was to maintain the unity that they had been given by God's Spirit. Christ had linked them together by a chain of peace.

Paul identifies several links necessary to strengthen unity in the face of disagreement: humility, gentleness, patience, kindness, compassion and forgiveness (4:2-3). Such unity in the face of disagreement equips the body of Christ for service (4:12), and correct understanding (4:13f), so that it grows and is built up in love (4:16).

It seems from the responses received to BFC 5.1 that respondents have reflected this dynamic relationship between unity and disagreement. On the one hand, the responses do indicate a sincere yearning for the unity of the Spirit while, on the other hand, the responses reveal significant disagreement in our understandings of same-sex relationships in the church. Paul's challenge to us is to be willing to chain ourselves together in peace in order to maintain the unity we desire.

Rather than a focus on agreement, the passage (and Question No. 1) repositions unity as a character of relationship:

- a. What important characteristics are necessary to maintain unity while acknowledging different understandings in matters of same-sex relationships?
- b. How has your congregation dealt with

disagreement on other matters in the past? What has worked well in your discernment in those moments? What did not work well?

c. What would be necessary to create sufficient space to acknowledge our disagreements on matters of sexuality while continuing to work at our larger common vision and mission?

d. How can we honour those within our church who disagree with a widely held viewpoint?

Question No. 2

Most responses indicated a desire to better understand individuals who are same-sex attracted and to demonstrate the love of Christ towards all people.

Congregations may express this desire in different ways. For example, your congregation may wish to strengthen your expression of Christ's love to those of same-sex orientation, while continuing to embrace MC Canada's historic understandings of sexuality, as defined by the Saskatoon Resolution on Sexuality (1986), and the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

Or in this desire to show Christ's love, your congregation may find itself pushing up against the traditional understandings of sexuality, as defined in the denominational documents, and feel led by the Spirit and your study of Scripture to move to a new place of greater acceptance of same-sex relationships.

We look forward to receiving a more complete description of what our congregations would look like as they live out Christ's love in the area of human sexuality. The following suggestions come from feedback received:

a. Does it mean seeking a better understanding of the best medical/scientific information available regarding same-sex orientation?

b. Or hearing from non-heterosexual Christian brothers and sisters about their experience with Christ and the church?

c. Or coming to understand better how the Bible is interpreted both within the historical understanding of the church and by Christian brothers and sisters who favour a more inclusive attitude to committed same-sex relationships?

d. Or becoming more welcoming in ways that, in your estimation, remain within the parameters of the historical understanding?

We hope that we can share these descriptions across our denomination.

Equipped to listen, but not to agree

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan continues discussion around its Safe Church Policy and homosexual inclusiveness

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

“Jesus, help us live in peace,” people sang at the outset of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s “Equipping to listen” event, expressing the sorrow—but also the hope—of a church deeply divided.

The division over homosexuality had been simmering for some time, but came to the fore at the annual delegate session in March. At that time, plans to ratify the Safe Church Policy, which had been in place since 2010, prompted members of Hope Mennonite Fellowship in North Battleford to move that the “Preventing discrimination” section be referred back to the MC Saskatchewan Council to be reworked into a hiring policy to be presented at the annual delegate session in 2015. That motion was defeated, and the Safe Church Policy was ratified as written. Not everyone was comfortable with the process or the outcome.

Knowing this, Council decided to use MC Saskatchewan’s annual Equipping Day as a forum for continued conversation on this contentious issue. About 150 members met at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon on Oct. 25.

Moderator Gerhard Luitjens limited the morning’s discussion to questions and comments regarding the process by which the policy was ratified in March. The afternoon sessions allowed for more open discussion of the broader issue.

Question No. 3

Based on your reflections in Questions No. 1 and 2, what additional counsel do you have for the area/national church?

This material is published at the request of Mennonite Church Canada.



Jerry Buhler, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s area church minister, standing, and his wife Kara visit with John Bartel of North Star Mennonite Church in Drake at the Equipping Day event in Saskatoon on Oct. 25.

Council member Len Andres explained that the policy was commissioned in response to the steeply rising cost of liability insurance faced by the area church’s three camps.

Orlando Bueckert of Eyebrow Mennonite Church questioned whether the church should let the dictates of insurance companies determine church policies.

Jim Bergen of Waldheim also expressed disappointment that the outcome of the March meeting had been “orchestrated to change the church,” and that due process had been bypassed in an effort to ratify the

policy. "Unity is more important than endless discussions that create a dysfunctional body," said Bergen, who decided to leave MC Saskatchewan as a result.

Many of the thoughts shared centred on what is sinful and what isn't.

Ruby Harder of Hope Mennonite voiced her view that the church has reached a breaking point over "whether the practice of homosexuality is considered a sin." Harder went on to say, "We all have sinned. Christ died for all of us."

Chad Doell of Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite in Glenbush said, "Nothing is beyond God's reach if we have willingness to humble ourselves." He also said, "Our flesh is our nature, but we can overcome the flesh."

Henry Patkau of First Mennonite in Saskatoon concurred, saying, "We need to come to the place where we say, not everything goes."

Others had difficulty accepting these viewpoints. Ray Friesen of Emmaus Mennonite in Wymark expressed discouragement, saying, "You give the impression that your version of faith is better than mine."

Matthew Wiens of Nutana Park Mennonite in Saskatoon took exception to Patkau's suggestion that accepting those with same-sex orientation would necessitate accepting immoral behaviour. "As a gay Christian, I am not abandoning my moral integrity," Wiens said.

Although the temptation to split over this issue was present, Ryan Siemens of Grace Mennonite Church in Prince Albert said, "Christ has destroyed the dividing wall between us [and we need to] resist the worldly temptation to go our separate ways."

Gary Peters of Hanley Mennonite agreed with this view. "When you keep splitting and dividing because you are right and others are wrong, you eventually get to be one and alone," he said.

Numerous participants urged one another to focus on Christ and work toward unity.

Berny Wiens of Herschel Mennonite said, "The church has had two opinions on this subject for as long as the church has existed. . . . We must resist the temptation to condemn each other."

As the meeting ended, participants on both sides of the issue did worship

together, listening as Larry Epp of Rosthern Mennonite Church read Christ's words in John 17 and then singing softly, "Jesus, help us live in peace." ❧

Sisters care

Rhoda Keener and Carolyn Heggen build network of caring women

STORY AND PHOTO
BY MARTHA SMITH GOOD
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
CAMBRIDGE, ONT.

In her opening remarks at the Sisters Care seminar on Oct. 3 and 4, co-leader Rhoda Sherk Keener answered her daughter's question and described Sister Care for those in attendance: "Sister Care is helping women find their own healing so they can help others find their healing."

