

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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When
vets
mourn

what should Mennos do?

pg. 24

PM40063104 R09613

inside

Pulling the curtain of hope over fear 4

'Where's God in my song?' 19

A servant for Jesus' sake 30

EDITORIAL

The church will prevail

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

While personally rejuvenated from my four-month sabbatical, I am saddened to come back to a faith community that seems wounded and immobilized with what one of our interim editors, Barb Draper, called a “difficult debate” over sexuality.

As the conversation intensifies, we, the churches of Mennonite Church Canada/U.S.A., seem to have veered into a one-issue discussion that is taking up enormous amounts of spiritual and emotional energy, sucking the oxygen out of other important 21st-century issues the church should be addressing.

Issues such as those identified by the Future Directions Task Force: “a growing reliance on technology; the politicization of ethical discussion; growing diversity through multiculturalism and multi-faith realities; increased individualism and secularization.” Where is the vision for the life-giving exercises of prayer and meditation; caregiving to the distressed and sick within our own congregations; healing the “wounds” of the gathered faith community; and being conscious of the “least of these” in our communities, such as the homeless and jobless?

Where is the passion to reverse the effects of global warming, the concern for growing militarism and preoccupation with security in our national consciousness, the plight of the incarcerated with the governmental priorities of “law and order,” the tightening up of immigration laws to make “the stranger” less welcome

in a historically “peaceful” country?

One of the things that helped keep all of this in perspective while I was relieved of my editorial/publishing duties, was to engage with a Sunday school class that re-enacted the first-century church at Corinth.

Our exercises, over several weeks, were based on the Herald Press book, *Creating a Scene in Corinth*, by Reta Halteman Finger and George D. McClain.

It was helpful to take a break from our own struggles to simu-

late the discussions of those ancient first-century Christians who, with the Apostle Paul as their leader, were giving shape and form to a new church from a very diverse group of people—those who were followers of the Hellenistic-persuasive Apollos, the well-educated, upper-class scribe for Paul; those of lower social rank from the Jewish tradition (those groups belonging to Cephas); and those claiming loyalty to Christ (often former or present slaves).

Minus the class structure, there were many similarities to our present church struggles. Sexuality, as an issue, was high on the list. While same-sex attraction wasn't the dividing issue, prostitution as we know it was. The powerful, upper-class Christians, namely those following Apollos, thought nothing wrong with having sex with their powerless slaves. And since eating meat offered to idols was also their cultural practice, they saw nothing wrong with continuing what the Jewish contingent of the new church considered idol worship.

Into this cultural chaos steps Paul with sometimes strong, scolding words, and at other times, gentle prodding. He always addressed the churches with a loving salutation: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 1:3). He always called them “saints.” In the list of conditions to hold the church together, Paul named love as the highest spiritual quality—above faith and hope (I Corinthians 13:13).

In addressing the church in Rome, Paul lays down another marker for unity, when, allowing for the tendency to judge each others' righteousness, he says that “so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18).

From these beginning days of struggle to survive the cultural and historical influences of the times, the early Christians, led by a discerning leader in Paul, the church managed to survive—through the Roman Constantinian era of a state-sponsored Christian church, on through the Reformation and the courageous break with the Roman Catholic Church by our Anabaptist forefathers and mothers, to the present day. The church of Jesus Christ always prevailed. It is as strong or as weak as we make it in this present age.

If we are to get “unstuck” from this decades-old, unproductive, 21st-century discussion of sexuality, we have a choice to make in this present struggle:

- **WE, AS** congregations, can use the discernment process in Stage 6 of the Being a Faithful Church process to now focus on these scriptural pleas for unity, love and “making every effort” to live in peace.
- **OR WE** can continue the “difficult debate,” leading possibly to division and irreparable harm to the “body.”

It's up to us.



ABOUT THE COVER:

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Matthew Greene places a rose on his father's casket during a service at Arlington National Cemetery, Va., on Aug. 14, 2014. The elder Greene was killed nine days earlier in Kabul, Afghanistan. See 'When vets mourn what should Mennonites do?' by Will Braun on page 24.

PHOTO (DETAIL): RACHEL LARUE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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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 •

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contents



Pulling the curtain of hope over fear 4

CHRIS BRNJAS and **JESSICA REESOR REMPEL** write that 'when we follow the Lord in our churches and communities, we are promised a hopeful future.' But 'this involves abandoning the idols we have made in times of comfort and influence....'

A positive place to speak out 16

RACHEL BERGEN reports on churches in Saskatchewan and Manitoba that are providing safe forums for LGBTQ people to share their stories.



When vets mourn what should Mennos do? 24

Senior writer **WILL BRAUN** explores a new Sunday school curriculum that urges Mennonites to seek peace together with veterans of war.

'Another cool move' 28

VERNON ERB looks back at his 56 years in the trucking business as the founder of the Erb Group of Companies, in our continuing series, 'The business of faith.'

'Bring the wall down' 31

Edmonton artist **RHONDA HARDER EPP** seeks to get past 'arbitrary impediments' in her latest exhibition at King's University College.

Young Voices 34-37

AMANDA ZEHR asks, 'Where is God at the gym?'

RACHEL BERGEN profiles a Winnipeg choral group in 'Keeping it Riel.'

MIKE WIEBE provides 'Glimpses of God's kingdom.'

Regular features:

For discussion **8** Readers write **9** Milestones **15** Pontius' Puddle **15** Schools Directory **33** Calendar **38** Classifieds **39**

The church will prevail 2

DICK BENNER

Celebrate the gift of leadership 9

JERRY BUHLER

For better or worse we are Pharisees 10

PHIL WAGLER



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A black and white photograph of a man in a dark suit and tie, standing on a beach. He is leaning forward, pulling a thick rope that extends from the bottom right towards the middle of the frame. The background shows a turbulent sea with large, white-capped waves crashing. In the distance, a dark, stormy sky is lit by a single, bright lightning bolt striking the water. The overall mood is one of struggle and hope against a powerful, natural force.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

Pulling the curtain of hope over fear

in order to reveal new possibilities God has for the future of the church

BY CHRIS BRNJAS AND JESSICA REESOR REMPEL
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Mennonite churches are afraid. In fact, Christian denominations all over Canada are afraid. We have felt this, seen it and experienced it. Sometimes this fear leads denominations to do reckless things. Sometimes it reaches the point of despair. Why so much fear?

The cause, we are told, is the youth and young adults; apparently they're leaving. The youth group numbers are getting microscopic, and the college and careers are non-existent. Some churches are blessed to have a "vibrant" youth group or a popular



young adult sub-section, but rare is the church that has both.

As a result, churches are asking many questions:

- **IS THE** church on its last legs?
- **IS SECULARISM** a rumbling locomotive that cannot be stopped?
- **ARE MENNONITE** traditions and cultures being unceremoniously discarded?

- **WILL THERE** be enough money to support our churches and institutions?
- **WHERE ARE** the young people?
- **HAS GOD** abandoned us?
- **WHAT HAPPENED?**

Empathy from the past

The Israelites exiled in Babylon were asking similar questions. The northern kingdom was completely destroyed by the

Assyrians, and then Jerusalem was sacked and destroyed by the Babylonians! What happened to being God's chosen people? The Israelites had settled the Promised Land; they had maintained a kingdom and became prosperous. Surely this was only a temporary punishment by God, and God would deliver them once again and send them swiftly back to their homeland.

However, God had different ideas. In

Jeremiah 29, we see the Prophet Jeremiah write from Jerusalem a very surprising letter to the exiled Israelites in Babylon. He could have written, "It's not going to be very long; we will fight for you to return home; don't get too invested there; it's only temporary." But he did not say that. He told them to "*build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce*" (29:5).

What's more, the Israelites were not just called to seek their own stability. They were called to seek the shalom of the city where God had sent them into exile, and to pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its shalom they would find their own shalom.

While living in Babylon, the exiles had a distinct purpose. The Israelites were to meet with their neighbours, get to know them, hear their stories, share

their culture, and, most importantly, help them to thrive. Values of purity and separation—which were previously the highest values for Israelite religion—took a backseat to faithfully pursuing relationship with the other.

Mission for the present

We believe that God's message for the Israelites through Jeremiah's letter is the same message that God has for the Mennonite church in Canada. Just as the Israelites were exiled from their comfortable homeland, so, too, is the Mennonite church called away from its comfortable era of institutional stability and pocketed cultural dominance.

This liminal space of exile called post-Christendom is not going to disappear anytime soon, so we might as well settle in here and till the soil! We need to plant gardens

and share their produce, and seek the shalom of this new place we find ourselves in.

The Mennonite church in Canada will never be the same as it was. Increasingly, people no longer see Sunday morning church as mandatory for the Christian walk. We are seeing a greater cultural diversity, and the Mennonite Game is becoming exceedingly difficult to play on last name alone. As well, a different value of generosity exists that does not necessarily translate into more dollars in the offering plate.

In the past, there have been times of blessing, yes, but God continually moves us in a new direction to give us new blessings. Some of the traditions will be kept, but others will disappear.

Hope for the future

God assures the exiled Israelites through

PERSONAL REFLECTION I

Potluck picnics in the park

BY JESSICA REESOR REMPEL

If you find yourself in Victoria Park in Kitchener, Ont., on a Thursday evening in the summertime, wander down the tree-lined path and over the bridge until you reach the island. You will pass families from many cultures out for an evening stroll or a drum circle under the gazebo. Keep going. Just past the gazebo you will find a colourful mismatched collection of blankets and tablecloths spread with an abundant feast: a potluck picnic in the park.

For the past three summers we potluck picnickers have spent an evening a week eating together and enjoying each other's company, as well as the company of weeping willows and noisy families of geese. Our gatherings range from two to 20 people, and it's rarely the same group from one week to the next, but since everyone brings food to share and their own plates and blankets, there is no set-up or clean-up to do and no need for an RSVP.

Many of my fellow potluck picnickers are youngish



For the past three summers we potluck picnickers have spent an evening a week eating together and enjoying each other's company, as well as the company of weeping willows and noisy families of geese.

adults living in the downtown Kitchener vicinity who are either currently active in a local Mennonite church or have grown up in a Mennonite church but no longer attend. The conversation that happens on our picnic blankets ranges from talk of the food that's on our plates, and the farmers and gardeners who grew it, or analysis of the latest bike lanes in town and how that will affect our commuting times, to rousing discussions of global, city or church politics, and everything in between.

Sometimes we have disagreements. Sometimes we talk about God and sometimes we don't. Potluck picnics in the park are not church, a Bible study or even a small group in the traditional sense, but it's certainly a sacred space.

