

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

November 24, 2014

Volume 18 Number 23

## The desert of Advent: our passage to Christmas pg. 4



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## GUEST EDITORIAL

## New every year!

DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD  
ALBERTA CORRESPONDENT

Several years ago, a fellow pastor sighed in resignation as we talked about the approach of Advent, a pastor's workload equivalent to an accountant's tax season. "I don't like preaching through Christmas," he said.

He struggled with finding anything new in the "too familiar" scriptures, stories and traditions. In addition to this difficulty, we commiserated about the increased time pressures of the season, with school, church, work events, family gatherings, shopping and travel all bundled up with the tendency for pastoral care crises to increase over the holidays.

I feel the sense of resignation and dread when the Advent season starts too, but mainly as it applies to the secular experience of shopping, decorating and rushing around. The worship experience and preaching through the season have somehow always been fresh and enriching each year, even though—and maybe because—the scriptures are so familiar.

Each year, the experience of life is different in the world and in our individual lives. The familiar verses sound different in the changed context of each year and help us to understand anew, to find our place in God's world and rekindle a renewed sense of hope and purpose.

Examples of this "new every year" experience come easily to mind. Our first Christmas as parents was full of joy as we experienced a gift unlike any other we had ever received. At the same time,

caring for our son attuned our hearts in a visceral way to the struggles that poor and displaced parents and children must face every day. We could imagine Mary and Joseph trying to cope with all the "firsts" as they rested in the straw, far away from the advice and help of their own moms.



In 2001, the world felt particularly dark and scary after the tragic events of 9/11. That was an Advent in which the longing for light and hope was poignant and absolutely palpable in worship. Humanity's failings and our desperate need for God's intervention sharpened our longing for a new direction to be born into our lives.

There have been a number of Advent seasons where death and birth have been juxtaposed in our church family. There is mourning and loss, but it is tempered and understandable in a beautiful way. The affirmation of life, a hoped-for better future, and the moving of the seasons feel natural and God-given. The stories of Simeon and Anna and baby Jesus in Luke 2 sing to my soul at these times of contrasting emotion, of both loss and gain.

Last year, I was captivated by the idea of who today's "shepherds" might be. To whom would the angels first give the good news if Jesus were to be born this Christmas? I thought of the taxi drivers and hospital workers on duty on the holiday nights, tending to those who are wandering or lost or in crisis, who cannot be at home. I think Jesus might just be

announced to them first.

In this issue's feature article on page 4, Stuart Scadron-Wattles examines the passive and active voices of Advent and how they speak differently than the secular voice of Christmas glitz does. He encounters the season of waiting, not with images of sparkly snow and pretty packages, but with desert-dry symbolism. To enter Advent, he writes, "we must become acquainted with this desert."

In our western culture, Christmas is the ultimate escapism, as we hope for fun through the fleeting oblivion of sentimentality and overwrought sensation. For the church, the Advent season is about facing what is real. It is about looking at the state of the world and fully acknowledging our desperate and deep thirst for God. Once this is acknowledged, the active voice of Advent calls us to be part of the needed change. Advent calls God's people to look to God's incarnation for direction.

Scadron-Wattles challenges us to live in expectation and to be ready to receive the revelation of God. "We have to be able to handle both active and passive voices by preparing our hearts actively and being ready to receive the 'gift' in its own time and way," he writes.

Worship times during Advent should invite us to step aside from the tiring "same old same old" of every frantic Christmas season. Each Sunday morning is a small opportunity to sit in the Advent desert, away from the jingling pressure, to acknowledge what is real in life, including all the joys, fears and losses. These are times we can passively wait for God to speak into today and listen for familiar scriptures to come alive with this year's special relevance. Into the desert, God gives a word of hope. We are invited to listen for it and to actively use that hope to move forward in a new year of living into God's kingdom.

## ABOUT THE COVER:

The desert of Advent is our passage to Christmas, according to Stuart Scadron-Wattles in this issue's feature on page 4. It is '[i]n this often painfully empty place, we hear a voice saying, "Prepare the way of the Lord!"'

PHOTO: SHAYANTANI SARKAR / COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

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**Advertising Manager:** **D. Michael Hostetler,** [advert@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:advert@canadianmennonite.org),

toll-free voice mail: 1-800-378-2524 ext. 224

**Correspondents:**

**Will Braun,** Senior Writer, [seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org)

**Amy Dueckman,** B.C. Correspondent, [bc@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:bc@canadianmennonite.org), 604-854-3735;

**Donita Wiebe-Neufeld,** Alberta Correspondent, [ab@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:ab@canadianmennonite.org), 780-436-3431;

**Donna Schulz,** Saskatchewan Correspondent, [sk@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:sk@canadianmennonite.org), 306-232-4733;

**Evelyn Rempel Petkau,** Manitoba Correspondent, [mb@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:mb@canadianmennonite.org), 204-745-2208;

**Dave Rogalsky,** Eastern Canada Correspondent, [ec@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:ec@canadianmennonite.org), 519-577-9987.

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A photograph of a dead, bleached tree in a desert landscape. The tree is the central focus, with its gnarled branches reaching out against a clear blue sky. In the background, there are large, smooth sand dunes of a vibrant red-orange color. The foreground shows sparse, dry vegetation and a dark, sandy ground. The overall scene is arid and desolate.

The  
desert of  
**Advent**: our passage to  
**Christmas**

*From a sermon written and delivered at Rockway  
Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., on Dec. 10, 2006,  
and updated by the author on Oct. 5 of this year*

BY STUART SCADRON-WATTLES

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

“I can’t get into the Christmas spirit,” she said. My daughter Alyson hefted the load in front of her, and the load—my 10-week-old granddaughter—squeaked. “Maybe it’s the new baby. Everything else seems anticlimactic.”

We were walking in downtown Seattle, Wash.—Alyson’s hometown—and every store was bedecked and bejewelled. In Seattle, of course, one does not need shop windows to know that it’s Advent. The streets are filled with people carrying that red Starbucks cup. Here in Canada, the more prevalent blue Tim Horton’s snow scene tells the same story.

But even the cups weren’t helping. “What might help?” I asked. She was going to a carolling contest, she replied. Maybe that would help.

Maybe.

Christmas is not the most significant feast on the Christian calendar. Easter clearly is. Still, Christmas gives us a marvelous cultural opportunity. There is no better cultural event in western society to point out the significant differences between our faith in Christ and the surrounding world’s pre-eminent and contrasting interests than the Christmas season.

These days, we tend to emphasize the commonalities. But let’s focus instead on a key difference, for what I hope to be our spiritual encouragement and instruction.

The world we live in prepares for the Christmas season by adjusting its attitude. That’s what my daughter was trying to do. A Starbucks website even provides one with electronic means to pass on a seasonal random act of kindness—with the Starbucks name attached, of course.

Christmas carols are played everywhere, so ubiquitous and so cloying as to spoil true carolling, the way sweets spoil one’s appetite for dinner. It’s all done in the

name of “getting into the Christmas spirit.”

Christians need to get there by a different route, by passing through Advent. That’s very different from passing through the round of cocktail parties, shopping excursions, heartfelt charity and joyful decorating that our surrounding culture recommends. We Christians have a different adjustment to make, and we need to adjust more than our attitudes. We need to adjust our spirits by passing through Advent.

And Advent begins with a voice crying in the wilderness. Or, if you prefer, the desert.

This desert is a very different place than, say, the city of God we see descending in the Book of Revelation. That city descending from heaven is a populated area with a garden, a river, nation-healing trees with fruit always in season, and no need for a temple because the people there require neither reminder nor occasion for worship.

This desert has none of these things. It is the opposite of any city, especially a contemporary city that decks itself out for the holidays like a faithless man in a designer suit, or a woman in a dress that just tries a trifle too hard.

In order to enter Advent, we must become acquainted with this desert, the desert in our souls. You’ve probably been there before, as a visitor. This is the place where nothing is fruitful, where we spin our wheels and get stuck in the sand, where—if left alone—we will die of spiritual hunger and thirst. You know that desert. I certainly do. Most of us spend a lot of effort trying to get away from it. But in Advent, that desert is our passage to Christmas.

### **The active voice**

In this often painfully empty place, we hear a voice saying, “Prepare the way

of the Lord.” This is the active voice of Advent, because the voice is telling us to do something: We are to make his paths straight.

And these paths are not paved. The word for “path” used here, *tribos*, is best translated as “worn places of walking.” A travelled path like this could well be called a “rut.”

Now you know what this voice is talking about: those circular curved habits of ours that eventually lead us to God. I would call it the scenic route, but the topography we are avoiding is usually those hard places in our hearts, and how scenic is that? We walk around them, using the path of least resistance. We’ve learned to use that path over and over. When I’m driving and I don’t stop for directions, my wife Linda calls what I do “going ‘round Robin Hood’s barn.”

That’s not a direct path either, and the voice in the desert is saying to make it more so. This active voice of Advent calls on us to make change. How do we do that? By reflecting on those paths. By asking for grace to change the route. Perhaps by stopping to ask for direction. Google maps may not be the only way to navigate.

We should heed the active voice of Advent, and straighten out those ruts. This is more than a change of attitude, though; it’s a change of route.

That’s the true work of preparing for Christmas.

### **The passive voice**

But the voice has more to say: “Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.” This is the passive voice of Advent, the one that promises action to be done upon us.

When the angel comes to Mary, Mary says, “How shall this be?” And the angel says, in effect, “You don’t have to do anything, Mary. Jesus will happen to you.”

Well, that’s fine. I think all mothers should be laughing right now, because, in fact, Mary will have to give birth to and then raise this child. Let me also point out that the angel gets to deliver only the good news. God leaves it to Simeon to tell Mary later that Jesus’ time on earth will not end well, either for him or for her. The action that God will bring upon us will create



PHOTO BY SHAYANTANI SARKAR / COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

*In order to enter Advent, we must become acquainted with this desert, the desert in our souls. You've probably been there before, as a visitor. This is the place where nothing is fruitful, where we spin our wheels and get stuck in the sand, where—if left alone—we will die of spiritual hunger and thirst.*

change. And this is my second point.

The passive voice of Advent requires us to wait until Christmas happens to us. I have had some recent experience in waiting. It's not an easy discipline, especially waiting in expectation. That's a balance that's tough to keep. I fall over a lot, trying to keep that balance.

The great comfort that I have derived in the process is from those who are also trying to keep that balance, those who have prayed for me and encouraged me. We need one another in these times, and we should not be afraid to admit it, and both help and rely on one another.

Advent is a very Jewish time of the church calendar, because we are being asked to contemplate yearning and longing for Messiah. Perhaps that is why my favourite Advent hymn is "O Come Emmanuel." This longing is part of the waiting, and it's hard to do.

Christians widely recognize John the Baptist as the voice in Luke and the messenger from the Book of Malachi. But John, for all of his relationship with Jesus, had trouble recognizing his cousin as the object of his yearning.

We read about this in Matthew 11. Imprisoned for his ethical critique of the

king of Israel, John loses heart. What's Jesus doing walking around like a traveling nouveau rabbi, healing cripples and feasting with tax collectors? he wonders. Next, he'll be handing out tips on keeping your married sex life alive and kicking. John's not hearing about any mountains being toppled or valleys lifted up.

Perhaps Jesus needs a swift kick in the *tuchas*. Perhaps John should look for another messiah. Perhaps John should send his disciples to Jesus to deliver that message. And that's what he does.

Jesus, however, replies to the imprisoned John in kind. He instructs John's disciples to tell John what they are seeing and hearing: in other words, share the experience. The experience those disciples must have shared with John—however transforming—is different from John's expectation. John is looking for an active Jesus, and Jesus is preparing for the Passion.

Like John and Mary, we have to live both in expectation and be prepared to receive the One who comes. This is the essence of the passive voice of Advent.

### **The syntax of Advent**

So, for us to travel through Advent, we

have to heed what I would call its syntax. We have to be able to handle both active and passive voices by preparing our hearts actively and being ready to receive the "gift" in its own time and way.

Perhaps, in fact, the fruit of our activity will lead to the passive voice. Perhaps our actions will lead to the frustration of longing. If so, that might very well be a good thing, part of the process of preparation.

When will Messiah come? Suddenly, says Malachi, which implies that we will all be surprised. ❧

*Stuart Scadron-Wattles lived in Kitchener, Ont., from 1998-2006, where he was a member of Rockway Mennonite Church. He and his wife Linda currently reside in Seattle, Wash., where they have five grandchildren. He is director of resource development for Image, an international organization serving artists who are seeking a cultural revival of the Judeo-Christian imagination ([www.imagejournal.org](http://www.imagejournal.org)).*



## REFLECTIONS ON WAITING

# A mother's perspective on Advent

REBECCA PENFOLD

It is my favourite time of year, this season of Advent. The anticipation leading up to Christmas is the richest and most exciting time of year for me. Last year, I had the privilege of journeying with Mary while expecting our second child. There is nothing quite as amazing as waiting for the birth of a child, waiting for the seeds of hope, the promise within the womb to be realized.

Advent is about waiting, but not passively waiting for something to happen; rather, it is about actively preparing our hearts for the arrival of Christ. Too often we focus all of our time and energy on decorating the house, baking Christmas cookies, buying gifts and other fanciful Christmas preparations. In the midst of the hustle and bustle, it is easy to forget to reflect on what the season is truly about.

Henri Nouwen, one of my favourite authors, has a whole series of writings on waiting. During Advent, I eagerly pull these out and reflect on what it really means to wait like Elizabeth and Zechariah for their miracle child, or like Mary for the promise and agony of what is to come.

“Waiting, as we see it in the people on the first pages of the gospels, is waiting with a sense of promise. ‘Zechariah, your wife Elizabeth is to bear you a son’ (Luke 1:13, 31). People who wait have received a promise that allows them to wait. They have received something that is at work in them, like a seed that has started to grow. This is very important. We can only really wait if what we are waiting for has already begun for us. So waiting is never a movement from nothing to something. It is always a movement from something to something more.”

As Christians, all of our preparations and the eager anticipation for Christmas festivities mirror a much larger story. The

coming of Christ is central to the Christian story; it is neither the beginning nor the end. It is, though, the fulfillment of a sacred promise within the story! Likewise, we wait in remembrance of Christ's birth and continue to wait for the second coming—or return—of Christ.

“Active waiting means to be present fully to the moment, in conviction that something is happening where you are and that you want to be present to it. A waiting person is someone who is present to the moment, who believes that this moment is the moment.”

Mary did not spend months preparing a baby room or freezing meals, but found herself giving birth to her child in a dark,

dirty barn. Yet Mary was not unprepared. We know that she was attentive to God's voice and was willing to carry his child. We know that she was actively present to the moment, carrying the Saviour of the world within her.

“Waiting, then, is not passive. It involves nurturing the moment, as a mother nurtures the child that is growing within her.”

This Advent, as we wait, let us actively engage and participate in the story. May our hearts be stilled as we wait, wait for something that has already begun and the promise that will come to bear fruit. ☘

All quotes from *Seeds of Hope: A Henry Nouwen Reader*, edited by Robert Durbach, New York: Image, 1989.



Rebecca Penfold of Wellesley Mennonite Church, Ont, says she has the best job in the world as the mommy of two young girls. She continues to seek God in the waiting places.

*There is nothing quite as amazing as waiting for the birth of a child . . . .*

## ☘ For discussion

1. Stuart Scadron-Wattles says that waiting in expectation is a difficult balancing act. What experiences have you had of waiting with expectation? What makes it difficult? Do we recognize and accept what we're waiting for when it comes?
2. Scadron-Wattles contrasts “getting into the Christmas spirit” with journeying through the desert of Advent to get to Christmas. Do you find yourself trying to get into the spirit of Christmas? How is that different from approaching Advent as a desert to cross? Do you find the image of Advent as a desert helpful?
3. Scadron-Wattles says the desert is very different from a contemporary city “that decks itself out for the holidays like a faithless man in a designer suit.” Is that what Christmastime feels like in your city? Do holiday decorations encourage us to ignore the things in our lives that need changing?
4. Why did many of the people who waited for a Messiah not recognize him when he came? Does the coming of the Messiah still surprise us? What does it mean to nurture the moment as we wait?

—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](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) or by postal mail or fax, marked "Attn: Readers Write" (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author's contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Preference will be given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

## ✉ 'Open invitation' leaves reader saddened and disturbed

RE: "COME OUT: An open invitation," Oct. 13, page 14. When reading the Oct. 13 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*, I felt sad and disturbed. What is happening in our churches? Are our members also becoming as sex-crazy as society already is? In the beginning, God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.