With this theme as the foundation for the seminar, Keener and Carolyn Holderread Heggen, both trained counsellors, taught women how to find healing for emotional, physical, psychological and sexual-abuse wounds.

Four topics became foundational for input and discussion over the two days:

- "**CLAIMING OUR** identity as God's beloved daughters" means "we honour all of who we are," said Heggen. The Samaritan woman at the well discovered her own worth through her encounter with Jesus. Jesus, in being truthful about her life, removed the mask behind which she hid. He, in turn, was truthful with her about his identity.

A quote from the manual provided for participants states, "When we have unresolved core issues and unhealed spiritual or emotional wounds, it takes tremendous energy to keep them contained and suppressed as we go about our daily living. . . . Unhealed parts of our story keep us from being an effective healing presence for others."

- "**CARING FOR** self and others" examined how the nurturing and caregiving nature

of women can lead to exhaustion unless appropriate boundaries are maintained. Women tend to see their own needs as secondary and often give without refueling, said Heggen, encouraging the women to enlarge their circles of care to avoid burnout and learn how to set appropriate boundaries.

- "**COMPASSIONATE LISTENING**" to the wounds of others is a restorative power enabling the wounded to find healing. Quoting theologian Paul Tillich, Keener said, "The first tool of love is to listen," explaining that this means listening without judging and putting aside personal needs and concerns for the moment, and simply "be there." Compassionate listening does not require saying the right words, but being a comfortable, caring presence, she said.

- "**TRANSFORMING LOSS** and grief" concluded the retreat. Jesus said, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*" Two women shared stories of loss and grief, and how they found healing through family, friends and their congregation. Loss and grief can be healed, and hope restored when compassionate listeners offer support and care, they said, adding that grief and loss are journeys to be made in the company of a supportive, caring network.

A working manual was given to each participant and women were encouraged to take their experience back to women's groups in their congregations. ❧



Anne Honderich of Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden, Ont., left, chats with Carolyn Heggen, one of two keynote speakers at the Mennonite Church Eastern Canada-sponsored Sister Care seminar in Cambridge in early October.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Avoiding the social media 'time suck'

BY GERALD SCHWARTZENTRUBER
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

The stated purpose of the Hidden Acres Seniors Committee, "to provide spiritual and intellectual stimulation" for older adults, was certainly realized on Sept. 29 and 30 through stimulating presentations and discussions on media literacy entitled "Sipping from the fire hose" during Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp's annual fall retreat.

Committee chair Nelson Scheifele referred to the scriptural principles stated in Philippians 4:8 as helpful guidelines for our discussion on the topic: "Whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, pleasing and commendable." He also pointed out that, as a "faith-based people," we have a unique lens through which to see and experience a lifetime of media multiplicity.

Jesse Huxman, director of communications for Mennonite Foundation of Canada, and Ron Rempel, chief communications officer for Mennonite World Conference, showed several educational video productions entitled "Media Smarts," that formed a background for the discussion of current issues related to media productions of our time.

Huxman indicated that our brains can become fragmented and overloaded, resulting in the loss of our focus. We need to decide what is "useful" on a daily basis. Encouragement was given to sift out the useful and authentic information provided through the various forms of media, whether it be the daily news or our presence online.

Media is an influential tool with commercial and political implications in society, we learned. We need to ask what the purpose of each message is, and also to be conscious that there usually is a target audience. To sort this out, and by understanding the purpose behind the

message, might well mean our rejection of the information presented.

We also learned that social media can become a "time suck."

Current technologies provide viewers/users with the ability and privilege to voice our concerns to the media producers. As receivers, the privilege is ours to control what we choose to receive from the message-bearer.

Because of present realities in the media business, participants were asked what their degree of trust in the secular media was, compared to religious media. Our trust level of secular media's credibility was very low in comparison with



Ron Rempel, Mennonite World Conference's chief communications officer and a keynote speaker at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp's seniors retreat, visits with Lois Lowe and Doris Gascho. The topic of the two one-day retreats on Sept. 29 and 30 was 'Sipping from the fire hose: Media literacy for 2014.'

religious media.

In the conclusion, the hope was expressed that the participants would be empowered, as it is up to us as to how much, and what, we consume. ❧



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PERSONAL REFLECTION

Pondering big dreams in the outdoors

BY NOLAN ANDRES AND TIM MILLER DYCK
SPECIAL TO *CANADIAN MENNONITE*

At the Silver Lake Mennonite Camp's September Men's Meat Retreat, Chip Bender encouraged us to consider dreams: What is God's dream? What are our dreams? The implicit follow-up question seemed to be, "How well do these two dreams align?" Perhaps it's actually this alignment that matters most, that our dreams and God's dream are one and the same.

Another pivotal question was, "What would we do if we knew we could not fail?" For men, at the very least, successes and failures are often closely connected to self-worth. We can be paralyzed by the fear of failure, and lose hope that our dreams could ever be realized. But when our dreams align with God's dream, success and failure are really God's concern.

It's easier to consider these questions in

the wilder spaces at the base of the Bruce Peninsula. Camp director Dave Erb asked us to leave our cell phones in our cabins and connect with God and each other, and to spend some time dreaming. Conversations in the lakeshore sauna or out on a canoe seeking a hungry bass were about some of those dreams.

Men shared with each other about trying to be good fathers; of trying to meet family bills while being laid off; of seeing dreams start and then seemingly die off, only to come to life again.

As one part of the Sept 21 worship service, Bender shared his experiences as part of a team that created a "dry house" for men recovering from addictions. This dream started with one recovering addict with almost nothing in hand but determination. It was only some years later

SILVER LAKE MENNONITE CAMP PHOTO



Foodies Paul Born, left, and Dave Lobe provide lunch for 'meat retreaters' at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp on Sept. 21.

that a group of more people were able to gather around this dream, including Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., which offered a house the church owned, to turn the dream into reality.

About 40 men from various locations and churches in southern Ontario attended the retreat. This was about double the size of the group in 2013, when the "Meat Retreat" first happened. Word got around, no doubt due to the stunningly mouth-watering meat creations of our chef, Dave Lobe. There was no shortage of meat, and a few token vegetables were present as well.

The evening feast on Sept. 20 featured four courses over the span of four hours, including scallop ceviche and beef cheeks slow cooked at low temperature over two days. As Lobe brought out the fourth course—roasted pineapple spears dipped in honey, with accents of pistachios, yoghurt and mint, along with a 2009 French Sauterne dessert wine—one table broke out into a spontaneous serenade of nothing but the word "Lobe" sung to the tune of "Dona Nobis Pacem." Dreamy harmony ensued. ❧

/// Briefly noted

SMYO celebrates Fall Extravaganza

The sun shone and skies were clear for the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization (SMYO) Fall Extravaganza. The outdoor event took place on Oct. 18 at Harvey and Linda Martens' acreage 20 kilometres west of Saskatoon. Judging by the immediate chatting and laughter upon their arrival, the participating youth, who represented six different congregations, enjoyed being together once again. A scavenger hunt took youth all over the property, and a campfire brought them together for a hot dog and marshmallow roast.