Jeremiah (29:11) that God has not abandoned them, that God surely knows the plans God has for them. These are plans for their shalom and not for harm, to give them a future with hope.

When we follow the Lord in our churches and communities, we are promised a hopeful future! This involves abandoning the idols we have made in times of comfort and influence, and boldly stepping out in faith as God leads in these uncertain times.

The comforts of our church buildings, our institutions and our unique culture are not God, but the blessings God has given us. If they have become idols, we are to toss them aside. God has blessed

the Mennonite church in Canada richly in the past, and God will continue to do so in the future. However, the nature and content of that blessing will look different and we need to prepare ourselves to receive it.

Last year around this time, as young adults we were asked by Ed Janzen, chaplain at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., to help him with a task he had been assigned. He needed assistance planning the Thursday evening lecture, geared toward young adults, for the annual Mennonite Church Eastern Canada School for Ministers conference that happens at Grebel every February. We accepted with reluctance and some

tempered enthusiasm.

The three of us did not find it particularly energizing at first because we felt young adults were once again compartmentalized tokens. A young adult chaplain and two young adults were asked to plan yet another young adult event that not too many young adults would actually be interested in attending. Why were young adults being singled out?

Throughout our planning meetings with Janzen, we came to the determination that God was going in a different direction. Why do we have to do a lecture? Can it be something energizing? Why is it aimed only at young adults? Can we eat food?

(Continued on page 8)

PERSONAL REFLECTION II

The joy of pizza

BY CHRIS BRNJAS

My wife Rachel and I wanted to start practicing radical hospitality, but we live in a cosy basement apartment. It would be so much easier if we had our own house with lots of common space. But we felt Jesus was calling us to open up our doors with the room we did have.

We had developed a habit of making our own pizza on Mondays for ourselves. Sometimes we would invite specific people over, but for the most part just the two of us enjoyed the pizza. Then we asked each other, what would happen if we invited anyone and everyone to come join us?

With that, Pizza Mondays were born, with this basic premise: On Monday evenings, we make homemade pizza and we invite people to come and eat it with us. Anyone is welcome, and we usually make an announcement on social media the night before. And then we wait and see who God brings.

Each week is different. Sometimes two people show up, other weeks 12 show up. I remember one week where it seemed that our basement gradually got more and more packed the later the evening went on! That particular night we had an enlightening inter-generational conversation about living in intentional community. Another night, we got into a deep conversation about some profound and critical questions



On Monday evenings, we make homemade pizza and we invite people to come and eat it with us.

regarding Christian faith. Most nights we just sat together and played board games.

It is interesting that no matter what happened, no matter who came, we always seemed to have enough! On one occasion we had one of our guests run to the grocery store to get some additional food, but I never remember anyone leaving hungry. Some people would bring toppings for the pizzas, others would bring some food they had that they wanted to contribute.

We have friends who live in downtown Hamilton who were inspired to start their own Barbecue Mondays variation last summer, and invited their neighbours to come out.

What is Pizza Monday? It doesn't really fit into a category. It's not really a potluck, it's not a Bible study or small group or church event, nor is it just a social gathering. I like to think of it as a place where community gathers, where food and hope are shared, and God is glorified.

It's not rocket science. It's merely making pizza and inviting people to join in!

(Continued from page 7)

The event was called Awakening Hope and was open to the community of all ages. We started with potlucks at multiple houses around the city, and then came together to tell stories, sing songs and create art at the new Mennonite hub at 50 Kent in Kitchener, Ont.

One friend told us that there was just enough organization and structure to make sure the event went smoothly, but also enough spontaneity to make it fun.

The event was not a smashing success. It was merely community coming together in a natural and organic way. Together, we experienced a way of doing church and worship that combined elements of tradition with creativity. It existed in that in-between void that the church is now called into.

What does this mean?

We are not asserting that everything about the Mennonite church in Canada should change. There are many things that Mennonites do well and many ways that we continue to experience God's blessing. But we are writing that God is calling all of us to release our control and our power so we can invite the Holy Spirit to move among us.

Furthermore, it means we must jettison the pervasive fear that plagues our churches about the long-term future. It means that we must once again surrender control of our weekly attendance and finances to God. It means we must stop the passive-aggressive shaming or manipulation of young people so that they don't leave the church.

We cannot speak for all young people, but there are some important things you need to know:

- **YOUNG PEOPLE** who have grown up in our faith communities are, on the whole, doing well.
- **WE ARE** full of questions and seek answers with integrity.
- **WE SEEK** to make a change in our world to bring the reign of God closer to reality.
- **MANY OF** us even have vibrant and eclectic Christian faith; it just may look a little different for some of us today than it has in the past.

FILE PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



David Siebert, left; Josie Winterfeld, outreach worker at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.; Dylan Siebert and Annemarie Rogalsky enjoy table fellowship at 50 Kent during Awakening Hope, an evening of 'inspiring each other on the path of Christian discipleship and community living' on Feb. 20, 2014.

It also does not necessarily mean that weekly church attendance is a high priority. People of our generation seek authentic worship, and if it seems that Sunday morning is all about maintaining structures and self-preservation, then not too many will buy into that. Fortunately, we personally have been blessed to worship with many congregations that are open to God moving in the church.

As far as we can tell, there will be a place for the Mennonite church in Canada for a long time to come. It continues to grow

[I]f it seems that Sunday morning is all about maintaining structures and self-preservation, then not too many will buy into that.

and there are many of us young people who are deeply passionate about it. We need to be faithful to where God leads us in this next chapter so that together we can receive a future with hope. ☘

Chris Brnjas, left, and Jessica Reesor Rempel are founders of PiE, a ministry start-up dedicated to being pastors to young people in Waterloo Region who exist in the liminal space between Christian and secular identities.



/// For discussion

1. What are your fears about the church? How much do we fear the declining involvement of young people? How much do we fear secularism? Do we fear a decline in financial support for our churches and institutions? Does it feel as though God is abandoning the church?
2. Chris Brnjas and Jessica Reesor Rempel suggest that God is calling the Mennonite church "away from its comfortable era of institutional stability and pocketed cultural dominance," and that maybe our institutions and unique culture have become idols. Do you agree? Are these young people offering a hopeful prophetic message?
3. Brnjas and Rempel write: "Increasingly, people no longer see Sunday morning church as mandatory for the Christian walk." Do you agree? Is this because God is calling us to a different way of doing church or is it self-indulgence?
4. Do Rempel's potluck picnics or Brnjas's pizza Mondays sound attractive? Is this doing church in another form? Do you find hope in the emphasis on relationships? What signs of hope do you see in the young people of your community?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

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.

✉ Conscience Canada offers 'peace tax' alternative to taxpayers

CURRENT GLOBAL EVENTS feel overwhelming. Here we are on a globe that seems to be rolling down a mountain, swelling with the detritus of violence as it plummets toward chaos. Is it possible for peace-minded people to get off? No, but if all the earth-loving people would perk up and drag their feet, surely the ball could be slowed down and finally halted.

When leaders of countries stand up and say, "We are at war!" what is our response? "Silence gives consent," is the old adage. So while we are silent, our country is supporting our Canadian industries to accept contracts for \$19 billion for the production of military hardware to send around the world and fuel conflicts, according to the Winter 2014 issue of *Ploughshares Monitor*.

When forces of greed, lust for power and fear of

(Continued on page 10)

FROM OUR LEADERS

Celebrate the gift of leadership

JERRY BUHLER

As I scan the directory of pastors and congregations in our area church, I am inspired and immensely grateful. I know that very fine pastoral leadership is happening. I know that intense hours are being spent crafting biblically sound sermons. I know that lonely people are being visited, small people are being noticed and subdued voices are being heard. I know that people are being nurtured into baptism, blessed in their relationships and given a farewell of hope when they die.

I hear reports of sparkling adult Sunday school classes with high attendance and intense discussions. I observe congregants who look to their pastors for meaningful direction and who take their counsel seriously.



I see this and I hear of this. Good leadership is happening.

Collectively these pastors give shape to the leadership landscape of the larger

I like Jethro's advice to Moses, suggesting that leadership be shared to avoid wearing out.

church. There is comfort and safety in knowing that leadership is a communal pursuit and does not rest on one individual, but is owned together.

There is comfort and relief in knowing that leadership in any given congregation will also be spread and extended over the lifetime of that congregation. No one leader shoulders the entire weight of a congregation's life.

It is important to maintain realistic, balanced and healthy expectations, realizing that each of us may only contribute

a small sliver of leadership and administer a small dose of authority in a lifetime.

I like Jethro's advice to Moses, suggesting that leadership be shared to avoid wearing out. And Moses graciously accepted the advice. It's a nice story.

Leadership is a gift that is given. We recognize it in community. We give it to those among us whom we trust. We share it, we treat it gently, we treat it respectfully.

Let's celebrate leadership, let's be lifted and transported by it, not to places

where selected egos are satisfied, but to places where good news is heard, sight is recovered, release is proclaimed and oppression is lifted.

And to our blinking surprise we will see that we have been given community because we obediently tied towels around our waists and knelt at each other's feet.

Jerry Buhler will finish as area church minister of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan on March 31.

(Continued from page 9)

others are driving our human resources and natural resources into a black hole of enmity and perpetual conflict, it is time for a new resurrection. Those who know something about human hope, divine love and a life of faith in truth and goodness, need to make these realities apparent to the world around them. We must be seen for what we are in our daily lives, our weekly

corporate worship, our monthly giving to support our frontline workers, and our annual resistance to the income tax collected to fund the government's Department of Defence.

Something we can all do is make our convictions known to those we have elected to govern us: Our commitment that our money, as well as our lives, be used for peacebuilding, not for destructive violence.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

For better or worse we are Pharisees

PHIL WAGLER

The Pharisees were Jesus' nemesis, his constant sparring partners, fellow citizens who conspired eagerly against him. The Pharisees (spit) are the bad guys in the story even as it is told to children. "I don't want to be a Pharisee" is still irritatingly hummed from one generation to the next.

What's lost on us, however, is that the Pharisees were champions of the common folk. They were, as Josephus the Pharisee himself pointed out, recipients of the goodwill of the common people. The elite embraced the Sadducees, while the everyday person identified with the Pharisees. The Pharisees took Judaism from the temple and made it the priesthood of every Jew. The Law could be practised by everyone, social justice mattered, the unity of humanity was paramount, and, of course, the restoration of the true Israel was key. The Pharisees were the radical reformers of Judaism. And yet they found themselves in direct conflict with Jesus. They were offended by the Source. Sadly, they could not even recognize him.