May the Lord have mercy.

MARY GIESBRECHT FRIESEN, WINNIPEG

## ✉ Atmosphere still 'poisonous' for many LGBTQ people and their allies

RE: "COME OUT: An open invitation," Oct. 13, page 14.

I appreciate Carl DeGurse's desire to develop relationships and take the conversation about sexuality

## GOD, MONEY AND ME

Transformation  
to generosity

PETER DRYDEN

I didn't grow up in a home steeped in Christian heritage. Instead, my childhood includes only a handful of memories that involve the church or religion. But in 1980, that all changed. My parents moved from having a distant relationship with God to a profound new life of walking with Christ.



This transformation brought many changes to our actions and attitudes—especially our attitudes about faith, finances and generosity. In fact, generosity became a new paradigm that our family grew into. We learned that giving to support the local church and beyond, out of a spirit of love and generosity, carried with it a real joy.

My mom was especially changed. As she grew into an abiding trust of God's

promises, she discovered a joy in giving without reservation or expectation that led to an even deeper pursuit of gratitude and generosity.

That feeling of joyfulness was also evident in our congregation. We learned firsthand that giving generously of time, talent and energy for the benefit of others gave us the satisfaction that we had made a difference.

We were encouraged and guided by the words of Paul: "*You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves a person who gives cheerfully*" (II Corinthians 9:7).

Now I have the privilege of working with others to help them learn about the joy of generosity. Some have small gifting accounts with which to make an annual donation to a charity that is important to

them. Others give larger amounts. Still others have carefully mapped out a plan to make a significant contribution with a bequest.

But each of them is motivated by faithful generosity. Their faces light up when they talk about God's generosity, and an undeniable sense of joy overtakes them as they tell their stories about sharing God's goodness with others. The amounts and the methods of giving may vary, but the motivation is the same: God is good and we are privileged to share his goodness with others.

Where are you in your generosity journey? Have you experienced the deep-down joy of giving and living generously? Call us. We exist to walk with you along your journey of generosity.

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



beyond theory. Many people's views, my own among them, have changed and grown as a result of such relationships. At the same time, I don't think he appreciates just how poisonous the atmosphere is in many communities and churches, both for those who identify as lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) and for those who are their allies.

Openly expressing support for LGBTQ identities

in our community led to verbal attacks from fellow church members and community members. In one meeting, a person spent a half-hour telling me how I was corrupting children, before "giving" me the verse about those who cause a little one to stumble would be better off being killed. Such violent views are not uncommon.

*(Continued on page 10)*

## FAMILY TIES

# Talk of sin should start with forgiveness

MELISSA MILLER

The best moment of my Sunday school teaching career happened when the children were nearly stumped by a question. My co-teacher began the Bible lesson by asking the 8- to 10-year-olds, "What is sin?" whereupon a rare and rich silence descended as the children contemplated her question. The silence was broken by a spiritually precocious boy who offered, "Isn't that where we're forgiven?"

When we want to talk about sin, I think forgiveness is a pretty good place to begin, although that is not usually the case. This column, for the better part of the past year, has been devoted to the topic of the Seven Deadly Sins and their corresponding virtues. Here I offer a few summary reflections on sin.

Generally speaking, sin is not a pleasant topic, nor a welcome one. Many of us have relegated discussion of sin into the category of "destructive things the church used to do that should be left behind." On occasion, I have recoiled from my self-appointed task of learning more about the particular sin under discussion, as I engaged with the flaws and evils of humanity. Such shadows could and did awaken feelings of disquiet and shame,



and troubled my spirit. Like Paul, I see the value in attempting to direct my thoughts toward what is true and honourable and pleasing and just (Philippians 4:8).

Unfortunately, the strategy of avoidance hasn't made sin any less real or reduced our proclivity to sin. It has resulted in the unfortunate consequence that we have little capacity to identify sin, and to respond to it with clarity and firmness. Many of us have lost the language to speak of sin; we're confused about what sin is and what it isn't. One reader wondered why certain sins get on the list

*Still, the truth is that there is sin in the world and there is sin in us, and it's always necessary to pay attention to what is true.*

and others are left off.

Another rightly protested about a column on sloth, with its characteristics uncomfortably similar to the symptoms of depression. Certainly I never intended to link the two, or to classify depression as sin. As we have become more knowledgeable, we have necessarily redefined some things as mental health issues, rather than moral ones. We avoid discussions of sin in part because we want to avoid harsh, unkind judgments.

Still, the truth is that there is sin in the world and there is sin in us, and it's always necessary to pay attention to what is true. Every pastor knows that sin is real and must be addressed. All Christians throw themselves on God's grace for the forgiveness of sins, even if there are many different understandings of what that means. Parents worth their salt know they must nurture morality in their progeny, and that necessarily involves some kind of engagement with vices and virtues.

My working definition of sin is drawn from one of its meanings in Hebrew, that being "to miss the mark." If the mark is what God intends for us—our true and beautifully redeemed selves shining like a perfectly centred arrow in the bullseye of a target—then sin is coming short of that mark. Such a definition might be at least a starting point.

This summer's movie, *Calvary*, returned to my Sunday school moment in

its own way, when the heavily burdened and faithful priest says, "I think the church has said way too much about sin, and not nearly enough about virtues." When asked what virtues he would hold up, he says, "I think we could start with forgiveness." Isn't that what God does?

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

(Continued from page 9)

Christians and Mennonites, in particular, led the charge against Bill 18 here in Manitoba a year ago, a bill—now law—that defines bullying in the school context, and which, among other provisions, requires schools to allow student clubs that aim to promote understanding and awareness of, and respect for, various people, including those of diverse gender

identities and sexual orientations.

I am glad to hear that some congregations, and even area churches, have experienced more positive responses, but the coast is not clearing for LGBTQ Mennonites in many churches and communities. In some cases, the Being a Faithful Church process has, in fact, increased the repression and the oppression.

PETER WOHLGEMUT, ALTONA, MAN.

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Serving as a witness to God's salvation

NORM DYCK

What is central to our relationship with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit? Do we experience vitality in this relationship? What happens when we encounter people who can't, or won't, agree with what we hold as central to our understanding of faith? How do we challenge the discomfort, doubt or uncertainty many feel when asked to seriously consider our role in mission or evangelism?

In his book *Is It Insensitive to Share Your Faith?* (Good Books, 2005), James R. Krabill writes, "There is a degree of discomfort and a pestering uncertainty about the whole mission enterprise—uncertainty about where and with whom to engage in mission, about how such mission should be carried out, and ultimately, about whether mission is even appropriate at all in this diverse, multicultural 21st century."



When Mennonite Church Canada's Christian Witness Council last met, we explored how to breathe life into one of our unstaffed ministry mandates—evangelism and church planting—prompting such questions as, "Do we see evangelism and church planting as a critical area of ministry?" and, "What does it mean to

share our faith in an increasingly uncertain world?"

Since the beginning of the Anabaptist movement, we have claimed the centrality of Christ. Menno Simons often quoted I Corinthians 3:11: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ."

In a recent Facebook post, Dann Pantoja, Witness worker in the Philippines, offered his thoughts about sharing faith. "If we go to a community with a so-called 'Christian love' and try to do everything for the community without cultural sensitivity, without respect for the people's dignity, as if God was absent in that community before our ministry arrived, then our ministry's concept of

everyone accountable by challenging his disciples and others in a manner reflecting respect, value and love.

Krabill writes, "The church has never ever in all its history been a perfect model and messenger of God's big plan to save the world. . . . God is not only saving the world. God is also saving the church. And the church's job is nothing more or less than to serve as a witness to that salvation."

Evangelism and church planting speak to our desire to see the world transformed by the love of God experienced in relationship with Christ. I believe this passion is ignited within us as we con-

*Evangelism and church planting speak to our desire to see the world transformed by the love of God experienced in relationship with Christ.*

'Christian love' must be [re]evaluated with the love of Christ."

As we interact with people of other faiths, or even of no faith, we can be honest about how we see the world differently and how we understand or experience God differently. Jesus demonstrated this. He never turned anyone away, yet held

continue to live out a bold yet vulnerable witness as a people who share a faith in God that highlights the centrality of Christ. That is the kind of evangelism I pray our church is excited about!

*Norm Dyck is chair of MC Canada's Witness Council.*

## ✉ Does out of the closet mean out of the church?

**RE:** “THE ‘PREFERRED model’ not the reality for all” column by Rudy Peters, Sept 15, page 15.

To be clear, this article is about homosexuality, right? It’s surprising that a column could be written with the intent of addressing homosexuality without actually mentioning the word. The passive style of Peters’ argumentation leaves the reader to infer his intended recommendation. He suggests that church members who join the military are not welcome, but if they repent and choose a path of nonviolence, then they may be accepted back. We can extend this logic to conclude that, according to Peters, if homosexuals choose a life of celibacy, they can also be accepted by the Mennonite church. However, if they want to live in a meaningful same-sex relationship, they’re out.

Mennonites are clearly split on the issue of same-sex relationships, so how do core biblical commandments address this issue? Sexuality is not addressed in the Ten Commandments, and when Jesus was asked which commandment was most important, he said, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and secondly, Love your neighbour as yourself.*” This commandment of love was part of Jesus’ revolutionary welcoming message that singlehandedly debunks Peters’ recommendation of exclusion.

The “different way” Jesus asks us to follow is by demonstrating unconditional love to our neighbours, and being in relationship is how humans articulate that love.

Rather than excluding interested church builders, inclusion will ensure the continued relevance and growth of the church while staying in line with Jesus’ core precepts.

TRAVIS MARTIN, VANCOUVER

## ✉ Memories of painful events can make us more empathetic

**RE:** “BEARING THE burden of memory pain,” Sept. 29, page 4.

Henry Neufeld’s discussion is well balanced and very helpful. You can’t forget the bad things, the painful events, the tragedies that have happened in your life, but we need to be reminded that those events need not define who we are, that we need not be trapped as a victim of those painful memories. In fact, those experiences can make us more compassionate, more understanding and more empathetic.

I especially liked the visual image accompanying the article on page 5. Those tiny tacks have imprisoned the heart and leave no room for the heart to grow or move

ahead. With the page turn, though, there should have been another image of that heart with the tacks turned and pushed into the surface, a visual illustration of the fact that the memories are still there and are a part of who we are, but they no longer imprison our heart.

Thanks for all the good work!

JOYCE REESOR, CORNER BROOK, N.L.

## ✉ Termination of Darryl Klassen ‘simply illogical’

**RE:** “MCC B.C. ‘refocusses’ Aboriginal Neighbours program, releases staff,” Oct. 13, page 6.

As a former employee of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C. and a colleague of Aboriginal Neighbours program coordinator Darryl Klassen, this news makes me both sad and angry. In the 17 years that I worked alongside him, I can confidently say that his work was done with integrity and a profound sensitivity that garnered him respect with indigenous and Mennonite people alike. I know that his absence will be deeply felt. I simply cannot understand how the staff and board at MCC B.C. would choose to release a 24-year veteran of this work, work to which they claim to be committed.

Why would leadership at MCC B.C. even consider applying a settler goals-oriented process to an aboriginal relationship-based program? To do so goes against MCC B.C.’s own stated commitment to “fostering respectful relations and understanding with aboriginal people.”

How does one define “results”? How does one quantify years of patient bridgebuilding? Is the fostering of genuine, meaningful relationships in communities that have experienced deep hurts not a “result”? Does the participation of Mennonites in events as significant as last year’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission not count?

If the leadership of MCC B.C. is truly “reaffirming its commitment to indigenous relations,” then how are they going to do this without experienced staff? Why on earth would they fire the very person who has fostered this work and built these relationships for the past 24 years? It is simply illogical. Shouldn’t they be asking him to stay even beyond his retirement to nurture and mentor someone to take his place so that this work can continue seamlessly?

Finally, the fact that there has been no communication with indigenous partners regarding the decision to let Klassen go seems to show little understanding of the nature of indigenous relations work. If MCC B.C. leadership does not understand this, then its expressed commitment to this work is nothing more than lip service. The decisions made by board and staff

have already cost my friend and colleague his job; to dismiss him one year before retirement is unconscionable. My fear is that these decisions will spell the end of 24 years of work done with integrity by a man who actually did understand the community he served.

ANGELIKA DAWSON, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

## ✉ Graphic designer offers her thoughts on church communications

RE: "IMPROVING CHURCH communications," Oct. 13, page 10.

I would like to offer my thoughts about hiring and working with graphic designers:

- **COMMUNICATION IS** the most important part of the project. This seems like a no-brainer, but it is overlooked by people as they rush toward deadlines or have a favourite style. A professional graphic designer will discuss not only your project itself, but your long-term goals, church demographics, the design process, and, of course, money. If you only have \$500 to spend on a website, but also want a logo, it might be time to rethink what you need. Even if you hire a self-employed designer and get a non-profit rate, your budget for the project will still restrict what you can achieve. Talk to the designer about budget constraints; he/she is trained to find creative solutions within tight parameters.
- **CONTENT DEFINITELY** needs to be in place. It is difficult for a designer to create a newsletter or brochure when the text is still being written. You can see a proof of the design with fake text in place, but it's better for you to have your text ready for the designer to use. Content is the most important part of your piece because it, not the background colour, will convey the information to your readers.
- **MORE PEOPLE**, more problems. Getting the entire church to give feedback on a logo is a headache waiting to happen. There will always be people opposed to any design, and it will cost the church to continually make alterations. A better option is to do a survey beforehand of the congregation's likes, dislikes and hopes for a cohesive visual identity. This is valuable information that helps the designer understand your church. Feedback on design should always be done with a smaller group of people. Again, it's important to discuss this with the designer at the first meeting.
- **HIRE A** designer whom you trust. When hiring a designer, you hire a person who is trained to find solutions for communications problems. A designer looks at the big picture, not just a single element, and is an invaluable source of information as you cultivate your church's communications. Think about building trust with this person as you invest your time, expertise and

money in each other.

KAREN ALLEN, WINNIPEG

*Karen Allen operates her own graphic design firm (www.karenallendesign.com).*

## ✉ Unity must not be allowed to hold truth hostage

RE: "WHAT IS truth?" feature, Oct. 27, page 4.

Truth is to be distinguished from knowledge, and truth must exist apart from human knowledge for people to be able to know it.

Dave Rogalsky concludes with what he believes to be a truth: "In the postmodern era, many have given up on finding absolute truth," which is a statement that he believes truth exists in and of itself, and people can seek to find it or know it, but many have given up on finding it.

All truth arises in and from the self-existent, infinite Creator God. He is "the truth." Jesus Christ identified with this truth when he said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6).

On the other hand, the enemy of God, the devil, is the origin of falsehood: "*All of you are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father all of you will do*" (John 8:44).

All knowledge of truth arises in and from the self-knowing, infinite Creator God, which is why "[t]he fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).

Therefore, it is extremely important that we come to know the truth. It is only in the knowledge of truth that we are set free from ignorance, darkness and falsehood: "*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32).

Willard Metzger, Mennonite Church Canada's executive director, was wrong when he appealed to us to pursue "a unity that was not based on finding 'the truth.'" Because truth and falsehood are opposites, and knowledge and ignorance are mutually exclusive, it is foolishness to throw out truth and knowledge of the truth for the sake of unity.

"*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" (Amos 3:3). "*Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?*" (II Corinthians 6:14).

When we find ourselves in despair of knowing the truth, as many do today, we find the answer in the work of the Holy Spirit of God in us. "*Nevertheless when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth. . .*" (John 16:13).

STEVE SWIRES (ONLINE COMMENT)

## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

## Faith vs. beliefs (Pt. 2)

TROY WATSON

**“W**hen the disciples saw him they worshipped him, but some of them doubted.” That’s how the disciples responded to the risen Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (28:17).

So what were these disciples doubting? Nothing less than the resurrection of Jesus.

In my experience, this would be a deal breaker for most modern churches. Belief in the resurrection is a non-negotiable. Yet how does Jesus respond to these sceptics?

“Depart from me you doubters for you have no place in the kingdom of God!” Nope. Not even close. Jesus calls them into ministry.