The day ended with the showing of *Secondhand Lions*.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY KIRSTEN HAMM



Youth enjoyed a variety of outdoor activities at this year's Fall Extravaganza.

Another mutual aid organization calls it quits

Mennonite Benefit Association closes after 67 years of service

By DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

The New Hamburg-based Mennonite Benefit Association is another in a line of mutual aid organizations closing its doors.

Founded in 1947, it was not an insurance business and received its letters patent under the pen of Roland Michener, then provincial secretary and registrar of Ontario, as a church society. To get the association up and running, the Mennonite Board of Missions loaned the association \$5,000 at 6 percent interest. The association served up to 800 paying members in the mid-1990s, but had shrunk to only 300 when it ceased operation at the end of September.

Assessments were based on the previous six months' pay-outs to members for pharmaceutical, dental, chiropractic, optometry, audiology, disabilities and burial assistance. Nancy Gingerich, who served as the association's bookkeeper for 25 years, noted that up to a third of members never drew on the funds, seeing the service as mutual aid, fulfilling the organization's theme verse: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

But times changed. Various institutions and groups stopped using the association over the years, changing to insurance carriers for coverage. Some families with two incomes found that their employers carried group insurance.

As the group of members grew smaller, the burden of ever-increasing assessment requests was placed on those who remained. And in the early 2000s, the Canada Revenue Agency began to require an 8 percent tax to be paid, ruling the association was a benefit plan. For several years, annual meetings were filled with questions of whether the association could continue as deficits began to pile up.

Gingerich also wonders if people in the churches have lost touch with the idea of

mutual aid, of paying something but never expecting to draw on it. Brent Zоргdrager, chief executive officer of the Mennonite Savings and Credit Union, noted the same in his 50th-anniversary address earlier this year. While it would seem to Gingerich that the giving of time and talents has continued, the giving of money to others is decreasing.

While a third did not use the services and about another third already have other benefit packages on which to fall back, up to a third of the users will be "severely affected," she said.

Members could send in receipts for services paid for until the end of September.

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2. SURGERY

The actual surgical fee charged, subject to the following specified maximums. Where two or more operations are performed during any one continuous period of disability the total payment not to exceed \$150.

(Note: The following is only an abridged listing of the Schedule of Surgical Operations and Maximum Payments which appears in the By-Law itself.)

Surgical Operation	Maximum Payment
Abdomen (unless otherwise specified)	\$100.
Abscesses	\$ 25.
Amputations	\$10. up to \$100.
Appendix, Removal of	\$25. up to \$150.
Chest	\$100.
Dislocation, Reduction of	\$10. up to \$ 35.
Ear, Nose or Throat	\$10. up to \$100.
Excision (Removal)	\$50. up to \$100.
Eye	\$20. up to \$ 50.
Fracture, Treatment of	\$10. up to \$ 50.
Genito-Urinary Tract	\$25. up to \$150.
Goiter	\$50. up to \$150.
Ligaments	\$25. up to \$ 40.
Obstetrical (after 1 year's membership)	\$25. up to \$100.
Skull	\$150.
Spine or Spinal Cord	\$50. up to \$150.
Tumors	\$10. up to \$100.

Payment for X-rays may be made in the cases of fracture only—\$10. for simple fracture and \$20. for multiple fracture.

Rates from a 1954 Mennonite Benefit Association brochure. Before the Ontario Hospital Insurance Program was put in place by the provincial government, people had to pay for surgeries and hospital stays.

At the end of October, cheques to honour those requests will begin to be paid out and Gingerich will prepare the final assessment to be sent sometime this winter. ❧

/// Briefly noted

MC U.S.A. to explore new denominational structure

Seeking to hold the denomination together amid controversies over homosexuality, Mennonite Church U.S.A. will explore possibilities for a new structure. "It's very much up in the air whether we can find a structure that will satisfy all that are in Mennonite Church U.S.A.," said Ervin Stutzman, the denomination's executive director, in a telephone interview following an Executive Board meeting at the end of September. "It will not be easy to find any structure in which all can happily flourish." Stutzman said a committee appointed at the Executive Board meeting would explore a looser structure, perhaps called an association, network, alliance or affiliation, and bring a proposal to next summer's convention in Kansas City, Mo. "The idea for a looser network was shared by both those who are more progressive and those who are more conservative, but they expressed it for very different reasons," Stutzman said, adding that some conservatives would favour a looser affiliation so they don't feel guilt by association with those who have taken actions they disagree with. While exploring new structures could be seen as an attempt to keep MC U.S.A. from shrinking, Stutzman said a larger vision should drive the process. He said he hopes for an association that would attract "people who want to express an Anabaptist understanding of the world," including those who are not currently part of MC U.S.A.

—Mennonite World Review

Reprinted with permission from a longer story posted at mennoworld.org on Sept. 30.

Global church comes to Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan Women in Mission hear stories of women from other cultures

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
WALDHEIM, SASK.

“**W**hen I see her smile, I see my mother.” Speaking through an interpreter, Claudia Chavez describes the woman who has been like a mother to her since she came to Canada from Honduras two years ago. That woman, Ruby Harder, and Chavez met in a warm embrace at the Saskatchewan Women in Mission annual fall retreat, held Oct. 17 and 18 at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

The retreat’s theme was “Women’s voices from the global church.” A Russian Mennonite-style supper of farmer sausage, *verenike* (pockets of dough stuffed with cheese), and cream gravy reminded participants of their own cultural heritage on Oct. 17. Colourful aprons, which the women had been asked to bring, sparked stories of mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters. Three women—Edna Zacharias,

Ruth Heppner and Esther Patkau—shared stories of revolution, family separations and immigration, reminding participants that their own families were newcomers to Canada not that long ago.

On Oct. 18, seven women from Saskatoon Vietnamese Mennonite Church arrived to share their stories with the group. So did five Honduran women from Hope Mennonite Fellowship in North Battleford, along with their co-pastor and interpreter, Sonja Zabaleta. Kaytee Edwards, coordinator of Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan’s International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP), also brought two IVEP participants: Sandra Isabel Hildebrand Reimer from Paraguay and Nina Caesaria Karin Penina Saud from Indonesia. The women spoke about their faith in Christ, the challenges of coming



Women from Saskatoon Vietnamese Mennonite Church treated participants at the Saskatchewan Women in Mission’s fall retreat to fresh spring rolls, which they prepared themselves.

to a new country, and the humour and joy they find in life.