Which gives sudden pause. We Mennonite Anabaptists can act like we uniquely see the way. After all, our spiritual ancestors saw through, and suffered

for, a vision of the church that was radically different from the state-bound and religiously entrapped Christianity of their day. Today, many other tribes of the Christian family who once persecuted Anabaptists are discovering, in this secular age, that perhaps those radicals were on to something. Anabaptism seems to be quite "popular." Mennonites are hip. We are the movement of the common people. We've got the beards and politics to prove it.

But dare we admit that we are Pharisees?

Dare we confess that, like those old-time Pharisees, we really don't know what to do with Jesus? He is grace when we want him to be truth; after all, surely he can't really accept a gun-toting Baptist.



He is grace when we want him to be truth; after all, surely he can't really accept a gun-toting Baptist.

He is truth when we want him to be grace; after all, surely he doesn't really say to the sexually broken, "Go and leave your life of sin." He frustrates our politics. He messes with our laws. He accepts those we think are out and confronts those we think are in. He demands an end to ourselves. He keeps elevating himself in an uncompromising way.

It's intriguing, isn't it, that Paul—the missionary to the gentiles—was himself a Pharisee? He saw the light, literally. Having met the risen Jesus, he abandoned the movement of the common people for the truly radical life. What he once was, he boasted, is rubbish compared to the worth of knowing Christ.

So here's the thing, my sisters and brothers: We're a tribe lost in the fog because we have confused our agendas, politics and interpretations with the real thing. What if they're just the religious exercises of the culturally capitulated? What if, as Paul learned, they are pharisaical rubbish?

We need to discover Jesus again. Our only future is as a Jesus movement, in which we bow at his holy feet and lay down our own ways—and our views of the world, the church and our ethics—for his design. We must lay everything down and be found in him, no longer depending on self-righteousness or expecting that he is pleased with our

attempts at the common good. We need, as Paul the Pharisee said, to know Christ. What would it look like to start there again?

Phil Wagler (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca) continues to have his inner Pharisee exposed by Paul's words in Philippians 3, and that's a good thing.

This message can be reinforced by those who have control over the remittance of their income taxes.

You can withhold 7.8 percent of your federal income tax and send it instead to the Peace Tax Fund in Trust of Conscience Canada. This organization has been providing this door—not as yet legally open—to conscientious objectors to military taxation for more than 30 years. It is a way for peace people to drag their feet against globalized violence. To access the online Conscience Canada Peace Tax Return, visit www.consciencecanada.ca.

MARY GROH, SCARBOROUGH, ONT.

✉ Understanding a grave situation

IT HAS BEEN 100 years since the masses were mobilized into crowds—*foules*, to use the French word—and then uniformly regimented into the military to fight in the trenches of northern France and on the Eastern Front in the First World War.

In the aftermath of the assassinations of the cartoonists and editor at *Charlie Hebdo* magazine on Jan. 7 in Paris, we see this phenomenon beginning again. Will it be war, a crusade against Islamic teachings on graven image depictions of Qur'anic characters, or will it be revolution for the western idea of free artistic expression? Is there no other choice?

Think of Christ in the Gospel of Luke, kicked out of the synagogue and facing the five thousand who needed to be fed. Consider the disciples sent out to heal and cast out demons in houses that Jesus will minister at himself on his road to Jerusalem and the cross.

Can a flock walking through a crowd or a choir singing with a congregation on the Lord's Day not bring a message—a witness—to such mass assemblages?

Hope this helps Mennonites understand the gravity of the current situation.

JAMES NEUFELD, WINNIPEG

✉ It costs a lot to keep a senior in poverty

RE: "HOLY RECKLESSNESS," Jan. 19, page 21.

Having recently "retired" and turning 60 this year, I found the topic interesting. I like Will Braun's emphasis on simplicity and opting out of consumerism and the financial planning industry that is designed to scare people into buying their products.

However, I would be interested in more details about how he intends to support himself in his "senior" years. Will he accept the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security or maybe even the Guaranteed Income Supplement? Will he keep working? Each of

those options come with their ethical dilemmas as well.

Perhaps he could devote a future column to sketching out what it looks like to live simply as we age: Where does the necessary income come from? What types of housing are needed and especially what kinds of support need to be in place as our bodies and minds fail us?

Ghandi is quoted as saying, "It costs a lot to keep me in poverty." One might rephrase that to say it costs a lot to keep a senior in poverty.

KATHY SHANTZ (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ Bethany College unfairly targeted by column, says dean

RE: "WALK ALONGSIDE," Jan. 19, page 4.

As a staff member at Bethany College, I was very disappointed to read Brent Charette's column that used the closure of Bethany as an opportunity to make some observations about the church and young adults.

His conclusion: We should take social justice far more seriously than we do. And I agree with this conclusion. My question is: Why does he need the closure of Bethany to make his point?

There are a number of false dichotomies simmering beneath the surface of this column:

- **INSTITUTIONS ARE** a thing of the past, social justice is the way of the future.
- **YOUNG ADULTS** don't want to talk about Jesus, they simply want to do what he commanded.
- **OLD PEOPLE** are regressive, young people are progressive.

The list could go on.

It is simply not helpful to set "institutions" and "social justice" against one another. Institutions are ways of preserving priorities while passing them on to future generations. Institutions come and go, but there has hardly been a church or social movement in history that has been able to avoid them. Can they stagnate? Of course. Can they be transformative? Absolutely.

Likewise, it is unwise to point to social justice as the ingredient that will ignite our practice of young adult discipleship. Presenting this as a strategy for engaging young adults migrates the conversation into the realm of consumerist anxiety, where churches look for hooks that will attract disaffected customers. Is caring for the poor a boutique item in the marketplace of Christian strategies? Probably not. But this is unwittingly where his column's logic goes.

Finally, I find it very difficult to understand why the

editors would include a column that uses the closure of Bethany as a springboard for this conversation. It leaves readers with the sense that the college's demise has resulted from its failure to do what the article is advocating.

The reasons for Bethany's closure are complex and would require a highly nuanced conversation. To implicitly reduce it to this particular issue without describing—or even asking—what was actually happening at the college seems careless at best and opportunistic at worst.

GIL DUECK, HEPBURN, SASK.

Gil Dueck is academic dean of Bethany College.

✉ 'Love each other, but sin is sin'

RE: "A BIBLICAL and better way," Jan. 19, page 4.

First of all, I would like to say that I liked this article.

I have read many other stories about sex and the homosexual comments, and it bothers me.

Finally, using the Bible this piece states in black and white that this behaviour is not natural. God says I am to love my neighbour, and I agree and do so. But to accept the sex part, we should not.

In my opinion, and without prejudice, we need to not participate in gay marriage because that has do to with the world's ways ("It felt like a big deal . . . it was so powerful," Jan. 19, page 13). Are we becoming so blind that we do not see that is not right? Love each other, but sin is sin. I say this because I love God and my neighbours!

**BARBARA CHARTRAND,
SPENCERVILLE, ONT.**

✉ Homosexuals are 'a natural part of God's creation'

RE: "A BIBLICAL and better way," Jan. 19, page 4.

Ronald J. Sider summarizes biblical teaching concerning homosexuality and concludes that it is an unbiblical sexual practice. He concludes that this interpretation, combined with Christian church history of long condemning same-sex practice, should give us "great pause before we bless same-sex intercourse."

In my opinion, the stumbling block in coming to grips with how to view homosexuality is the belief that all truth and knowledge are frozen in biblical time. The Bible is clearly riddled with contradictory moral practices and stories of "sinful" people supposedly used to further God's purposes. How are we to understand it? It seems to be an account of imperfect people in a small part of the world trying to understand their

relationship to God and interpreting events around them in the light of the knowledge and understanding of their times.

However, times have moved on. Events, circumstances and understanding have moved on. Most importantly, knowledge has moved on.

I would say that the large majority of Christians rely upon modern medical science in case of illness, even while believing in Christ's healing powers. Modern science also presents answers, based on evidence, as to how life evolved and to the extent of the universe. We now know that the universe does not revolve around humankind.

Knowledge and understanding will not remain fixed in our time either, but will continue to change. Why then do we cling to the biases and prejudices of a society from thousands of years ago? It is time to shake them off and face facts. It is time to exercise Christian goodwill and offer the hand of friendship, understanding and acceptance to those who are homosexual and as much a natural part of God's creation as those who are heterosexual.

MICHAEL J. NEWARK, WELLESLEY, ONT.

✉ Is it a call—or a demand—to celibacy?

RE: "A BIBLICAL and better way," Jan. 19, page 4.

Paul and Jesus made a conscious and individual choice to remain celibate. It was not externally mandated. When we ask homosexual persons to remain celibate for the rest of their lives, this is not a voluntary sacrifice being offered up to God by an individual. Neither they, nor the unmarried heterosexuals that Ronald Sider refers to, are "called" to celibacy.

If we define "calling" as something that is undertaken after serious consideration and prayer, and with the possibility of refusing the said ministry path, then the celibacy that Sider describes is not a "calling." Whether widowed, single or homosexual, the celibacy that Sider promotes as a "calling" is, quite simply, a demand being imposed by outside forces. It is not a willing sacrifice; it is a denial, and the denial is an imposed one. If homosexual persons—or any singles, for that matter—do not agree to the denial, they risk the loss of a place of worship, perhaps the loss of family, and, if you are in church ministry, very likely the loss of a job.

As a single, female pastor in church ministry, the reality of this is with me everyday.

With the use of Jesus and Paul as examples of the "calling" of celibacy, there also comes a not-so-subtle judgement: "How could you not want to emulate them? If Jesus and Paul did it, why can't you? Is your faith that weak?" There is a very clear shaming process at work here.

My sense of Sider's summary invitation to those in the faith community who are not married heterosexuals is this: We would love you to make use of your gifts; put money into our coffers; and donate your time, energy and talents to our endeavours. We would love to benefit from everything you have to offer. In return we only ask that you:

- **MAINTAIN LIFELONG** celibacy;
- **DENY YOURSELF** any intimate, loving relationship with a person you are actually physically attracted to;
- **CONSENT TO** regular questioning on whether you are maintaining the above standards; and
- **LOOK FORWARD** to your senior years alone, without children or grandchildren.

By the way, we love you and would not dream of excluding you.

Is it a wonder that young people aren't flocking to our doors?

ERIN MORASH, CRYSTAL CITY, MAN.

Erin Morash is pastor of Crystal City Mennonite Church and Trinity Mennonite Fellowship, Mather, Man.

✉ **Same-sex coupling, marriage are indulgences when discipline is called for**

RE: "A **BIBLICAL** and better way," Jan. 19, page 4.

I would like to express my support for the position Ronald J. Sider takes in his feature article. He reminds us of a distinction between the individual per se and the behaviour of the individual, and thereby comes near the compromise Barb Draper references in her editorial, "A difficult debate," on page 2 of the same issue.