Jesus gathers both the worshippers and the doubters together and sends them out as spiritual coaches to the world. Jesus charges them all with what we call the Great Commission, to go into the world and make disciples. In sending both doubters and worshippers to minister, Jesus is implying that doubts don’t disqualify them for ministry in the kingdom of God.

Now I think it’s obvious all the apostles eventually believed Jesus rose from the dead and were empowered to risk their lives and face martyrdom because of their unshakable confidence in the resurrection. There’s no question the resurrection of Jesus was foundational for the early church. In fact, Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians that Christians are fools if there is no resurrection: *“If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless . . . if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world”* (5:17-19).

Yet Jesus doesn’t make doubting the



resurrection a deal breaker for following him and serving in the kingdom of God. So what did Jesus make a deal breaker?

- **IF YOU** don’t forgive others their sins, God will not forgive you.
- **IF YOU** judge others, you will be judged. If you condemn others, you will be condemned.
- **NO ONE** can enter the

kingdom of God unless they are born of the Spirit.

- **“NOT EVERYONE** who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of God.”

These are some of Jesus’ non-negotiables in the gospels. What a strange

*I’ve found the teachings in the Book of James, whose author is believed to be the brother of Jesus, to be more consistent with Jesus’ teachings than the writings of Paul.*

salvation doctrine Jesus seems to have. Beliefs don’t even make his Top 10 list.

So where did the church’s hyperactive focus on beliefs come from, if not from Jesus? That’s a huge question that would take more than a short article to address. Some would point to Paul, others to the “Constantinian shift” of Christianity in the fourth century, and some would say the Protestant Reformation with its narrow emphasis on grace and “right beliefs” for salvation.

Regardless of how and when this shift occurred, it seems clear to me that Jesus had a different focus than the Christianity I was raised with. I really resonate with the Apostle Paul and his mystical, logical, philosophical faith. Yet I’ve found the

teachings in the Book of James, whose author is believed to be the brother of Jesus, to be more consistent with Jesus’ teachings than the writings of Paul. I’m not the first to notice this, of course. The Book of James seemed so inconsistent with the rest of the epistles and the Protestant Reformation that Martin Luther called it a “book of straw” and tried to remove it from the Protestant version of the Bible.

For example, in James 2:13 we read, *“There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.”* Is James saying that if you show mercy to others, but don’t believe the “right Christian things,” God will be merciful to you on Judgment Day? Or even more heretical, if someone believes the “right Christian doctrine” but doesn’t show mercy to others, God won’t be merciful to that person on Judgment Day?

Of course James is also the one who proclaimed, *“Faith without works is dead”* (2:20). James understood the difference between faith and beliefs. In fact, James gets sarcastic towards those who think beliefs are what makes someone a follower of Jesus: *“So you believe . . . good for you! Even the demons believe and tremble. How foolish!”* (2:19-20).

It’s not that beliefs are unimportant. It’s just that faith is different than believing and much more important than believing the “right things.”

To be continued . . . ❧

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

## VIEWPOINT

# What is 'the Word of the Lord'?

GERHARD NEUFELD

**Y**ou may have noticed that worship leaders and others who read Scripture in our services sometimes conclude with the exclamation, "The Word of the Lord," and we often add, "Praise be to God." This was not a common practice in Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in the past, and I venture to say it was not the case in many other Mennonite churches either.

A number of other Christian denominations have used this expression routinely. According to several articles on the Internet, this is the established practice of the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church and the United Church of Canada.

This fact alone, of course, should not keep us from using such expressions, as we should be open to new ways of worshipping. But when we do things differently, we should be aware of what we're changing and why. I am concerned that our use of the "the Word of the Lord" is the thin edge of a wedge that will lead us to misunderstand what the Bible is saying.

This expression is a ritual exclamation used in Christian denominations whose attitudes toward the relationship between Scripture and the individual believer have been very different than that of our Mennonite heritage. The Protestant Reformation happened, in part, because some members of the Catholic community began to see the importance of being able to read Scripture for themselves, translating it from Latin into their own languages and reading it alone or together, rather than having the priests tell them what God's Word meant.

This made the official Catholic Church nervous because it raised the possibility that there could be disagreement about

what the Bible meant. The exclamation, "the Word of the Lord," comes from a time when the Catholic Church would tell people what the Bible meant, and the people would express their acceptance by saying phrases like "Praise be to God."

Historically speaking, the Anabaptists were known as "People of the Book." But even though they were intensely engaged with Scripture, this did not mean they felt bound to uphold a literal interpretation of the Bible, for it was the role of the priesthood of all believers to discern God's will.

My question is, "Do we need to join other denominations in this practice?" We might ask, "What could possibly be wrong in us using these expressions when so many others do?" On the surface, it is

*We don't need to believe in the literal Word of God to hear God's voice.*

a nice-sounding phrase. It elevates what was read.

But following other sincere Christians does not prevent us from making mistakes. I would argue that using this expression seems to have a problematic side when considered from the historical Anabaptist perspective.

Would we feel comfortable using this expression in response to all passages of the Bible, including those that sound violent and unjust? Do we feel comfortable following Psalm 137:9, where God's command is to grab an infant by its heels and smash its head against a rock, with the exclamation, "the Word of the Lord"?

We might want to argue that the New Testament, especially the gospels, with their accounts of what Jesus said, are at least one place where we can comfortably

use this expression, "the Word of the Lord." But again we must confront a kind of literalism here. Unless we believe that someone was following Jesus around and copying down what he said, as he said it, we must acknowledge that we receive a modified account even here.

When a speaker utters a word, it ceases to be his and becomes the listener's word. So when there is not a clear understanding between the speaker and the listener in the use of a word or phrase, there is a problem.

There are many Christians who believe the Bible is the literally inspired, infallible Word of God. Others believe the Bible is inspired, but some parts are more important than others. Anabaptists say that all Scripture is to be interpreted through

Christ. This means that some passages are considered more important than others. We don't need to believe in the literal Word of God to hear God's voice.

The way Christians have read and proclaimed "the Word of the Lord" for over a millennium has contributed in no small measure to the loss of credibility of the Christian faith. Does this disturb and motivate us to explore new ways of reading the Bible?

We need not discard it. God is speaking through it. But we need to do more than say "the Word of the Lord" after a reading. We need help in interpreting what that actually means. Are we willing to do this? ▮

*Originally written for Winnipeg's Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church newsletter.*

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

- Boylan**—Twins Milo and Finley (b. March 7, 2014), to Jennifer and Michael Boylan, Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.
- Del Bianco**—Brody Lukas (b. Oct. 29, 2014), to Alex and Jessica Del Bianco, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver.
- Evans**—Jakob Emmanuel (b. Sept. 9, 2014), to Robert Evans and Susan Toman, Ottawa Mennonite.
- Helbig-Reimer**—Oscar (b. Aug. 19, 2014), to Louis Helbig and Kirstin Reimer, Ottawa Mennonite.
- Janzen**—Eli Benjamin (b. Sept. 20, 2014), to Ben and Stephanie Janzen, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.
- Joice**—Emerson Ryan (b. July 18, 2014), to Peter Joice and Ashlee Mulligan, Ottawa Mennonite.
- Klein**—Maynard Ivan (b. Sept. 26, 2014), to Bethany and Dan Klein, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.
- Wiegand**—Emmett Walter (b. Sept. 29, 2014), to Melanie and Erik Wiegand, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

### Marriages

- Doering/Schumm**—Robin Doering and Nicholas Schumm, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont., Sept. 12, 2014.
- Dresser/Wiens**—Tim Dresser and Cassandra Wiens (Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.), in Leamington, Oct. 4, 2014.
- Driedger/Friesen**—Kathleen Driedger (Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.) and Randy Friesen (Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.), in Haliburton, Ont., Oct. 4, 2014.
- Froese/Thiessen**—Matt Froese and Jesslyn Thiessen, The First Mennonite, Vineland, Ont., Sept. 20, 2014.
- Kanteman/Leis**—Staci Kanteman and Greg Leis, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont., July 5, 2014.

### Deaths

- Erb**—Nelson, 87 (b. Feb. 28, 1927; d. Sept. 19, 2014), Poole Mennonite, Milverton, Ont.
- Hildebrand**—Peter, 76 (b. Jan. 6, 1938; d. Oct. 28, 2014), Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver.
- Janzen**—Annemarie, 102 (b. Sept. 5, 1912; d. Oct. 28, 2014), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Kerber**—Wally, 82 (b. Oct. 7, 1932; d. Oct. 23, 2014), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.
- Ludlow**—Lily, 97 (b. July 18, 1917; d. Oct. 25, 2014), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Neufeld-Berg**—Helen, 78 (b. June 30, 1936; d. Oct. 22, 2014), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Peters**—Frieda, 96 (b. May 22, 1918; d. Oct. 10, 2014), First Mennonite, Calgary.
- Ramer**—John, 65 (b. Oct. 14, 1948; d. May 7, 2014), Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.
- Steckly**—Marcella (nee Bender), 89 (b. Jan. 27, 1925; d. Oct. 1, 2014), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.
- Thiessen**—Anna (nee Hildebrandt), 90 (b. Jan. 18, 1924; d. Oct. 22, 2014), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Wiebe**—Dietrich, 96 (b. Aug. 18, 1918; d. Oct. 25, 2014), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

### Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

*announcements within four months of the event.*

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

## Ponius' Puddle



## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# MC Manitoba approves 2015 budget in principle

*Fall gathering was two churches short of a quorum*

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

WINNIPEG

**D**espite falling short of a quorum, delegates attending Mennonite Church Manitoba's fall gathering on Nov. 6 gave the board strong affirmation for its 2015 proposed budget.

The budget as presented calls for the same amount—\$645,000—from congregations as the 2014 budget.

“Our thinking behind that was that we have all the indications that our giving is levelling out, said Ken Warkentin, the area church's executive director. “We can't expect any more and we can't do with any less.”

A second motion dealt with how the budget will be divided between the four ministries of MC Manitoba: leadership, evangelism and service, camping and church community building. The delegates were asked to approve the allocation of monies in principle and authorized the board to make the necessary alterations pending the sale of Moose Lake and Koinonia camps.

In a final motion, delegates authorized the board to approve the details of the 2015 budget.

“We do this every year, giving approval for the board to work out the details,” said Warkentin.

Although all three motions received very strong support from the delegates, discussions conveyed a level of frustration. The call for requests to determine the future of the two camps closes on Dec. 1, and until that process is complete the board is unable to offer delegates any information.

After the closing date, Warkentin said “the board will have the authorization to deal with the request proposals, evaluate them and ultimately make a decision. I think it is realistic to say that we will make

an announcement and hopefully have a business plan for the February gathering.”

Delegates received an interim report outlining a direction for MC Manitoba's Camping Ministry in light of potential changes to the camp ownership structure. Children's camping ministry and leadership development for youth and young adults, both rooted in Anabaptist biblical traditions, will continue to be a primary focus. The vision also includes infrastructure changes at Camp Assiniboia to better accommodate multi-group uses, the establishment of a “gap-year” program for young adults, the creation of new stewardship programs and expansion of off-site programs.

“Because of the opportunity before us with the sale of the two camps, changes in structure will be necessitated,” said Warkentin. “Right now, our structure is designed to some extent around Camping Ministry.”

For this reason, the board is crafting a new job description for the position

of director of Leadership Ministries. Former director Henry Kliever retired in September.

“There are a lot of unknowns as we reorganize, but we are not eliminating the position,” Warkentin said. “In fact, we will be advertising in the next few months.” Warkentin will be assuming some of the responsibilities of the position in the meantime.

Time was given for brief reports from the ministry directors.

Norm Voth, director of evangelism and service ministries, reported that the Partnership Circles program had a very successful summer, with more than 20 communities making meaningful connections through MC Manitoba congregations and northern indigenous community partnerships.

Although summer camping presented some unique challenges, due to illness and flooding, it was a successful year, with nearly 700 child and youth campers, more than 200 disabled adult campers and more than 200 camp staff taking part.

“It is a very interesting time to be the church, perhaps even more so for MC Canada,” said Warkentin, who sits on the national church's Future Directions Task Force. “The Spirit of God seems to be moving in unique ways. Both the Being a Faithful Church process and the task force are forcing us to recognize those changing fundamentals in the way we organize. I think we are being responsive to the Spirit, although the prospect of change can be very frightening.” ☞



*Peter Rempel, left, chair of the MC Manitoba board, addresses delegates at Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on Nov. 6. Treasurer Tom Seals looks on.*



# Dessert fundraisers increase awareness

*Three different fall events raise funds for MC B.C.*

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

The dessert selections were as varied as the stories about Mennonite Church B.C. at the first of three MC B.C. fundraising evenings held on Oct. 2.

Planned by the MC B.C. Finance Committee, the dessert nights are designed to put a face on the many programs in which the area church is actively involved. The Abbotsford event was hosted by Emmanuel Mennonite Church, followed by similar dessert fundraisers on Oct. 16 at Peace Mennonite in Richmond and on Oct. 30 at Eden Mennonite in

Chilliwack. At press time, the events had raised more than \$41,000 that will be applied to the area church's general budget.

Presentations by Columbia Bible College included an original musical selection, "Something to Live For," by student Billy Bosch; a testament to lifelong learning by recent graduate Lisi Schrottner; and remarks by Bryan Born, Columbia's president. "We do have something to live for," said Born. "Thank you for consistent and faithful support."

A message from Camp Squeah came

from volunteer staffer Ashley Redekop, who called Squeah "MC B.C.'s greatest gem," as she told of how working at the camp had enriched her personal and spiritual growth.

Rounding out the program were a recently produced video about MC B.C.; a summary of the Service, Peace and Justice Committee's indigenous relations work; information on estate planning from the Mennonite Foundation of Canada; and a review of developments from Forge Canada's partnership with MC B.C.

This is the second year for the special event dessert fundraisers in B.C.

"We want to give a refresher as to what's happening [in MC B.C.] and give opportunity for giving," said Alan Peters, chair of the MC B.C. Finance Committee. ❧

## ❧ Briefly noted

### Church building moves from one group to another

A former United Church building in the country near Wellesley, Ont., which has been home to West Hills Mennonite Fellowship since 2002, will soon provide a home to yet another church congregation, this time Appletree Community Church, a non-denominational group currently worshipping and reaching out "with an edgy and contemporary style" from space in the Wellesley community centre. West Hills recently discerned a renewal of its desire to witness and work in Baden, leading the congregation to buy the Baden Emporium building, a commercial property in the village. It is currently in the process of preparing the former Emporium as a community and worship space. In thankfulness for the gifting from West Hills to Appletree, the congregation held a Christian concert featuring Kevin Pauls on Oct. 25, which included a freewill offering to support the West Hills' building project.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



*West Hills Mennonite Church is converting the Baden Emporium building in Baden, Ont., into its new church and community space.*



*Stan Olson, foreground, surveys the selection of desserts at the MC B.C. fundraising evening in Abbotsford on Oct. 2. The program following highlighted various programs in the area church.*

# Making a visceral connection to the past

*Museum curator uses personal contact with artefacts and old photos to help people relate to their forebears*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent  
EDMONTON

With cotton-gloved hands, the curator carefully holds up a small white shirt for everyone to see. It seems an innocuous bit of fabric until she points out how unblemished it is. She says the shirt represents “the history that wasn’t,” as the baby it was made for was born in Russia in 1927 and only lived for 23 days. The condition of artefacts and the family stories accompanying them poignantly tell tales of the hardships and joys faced by Mennonites who immigrated to Canada from Russia in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Andrea Dyck, curator of the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Man., was the guest speaker at the Mennonite

Historical Society of Alberta’s annual general meeting in Edmonton on Nov. 1. Dyck displayed a number of small artefacts and photos as a way to viscerally connect her audience to the stories of their Russian Mennonite ancestors.

“Contact with these things helps people remember their own stories,” she said. Among the artefacts were baby clothes, hand-stitched items from a hope chest, a family Bible, a few coins and many stories. “Looking at objects like this . . . I often think of the emigration stories that the objects can tell,” Dyck said. “In many instances these things are just the stuff of everyday life. What on earth might the original owners think of all of this?”

As time goes on, and the original immigrants age and pass away, stories are in danger of being lost, according to Dyck. “The distance between the pioneer existence and the kids who are 10 years old is a lot different than it was in the ‘60s,” Dyck explained, noting that the Steinbach museum’s mission statement is: “To preserve and exhibit, for present and future generations, the experience and story of the Russian Mennonites and their contributions to Manitoba.”

