

CANADIAN MENNONITE

December 15, 2014

Volume 18 Number 24

Mennos push back N.Y. SNOWPOCALYPSE

PM40063104 R09613

inside

Three meditations on Christmas mysteries 4

MCC Manitoba stands with Buffalo Gals 22

No time to give up on Planet Earth 30

GUEST EDITORIAL

The power of words

LES KLASSEN HAMM

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was toward God.”

I remember vividly the moment in an introductory Greek class that this sentence surprised me. We were asked to translate the first few verses of John 1 from Greek into English. Word by word we tried to make sense not only of individual words but also phrases and idioms. But when it was supposed to say “and the Word was with God,” it appeared to say that “the word was toward God.” I loved the nuance of “the Word” being toward God. How clever! Leaving aside the scholarly details, I found great delight in the notion that the Word is toward God. What might that mean? When is a word toward God? Can all words be toward God?

I love words. I use them all the time. I love puns that are perfect for dad humour. I love the deep and artistic ways words are used to convey story and emotion. Words are at once both simple and complex. I use words to speak to people, I’ve used them for a few sermons, I’ve written lots and lots of e-mail, I’ve sung them in various languages, I’ve whispered them to children, and, if I’m honest, I talk to myself a surprising amount of the time with very quiet words.

I’ve come to believe that words are fraught with danger, filled with possibility, and packed with power:

• **WORDS REALLY** are dangerous. They can be used to manipulate, criticize,

mislead and hurt.

But they are also dangerous simply because it is so easy to misunderstand them. I recall more than once carefully crafting the words of a sermon, to the point where I was confident that I had edited out all ambiguity, only to be completely surprised at how many different ways listeners understood them. Oftentimes they inferred quite different meanings, or completely misunderstood what I thought I had said. It’s probably foolish to believe that my words are always obvious and clear. We need to tread carefully with our words.

• **WE ALSO** need to tread boldly with our words, because they are filled with possibility. Words let us sing, words make us laugh, words share our tears. Sometimes prayer requires words. Words weave tales that entertain and enrich us. The words of a parable can fool us into hearing something we might not be ready to hear. Words build relationships.

• **AND WORDS** have power beyond our knowing! The power of words fascinates me, not only in the way they affect the listener, but, in particular, how words affect the speaker. I’ve noticed that my own words shape my thinking.

For many years, I half joked that there are really only eight kinds of birds in Canada, because that’s how many I could distinguish. But when some birder friends helped to grow my vocabulary,

identifying notched tails, crests and tufts, crowns, eye rings and hoods, I saw with new eyes. They taught me to see differences by naming them. Growing my vocabulary improved my vision.

Words don’t just describe the world around me, they shape how I encounter it. I have had some neighbours who drink to great excess. When I think of them always as drunks, or refer to them that way, they really become little more than drunks to me. When I meet them taking out the garbage or shovelling the walk, I don’t have much to say to them. They’re just drunks. But if I think of them by their names, and refer to the one as an artist, and another as a student, they somehow become more human to me. The sidewalk chat somehow becomes interesting.

The words I choose, and the words I use, change me! The labels I adopt for others affect me. Calling a friend “sister” or “brother” has power. Maybe even more telling, and shaping, are the words I choose for my enemies, for those with whom I completely disagree, for those who live differently, choose differently, look different, act differently. The words I choose for them change me.

And so I am left with that same question. What does it mean for words to be toward God? Apparently it’s time to watch my language.

Les Klassen Hamm lives in Saskatoon, owns Bitlink Technology and loves Wildwood Mennonite Church. He is also a member of the board of Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service, which publishes Canadian Mennonite.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Twenty-seven MDS volunteers from Drayton, Ont., joined 300 others from Ontario, New York and Maryland to help remove snow in and around West Seneca, N.Y., on Nov. 21, after the area received a year’s worth of snow in a few days. The Drayton group, including Kervin Horst, pictured, shovelled off the roof of a massive dairy barn. “We feel it’s part of the teaching of Christ to help our neighbours,” said David Martin of Drayton, even if they are two hours and a border crossing away.

PHOTO BY PAUL HUNT, MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE

Circulation: Please contact Lisa Jacky toll-free at 1-800-378-2524 ext. 221 or by e-mail at office@canadianmennonite.org for subscriptions and address changes. Subscriptions can also be ordered at our web site. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund for our publishing activities. ISSN 1480-042X

Canada

CANADIAN MENNONITE

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

490 DUTTON DRIVE, UNIT C5

WATERLOO ON N2L 6H7

Phone: 519-884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 Fax: 519-884-3331

Web site: canadianmennonite.org

Please send all material to be considered for publication to:

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Obituaries: michael.hostetler@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

Material can also be sent "Attn: Submissions/Readers Write/Milestones/Obituaries/Calendar" by postal mail or fax to our head office.

Reprint requests: reprints@canadianmennonite.org

Mission statement: *To educate, inspire, inform, and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through an independent publication and other media, working with our church partners.*

Guiding values:

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

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

Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

Area churches and MC Canada financially support 38 percent of Canadian Mennonite's annual budget.

Board of Directors (by appointing body):

MC Canada: **Les Klassen Hamm, Doreen Martens, Henry Krause, Bryan Moyer Suderman,**

MC B.C.: **Linda Matties,** MC Alberta: **Kuen Yee;**

MC Saskatchewan: **Marianne Harder;** MC Manitoba: **Ken Reddig**

MC Eastern Canada: **Tim Reimer;**

CMPS: **Carl DeGurse, Roger Epp, Tobi Thiessen**

Board Chair: Tobi Thiessen, tobi.thiessen@sympatico.ca, 416-622-7850

Head Office Staff:

Dick Benner, Editor/Publisher, editor@canadianmennonite.org (on sabbatical)

Ross W. Muir, Managing Editor, managinged@canadianmennonite.org

Barb Draper, Editorial Assistant, edassist@canadianmennonite.org (interim co-editor)

Dan Johnson, Graphic Designer, designer@canadianmennonite.org

Lisa Jacky, Circulation/Finance, office@canadianmennonite.org

Aaron Epp, Young Voices Co-editor, youngvoices@canadianmennonite.org

Rachel Bergen, Young Voices Co-editor, rachel.bergen19@gmail.com

Virginia Hostetler, Web Editor, webeditor@canadianmennonite.org (interim co-editor)

Advertising Manager: D. Michael Hostetler, advert@canadianmennonite.org,

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

Correspondents:

Will Braun, Senior Writer, seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org

Amy Dueckman, B.C. Correspondent, bc@canadianmennonite.org, 604-854-3735;

Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, Alberta Correspondent, ab@canadianmennonite.org, 780-436-3431;

Donna Schulz, Saskatchewan Correspondent, sk@canadianmennonite.org, 306-232-4733;

Evelyn Rempel Petkau, Manitoba Correspondent, mb@canadianmennonite.org, 204-745-2208;

Dave Rogalsky, Eastern Canada Correspondent, ec@canadianmennonite.org, 519-577-9987.

One-Year Subscription Rates

Canada: \$44 + tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)

U.S.: \$66

International (outside U.S.): \$89.10



Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



contents



Three meditations on Christmas mysteries 4

EDNA ALISON FROESE of Saskatoon offers up 'A gathering of strangers,' 'Exile and return,' and 'A giving of gifts' for your Christmas reading enjoyment. Plus, artist **LYNDA TOEWS** of Steinbach, Man., explains how her painting 'The Commitment' came to be.



CMU opens Marpeck Common 16

With words and photos, Manitoba correspondent **EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU** showcases Canadian Mennonite University's \$14.4 million expansion project that includes a new library, a combined resource centre/bookstore/TTV outlet, multi-media facilities, classrooms and pedestrian walkway connecting the two campuses.

Peace brings together local community 21

Second-annual Peace Prayer Walk in Morden, Man., invites Christians with differing perspectives on war and pacifism to find common ground in their efforts to promote peace. Plus, Edmonton holds fifth-annual Remembrance Day Prayer Service and Prayer Walk for Peace.

Old hymns with new arrangements 27

CARLA KLASSEN of Ottawa Mennonite Church undertakes her year-long 'Hymn Project,' providing one new arrangement of a hymn each week. She calls the hymns suggested to her by friends and family, 'a treasure I must handle with care and a kind of devotion.'

Young Voices 34-37

RACHEL BERGEN's 'Inviting the whole family to the table' explains how three Manitoba young adults are raising money to bring Global South Mennonites to MWC's 2015 assembly. **ELLERY PENNER** suggests Canadian Mennonites can learn from their English counterparts in 'Different ways of doing church.' **NICOLE BLOCK** reports that a Christian band from southern Manitoba forms connections with audiences of all ages in 'Rocking in "Color:"'

Regular features:

For discussion **8** Readers write **10** Milestones **15** Pontius' Puddle **15** Schools Directory **33** Calendar **38** Classifieds **39**

The power of words 2

LES KLASSEN HAMM

A deeper view of bread 10

KEN WARKENTIN

Movember is the new Christmas 11

PHIL WAGLER

An uneasy transition 12

RIE NEUFELD

SEASONAL FEATURE

Three meditations on Christmas mysteries

BY EDNA ALISON FROESE

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

A gathering of strangers

'CREATION OF MAN' BY MICHELANGELO (C. 1512) / COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG



That Jesus is thus a union of divine and mortal signals an ancient truth that underlies all worship: from creation onward, in love's deep sacrifice, God's outstretched eternal finger touches the outstretched finger of the mortal Adam.

The Christmas stories include an odd assortment of strangers. The guest list for the party that would eventually become the familiar nativity scene omitted all of the proper people: no clergy—you would have thought that the founder of a new religion could have been welcomed by the licensed prophets at least, if not the priests; no politicians—although they did try to crash the party; not even extended family—although social historians of the period insist that such an isolated birth, hidden away from everyone, was quite unlikely.

Nevertheless, the stories that have been handed down to us have not a word to say about aunts and grandparents and kindly neighbours. Nor about the mayor of Bethlehem or a representative from the local chamber of commerce in Jerusalem.

Instead, the guest lists that we do have possess an otherworldly air, as if the meaning of these stories does not depend on socially approved networks.

This is not to say that such family and community systems do not have the blessing of God. Did not Mary flee to see her cousin when her pregnancy called for womanly support? And surely the immediate and unusually close community in the early church, not to mention the deep friendships and mutual support surrounding the itinerant Jesus, give evidence of divine sanction on the loving ties that bind us together. Children do not grow well without a village network of some sort.

Yet the gathering of strangers that we celebrate each Christmas

(Continued on page 6)

'THE COMMITMENT' BY LINDA TOEWS (2014)



/// Artist's statement

How 'The Commitment' came to be

It all began in January 2014. My husband Gary and I started to research conventional nativity art and arrived at a new vision. We decided to focus attention on the very humble and usually invisible Joseph.

From then, the painting took three months to create, beginning with buying old sheets from Mennonite Central Committee for sewing some first-century costumes.

Since I paint from my own photographs, we then invited several members of our church, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man., to pose for a photo wearing these costumes, and set a lamp in the middle of our living room to achieve the desired lighting effect.



Then I visited some nearby hobby farms to get the animal photos I needed.

After several weeks of painting, the image was finished! We gave it the title "The Commitment," referring to Joseph's commitment to raise a child that was not his own. Note that he is the one holding the baby Jesus. It also shows commitment between wife and husband, shepherd and flock, ewe and lamb, and, of course, God's commitment to us.

The dorsal stripe on the donkey's back forms the shape of a cross pointing up to baby Jesus, foreshadowing his ride into Jerusalem shortly before sacrificing himself for humanity.

Interestingly, the people who posed for the Wise Men were actually women whose faces I changed.

Gift cards featuring "The Commitment" can be ordered via e-mail at lrtoews2@gmail.com.

—By **LYNDA TOEWS**



(Continued from page 4)

shows us something different but nevertheless just as essential. Ancient story after ancient story, whatever the culture, speak of a primeval, almost gravitational, pull between the earthly and the divine, between mere mortals and those who are clearly immortal. We humans were obviously not meant to live in material stuff alone—and, apparently, all those gods in the ancient stories were also not meant to live alone in splendid spiritual isolation.

Likewise, Genesis records a divine desire—“*Let us make man in our image*”—followed by profound conversations in a garden. There is always traffic between heaven and earth. That Jesus is thus a union of divine and mortal signals an ancient truth that underlies all worship: from creation onward, in love’s deep sacrifice, God’s outstretched eternal finger touches the outstretched finger of the mortal Adam.

At such mysterious meetings otherness ceases to be, and the guest list includes strangers who are no longer strange, who belong. So we have the angels

hovering over the archetypal family. Did the anxious father, his heart still beating in triple-time, hear the whoosh of angel wings? Maybe. Joseph had already conversed with angels and would do so again. I suspect the exhausted mother, so very close to miracle already, might have heard them or simply known that angels had to be there. Representatives of God, of course, they had to be there.

So did the shepherds. Their boots likely still carried tufts of grass and their clothing a smell of wet wool. However we try to romanticize shepherds—and poetry since the early Greeks, as soon as there were cities of any kind, has done its best to separate shepherds from their sheep and turn them into symbolic poets or pastors, and make them stand for innocent simplicity or uncorrupted erotic love—they still retain, and will forever retain, a whiff of the disreputable, a whiff of manure. Of course, they were the ones who saw the angels.

Who else was close enough to earth to be able to hear heavenly music? Who else had time and space for unearthly intrusions?

Evidently the Wise Men did. The Magi,

gentle astrologers likely, were sufficiently detached from the fuss of daily-ness to be able to read the stars, and then to follow wherever starlight led them. It is disturbing to realize that in current literature, typically, the sage only appears in the kind of stories we dismiss as children’s fantasy. The real world doesn’t have any Dumbledore or Merlin, just a dress-up Santa Claus commercialized past all recognition of old stories of giving. But, as the Christmas stories inform us, the real world could do with more contemplative thinkers, the strange ones who see straight through the transient busyness that so occupies us, to the detriment of our souls.

Yet, in defiance of the relentless materialism of our time, perhaps not so different from Jesus’ time, the nativity scene, with its gathering of otherworldly strangers, still begets more Christmas stories of strangers welcomed, of eyes opened suddenly to see the angels who are indeed always with us. ❧

Exile and return

The least favourite part of the gospel Christmas narratives is the gratuitous cruelty of Herod and his obedient soldiers. Well, perhaps not all of that part. There’s something compelling and exciting about the Wise Men’s adept escape from Bethlehem without offering Herod the details he wants.

Every good story needs a villain and the escape of the innocent, maybe even a clever outwitting of the villain. Such story development quickens the breath of the hearer: Will the beautiful newborn baby get away? Will the travellers make it safely back home after their long pilgrimage? The intervention of angels adds the miraculous touch that signifies the status of this baby as the hope of the world.