The coupling of a man and a woman is a good for many reasons: companionship, pleasure and procreation, among them. In my opinion, a same-sex coupling is not a "marriage," as the term has long been defined, and the church would be correct to reserve "marriage" for a man and a woman. Because something may be legal in the secular realm, it does not follow that the church must automatically conform.

What sexual practices occur in the bedroom should not be matters that require investigation by anyone, church or state. But public advocacy is something else. For what practices should we advocate in order to build the ideal God had in mind for us before the Fall? What practices should we hold on to and which can we let go of?

I fail to see how same-sex coupling and approval of same-sex marriage would bring us closer to the

establishment of God's kingdom. It seems to me they are indulgences when discipline is called for.

Celibacy is an option, Sider suggests, despite what our ever-more secular and sexualized society presents. I truly believe that we should—and can—embrace and love every individual, those like us and those unlike us, just as Jesus called us to do (Matthew 5:43-48).

I also believe there are good and bad behaviours, that we are called to be good, and that the boundary between the two may change with time and place. May we continue the endeavour to locate the boundaries for our time and place, and to discern altogether the way forward in a climate of mutual love and respect, and remain open to persuasion.

RUDY PETERS, WINNIPEG

✉ **Some don't think gay wedding was 'God at work in the Church'**

RE: "IT FELT like a big deal . . . it was so powerful," Jan. 19, page 13.

For the sake of loving our fellow Christians, and for the sake of church unity, I wish that Rachel Bergen's article on the same-sex marriage in Osler Mennonite Church had not been placed under the "God at work in the Church" category of your magazine. While some Christians do indeed see this event as God working in the church, those who do not were unnecessarily angered and provoked by this categorization.

I thought it was an extremely unwise editorial choice. Rather than reflecting your guiding value of "provoking one another to love and good deeds," it was instead a provocation to greater polarization and suspicion. In the future, I plead with you to be more thoughtful in how you present your articles, seeking to enhance—rather than inhibit—our ability to agree and disagree in love.

LYDIA CRUTTWELL, VANCOUVER

✉ **Christian Bible doesn't include smudging practices**

RE: "MCC BANQUET cancelled due to Pentecostal church's racism" letter, Jan. 5, page 8.

This issue here isn't racism. It's about spirituality. Where in Scripture is there an indication that smudging is to be practised by Christians?

ELAINE FEHR (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ Last call for responses to Being a Faithful Church 6

The following letter was originally sent to Mennonite Church Canada pastors, and church council/congregational leaders, and is printed in Canadian Mennonite at MC Canada's request.

GREETINGS IN THE name of Christ, who courageously and compassionately incarnates the love and wisdom of God for us.

Recent media attention to the first same-sex marriage in a Mennonite Church Canada congregation has further sharpened our focus to continue our communal discernment around the question of congregational response to same-sex attraction through our work with the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process.

We regret that some congregations, because of their particular circumstances, have moved ahead of the BFC process, either by blessing same-sex unions or by deciding to leave our fellowship. Those who have invested hard work, energy and patience with the BFC process feel as if the process has been compromised.



The BFC process, initiated by the General Board of MC Canada in 2008, was to guide our denomination's discernment in a number of important matters, including the church's response to same-sex attraction. BFC 6—"Unity, Christ's love and faithfulness in discerning matters of sexuality"—is the most recent discernment document in the BFC process. The discernment questions in BFC 6 were affirmed by the delegate body (90 percent) at Assembly 2014 in Winnipeg. (The BFC 6 document is available online at bit.ly/1CKh80N.)

The discernment questions ask how we will maintain unity in Christ while we understand matters of same-sex relations differently. How will we express our desire to demonstrate the love of Christ towards all, irrespective of sexual orientation, different understandings of Scripture, and our denomination's *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*?

We are grateful for those who continue to challenge one another's understandings in love. We urge congregations to stay with the discernment process: to continue to engage in study together, pray together, wait for guidance from the Spirit together, honour those with whom we disagree, and offer counsel to the national body. We can take as our example the Council of Jerusalem from Acts 15. We encourage you to revisit this Scripture passage for insight on disagreement.

BFC 1—"Testing the spirits in the midst of hermeneutical ferment"—declared that discernment is

an essential ongoing task of the church. The church must always speak again and when the church speaks again in discernment, she can say what has been said before, modify what has been said or say something new. Congregations, through their delegates, have also said that until we speak again as a body on the matter of sexuality, we are guided by previous confessions and agreed-upon polity.

As a refresher, we provide here a brief outline of our journey so far:

BFC 1: "TESTING the spirits in the midst of hermeneutical ferment"

BFC 2: "'PEACE church' as 'pacifist church.'" (This was a way to test the proposed BFC process.)

BFC 3: "A plan to discern faithfulness on matters of sexuality"

BFC 4: "USING the Bible in helpful and unhelpful ways"

BFC 4.1: "EXERCISING our interpretive muscles: Testing our interpretive framework"

BFC 5: "BETWEEN horizons: Biblical perspectives on human sexuality"

BFC 5.1: "BETWEEN horizons: Biblical perspectives on human sexuality"

BFC 6: "UNITY, Christ's love and faithfulness in discerning matters of sexuality." (This is the current document to which we need congregational responses by Feb. 28.)

Please be assured that the BFC Task Force reads and studies all submissions carefully and reports its findings regularly to the General Board. Your submissions are vital to the task force as we move forward together as a family of God. Some congregations have already responded; we thank you. If your congregation has not yet responded, we ask that your feedback be returned by Feb 28 to: wmetzger@mennonitechurch.ca.

Discernment within the national body is not easy, especially on a matter over which we are not agreed, often even within individual congregations. We commend our congregations for consistently offering excellent feedback throughout the BFC process and look forward to receiving the feedback to the questions of BFC 6.

We offer our sincere prayers for each of our family of congregations across Canada, trusting that God will indeed hold us close during this time.

HILDA HILDEBRAND

MC Canada moderator

WILLARD METZGER

MC Canada executive director

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Konrad—Emmett William (b. Jan. 3, 2015), to Mark and Michelle Konrad, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Krahn—Alexander Eddy Penner (b. Dec. 31, 2014), to Trishia Penner and Dennis Krahn, Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Marriages

Epp/Gillespie—Kevin Epp and Emma Gillespie, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., Jan. 3, 2015.

Halliday/Jutzi—Andrea Halliday and Peter Jutzi (First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.), at Grace United, Tavistock, Ont., Sept. 20, 2014.

Regier/Smits—Christopher Regier and Chesley Smits, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., at Nipawin, Sask., Nov. 16, 2014.

Deaths

Bergen—Helen (nee Loewen), 87 (b. Aug. 28, 1927; d. Dec. 29, 2014), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Cressman—Edwin, 93 (b. March 15, 1921; d. Jan. 11, 2015), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Dyck—Peter J., 89 (b. Oct. 6, 1924; d. June 2, 2014), Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Falk—Linda (nee Dyck), 84 (b. Nov. 28, 1930; d. Dec. 27, 2014), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Heide—Johnny, 86 (b. April 17, 1928; d. Nov. 22, 2014), Gretna, Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Hoover—Thelma Winifred (nee Grove), 91 (b. May 19, 1923; d. Dec. 23, 2014), Wideman Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Koop—Dietrich (Dick), 91 (b. July 22, 1923; d. Dec. 18, 2014), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Martens—Heinrich, 91 (b. May 6, 1923; d. Nov. 5, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Matties—Dorothy (nee Steingart), 83 (b. Aug. 19, 1931; d. Nov. 3, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

McDowell—John David, 59 (b. March 31, 1955; d. Jan. 1, 2015), Community Mennonite, Stouffville, Ont.

Pauls—Katharina (nee Berg), 91 (b. April 27, 1923; d. Jan. 17, 2015), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Sawatzky—Susan, 97 (b. April 3, 1917; d. Dec. 16, 2014), Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Schellenberg—George, 87 (b. July 24, 1927; d. Oct. 19, 2014), Hanley Mennonite, Sask.

Schellenberg—John, 88 (b. March 30, 1926; d. Dec. 29, 2014), Hanley Mennonite, Sask.

Tiessen—Jacob, 78 (b. March 29, 1936; d. Nov. 16, 2014), Crystal City Mennonite, Man.

Thiessen—Peter, 89 (b. June 1, 1925; d. Oct. 27, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Wiebe—Marvin, 54 (b. Feb. 9, 1960; d. Dec. 13, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Wiebe—Peter, 76 (b. July 31, 1938; d. Dec. 16, 2014), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Wiens—Helen (nee Sawatzky), 89 (b. May 3, 1925; d. Dec. 8, 2014), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

announcements within four months of the event.

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

Pontius' Puddle



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

A positive space to speak out

Churches hear stories of gender and sexual diversity

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RACHEL BERGEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
SASKATOON, SASK.

It was a “magical” and “spirit-filled” Jan. 24 evening for many who attended a Wildwood Mennonite Church event, held to provide a positive space for members of the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) community, family and friends to tell their stories and be vulnerable with each other.

Krista Loewen, a pastor of Wildwood Mennonite Church, was one of the organizers of the event. “There are so many

misunderstandings and assumptions about people that are prevalent during discussions on sexuality,” she said. “We wanted to create a space for people to actually learn what it is like to be a part of this marginalized community.”

Loewen and others on the planning committee were worried that the church doesn’t hear from gender- and sexually diverse people on a national level. “If we don’t hear from a diverse set of opinions,

how are we supposed to capture where the Spirit is leading us?” she asked.

Committee members have also found past area church events to be unsafe places for people from the LGBTQ community. (See “Angry words call for a peaceful response,” Nov. 24, 2014, page 42.)

The planning committee for the Jan. 24 listening event wanted to do things differently by creating a positive space. The event drew those who haven’t felt comfortable entering, let alone speaking in front of, a church in years.

Sharing and listening

One such person was Rachel Loewen Walker, who attended the now-dissolved Peace Mennonite Church in Saskatoon until she was a teenager. She said she is used to speaking publicly, but admitted speaking in front of a church made her nervous.

Loewen Walker recalled that church became a different place after she came out as lesbian and she didn’t return after she went away to attend Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. She admitted there wasn’t an outward animosity, but there was a sense that it was a closed community that she didn’t fit into. “I’m proud to see this conversation happening now,” she said.

Kelsey Dick also spoke up at the event. Dick doesn’t fit into many socially constructed binaries, gender included, identifying herself as “gender queer.” Dick, who self-identifies as lesbian, sometimes feels and presents more feminine; other times, more masculine.