Of the approximately 40 people who attended Dyck’s presentation, only a few were under the age of 60. Asked why younger Mennonites do not seem to be interested, Dave Neufeldt, chair of the Alberta historical society and one of the “youngsters” in attendance, was thoughtful. He did not assume younger people were not interested in their history, saying, “It’s an interesting thing. It has to do with your time of life. When you have young kids, history can wait.”

Not for Kathy Ma, though. The youngest



*Andrea Dyck, curator of the Mennonite Historical Village in Steinbach, Man., holds a hand-crocheted collar that would have been used to dress up a Russian Mennonite baby’s outfit.*

## Staffing change

### Pastoral transition in Saskatchewan

Jerry Buhler has announced his resignation as area church minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, effective March 31, 2015. He has been in the position since February 2006. Prior to coming to Saskatchewan, he served as pastor of Springridge Mennonite Church in Pincher Creek, Alta., for 18 years. Buhler says that although he has enjoyed his work as area church minister, and continues to do so, he feels it is time to move on. At this point, he has no future plans.



**Jerry Buhler**

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

participant, who has two small children, aged 3 years and 10 months, is intensely interested in history. “What does it mean to be a Mennonite? How do people of my generation honour the people who came before us and their experiences?” Ma asked. “How do we pass that along to our children in a world of me, myself and iPods?”

*For more information about the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta, which maintains an archive and library in Calgary, or to receive its newsletter, e-mail [mennonitehistorycalgary@gmail.com](mailto:mennonitehistorycalgary@gmail.com) or call 403-250-1121. ☞*

# Listening to Balaam's donkey

*New dean of Conrad Grebel University College lectures on creation relationships*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

One of the first questions asked of Trevor Bechtel, the new dean of Conrad Grebel University College, at the school's annual pastors breakfast, was whether everyone needs to listen to figurative donkeys the way Balaam did in Numbers 22.

Bechtel had been speaking about how Balaam, because of his greed, had questioned God's command to not work for Balak, king of the Moabites, and curse the Israelites under Moses. Three times God placed an angel with a sword in Balaam's path. Balaam could not see the angel, but his faithful donkey did, saving his master each time.

But Bechtel meant that, as human beings, everyone needs to be listening to real donkeys or bees. The donkey does not speak with human concerns, but instead says, "*Am I not your donkey, which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I been in the habit of treating you this way?*"

*And [Balaam] said, 'No' (Numbers 22:30).*

The donkey is concerned about donkey matters and teaches its master through this.

Bechtel noted that the collapse of bee populations, upon which much of the world's food is dependant, is complex, but includes the use of neonicotinoid insecticides, trucking bees over long distances, a parasitic mite, and trying to get bees to feed on single crops instead of gathering nectar from a large variety of plants. He suggested that everyone needs to listen to bees for their sake and that of the planet.

Besides his duties as dean, Bechtel will be teaching an undergraduate course this winter on "The lives of animals," as associate professor of religious studies and theology. The topic fits his areas of interest: human-animal relationships, creation, biblical theology, 20th-century Anabaptist

thought, and theological and ethical implications of technology.

While at Bluffton (Ohio) College, where he served as a professor of religion, he worked with students on the musical *Anabaptist Bestiary Project* and taught courses on theology and creation care. ✎



To listen to the song "Colony Collapse Disorder" from the musical, visit <http://bit.ly/1zGNwAE>.

## ✎ Briefly noted

### 'Sabbath Fridays' instituted at Rockway

KITCHENER, ONT.—Janet Bauman, head of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's Religious Studies Department, spoke to pastors at the Oct. 16 Pastors Breakfast about recent developments in spiritual formation at the school. At the



Janet Bauman

previous breakfast, pastors praised Rockway's direction, but suggested more practical teaching and practise of spiritual disciplines like prayer and silence. Since then, Bauman said "Sabbath Fridays" have been instituted to teach those things, as well as to create a place to talk about faith. "During the lunch hour, these times are voluntary, but have seen students, faculty and staff come for the quiet in our increasingly noisy and intrusive culture," she said. These developments follow what principal Ann Schultz calls a "forming faith, building character" focus at Rockway. The three "Sabbaths" so far have focussed on healthy sexuality; breath and body awareness; and "praying in colour," following the 2007 book of the same name by Sybil MacBeth. Bauman also noted that the development of a permanent, always-available quiet space for Rockway is still in development.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Marilyn Zehr, left, and Michele Rae Rizoli, pastors at Toronto United Mennonite Church, chat with Trevor Bechtel, dean of Conrad Grebel University College, after his 'Thinking twice about Balaam's donkey' presentation at Grebel's annual pastors breakfast on Nov. 4.

# Restaurant 'converted' to church use

*Growing Chin congregation needs larger space for worship and ministry*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY  
Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

For the past 11 years, Verses was an upscale restaurant in Kitchener. A former New Apostolic Church, it became a "Four Diamond" restaurant under the Canadian Automobile Association grading system, but now it has been bought by the Chin Christian Church, a member of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

The Chin had been worshipping at First Hmong Mennonite Church in Kitchener for the past eight years, after beginning life as a congregation worshipping in homes and eventually in the dining room of an apartment building. The congregation, which started out with 15 people in 2004, has grown to 130 presently. The Chin people are a group from Burma who have been persecuted by the majority there. The congregation is made up of refugees and their families.

The asking price on the building was \$1.2 million, but the owners accepted \$1 million after the congregation asked that the restaurant kitchen and amenities be sold separately. Aided by a \$150,000 grant from the MC Eastern Canada Missions Capital Fund, and by sacrificially saving \$250,000, the congregation took out a mortgage for the remainder with Mennonite Savings and Credit Union.

Pastors Jehu Lian Ching and Joseph Raltong, together with congregational chair Cung Bik Lian, are excited about the possibilities the new building will afford the congregation. Worshipping in the Chin Haka dialect, they know that there are many Burmese speakers in Waterloo Region who don't speak their language. The church hopes to reach out to those people in the near future, but can also see the day when it will need to do more programming in English. Already some



*While it still said Verses Restaurant on Oct. 25, the building is being cleaned and prepared to be the Chin Christian Church place of worship and work.*

Chin youth and children only speak and understand Chin poorly and need English. The church is also considering a Saturday night service for those who have to work on Sunday, a common experience for recent immigrants and refugees in Canada.

The congregation took possession of the building on Oct. 23 and will begin with a few repairs and clean-up, as well as purchasing chairs and a pulpit. Ching, a diminutive man, noted that he's looking for a clear pulpit so the congregation can see him when he preaches! ❧

/// Briefly noted

## 'Your money or your life'



CAMBRIDGE, ONT.—Mike Strathdee, a stewardship consultant for Mennonite Foundation of Canada in Kitchener, pictured above left with Fred Lichti, pastor of Elmira Mennonite Church, was one of two keynote speakers at the recent 'Your money and your life' seminar for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada pastors over 55, held on Oct. 22. The seminar, one of three for pastors of varying age demographics, dealt with similar themes with different emphases: the need for wills; questions about insurance; purchase or paying off a house, and other debts; investments and retirement savings; and teaching about money in the church, even when the pastor's salary is a large part of the budget. Strathdee noted that the Bible spends a lot of time on money and wealth, and, drawing on C. Clif Christopher in *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate*, he noted that pastors could preach on money four times a year: once each on 'personal financial stewardship, generosity as a character trait of God, supporting the mission of the local and global church, and gratitude as a motivation to give.' Different generations in the church are giving differently, it was pointed out by a Lutheran pastor who attended, noting that it takes the giving of 10 young families to replace one 'builder' born between 1925 and 1945.

—STORY AND PHOTO  
BY DAVE ROGALSKY

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



*Wilmot Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont., celebrated 'Faith, creativity and the arts' on Oct. 25 in both its worship time and formation hour. In that hour and during the lunch afterward, congregational participants were able to show and describe their creativity in quilting, sewing, painting, handiwork, woodwork and food preparation. Pictured, left to right: Laura Gray, Conrad Grebel University College's associate professor of music and chair of the Department of Music, who preached that Sunday; Elizabeth Rogalsky Lepock, who, with her husband Michael Lepock, provided song leading and special music; Paul Bowman, who builds guitars; and Martha Smith Good, who led worship and helped coordinate the day's activities. A repeated refrain of freedom and peace through the day, coming from Gray's sermon, was that God does not expect congregants to be perfect as they express their creativity.*

PHOTO BY JEREMY WIEBE



*More than 100 people gathered at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., on Oct. 25 for 'Mennonite memories of migration,' a storytelling event hosted by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario and the Institute for Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies. Representing the various paths that brought Mennonites to Ontario over the centuries, six speakers shared compelling stories of danger, uncertainty, loss and adaptation. Pictured, the Salvadoran dance troupe Generations enacts narratives of a different type, performing three dances during an intermission, including a tribute to the cotton harvest. Generations is led by Victoria Linares, a member of the Hispanic congregation at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont. Linares told her story of living through political repression in El Salvador, and the social justice teaching of the Christian Base Community, of which she was a part.*

# God at work in the Church Snapshots

## OBITUARY

# First Vietnamese Mennonite pastor dies

Quang Xuan Tran, 84  
Feb. 4, 1930 – Sept. 20, 2014

By LUKE S. MARTIN  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Quang Xuan Tran, the first Vietnamese Mennonite pastor, died in Philadelphia, Pa., on Sept. 20 at the age of 84.

Quang came to the United States in March 1975 to attend the annual missions meeting of Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM). As South Vietnam was over-run by military forces from the north in the following weeks, he remained in the U.S., where his family joined him. The family initially settled in Ephrata, Pa., where Quang



Quang Xuan Tran

established a Vietnamese church.

In 1982, EMM invited the family to move to Philadelphia, where Quang became founding pastor of the Vietnamese Mennonite congregation. He and his wife welcomed and assisted new refugees and immigrants. Quang was known

as a caring pastor and skilled teacher who preached well-illustrated sermons. He retired in 2005.

Quang was born in Da Nang, where

his father was a pastor in the Evangelical Church of Vietnam. Quang graduated from Da Nang Bible School of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1955.

When EMM missionaries first went to Vietnam in 1957, they developed close relationships with the Evangelical Church in Vietnam, assisting in the formation of a new congregation in Saigon. EMM established a student centre in Saigon in 1960, and the Gia Dinh community social service centre in the northern outskirts of Saigon in 1964.

After a Mennonite congregation began forming there, Quang was invited in 1965 to assist in teaching and preaching. On March 16, 1969, he was ordained pastor of the congregation, becoming the first Vietnamese Mennonite pastor.

In 1971, Quang represented Vietnam at the Asia Mennonite Conference in India.

When Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) merged its program with Church World Service and Lutheran World Relief in 1966 to form Vietnam Christian Service, director Atlee Beechy invited Quang to coordinate the material aid program assisting refugees.

When voices called for MCC to withdraw from Vietnam after the 1968 Tet offensive—because of the savage destructive American fighting—MCC administrator Paul Longacre said that MCC had to listen closely to the voices of Vietnamese Christian leaders.

Quoting Quang, Longacre said, “This is no time for the church to pull back in Vietnam. This is the time for her to move out with the good news. My fellow Vietnamese have spent their lives gathering things and now see them go up in smoke. They have sought security, only to find death coming to them everywhere. What else but the Christian faith can bring to man a sense of reality?”

Later, Quang became director of the Gia Dinh community centre, which operated an elementary school, classes for learning trades, and a clinic.

Nguyen Quang Trung, the president of today’s Vietnam Mennonite Church, served as a pastoral assistant to Quang for several years. ☸

## /// Briefly noted

### MC Eastern Canada launches website to share and find resources

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada has launched a new website to facilitate the sharing of ideas and resources among its member congregations. This dynamic, interactive website ([www.theexchangeMCEC.ca](http://www.theexchangeMCEC.ca)) allows congregations to share resources with others, as well as look for resources that they may or may not have known they were looking for. “This is like the Kijiji of [MC Eastern Canada],” quips Jeff Steckley, the area church’s congregational ministries minister. “We have built a tool to connect congregations each to another. Often people call the . . . office and are looking for resources or have resources their congregations would like to share. This allows those connections to be made directly and to be housed in a common place.” Each resource or request posted is described and categorized, with contact information or a downloadable link. Users are able to utilize a subscription feature to alert them to new posts in their identified areas of interest. Worship is currently the top trending category. “Not only have we created a resource sharing tool,” says Steckley, “but we are also strengthening relationships between congregations, providing a new space to connect—and in real time too—as they make their exchange.”

—Mennonite Church Eastern Canada





# Mennonite World Conference Assembly Buzz



*Will we meet you at PA 2015?*

## Basic Facts and Information

You are warmly invited to join your sisters and brothers from around the world at the next MWC Assembly, PA 2015. The global event will be held July 21-26, 2015, at the PA Farm Show Complex and Expo Center in Harrisburg, PA. The theme for the event? "Walking with God."

- **Each day**—begins and ends with singing, led by a multi-national worship team.

- **Each morning**—stimulating meditation; response by a young adult; fellowship and discussion with a small, multi-cultural group you'll be part of for the whole week.
- **Each afternoon**—workshops; performances, exhibits, visiting in the Global Church Village; service opportunities; sports events; tours.
- **Each evening**—testimonies, prayer, times of encouragement.

PA 2015 includes a children's program and a youth program (ages 12-17).

"An experience of Jesus we can't fully replicate in our own congregations ... a taste of heaven as we worship and fellowship in many languages and cultures."



*Delegates will come from around the world to find consensus.*



*Inspiration and wisdom from leaders from all continents will be part of each day's worship time.*

Registration for  
"Pennsylvania 2015"  
Now Open!

Go to:  
[mwc-cmm.org/pa2015registration](http://mwc-cmm.org/pa2015registration)

# Music and Inspiration from Everywhere!

A definite highlight of the Assembly. Begin and end each day with singing as part of a global chorus.

In the morning, learn stirring songs from around the world, led by the Assembly singers and instrumentalists. In the evening, sing those songs—along with other favorites—with an arena full of international sisters and brothers.

Hear choirs from around the world, too. And don't miss musicians in the Global Church Village each afternoon.



## Seminars and Workshops

Between 160 and 200 workshops and seminars will be offered during the week. Many to choose from each day.

Topics will include living faithfully in difficult settings, drawing support and wisdom from each other despite our distances, practicing hope.

Other seminars and workshops will address interfaith conversations and encounters, conflict and

reconciliation within congregations, Anabaptist spirituality.

One workshop each day will go in-depth with the morning speaker.

Workshops and seminars are the ideal place to explore issues with a relatively small international Anabaptist group, who are all interested in and connected to the questions raised.



The Global Youth Summit is a gathering of young adults ages 18-30, being held July 17-19 (four days before the Assembly) at nearby Messiah College.

"An oasis for young leaders of the church," meeting together around the theme, "Called to Share: My Gifts, Our Gifts."

Bring your challenges and questions, your story, experiences, and testimony. Go home with new energy, new ideas, and a global network of prayer partners and co-workers in Christ.

For information and to register, go to: [www.mwc-cmm.org/gys](http://www.mwc-cmm.org/gys)



*Young adults will gather at the Global Youth Summit for inspiration and fun.*



# Are we capable of true hospitality?

We North Americans have given ourselves a test. We've invited our Anabaptist sisters and brothers from around the globe to a massive reunion on our continent—Menno-nite World Conference's upcoming Assembly, "Pennsylvania 2015."

I've had a nagging worry about all of this ever since our invitation was accepted. And it isn't that I'm afraid we won't be able to pull off the logistics.

I'm wondering if we can find it within ourselves to be fully hospitable, to offer hospitality of the heart to these "relatives" of ours whom we really don't know very well.

If you've spent any time in Menno-nite, Mennonite Brethren, or Brethren in Christ homes in other parts of the world, you've likely experienced extravagant hospitality. I don't mean extravagant accommodations. I'm talking about those extraordinary welcomes we've received from hosts who give us days of time in the middle of their work weeks, never mind their over-burdened lives. Who give us their own beds. Who prepare bountiful meals that tax their own resources. Who ask us about our lives, our fears, our joys, and then listen with true interest.

When we went to the MWC Assembly in Zimbabwe, we hoped to catch a quick lunch with a couple from Bulawayo we knew. They were tied up full-time as Assembly volunteers and had Assembly guests staying in their home. But they insisted that we come to their home for dinner.