It takes nothing away from the Christian story to notice that such narrow escapes of the unlikely babe of hope occur in other traditions as well. These

similarities in the stories underline our sure faith that of such is the fabric of the world. It must always be thus. The hope of goodness, the hope for redemption, is

‘MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS’ (DETAIL) BY CORNELIS VAN HAARLEM (1591) / COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG



slender, fragile, yet astonishingly safe and enduring. This baby will live, yes, and a thousand Herods will go the way of all flesh. What matters an unscheduled trip into Egypt? So many heroes have entered the world in surprising ways and then disappeared into exile, only to return at

What many hero stories fail to show is the cost of redemption for all the bit players in the story, all those ordinary people who attempt to get on with life, often oblivious to the grand narratives in the making.

the crucial moment to save their people.

What the gospel narratives offer us, however, is not nearly so sanguine or satisfying. In reality, evil seldom rages harmlessly on a narrow stage. What many hero stories fail to show is the cost of redemption for all the bit players in the story, all those ordinary people who attempt to get on with life, often oblivious to the grand narratives in the making.

The innocent do not, after all, escape. It is almost intolerable for us to imagine the senseless death of babies and toddlers, all for Herod's blind and stupid drive to maintain power in the face of the mysterious force of love, which shuns the tools and trappings of power.

Thus, despite the innocence and almost naïveté of a simple birth watched over by angels, the Christmas story is full of the tension that will become a central theme of Jesus' ministry: his repeated repudiation of the violence and oppression of empire. For the drive to power inevitably makes grieving, empty-armed mothers.

The figurative image of Rachel weeping for her children stands in blunt contrast to Jesus, the man, with children in his lap and widows among his followers. Imagining the horror of all those weeping mothers in Bethlehem and Judea makes us face the consequences of our ways, whether those are openly militaristic or merely a typical grasping for advancement at the cost of others. Christmas is thus a story about consequences. Small wonder that we hasten by the weeping Rachel and look eagerly to Egypt where the exiled hero awaits return.

Yet even the story of the flight into Egypt has its dark underside, for it suggests that we do not always recognize a Saviour when he comes. This, too, is a common theme in the world of story. Those who would do their people good seem to need a time apart in which to let longing grow, vision sharpen and wisdom increase.

Moses needed at least 40 years away from his fancy palace beginnings. And if it seems harsh to imagine Mary and Joseph far from their home in Egypt—the land of exile (remember the Israelite slaves)—then think of what it means to

be exiled from the knowledge of and presence with God.

It is a part of the human story to experience separation before a return brings hope. To imagine Jesus as home-sick for God the Father sharpens our own sense of loss, for we are all aware, sometimes more keenly than others, that we are far from what we instinctively long for. The image of exile speaks to

everyone. Whatever at-home-ness we sometimes achieve remains fragile at best, easily shattered by accident, loss, disillusionment. That is why the story of the return of the hero speaks so deeply to us.

Christmas, of all times, is so often about returning and not being able to return, about being at home and not being at home. About hope. ☸

'ADORATION OF THE MAGI' BY EL GRECO (1568) / COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG



While gifts sometimes do fill a material need—the poverty-stricken student accepts with gratitude a food voucher or a decent blanket—at their truest, gifts are part of the self that is offered to another self.

A giving of gifts

As baby shower gifts go, gold, frankincense and myrrh are on the unusual side, if not downright quixotic. Only men utterly caught up in their astronomy, philosophy, astrology and religion could offer the poor parents of a newborn something so far beside the point. Surely more of whatever women used then to diaper their infants,

or even some more swaddling cloths, would have been more suitable and more necessary.

Yet in my head, I hear the cry of old King Lear in Shakespeare's play, "Oh, reason not the need!" Are gifts supposed to provide the necessary? Lear knew that his many attending soldiers were not necessary, not in any reasonable sense.

But their presence testified to his identity. Without them, he was something less than king—stripped, half-naked, vulnerable. Shakespeare does not usually minister to our hearts at Christmas, but in this case, this old king names something we should know about gifts.

While gifts sometimes do fill a material need—the poverty-stricken student accepts with gratitude a food voucher or a decent blanket—at their truest, gifts are part of the self that is offered to another self. Out of the exchange arises a new dependency, a new identity, however briefly and partially understood. What I give to you expresses something of myself, both of what I imagine you to be and of what I am.

The old story, “A Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry, illustrates this well. A young woman sells her long beautiful hair as the only way to get enough money to buy a gold chain for her husband’s gold watch, his one valuable possession, and his one testament to better days and his noble birth. Meanwhile, he has sold that gold watch to buy his wife expensive combs for the beautiful hair she no longer has. The gifts are now quite unnecessary in any practical sense—if they ever were. What moves us deeply in this story is the dramatic giving of self: Both gave what was part of who they were in order to enhance what the other was, and each thus demonstrated the love and sacrificial willingness to give that which was also a part of each.

Just so, the original Magi gave to the baby Jesus what identified them, and thus, perhaps unknowingly, testified to the identity of that baby:

• **GOLD** IS the purest and most valuable of metals. It is the sign of kings. Not only that, but its beauty and its endurance through all fire have given it divine status both in biblical lore and in other stories. It is immortal and thus belongs to God.

Its medieval symbol was a circle with a point in the middle. Circles are symbols of perfection. To think of Christ as the still point in the centre of perfection magnifies the Magi’s gift into the perfect acknowledgement of the self that he is.

• **FRANKINCENSE AND** myrrh were both resins from which expensive incense

could be made. Frankincense was sometimes burned as part of a sacrifice, and myrrh was also used for embalming. That both are grouped with gold indicates their value and their cost.

Thus, all three gifts signify both the wealth of the Magi and the kingly identity of the baby. Such gifts are not necessary, practically speaking. They are, however, an offering of the very self of the Magi for the establishment of the very self of the baby who will become the crucified Lord.

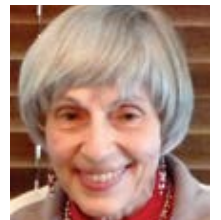
Such gifts are not free. Indeed, I wonder if gifts are ever free, because the very nature of a gift requires something of the giver—thought, time, cost, imagination—and something of the recipient. In order to receive a gift, I must acknowledge dependency. I must acknowledge that my life, my self, my goods, will somehow be enriched by this gift that I now take. The gift retains something of the giver, something of the giver’s very self, and thus it demands that I respond, in some way. I am not free to throw it away, for thereby I throw away something of the giver, which he or she has committed to me. At the very least, I have to respond, however tentatively, to this embodiment of what the giver sees in me.

On the one hand, this understanding of giving magnifies immeasurably the gift that is the baby Jesus. To think that

God embodied himself, gave of his self, as testament to what God sees in us, is to take our breath away. On the other hand, such a vision of gifts shames us for the mechanical piling up of stuff that constitutes our usual Christmas giving. To offer more stuff in response to a cultural mandate to shop until we drop, and in response to lists of people and lists of requests, can be a diminishment. Is this all of my self that I am prepared to give? Is this what I think of you for whom I have hastily grabbed whatever was nearest on the shelf?

We all function within our cultural spheres, and accept, more or less unthinkingly, the definitions that are current. Gifts are not usually defined as lofty exchanges of the self. So be it. However, in the quiet of the morning after, can we contemplate the rich symbolism of the giving of gifts with which we remember and re-enact the young child’s hands reaching out to accept the gold, frankincense and myrrh? ❧

Edna Alison Froese, a self-employed academic editor, wrote these Christmas mysteries and presented them to her Sunday school class at Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, in 2007.



/// For discussion

1. What strangers have you encountered this Christmas season? Who are the wise and contemplative thinkers who help us to see where heaven is reaching down to earth? How do we make room in our lives for strangers and wise ones?
2. Edna Froese writes that “Christmas . . . is so often about returning and not being able to return, about being at home and not being at home. About hope.” Do you agree? How does a time away change our perspective of home?
3. Froese says that, “at their truest, gifts are part of the self that is offered to another self.” What gifts have you given or received that show this statement to be true? What motivates you when choosing gifts for others? Is there a time and place for gifts to be unimaginative and practical?
4. What does the painting “The Commitment” show about Joseph? How did Joseph’s life show his commitment to God? What actions show commitment in our lives?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

SEASONAL REFLECTION

Wishing you a murky Christmas

BY BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER

I love the music and colours and hope of Christmas. But this year, I'm trying to be honest with how messy and disturbing it is, too. We all know there will be at least one rotten thing about the season: Old sibling conflict at the family meal. Inadequate or disappointing gifts. Health and financial problems in the wake of excessive eating and runaway spending.

But the mother of all ugliness is embedded in the very story that gave rise to our biggest holiday. Let's name it for what it is: scandal. God sullies God's own clean reputation by getting someone else's teenaged virgin fiancé pregnant.

What kind of salvation strategy is that? Where is the universe's police force? God needs to be reined in.

Following the birth of this out-of-wed-lock baby, the mess only multiplies. Think smelly barns and shepherds, and Roman oppressors. Think pagan gurus from the East, whose visit leads to mass infanticide in Bethlehem at the hands of a paranoid Kind Herod. This is "good news"? This is "peace on earth"?

Yet we've succeeded in covering up the scandal through Kinkade-esque pictures of glowing stables and cross-shaped stars hovering in indigo skies. Some have skirted around the embarrassment—and sectarianism—of traditional Christmas by taking Jesus out of the festivities altogether. Santa Claus, frosty snowmen and candy canes have more than filled the gap.

Should we be surprised, since scandal seems to show up in every other act of the Bible's salvation drama? The prostitute Rahab is granted an exemption from Israel's genocidal destruction of

Jericho, then joins the "chosen people" and becomes an ancestor of Jesus. Ruth, a foreign widow, boldly presents herself at the bedside of a sleeping Boaz, and soon becomes another messianic ancestor. Ruth's great-grandson David commits adultery with Bathsheba and takes her as another of his wives, murders Bathsheba's husband, and grooms their second son, Solomon, as heir to the throne—another forebear of Jesus—even though Adonijah, David's older son by another wife, also had a claim to the throne.

The adult Jesus does nothing to clean up the Old Testament pattern or to rescue his image. By attending parties, Jesus accrues a reputation as a drunk. By associating with women of troubled backgrounds, such as Mary Magdalene and the Samaritan woman, Jesus leaves himself open to intense scrutiny.

The early church, calling itself the body of Christ, didn't try to stop the pattern either, courting even more scandal of its own. By consuming the bread and wine of the eucharistic meal, early Christians were suspected of cannibalism. By allowing women and gentiles to fully participate in the church, they violated old taboos of God's people.

So in this supposedly sacred story, what is the point of God using scandal to push forward the divine plan to heal the world? And why do I find myself clinging to this story and treasuring it, rather than discarding it?

Mostly, that is beyond me, except that I've recognized two things the story does for me:

• **FIRST, IT** convinces me that God is not someone who must preserve a reputation

at all costs. God enters the fray of human history and does things that might be misunderstood, challenged, twisted around in the retelling, or sanitized. People may want to clean God up, but God really doesn't care about a pristine image. Salvation for a broken humanity is messy business, and clean, logical remedies have been found wanting before.

• **SECOND, IT** reminds me that my ideas of salvation are skewed by my limitations of vision. I can either stand above the scandal of the incarnation, handing down a verdict on whether it is good or not—or I can hold my judgments lightly and live in the story's mystery. The latter seems the humblest and healthiest response.

I need to remind myself that that the story abounds with good news. God didn't knock up Mary in the usual, abusive sense of the term. God kept Mary and her fiancé Joseph in the loop, explaining what was going on, pointing out the long-term plan. The angel's appearances and dreams said, "Don't be afraid." There was no secrecy and no manipulation. Mary's poetic Magnificat and Joseph's compassionate actions show that neither of them felt that God had wronged them. They accepted the bearing of God's Son as a holy and blessed calling.

Other such identifications would follow in Jesus' life. Jesus would invite himself to the house of vertically challenged and financially corrupt Zacchaeus. He would allow a prostitute to rub his feet with her hair. He would die on a cross between two criminals. God's story is wrapped up with marginalized people.

Given the choice between a glitzy Hallmark Christmas and a murky holiday fringed with scandal, I'd take the latter any day. It's real. It's robust. And it has nothing to hide. ✎

Byron Rempel-Burkholder is an editor and writer from Winnipeg.

/// Readers write

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

✉ Feature takes us 'where we need to go'

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

I want to thank writer Dave Rogalsky and *Canadian Mennonite* very much for this excellent and important feature. I greatly appreciate Rogalsky's courage and honesty for "telling it like it is." He presents us with a glimpse of the reality that we're going to have to contend with, both personally and corporately.

Some of us, of course, are made uncomfortable by varying degrees with what he's presented. Others of us, myself included, are encouraged and made to feel hopeful that there is a reasonable pathway on which we can continue our sincere seeking while maintaining our love of Christ. Seems to me that, with his formidable talent and ability, Rogalsky has taken us all into territory where we need to go.

RON HILLER, KITCHENER, ONT.

FROM OUR LEADERS

A deeper view of bread

KEN WARKENTIN

When I was a child, my mother used to bake buns every Saturday. It seemed to me that she would make hundreds of them. She baked so that on Sunday we could have *faspa*. There was something sacred about *faspa*. Something about that light meal contributed to my concept of sabbath. In my mind, I made a connection to the divine when I smelled fresh baking.



Jesus knew the power of taking something ordinary and infusing it with rich theological significance. When he said, "I am the bread of life," I got it immediately. I thought I understood the holiness of that statement. The significance of taking many individual grains, crushing them together to create a new substance that could be used to feed a hungry world, was not lost on me. A metaphor rich with meaning, and yet for me it was limited to my memories of bread, my understanding of what flour should be and my experience

of holy food.

I knew the beauty of bread made from crushed grains of wheat and now that bread makes me ill. Several years ago, I was diagnosed with celiac disease and now my body reacts badly to even small amounts of gluten. I no longer can eat bread made from wheat and I am still

Reflecting on my changing relationship with wheat reminds me to continue to go deeper into the meaning of Jesus' words: 'I am the bread of life.'

disappointed at this reality every time I walk past Tall Grass Prairie Bread. My life seems incomplete without it. Yet I cannot eat it anymore.

Reflecting on my changing relationship with wheat reminds me to continue to go deeper into the meaning of Jesus' words: "I am the bread of life." I was so sure I knew what bread looked like. Now that look is much richer, much more varied and complex. Flour blends of beans, potatoes, corn, rice and nuts now compose

the bread I eat. Communion bread, now generously made without wheat so that I can share the holy meal with my community, still represents the body of Christ—maybe more like the body of Christ than ever before.

In this Advent season, a time rich with signs, words and symbols, I pray that together we will grant one another the grace to continue to explore the meaning of this holy time in the church year, creatively deepening our understanding of faith by allowing the Holy Spirit to breathe new meaning into the symbols we hold dear.

Ken Warkentin is executive director of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

✉ Controversial articles and letters are better than 'platitudes or clichés'

RE: "LOWER THE pointing finger" editorial, Oct. 27, page 2.

The editor brought up the complaint of a reader, that some letters to the editor should be screened or omitted because they could cause friction.

I think *Canadian Mennonite* would lose its character and purpose if all of the controversial contributions were omitted. I commend the editorial team for the courage to publish those critical reader contributions.