Childhood was marked by trying to be like the boys and feeling confusion when that didn’t seem right to family and friends, Dick shared. After growing up, Dick knew she needed to conform to the norms of her gender—growing her hair long and trying to suppress what came naturally—causing great internal conflict.

“But what I came to recognize was that the masculine identity and expression I felt as a child was the most honest, genuine self I had ever been,” Dick said. The recognition of her true self, and the physical expression of that when she cut all her hair off two years ago, was the most liberating moment of her life, Dick said.

Overall, the event was marked by



Pam Booker, left, Kelsey Dick and Rachel Loewen Walker were just some of the people who talked about sexuality and gender identity at Wildwood Mennonite Church’s listening event on Jan. 24.



Michelle MacDonald made a piece of installation art for the event. It is a physical representation of the goal of the evening: freedom, vulnerability, love, support and spiritual care.

courage and vulnerability, Loewen said. More than 10 people, including parents of LGBTQ children, came forward to speak.

“It wasn’t our great planning or preparations that made it a success, it was the Spirit within us that made the space magical,” Loewen said.

A wider trend

Other Mennonite congregations have worked to create a positive spaces recently. Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach, Man., is one such church.

After a year-long conversation about sexuality, sexual orientation and same-sex attraction, the church ended with an evening of sharing, Kyle Penner, the associate pastor, explained. “The evening went well,” he said. “We shared, we listened, we sang, we prayed, we learned, we cried and we hugged. . . . It’s our hope that we can look back at the evening and remember it as part of our effort to build a community that supports each other as we try to follow Jesus together.”

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

'Good neighbours'

BY TIMOTHY EPP

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

PHOTO COURTESY OF SASKATCHEWAN
AFRICAN CANADIAN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Mattie Mayes

In 1910, a train rolled into North Battleford, Sask., carrying “sixty-two negro people” fleeing from oppressive Jim Crow laws in Oklahoma and Texas, and seeking land and a better life on the Prairies.

While some of these refugees would make their way to northern Alberta, the passengers on this train were heading for the Maidstone area of Saskatchewan. They would form a block settlement approximately 16 kilometres north of the town, and would erect both the Shiloh Church, now a provincial historic site, and the Eldon School. Local histories depict the lives of these black pioneers, and suggest that the Maidstone area, as well as the Fiske/Rosetown area, featured relatively integrated communities across lines of race and religion.

This is remarkable within the context of discrimination and animosity toward blacks in early 20th-century Canada. The next year, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier approved an Order-in-Council barring anyone of African descent from migrating to Canada.

The Maidstone and Fiske areas were also significant in terms of the Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren who established churches there by the mid-1920s. Based on my current research, Anabaptists and blacks were good neighbours to each other.

Abraham and Pauline Schwartz, who arrived in the Maidstone area in 1925, lived near the Lane and Mayes families. In *North of the Gully*, Murray Mayes recounts, “If it had not been for food given us by these kind people [Schwartz family], we would have sometimes gone hungry.”

In the Fiske area, Bernhard H. Wiens describes his relationship with his neighbours, the LaFayettes: “We lived side by side and respected each other.” One of the descendants of this black family informed me that race “wasn’t an

issue in those days.”

Anabaptists and blacks worked side by side. Black threshing teams existed in both the Maidstone and Fiske areas. These teams would travel the area and work for, or together with, other farmers. At times, European settlers would hire young adults from the Mayes family for agricultural labour.

Several of the matriarchs from three black families served as midwives to their neighbours. Audrey (Schwartz) Newby writes of her own birth: “I was ushered in by Mattie Mayes and Grandma [Pauline] Schwartz.”

Louise Klaassen (nee Wiens) recalls, “When someone’s car got stuck in the snow, everyone helped out.”

Anabaptist and black children attended school together. While sources suggest that the Eldon school was initially meant to be strictly for the children of black families, it quickly featured a diverse student body. Several school photos portray children from Eldon and Garvoch schools with surnames of Roth, Schwartz, Herter and Wert attending school with Crawford, Mayes, Gordon and Cooper children.

Accounts by former teachers at the Eldon School reveal a sense of “delight” and “fascination” at the opportunity to teach “negro” children. These reports are characterized by a sense of congeniality and friendship. Carol LaFayette-Boyd recalled being taught in the Fiske area by teachers with the surnames of Klassen and Epp.

 Staff change

Canadian coordinator named for Mennonite Men

Hans Peters of Kitchener, Ont., has been named Canadian national coordinator of Mennonite Men/JoinHands effective last Dec. 1. Says Tim Froese, Mennonite Church Canada’s Witness executive minister:



Hans Peters

“Hans brings a background of business and church ministry to this role and has a particular passion for developing young leaders, working with communities in development, and engaging people from a variety of cultures. This is especially true of Hans’ ministry as one of the leaders at Jane Finch Faith Community in North York [Ont.] and as a mission associate with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.” Peters succeeds Marv Baergan, who retired last August after serving for 12 years. Mennonite Men is a jointly owned partnership of MC Canada and Mennonite Church U.S.A. It seeks to provide an Anabaptist perspective on manhood that speaks to current issues; promotes men’s groups; offers study resources for men’s groups, retreats and mentoring relationships; and encourages acts of service.

—Mennonite Men/Join Hands

While these accounts are generally positive, this is not to neglect the underlying, and at times evident, racism of the time. One young man from a Mennonite family in the Fiske area went on to found a white supremacist church in the United States. However, this appears to be an isolated exception among otherwise positive and mutually supportive relations.

We need to remember these stories of cooperation in a world divided and torn across lines of race and religion. ❧

Timothy Epp is an associate sociology professor at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ont.

'Where's God in my song?'

Saskatchewan youth explore what it means to connect with God through music

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
WALDHEIM, SASK.

Music plays an important role in most teenagers' lives. Through music they connect with peers and with

/// Briefly noted

MSCU announces new investment opportunity

Mennonite Savings and Credit Union (MSCU) and Oikocredit Canada have teamed up to launch the Oikocredit Global Impact guaranteed investment certificate (GIC). Oikocredit is a global co-operative and social investor providing loans and investments to partner organizations in low-income countries, mainly investing in microfinance, agriculture, co-operatives, fair trade organizations and renewable energy. "For the first time ever, people in Ontario will be able to invest in a guaranteed, RSP-eligible investment aimed at lifting people out of poverty in low-income countries," says a credit union news release. CEO Brent Zorgdrager says, "We are thrilled to be offering this innovative new investment opportunity. Our commitment to our members is to offer values-based products that make our world more just, peaceful and prosperous." The GIC is being offered with a 12-month term at an initial interest rate of 1.30 percent. It is available to any individual or institutional investor in Ontario who is a member of the credit union. When members invest in the GIC, MSCU purchases shares in Oikocredit that match the principal amount, thereby providing funds to support impoverished communities in low-income countries.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

issues that matter to them. Perhaps that's why the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization (SMYO) chose "Where's God in my song?" as the theme for its recent senior-high retreat.

Twenty-three youth from seven Mennonite Church Saskatchewan congregations gathered at Shekinah Retreat Centre from Jan. 30 to Feb. 1 to think about how they connect with God through music. Area church youth minister Kirsten Hamm-Epp said that, although the group was small, they brought a "high level of engagement" to the weekend's activities.

Ben Pauls, pastor of Zoar Mennonite Church in Waldheim, encouraged the youth to think about songs that are meaningful to them and imagine what might have inspired their composers to write them. He gave them various scenarios to work with, including Bible stories, stories from Mennonite history, pop culture and contemporary situations. Pauls asked the

youth to put themselves in the shoes of the main character in their scenario and then create a psalm based on the scenario.

Anna Epp of Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon said the exercise "illustrated how music can come from [many] different experiences."

People connect with God through music, especially when they sing together. Zachary Stefaniuk of Hague Mennonite Church, has experienced this in his own life. Times of singing with others at retreats or at summer camp have been powerful times of connecting with God for him.

Marcus Kruger, also of Wildwood Mennonite, is motivated by the "positive energy" of singing together at retreats and at camp. "The energy you get from people here will stay with you," he said.

Singing together is also a way of building community. "I can sing a song by myself," said Pauls, "but when we sing together in the context of congregation, we create relationships."

Pauls recognizes that youth often struggle with questions, doubt and confusion, but said he hopes they will come away from the retreat secure in the knowledge that "I can always sing my song to God. God is always there." ❧

For more photos and video, visit www.canadianmennonite.org/wheres-god-in-my-song.



Youth at SMYO's senior-high retreat connect with God and each other as they sing together.



*Michelle Dunsford, right, a lay leader at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, Ont., chats with Gerald and Marlene Kaufman, who co-authored *Necessary Conversations Between Adult Children and Their Elderly Parents*, at Breslau Mennonite Church on Jan. 17.*

'Necessary conversations'

MC Eastern Canada leaders focus on aging together

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
BRESLAU, ONT.

"The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The next best time is today."
(African proverb)

"Imagine your elderly parents are visiting from a distance and that they are planning to go on to more travel after they've left your place. You notice your dad has an off-putting odour. Do you talk to your dad? Your mom? Ignore it? If your parents and you have been in the habit of open communication about life's issues, then you and your parents will figure out some way to address this delicate subject. If you haven't, then maybe today is the time to start."

This real-life situation was only one of many shared by Marlene and Gerald Kaufman at the annual Mennonite Church Eastern Canada "Pastors, chaplains and congregational leaders event" held on Jan. 17 at Breslau Mennonite Church. The Kaufmans are co-authors of *Necessary Conversations Between Adult Children and their Aging Parents* (Good Books, 2013) and were the event's resource people.

The timeliness of the topic was clear as the sanctuary was full of lay and ordained leaders looking for help not only in the families of their congregations but in their

own families as well.

The day began with Scripture lessons interlaced with scripted responses. Abraham's purchase of a grave for Sarah from Genesis 23 was coupled with the musings of a mother and daughter in which they wonder how to broach sensitive topics with each other. Using the comments and questions of the gathered leaders, the Kaufmans spoke to the why, when,

what and how of conversations between adult children and their aging parents.

"Why" is basically so that children can carry out their parents' desires as their parents become unable to do so for themselves.

The Kaufmans suggested that "when" should take place between the parents' ages of 60 and 70, with the focus on the early 60s as the time to begin the conversations. Before that, children often don't want to think about their parents dying, and later on the parents may not be able to fully take part in the conversations.

"What" the conversations need to be about are: where the parents want to, or should, live; finances; powers of attorney for personal care and property; wills; dispersal of personal objects; and the funeral, among many other topics. Basically, the conversations need to be about all the details of the parents' lives that they may someday be unable to regulate themselves.