They welcomed us with a full meal, despite the food shortages, and lots of wonderful visiting. Later we learned their oldest son was in the hospital, where they went early each morning to feed him. Their grief and uncertainties simply lived alongside their hospitality.



*The author with Emelia Amexo of Ghana.*

## Becoming hospitality apprentices

We North Americans may have more material resources or education than many of our guests, tempting us to assume that we will be the givers, acting from a superior position. But money and degrees and economic security aren't an automatic advantage when we're considering true hospitality.

I've come to believe that when we offer authentic hospitality, we make room within ourselves for the other person—and for the unexpected. We lay aside our opinions, we stop being possessive of our time. And we become open to receiving. We come to believe we have something to learn.

## What if...?

What if we saw this coming Assembly as a chance to become apprentices in hospitality?

What if we became free to replace the guilt we sometimes feel with humility?

What if this event offered us the grace to practice openness rather than the urge to impress?

What if we sat down to eat with sisters or brothers who speak little

or no English? They're our guests, so why not? Think about what they've risked to come here.

What if we extended hospitality by attending the entire Assembly, entering fully into the spirit of the event, coming humbly each day to see what we might learn from others who share our convictions? What an absolutely counter-cultural act it would be to set aside our insistence on multi-tasking, our captivity to our heavy schedules, our electronic devices, and our apparent belief that our jobs are more important than this international festival of faith.

What if we risked opening our lives to this wide and wonderful gift from God—welcoming these visitors by refusing to fill every space and silence between us with words? Who knows, maybe our guests might be preparing to ask us a penetrating question, offer us a blessing, or invite us into their hearts and worlds?

We may become more hopeful, feel less discouraged and alone, and gain some lifelong friends in faith.

*Phyllis Pellman Good is a writer and editor for Menno-nite World Conference. She lives in Lancaster, PA.*

## What can you do?

- Register and attend PA 2015.
- Volunteer.
- Join the Prayer Network.
- Support the Assembly fund individually or as a congregation so people from all parts of the world will be able to attend.

To learn more, go to [mwc-cmm.org/pa2015](http://mwc-cmm.org/pa2015)

## Small Groups a New Feature



Is it possible to attend an Assembly of several thousand people and have a meaningful conversation with someone from elsewhere in the world whom you didn't know before?

Following each morning's worship service, everyone attending

will join a multi-cultural group of 15-20 people for fellowship and a discussion on the morning theme.

The same groups will meet all week long—a great opportunity for visiting and discovering new relationships.

## “Assembly Scattered” Opportunities

MWC Assemblies come with many parts. Two of them are “Assembly Gathered” and “Assembly Scattered.” (“Assembly Gathered” will happen in

Harrisburg, PA, July 21-26.)

“Assembly Scattered” is the opportunity for guests from North America and around the world to visit MWC-related churches and their ministries on their way to PA 2015 in Harrisburg, or during their return home. These visits provide opportunity for guests to engage with members of local churches and get a taste of the diverse, North American church through fellowship, worship, learning about community concerns, touring historic and cultural sights and sharing meals together. For more information and to find out the various “Assembly Scattered” locations, please go to [www.mwc-cmm.org/assemblyscattered](http://www.mwc-cmm.org/assemblyscattered)

### “Assembly Scattered” sites include —

- “Walking with God in the City and the Wilderness: Anchorage, Alaska.”
- “Fun and Fellowship with Pittsburgh (PA) Mennonite Church.”
- “Mennonites, Monuments, and African American History in Washington, D.C.”
- “Diverse Anabaptist Communities in Miami (FL) Metro Area.”
- “DOOR San Antonio (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) in Partnership with San Antonio (TX) Mennonite Church.”
- “Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren, and Brethren in Christ Churches in the Pacific Region.”

## Tours for Everyone



Registrants for PA 2015 can choose from 47 tours. Ten full-day tours will take place on July 20. Choose to visit NYC, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Lancaster County.

During the Assembly, 37 half-day tours will be offered—from historic Underground Railroad locations to an Old Order Mennonite meetinghouse.



## Global Village Every Day

The Global Church Village, inside the Farm Show Complex, will be a natural meeting point during PA 2015.

A stage at its center will feature



international and local artists—musicians, actors, storytellers—performing live each afternoon and following evening services.

Churches from each continent will have displays. Snacks will be available!

Relaxed setting for easy visiting.

“Like” our Facebook page for the latest news — [www.facebook.com/MennoniteWorldConference](http://www.facebook.com/MennoniteWorldConference)





Fall 2014  
VOLUME 25 ISSUE 1

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# AMBS window

## Connecting the Bible with our ethics

Malinda Elizabeth Berry, PhD, assistant professor of theology and ethics

“Everything is connected.” This phrase may sound trite, but as I help shape AMBS conversations about creation care, I want an “organic” view to shape how we integrate our ethical concerns and biblical perspective. That will help us be channels of God’s Healing River that makes cities glad and soothes parched lands.

Let me share an example from the presentation centered around food deserts that I did this fall at AMBS’ Rooted and Grounded conference.

The US Department of Agriculture uses census data to track food deserts, which it defines as “urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food.” Diabetes, obesity and heart disease are all linked to life in food deserts with over half of food desert dwellers (13.5 of 23.5 million) also being poor. But this is only one layer of the food security matrix.

Folks like LaDonna Redmond, a food justice advocate, and Laura Leete, a University of Oregon professor, are helping us notice that when relief—well-stocked grocery stores—come to some

neighborhoods, they replace food deserts with new problems: food hinterlands and food mirages, where food quality may be high but access to that food is low.

The assumption is that building a Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods or Super Walmart will irrigate the food desert. Instead, these stores are the engines of the gentrification train. Newer businesses attract newer, often wealthier, residents. Older businesses and residents can no longer afford the property taxes, rents or other necessities, like groceries.

Commentators explain that when neighborhoods are at their lowest point, a typical financial solution puts a new grocery store front and center. Thus, a promising food source is also a tool for development that displaces people. Gentrification’s race and class components mean young (often) white newcomers benefit, marginalizing long-time (often) black and brown residents.

Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, like most North American denominations, have church buildings and congregants in all kinds of communities. Some are

witnessing gentrification, some know the loneliness of rural flight, and some are in food deserts or hinterlands.

I have started to think differently about where I fit into the web of life after participating in a 100-mile radius potluck group. We brought foods prepared with ingredients that had travelled 100 miles or less to our table. By learning more about foods produced nearby, we learned more about the rural communities that surrounded us. It even gave us—black, brown and white neighbors—a way to encourage our local supermarket chains to utilize local suppliers for produce.

When we pray for daily bread, we are saying that Christianity has something to do with our food system and with the way that public policy and what we eat have changed how and where we live.

When we think of ourselves as branches abiding in the vine, discipleship’s biblical metaphors are a pathway to talking about how we want to participate in God’s great work of healing our communities and healing our planet. ●

Photo: Malinda Berry (center) meets with students Rhonda Yoder and Ben Bouwman.

# Relying on God's abundance

## Rooted and Grounded conference on land and discipleship

**O**ur place in God's creation, and especially our relationship with the land, underscored the September 18–20 Rooted and Grounded conference at AMBS. Three keynote addresses drew from biblical texts to call us to greater faithfulness in our role as caretakers of creation. Each address also called us to greater trust in God's abundance to provide for us. We share brief excerpts here. For more information about the conference, visit [www.ambs.edu/rootedandgrounded](http://www.ambs.edu/rootedandgrounded)



### Ellen Davis

We have lost confidence that we can have enough without overproducing, without hoarding, without laying waste to our land. In other words, we have lost the vision that communities can produce food within the limits of nature, rather than industry producing food by violating those limits. This story [Jesus feeding the crowd in John 6:10–15] speaks to our lack of confidence. It speaks of the daily generosity of God working through the created order and sometimes even human

hands and heart. — *Ellen Davis, Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C., and author of Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible (Cambridge University Press, 2008).*



### S. Roy Kaufman

We have many models of traditional agrarian cultures that through long experience have learned to live sustainably and productively on the earth, and our Native American brothers and sisters are the primary example of that. These are always very tenuous, marginal, usually compromised, always exploited communities, as with Israel's own story in the Old Testament. But still these agrarian cultures and traditional peoples, including the Israelites and Christian communities of rural America today, do hold the best promise of being able to shape a sustainable future for the human family and to bring healing to this earth of God's creation, now so

badly disfigured by the exploits of urban civilization. — *S. Roy Kaufman, retired Mennonite pastor and author of Healing God's Earth: Rural Community in the Context of Urban Civilization (Wipf and Stock, 2013).*



### Barbara Rossing

Early Christians created village communities right in the midst of the city, right in the midst of the empire—joyful communities that lived differently. They shared. They practiced *koinonia*. They ate differently.

Today as in the first century, we are called to live according to that compelling joy-filled, counter-imperial vision, as communities deeply grounded and rooted in the love of Jesus and this vision of abundant life gathered around that tree of life with its leaves for the healing of the nations. — *Barbara Rossing, Professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Her publications include The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation (Basic Books, 2004).* ●

## AMBS Window Fall 2014 Volume 25 Issue 1

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3003 Benham Avenue  
Elkhart IN, 46517  
574.295.3726  
[advancement@ambs.edu](mailto:advancement@ambs.edu)

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A seminary of  
Mennonite Church USA and  
Mennonite Church Canada

## ALUMNI NEWS

**SeongHan Kim (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2003)**, media director of Korea InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, has been named a Hanson Fellow. He is a PhD student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, studying intersections of missiology and peace studies.

**Jeni Hiett Umble (Master of Divinity 1998)** serves part-time as pastor of Living Light of Peace (formerly Arvada Mennonite) in Arvada, Colo.

**Phil Bergey (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 1993)** received a PhD in Human and Organizational Systems from Fielding Graduate

University in Santa Barbara, Calif. He is an executive coach and process consultant with Design Group International and is currently also part-time interim lead pastor at Blooming Glen (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

**Timothy Singenstreu (Master of Divinity 2003)** was ordained June 15 at Salem Mennonite Church, Wooster, Ohio.

**Dorothy Jean Weaver (Master of Divinity 1977)** joined the editorial board for *The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* (JIBS), edited by David R. Bauer and Frederick J. Long of Asbury Theological Seminary. ●

# The gardens of AMBS

## Growing for ourselves and to share

**R**ain gardens ... fields of wildflowers and prairie grasses ... vegetable gardens and a plot filled with melons. They literally nourish us and others in our community as we eat and share the bounty.

Students have expanded their garden plots and experimented with making maple syrup and crab apple jelly from campus trees. Our first Seed to Feed plot allowed us to use campus space to provide fresh produce to others. ●



**ABOVE:** Ryan Harker, AMBS Master of Divinity student, harvested 400 pounds of melons this summer from a Seed to Feed plot on campus. AMBS joined an effort sponsored by Church Community Services in Elkhart to raise fresh produce for the food banks in the county.



**ABOVE:** Katerina Friesen (pictured) and Annika Krause tapped maple trees on campus and shared the resulting syrup along with corn bread for a morning break in spring.



**LEFT:** Adam Graber Roth, 2014 graduate now serving in Egypt, helped establish AMBS's first beehive. The wildflower gardens on campus provided nourishment for the bees, and the honey was used in meals for the Rooted and Grounded conference.

## YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

**A**t AMBS, we have four days of thanksgiving. In addition to two Thanksgiving Days (October 13 for Canada and November 27 for the U.S.), we have two Giving Thanks Days in late October when we express appreciation for donors. **Donations from individuals, congregations and businesses constitute almost one-half of AMBS annual income.** AMBS relies on tuition for only about one-seventh of our income each year.

Your gifts support all students, faculty and staff, and each fall we say an additional "Thank you" for gifts that ease the financial burden for students. Many students receive some form of financial aid, and students with demonstrated gifts for leadership in the church receive full-tuition scholarships. **Your contributions help remove financial barriers and burdens** for students and in this way you are investing in future leaders and the future health of the church. ●



# AMBS PANORAMA

## Anabaptist Witness launches

The journal, *Anabaptist Witness* (formerly *Mission Focus*), published the first issue in October. This issue focuses on Anabaptist and Mennonite understandings of mission and the interchange among mission practice, missiology and Anabaptist identity.

All content is available at no charge online: [anabaptistwitness.org](http://anabaptistwitness.org). The site also provides information about purchasing print copies.

## Resources for conversations on sexuality

AMBS faculty are providing a collection of resources for conversations in the church during this time of discernment. Resources include careful biblical study, a call to praying for our enemies and a clear description of church governance.

Visit [www.ambs.edu/publishing/sexuality-conversation.cfm](http://www.ambs.edu/publishing/sexuality-conversation.cfm)

Also visit Sara Wenger Shenk's post, "Patient Vigor," on her Practicing Reconciliation blog: [www.ambs.edu/publishing/2014/09/Patient-Vigor-for-interesting-times.cfm](http://www.ambs.edu/publishing/2014/09/Patient-Vigor-for-interesting-times.cfm)

## Seminary Preview Days

Do you know someone who should be part of the 2015 incoming seminary class? Encourage him or her to plan a campus visit. Seminary Preview Days, March 27 and April 24, are the best times to meet professors and students and learn about financial aid and degrees. Register at [www.ambs.edu/visitAMBS](http://www.ambs.edu/visitAMBS)

## Wilma Bailey recognized

Wilma Bailey, professor emerita of Hebrew and Aramaic Scripture at Christian Theological Seminary



in Indianapolis, Ind., received this year's Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition. She presented a paper at the Rooted and Grounded conference and returned October 16 for the recognition celebration.

## Pastors Week, January 26–29

**Where culture blurs theology: What is an Anabaptist Christian?** will focus the conversation at Pastors Week. Four speakers will address questions of identity from their perspectives:

- Greg Boyd, PhD
  - Drew Hart, PhD student
  - Janet Plenert, MDiv
  - Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, DMin
- Visit [www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek](http://www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek) for further information.

## Trail of Death pilgrimage

**A nine-day pilgrimage next summer will trace the path** of the 1838 forced relocation of the Potawatami Indians from their ancestral home in northern Indiana to present-day Osawatomie, Kan. David B. Miller, AMBS associate professor, will lead *The Trail of Death: A Pilgrimage of Remembrance, Lament, and Transformation*. The experience will be scheduled just prior to the Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City. Watch for further details at [www.ambs.edu/trailofdeath](http://www.ambs.edu/trailofdeath) •

# PRESIDENT'S WINDOW SARA WENGER SHENK



It was an ordinary weekday evening, but the meal was festive. To commemorate my husband Gerald's completion of a difficult writing project, I had prepared two highly spiced Ethiopian dishes for dinner. Our sons (then small boys) were delighted to rip off pieces of flat *injera* and dip them into the spicy *wat*.

While dousing flames in his mouth with gulps of water, our then six-year-old remarked, "I can't believe it! Just the simplest things at home can be so exciting!" I sank back into my chair for a quiet moment of exultation. Gerald's

eyes shone across the table.

Food shared around table with family, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, neighbors, even strangers, is among the most treasured blessings of what it is to be human.

Much of Jesus' ministry, both before and after his resurrection, took place at table. Most striking are the companions he chose to eat with. When Jesus ate and drank with those considered to be of questionable character, he extended shalom to "outsiders." When he fed the hungry, he demonstrated the very present goodness and justice of the reign of God. Jesus' table practices and sharing of food were inseparably linked with his mission to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The early church continued Jesus' table practices, frequently "breaking bread" together, welcoming outsiders who were drawn to the goodness of life in Christ. As they participated around the Lord's Table, they remembered Jesus' death and celebrated his living presence

made known to them in "the breaking of the bread."

During the Rooted and Grounded conference, we were reminded that enjoying the fruits of the earth is a central theme of the Scriptures. The energy among the participants was phenomenal. Trisha Tull, Professor Emerita of Old Testament at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, wrote to student Ryan Harker: "Thank you for helping create the most satisfying, well-organized conference I've ever attended. I loved the way it combined academic sophistication with wondrous worship, experiential opportunities, lovely new connections, and a peaceful, hopeful setting."

We desperately need a revolution of hope at home—with children who thrive on the simple pleasures of the family table. And we desperately need a revolution of hope in our congregations and communities—readily offering warm hospitality around Christ's table and our dinner tables to those hungering for food and fellowship. •

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# MC Canada promises prayer for Middle East churches

Canadian Mennonite

Mennonite Church Canada has responded with letters of support to the Supreme Council of the Evangelical Community and the Middle East Council of Churches. The organizations state that their member congregations in Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon are struggling “to preserve what remains of the Christian and moderate non-Christian presence in the East, and to circumvent its complete demise,” in the face of ongoing violence.