Between sessions, participants sampled fresh Vietnamese spring rolls and Honduran-style tortillas. The Honduran women also brought a piñata to lend a party atmosphere to the afternoon’s activities. ❧

/// Briefly noted

New MCC Centre opens for business, ministry

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Customers were already waiting outside the door when the new MCC Centre thrift shop in the brand new Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C. building on Gladys Avenue opened its doors for the first time on Oct. 20. The opening of the new store, originally scheduled for the beginning of October, generated much interest. Sales were brisk, with an end-of-the-day sales total that was a record for B.C. The two-storey building has been under construction since the summer of 2013. In addition to the thrift shop, the MCC Centre houses headquarters for MCC B.C.’s offices and material resources warehouse, a Ten Thousand Villages retail shop, MCC quilters and Common Place Café. Mennonite Foundation of Canada also shares the facilities. According to MCC B.C. staff member Ron Ratzlaff, the building’s grand opening will take place on Dec. 6, pushed back from the original date of Oct. 25. Doors will open at 10 a.m., followed by a program at 11, which will include a ribbon cutting; speeches by MCC staff, local business and political dignitaries; and tours of the building.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN



The first customer of many makes a purchase at the MCC Centre thrift shop in Abbotsford on opening day, Oct. 20.

/// Staff changes

Pastors in transition in Eastern Canada

SEAN EAST was ordained at West Hills Mennonite Fellowship, New Hamburg, Ont., on Sept. 28. East has a bachelor of mathematics degree from the University of Waterloo and a master of theological studies degree from Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont. He is a certified managerial accountant, and worked in that capacity at Mitchell Plastics in Kitchener, Ont., from 1998 to 2010; he has been West Hills' pastor since November 2010.



Sean East, right, is anointed as part of his ordination service by Henry Paetkau, area church minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

• **LOUISE WIDEMAN** became lead minister at Vineland (Ont.) United Mennonite Church on Oct. 1. She earned a bachelor of arts degree in music from the University of Waterloo, Ont.; a bachelor of education degree from Queen's University, Kingston, Ont.; and a master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. She volunteered for two years in Mashulaville, Miss., and served as associate pastor at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., from 1994 to 2002. She moved to Vineland after being co-pastor at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio, where she served since November 2002.



**Louise
Wideman**

ELEANOR EPP-STOBBE began serving as interim pastor at Breslau Mennonite Church on Sept. 1. She has a bachelor of arts degree from Goshen (Ind.) College in science, psychology and women's studies; a master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.; and a doctor of theology degree from the University of Toronto, Emmanuel College, in systematic theology. She has served as pastor of Hamilton Mennonite Church; Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont.; and Windsor Park United Church, Ont.; as well as executive director of Voices



**Eleanor
Epp-Stobbe**

for Non-Violence, and with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada and MCC Manitoba.

CARMEN BRUBACHER began as supply minister at Ottawa Mennonite Church on Sept. 28. Brubacher has a master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and worked as interim chaplain at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont. in 1998-99. She was involved on the Leadership Team when Milwaukee (Wis.) Mennonite Church was birthed. Most recently, she has been a curriculum writer for the new Shine curriculum, but she has mostly enjoyed being home with her four children.



**Carmen
Brubacher**

DAWNE DRIEDGER was installed as interim minister at Milverton Mennonite Fellowship on Oct. 5. She practised as a registered nurse for 14 years before entering pastoral ministry. A campus minister for two-and-a-half years, she also co-pastored with her husband Ken at Zion Mennonite Fellowship in Elmira for eight years. In April 2013, she graduated with a master of theological studies degree and is currently enrolled in the Interim Ministry Network's certificate in Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry course, and is working to complete the certificate in Conflict Management and Congregational Leadership course through Conrad Grebel, University College, Waterloo, Ont.



**Dawne
Driedger**

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Pastor in transition in Manitoba

DARREL TOEWS began serving Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg as lead pastor on Sept. 1, joining a pastoral team of three others. He comes with his wife Lucille from Breslau Mennonite Church, Ont. For Toews, Manitoba is a return to his roots. After studying at Steinbach Bible College, he accepted a call to youth ministry at Gospel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg for four years. Later, at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., he graduated with a master of divinity degree in 1989. Since then, he has served in pastoral ministry in southern Ontario, first at Tavistock and at Breslau beginning in 2003. Toews's ministry is solidly based on an Anabaptist theological understanding, including believer's baptism, stewardship, a strong peace witness and active service.



**Darrel
Toews**

—BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

PHOTO BY TIM WIEBE-NEUFELD



Rev. Dr. Peter Coutts, standing right, leads a session during the Mennonite Church Alberta pastors retreat at Camp Valaqua, Water Valley, Alta., from Oct. 14 to 16. Coutts encouraged pastors to re-imagine spiritual practices not only as acts of devotion, but also as a means to partner with God to develop professionally, personally and spiritually. The retreat included a mix of input sessions, worship, prayer and time for personal reflection.

PHOTO BY SAMANTHA KRUTHOF



The 'Thanksgiving Harvest Table,' a ministry of caring and interdependence at Hunta (Ont.) Mennonite Church, featured bounty from the community on Oct. 12. Pictured from left to right: Kaitlyn, Hanna and Lauryn Carney.

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Fanosie Legesse chats about one of the Mennonite Archives of Ontario's Froschauer Bibles published in the early 1500s with archivist Lauren Harder-Gissing at the 'Ancient to modern: From written word to Living Word' fundraiser for Meserete Kristos College in Ethiopia, held on Oct. 17 at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont. The evening, sponsored by MK College Link Canada, also included a DVD of the St. John's Bible, a 21st-century illuminated, hand-written English Bible sponsored by St. John's Benedictine Abbey in Minnesota. Link Canada is working to raise \$110,000 to sponsor 55 students at the Ethiopian college.

God at work in the Church Snapshots

GOD AT WORK IN US

OBITUARY

'I can still be heard'*Tina Block Ediger, 83**April 25, 1931 – Oct. 16, 2014*

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

The woman known to countless Mennonite church missionary kids from Canada and the U.S. as "Aunt Tina" died on Oct. 16 at the age of 83

"Tina had a special place in her heart for single women missionaries and missionary children. She often entertained them in her home when they came to Newton [Kan.] for debriefing," wrote Howard Habegger, former executive secretary of the Commission on Overseas Mission (COM) of the General Conference (GC) Mennonite Church, for which Block Ediger worked for more than a quarter-century.

Block Ediger served with COM from 1955-81. She was there when Habegger joined the staff in 1970 as executive secretary. "It was Tina who welcomed me and provided the information and inspiration I very much needed," he said in his tribute to her. "She had a unique grasp of the total mission program and its personnel overseas. Tina possessed a deep personal passion for GC involvement in world missions, first serving in India and then many years on the COM staff."