That left the tricky question of "how." The Kaufmans spoke to both the unofficial conversations that happen from time to time in communication, and the need for official conversations, where all the children are present with the parents. Sometimes the church—in the person of the pastor or a trained mediator—may be necessary to facilitate these conversations, especially when families have deep divisions and hurts that they cannot overcome, or there is the sense that a child may dominate or that parents will play favourites. Either parents or adult children can initiate the conversations. These need to be repeated as needed and the parents' situation changes as they age. ❧

MWC puts creative tensions at the centre of PA 2015 program

BY PHYLLIS PELLMAN GOOD

Mennonite World Conference
HARRISBURG, PA.

"We're coming together at PA 2015 to talk with each other about our faith-life with open hearts and open minds," says Liesa Unger, international coordinator of this summer's Mennonite

World Conference (MWC) assembly.

"We've invited our speakers to address the creative tensions found in several important topics that we all face daily," explains Unger, who's working closely with

the Program Planning Committee for the global gathering. “As Christians, we tend to think we should conquer or resolve these struggles. So we’ve asked a pair of speakers each morning to explore how we live faithfully within these tensions”

“Walking with God” is the guiding theme for PA 2015. Speakers will address these subjects during morning worship services:

- “WALKING IN doubt and conviction,” on July 22.
- “WALKING IN conflict and reconciliation,” on July 23.
- “WALKING IN autonomy and community,” on July 24.
- “WALKING IN receiving and giving,” on July 25.

Confirmed speakers for the mornings include Rebecca Osiro, a pastor from Kenya; Tom Yoder Neufeld, Conrad Grebel University College professor emeritus, Waterloo, Ont.; Nancy Heisey, an Eastern Mennonite University professor; Shant Kunjam, a bishop from India; and Hippolyto Tshimanga, Mennonite Church

Canada’s director of Africa, Europe and Latin America ministry.

“God has given us such a rich variety of experiences, cultures and settings—and we want to learn from our different lives while we’re together in July,” says Unger. “So often, we only see a narrow wedge of God’s kingdom among us. Each of us, in our particular settings, is up against dilemmas that feel threatening. So why not explore the Bible in the company and



Tom Yoder Neufeld will be one of the keynote speakers at PA 2015, the Mennonite World Conference assembly, in Harrisburg, Pa., this July.

/// Staff changes

Alberta pastors in transition

Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church had a lot to celebrate on Jan. 24, with the ordination of its lead pastor, Thomas Pham, and the licensing of its English ministry pastor, Kuen Yee. Pham has served the congregation since 1999, first as children’s pastor and then interim pastor. In 2002, he assumed the role of senior pastor. Before coming to Edmonton, Pham served as a church planter in Kitchener, Ont., and Langley, B.C. He earned a master of religious education degree from Acts Seminaries of Trinity Western University in Langley. Yee has served as the congregation’s English ministry pastor since 2013. She holds a bachelor of science degree in pharmacy, and a doctor of ministry degree from Acts Seminaries. Nhien Pham, president of the North American Vietnamese Mennonite Church and Pham’s cousin, travelled from Vancouver to witness the ceremony and to deliver a message based on John 21:15-19: “Feed my sheep.”

—STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD



Dan Graber, Mennonite Church Alberta area minister, centre, ordained Thomas Pham, senior pastor of Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church, left, and licensed Kuen Yee, the church’s English ministry pastor, on Jan. 24.

support of each other and together commit to greater faithfulness?”

César García, MWC’s general secretary from Colombia, reflected recently about the idea of “walking with God”: “I like the idea of understanding the Christian life as a way of living that’s under construction, a process that isn’t static or finished. I really believe that our conversations at PA 2015 will transform us, because we’ll be discovering together the implications of following Christ in our home communities.” ☼

/// Briefly noted

Vietnamese pastor severely beaten in Ho Chi Minh City

Nguyen Hong Quang, leader of the unregistered Vietnam Evangelical Mennonite Church, was severely beaten on his way to worship on Jan. 18. A few minutes after leaving his home in District 12 in the northwest area of the city with another pastor, Huynh Thuc Khai, each on his own motorcycle, they were accosted by two strangers who knocked Khai from his bike. Quang, who was following, stopped to assist the younger pastor. The two unknown men signalled five others, who assaulted Quang with clubs and bricks. Quang recognized two of these men, who often lounged by the gate of the house adjacent to his home. Passersby tried to stop the attack, but were threatened by the assailants, who fled after Quang lost consciousness. Members of the church happened along and took Quang to the nearest hospital. Family members later had him transferred to the Saigon Hoan My International Hospital, where doctors reported that Quang had suffered a fractured nose and serious internal injuries. Khai only suffered brush burns from the fall.

—BY LUKE S. MARTIN



Nguyen Hong Quang in hospital after being beaten.

VIEWPOINT

Spain: Old churches in new Europe

DIONISIO BYLER

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

Christianity is experiencing rapid decline in Europe, having gone in the past two or three generations from being an outwardly Christian culture, to something post-Christian. In general, statistics from Mennonite World Conference (MWC) indicate that the evolution of the old Mennonite churches in Europe reflect this same tendency.

One exception is the case of Spain, where, in less than 40 years, a new reality has come into being: a flourishing Anabaptist presence whose growth is seen as a sovereign work of the Spirit that surpasses inadequate human efforts.

Our brothers and sisters in the old European Mennonite churches—those that originated in the 16th century—tell us that they find our reality encouraging and hopeful. We, on the other hand, value their centuries of faithfulness and

feel honoured when they keep us in mind for continent-wide activities and organizations.

The first documented activity of Mennonites in Spain occurred during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), when the Mennonite Relief Committee sent several volunteers from the U.S. to participate in a program to feed child war refugees. The victory by the fascist faction effectively terminated Mennonite involvement in Spain at the end of the war.

During the 1970s, it became possible to send missionaries to Spain. After consulting with leaders of the Spanish Protestant churches, Mennonite missionaries initially decided to cooperate with them, instead of establishing yet another denomination in the country.

Later, the first Mennonite church came into being in Barcelona. The group that

started the congregation arrived from Belgium, where it had migrated years before and where it had been worshipping with a Mennonite congregation at an American mission.

Outstanding characteristics

In our communities today it is possible to find typically Pentecostal practices, but also misgivings regarding emotionalism. Theologically, there are among us both fundamentalist and liberal tendencies, but neither are we lacking in an Anabaptist “Third Way,” which explores alternative ways of explaining Christian faith.

Although few in numbers, our churches have not neglected service and missions. And since the 1970s, there has been among us an important element of biblical and theological exploration in a Mennonite or Anabaptist mode, which finds expression in ministries of teaching and literature, in print and on the Internet.

Some other clearly Anabaptist emphases surface repeatedly in our communities:

- **THE CHURCH** as a close-knit, closely bonded family that practises mutual assistance.
- **JESUS AS** teacher and example, as well as Saviour and Lord.
- **NONVIOLENCE AND** objection to

On being Anabaptist in Spain

Agustín Melguizo

Pastor, United Anabaptist Communities (Burgos)

Some of the demands of Anabaptism have been accepted by most of the evangelical churches which I relate to: for instance, separation of church and state, and adult baptism. This implies [we are] living alongside of, and in cooperation with, different Christian churches, with which we have some differences but also much in common. It also means [we need] to look at our environment in order to take the light of Jesus to anyone who is open to him and, with personal and community witness, present a conversion which involves all areas of life and also implies a lifelong discipleship.



David Becerra

Pastor, Barcelona Mennonite Church

I am Mennonite because one day I discovered that the message and life of Jesus imply a radical nonviolence. Reading the gospel this way led me to be a conscientious objector to military service. I am Mennonite because one day the pastor of the Barcelona Mennonite Church knelt and unexpectedly washed my feet. This taught me the true measure of authority: to serve others [as a slave]. In the Spanish context, to be Mennonite is to understand and live the gospel differently, focussing especially on Christ and his message of reconciliation.



military service.

♦ **A PRAGMATIC—RATHER** than dogmatic—theology, more interested in personally following Jesus than in theoretical affirmations about doctrine.

Looking ahead

Some significant challenges face this new growth of Anabaptist/Mennonite Christianity in Spain. In the next 10 to 15 years, most of our churches will face a significant generational shift in leadership. New leadership will arise, or else be imported from other churches. Will this second-generation leadership have a clear sense of identity beyond generic evangelical Christian identity?

Additionally, Protestant Christianity in general, and Anabaptist/Mennonite Christianity as a form of non-Catholic Christianity, are relatively new arrivals in Spain. They have arrived, not coincidentally, in precisely the generation in which the Spanish people began to reconsider the ancient connection between Spanish identity and Roman Catholic religion. But the weakening hold of Catholicism over the Spanish people does not necessarily mean openness to other forms of Christianity. Rather, it is a sign of a European trend to a post-Christian, profoundly atheistic way of understanding human existence.

The prevalent culture is not necessarily hostile to Christianity, but it does find Christianity utterly uninteresting, perhaps embarrassingly primitive. The challenge for our churches—and sister churches of every other stripe—is to find a way to light the flame of interest, curiosity and commitment. Essentially, this constitutes a call for a church that overflows with the life and presence of the Spirit of God.

We have no illusion of being able to kindle the flame of interest, conviction and passion for Christ with our own witness or human resources. But we are committing our energies and resources to this end anyway. We do not live under the illusion that the fact of prayer generates a mechanically automatic response from God, yet we redouble our commitment to prayer, beseeching God on our knees to pour out God's Spirit upon this country.

PHOTO BY JOSÉ LOZANO



Congregants worship at the Burgos Anabaptist Church in Spain.

In the final analysis, this youngest shoot of Anabaptist/Mennonite Christianity in Europe shares with our older sister-churches of Anabaptist origins the reality that our very survival—not to mention propagation—depends most absolutely on

the grace of God. Only the grace of God can grant us a future. ❧

Dionisio Byler is a writer and teacher at the Protestant Faculty of Theology in El Escorial, near Madrid.

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GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

COVER STORY

When vets mourn what should Mennos do?

New Sunday school curriculum urges Mennonites to seek peace together with veterans

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

A new Sunday School peace curriculum in the U.S. pushes Mennonites in a direction very different than the predictable emphasis on the evils of war and the theological superiority of pacifism.

“Returning veterans, returning hope: Seeking peace together” encourages Mennonites to see veterans not as people with incorrect views, but as fellow human beings to be understood and embraced.

The curriculum—found online at mcc.org/media/resources/1719—is not about us “trying to win an argument,” says Jason



Jason Boone

and Mennonite Mission Network, is about understanding people with military experience and exploring how the Anabaptist circles of faith can be extended to welcome

Boone of Mennonite Church U.S.A. “That’s not it at all.” Instead, it equips Mennonite churches to reach out to veterans.