I personally like to be challenged by articles that are controversial. They make me wonder what may have motivated the writer to write that. Has he written it

(Continued on page 12)

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Movember is the new Christmas

PHIL WAGLER

I have a goatee. I've had it for a while and, as my wife reminds me, my kids can't even remember me without it. I can barely remember me without it. So, given that I'm already stubbled, it's pretty hard to get excited about Movember.

November has become the month—other than hockey playoff time—when men grow facial hair to make a statement.

What statement? Good question.

Movember's only 10 years old, yet I question whether most moustachioed guys could name what it's all about. Even less, I suspect, have contributed to the cause for which the hairy upper lip stands. At its outset, Movember creatively raised awareness of men's health issues, particularly prostate cancer. And, it

must be noted, the movement has raised \$560 million for research and programs, making it one of the Top 100 non-governmental organizations out there.

That's impressive, but in the last few years I've heard few guys mention what this movement is all about, although they wax eloquent about their whiskers. It's not that they are heartless, but the cause is now a fad, even a "tradition," and while that's a big win for Movember, these things can become just more white noise

in our culture, where people hurriedly identify themselves with the next hip cause. (Remember this past summer's ice-bucket challenge or all those yellow rubber bracelets?) You see, we're not really moved by causes, but by marketing and the yearning to "#trend."

Here's the point: Movember is trending toward becoming the new Christmas. In other words, we're a culture increasingly forgetful of the metanarratives, but we keep on celebrating them anyway. While some Christians bemoan that the true "reason for the season" is largely forgot-



To follow the one born of a virgin is not a trend, a fad or even a tradition. Jesus described his coming as the defining metanarrative of life.

ten or unknown, we ought not to be surprised.

We are part of a culture that rapidly and thoughtlessly exchanges one defining big story—that's what a metanarrative is—for another. The late French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard defined postmodernity—the age we are apparently in—as "incredulity toward metanarratives."

In other words, we are unwilling or unable to believe any larger stories. We can't

settle ourselves on anything definitive or bigger than ourselves, so we redefine, or, as Movember-type trends reveal, we jump on board with the cause du jour, but swiftly forget what it's really all about. Changing causes is as easy as shaving or putting up lights. We live in a culture curiously given to "traditional-ization," but with no real sense of what we actually hold to be ultimately true or worthy of such sacred designation.

Now, perhaps you think this is just a rant. It's not. It's a wake-up call for those who are disciples of Jesus. To follow the one born of a virgin is not a trend, a fad or even a tradition. Jesus described his coming as the defining metanarrative of life: He claimed to fulfill the Law and the Prophets.

"Take up your cross and follow me," he said. "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me," he declared. He began no fad or cause, but claimed that true life is defined

by himself. To believe and follow him as Lord will neither make sense or be celebrated in this incredulous culture, whether you have a moustache or not. The cost of steady, Jesus-centred discipleship is growing faster than a Fu Manchu, chin curtain or handlebar as the months roll on.

Phil Wagler wears his goatee with satisfaction year round, but it is the call of Jesus that defines his life as he lives with his family in Surrey, B.C.

(Continued from page 11)

out of frustration or distress, and needed a vehicle to let off steam? Or has she been struggling with a problem and has been thinking aloud? Their frustrations may lead me to pray for their situations.

Should that person sacrifice honesty expressed in an outburst of emotion for the sake of shallow peace or harmony expressed in platitudes or clichés? Those

contentious or provocative articles can help us to grow, and to test our level of tolerance, respect and love. They can train us to resist the urge to correct and put others in their place. We may not agree with the writer's opinion or attitude, but we do not need to respond, just listen and perhaps only acknowledge the challenge by, "Yes, I hear you."

Those friction-causing articles may suggest to the

NEW CANADIAN VOICE

An uneasy transition

RIE NEUFELD

This is my seventh year living in Canada. My transition from Japan to Canada wasn't easy, since I love my country and my family. I especially love the church where I became a believer, Atago Mennonite, in Miyazaki. I still have a heart that one day my entire family will come to know Jesus.

When my husband Gerald and I started our ministry in Canada, we were soon welcomed by Mennonite Church British Columbia staff, leaders and congregations. There were retired missionaries supporting Japanese ministries—so they weren't actually retired—and there was also a church that had built a good relationship with our new, small Canadian Japanese community, showing wonderful care. Some members from that church visited us during our Sunday afternoon service. We had joint worship services together and enjoyed fellowship together at Camp Squeah.

We felt welcomed and supported by these "real Mennonites."

The challenges our church has been experiencing are:

- **ENGLISH LANGUAGE** ability
- **CULTURAL EXPECTATION** differences
- **LIMITED BIBLE** training
- **TOO HIGH** expectations of the pastor
- **FINANCIAL STRUGGLES**



I can see some difference in those five things compared to the challenges of typical Canadian Mennonite churches. These challenges cause us to step back from getting to know each other, rather than stepping into more close relationships with our Mennonite neighbours. Living in Canada as a minority has made us shy and quiet. Many of our members have had some experience being misunderstood or embarrassed in this society. Mennonites seem to have too high of a standard for many of us.

About 20-plus adults and about the same number of children regularly come together for Sunday worship services. Many have little knowledge of Mennonite/Anabaptist practice. We need more wisdom and knowledge of the Bible. Many members don't have a Christian background, which means they have not learned how to study and

Many of our members have had some experience being misunderstood or embarrassed in this society.

understand the Bible, or how you raise children in a Christian way. Those are big things to learn. We need the wisdom of the older generation of Christians in order to be encouraged to walk with faith in Jesus.

Our ministries have been focussed on non-believers, such as international students, "working holiday" short-term

workers and local Japanese families. At every third Sunday worship service, we take turns hearing from members sharing their faith journeys. Everyone has an amazing story, which may include how they became a believer or how they went through a difficult time with faith. Some share deeper issues, and some are just learning what to share. We are getting to know how our God is working in each other's lives through this testimony time.

I feel well supported by MC B.C. Our area church minister is interested in our faith community. Gerald is supported by area church and multicultural leaders, so he can share any difficulties and can learn from other people's experiences. Children in our church look forward to attending Camp Squeah every summer. We are very grateful for its fund to support low-income families.

It seems the process of growth is slow and messy, but I trust God, who is able to work and create from nothing to complete his will. Knowing that, I continue

serving where I am and follow the Spirit's leading.

Rie Neufeld lives in Surrey, B.C., and attends Mennonite Japanese Christian Fellowship there. She was a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker in Japan with her husband Gerald, who pastors the congregation.

editor or writer which topics he or she can deal with for the general readership, as Dave Rogalsky did with his feature article, “What is truth?” on page 4, or Troy Watson’s “Faith vs. belief (Pt. 1)” column on page 13. I value Watson’s contributions very much because of the honesty and clarity with which he presents them.

Please continue to challenge us that we may mature and grow in our faith and attitude.

HELMUT LEMKE, VANCOUVER

✉ MCC has broken trust ‘too often’

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

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) seems to repeatedly treat staff within the Aboriginal Neighbours program in a way that suggests that relationships are not important. This is also the message it is portraying to the first nation communities.

I know that when MCC Ontario suddenly ended my contract, I was directly told to discontinue my relationships with those in the first nations communities with whom I had developed partnerships. Aboriginal partners were not surprised that relationships were cut because they are accustomed to MCC and other institutions ending programs—or letting staff go—when they start actually listening to their struggles and beliefs.

Constituents apparently want “measurable outcomes,” but relationships are hard to measure and also take time. First nations have a hard time trusting MCC when the relationships that are built are suddenly ended; trust has been broken too often.

Ultimately, when MCC cuts or changes these programs, it is probably reflecting the attitudes of its supporting constituency who want to see their money going to more “productive” programs, or who simply want others to do the changing.

We are the ones who need to change. We all have the responsibility to listen to the stories of Aboriginal Peoples and walk a mile in their shoes until we understand them and open ourselves to new thinking and acting, rather than expecting MCC and the few individuals working within the Aboriginal Neighbours programs to do the work of “fixing” relationships with first nation communities.

DON PROCTER, BELGRAVE, ONT.

✉ Is it really a choice?

GENDER ISSUES NEVER came up at home when I was a young boy. As I got older and became aware of gays and lesbians, I couldn’t understand how a man

would choose to like his own gender when there were so many beautiful women available. It just didn’t make sense to me because, in doing so, you were opening yourself up to ridicule, bullying, getting beat up, killed, or—the hardest part—being excommunicated from your family, friends and community.

Then one day as I was coming home from work on the bus—I was in my 50s by this time—it hit me like a tonne of bricks: I hadn’t chosen to like girls. It just all of a sudden happened. Being a young boy, girls really didn’t matter; you played with them the same as you did with your male friends. Then one day, all of a sudden you realized girls had beautiful eyes and hair, and you wanted to spend time with them.

So how am I going to say that my attraction to girls happened naturally, but lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) people chose who they would like? In talking with my friends, I think I persuaded them that if they could tell me the date they decided to like the opposite gender is the day I might consider that LGBTQ people made their own choice.

I realized that LGBTQ people want nothing more or less than heterosexuals. They want to find someone who will love them, and sex will be part of that relationship.

As human beings, most of us have a basic need to love and be loved. Love and relationships are really the essence of life and make us who we are. How terrible it must be for LGBTQ people when they reach the age when the need for love and companionship manifests itself and we, as a church and society, deny them the basic right to love and companionship that we cherish as heterosexuals.

I find it very difficult to accept the fact that God would deny LGBTQ people, whom he created, the right to love and be loved. Maybe God is finding out how far we, as heterosexuals and Christians, can extend our grace.

WALTER KLASSEN, SASKATOON

✉ Fight, fight, fight the madness of war

FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT, the recurring Department of Defence recruiting ad urged my grandson as he watched the Maple Leafs and Canadiens on Hockey Night in Canada. Join Canada’s Armed Forces. Fight fear, fight distress, fight chaos, said the ad and the attendant recruiting poster. Fight, fight, fight, the ad urged my only grandson, whose parents, grandmother and I were bringing up to be a peacemaker, to resolve differences without resorting to violence.

Our sons and daughters fought in Afghanistan, and 158 came home in maple leaf shrouds. And how many more came home with post-traumatic stress disorder,

and, after getting little help from the government that sent them into battle, died at their own hand or sought solace in booze and dope?

There was \$30 billion of our taxes to fight the Taliban and make Afghanistan safe for the warlords and their opium production, but just a pittance to help our returning sons and daughters, the walking wounded.

Fight, fight, fight, said Canada's leaders as they sent CF-18s to Libya to help depose a vicious dictator whose guns mysteriously migrated to Mauritania and Nigeria to arm the Boko Haram, to murder infidels, and kidnap and violate innocent schoolgirls. Too late we learned how easy it is to generate fear, multiply distress, create chaos and leave the country a failed state, a breeding ground for fanatical jihadists now fighting with Islamic State in Iraq.

Fight, fight, fight, said Canadian officials who stood by supportively while Gaza suffered another of its recurring rounds of destruction, pain and death. Fight, fight, fight, and propel the cycle of violence to ever deeper reservoirs of hate, fear, distress and chaos.

Fight, fight, fight, said some Canadians, and we sent six CF-18s to battle Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, born of misguided, dishonest foreign policies and gross military mismanagement. Fight, fight, fight, and join the empire in its self-appointed role as global policeman. Join this empire in attracting to ourselves the pain, inchoate rage and desire for bloody vengeance generated by the obscenities of Abu Ghraib and Gaza.

Fight, fight, fight, and jail or kill our alienated, misguided, mentally ill sons, whose demented minds led them to fight fear, distress and chaos by killing RCMP officers in Moncton, N.B., a warrant officer in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que., and a corporal at the War Memorial on Parliament Hill.

Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing.

D.E. HUBERT, EDMONTON

✉ 'Cloud of witnesses' may help solve complex human problems

THIS YEAR MARKS the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War. Some pledged it would be the war to end all wars.

Challenges facing our generation—war, climate change, poverty—continue and may only partially be solved by formal governments. Do Mennonite Canadians have a unique role to play in the 21st century?

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 13 that everyone must submit themselves to the governing authorities. However, many Mennonites reserve the right to disagree with governments based on matters of conscience. As a young boy, I remember listening to an old man speak about how he went to jail rather than fight in the First World War.

There are solutions to war, climate change and poverty.

Nonviolent civil organizations are encompassing the world like never before in our history. This includes organizations like Doctors without Borders, Christian Peacemaker Teams and Mennonite Central Committee.

Given our country's unique multicultural identity and vast geography and resources, could Canada increase immigration as more people are displaced by war, climate change and poverty? Canada has the largest supply of fresh water in the world. Would an inclusive immigration policy create jobs and perhaps a robust economy? Paul may have had it partially right: governments may have a role to play from a Peace Church perspective.

If only it was that simple. On the surface there are issues with first nation land claims and many broken treaties. By advocating for more immigration, would Mennonites be betraying first nations? An immigration plan like this would only work in partnership with first nations.

Beneath the surface there may be issues with trade agreements with China, the United States and multinational corporations.

I am encouraged, however, by the New Testament writer of Hebrews 11, who lists people that he said had faith. Since we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, let us find the courage to discern the race to be run.

MYRON STEINMAN, KITCHENER, ONT.

/// Corrections

- **LAVERNE SIEMENS'** name was spelled incorrectly in "Church left reeling after pastor charged," Oct. 13, page 17.
- **MENNONITE CHURCH** Canada was also a sponsor of the sports panel discussion featured in "I can't give God any less than my best," Oct. 27, page 18.
- **IN "SEEKING** the welfare of the city," Nov. 10, page 4, Jane Philpott's name was spelled incorrectly. Everett Thomas was incorrectly identified as being retired; he is currently employed by Greencroft Goshen (Ind.), where he serves as chaplain, among other duties. Also, he served on Goshen city council for 23 years, not on Elkhart (Ind.) city council.

Canadian Mennonite regrets the errors.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Doell—Joshua Timothy (b. Nov. 15, 2014), to Curtis and Corrina Doell, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

Ladino Ubola—Megan Elisha (b. Oct. 27, 2014), to Paula Ubola and John Ladino, Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Lamure-Wilker—Jailynn and Jamario, (adopted on Oct. 23, 2014), by Greg Lamure and Karla Wilker, Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Neff—Isobel Jean (b. May 4, 2014), to Jacob and Jenny Neff, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Phillips—Clara Elizabeth (b. July 16, 2014), to Jennifer and Sean Phillips, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Sawatzky—Emily Kamille (b. Aug. 28, 2014), to Mike and Melissa Bartel Sawatzky, First United Mennonite, Vancouver.

Schiedel—Rudy Daniel (b. Nov. 19, 2014), to Andrew Schiedel and Karen Martin Schiedel, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Stewart—Cole Philip Richard (b. Oct. 20, 2014), to Kathy and Brandon Stewart, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Thiessen—Twins Adela Evangeline and Everly Lincoln (b. Nov. 12, 2014), to Trenton and Jessica Thiessen, Ross Road Community, Abbotsford, B.C.

Thwaites—Quinn Alfred (b. Sept. 14, 2014), to Andrew and Alicia Thwaites, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Baptisms

Matthew Bauman—Elmira Mennonite, Ont., Oct. 26, 2014.

Tony Albrecht, Daniel Erb, Aaron Gerber, Christina Jantzi, Tricia Wagler—Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont., Nov. 2, 2014.