Block Ediger was born April 25, 1931, in Steinbach, Man., to Julius H. and Katherina Block, the sixth of eight children. She was baptized in 1951. According to her brother Bill, she put her secretarial training to work at several different jobs in Manitoba, but found the work unfulfilling.

"I prayed and God led me to accept a job in Newton, Kan., as a secretary for [the] Commission on Overseas Mission, a two-year job that lasted 26 years," she wrote in her life story.

During these years, she completed her



Tina Block Ediger

bachelor of arts degree at Bethel (Kan.) College and served for two years as the secretary-bookkeeper at the Union Biblical Seminary in Yeotmal, India.

In 1975, she married Elmer Ediger. "One great joy of marrying Elmer was gaining a family," she wrote. Elmer died unexpectedly in 1983, three weeks before she started chemotherapy for her lymphoma.

"Tina believed it was necessary to put a 'face' on overseas mission," wrote

I prayed and God led me to accept a job in Newton, Kan., as a secretary for [the] Commission on Overseas Mission, a two-year job that lasted 26 years.'
(Tina Block Ediger)

Habegger. "Therefore, she developed an extensive itineration program for furloughing missionaries, COM staff and commission members. She would say, 'We need to get a face-to-face story to our

churches on what God is doing through the life of our mission family overseas.' It is safe to say that during Tina's tenure as a COM staff person she placed mission partners in approximately 90 percent of General Conference churches in the U.S. and Canada. This was an immense task in communicating with pastors, setting up travel arrangements and placing missionaries as speakers in local churches."

Block Ediger envisioned and then produced the first Overseas Mission Directory, a compilation of information on each country where missionaries were serving. This pictorial directory was "a monumental task," wrote Habegger, "and was sent to every GC church and each of its members."

In 1996, Block Ediger was asked to write a book celebrating 100 years of overseas missions. She completed *Window to the World* five years later. Block Ediger went on to work for the Kansas Department of Health and Human Welfare as the Low-German interpreter for Old Colony Mennonites who emigrated from Mexico.

"There is still so much to do," she wrote

in her life story. "One of my mottos is, 'Now that I have shrunk to 4 feet 7 inches, I cannot be seen, but I can still be heard.'" ❧

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ARTBEAT

PHOTO BY JOEL MIESKE / COURTESY OF GREEN LIGHT ARTS



Amy Keating, playing Velda, an Old Order Amish girl, lies dead on stage in *The Amish Project*.

The Amish Project *provocative and harrowing*

One-woman play about Nickel Mines shootings has its Canadian premiere in Waterloo

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

In 2006, when the Amish of Nickel Mines, Pa., forgave the man who shot their daughters and offered assistance to his widowed family, the world was divided: Were they insane, misguided or holy beyond human reckoning?

Jessica Dickey, an award-winning actress and playwright from Pennsylvania, wrote a one-woman play about the tragedy, trying to get inside the heads and hearts of the main characters. Although the characters are all fictitious, her play moves theatre-goers to consider each of the real people they're based on, including the shooter, as broken beings in need of forgiveness. The specific becomes the general as the viewers of the unfolding catastrophe consider their own needs to forgive and be forgiven.

The Canadian premiere of the play was produced at the University of Waterloo in early October by Green Light Arts, with director Matt White and actor Amy Keating.

Dressed as a traditional Old Order Amish girl, Keating transforms herself from that girl into the shooter, his wife, a

church historian, a local supermarket clerk of Latino/African American heritage, and a local woman who tells the shooter's wife in the supermarket that "there's a special hell reserved for you and your sicko husband."

The characters tell their stories from their particular point of view. Velda, the central character, is a pre-teen girl, naïve, engaging and chatty, telling the audience that she wants to be like Dirk Willems in *Martyrs Mirror*, dying for her faith when the time comes. On the stage floor she uses chalk to draw a crucifixion, the shooter, and the 10 children who were tied up and shot, with each successive drawing pulling the viewers into the horror they know is coming, but she doesn't.

The shooter's wife, confronted and broken, returns home to find members of the Amish community at her house bringing food, and offering money and forgiveness. When, in anguish, she tells them to leave, Velda's father looks at her, "the word [forgiveness] between his blue eyes, boring the word into my forehead." When she has

a post-death experience of her husband looking at her through a window, much as he had in their courtship years earlier, she does the same for him, until he fades away, never to return.

The director, who describes himself as "a humanist from a religious family," says he was looking for a play that was both inexpensive to stage and that connected people with real issues when he came across *The Amish Project*. The play ends with Velda, in an out-of-body, post-death appearance, calling on the audience to "see [God], keep on looking."

Some have found this heavy-handed theologizing, but White feels it to be open ended, inviting all to find their truth that will help them to connect with others in the human community. In a society in which profit and money have replaced belief systems, and in which greed affects those around each human being, he feels people are out of touch with the bigger picture of being humans in relationship.

The Mennonite Savings and Credit Union provided funding to run the production, Mennonite Central Committee flew Wilma Derksen, whose daughter Candace was murdered in Winnipeg in 1984, to Waterloo for discussions following performances, and Conrad Grebel University College's peace and conflict studies program helped facilitate those discussions.

White hopes to restage *The Amish Project* in a year and then take it on the road to Manitoba, Alberta and potentially to B.C.'s Lower Mainland. ☞

BOOK REVIEW

Revised cookbook now appeals to the eye

Extending the Table, (Revised Edition).

Joetta Handrich Schlabach. Herald Press, 2014, 344 pages.

REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

The revised edition of *Extending the Table* is much more colourful and appealing to the eye than the original edition published in 1991. From the brightly coloured spices pictured on the cover to the many full-page colour photos that illustrate various recipes, this version has an up-to-date flavour, especially when compared to the text-heavy, black-and-white original.

In fact, I almost wonder if it is designed to be to be visually captivating, rather than a sourcebook for international dishes. Perhaps the publisher hopes that people will enjoy browsing through the recipes without the expectation they will use the recipes to make anything. After all, in our modern world of pre-packaged food it has been said that we tend to enjoy reading recipe books and watching cooking shows, but we spend little time in the kitchen actually preparing food ourselves.

The cover describes this collection as “recipes and stories from Afghanistan to Zambia in the spirit of *More-With-Less*.” These are authentic international recipes; in each case, the country of origin and the local name—and pronunciation—for the dish are provided. Presumably the contributors learned to make the dishes in the culture from which they originate. The recipes are clearly “from scratch,” using basic ingredients with almost no tinned or half-prepared ingredients. Most of the ingredients are not too exotic; if they are not readily available, usually an alternative is suggested.