The material, which was released last November by MC U.S.A., Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Returning Veterans. Returning hope.

them. It asks, “What can veterans and peace churches learn from one another?”

The U.S. is home to 21 million vets, including 2.5 million from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of these people’s lives have been turned upside down. The pain that many of them carry is a “living reminder,” the curriculum states, “of our shared failure to prevent war and create a culture of peace.”

The material suggests that members of peace churches should extend the same compassion towards these people as they would to victims and survivors of war overseas, since they, too, “carry the emotional and moral pain of war.”

For many Mennonites, a first step is to take down the walls that tend to separate pacifists from those who have gone to war. The first of the six lessons is entitled “Crossing barriers.” Boone says a “healthy dose of self-reflection” is required. Mennonites need to examine whether there is “a purity that we own that keeps

Blankets for vets

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

Retired Canadian Forces captain Wayne Johnston received a warm welcome at 50 Kent, the home of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario and other Mennonite agencies in Kitchener last month. Invited by MCC Ontario director Rick Cober Bauman to make a noon-hour presentation, Johnston shared his story of harm and healing.

Johnston concluded his military career, which involved a stint in Bosnia, as casualty administration officer, overseeing arrangements for the return of soldiers killed in Afghanistan. Dealing so closely with death and its survivors took a toll.

“It was great for my soul, but it broke my heart,” he told Global News.

Johnston is also founder of Wounded Warriors, a non-profit organization that assists returning soldiers, with a focus on mental health. Johnston himself is candid about

his struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Cober Bauman says Johnston’s presentation was “very compelling” and deeply appreciated by those in attendance. Cober Bauman helped present Johnston with a hand-made quilt.

MCC Ontario, along with MCC Manitoba and MCC Alberta, will also be providing quilts for soldiers and their families at a Wounded Warriors healing weekend taking place in Chilliwack, B.C., from July 31 to Aug. 3.



Retired Canadian Forces captain Wayne Johnston, right, receives a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) quilt from MCC Ontario staff, Wendy Adema, left, and Rick Cober Bauman, while other staff and volunteers look on.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PHOTO BY RACHEL LARUE (DETAIL)
(CREATIVECOMMONS.ORG/LICENSES/BY-NC-ND/2.0/)



us away from other folks.”

“Are we setting ourselves aside from people that we see as less than us?” he encourages churches to ask. “If so, that’s a problem.”

In the first lesson, Ron Adams, a Mennonite pastor from Wisconsin, shares his own experience of crossing barriers to work with veterans. “As a good Mennonite, I am comfortable remaining behind the walls that separate me from those participating in the military,” he writes. “And, frankly, it’s easier that way, neatly dividing the world into us and them.” But beyond those walls, Adams says, lies the realization of “the humanity we share.”

The lesson draws on Matthew 8, in which Jesus heals the servant of a military officer of the oppressive Roman occupying force. “He touched everybody,” Adams says of Jesus. “He turned no one away.” Adams writes that he remains a “convinced Mennonite pacifist,” but that does not excuse him from loving others, including veterans, and sharing their pain.

Subsequent lesson topics in the series include:

- “OUR MILITARIZED lives.”
- “THE EXPERIENCE of trauma.”
- “BREAKING FREE from trauma and moral injury.”

- “HOSPITALITY: A two-way street.”
- “DEEPENING OUR peace roots.”

Each lesson is intended to be used for one or two Sunday sessions.

Ultimately, the goal of the initiative is to equip and motivate individual congregations to find ways in their particular setting to make relational contact with military personnel and to do so in such a way that particular vets will feel comfortable becoming involved in their churches and will experience church as a place of healing.

Boone says he has personally found it very helpful to learn about the sorts of issues vets face and what the process of dealing with intense trauma can involve. He says people dealing with “moral injuries” need two things that churches are well-positioned to provide: long-term community ties and access to some sort of moral authority figure.

Boone says the response to the new curriculum has been positive, although he does not have data on how many congregations are using the material. The next phase is to offer day-and-a-half congregational training sessions that will delve deeper into theology and ethics, as well as look at exactly what specific congregations can do in their particular settings. Those sessions will be offered beginning later this year. ❧



Employment Opportunity Assistant Director of Facilities and Hosting

Canadian Mennonite University invites inquiries and applications for the full-time salaried position of Assistant Director of Facilities and Hosting with an anticipated start date of March 16, 2015.

Applications should be submitted immediately and will be accepted until this position is filled. Inquiries should be directed to Dianna Robson, Director of Human Resources at drobson@cmu.ca or 204-594-0532.

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VIEWPOINT

Arms Trade Treaty signed but not by Canada

PROJECT PLOUGHSHARES

The Arms Trade Treaty became international law on Dec. 24, 2014. Sadly, the Government of Canada was absent from the Christmas Eve celebration. Canada participated in negotiations for the treaty and voted to approve the text in the UN General Assembly in April 2013, but subsequently failed to sign it, becoming the only member of NATO that has failed to do so.

The treaty aims to set the highest possible standards for cross-border transfers of arms and ammunition, and to cut off the supply of weapons to dictators and human rights abusers around the world. Project Ploughshares worked for more than 15 years to make the treaty a reality, most recently as part of the global civil society Control Arms Coalition.

“The [treaty] is the most important conventional weapons control treaty of

this generation,” said John Siebert, executive director of Project Ploughshares, late last year. “It is highly regrettable that Canada is not part of this historic occasion. As more states join the treaty—Israel became a signatory just last week—Canada’s absence becomes more stark. Why isn’t Canada party to this international effort to end irresponsible weapons transfers across borders?”

Under the treaty’s new rules, before any arms transfer takes place, it must be assessed against strict criteria, including whether the arms might be used for human rights violations or war crimes. If there is a substantial risk the transfer will breach this criteria, then it cannot be authorized.

According to Anna Macdonald, director of the Control Arms Coalition, “Civilians have paid far too high a

price this year [2014]. From Aleppo to Peshawar, from Gaza to South Sudan, we have seen the devastating impact of the poorly regulated arms trade.

“For too long, arms and ammunition have been traded with few questions asked about whose lives they will destroy. The new Arms Trade Treaty . . . will bring that to an end.

“If robustly implemented, this treaty has the potential to save many lives and offer much-needed protection to vulnerable civilians around the world. It is now—finally—against international law to put weapons into the hands of human rights abusers and dictators. Dec. 24 marks the dawn of a new era.”

Informal discussions between governments that have ratified the treaty took place during 2014 to prepare the ground for implementation of the treaty. The next round of discussions is due to take place in Trinidad and Tobago in February. Planning is also underway for the treaty’s first annual meeting for states to assess progress on implementation. This is expected to take place this summer.

To date, 128 states have signed the treaty, with 60 having ratified it. These include major arms exporters such as France, the United Kingdom and Germany. ❧

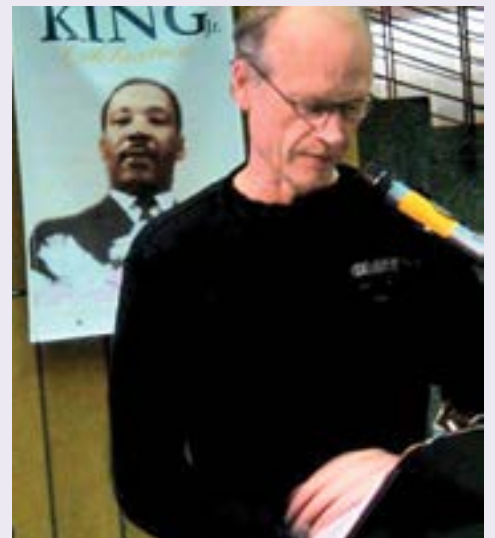
/// Briefly noted

PeaceQuest challenges Canada to sign Small Arms Treaty

KITCHENER, ONT.—A new peace group in Waterloo Region gathered at Kitchener City Hall on Jan. 19 to highlight the fact that the Canadian government has yet to sign the Small Arms Treaty and to begin a local petition to have people encourage the government to do so. Roger Albrecht of the new PeaceQuest group, pictured, addressed the group. As the photo illustrates, the group chose Martin Luther King Day to begin its public work. The treaty is an attempt to ensure that conventional weapons are not transferred to those who would violate international human rights or humanitarian law, engage in acts of genocide or crimes against humanity, or facilitate terrorist attacks. Canada is the only NATO country that has refused to sign it, even though Canada voted to approve the text of the treaty back in April 2013. By now refusing to sign it and bring it to Parliament for ratification, some believe Canada appears to be backing the only three states that voted against it: North Korea, Iran and Syria. “That doesn’t send a good message to the global community about Canada’s commitment towards working for peace,” said PeaceQuest coordinator Emily Mininger.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

PHOTO BY MATTHEW ALBRECHT



Fire results in interfaith connections

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

On Nov. 13, 2013, a house built in the latter part of the 1800s in Kitchener was gutted, thankfully with no loss of life or injury. Nearly a year later, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) was called in to lend a hand.

According to neighbour Carolyn Dawn Good of First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, it seemed as if repairs were moving ahead at first, with a new roof put on. But inside things were not moving ahead and the City of Kitchener's expectations were not being met, to the point that the owner, a Sikh woman, and her adult son had received a demolition order.

Attempts to find assistance from Good's congregation, the Working Centre in Kitchener, the city and social services seemed to go nowhere. Finally, Good contacted MDS—just in time, as the city's

demolition crew arrived to begin their work.

The building had to be stripped back to the brick walls and have a coating applied to control the smoke smell. MDS was committed to making the main floor living space ready to minimum occupancy for the mother and son to move back in. The upstairs, which had not been used before the fire, was to be roughed in for future development. Volunteers from many different Mennonite groups did the work as volunteers, with the tradespeople paid for their time.

Good notes that it has been a good experience for Mennonites and Sikhs to be working together, as the Sikh community has been supporting the family with financing for the project. ❧



Dan Ulrich of Mennonite Disaster Service works on the Kitchener fire rebuild.

Langley church adopts indigenous protocol

Acknowledges presence on first nation land

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent

Langley Mennonite Fellowship has become the first Mennonite Church B.C. congregation to acknowledge in writing that it sits on unceded first nations territory.

At last year's MC B.C. annual general meeting, Brander McDonald, the area church's indigenous relations coordinator, challenged member congregations to consider posting a written declaration to that effect in a prominent place, such as a church bulletin or website.

Langley Mennonite considered the call.