Nathan Murray Shantz—Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont., Nov. 2, 2014.

Marriages

Friesen/Prince—Stephanie Friesen (Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.) and Guy Prince, at Panorama Ranch, Okotoks, Alta., Sept. 27, 2014.

Groen/Groh—Joshua Groen and Victoria Groh, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., Nov. 1, 2014.

Miller/Toews—Bryce Miller (Shalom Mennonite, Tucson, Ariz.) and Emily Toews (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.), at Camp Friedenswald, Cassopolis, Mich., Nov. 1, 2014.

Valenta/Vesa—Brian Valenta (Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.) and Mariana Vesa, at World Outreach Ministries, Waterloo, Ont., Nov. 8, 2014.

Deaths

Gordon—Allan, 90 (b. June 5, 1924; d. Oct. 29, 2014), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Krahn—Mary (nee Enns), 89 (b. Nov. 5, 1924; d. Aug. 18, 2014), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Kroeger—Bertha (nee Sawatzky), 96 (b. July 12, 1918; d. Oct. 28, 2014), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Regier—Bernice, 89 (b. Jan. 21, 1925; d. Oct. 23, 2014), Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

Toews—Peter, 92 (b. Nov. 20, 1921; d. Nov. 9, 2014), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Zehr—Laurene (nee Bast), 85 (b. July 19, 1929; d. Oct. 27, 2014), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

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

Poncius' Puddle



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH



An external view of the new Marpeck Commons at Canadian Mennonite University.

CMU opens Marpeck Commons

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

For the past year-and-a-half, residents of Winnipeg have watched as Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) built a pedestrian bridge linking its north and south campuses over a busy thoroughfare. On Nov. 29, as CMU was preparing to open the doors for the public to view the new facility, the excitement was palpable.

Staff of Mennonite Church Canada and CMU eagerly and warmly welcomed visitors to the bright, spacious building that conveys a simple elegance and much careful thought in its design. Careful thought was also given to the name: Marpeck Commons.

“It was a vigorous and good process coming up with a name,” said Terry Schellenberg, CMU’s external vice-president. “This name rooted it in terms of identity and pulled it forward. Marpeck was an engineer whose work and writing are so pronounced in bringing diversity together. It reflects our diversity in bringing together Mennonite Brethren, Mennonite Church [Canada] and other voices.” Pilgrim Marpeck was also a reformer and lay leader of Anabaptist groups during the Reformation.

The new library comprises 930 square metres of the main level. Tens of thousands of volumes will be brought out of the old

basement library on the south campus. Movable space-saving shelving has been installed. Study carrels, tables and comfortable chairs ring the outside perimeter, and take advantage of the natural light.

“We want the larger community, as well as the students, to see this space as theirs,” said Schellenberg, noting that more than 700 registered borrowers come from outside the student community.

“We want Canadian Mennonite readers to know that this is their space,” said Arlyn Friesen-Epp, director of the MC Canada Resource Centre, which is moving

to the new facility and will be housed in a bright, spacious area on the main level. This 215-square-metre space, called the CommonWord, will be shared with the CMU Bookstore and a 37-square-metre portion will be retail space for Ten Thousand Villages. “CommonWord will be its own entity overseen by a management committee with representatives from CMU and MC Canada,” he said.

“The vision was to bring the Resource Centre here and the bookstore out of the basement into a public venue,” said Schellenberg. “We want to create a collaborative, integrated space that is engaging and inviting for the broader community. With the demise of so many Christian bookstores, CommonWord will offer arguably the best collection of Anabaptist Christian resources in the country and the largest Christian bookstore in the province.”

An abundance of natural light spills into the entire building. Comfortable chairs invite visitors and students to sit and relax in the large gathering space off the main entrance. They can purchase a cup of specialty coffee and pastry, even gelato, at the new Folio café. Across the open space is room for performances and other events. A portable stage, lights, sound system and video/live-streaming capabilities will give opportunity for hosting book launches, CMU’s Community in Conversation series Face2Face and other events.

On the mezzanine, which leads to the bridge, rooms are provided for student group study. Each of these three rooms is



Librarian Vic Froese, left, Terry Schellenberg, Arlyn Friesen-Epp and Dave Bergen are pictured in the new library at Canadian Mennonite University's Marpeck Commons.



A new pedestrian bridge links CMU's north and south campuses.

named in honour of a church leader: J.J. Thiessen, David Ewert and Archie Penner, "We wanted to communicate to the students the church roots that this place rests in," said Schellenberg.

A seminar room, classroom and offices for student support services are also found on the mezzanine.

"We had to work with Heritage Canada on the construction of this project," explained Schellenberg. "The north campus building is a heritage building and therefore we cannot obstruct the view from the corner of Grant and Shaftesbury."

Environmental sustainability has always been integral to the building project.

"We were disappointed when we learned that geothermal did not make sense for this project, but we were able to include many environmentally conscious and energy-saving initiatives in the construction," Schellenberg said. "A large naturalized retention pond has been constructed on the grounds. Over 100 trees have been planted, with plans to plant more fruit trees."

Marpeck Commons was built at a cost of \$14.4 million. To date, \$13.3 million has been raised.

"Not a penny of that has come from any level of government," said Schellenberg. "We knew that much of the fundraising would rest primarily on a volunteer campaign cabinet and we knew the cabinet needed to be chaired by Elmer Hildebrand. He has been incredible, unrelenting and committed in his own unique and humble way."

Marpeck Commons will be fully functioning on Jan. 6. ❧

Thanks for Helping Us Celebrate 45 Years of Value Added Travel

In 2015, come with us to Alaska, Australia/
New Zealand, Cuba, Europe, Hawaii, Haiti, the Holy Land, Kenya/
Tanzania, Mexico, Russia/ Ukraine, South America, Uzbekistan, and more.
Or choose 1 of 4 North American Mennonite heritage tours before or after MWC.

Book your life-changing journey today!
(800) 565-0451 | office@tourmagination.com
www.tourmagination.com

TK0450014322

35 20

20 under 35

Young Professionals
Changing the World

MEDA CONGRATULATES THESE HONOREES

A. Leveille, Langley, BC	B. Landis, Strasburg, PA	M. Haile, Washington, DC
A. Soeder, Elmira, ON	C. Steingart, Kitchener, ON	N. Graber-Alvarez, Chicago, IL
A. Derstine, Souderton, PA	D. Penner, Harper, KS	P. Miller, Champaign, IL
A. Thomas, New York, NY	G. North, Lancaster, PA	R. Classen, Baltimore, MD
	H. Weaver, Goshen, IN	S. Hackman, Souderton, PA
	J. Horst, Kitchener, ON	S. Vercillo, London, ON
	J. Coleman, Lancaster, PA	T. Myer, New Hamburg, ON
	L. Steiner, Kidron, OH	W. Delp, Baltimore, MD

Mennonite Economic Development Associates

creating business solutions to poverty 20under35.com | 1.800.665.7026

RJC envisions a bigger, better school

Board unveils five-year strategic plan

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

“Do more. Be more.” These words sound a little like the mantra of a motivational speaker. They are, in fact, the name given to a new five-year strategic fundraising plan for Rosthern Junior College (RJC). The plan includes the ambitious goal of raising \$1.5 million to be allocated toward three clearly defined strategies:

- **GROW STUDENT** enrolment
- **DEVELOP AND** enhance the facility
- **ENRICH STUDENT** programming

Encouraged by increased student enrolment and a projected budget surplus, board chair Tammy Forrester and vice-chair Peter Hooge unveiled the plan at the school's corporation meeting and again at a fundraising and appreciation dinner. Both events were held at the school on Nov. 22.

“As a board, we look forward to the path that we are walking with enthusiasm and interest,” said Forrester in her report to the corporation. “[We know] that it will not be easy nor straight, but the rewards for RJC in the end will be worth the road taken.”

RJC student council representatives presented the board with its first donation toward the “Do more. Be more” campaign: a cheque on behalf of the student body for \$5,000.

No strangers to doing more and being more, the three featured speakers at this year's banquet, all with connections to RJC, were each named to CBC Saskatchewan's Future 40 List, which identifies men and women under 40 years of age who are making a difference in their communities. Using a late night television talk show format, dubbed “Menno-Nite Late Night,” teacher Ryan Wood interviewed the three guests:

• **MATT LOVE** served as dean of boys at RJC from 2004-09. At Saskatoon's Aden Bowman Collegiate, where he currently teaches and coaches football, Love coordinates a program for Grade 9 students called Collective Voice. The program integrates English, social studies and arts education with a focus on social justice issues at local and global levels. As students learn about first nations and other cultures in their community, and issues related to racism and oppression that these groups face, they report on what they are learning via a weekly radio broadcast, which airs on Saskatoon's community radio station, CFCR.

• **TOM REGIER**, who graduated from RJC in 1995, has been a scientist with the Canadian Light Source at the University of Saskatchewan since 2009. Canadian Light Source is this country's only centre

for synchrotron particle-acceleration research and Regier operates one of its most successful “beamlines.” Confessing that he was “kicked out of physics class” while a student at RJC, Regier went on to earn his Ph.D. in physics from the University of Saskatchewan while working at Canadian Light Source.

• **DEEANN MERCIER** also attended RJC, graduating in 2003. Her claim to the Future 40 title comes as a result of her work as communications and public relations coordinator for Lighthouse Supported Living, which offers emergency shelter, assisted living and affordable housing for those who need it. Through the Up Capital Campaign, which Mercier coordinated, Lighthouse raised \$4 million in 11 months for improvements to facilities and services. Through her involvement with the Plan to End Homelessness and Poverty Awareness Week, Mercier has become an outspoken advocate for the people served by Lighthouse.

More than 200 supporters braved wintery weather to attend the dinner, bid on a variety of silent and live auction items, enjoy the musical stylings of siblings Leah and Philip Klaassen, and be inspired to do more, be more and give more on behalf of the school. ☘

‘Do more. Be more.’ These words sound a little like the mantra of a motivational speaker.



Rosthern Junior College student council representatives Kelsey Dueck, left, Kylee Kosokowsky, Joseph Hachachena, Kelsi Siemens and Brandon Janzen hold up a \$5,000 cheque to kick off the school's five-year 'Do more. Be more' fundraising campaign.

German services come to an end at First Mennonite

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
CALGARY

Fond memories and deep gratitude mixed with feelings of loss as the last German worship service was held at First Mennonite Church in Calgary on Nov. 9. After 68 years of holding a regular German service, a dwindling population of German congregants and difficulties in finding preachers made the continuation of the services too difficult.

Thirty people braved icy roads to attend the final service. As snow fell outside, the small congregation sang hymns from the *Gesangbuch Der Mennoniten* and listened to speakers share Scripture, memories and stories.

Pastor Ed Kauffman said that at First Mennonite the German language has been “about more than just words and grammar. . . . Closing this chapter is a loss for you. It may be the only remaining place where you get to hear and speak the language that is most comfortable to you. . . . Today we end this chapter. . . . But as we end this chapter, we recognize that the book is still being written.”

Looking back

The beginnings of First Mennonite coincided with the Depression in the 1930s, when recently immigrated Russian Mennonite farmers struggled to make a living. Many of the young women from these communities found work in the city as domestic help. *Maedchen Heim* homes for these women were formed, and the Mennonite conferences of the day were asked to send ministers, mostly from Didsbury, Alta., to lead worship services.

In 1944, the number of young Mennonite women and families in the city warranted a more formal organization. Pastor J.J. Sawatzky from Didsbury was asked to move to Calgary and the old Scarborough United Church building was purchased.

On May 29, 1946, the church was officially organized, with 27 founding

members signing the constitution. Two years later, more immigrants began to arrive from Europe, bringing a second wave of German speakers into the church.

With the arrival of immigrants from Russia, Germany, and later Paraguay, a trend towards English was reversed, as some felt that without the German language, Mennonites would not survive. In 1953, a Saturday German School began. Worship services continued to be mainly in German.

The language, however, was a problem for members who had come to the city from rural churches that were already switching to English. In 1963-64, a number of people left the church, largely because of language issues, and formed an English congregation that would eventually become Foothills Mennonite.

In 1969, a decision was made to hold two services each Sunday, the first in German and the second in English.

Looking forward

Although there will be no more regular services in German, the language continues to be important to many people at First Mennonite.

Jake Wiebe served as pastor from 1967-93 and often spoke at the German services. “[German] is still significant,” he said. “We often sing and pray in German in the hospital.” He added, though, that “language is not the important thing. It is your relationship with the Lord that is most important, no matter what language you use.”

After the German and English services on Nov. 9, the congregation gathered for a potluck lunch and a short program at which more memories and stories were shared. While German speakers will miss the services, the feeling at the service was upbeat and hopeful as congregants look to the future.

Kauffman summed the situation up, saying, “We may not know what that future is, but we trust God to guide us as we move into that future.” ☘



Charlotte Wiehler, left, poses with her friend Dora Janssen, and Pastor Ed Kauffman. At 96, Wiehler is the oldest member of Calgary First Mennonite Church, and clearly recalls the early days of the church. In 1957, at the first Christmas concert ever held in the Richmond Road building, her six-year-old son's fake beard caught on fire. She remembers that the fire was immediately put out and when Heinrich Bartel gave her son a dollar, he recovered quickly!

Same-sex marriage debate creates online conversation

BY BARB DRAPER

Canadian Mennonite

Lively debate and online conversation brought many viewers to the websites of Mennonite publications in the month of November.

On Nov. 6, *The Mennonite* website carried “An open letter to my beloved church,” written by a 96-year-old Mennonite pastor and missionary explaining why he decided to preside over the marriage ceremony of his gay son and his long-time partner.

This story was widely shared on Facebook. By the end of the month, there were close to 200,000 views on *The Mennonite’s* website, with many more comments than the website ever experienced before. The debate was animated, with lots of disagreement about whether Wenger and the Lancaster Conference did the right thing.

Mennonite World Review (MWR) also

*‘[H]omosexual actions are sinful and we should not attempt to craft a more inclusive definition of Christian marriage.’
(Jewel [Wenger] and Richard Showalter)*

Chester Wenger explained that when he informed the leadership of Lancaster Conference, part of Mennonite Church U.S.A., of his actions, they listened respectfully, but felt they had no course of action except to terminate his ministerial credentials. Wenger understood why they did so and said he was “at peace” with their decision.

On the same day, the story appeared on Lancaster Online, a news website for Lancaster County, Pa.

got involved in the conversation. On Nov. 10, its website carried the story about why Wenger lost his credentials and on Nov. 14 added “An open letter to the Mennonite family,” written by Wenger’s daughter and son-in-law, Jewel (Wenger) and Richard Showalter. While this letter called for compassion for gays and lesbians, they declared that “homosexual actions are sinful and we should not attempt to craft a more inclusive definition of Christian marriage.” This

posting also had many more comments and replies than usual.

Meanwhile, the *Canadian Mennonite* website posted the Wenger letter on Nov. 11 and the Showalter letter on Nov. 15, attracting a few comments, but nothing compared to those on the U.S. websites. ☺



To view the letters, visit canadianmennonite.org/articles/open-letter-my-beloved-church and canadianmennonite.org/articles/open-letter-mennonite-family.