After outlining some of the horrific circumstances faced by Christians and others, the appeal from the two church organizations urged fellow Christian church bodies to encourage their governments and decision-makers to take action. Raising awareness, stopping abuse and displacement under the threat of arms, and working for a long-term strategy that will end the phenomena of violence and displacement are imperative, they maintain.

“We want to assure you that we are praying for you during this difficult time,” Willard Metzger, MC Canada’s executive director, wrote to the two organizations on Oct. 6. “We pray for people of all faith

traditions who are affected by war, and especially our fellow Christians. We pray for protection from those who use violence to achieve their goals. We pray for all Christian churches in the region, that they will be equipped to respond with God’s spirit of love to the many needs around you.”

Metzger also pointed out that there are “many people from Mennonite churches praying and working for peace in the Middle East,” citing both Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and Mennonite Central Committee.

As well, he said that, as a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, MC Canada “is discerning with other Christian communities in Canada how we can best support Christian communities in the Middle East.”

Robert J. Suderman, secretary of MWC’s Peace Commission, said that churches in the Middle East expect that churches in the West will “stand in solidarity of the suffering people and impact on the policies” of their governments towards the Middle East.

“This agenda is critically important,”

Suderman said, “especially with the decision by [the Canadian] government to go to war in the Middle East. I trust we can all find ways of some compelling advocacy on this issue.” ❧

From reports by MC Canada and MWC.

## ❧ Sidebar

### Islamic State terror does not render pacifism obsolete

While “deeply shaken” by the terror caused by Islamic State militias in Iraq and Syria, “we believe that the situation does not render pacifist convictions obsolete,” declared the faculty of the Theological Seminary Bienenberg, a Swiss school founded by the Mennonite churches of France, Germany and Switzerland, in a mid-September statement. The statement, entitled “Using violence against violence?” questions the growing support for military intervention as a “moral responsibility compatible with the Christian faith.” “A peace church position is not equivalent to apathetic passivity,” notes the faculty statement. “We are convinced that evil must be confronted.” They advocate the following alternative means of action: prayer, nonviolent peacemaking operations, help for refugees and the practice of “just policing.” The statement responds to the claim that the Christian pacifist position is “idealist and naïve.” The statement also challenges those who find biblical support for “necessary violence,” citing, instead, God’s protest against the “logic of violence” in the death and resurrection of Jesus. “We know that it is only possible to express some of these thoughts when at a safe distance from violent conflicts,” acknowledges the statement. “However, we do not want to let ourselves be paralyzed by helplessness and resignation, but rather we carry on, humbly and with the help of God’s Spirit, in the ‘hunt for peace’ (Hebrews 12:14) as best as we are able.” To read the complete statement, visit <http://bit.ly/1qu6BOc>. Mennonite World Conference

PHOTO BY MATTHEW BAILEY-DICK



**On the evening of Remembrance Day, about 40 people attended a public prayer vigil for peace at the Waterloo Public Square in Waterloo, Ont. During the liturgy that included prayers, spoken words and repeated singing of ‘Let there be light, Lord God of host,’ passers-by were given a leaflet explaining the vigil. Speakers addressed both local and global peacemaking. The vigil was co-sponsored by Project Ploughshares and Mennonite Central Committee Ontario.**

## INDIGENOUS-SETTLER RELATIONS

# Water of life

*Winnipeg Mennonites follow their drinking water to its source*

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

When Mennonites in Winnipeg baptize a believer, they do so with water from Shoal Lake. The baptismal water comes from a project for which the members of Shoal Lake 40 First Nation were involuntarily moved. It comes from a place where local residents have lived under a boil-water advisory for 17 years.

On Oct. 9, five carloads of concerned Winnipeg citizens—including two Mennonite Church Canada representatives—travelled 160 kilometres eastward to the other end of the aqueduct that has supplied Winnipeg's water since 1919. There, Chief Erwin Redsky and other community members shared their story.

The community of Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, on the Manitoba-Ontario border, happened to be right where Winnipeg wanted to draw its drinking water a century ago. So Ottawa confiscated reserve land and moved the community to a peninsula elsewhere on the reserve. Then a canal was built at the base of the peninsula as part of a project to divert water from

Falcon Lake, a popular cottage area that used to flow into Shoal Lake near the aqueduct intake. That turned the peninsula to which the people had been moved into a man-made island, further isolating them.

No replacement lands or compensation money have ever been offered.

Although traffic from Highway 1 can be heard on a calm day in the community, today Shoal Lake 40 is the only reserve south of the Trans-Canada Highway without all-weather road access. In summer, members use a small ferry and in winter an ice road. But during freeze-up and ice break-up periods, they are stranded, sometimes forced to cross thin ice to get necessary supplies or to seek urgent medical attention. Over the years, several community members have died as a result.

In addition to isolation, 17 years ago authorities deemed their water unfit to drink without treatment. Eventually, Ottawa agreed to construct a water treatment plant, but backed out before it was built. Now, the first nation spends about

\$240,000 annually to supply bottled water to the roughly 275 community members.

During the opening weekend for the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg in September, Shoal Lake people camped for four days outside the museum. The \$350-million museum features reflection pools and uses water as a “healing” element—water that is obtained at the expense of their rights.

“When we look into those pools,” Redsky wrote in an online article for the *Globe and Mail*, “we will see a century of sorrow. We will see what we lack.” The chief called the museum a “towering monument to hypocrisy.”

Shoal Lake 40 has opened its own museum—the Museum for Canadian Human Rights Violations. The “living museum” includes exhibits in the lobby of the community arena and a community tour. In addition to the group that visited on Oct. 9, other visitors to the museum have included environmental advocate David Suzuki, reporters, and representatives of Amnesty International and the Council of Canadians. Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba is planning to take a vanload of people to the museum this fall.

In July, staff of the Winnipeg museum also visited the Shoal Lake museum. One staffer said publicly that the community faces “a whole cascade of human rights issues.”

Winnipeg museum staff granted permission for the Shoal Lake encampment during its opening and provided some firewood and food. A few Manitoba Mennonites also contributed firewood.

The first nation is in talks with Manitoba, Ottawa and the City of Winnipeg regarding construction of an all-weather road. A spokesperson for the provincial cabinet told *Canadian Mennonite* that “the three levels of government have agreed to split the cost of building an all-weather road, with each government paying one-third of the cost.” Detailed design of the road is to begin later this year.

The office of Bernard Valcourt, federal aboriginal affairs minister, said his department has “committed funding to support one-third of the design costs and . . . will continue to work with the first nation to seek other potential government and

PHOTO COURTESY OF MC CANADA



*Moses Falco and Steve Heinrichs of Mennonite Church Canada don T-shirts from their visit to Shoal Lake 40 First Nation to honour the source of their drinking water.*



PHOTO BY WILL BRAUN



*Daryl Redsky of Shoal Lake 40 First Nation stands on a temporary bridge over the man-made channel that isolates his community.*

private funding sources for the construction of the road.”

As for a water treatment plant, the minister’s office said in an e-mail, “We will continue to work with Shoal Lake 40 . . . so that the construction of a water-treatment plant can move forward.”

The people of Shoal Lake have heard promises before, and are asking Winnipeggers to help make sure these commitments turn into reality.

Following the visit, Steve Heinrichs, director of indigenous relations for MC Canada, said, “Winnipeggers need to know where their water comes from. Visit the community, thank them, and then raise a loving stink to make sure the situation is addressed.”



A brief Mennonite Church Canada video about the visit is available at [www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2440](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2440).

## /// Briefly noted

### Youth Farm Bible Camp gives back to community

ROSTHERN, SASK.—Church camps don’t typically give money to charity, but for the second year in a row, Youth Farm Bible Camp has awarded the Rosthern District Food Bank a sizable donation. This year’s gift of \$2,952 was presented as part of the camp’s “Give this Thanksgiving” campaign. The money was raised by the camp’s corn maze over the Thanksgiving long weekend. Visitors to the maze were invited to bring a non-perishable food item for the food bank. In addition, a portion of every admission fee was designated for the food bank. Youth Farm Bible Camp has operated the maze for the past six years. Attendance has grown from 1,000 visitors in 2008 to a record 13,000 visitors this year. Camp director Mark Wurtz, not wanting to give the impression that the camp is flush with cash, pointed out, “We still always have need for funds [but] we did this to bless and partner with another organization. Many of our campers are from lower-income families and we wanted to give to them.”

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

PHOTO COURTESY OF  
THE SASKATCHEWAN VALLEY NEWS



*Youth Farm Bible Camp director Mark Wurtz, left, presents a cheque for \$2,952 to Wilmer Froese, who represents the Rosthern District Food Bank.*

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## INDIGENOUS-SETTLER RELATIONS



*Adrian Jacobs, right, responds to questions and concerns from Rudy Friesen and Gerhard Neufeld.*

# How will we walk together?

*Growing indigenous-settler relationships a priority for Partnership Circles*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

Instead of the usual small, intimate gathering that has characterized previous fall Partnership Circle meetings, more than 85 northern indigenous people, Mennonite Church Manitoba representatives, people from other denominations and social service agencies gathered on Nov. 1 to form a vastly expanded circle at Winnipeg's Circle of Life Thunderbird House.

For more than 10 years the MC Manitoba partnerships with northern indigenous communities have struggled to overcome financial, geographic and cultural barriers to build mutual, reciprocal and meaningful relationships.

Although time was given for the partners to meet in their own circles to review the past year and plan for the future, this fall's agenda was much broader.

Norm Voth, director of evangelism

and service ministries for MC Manitoba, explained, "Questions were being asked about why there is nothing in Winnipeg, given the significant urban issues that exist.



*Michael Champagne, left, participates in a table discussion of opportunities and barriers to indigenous people and settler populations working together in the city.*

In the past, we have reflected on what we were doing, but we wanted to broaden opportunities for other partnerships, consider broader issues and ask whether what we are doing is helpful."

"We intentionally broadened the invitation beyond the Mennonite community," added Steve Heinrichs, director of indigenous relations for MC Canada.

Adrian Jacobs, keeper of the circle at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre near Beausejour, Man., and an indigenous advocate and educator, said that when Jesus called his disciples "to make disciples of all nations," he never indicated they should take away a people group's nationhood. "There are four things that define a nation," he said. "Language, culture, governance and land. The church was involved in taking away our language. It should be involved in some way of restoring it."

In speaking about land, he told a story about "the racist reaction and huge rejection to our community locating in the southeast part of Winnipeg, resulting in our present location near Beausejour. We have just as much right as anybody else to be there. If you don't have the willingness to stand up and say something about such injustices and the racism that exists, you cannot be in relationship. You must enter into the struggle and enter the pain we feel and not sit back in a comfortable place, insulated from all the stuff going on, because a real relationship is more than an isolated concern."

Michael Champagne, an activist, community organizer and founder of Aboriginal Youth Opportunities (AYO)



*Michael Champagne speaks with energy and passion about indigenous youth and young adults in the city.*

in Winnipeg's North End, shared a similar message. "Programs don't change people," he said. "Relationships change people."

Since graduating from high school in 2005, he has been using his passion and energy to create a better, safer world for indigenous youth. He founded AYO in 2010 and a year later he helped the "Meet me at the bell tower" movement, a weekly event that aims to make the North End, known for its poverty, crime and violence, a safer community. Every Friday evening, people of all ages gather at the bell tower at the corner of Selkirk Avenue and Powers Street to discuss neighbourhood issues and figure out ways to combat crime in the area.

"We don't need a white horse galloping in to save the day," said Champagne. "We need space for indigenous wisdom and indigenous school of thought. We need support and space for our own identity to be developed. Will you, the settler community, be brave enough to create space for this?" he challenged. "The time is now."

Norman Meade, pastor of Manigotagan Fellowship, served as elder over the proceedings. "We, as churches, really have to be more inviting," he said. "Let's open our churches and learn from them, from the young people." ❧

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GOD AT WORK IN US

# Building peace in Northeast Asia

*Korean restorative justice practitioner inspires delegates at MCC Saskatchewan annual general meeting*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATOON

**H**ow does a South Korean soldier become a teacher of peace?

Delegates at Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan's Encounter and annual general meeting heard the answer to that question through the life stories of keynote speaker Jae Young Lee.

As a soldier, Lee was to guard a section of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea, and report any unusual activity. After the death of North Korea's Kim Il Sung, South Korea anticipated that North Koreans would attempt to flee their country. Lee and his fellow soldiers were ordered to shoot anyone who entered the DMZ.

The only movement Lee saw, however, was the free flight of birds. He thought about how the DMZ might look from a birdseye view, and that prompted him to think about God's viewpoint. Lee said he thought "God would be very disappointed in people [who were] pointing guns at each other for peace."

So Lee began considering alternatives to military service. His father, who had worked for six years at the Mennonite Vocational School operated by MCC in Korea in the 1950s and '60s, suggested he consider Canadian Mennonite Bible College (a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg). Although he knew nothing of Mennonite theology, Lee's father remembered that Mennonites were good people.

While there, he grappled with the idea of Christian pacifism. "I still wore my military pants because they were comfortable," Lee recalled, noting that a professor told him,

"Jae, you're the first student to wear a military uniform in my class."

Wanting to learn more about pacifism, Lee enrolled in Eastern Mennonite University's Summer Peacebuilding Institute, and went on to study conflict transformation and restorative justice under Howard Zehr.

Lee visited MCC headquarters in Akron, Pa., where he was surprised to see older women packing health kits for North Korea in the material aid warehouse. Lee told them he was from South Korea, to which one woman replied, "Back in the 1950s, I packed these for South Korea." Lee said he cried when she told him this.

He had grown up hating North Koreans, and, as a soldier, was trained to kill his enemies. He thought this was what God wanted him to do. Yet, he said, "these humble ladies were doing the same work for

that many years with the same heart, the same mind. I felt great guilt. People like her saved millions of lives and brought hope, peace and justice to the world."

On completing his studies, Lee returned to Korea, where he founded the Korea Anabaptist Center in 2001 and the Connexus Language Institute in 2004. Through the Korea Peacebuilding Institute, established in 2011, and the Korea Association for Restorative Justice, Lee and his associates offer instruction in conflict transformation and restorative justice in schools and prisons, and to police officers.

"We can't just sit back and enjoy Gangnam Style pop culture," said Lee, because the Cold War is still a reality in the highly militarized region. The Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute, founded in 2009 and supported in part by MCC, provides training in peacebuilding to participants from various national and cultural backgrounds. The institute's goal, he said, is to transform Northeast Asia into "a region of active nonviolence, mutual cooperation and lasting peace for all."

Restorative justice, said Lee, is a "way to follow Jesus," noting that Jesus himself practised restorative justice by mediating between God and humankind. The Korean word for "peace" means "equal distribution of rice," showing that peace and justice are inextricably linked, he said, concluding that restorative justice is key to a safe and peaceful society. ☸



*Keynote speaker Jae Young Lee, left, visits with Tina Doell at the MCC Saskatchewan Encounter and annual general meeting held in Saskatoon on Nov. 1.*

# Ministry, good works anchored in Christ

BY MARIA KLASSEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

A new autobiography, *Memories That Shape the Future*, has been published about the life journey of Otto Dirks.

The book recounts Dirks's three stints as minister at St. Catharines (Ont.) United Mennonite Church for a total of 15 years, including seven years on a part-time basis and six years as lay minister. In between, he pastored at Niagara United Mennonite Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., for almost 16 years.

Dirks was born in Ukraine and made his way to Germany during the Second World War. He came to Canada in 1948, settling in New Hamburg, Ont. After completing high school, he attended Canadian Mennonite Bible College (a founding school of Canadian Mennonite University) in Winnipeg. He later studied at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, which led him directly into his first pastoral position in Lima, Ohio. Six years later, he started

servicing in Taiwan for 10 years, and then he returned to Kitchener.

Since he could not return to Taiwan due to his first wife Elaine's illness, he accepted his first two-year term at St. Catharines United Mennonite. Much of this history is given in greater detail in the first 23 chapters of the book.