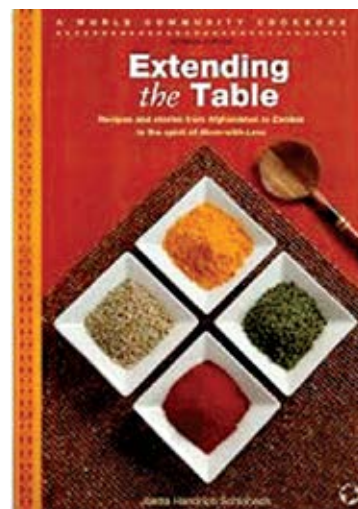
Over the years I’ve appreciated the original *Extending the Table* cookbook and learned to confidently make dishes such as tortillas, hummus, tabouli and

pad thai. The first time I made pita bread I was apprehensive as I followed Alice Lapp’s specific instructions for baking, but was pleased to discover that baking them on an upside-down cookie sheet on the bottom rack of a hot oven makes them puff up beautifully.

While this revised edition has a very attractive appearance, the original version had more recipes. The number of pages is similar for the two books, but the layout of the newer version is less cramped and has many more photos, leaving less space for recipes. For example, the number of recipes from Canada dropped from nine to three. On the whole, the editor made good choices in deciding which recipes to drop.

One new recipe that has been included is a bread bowl curry called “bunny chow.” This South African curried bean stew served in hollowed-out bread rolls comes from Stanley Green, the executive director of Mennonite Mission Network, who was born and raised in South Africa. The accompanying full-page colour photo helps to make this an appealing recipe.

This cookbook has a variety of indices,



These recipes are not your typical old-fashioned Mennonite cooking.

listing recipes by name and country, as well as a list of gluten-free and vegetarian recipes. It is available in hardback with a spiral binding, in paperback or as an e-book.

These recipes are not your typical old-fashioned Mennonite cooking. Many of them call for curry and hot pepper, but the beauty of making your own is that you can control the amount of spices to fit your taste.

This cookbook provides an interesting way to learn about the food of cultures from around the world, not only from the recipes but also from the stories and proverbs found scattered among the recipes. Readers are reminded that hospitality and community are important values and that we are blessed when we extend the table. ☸



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FOCUS ON MUSIC

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Charlene Nafziger, left, Brandon Leis, Sharla Nafziger and Benjamin Bolt-Martin perform at the culmination of Hillcrest Mennonite Church's 50th anniversary celebrations on Oct. 11 in New Hamburg, Ont. All proceeds from the concert went to the Wilmot Family Resource Centre and the Interfaith Community Counselling Centre. The concert was to have included Daniel Lichti, who, for only the fourth time in his 40-year professional music career, was ill. Songs sacred and secular wowed the audience with these professional performers who had spent formative years in the Hillcrest congregation.

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Promotional Supplement

Schools Directory featuring Rockway Mennonite Collegiate



Dennis Wikerd

For students at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, membership in the global village is more than a pipe dream. Hospitality is a highly valued practice at the school and around the world. An expression of kindness, mutual aid, neighbourliness and a response to the life of faith, hospitality also addresses physical needs for food, shelter and protection.

This recognition of worth and common humanity drove assistant principal Dennis Wikerd to work tirelessly at teaching hospitality through community at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate. "One of the reasons we do this" he says, "has to do with languages. Basically it is an extension of the school's curriculum. To practise language is also about building bridges for peace in our personal lives, in our local communities and in the world we live in."

As result of this work, students' lives are enriched. They learn, grow and teach all at Rockway about hospitality.

This year, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate students, faculty and alumni celebrated 20 years of partnership with teachers and students from their sister school, Weierhof Gymnasium in Germany. Their German guests joined in a banquet at Rockway as part of their 10-day visit to Waterloo Region.

Rockway offers opportunities for travel to Europe, China and Guatemala through exchanges and trips, and receives as many as 60 students from abroad on an annual basis. Rockway builds bridges of peace and understanding through its global connections and initiatives at home and around the world.

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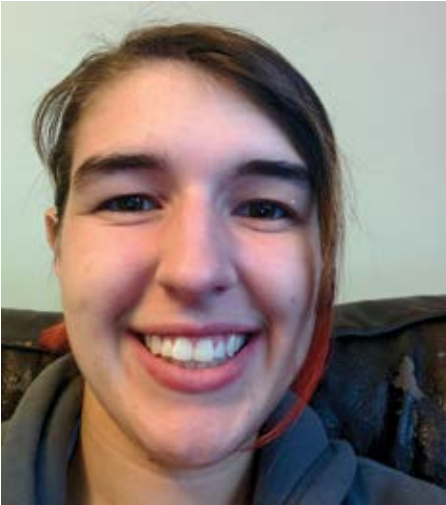
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Glenna Schowalter

MICROSOFT PHOTO



Ultimately, it is up to video game players to decide whether or not they want to play violent video games such as Mass Effect 3.

MICROSOFT PHOTO



Video games like Mass Effect 3 allow players to make choices on how to approach an obstacle and yield different results based on those choices.

VIEWPOINT

More than mindless fun and death

As with any other medium, violent video games require critical thinking to navigate their worlds

GLENNA SCHOWALTER

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

Video games are fun. They can be seen as an escape from reality, but often provide an opportunity to overcome challenges. Many of them are violent. However, for every violent shoot-'em-up, there exists Goat Simulator or 10 business management games. A wide variety of genres exist for players both young and old.

I find myself playing all sorts of games. I am a big fan of point and click puzzle adventures, which require clever use of objects and environments in order to achieve certain objectives. I also cannot resist a good dungeon-crawler, where I enter medieval times and go underground to find treasure and useful items.

Sometimes the treasure is guarded by some huge monster or a room full of bandits, and I find my character having to chop her way through the guards. That is definitely not a Mennonite response. How can I, as a Mennonite and self-proclaimed pacifist, enjoy leading my avatar to cut out the entrails of a virtual monster?

Yet I do. Is this wrong? If the game provides me with a challenge that requires perseverance and good timing, I'm proud of myself for succeeding. It provides a satisfying feeling of being superior to an enemy designed only to prevent me from achieving my goal.

That said, if I can achieve the same goal

without resorting to violence, I will. It's a little-known fact that several modern games allow the player to choose her own path. Using stealth is a favourite of role-playing games, giving the player the option to sneak past opponents, rather than spill their animated blood. It is an equally effective technique to attaining the objective and allows for quicker progression through the game. Sneaking past a room full of guards can be even more rewarding than single-handedly murdering every last one of them. I appreciate the option to exercise my real-world morality in-game.