☺ Briefly noted

MC Eastern Canada churches ‘ReLearn Community’

Ten Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregations have embarked on a two-year process to “ReLearn” how to be communities of disciples who enter into their surrounding communities to invite others to be disciples of Jesus as well. Overseen by the area church’s Executive Council, teams from the congregations met in October with 3DM, a discipleship-building organization from Sheffield, England. Former Mennonite Central Committee Binational executive director Arli Klassen, who has been contracted in a part-time role to oversee “ReLearning Community,” notes that England is deeper into a post-Christendom culture than Canada, with the resultant antipathy towards the organized church. Congregations were invited to this first cohort phase based on their previous connections with, or knowledge of, 3DM, or their previous work to rethink church in Canada’s changing culture. Klassen says that “ReLearning Community” is not a cookie-cutter program, but one that requires congregations to think about their own strengths, weaknesses and the community around them, as they develop plans to become better communities of disciples who then reach out into their communities to invite more people to become disciples of Jesus.

—By Dave Rogalsky

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRUSSELS MENNONITE CHURCH



Ken Gazley, right, was installed as minister of Brussels Mennonite Church, Ont., on Oct. 19. Also pictured: Mennonite Church Eastern Canada regional minister Linda Brnjas and congregational chair Ross Hemmingway.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Peace brings local community together

Peace Prayer Walk invites Christians with differing perspectives on war and pacifism to find common ground

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

“Regardless of our perspectives on ‘just war’ and pacifism, as Christians we are all united in our desire for peace and justice in our community and around the world,” says Michael Pahl

PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL PAHL



Participants pause by the Morden, Man., cenotaph to offer prayers concerning civil justice during their Peace Prayer Walk on Nov. 9. Michael Pahl, who came up with the idea for the walk, is pictured facing the camera with white papers in his hand.

of his idea to hold an annual Peace Prayer Walk in Morden, Man., last year. “This prayer walk is an opportunity to put our feet and mouths where our hearts are, to reflect on the need for peace in the world and to pray for peace together.”

Pahl, having just begun his ministry at Morden Mennonite in 2013, proposed the idea of a peace walk to the local ministerial last year and was surprised and grateful that the idea was well received. He also brought the proposal to the local Legion and found strong support for it there.

“As a matter of fact, the Legion invited the ministers to come to a dinner last year at the Legion the night before the [inaugural] prayer walk,” said Pahl. “We all want peace. We have different ideas about how to achieve peace, but we all desire peace.”

This year, approximately 50 people from several Morden churches participated in the community’s second-annual Peace Prayer Walk on Nov. 9. They walked to several locations around the town. They paused to reflect and pray about issues of peace and justice; at the court house, the Bible readings and prayers focussed on civil justice. Each stop concluded with a song.

All participants were given the Mennonite Central Committee button stating, “To remember is to work for peace,” and a handmade clay dove to carry with them throughout the walk as tangible symbols of peace.

The hour-long Peace Prayer Walk made its last stop at Morden Mennonite, where participants gathered for hot chocolate and fellowship.

Holding the Peace Prayer Walk on the Sunday before Remembrance Day “allows

us to draw on this [peace] tradition and also to respect the community services on Remembrance Day itself,” said Pahl. “We want this to be something that brings us together for peace, not something that divides us.” ☸

PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD



On Nov. 11, Shafiya Khawaja enthusiastically carried a candle for peace and posed in front of a statue of Gandhi during the fifth annual Remembrance Day Prayer Service and Prayer Walk for Peace, sponsored by the Edmonton Ecumenical Peace Network and Mennonite Central Committee Alberta. The prayer service, held at McDougall United Church, was followed by a one-hour walk to city hall, the Gandhi statue at the Stanley Milner Library, Canada Place and the war memorial on Jasper Avenue. The event included Mennonites, Anglicans, Catholics, Quakers, the United Church, Muslims and others. The Muslim Association of Canada provided hot chocolate and snacks for a fellowship and warm-up time after the walk.

VIEWPOINT

MCC Manitoba stands with Buffalo Gals

Anniversary event postponed because of smudging controversy

WILL BRAUN
SENIOR WRITER

The landmark event was intended, in part, to promote reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous Peoples. That goal will likely be achieved to a far greater extent than organizers ever imagined, but the path will be circuitous and theologically bumpy.

The 50th-anniversary celebration for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba was to include 1,200 guests, 300 participants, three choirs, a keynote address by former prime minister Joe Clark, and a hoped-for \$100,000 in donations.

And it was to include the Buffalo Gals, an indigenous drum group based out of Winnipeg's North End Women's Centre. Their involvement was to be woven into the choral music, including as part of an original piece combining hymns and indigenous songs.

Their inclusion was to reflect the fact that "a very big part of MCC's history is relating to marginalized people," said Ron Janzen, MCC Manitoba's executive director. It would have also reflected the fact that indigenous relations was one theme of the Nov. 15 event. Clark, an honorary witness of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, had planned to speak about indigenous matters among other topics.

But just days before the event, MCC Manitoba called it off. As reported in the local and national media, the rented venue, Immanuel Pentecostal Church in Winnipeg, would not allow the Buffalo Gals to conduct their private smudging

ceremony on church property.

As Janzen openly admitted, organizers never thought to double check that the smudge would be allowed until the week of the event. A last-minute scramble to find another venue failed.

Janzen said the decision to postpone the event was very difficult in terms of complications and costs, but not difficult in terms of knowing what needed to happen. The drum group was integral both to the musical performances and the spirit of the event. Janzen said consensus emerged quickly among the participants, including Clark, that the show could not go on without the Buffalo Gals.

MCC Manitoba has gone out of its way to take responsibility for the kerfuffle and to avoid pointing fingers at the church. Janzen attended Immanuel Pentecostal the following Sunday and was introduced to warm applause. He is hoping to sit down with church pastors in due course.

In an e-mail to *Canadian Mennonite*, Pastor Scott Bullerwell said he has agreed to such a meeting, and his church bears "no ill feelings" toward MCC.

Jaki Skye, who oversees the drum group for North End Women's Centre and participates in the group, said, "We hold no ill will toward the Pentecostal church." A member of the group is willing to meet with representatives of the church to make things right.

The incident raises questions:

- **ARE SMUDGING** and Christianity compatible?
- **HOW DO** we Christians deal with the impulse, or imperative, within Christianity that says, "We are right,

others are wrong, and those others should be more like us"?

- **HOW DO** we contribute to healing the brutal scars of Indian Residential Schools and address the legacy of marginalization faced by Canada's Indigenous Peoples?

Bullerwell said, "Christianity and native spirituality are incompatible," as a number of Christian indigenous people have "solidly affirmed" recently. Many Mennonites would agree. Some would say practices like smudging and drumming are not of God and don't belong anywhere near a church.

MCC organizers see it differently.

First, Janzen said MCC's intent was never to send a message about forms of spiritual practice. The intent was to "reach across social barriers" and "express the need for relationship and community," allowing invited guests to observe their customs.

The smudging was not part of the event itself, but something the drum group does on its own before singing. MCC was comfortable with that.

Janzen is not alone. Skye said the Buffalo Gals have been invited into many churches over their 10-year history. Janzen estimated that of the considerable phone and e-mail responses MCC has received about this incident, 75 percent are in favour of MCC's decision.

Smudging was part of Mennonite Church Canada's Native Assembly this past summer, and numerous indigenous Christians—though not all, as Bullerwell notes—practise it.

Smudging involves a leader lighting a sort of incense—most commonly dried sage—in a shell or stone bowl, and then taking it around the circle or room, pausing silently in front of each person. One by one those people quietly gather a bit of the smoke in their hands and draw it over their head and body a few times. It is usually at the beginning of an event or gathering.

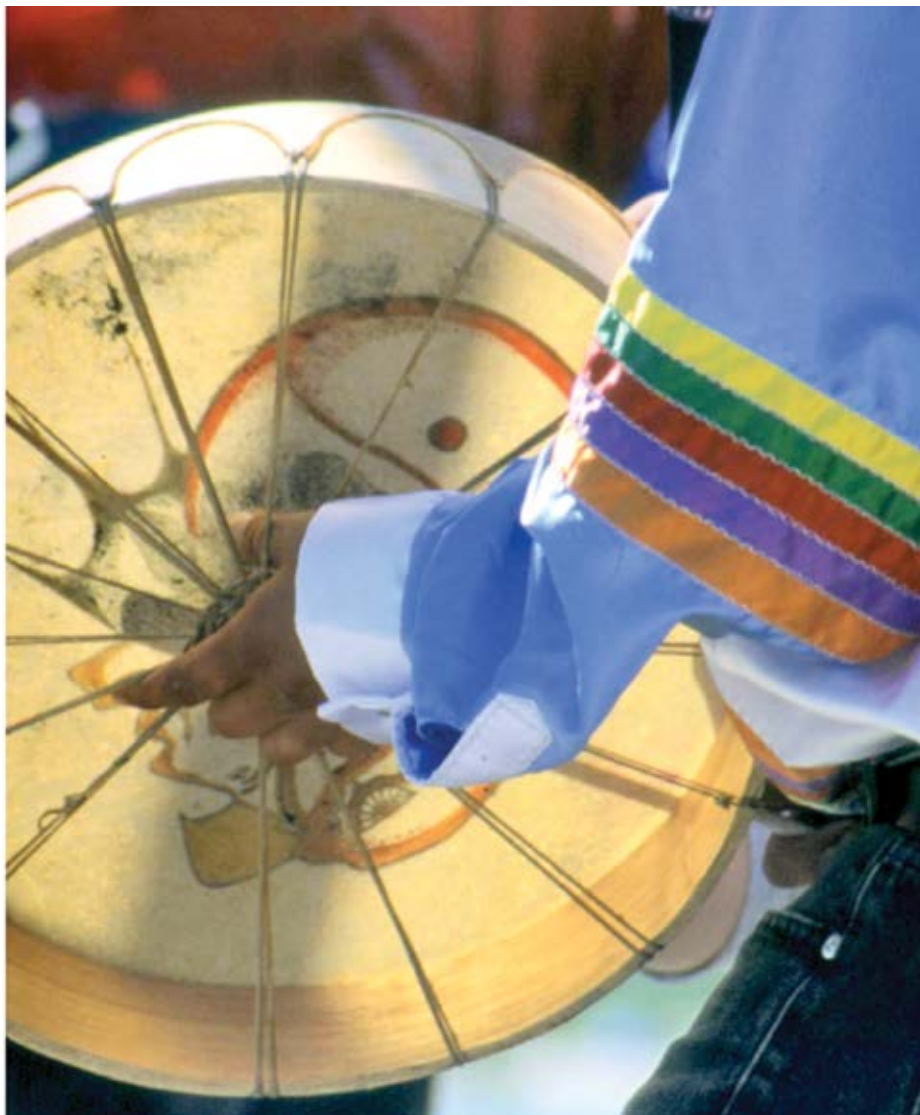
It is meant to calm participants, clear their minds and hearts of negativity, and focus them on doing things in a good way. It's hard to imagine God being displeased with that.

But western Christianity has



Ron Janzen

PHOTO BY WILL BRAUN



'It seems to me that a generosity of spirit is at the heart of both Christian and Canadian aboriginal beliefs, so there should be a strong mutual interest in demonstrating mutual respect.'
(Former prime minister Joe Clark)

traditionally been wary of anything that might be associated with other belief systems or cultures. There is a strong impulse to differentiate ourselves and to label certain practices as wrong or evil. That impulse, in its starkest form, says Jesus is the only way; the rest go to hell. The good news comes with corollary bad news. Very bad news. Not all Mennonites believe that, but those who do can muster considerable biblical backing.

Bullerwell does not speak in such blunt terms, but he did say, "The message of Christ will be bothersome to some and I cannot assuage the pain, grief or angst it might cause," adding that a Christian's calling is to "mediate the love of Christ with the life-changing force of the gospel."

The matter is complicated by cultural lenses. We white Christians tend to unknowingly associate Christianity with our

music, our language, our order of service, our potluck casseroles. It's what we know. And it's okay, as long as we recognize that an abalone shell cradling a smouldering bundle of sage is probably just as close to Jesus' cultural experience of faith as shiny stackable trays of tiny juice cups passed along rows of pews while an organ plays hymns in a church with pointy-topped windows. After all, Jesus was more brown than white.

At times, Christians have shared good news in gentle, humble ways, but too often we have cared more about strictures than reaching out to marginalized people and understanding the least of these. We have left a wake of hurt throughout the land and throughout history. That should give us pause.

How, we might ask, can we contribute to healing and reconciliation if our starting point is that the preferred forms of healing for many indigenous people are evil? What exactly is the good news we bring?

"The fact that MCC Manitoba stood with us was huge," said Skye. "We are very grateful. . . . It means a lot."

Was MCC serving in the name of Christ by standing with the Buffalo Gals—some of whom are residential school survivors—or just the opposite?

Clark said in an e-mail: "It seems to me that a generosity of spirit is at the heart of both Christian and Canadian aboriginal beliefs, so there should be a strong mutual interest in demonstrating mutual respect. That is unusually important in this time when there is such a clear need to restore the respectful partnership that was established historically between Canada's original people and the settlers who have come here over centuries."

MCC Manitoba is working on a new date and Clark said he looks forward to participating. When that day comes, I'm sure he will receive a warm welcome from the audience. But I expect the warmer reception will come when the Buffalo Gals step onto the stage.

As Skye said, "Things happen for a reason." ☛



For more, visit
canadianmennonite.org/smudging.

MEDA builds human dignity through entrepreneurship

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

WINNIPEG

More than 500 Christian businessmen and women from a half-dozen countries converged at the corner of Portage and Main in Winnipeg for four days in early November. There, in the shadow of the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights, participants attending the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) annual convention learned about human rights and “human dignity through entrepreneurship.”

While human rights have always been a core value of MEDA, “every convention sets the bar a little higher,” said Allan Sauder, president, adding, “This theme hit a chord with so many people. Human rights is always a factor in choosing and

shaping sustainable programs that will have meaningful impact at a personal level, often for women, youth and those disadvantaged in their societies.”

Plenary speakers included Art DeFehr, chief executive officer of Palliser Furniture, and Stephanie Stobbe, who came to Canada as a refugee from Laos when she was seven years old and is now associate professor in conflict resolution studies at Menno Simons College, Winnipeg. Together, they offered “a business case for human rights.”

After carefully examining such questions as, “Does practising human rights lead to success in business?” and, “Are human rights consistent with biblical teachings?”

they offered no black and white conclusions, but determined there is still lots of work to be done. People need to focus on issues close to home, where they can actually do something, they said.

On Nov. 7, participants were treated to a visit to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, where two exhibits were opened for them. In this setting, Ziauddin Yousafzai spoke about human dignity for children and women. The educator, human rights campaigner, social activist and father of Nobel Peace Prize-winner Malala, said that, although the Taliban stirred up fear and violence in Pakistan, he, at great personal risk, peacefully resisted the Taliban’s efforts to shut down schools and kept his own school open. He also inspired Malala to stand up for the right of all children to an education. Following the attack in which Malala was shot in the face while riding a school bus, Yousafzai didn’t chose hatred or revenge, but forgiveness, for the attackers.