In 2002, Dirks married Doris Rempel, who had pastored in North Battleford and taught at Swift Current Bible Institute, both in Saskatchewan. She also served as chaplain at a Mennonite nursing home in Abbotsford, B.C., and in Vineland, Ont. The couple are now retired and living in Winnipeg, closer to some of their children.

They say that the highlight of their marriage was working together in the church. Often both would preach or one would preach and the other would be worship leader.

The shift in the language from German to English is a major change they have witnessed over the years. As for the future of the Mennonite church, they foresee more contact and working together with different denominations.

The couple are also concerned that what they call "the new liberalism"—good works without connection to God in Christ—is going too far, saying Christians need to work not in their own wisdom, but in God's wisdom and power, citing I Corinthians 2:1-5.

They also believe that hospitality needs to be nurtured more, with the church welcoming new people and incorporating them into congregational friendship groups. And the church needs to continue the Anabaptist peace tradition.

Summing up, they said, "God does new things if we are open to them. In some of our most frustrating experiences, we had the greatest growth. God has gone ahead and paved the way. He gives joy and inspiration." ❧



Otto Dirks and Doris Rempel Dirks hold a copy of Otto's autobiography, *Memories That Shape the Future*.

## /// Briefly noted

### Pastors in transition in Saskatchewan

For a number of years Mennonite Church Saskatchewan has enjoyed relative stability with regard to pastoral supply. Recently, however, two congregations said farewell to long-serving pastors:

• **ARNIE FEHDERAU** completed 18 years as lead pastor at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, on June 30.

After 27 years in pastoral ministry, Fehderau is pursuing other interests. He and his family have remained in Saskatoon.



• **GORDON ALLABY** resigned as pastor of Osler Mennonite Church effective Sept. 30. Allaby served the Osler congregation as lead minister for 10 years and one month.

On Oct. 1, he began as lead pastor at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Ont.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

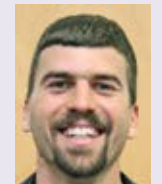


### Pastor in transition in Eastern Canada

• **JONATHAN BRUBACHER** was licensed toward ordination at Elmira Mennonite Church, Ont., on Oct. 19.

Before starting as Elmira Mennonite's associate pastor of youth ministries in January 2013, he worked on a chicken farm in Elmira. He has a bachelor of science degree from the University of Guelph, Ont., and is currently working towards a master of theological studies degree at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



## ARTBEAT

# Herald Press publishes new book on spiritual formation

*Clymer siblings co-write* The Spacious Heart

MennoMedia

Many people have grown tired of the pat answers that the church and religion have provided regarding questions of faith and meaning in life.

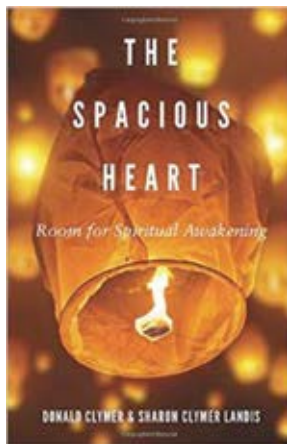
A new book addressing the deepest questions of the soul, *The Spacious Heart: Room for Spiritual Awakening*, was released by Herald Press this fall. The authors, siblings Donald Clymer and Sharon Clymer Landis, offer 12 keys—or insights—for unlocking the heart for spiritual growth.

Don is a spiritual director and Spanish professor who has led cross-cultural seminars at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), in Harrisonburg, Va.; younger sister Sharon is a writer, spiritual director and retreat leader from eastern Pennsylvania.

Don and Sharon spoke about their mutual spiritual interests during a family gathering in early 2010.

Don's experiences teaching a senior seminar at EMU dealing with suffering and loss had deeply moved him as he discovered the frequency of brokenness among students. Added to the brokenness were their questions about faith and God. "I wrote the book with them in mind, hoping that I could guide them toward a deeper commitment to God and a more 'spacious heart,'" explains Don.

Impetus for Sharon came from knowing of spiritual seekers who long for emotional and spiritual intimacy with themselves, others and God. "I wrote to encourage more understanding that gaining self-knowledge is not narcissistic, but actually helps one know the 'source' of life and



love," Sharon says.

In *The Spacious Heart*, Sharon describes some of her fears of getting involved in spiritual direction: ". . . my [spiritual] director's companionship me, and her deep listening, reflected love to me. This allowed me to heal and grow in intimate, close relationships with others and with God." Still, she had no plans to become a spiritual director herself. "But the Spirit and

my own heart kept drawing me," she recalls. She enrolled in training at Kairos: School of Spiritual Formation, in Lancaster, Pa., in 2008, and began taking on those seeking spiritual direction in 2009.

Sharon uses many stories in the book, some from her spiritual direction practice and others from her upbringing, feeling

that stories help people understand where they come from and where they want to go. "I wrote to encourage all who are disillusioned with church or old faith paradigms, who long for stories of spiritual awakening, and who aren't able to go to a spiritual director," notes Sharon.

Don first became involved in spiritual direction as a mentee, and then took training to be a spiritual director. He has been giving spiritual direction since 2003.

Both Don and Sharon also blog regularly at [www.donrcllymer.blogspot.com](http://www.donrcllymer.blogspot.com) and [www.spiritsongsl.blogspot.com](http://www.spiritsongsl.blogspot.com), respectively.

The authors hope that the book reaches a wider audience than the Mennonite church, including as a possible textbook for classes on spiritual formation.

Marva J. Dawn, who contributed the foreword for the book, praises *The Spacious Heart's* emphasis on justice and other "traditional" Mennonite issues. "Several of the traits that are usually associated with Mennonites make this one of the best books on spiritual disciplines that I have ever read," Dawn writes.

Mary Herr, who cofounded The Hermitage retreat centre in Three Rivers, Mich., with her late husband Gene, notes that there are not a lot of Mennonite-authored books on classic spiritual disciplines. "A book by Menno writers on spiritual disciplines is sheer gift," she says, adding, "So grateful for the book." ❧

## /// Briefly noted

### 'Taste the new wine' study guide released

The Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship (Canada) has published a new study guide based on the Sermon on the Mount. The 33-lesson series, under the title "Taste the new wine," is designed for personal study, for small groups, and for young adult and adult Sunday school groups. The series, authored by Bernie Loeppky, was developed in the adult Sunday school class at Grace Mennonite Church in Winkler, Man. Although the study includes 33 lessons, the original group spent more than two years in the lesson material. Lessons in the study include background material followed by a series of discussion questions. In the Grace Church experience, different Sunday school class members prepared to study one of the follow-up questions and report back to the class; this type of engagement meant that often one question would take up the entire class time, hence the 30-month timeline. To order "Taste the new wine," e-mail [eafellowship@gmail.com](mailto:eafellowship@gmail.com) or write: EAF (Canada), Box 323, Winkler, MB R6W 4A5. —Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship

## FOCUS ON MISSION &amp; SERVICE

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# A place of beauty

*Soccer ministry reaches out to youth at risk*

NATHAN DIRKS

When entering Bontleng in Botswana's Gaborone Region from the southeasternmost road you find yourself passing tall grass, wrought-iron covers and headstones of a large cemetery. As the road curves to the left around the nearby Zion Christian Church compound, just before three drinking establishments on the right that are marked by stacks of bottle crates, you find an open, dusty plot of land crisscrossed by a steady stream of pedestrians.

On maps it's marked as a green space, although it's decidedly brown. Industrious entrepreneurs set up competing carwashes on its perimeter. You can get your vehicle washed by hand and bucket, and swept and polished, for a reasonable \$5.50, although you need to be careful as you drive out not to kick up dust and sully their work. A middle-aged

man sits beside his wheelchair in the far corner of the space under a drooping stretch of shade netting, mending shoes. A thorny wait-a-bit tree near the middle of the property grows beside a shack housing a barber, where local men sit and visit outside in the shade.

Residents in nearby houses tell us that a stabbing recently occurred in the park as two men fought behind the bars one evening. Many locals have been robbed of cell phones and money while crossing through the area at night, the darkness hiding assailants who wait for the inevitable foot traffic. Abductions of children for the use of the *sangoma*—traditional doctors—are not unheard of, as certain politicians seek extra good luck during election season.

In the middle of this picture is a playground. Day and night, children love to play on the metal playground equipment, placed there haphazardly many decades

ago. But every single swing is broken, with a few chains left hanging at awkward lengths. The jungle gym teeters dangerously; some of its legs are rusted off near the base, while a few are bent from the impact of a careless driver. The rusted slides have gaping and jagged holes, and can't be used except to scramble up and down; children do this each day, still wearing their blue and grey school uniforms as they pause for some fun.

As children grow into youths, the playground loses its appeal and the focus shifts to the surrounding bars. Neighbourhood action occurs there nightly from Thursday to Sunday every week, drawing crowds of all ages. A recent stabbing was not an isolated incident. Neither are the frequent thefts and assaults that happen both to and by patrons of these establishments.

Bontleng, incidentally, is Setswana for "place of beauty."

When Taryn, my wife, and I first arrived two years ago, we began to envision ways that such places could be transformed. The possibilities seemed endless. Recently, we began a project in earnest.

We measured some areas, wrote proposals, made sketches, got to know people on Gaborone's city council, and officially asked permission to use some of the land.

*(Continued on page 40)*

PHOTO BY NATHAN DIRKS



*Day and night, children love to play on the metal playground equipment, placed there haphazardly many decades ago. . . . The rusted slides have gaping and jagged holes, and can't be used except to scramble up and down; children do this each day, still wearing their blue and grey school uniforms as they pause for some fun.*

## FOCUS ON MISSION & SERVICE

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Programs of Mennonite Central Committee 

*(Continued from page 39)*

Almost a year later, we received notice that we were welcome to make use of this sketchy park in the middle of the “place of beauty.” Soon after we received the necessary permits, we were off and running with youth and young adults in our Bible study and community service projects, playing soccer together, sharing meals and growing as a community of believers from various churches, as well as from the community beyond.

With our youth, we spend time learning from Jesus that God’s Word is there for us to know and love. And in learning to know and love God’s Word, we explore ways to enact what we’re shown, which is creative, loving, unexpected service of each other.

The people of Botswana love football—what we call soccer—but there isn’t really any football development in the country. So we initiated a project to give children a safe place that can also be used by youth and adults who might otherwise be drawn toward the bars.

With a group of young adults from

Spiritual Healing Church and some youth from the surrounding area, Taryn and I are building Botswana’s first futsal court. Futsal is five-a-side football, and is played in many of the best football nations. Fast-paced, skill-developing, easy to play and fun to watch, futsal is played on a surface about the same size as a basketball court. We’re hoping to use a hard synthetic surface that will be safe and will also last for decades.

Our team is also rebuilding the children’s beloved playground, recycling, repairing and repainting pieces that can be salvaged, and building new structures of our own design.

Under a tree beside the court and the playground, we’re installing a brick patio and the semicircular log fencing of a *kgotla*, a traditional place of meeting for elders, as well as crafting Muskoka chairs out of wood recycled from old skids to arrange around it. We’re trying to garner donations of hardy trees to beautify the space and create shade, as well as concrete bus shelters for team benches.

Around the fenced-in futsal court we will

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**Mennonite Church Canada**





place stadium lighting. We're hoping that solar panels will be donated to power them, since we get well over 300 days of intense sun annually; they will also light up the surrounding park at night and make it a safer environment.

There are a number of other concepts our team has come up with to make the whole place interactive and profitable for the community, including using it as a recycling centre, a rarity in Gaborone. Recycling could generate income for maintenance and security. By building stalls and fixing up the ones already in use by the cobbler, barber and car washers, we could attract food vendors and more small local businesses selling furniture of recycled wood, locally made T-shirts and hoodies, and crafts.

Peter Butler, a former English Premier League football player and the new coach


of Botswana's beloved but unsuccessful national football squad, the Diamond Zebras, has expressed his support for this project, giving us his official endorsement to show to the businesses we are approaching for sponsorships. He's also stated his intention to bring out the national team for the eventual launch event. Even better, he is interested in helping to provide football development for the program we intend to establish for kids and youth once the court is in place.

The beauty of a place like Bontleng is reflected in the people who live and meet here, who see and envision more in the land and in the people around them. When Jesus-loving individuals come together as a community to serve their neighbours, there is a reality to the words of Jesus: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

*Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:14-16).

The darkness of the park that allows weak individuals to target strangers and neighbours alike with violence and fear is no match for the light of Jesus, reflected by God's people in Gaborone. ☺

*Nathan and Taryn Dirks of Niagara United Mennonite Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., are MC Canada Witness workers in Gaborone, Botswana.*

 To view of a video of the Dirks's work in Botswana, visit <http://bit.ly/1v6eHUB>.

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## Angry words call for a peaceful response

*Saskatoon pastors say verbal abuse of gay congregant highlights need for safe spaces*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor  
SASKATOON, SASK.

**B**en Borne, 24, who self-identifies as gay, was talking to Krista Loewen and Joe Heikman, his co-pastors and friends, after attending a Mennonite Church Saskatchewan meeting to discuss its Safe Church Policy when Borne was condemned on the basis of his sexual orientation.

The policy, ratified last March, ensures that no person will be granted or kept from a church position on the basis of age, gender, cultural background, physical appearance or sexual orientation. The meeting in October was an attempt to hear voices from all people, including those who affirm the importance of the policy, especially when it comes to creating safe spaces for people of differing sexual orientations,

deeply hurt.

Heikman and Loewen say they were shocked and horrified, and told the man his words were inappropriate, at which point he left.

Borne says this isn't the first time someone has reduced his humanity to a warped idea of his sexual orientation, adding that many lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) people face discrimination on a regular basis.

### **Creating and maintaining a safe space**

Heikman and Loewen say they felt the violent words called for a peaceful response. They invited Borne to speak at church the next Sunday, to share his experience.



*Ben Borne and Krista Loewen, co-pastor of Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, are planning a listening day in January for LGBTQ people and other marginalized people in the community, along with co-pastor Joe Heikman.*

*'We have to speak out and take action to make it clear that this kind of hate and discrimination has no place in the church.'*  
*Joe Heikman (co-pastor of Wildwood Mennonite)*

and those who don't.

After the meeting, Heikman, Loewen and Borne say they were approached by an older man they didn't know, who asked Borne, "Are you a homosexual?" Borne replied, "Yes, I am gay." They say the man then proceeded to compare Borne to a sexually depraved animal that should be put down and called him "sick." Borne says he tried to laugh off the response, but was

On Nov. 2, Borne addressed his home congregation, Wildwood Mennonite Church, in Saskatoon. The congregation strives to be a safe, inclusive place for all marginalized communities.

"Growing up here, I have always felt loved and safe in this special place," Borne said. "When I walk through the doors here on a Sunday, I am reminded that I am a beloved child of Christ, and this has cast

out any fear and doubt of who I am and what my role is as part of the church body.”

After Borne spoke, nearly all of his fellow congregants got to their feet and formed a prayer circle around him. There wasn’t a dry eye in the place.

“It was a time of overwhelming community support, something I haven’t experienced before in response to something so traumatic,” Loewen says.

Borne says it felt like his church family was renewing its love and support for him.

Church members talked about the service for days, and Loewen says she heard from people who don’t even attend Wildwood who heard about the traumatic incident and wanted to offer support.

“Everyone was emotionally touched by this,” she says.

But Heikman and Loewen say the work isn’t over.

### Goals for the future

MC Saskatchewan is working to identify the man in an attempt to bring about understanding and reconciliation.

Heikman says the broader church needs to acknowledge the hurt LGBTQ people

like Borne deal with, sometimes from people within the area church itself.

“If we stay silent, this implicitly becomes the message of the church,” Heikman says. “We have to speak out and take action to make it clear that this kind of hate and discrimination has no place in the church.”

“If we say nothing, if we aren’t proactive in making the church a safe place, then it won’t be seen as a safe place,” he adds. “It won’t be a safe place in spite of the vast majority of people who desire to be compassionate and welcoming.”

Heikman, Loewen, Borne and others are planning a listening day in January for LGBTQ people and other marginalized people in the community. They want it to truly feel safe for people who are typically on the edges of society to speak up. They hope other area churches will plan similar listening days so gender and sexually diverse Mennonites will feel less like an issue and more like a part of the body of Christ. ☸

*In the interests of full disclosure, Rachel Bergen attends Wildwood Mennonite Church.*



*Joe Heikman, co-pastor of Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, says of an incident involving congregant Ben Borne, ‘We have to speak out and take action to make it clear that this kind of hate and discrimination has no place in the church.’*

## ‘A family camping trip . . . with a lot more guitars’

*CMU students use time off from school to record new EP*

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Co-editor  
WINNIPEG

Most university students use reading week to study or go on a quick vacation, but not the members of Pocket Change, a Winnipeg rock band. While their peers were hitting the books or the ski slopes this past February, the band members were busy recording their new EP, *Party Culture*.