Not all games allow for this, unfortunately. However, many games implement repercussions for a player's actions. Some games, like the Fable franchise, have a sliding "morality" meter, which shows whether the player is being good or evil. It's a simplistic mechanism and makes for a black and white morality, but at least it encourages the player to think through her actions before making them. Other games, like Dragon Age and Mass Effect, not only allow the player to make choices on how to approach an obstacle, but will yield different results based on those choices.

Often, there is no "right" or "wrong" choice available, challenging the player to choose wisely. If I choose to dethrone the tyrant king or ruthlessly execute a repentant criminal, I have to deal with the

consequences of my actions. Rather than glossing over violence or glorifying it, these games force the player to take stock of what violence does. If these games had no violence at all, they would be ignoring the issues they bring to light.

Other games, particularly in the horror-survivor genre, take this notion one step further and prevent the player from engaging in violence, while giving her ample opportunity to suffer from it. Part of what makes games like *Silent Hill* and *Amnesia* scary is that the player has no chance to defend herself from the violence of opposing often supernatural forces. The argument could be made that this is gratuitous violence. However, these games force the player to look at repercussions of violence in a personal way with little or no chance at redemption. Grim though it may be, this mechanism allows for serious thought on the experience of being on the receiving end of senseless violence. The result? Terror.

Other games make violence the only means of earning points. A popular franchise called *Manhunt* features a death-row inmate and requires the player to brutally murder enemy gang members to proceed. Higher points are rewarded for more savage murders, with gory animations to match. *Manhunt* was banned in

several countries for its graphic violence and had to be re-released with censors. I cannot think of a single redeeming quality of such a game. One might argue that the point of video games is to be able to do things one could not or would not do in real life, but that kind of violence makes me sick to my stomach.

Ultimately, it is up to the gamer to make prudent decisions regarding which games she plays. I allow both my sense of morality and my sense of enjoyment to influence which games I spend my time and money on. It is important to be able to differentiate between games that have complex moral choices, games that have violence for violence's sake, and games that focus on an enjoyable experience without much philosophical thought.

It is fine for a game to be mindless fun. One must be able to take a step back and understand a game for what it is. A critical mind can allow for both enjoyment and learning from video games, even the ones that include violence. They do not have to be completely avoided. Like any other form of media, games offer a wide variety of perspectives on varying issues, as well as new and exciting ways to have fun. ❧

Glenna Schowalter, 20, attends First Mennonite Church, Edmonton.

A 'small protest' they call home

Saskatoon couple builds 14-square-metre house

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor
SASKATOON

Newlyweds Jared and Rachel Regier are building a new home in Saskatoon . . . and it's no bigger than a garage.

The couple, who attend Nutana Park Mennonite Church, call it their "tiny house." Jared, 35, designed it, and he and Rachel, 29, are building it from the ground up, all 14 square-metres (150 square feet) of it.

The Regiers' new house will feature solar

panels to generate all their power. Jared calculates that it will produce about double the amount of energy they will need, which will allow them to sell the excess energy to Saskatoon Light and Power.

Many people think their decision is weird, but the Regiers think it's pretty normal, at least by global standards. Sixty-five

(Continued on page 36)

ELECTRONIC ARTS PHOTO



*In today's video games like *Dragon Age: Inquisition*, there is often no 'right' or 'wrong' choice available, challenging players to use their best judgment.*

ELECTRONIC ARTS PHOTO



*A critical mind can allow for both enjoyment and learning from video games, even ones like *Dragon Age: Inquisition* that include violence.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RACHEL AND JARED REGIER



Jared and Rachel Regier are in the process of building their tiny house.

(Continued from page 35)

percent of the world's population lives in less than 19 square metres per person.

"To live in a house that's a little under 150 square feet, we're in that norm," says Jared. "What makes it seem outrageous is that we're doing this in the middle of this North American culture."

Living with integrity

Jared and Rachel met when they co-taught the Earthkeepers program at Aden Bowman Collegiate in Saskatoon. It's a Grade 10 program that focusses on sustainable living and active citizenship. The Regiers say they felt like their actions weren't in line with the messages they taught their students.

"I've always felt guilty living in a house that consumes energy because we know the technology is out there to not do that anymore," Jared says. "We know our lifestyle in North America far exceeds what the rest of the world enjoys. Building a tiny house is a small protest against that."

The Regiers' tiny house will feature everything a normal house has, but in one compact space. However, they will not own a fridge, dishwasher, washer or dryer. They feel they can live without those luxuries. They will use a composting toilet and a sink with a hand pump.

The Regiers say they want to spread the message that living sustainably isn't that difficult or expensive. The whole house will cost less than \$16,000, with many of the building materials reclaimed from old job sites. The most expensive part are the solar panels, which cost around \$6,000. That's less than

most people spend on renovating a house or adding an addition on to their home.

Tiny-house theology

The Regiers want to care for creation and live simply, and their new home meets both of those goals. Rachel says she and Jared want to spend less time working for things they don't need, so they can spend their time and money more intentionally.

The tiny house is also in line with their Mennonite theologies.

"If I believe that everyone in the world deserves what I deserve, I shouldn't take more than what's allotted for me," Rachel says. "When I take more than my fair share, that literally takes it away from someone else."

Rachel worries that Christians compare themselves to others. If they meet the status quo, that's enough, and they won't strive to do more. "Being a Christian isn't about comparing ourselves to whoever else, and saying, 'I'm okay because I'm better than so-and-so.' It is about the best that I can do and the best that I can offer," she says.

"The best I can do is build a tiny house," adds Jared.

Jared and Rachel say they likely won't live in the tiny house forever, but they want to continue being intentional about living as simply and as sustainably as possible.

Architecturally minded people like Jared aren't the only ones who can enjoy a tiny house, however. Companies like Tumbleweed Tiny House Company (www.tumbleweedhouses.com) host workshops, and sell house plans and ready-made homes for people looking to downsize. ♥



Jared Regier designed their tiny house.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

On a radical journey

TIM WENGER

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

As a student at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont., I was taught to care about the well-being of others. When I graduated in 2009, I originally

planned to pursue social development studies at the University of Waterloo, Ont., since I figured that working towards societal change would be a good way of doing that.

There was something missing in this plan, though. When the opportunity arrived for me to participate in Radical Journey, a gap-year program of Mennonite Church Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network (MMN), I readily accepted.

Following a month of orientation and service in Chicago, I and four other young adults travelled to Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, for 10 months of service. We lived and worked at Breakthru Church International, a partner congregation of MMN, as well as served at a variety of other partner organizations. Each of us young adults was connected with specific areas of ministry.

While some of my teammates were given work in HIV/AIDS awareness or environmental protection, I decided to work with Breakthru's youth program. While a lot of what I did was data entry and connecting new attendants with small group leaders from their part of town, I also had the opportunity to participate in actual ministry. Every week,

Watching Breakthru's combination of evangelism and social outreach, I began to see greater possibilities in ministry.

we saw people making commitments to follow Christ.