He shared stories of how, in his own country where 57 million children are out

Grebel students win 2014 MEDA Business Case Competition

BY FRED MARTIN

Conrad Grebel University College

In only its second year of competition, a Conrad Grebel University College student team won the Business Case Competition at the annual Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) convention, held this year in Winnipeg on Nov. 8.

The team, headed up by fourth-year student Jono Cullar, an international development major, beat out five teams from other Mennonite colleges and universities from across North America.

“Our team was well rounded in our academic programs,” said Jono. “Not only did we have students in business and arts, but peace and conflict studies, accounting,

and environment and business.”

This was a broader skill set than other teams, comprising primarily business students.

This year’s case competition was an actual MEDA project called Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) in Ghana that is working to empower women in soy bean production. With a month to prepare, each team was asked to provide analysis and recommendations on MEDA’s partnership with five local non-governmental organizations.

In its presentation, the Grebel team told a story through the voice of an entrepreneurial Ghanaian woman to make it personal.

“But we also backed the presentation with a lot of research,” said Jono.

“I’m so proud of these students,” remarked Grebel president Susan Schultz Huxman, who watched the university teams compete. “The competition is a wonderful way to expose students to the good work of MEDA. The foursome really articulated a smart, inspiring plan to help make the world a better place!”

Expenses for the team’s registration and travel were supported by the Waterloo MEDA chapter, a donation from Murray and Yvonne Martin, and donations to the annual Grebel Fund.



PHOTO BY FRED MARTIN

Grebel’s winning Business Case Competition team included, from left to right: Elliot Parke, Anneke Pries-Klassen, Jono Cullar and Sarah Steiner.

of school and many work in sweatshops, entrepreneurship can be a vehicle through which the dignity of women, children and men can be restored.

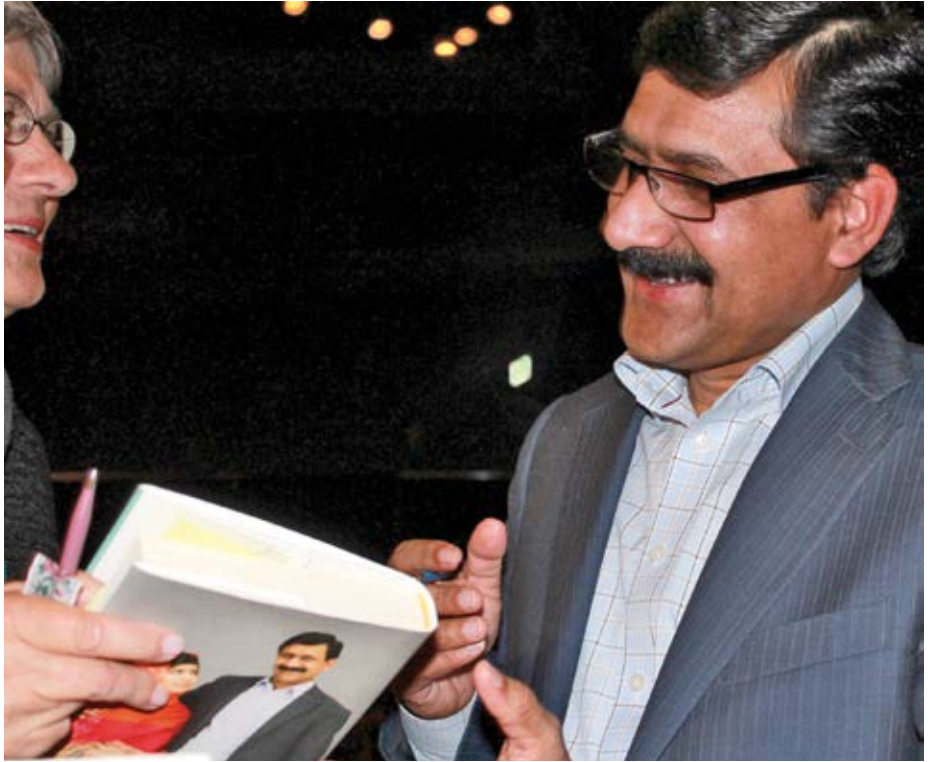
His own entrepreneurship is one such story. He said he wanted to be a teacher, but was unable to get a teaching job, so “in 1994, with three students, I and my friend started our own school. Today, we have more than 1,000 students.”

“In many societies, women are ignored, treated as property, abused and sometimes even killed in the name of honour. Attitudes can change through education,” he said. “My five sisters could not go to school. I wanted my school to be different. I wanted to change the attitude of men to their sisters and mothers.”

On Nov. 8, Laura Ling, award-winning journalist and author, told her story of being arrested and held captive in North Korea for 140 days in 2009. She was reporting on the trafficking of North Korean women at the time of her arrest. She said that this “darkest period of my life” taught her how to hold on to hope. “Seeing each day as a precious treasure, an opportunity to make a difference,” she said she would treat her guards with compassion and grace. She believes this “practice of intentional gratitude” gave her the hope she needed and can also empower her to continue to be a voice for human dignity.

Jim Miller, president of JMX Brands, which is recognized as one of the top 1,000 Internet retailers in the U.S., used the story of the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet with costly perfume as an example of giving. “Gifts bring depth to the relationship, but the power of the gift is unleashed only if it is shared for the good of the whole community,” he said, adding, “Gift giving and receiving is at the very heart of God’s story. Our faith compels us to share with those around us and we are inspired to work harder for the good of others.”

Trudy Dueck, a businesswoman from Arborg, Man., was grateful to attend the convention. “Often you feel there is no place for business in the church,” she said. “Here it is great to be amongst like-minded people and to have the recognition that business too can be a calling.” ❧



Ziauddin Yousafzai autographs his daughter's book, I am Malala, after addressing the MEDA convention at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.



Master of Peace and Conflict Studies

A vibrant, interdisciplinary academic program that seeks to empower students with knowledge and skills for nonviolent peacebuilding.

CONTRIBUTE TO PEACEFUL CHANGE

MPACS places a unique focus on the pivotal role individuals within civil society play as catalysts for peace. Combining rigorous interdisciplinary scholarship with practical application, the program provides scholars and practitioners with tools to understand conflict and contribute to peaceful transformation. Be part of a unique community learning environment while taking advantage of research specialties at the University of Waterloo, one of Canada’s premier universities.

Also housed at Conrad Grebel, the Mennonite Savings and Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement brings together bold partners from the business, government, church, civil society, and academic sectors.

**APPLY
NOW**

Application
deadline
February 1, 2015



Conrad Grebel
University College

uwaterloo.ca/mpacs



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

MDS PHOTO BY PAUL HUNT / TEXT BY NICK HAMM



Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) executive director Kevin King, centre, presents Martin Durksen, MDS Ontario chair, and Nick Hamm with MDS watches as tokens of appreciation for the leadership given to the Staten Island, N.Y., response following Hurricane Sandy that battered the U.S. East Coast in October 2012. The MDS Ontario Unit partnered with the MDS New York Unit from February 2013 to August 2014, during which time 1,150 volunteers—mostly Canadians—helped 80 families return to their homes on Staten Island. The project is now officially completed.

MCC PHOTO BY KRIZ CRUZADO



One year after Typhoon Haiyan destroyed the house of Dominga Arias in the Philippines, the 50-year-old widow and mother of three has a new home with a more spacious bedroom. The simple wood structure with a tin roof was built by combining wood from her old house with a shelter kit of new wood, tin roofing, rebar and building supplies provided by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) through Church World Service and its partners. By the end of September, the Arias family was one of 5,076 that had received new shelter kits, financed through the \$4.3 million in donations given to MCC after the Nov. 8, 2013, typhoon devastated large swaths of the central Philippines.

God at work in the World Snapshots

PHOTO BY MARY KOOP / TEXT BY MARIA H. KLASSEN



The Niagara chapter of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) met for breakfast and a farm tour recently. After breakfast at the Grand Oak Culinary Market in Vineland, Ont., where David Brubacher and Alf Redekopp talked about several of MEDA's innovative projects, the group then drove to Chris and Laura Mullet Koop's egg farm to see the innovations that have taken place there, including the first Meller® cage system for laying chickens in Canada. The group is pictured in biosecurity suits necessary for visiting the barns.

ARTBEAT

Old hymns get new arrangements

Carla Klassen of Ottawa Mennonite Church undertakes year-long 'Hymn Project'

BY JANICE SCHROEDER

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
OTTAWA

“Whatever you believe, there is something about the way words and music combine that allows us to see beauty, find comfort and connect with history.”

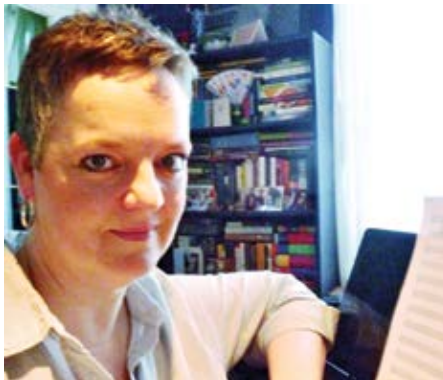
This is the essence of the “Hymn Project,” a new blog by Carla Klassen. Each week Klassen composes a new piano arrangement of an old hymn and uploads a recording of it to her blog (www.thehymnproject.net/). These are accompanied by a note with reflections on the text of the hymn, its history, and the hope and inspiration it brings to her and others. She plans to post a new arrangement every week for a year.

Klassen, a member of Ottawa Mennonite Church, is a piano teacher, professional chorister and church musician. She sings with the Ottawa Bach Choir, which toured in Europe last summer, performing in several of the churches Bach played in. She was inspired to start the blog after learning that Bach wrote a new cantata every week over a period of about three years for his church in Leipzig, an astounding creative feat.

“I wish we knew what went on in his mind, how he managed everything—how he slept!” says Klassen. “I find even with my very short arrangements, I’m thinking about this project every day.”

Klassen began last spring by asking friends and family to contribute the names of favourite hymns without revealing her purpose. Some of the hymns she has posted since starting the blog in September include “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” “Dona Nobis Pacem,” and “This Little Light of Mine.”

She starts by composing the music, then, after the hymn is arranged, she writes the blog note, often including stories or comments she has received from the person who



Carla Klassen of Ottawa Mennonite Church has undertaken the ‘Hymn Project,’ a year-long endeavour to write new arrangements weekly for old hymns.

suggested the hymn, and whatever background information she can find about it.

“Often, these hymns start to reflect or relate to something that’s happened recently,” says Klassen. The blog post for “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy” was posted for Peace Sunday, shortly after the Parliament Hill shootings in downtown Ottawa, both of

which Klassen referred to in her blog note.

The hymn posted on Thanksgiving weekend was “Now Thank We All Our God—Nun danke alle Gott,” with a note that the hymn was written in the 1630s by a Lutheran minister in Saxony who sheltered victims of famine and disease at the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War. The tune, attributed to Johan Crüger, was used by Bach in several of his cantatas, and harmonized by Mendelssohn. Klassen says she admitted to feeling some “trepidation” about approaching this august hymn, but she also writes that “it was inspiring to think that for almost 400 years this hymn has provided a reminder to be thankful even when perplexed.”

Klassen says her religious and spiritual life is “inseparable” from her work as a church musician and composer. The hymns that have been suggested to her by friends and family are a gift for her, “a treasure I must handle with care and a kind of devotion,” she says, adding, “These songs hold deep meaning for people that I may not always fully understand. On a couple of occasions I have found myself working on a hymn that I didn’t really care for all that much, only to discover something beautiful.”

Many such year-long projects that start out as blogs eventually blossom into other forms and formats. Klassen says she has already begun to receive requests to publish the blog as a book and CD, with meditations and sheet music included. For now, however, she is focussing on the hymns, one by one.

Those who sign up to the “Hymn Project” blog will receive a new hymn arrangement in their inbox or newsfeed every week. ❧

MENNONITE HERITAGE TOURS

Affiliated with the California Mennonite Historical Society

SEEING POLAND THROUGH MENNONITE EYES

June 12-24, 2015

Tour Leader: Alan Peters

THE MENNONITE PAST AND PRESENT IN NETHERLANDS AND BELGIUM

June 15 – June 26, 2015

Tour Leader: Paul Toews

www.calmenno.org
ptoews2000@yahoo.com
lnptrs@comcast.net



'Portraits of perseverance'

Karl Kessler and Sunshine Chen capture disappearing jobs in pictures and text

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

Karl Kessler and Sunshine Chen openly admit to being inspired by *Harvey Wang's New York*, a 1990 book of photographic "portraits of men and women in vanishing jobs and professions." Kessler and Chen decided that there

was ample material for a similar project in Waterloo Region. What developed over six years was "Portraits of perseverance," a show of more than 50 black-and-white portraits and profiles of women and men who have "outlived an era," in the words of Kessler, a member of Erb St. Mennonite Church in Waterloo. Chen frames each profile—on display in the City of Waterloo Museum at the Conestoga Mall until Jan. 30—with quotes from the subject of the photo.

Photos of rubber and garment workers, both once major Waterloo Region industries now shrunk to small plants with a few workers, are side by side with watch and typewriter repairmen; a shoemaker and urban farmer; a plasterer; the owner/operators of Budd's, an independent department store; and an independent corner store owner.

In profile after profile Kessler notes the ways in which the professions built or continue to build community. People drop by the corner store to catch up on gossip and leave without buying anything. The shoemaker speaks of how both rich and poor come to him to have their footwear repaired.

Several Mennonites show up in the series, including Aden Bauman of Elmira Mennonite Church, who is a watchmaker. Disabled, he trained in a profession that allowed him to work with just his hands, although a debilitating disease is hampering that now too. He began fixing watches when he was 21 and "retired" to a home shop 46 years later.

He told Chen and Kessler: "I went to Toronto to a school for handicapped boys. I wanted to be able to earn a living for myself, and I went down there and they had

PHOTO BY KARL KESSLER



Aden Bauman sits at his home work bench after retiring from 46 years of running a watch repair business. His photo and story are part of the 'Portraits of perseverance' project by Karl Kessler and Sunshine Chen.

What developed over six years was 'Portraits of perseverance,' a show of more than 50 black-and-white portraits and profiles of women and men who have 'outlived an era,' in the words of [Karl] Kessler.

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Photographer Karl Kessler of Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., stands in the City of Waterloo Museum at the Conestoga Mall, where his and Sunshine Chen's 'Portraits of Perseverance' are on display until Jan. 30.

different options, so that's what I got into. . . . I did alright. I survived, anyway. . . . I didn't want to go to the government for support. And I supported myself, and I got

/// Briefly noted

Rebecca, second book in the Ellie's People series, republished

The common conflict with parents over faith and whom to marry is the dominating theme in *Rebecca*, the second book in Ellie's People: An Amish Family Saga, a series by Mary Christner Borntreger. *Rebecca*, published by Herald Press, relaunched in early October. *Ellie*, the first book in the series, was republished in August, bringing back a collection written by Borntreger in the late 1980s and '90s. The newly released titles in the Ellie's People series have new covers and slight textual updates. Borntreger was raised in the farming community of Plain City, Ohio, the seventh in an Amish family of 10 children. The books are geared toward children aged 10 and up. More books in the series will be published throughout 2015. MennoMedia



married and had two boys, and I supported them too."