Made up of four Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) students—singer-guitarist Mike Wiebe, pianist Brandon Letkeman, bassist Jonas Cornelsen and drummer Nolan Kehler—Pocket Change

spent six days this past February at Private Ear Recording, a popular studio in downtown Winnipeg. Each day, the band worked from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. on its music. It was an intense schedule, with some recording sessions stretching until after midnight, but the band looks back on the time fondly.

“It was like a family camping trip, just minus tents and with a lot more guitars,” Wiebe says. “We were all pretty inundated with school work, so we kind of said we’ll  
(Continued on page 44)

PHOTO BY MATTHEW RYAN PHOTOGRAPHY



*Formed in 2009, Pocket Change solidified its current line-up in 2012. Pictured from left to right: Nolan Kehler, Brandon Letkeman, Jonas Cornelsen and Mike Wiebe.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF POCKET CHANGE



*Pocket Change's second EP, Party Culture, includes five songs. The band is firmly rooted in the rock genre, but certain production choices give their music an out-of-this-world sound.*

*(Continued from page 43)*

do less school during reading week and then hit the books hard when school starts up again."

There's no telling what impact this had on their grade-point averages, but one thing's for certain: It resulted in a solid EP. *Party Culture* is an engaging collection of five experimental rock songs reminiscent of three other Winnipeg bands, all with Mennonite members and connections to CMU: The Liptonians, The Waking Eyes and Royal Canoe. The melodies are strong and the music is firmly rooted in the rock genre, but certain production choices, be it the electronic flourishes, ethereal keyboard lines, stacked vocal harmonies and occasional distorted vocals, give Pocket Change's music an out-of-this-world sound.

Wiebe credits John Paul (J.P.) Peters, the EP's lead recording engineer and producer, with helping the band realize its vision. He likens Peters to Willy Wonka. "J.P. was the Candyman," Wiebe quips, "except that instead of making chocolate, he made our musical dreams come true."

Peters helped Pocket Change strengthen its songwriting. His knowledge of the studio and experience with the recording process were also assets to the young band.

"His mind is a well-oiled machine," Wiebe says. "We learned how to make very quick decisions about our music and our arrangements, and get things done very quickly, but still with great quality."

The result is light years beyond the

PHOTO COURTESY OF POCKET CHANGE



*Pocket Change—pictured from left to right: Brandon Letkeman, Nolan Kehler, Jonas Cornelsen and Mike Wiebe—has just released its second EP, Party Culture. All four band members are students at Canadian Mennonite University.*

three-song debut recording *Pocket Change* released in 2011, some two years after Wiebe formed the band while he was a high school student at Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Man.

Wiebe says the band's lyrics are his observations of everyday events. The EP takes its name from the first song on the disc.

"Nothing we write about is terribly profound in the sense that I don't think we're trying to change the world with our poetry," Cornelsen says. "It's a collection of experiences and a light-hearted spin on the everyday, and I think the idea of a 'party culture' captures that."

Wiebe says that watching the career trajectory of certain Winnipeg groups has given him an idea of what is possible for rock musicians who come from a Mennonite background. "Seeing local bands like The Waking Eyes and Royal Canoe, and even Alanadale and other bands who have come out of CMU, has enabled me to . . . have more respect for what Mennonites can do, and how our entrenchment in the musical world has so many more possibilities than singing four-part harmony in church," he says. "Now, we sing four-part harmonies on stage."

Growing up in a community that values thoughtful music-making has also been important to the band's development, Cornelsen adds. "It's a community that cares about music itself, and that cares about what its members are doing," he says. "People [we know] like to keep up with us because they care about who we are. It's really good to have that kind of support."

The band members are excited for people to hear *Party Culture*. They are also in the midst of contemplating their next move as a band. Just like earlier this year, band commitments may take up their reading week this coming February.

"We've batted around the idea of taking the EP on tour during reading break, maybe three to five shows in Saskatchewan and Alberta," Wiebe says. "Can we handle each other for that long? We did it in the studio. Let's see if we can do it on the road." ❧

*Party Culture is available now. Download the lead song, "Wonderful Time," for free by visiting [www.pocketchangemb.com](http://www.pocketchangemb.com).*



## PERSONAL REFLECTION

## 'Sweet' memories

AARON EPP

YOUNG VOICES CO-EDITOR

Every Sunday after church, a woman in my congregation hands out candy to children in Sunday school who can recite a Bible verse from memory.

My guess is that the goal is to increase each child's familiarity with the Bible. With any luck, these children will make Bible reading and memorization a routine that hopefully lasts them for the rest of their lives. Even if it doesn't become a life-long routine, or if these children grow up and stop going to church altogether, perhaps these Bible verses will come to them in times of need later on in life.

I experimented with Bible memorization in my late teens. In particular, I recall one summer where I wrote out different Bible verses I wanted to memorize on recipe cards and then worked on memorizing them during my 25-minute walk to my summer job at a local grocery store.

I can't recall why exactly I did this. I suppose I wanted to become more biblically literate and also felt that maybe memorizing some Bible verses would change me in some way—help me become a more faithful Christian, perhaps.

In 2009, ChristianPost.com reported on a man named Charles Matlock who has a photographic memory and has memorized most of the Bible. At the time, he was using his gift to preach as a travelling evangelist. Matlock began memorizing Bible verses at the age of 12. By the time he was 59, he had become known as the "Walking Bible of West Tennessee," but he emphasized, "I want a relationship with Jesus more than just reading and memorizing verses."

Perhaps memorizing the Bible is one way to build that relationship, though. Dallas Willard, the American philosopher and famed Christian writer, is quoted as saying that Bible memorization is "absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation."

"If I had to choose between all the

disciplines of the spiritual life," Willard once wrote, "I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs."

My Bible-memorization period didn't last very long, and if you asked me to recite a passage today, the only verses I could definitely rattle off with any confidence would be John 3:16 and John 11:35 ("Jesus wept").

When this Year of Reading Biblically began, it was in the back of my mind to memorize some passages along the way. I have not done this as of yet, but there are still six weeks left, so I'm going to memorize one or two passages that speak to me.

Choosing a verse to memorize that speaks to you is key when it comes to Bible memorization, according to BibleGateway.com, a website that aims to make Scripture readily available on the Internet. "A Bible verse that's relevant to what you're going through is easier to memorize than one that speaks to a topic that's abstract to you," it states.

Lately I have been thinking a lot about love. Not romantic love, but the love I have for my friends and family. I have also been wondering how loving a person I am in general. How much love do I exhibit to the people I encounter in everyday life?

In the next few weeks, I'm going to memorize I Corinthians 13. The chapter has 13 verses in it, so I figure if I memorize two verses each week, I'll have memorized the entire thing by the end of 2014.

Hopefully I'll memorize more verses in 2015. I may not end up being the "Walking Bible of Winnipeg," but I hope I'll feel closer to God and have something to draw on in times of need.

At the very least, memorizing these verses will earn me some sweets at church some upcoming Sunday. ☺

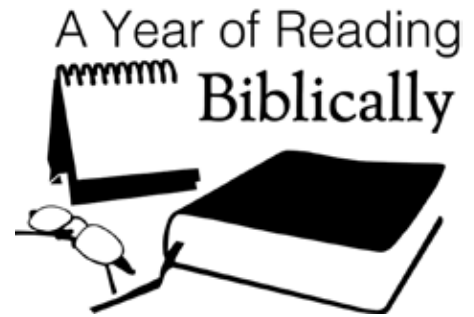
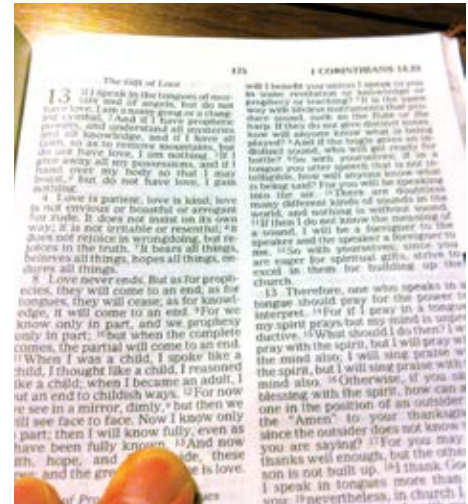


PHOTO BY GERHARD EPP



Aaron Epp has memorized Bible verses on occasion in the past, but it has never been a habit.

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



When choosing verses to memorize, picking a passage that speaks to you is key, according to BibleGateway.com.

## Calendar

### Saskatchewan

**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.

**Jan. 9-10:** RJC alumni basketball, hockey and choir weekend.

**Jan. 30-Feb. 2:** Senior-high youth retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

**Feb. 6:** RJC Friday Night Live youth event.

**March 22:** RJC Guys and Pies concert fundraiser, at 7 p.m.

**May 8:** RJC spring choir concert, at 7 p.m.

### Manitoba

**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.

**Jan. 23:** CMU Singers in concert with MCI and W.C. Miller choral ensembles, at Buhler Hall, Gretna.

**Jan. 28:** Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition, at CMU's Laudamus Auditorium.

**Jan. 29-30:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate junior-high students perform three one-act plays at the Franco-Manitoban Centre, Winnipeg. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

**Feb. 4:** Open house at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, at 7 p.m. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

**Feb. 6:** New Music Festival featuring all CMU choirs, at Centennial Concert Hall, Winnipeg.

**Feb. 10:** Face2Face community discussion: "You lost me: The church

and young adults," featuring Irma Fast Dueck and Peter Epp; at CMU's Great Hall, at 7 p.m.

**March 5:** Face2Face community discussion: "On being good neighbours: An urban reserve shopping centre, housing complex or casino at Kapyong?" featuring Steve Heinrichs, MC Canada's indigenous relations director; at CMU's Great Hall, at 7 p.m.

**March 13:** CMU dessert fundraiser, at Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite.

**March 28:** Jazz at CMU, in the Great Hall, at 7:30 p.m.

**March 29:** "Bells and Whistles with Strings Attached" concert, at CMU's Laudamus Auditorium.

**April 8:** CMU celebration fundraising dinner, at the Victoria Inn, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

**April 25:** CMU's spring concert, at the Loewen Athletic Centre, at 7:30 p.m.

**April 30-May 2:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate senior-high students perform their annual musical. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

**May 5:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate bursary banquet. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

**May 13:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate work day. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

**May 27:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Grade 7 to 9 spring concert at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

### 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](http://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/grebel-gallery).

**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.

**Dec. 3:** Fairview Mennonite Home Vocal and Handbell choirs present "The Peace and Joy of Christmas, at Fairview Centre, Cambridge; shows at 2 and 7 p.m. Concerts are free; dessert and refreshments for sale. For more information, call 519-653-5719.

**Dec. 6,7:** Pax Christi Chorale presents

"Winter Nights," with works by J.S. Bach and Stephanie Martin, at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto; (6) at 7:30 p.m.; (7) at 3 p.m. For more information, visit [www.paxchristichorale.org](http://www.paxchristichorale.org).

**Dec. 7:** Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir Christmas concert, "Christmas Blessings," at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m.

**Dec. 9:** "Carols with a global twist: A community caroling concert," with Inshallah and the Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir, at Kitchener City Hall, at 7 p.m.

**Dec. 14:** Menno Singers join St. Peter's Lutheran Church Choir, Kitchener, at 3 p.m., for a Christmas concert.

**Dec. 21:** Menno Singers presents a Messiah sing-a-long at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m.

**Jan. 21:** Mennonite/s Writing, a free public reading series with celebrated Canadian authors, at Conrad Grebel Chapel, at 7:30 p.m.: Patrick Friesen will read from his forthcoming book of poems, *A Short History of Crazy Bone*. For more information, visit [grebel.ca/mennolit](http://grebel.ca/mennolit).

**Feb. 4:** Mennonite/s Writing, a free public reading series with celebrated Canadian authors, at Conrad Grebel Chapel, at 7:30 p.m.: Di Brandt will read from a collection of poems-in-progress. For more information, visit [grebel.ca/mennolit](http://grebel.ca/mennolit).

**Feb. 6-7:** 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. 3: "John: If you believed Moses, you would believe me." For more information, e-mail [miriam@willowgrove.ca](mailto:miriam@willowgrove.ca).

**Feb. 18:** Mennonite/s Writing, a free public reading series with celebrated Canadian authors, at Conrad Grebel Chapel, at 7:30 p.m.: David Bergen will read from his new book, *Leaving Tomorrow*. For more information, visit [grebel.ca/mennolit](http://grebel.ca/mennolit).

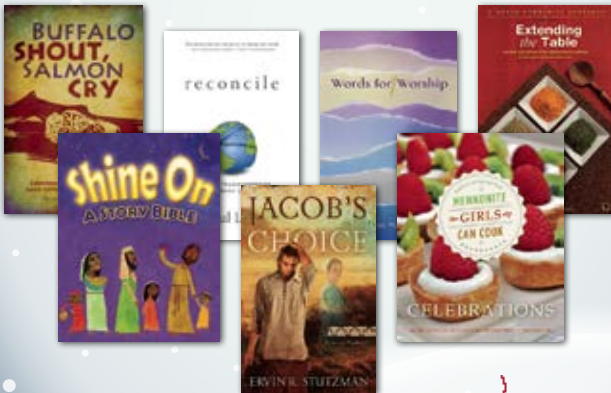
**March 4:** Mennonite/s Writing, a free public reading series with celebrated Canadian authors, at Conrad Grebel Chapel, at 7:30 p.m.: Grebel alumna Carrie Snyder will read from her new novel, *Girl Runner*, set for release in the U.S. in 2015. For more information, visit [grebel.ca/mennolit](http://grebel.ca/mennolit).

## GREAT CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR THE READERS ON YOUR LIST

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In celebration of the holidays and in gratefulness for your support, we are offering various sales until Christmas on our webstore.

This week's sales include:



1-800-245-7894 • [www.MennoMedia.org](http://www.MennoMedia.org)



**March 21:** Menno Singers present Poulenc's *Stabat Mater*, at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m.

**May 9:** Menno Singers present "Songs for spring," at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m.

**April 10-11:** 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. 4: "Luke: All

that the prophets have declared." For more information, e-mail miriam@willowgrove.ca.

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

## Classifieds

### Travel

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

**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](http://www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu)


### For Sale

Bungalow for sale at 132 MacKay Crescent, Waterloo, Ont., 3 bedrooms, 1 bath renovated, hardwood, full basement, sun room, garage. In great location: bus, mall, WLU, freeway, schools, quiet street, 519 885 6422.

### Advertising Information

Contact  
D. Michael Hostetler  
1-800-378-2524 x.224  
[advert@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:advert@canadianmennonite.org)

## Employment Opportunities



### Accounting Assistant

**Conrad Grebel University College  
at the University of Waterloo**

Conrad Grebel University College is seeking an Accounting Assistant to provide comprehensive bookkeeping services for all aspects of College programs, including maintaining Accounts Payable & Receivable and submitting payroll. The ideal candidate will have solid training and experience in all aspects of bookkeeping procedures, demonstrated speed and accuracy in processing financial data and excellent interpersonal skills. Experience using Blackbaud Financial Edge accounting modules would be an asset.

*This role is .7 fte (24.5 hrs per week). Applications accepted until the position is filled, reviewed starting December 8, 2014.*

Read more at [grebel.ca/positions](http://grebel.ca/positions)

## Ottawa Mennonite Church

### Employment Opportunity

Ottawa Mennonite Church seeks a Lead Minister to guide, inspire and equip members in worship, pastoral care and faith formation.

Applicant review will begin on January 5, 2015

Start Date: Summer/Fall, 2015

For more Information, contact Henry Paetkau at: [hpaetkau@mcec.ca](mailto:hpaetkau@mcec.ca), MCEC Area Church Minister

## 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.

Start: spring 2015 (negotiable). If interested, contact Henry Paetkau, MCEC Conference Minister, at [hpaetkau@mcec.ca](mailto:hpaetkau@mcec.ca)

## 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](mailto:rbjanzen@mennofoundation.ca)


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