While I was not always comfortable with the specific forms of evangelism I was participating in, I found that I was passionate about seeing people experience the love of God and committing to follow Christ. I also saw how Breakthru's work led them to a variety of community-outreach programs.

During the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, children were given time off from school. Breakthru moved its Holiday Club, similar to our Vacation Bible School, to the week of the World Cup to give the community's children a safe place to play while their parents were at work.

Watching Breakthru's combination of evangelism and social outreach, I began to see greater possibilities in ministry. I realized that the good news of Jesus Christ covers both spiritual and social realities.

As I worked at Breakthru, I also became friends with Karen and Andrew Suderman, Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers in Pietermaritzburg, who had studied at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg. The Sudermans demonstrated to me ways in which some of the things I was learning could be practised from a Mennonite perspective. As I spoke with them, I saw their faith in Christ lived out in their lives. They encouraged me to pursue theological education at CMU.

Initially, I was reluctant to travel to Winnipeg. Even though I had just travelled halfway around the world, I did not want to attend a school that was so far away from my home in Ontario. I had decided to go into ministry and attended an ecumenical university in Toronto the year I returned home. When I realized I was not financially able to continue studying at that school, I remembered my conversations with the Sudermans and looked seriously at CMU as a place to continue my studies.

When I came to CMU in my second year, I discovered a community of believers whose faith led them to theological studies as well as to disciplines focussed on the well-being of others, like international development or disaster recovery. I discovered a community in which my interests in faith in Christ and social outreach collided together into something wonderful.

I have since completed a bachelor of arts degree at CMU, and this past September I started a master of arts program there with the hope of eventually serving the church. My dream job is one at which I can connect the members of a congregation to all of the fantastic organizations in their community and encourage them to participate in the work God is doing to transform the world. ✎

Tim Wenger, 23, attends Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM WENGER



Tim and Stephanie Wenger

PHOTO COURTESY OF MC CANADA



Andrew and Karen Suderman, Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers in South Africa, encouraged Tim Wenger to pursue theological education at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg.

Calendar

British Columbia

Nov. 29,30: Abendmusik Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir; (29) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (30) Knox United Church, 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/ 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. 15: Deadline to register for the SMYO trek to the 2015 MWC assembly.

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

Manitoba

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.

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. 2: "A Merry Evening" fundraising event for Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg.

Dec. 6,7: Faith and Life Women's Chorus and Faith and Life Male Choir present their annual Christmas concerts; (6) First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.; (7) Steinbach Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m.

Dec. 8: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Christmas concert at Westminster 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, 2015: "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.

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.

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

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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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

Part-time Accounting Assistant

Winnipeg, MB

Mennonite Foundation of Canada, a donor-advised charitable foundation, is seeking a Part-time Accounting Assistant (up to 15 hours per week) in its Winnipeg office.

This person will be responsible for data entry of bank deposits, generating donation receipts, processing accounts payable for operating expenses and distributions from donor accounts, and other tasks as coordinated with the Accountant. Previous accounting experience in the charitable sector is an asset. Strong organizational and computer skills, and the ability to work independently are essential competencies.

Please submit resume to:

Rick Braun-Janzen, Director of Finance

Mennonite Foundation of Canada

12-1325 Markham Road, Winnipeg, MB R3T 4J6

Tel: (204) 488-1985 | Fax: (204) 488-1986

Email: rbjanzen@mennofoundation.ca



The First Mennonite Church

Employment opportunity

The First Mennonite Church (Vineland, Ontario) seeks a full-time pastor to lead our semi-rural congregation of 75 people in various stages of life. We are looking for someone with a strong commitment to Anabaptist values, a keen understanding of peace and social justice, and a love of music. We are the original Mennonite Church in Canada and have a rich history of leadership.

If interested contact Henry Paetkau, MCEC Conference Minister at hpaetkau@mcec.ca



Tenure-Track Faculty Positions Psychology | Biology | Music | Conflict Resolution Studies

Canadian Mennonite University invites applications or nominations for tenure-track positions in Psychology, Biology, and Music.

Menno Simons College invites applications or nominations for a tenure-track position in Conflict Resolution Studies.

Full position profiles and other details can be found at cmu.ca/employment.

Applications and/or nominations should be sent to:
Director of Human Resources, hrdirector@cmu.ca
Canadian Mennonite University
500 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2 Canada | www.cmu.ca

Travel

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way! Multiple Hotel Tours focussing on Mennonite-Anabaptist history in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Poland and Ukraine. Organized by Mennonite Heritage Tours, www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu

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

Christmas in October

Women celebrate spiritual gifts at retreat

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent

HOPE, B.C.

When Mennonite Women in B.C. members arrived at Camp Squeah for their annual fall retreat last month, they might have thought their calendars had skipped two months ahead. The holiday season was in the air with Christmas trees, ornaments and banners decorating the lodge, all in keeping with the theme, “Unwrap your gifts.”

To begin the weekend, participants took a spiritual gifts discernment test to help determine the special ways God has gifted them.

“God has gifted us in wonderful and many ways,” said April Yamasaki, pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford. She based her Bible study on the list of spiritual gifts in Romans 12 and other New Testament passages, and talked about how to put those gifts to work. She listed seven ways to unwrap spiritual gifts:

- **GIVE GIFTS** to God, sacrificing all that you do with your bodies.
- **ALLOW GOD** to transform your gifts.
- **DON'T THINK** more highly of your gift than you ought.
- **REALIZE THAT** your gifts are meant to work alongside others; but sometimes can rub them the wrong way.
- **USE GIFTS** to express genuine love.
- **USE GIFTS** to do good and bless others, even when they might not understand or appreciate them.
- **PRAY ABOUT** your gift and how best to use it.

It was noted that this year was the 50th year for the Mennonite women's retreat. Several women had been at the very first one, including Veronica Thiessen, former president of the then B.C. Women in Mission. Thiessen remembered that 39 women participated at the first one, compared to 122 this year. In contrast to today's catered meals by professional kitchen staff, she said that in those days the committee bought groceries, cooked meals themselves and did dishes by hand. They also slept on straw mattresses in cabins, as opposed to today's comfortable accommodations in the lodge or motel-style rooms.

Despite how things have changed over the years, Thiessen said she believes women now, as then, have the same vision of “getting together sharing joys, their sorrows, their concerns and getting to know one another” at these retreats. ☿



Christmas stocking 'goodie bags' greeted registrants for the B.C. women's retreat at Camp Squeah in October. The theme for the weekend was 'Unwrap your gifts.'



Being surrounded by Christmas wall hangings and table decorations helped women from Western Hmong Mennonite Church in Maple Ridge, B.C., get into the Christmas spirit.