Like others, Bauman waxed philosophical when interviewed: "Time is going too fast. . . . I still remember who I sold my first two manual-wind watches to. And the first automatic watch that I ever sold."

One of Kessler's favourite subjects was Joe Kelly. As the one who keeps the mechanical town hall clock in Elmira running, he told Kessler: "We worry so much about tomorrow and we should just live in today. Tomorrow we'll have enough worries. Today is precious." //

CMU
CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY
cmu.ca

Arts • Science • Business • Music

Exemplary Academics
Faith-filled Community

Discover the Alternative

Mennonite Church Canada

**THIS CHRISTMAS
INVEST IN PEOPLE**

Download the e-Giving Guide or give online at
[donate.mennonitechurch.ca/
Christmas2014](http://donate.mennonitechurch.ca/Christmas2014)

Your church at work in the world.

PARAMOUNT PICTURES PHOTO



After travelling through a wormhole, Amelia Brand (Anne Hathaway) lands on a potentially habitable planet in Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*.

FILM REVIEW

No time to give up on Planet Earth

Interstellar.

Directed by Christopher Nolan. Written by Jonathan Nolan and Christopher Nolan. Starring Matthew McConaughey, Anne Hathaway and Michael Caine. A Paramount Pictures release, 2014. Rated PG-13.

REVIEWED BY VIC THIESSEN
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

“We’re not meant to save the world; we’re meant to leave it.” So says the protagonist of *Interstellar*, a grand science fiction epic from Christopher Nolan. One of Hollywood’s best ‘blockbuster’ directors (*Inception*, the Dark Knight trilogy), he has created the best film to come out of Hollywood this year. It may also be the most dangerous.

Set in the relatively near future, in a time when blight—standing in for global warming—is destroying crops and suffocating the earth’s human inhabitants, *Interstellar* asks whether it might be time to abandon our planet and start anew on some distant world in another galaxy.

Professor Brand (played by Michael Caine), one of earth’s leading scientists, believes the answer is yes. Working from a secret base in the Midwest, Brand has discovered a wormhole leading to another galaxy that might contain habitable

planets. A dozen single-piloted one-way ships have already been sent into the wormhole to explore some of these planets and three of the astronauts have sent back positive signals.

Now the professor just needs to find an experienced pilot to follow up while he figures out a way to get NASA’s self-sustaining space station to carry a large human population to those planets. The challenges to his dream seem insurmountable until the unexpected coincidental arrival of Cooper, a farmer, and his 10-year-old daughter, Murph (Matthew McConaughey and Mackenzie Foy).

It turns out that Cooper is one of the country’s best astronauts and Murph is a young scientific genius. Mysterious forces have led the pair to the secret base, but is Cooper, a widower, prepared to leave his two children so he can make a trip to the stars from which he may never return? And how will the passage of time during

his journey be affected by relativity? If Cooper returns, will Murph be his age by then or even older? And then there’s the unknown effects of the black hole that lies at the other end of the wormhole.

The science in *Interstellar*, especially as it relates to time, is not remotely convincing. But bad science is not the film’s worst problem. That honour goes to the film’s suggestion that we should use our scientific expertise and resources to find ways to leave our dying planet, instead of trying to save the wonderful world God has blessed us with.

I am a lifelong sci-fi fan—an original Trekkie—and love the idea of exploring “strange new worlds” and going “where no one has gone before.” But we humans, to whom God has given the task of being good stewards of creation, cannot give up on earth. On the contrary, we should be using all our resources, including our best minds, to combat global warming.

And instead of the countless sacrifices that would be required of us to start over on another planet, we should be making whatever lifestyle sacrifices are necessary—like ending our dependence on fossil fuels—to ensure our earth remains a place where our children and their children can thrive.

At the heart of what makes *Interstellar* a great film is its theme of love for our children, and the impact of separation and aging on that love. Indeed, the time paradoxes that make *Interstellar* virtually incomprehensible can only be resolved by viewing what the film calls “love” as a higher power akin to God that allows humanity to step out of its temporal limitations and keep surviving. God, otherwise, plays no part in the *Interstellar* universe, just as God played no part in Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which obviously influenced the Nolan brothers.

Watching *Interstellar* on the IMAX screen is an exhilarating experience I would recommend to all. If only the film had been willing to ask what resources God has given us to save our planet, instead of positing that we need to give up on earth and rely on more fanciful ideas like wormholes and time paradoxes to save us. ▮

MUSIC REVIEW

Rescue Junction: a pearl of great value

Band presents 'the gospel of Christ through the joyful news of bluegrass'

REVIEWED BY FRED MARTIN
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



Kyle Gerber says he didn't really appreciate bluegrass music until he and his family moved to the Goshen, Ind., area with the Gospel Echoes ministry, where he met up with Jay Lapp, the mandolin player from Steel Wheels, a first-rate bluegrass/roots band. Lapp not only taught him the finer points of mandolin picking, but introduced him to the rich bluegrass tradition.

Kyle and his sister Kaitlyn, who plays guitar, drank deeply from this well, and now with their band Rescue Junction from the Millbank, Ont., area, are re-invigorating the gospel bluegrass genre. The band also includes Roger Martin on banjo and Dallas Roth on upright bass, whose harmonies blend with the voices of the Gerber siblings.

After watching their first number at the Sound in the Land festival hosted by Conrad Grebel University College this past June, I knew this band was the real deal. Not only are their harmonies tight, the banjo and mandolin licks crisp, but their stage presence shows an appreciation for traditional bluegrass bands at their best. Using a single omni-directional microphone, band members move in and out to chime in on harmonies or take a lead instrumental.

Rescue Junction released their debut self-titled album in September 2011 and followed it up with their sophomore recording, *On Any Road*, both of which have been well received in the bluegrass and gospel communities, earning the band the title of "gospel group of the year" at the 2014 Central Canada Bluegrass Awards.

Their 2011 debut album starts out with a Stanley Brothers' tune, "Will He Wait a Little Longer," which clearly shows the influence of traditional bluegrass. But what is so fresh and exciting is the fact that Kaitlyn is writing well-crafted original tunes, like "Hammer in my Hand," that are rich and cleanly produced. They are not unlike the songs of another favourite musician of theirs, Gillian Welch, whose work they also cover seamlessly on both albums.

Their first two recordings are available for purchase online at www.rescuejunctionband.com. A third record, focussing on the theme of "home" is currently in the works. ❧

Fred W. Martin is a long-time bluegrass fan and a member of No Discernible Key, a roots band that will open for Rescue Junction at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's fundraising dinner on Feb. 26, 2015.



Theological Studies at Grebel draws on the College's academic strengths in theology, biblical studies, and church history.

» Theological Studies

This interdisciplinary graduate program prepares students for careers in pastoral ministry and chaplaincy, for advanced graduate studies in theology, and to integrate theology into vocation and service.



ALL CANADIAN STUDENTS RECEIVE

FULL TUITION SCHOLARSHIPS
WITH FALL REGISTRATION

APPLY NOW



Conrad Grebel
University College

grebel.ca/ts



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

PHOTO COURTESY OF CORA LYNN CAREY



Artbeat Snapshots

Bethany College in Hepburn, Sask., performed an adaptation of The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, C.S. Lewis's fifth instalment of The Narnia Chronicles, for nearly 1,300 patrons over five shows between Oct. 30 and Nov. 1. The character that audiences first meet was Eustace Clarence Scrubb, the very disagreeable cousin-turned-dragon (pictured), played by Derek Giesbrecht, who was entirely disagreeable and dragonishly endearing before being convincingly transformed at the play's end.

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Soloists Stephanie Kramer and Daniel Lichti, foreground, take a bow after singing Brahms' Ein Deutesches Requiem with the Mennonite Mass Choir at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Kitchener, Ont., on Nov. 15. The choir, an outreach of the Menno Singers, was backed by the Talisker Players, a Toronto-based collective. Lichti had suggested the Requiem to Peter Nikiforuk, conductor of the Mass Choir, to help celebrate his 40th year of singing professionally, including with the Mass Choir.

Promotional Supplement

Schools Directory featuring Mennonite Collegiate Institute

MCI's 'music man'

The life of any vibrant organization is the wonderful result of synchronous roles too numerous, and often too subtle, to be obvious to observers. The broad stroke of an architect's work is vivid to passers-by. One sees angles, materials and design features which lend to beauty and function.

It is a forgivable mistake, however, to think her day is spent simply drawing beautiful buildings. A closer look reveals a mountain of precise calculations, formulas, scales and codes accomplished by a team of skillful experts in their fields.

The work of music director Rick Heppner

Mueller has a similar dynamic. Mennonite Collegiate Institute's "music man" is frequently at centre stage of brilliant choral performance and musical theatre. He is as apparently comfortable conducting classical choral arrangements as he is contemporary jazz, hip-hop, hymns, folk or pop. His compositions are a staple component of MCI's chapel chorus repertoire.

In the spring of the year, Rick is in his familiar seat in direction of MCI's annual musical production. *Sound of Music*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Mikado*, *Les Mis* (replete with a revolving barricade) and *Pirates of Penzance* (a Rainbow Stage Award winner), the list goes on. There are 75 students in the cast; 25 more backstage on lights and sound, and costumes, hair and make-up. An additional handful of staff volunteers complete the team of MCI's music and theatre architect. The result is

often so skillful a performance that audiences forget it is high school theatre.

Next spring it will be *Beauty & the Beast*.



Rick Heppner Mueller

As each music student in Rick's 16-year career at MCI will attest, the beauty of performance is no simple thing. Rather, it is the result of hours of students' skill development in the tutelage of a master whose love for music and art is surpassed only by his love for students and the God who gathers them for another year of music and theatre at MCI.

Elementary/Secondary

Menno Simons Christian School
Integrating sound academic learning with growth in character, faith and service to God.
CALGARY, ALBERTA | www.mennosimonschristianschool.ca
An Education for Life!

MENNONITE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE
GRADES 7 -12
Experience Res. Life, Chores, Sports, Academics, & More!
www.mciblues.net
GRETNA, MB

Rosthern Junior College
Christian Day & Residence
HIGH SCHOOL (Grades 10-12)
Be Transformed
Accepting Applications
Second Semester 2014/15 or FALL 2015/16
For more information call 306-232-4222 or email admissions@rjc.sk.ca
www.rjc.sk.ca ROOTED IN FAITH GROWING THE FUTURE

FORMING FAITH... BUILDING CHARACTER
ROCKWAY MENNONITE COLLEGIATE
110 Doon Road | Kitchener | N2G 3C8
www.rockway.ca | 519-743-5209

...inspiring and empowering students to live as people of God
WESTGATE COLLEGIATE
www.westgatemennonite.ca

THE COLLABORATIVE
MBA
Bluffton University, Goshen College & Eastern Mennonite University
Together we can do more.
collaborativemba.org

COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE
Prepare to Make a Difference.
columbiabc.edu

CMU
CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY
cmu.ca
Arts • Science • Business • Music
Exemplary Academics
Faith-filled Community
Discover the Alternative

EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY
Harrisonburg, VA & online
emu.edu

GREBEL
Challenging Mind and Spirit
Hundreds of programs. Dozens of friends. One campus.
grebel.uwaterloo.ca

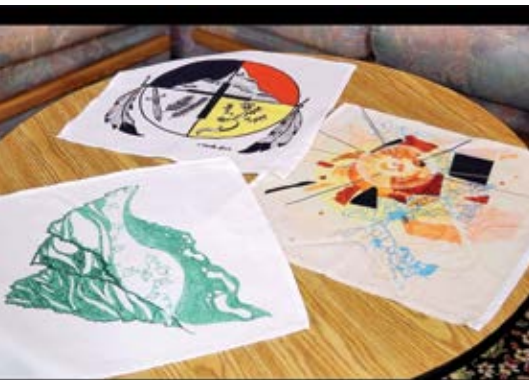
Inviting the whole family to the table

Manitoba young adults fundraise to bring Global South Mennonites to MWC assembly

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor
WINNIPEG

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MC MANITOBA



The three bread cloths that are being sold were designed by Lisa Obirek, Nicole Lea and Kayla Hiebert.



Megan Klassen-Wiebe

It's been 25 years since a Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly has been held in North America, but next year Mennonites from all over the world will congregate in Harrisburg, Pa.

Some Manitoba Mennonites want to take the opportunity to be good hosts. They wonder, what's the point of a family gathering if half the family can't make it?

A group of young adults from Mennonite Church Manitoba are fundraising to bring Mennonites from the Global South to the upcoming assembly who otherwise may not have the opportunity to come. They're calling it the Quarter Century Project.

Gerald Ens, 24, and Megan Klassen-Wiebe, 26, are leading the fundraising campaign, along with Kathy Giesbrecht, the associate director for leadership ministries at MC Manitoba.

Sharing the table

The fundraisers are selling three different versions of bread cloths with artistic designs printed on them. They can also be used as pieces of art.

"We picked bread cloths because they have a symbolic meaning, says Klassen-Wiebe, who attends Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. "They symbolize the sharing of bread, sharing the table with the Mennonite family around the world."

The bread cloths were designed by Kayla Thiessen from Steinbach, Man.; Lisa Obirek, a Canadian Mennonite University

student from Winnipeg; and Nicole Lea from Matheson Island, Man. For inspiration, they used Micah 4:1-5, which is one of the verses that will be used at next year's multinational assembly.

Thiessen's bread cloth shows people coming from all over the world to Jerusalem and God's Word emerging from that place. Obirek's shows three mountains to represent a Trinitarian God; in the verses, all creatures are welcomed to the mountain. Lea's shows a medicine wheel with a cross in the centre, because God binds all the nations of the world together.

The bread cloths cost \$15 each, but that only covers the cost of printing them. The organizers hope people will also give generously to MWC, to help low-income Mennonites get to the assembly.

Giesbrecht reached out to young adults in the summer to brainstorm fundraising ideas. She says her passion for supporting brothers and sister from the Global South began when she attended the MWC assembly in Winnipeg in 1990.

"That was the first time I had really seen the global Mennonite fellowship," she says. "I think it reminded me how important it is as churches who work with a peace understanding of the gospel, that we stand together."

"This is an opportunity for us to engage again," Giesbrecht says.

Taking steps toward unity

Their fundraising isn't just an effort to be

good North American hosts; it's also about taking concrete steps to foster community within the global church.

"For [MWC] to be a true representation of our church family around the world, we need people from other places to have diversity and to show us the true richness of our church family," says Klassen-Wiebe.

Ens, who attends Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, says the Mennonite church speaks about global unity as if saying it makes it true. "Such a unity needs to be claimed and received in a very concrete fashion, otherwise it ceases to exist," he says. "This is an opportunity to make that unity concrete."

Klassen-Wiebe, Ens and Giesbrecht are also visiting churches to raise awareness about their fundraising campaign as well as the challenges associated with travelling from the Global South to North America. Aside from difficulty paying the travel expenses, Mennonites hoping to attend the assembly may also face trouble acquiring visas or at the border.

So far, the Quarter Century Project fundraisers have sold about one-third of the bread cloths. They aren't sure how much money they have raised, though, because donations are sent directly to MWC.

Bread cloths can be purchased through MC Manitoba by calling 204-896-1616. ☘



Gerald Ens

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Different ways of doing church

Canadian Mennonites can learn from England's Urban Expression ministry

BY ELLERY PENNER

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

Early this past October, I sat with a cup of peppermint tea in a church in the small town of Cobridge, England. The church had four walls, long windows and high ceilings. In place of pews, however, I sat on a well-worn second-hand couch. As I looked around, I found toy boxes where the pulpit might be and family photos in place of an altar.

The smell of homemade pizza wafted from the kitchen, where our hosts were preparing a true feast for us that evening. Looking around that space, my mind began to open as I considered what a church looks like. Is this living room that I find myself in, in a complete stranger's home, truly church?

This was one of many questions that arose during a week-long learning excursion that eight young adults embarked upon, along with Jeff Steckley, Mennonite

Church Eastern Canada's congregational ministries minister. On Oct. 4, we caught a flight to London, to explore Urban Expression (UE), a ministry rooted in Anabaptist theology and focussed on bringing creative and relevant expressions of the Christian church in under-churched areas of the inner city.

In the fast-paced world we live in, churches are facing new realities and challenges. It can be hard to know how to respond, yet UE is rising to that task. Their teams are deeply dedicated to living out Jesus' teachings. UE values humility, creativity and relationship, and believes in the importance of community, hospitality and simple living. It sounded so familiar to me. Are these not the very same values that I've grown up with as a Mennonite?

Over the course of that week, we
(Continued on page 36)

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELLERY PENNER



Ellery Penner was one of eight young adults from Mennonite Church Eastern Canada who travelled to England this past October to learn about Urban Expression, an Anabaptist ministry focussed on bringing creative and relevant expressions of the Christian church to under-churched areas of the inner city.

GROUP PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEFF STECKLEY



Humpty Dumpty Club, a weekly music and playtime for toddlers and their parents, is one of the many avenues Urban Expression uses to connect with the local community.



The trip to England included a walking tour of Tower Hamlets, the original community in which Urban Expression is located.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NICOLE BLOCK



Nicole Block is a youth leader at Trinity Baptist Church in Kelowna, B.C.

(Continued from page 35)

were hosted by four different UE teams. Between the neighbourhood walking tours, where community gardens flourished and abandoned playgrounds showed signs of revitalization, to the meals of jellied eel and fresh baked bread shared around tables, and conversations about everything from church-planting to pottery, I made three distinct observations about UE:

- **THE SUCCESS** of church is not measured by the number of people who attend. Rather, it is measured by the quality of relationships that are formed. For UE, church is not just a place or a time; it is an expression to be lived out every day for those around us. Church can look like anything from cleaning the trash from alleyways and sharing community meals, to leading parenting seminars or rebuilding playgrounds.

- **FOOD AND** sharing meals are foundational to living out UE values. In the short time we spent with them, hospitality and generosity were most prominently expressed through food. Barriers broke down as we sat in cafés, kitchens and dining rooms.

“A theme that runs through all the different types of gathering is food,” UE founder Juliet Kilpin writes in her book *Urban to the Core*. “We have found that eating together and developing relationships and community seem to go hand in hand.” It was powerful to find such importance placed on something so easily

overlooked.

- **THOSE SERVING** with UE had a glow about them. Every person connected to UE exuded peace and joy. The work that UE does is not easy. The areas they live in are often overpopulated, ethnically and spiritually diverse, and economically disadvantaged, and their mission requires them to break out of comfort zones to extend love and forgiveness no matter how difficult. Despite the challenges, I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of love on us as visitors, and on the communities that these UE participants live in and serve.

I believe that there is much that Canadian Mennonites can learn from groups like UE. We already share common ground in our foundational values. Mutual beliefs in the tenets of Anabaptism bind us to groups like UE in powerful ways. Many of us are already hard at work, investing in our communities and finding ways to live out our Anabaptist beliefs.

Since my visit with UE, I have felt challenged to push myself further; seek new and creative ways to engage in the community I find myself in; expand my comfort zone; and to not just attend church, but to be church on a daily basis in some way, even if it is just over a cup of peppermint tea in the living room of a stranger. ☺

Ellery Penner, 23, lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., where she is a member of Niagara United Mennonite Church.

VIEWPOINT

Rocking in ‘Color’

Christian rock band from southern Manitoba forms connection with audiences of all ages

BY NICOLE BLOCK

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

As a youth group leader at Trinity Baptist Church in Kelowna, B.C., I know how difficult it can be

to capture young people’s imaginations. But when the Color, a Christian rock band, played for our youth group during

a recent event, the foursome quickly caught everyone's attention.

After they played their last song, lead singer Jordan Janzen gave a short talk promoting World Vision. Every youth's eyes were glued to him. Janzen asked people who were considering supporting a child to put up their hands, and the band members passed out pamphlets from World Vision. To my pleasant surprise, many of our youth put up their hands.

After I first saw the Color play for our youth, I saw the band perform again at the Canadian Youth Workers Conference in Kelowna, B.C., where they connected with young adults. It became apparent to me that the band is making an impact on not only children, but young adults as well. I thought they were unique, and being that they are fellow Mennonites, I asked them for an interview. They agreed.

Made up of Janzen, guitarists James Shiels and Larry Abrams, and drummer Tyler Martens, the Color hail from southern Manitoba. Janzen was a solo artist for six years before he started the band with Shiels in 2009. With Christian rock bands like Starfield and Tenth Avenue North as their inspiration, Janzen and Shiels began writing the songs that appear on the Color's 2012 self-titled debut album. Highlights on the 11-song CD include "Hailey," an acoustic ballad with beautiful harmonization and heartfelt lyrics that encourage listeners to be themselves.

A few months after the album's release, the band won three Gospel Music Association of Canada Covenant Awards, including New Artist of the Year. The Color have toured across western Canada in support of the disc, and spent two weeks in 2013 as the support act for acclaimed Christian singer-songwriter Tim Neufeld of Starfield. The band recently wrapped up their "One Sure Thing" headlining tour, which takes its name from a single the group released on iTunes this past July.

According to Janzen, along the way band members have learned that being in a band isn't just about making music, it's also about connecting with the audience.

The four have also overcome the hurdle of deciding who should be in the band,

and have settled on a line-up they are happy with. Being part of a band takes an immense amount of commitment, and finding a good dynamic between band members has been very important to them. It is clear that they were successful in finding this dynamic and commitment among the current members. On stage, one sees the light-hearted and sincere connection between the band mates. Each considers the band his second family.

This family dynamic is important to the players, who are often away from their real families.

"It is especially hard because two [of us] are married and two [of us] are engaged," Janzen says. "Being away from our wives and fiancées can be difficult."

Janzen and Shiels agree that being able to see the change they are making in people's lives with the Color's music makes it worth it. The band members have a true passion for sharing their music and spreading the Word of God. Both Janzen and Shiels have a history in youth ministry; one worked as a youth pastor, and the other worked as the director at a Bible camp.

It is clear that the Color know how to connect with young people. Do they ever feel a conflict between the desire for fame and staying grounded in their faith?

"We have been so fortunate with our family and supporters," Janzen says. "They have helped us so much, just being there and holding us accountable for staying strong in our faith."

Janzen, Shiels, Abrams and Martens have worked hard and are committed to making personal connections with the people who listen to their music.

When it comes down to it, the Color are four musicians who have a passion for serving God and making music. It was a pleasure getting to know them in Kelowna, and I wish them the best of luck with their work. ☞

Nicole Block, 21, is a fourth-year anthropology major at the University of British Columbia Okanagan. She grew up in Ladner, B.C., and is a member of Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, B.C.

BAND PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAMES SHIELS



Being in a touring rock band means being away from home, which can be difficult for members of the Color. Ultimately, connecting with audiences and sharing their faith with people across Canada makes it worth it.



Made up of four young men from southern Manitoba, the Color recently wrapped up their 'One Sure Thing' headlining tour, which takes its name from a single the band released on iTunes this past July.



The Color, a Christian rock band from southern Manitoba, connects with audiences of all ages.

Calendar

British Columbia

Jan. 17: "Life in the neighbourhood," a Forge Canada event with Karen Wilk,

at Level Ground Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Feb. 6-8: Young Adults Impact Retreat at Camp Squeah, Hope.

UpComing

January issue of *MQR* on sexual abuse to be released in e-book, print formats

MennoMedia is partnering with *The Mennonite Quarterly Review (MQR)* to make the January 2015 issue of *MQR* available in e-book format. This particular issue of *MQR* is devoted to the theme of sexual abuse—and the related motifs of discipline, healing, and forgiveness—within the Mennonite church, with a particular focus on the controversy surrounding the actions of its most widely recognized theologian, John Howard Yoder (1927-97). Those interested in the issue can order a hard copy directly from *MQR*, and MennoMedia will sell the e-book through its online store, at www.MennoMedia.org, as well as through Amazon, iBooks and Barnes & Noble. The e-book will be available in early January, releasing simultaneously with the print edition.

—MennoMedia

Saskatchewan

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.

Manitoba

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.

Ontario

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.

thank you
from MennoMedia

We appreciate your business and wish you and yours a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! As a way of saying thank you, many of our books are on sale through Christmas Day on our webstore www.MennoMedia.org. Take advantage of these great offers for positive, inspirational, and lasting gift ideas!



MennoMedia
1-800-245-7894 • www.MennoMedia.org

Rejoice!
"For unto us
a child is born"
Isaiah 9:6a KJV

Wishing you the
Joy, Love, and Peace
of the Christmas season.

We look forward to serving you
in the New Year!



Mennoite Savings
and Credit Union



www.mscu.com
1.888.672.6728

/// Classifieds

Announcement

Parent Support Group: Announcing a bimonthly support group for Mennonite parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) persons in Southwestern Ontario. We provide confidential support, fellowship, resources and opportunities for dialogue in the Spirit of Christ. For more information please contact the following: rvfast@rogers.com, pmsnyderangel@rogers.com, or Roy and Mary Gascho, 519-742-1850.

Travel

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

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

Employment Opportunities



Employment Opportunity

Breslau Mennonite Church is looking for an associate pastor to join the lead pastor on our ministry team. This is a .6-time position, with a particular focus on family, youth, and young adult ministry. The associate pastor will have a strong commitment to social justice and Christian formation, with strong abilities in teaching, mentoring youth/young adults, and helping to discern and develop spiritual gifts.

Breslau Mennonite Church is a mid-sized, semi-rural congregation with active Sunday School and youth programs. Our members are a mix of rural and urban families from the Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge, and Guelph areas.

Interested candidates should contact Henry Paetkau, MCEC Conference Minister (hpaetkau@mcec.ca), by January 31 to apply.



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, MCEC Area Church Minister



Employment Opportunity

Breslau Mennonite Church is a mid-size, semi-rural congregation serving families in the Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge and Guelph area (breslaumennonitechurch.ca).

We seek a full-time lead pastor who is committed to Anabaptist faith and its traditions of peace and social justice. Our ideal candidate will also have strong gifts in leadership, administration, and helping to create meaningful worship experiences. The lead pastor will be part of a team ministry with our associate pastor (also being sought).

Preferred start date: Fall 2015.

Please contact Henry Paetkau, MCEC Conference Minister, at hpaetkau@mcec.ca by January 31 with applications or expressions of interest.

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



LANGLEY
Mennonite Fellowship

LANGLEY MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP is searching for a FULL-TIME PASTOR who will initially work half-time with our current pastor who is transitioning to retirement. The half-time position, starting summer 2015, will convert into the full-time position in summer 2017.

LMF is a small, welcoming community of diverse Anabaptists who support social justice and rely on the consensus model for making group decisions.

If this pastoral opportunity interests you, please contact Gerry Grunau at gerrygrunau@gmail.com to start a conversation. Resumes, including the completed Ministerial Leadership Information form and references, due Jan. 31st, 2015.

More information at www.langleymennonitefellowship.org



Volunteer Opportunity

Looking for a way to serve while sharing your faith? Menno-Hof, Shippewana, Ind., needs individuals and couples in agreement with Anabaptist values and beliefs to serve as host and/or hostess for a minimum of one month June – August 2015. Responsibilities include conducting tours and some light housekeeping.

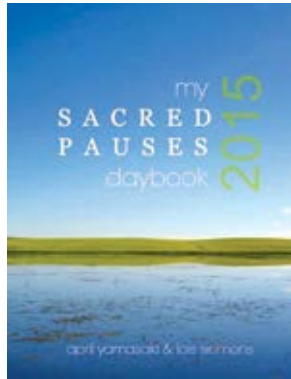
Menno-Hof offers visitors from around the world accurate information about the faith and life of the Amish and Mennonites. Two furnished apartments are available on-site. For more information contact Susan Miller, managing director: 260-768-4117 or smiller@mennohof.org or www.mennohof.org

Make your pauses sacred

Two MC Canada pastors create inspirational daybook for 2015

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. CORRESPONDENT



'We hoped the daybook would be both beautiful and useful, and I'm pleased with the way it's turned out.'
(April Yamasaki, author)

'I am always surprised, even when I have walked the same trail a hundred times, something new comes into focus.'
(Lois Siemens, photographer)

Combining their gifts for words and pictures, two Mennonite Church Canada pastors who are long-time friends have produced a 2015 inspirational daybook.

Lois Siemens, pastor of Superb Mennonite Church in Kerrobert, Sask., and April Yamasaki, pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., collaborated on the recently published *My Sacred Pauses*. Siemens enjoys photography as a hobby, while Yamasaki is the author of several books.

The two came up with the idea at the MC Canada assembly last July, when Siemens shared with Yamasaki the idea for a calendar that would include quotes from Yamasaki's book, *Sacred Pauses: Spiritual Practices for Personal Renewal*, published by Herald Press last year. After further conversation by e-mail and telephone, the idea expanded into a daybook.

The daybook is a combination calendar, appointment book and inspirational book. Unlike some appointment books oriented to the work week, this daybook has equal space for each day, including weekends.

"It can also be used as a mini-journal to write down words of thanks for each day, as a prayer journal. . . . Really, the list is endless," says Yamasaki.

Siemens feels that her inspiration in photographing nature is also endless. "I turn aside from my path to look at the thing that catches my eye," she says. "I am always surprised, even when I have walked the same trail a hundred times, something new comes into focus."

The two made some decisions together on the daybook, including artistic layout, pricing and promotion. Each woman also individually took on parts of the project. Yamasaki chose the monthly themes and *Sacred Pauses* quotes, while Siemens selected which of her photos would be included. Yamasaki also wrote the weekly journal prompts and Siemens suggested extra ideas for pausing that are scattered throughout the book.

"I'm grateful for the way we've been able to collaborate together," says Yamasaki. "We hoped the daybook would be both beautiful and useful, and I'm pleased with the way it's turned out."

The daybook is available online at <http://bit.ly/11Sjaxe>, and at the Canadian Mennonite University bookstore, Winnipeg, and House of James, Abbotsford, B.C. ❧