Says Pastor Henry Krause, "We were challenged by hearing Brander McDonald . . . challenging us to recognize the territory on which our church lies. We decided that this would be a simple, visible first step in our ongoing intentional journey towards greater understanding of our indigenous neighbours and the building of relationships, and so we put the following statement in each week's bulletin and on the homepage of our website: 'We at Langley

Mennonite Fellowship acknowledge our presence on Stó:lō Kwantlen land and are grateful to our first nation hosts.'"

McDonald told *Canadian Mennonite* that, in terms of relations with indigenous people, this would be "the easiest, most effective first step. . . . Then at least you could refer to that as to proper protocol regarding native relational development and bridgebuilding."

McDonald said that when he informed various indigenous people of Langley Mennonite's actions, "they were decidedly excited. Some were sceptical that a church would even consider, but [Langley Mennonite] is working hard to be part-takers in the walking out of their reconciliation walk in the MC B.C. . . . This is a huge first step. My hands are raised up . . . in honour." ❧

GOD AT WORK IN US

'Another cool move'

Vernon Erb reflects on 56 years in the trucking business

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
BADEN, ONT.

Vernon Erb had a busy fall. Wet weather combined with a late planting season last spring meant the soybeans and corn were hard to get off the fields.

"I guess I've gone full circle," he says with a laugh. Like many Amish-Mennonite boys in the 1950s, he was expected to take over the family farm near Wellesley, Ont. But farming didn't interest him then like it does now in "retirement." In the intervening five decades, he built an international trucking firm based in Baden.

In the latest "Erban Report," the newsletter of the Erb Group of Companies, Erb tells the story of how beginning in 1966 Erb Transport was shipping poultry for Shantz Poultry out of Ingersoll, Ont., to Thunder Bay. The Safeway stores receiving the poultry wanted Erb to also deliver meat from various suppliers in the Toronto area, but Erb didn't have the licence to do it.

In 1970, Erb Transport was granted a "wide open unrestricted PVC licence [by transfer from another company] to carry refrigerated goods to and from all points in Ontario," the newsletter states. Immediately, meat from Pillars, Siena Foods and other suppliers was shipped to Thunder Bay. But the trucks were coming back empty since Erb had no licence to ship anything out of Thunder Bay.

Soon Erb made contact with Burns Food, Schneider, Swift and Canada Packers in Winnipeg, to ship their meat from Thunder Bay, where it arrived by train from Winnipeg, to all the small stores along Highway 17 South. Until then it had been moved by unrefrigerated local carriers with many spoilage issues.

Erb Transport focusses exclusively on refrigerated goods and the specialized "reefer" (refrigerated) trucks and warehouses that requires. While deregulation



in the late 1980s meant more competition, Erb's good work and persistence helped his company to outlive the many upstarts that thought they could get into the business and undercut him.

The "another cool move" slogan was invented by Vernon's wife Viola and identifies Erb trucks all over North America.

When Erb first started out, his father did not like the idea of him being a trucker. He found it difficult to reconcile the stereotypical lifestyle of the trucker, with hard living

and drinking, and a Christian lifestyle. But Erb eventually convinced his father and began trucking, with his wife's work at the then new University of Waterloo supplementing their income.

Although he grew up in the Mapleview-Crosshill congregation, he and Viola have been part of Steinmann Mennonite Church in Baden for many years. Erb has used his gifts in finance and organization in the congregations he has attended.

When he reflects on how his Christian faith influenced his work and business, he talks about how he has dealt with his employees through the years.

One man complained constantly about seemingly everything and finally Erb took him into his office and suggested that this was obviously a bad fit and the man was free to leave. The man changed his attitude and became one of his best drivers. Another, who was proven to be pilfering money and goods, was given another chance; he continued to work without further incident and no public shame.

Erb Transport has not been unionized. Profit-sharing means employees share in the good fortune of the company. Employee committees at each of the 14 terminals meet with management monthly to discuss issues and problems, working



Vernon Erb stands with an International 9900 tractor, a gift from International to thank Erb Trucking for its many years of buying tractors from International, and partially as an apology for a series of bad engines it had shipped to Erb Transport. Erb drives regularly, still enjoying the road.

together toward solutions.

“There are always ways to improve,” says Erb. He and his son Wendell also try to get to each of the day-long barbecues for employees and their families held yearly at each terminal.

Now “retired,” he notes that he might have been “too attached [to the business] for too long.” When he pulled back and Wendell became general manager and then president and CEO, Erb noticed that his son had a different, more hands-off, way of dealing with the many facets of the

business. Like many business founders, Erb was used to having his hand in every aspect and being the go-to person for solutions. Wendell gave department heads and others more freedom to make decisions and implement policy, resulting in more creativity from the employees for the good of the firm.

So in “retirement” Erb farms about 90 hectares just a few minutes from the Erb Transport yard in Baden, still actively interested in the business, but more watching as the next generation moves the “cool” loads. ☞

Chris Steingart builds websites and life

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Late last year, Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) presented its inaugural 20 under 35: Young Professionals Changing the World Awards, honouring these young adults from Canada and the U.S. for their “faith, entrepreneurial spirit and service.” Ethan Eshbach, coordinator of engagement initiatives for MEDA, explains, “20 under 35 connects the values behind MEDA’s work around the world to those of young professionals here in North America. From entrepreneurs to business professionals to community advocates to church leaders, we have a very impressive mix.” Over the next few issues, Canadian Mennonite will be featuring profiles of all six of the Canadian winners, five from Ontario and one from British Columbia.

Chris Steingart has been running his QT Webdesigns business from his home in Kitchener for the past eight years. Besides designing and building websites, QT also hosts websites, and does brand

and identity development. The “QT” stands for Quality Transformations.

Steingart’s “commute” to work got a bit longer lately, after he and his wife Jillian added Maya in December to two-year-old

Rowan. Now his office has been relegated to the basement.

While he builds for anyone interested, he has done a lot of work for congregations and Mennonite church-related institutions, including Mennonite Church U.S.A., Silver Lake Mennonite Camp in Ontario, and MennoMedia’s new Shine curriculum. Congregations include a number of United churches as well as Rockway, Shantz, Waterloo-Kitchener and Breslau Mennonite churches.

Breslau Mennonite is where the Steingarts call home. Having worked as a youth pastor at Waterloo-Kitchener Mennonite before a period of teaching English in South Korea and getting QT off the ground, Steingart thinks he understands congregational and Mennonite culture in order to build sites that better fit their needs. The ethics and beliefs of these institutions inform how he does business.

Working from home allows him to support his spouse better and spend time with his children, while at the same time serving the church and community. He likes the flexibility of being able to break his day into sections based on other needs for himself and his family.

Steingart has depended on word-of-mouth advertising. One website for a realtor in Ottawa resulted in a dozen jobs there. After eight years, he is also getting repeat business. He thinks that websites need to be renewed every two to five years, depending on how quickly a business is evolving and changing. Some renew much more often; Vigor Clean Tech of Petersburg, Ont., changes its site yearly.

Being one of the 20 under 35 winners has resulted in more visibility for Steingart, both due to MEDA’s publicity and the convention announcement, but so has local media’s coverage of some of the local winners.

“Clients saw the coverage and it reminded them to get in touch,” he says with a laugh. He feels the acknowledgement validates his work and his relationships. ☞



Chris Steingart, one of the Waterloo Region MEDA 20 under 35 award winners, sits in his basement QT Webdesigns office.

35 MEDA
20 under 35
20 Young Professionals
Changing the World

OBITUARY

A servant for Jesus' sake

Peter Derksen

Aug. 12, 1928 – Nov. 12, 2014

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Peter Derksen never wavered in his belief that God called him to ministry in Japan.

That conviction led him and his wife Mary to serve there as church planters for more than 45 years, creating a network of believers who are still impacting Japan today. They ministered with the Commission on Overseas Mission (COM), a predecessor to Mennonite Church Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network.

Peter passed away on Nov. 15, 2014, after struggling with Parkinson's disease. A memorial service was held on Nov. 26 at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C.

Mary said that Peter drew his life motto from II Corinthians 4:5: "... your servants for Jesus' sake."

"Peter and Mary had a very special gift for starting new churches that had a solid foundation and have continued to the present, and also in developing good leadership in those churches," said Robert Ramseyer, a long-time friend of the Derksens and a fellow missionary in Japan, in an e-mail interview. "I say 'Peter and Mary,' because they were a real team. Neither could have done the work without the other."

While Peter led their church planting efforts and preached, Mary was deeply involved in building the relationships fundamental to church planting, even as their family grew to include six children.

The Derksens' ministry began by teaching English language lessons. That provided the opportunity to model faithful living and talk about Christ. Their commitment to their church plant in Oita, a city in southern Japan on the island of Kyushu,



Peter Derksen

sparked the growth of a tightly knit group of young adults. Through Peter's encouragement, young leaders from that group became Christians and eventually pastors.

Getting started was challenging, Mary said, and sometimes seemed slow. In a culture with tightly knit families and prominent Buddhism, being open to Christianity meant risking family disharmony.

In his early life, Peter likely never imagined taking part in such transformation. Born in Reinland, Man., he spent most of his formative years in Abbotsford. He and his four siblings grew up in a home with little material wealth, but were richly immersed in Anabaptist faith, farm chores,

music, hospitality and volunteering.

According to an old collection of type-written missionary biographies compiled by Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg dated 1967, Peter remembered inviting Jesus into his heart as a child and taking a public stand for Christ at about the age of 12. In junior high school, he first took notice of Japan through the unexplained disappearance of several Japanese classmates. It wasn't until later that he realized they had been sent to internment camps following the Second World War attack on Pearl Harbor.

An intelligent, studious young man, Peter managed to finish high school two years earlier than most. From the age of 16, he engaged his passion for faith and learning

within the walls of Mennonite schools, first in Abbotsford and then in Winnipeg at Mennonite Brethren Bible College, where he met Mary Klassen. The two connected through Mary's roommate, who introduced them in the school's residence kitchen, where they were given the chore of peeling potatoes. The two married in 1951.

"We were in service together from the start," Mary said.

Peter furthered his studies at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., and the Biblical Seminary in New York, now known as New York Theological Seminary. Following that, he taught at Bethel Bible Institute in Abbotsford, and preached on the live *Messengers of Peace* radio gospel broadcast.

During this time he was moved by a presentation of missionary W. C. Voth, who had just returned from a post-war exploratory trip to Japan on behalf of COM. Voth proclaimed that it was an opportune time and place for missionaries. Peter felt that God was calling him and his wife to go.

The Derksens embarked on their journey in 1954 with two young children in tow—Vangy and Rickie—and with Robert and Alice Ruth Ramseyer and their infant son, Mark. The Derksens returned

In junior high school, [Peter Derksen] first took notice of Japan through the unexplained disappearance of several Japanese classmates.

to Canada in 1999, but they kept in touch with the many friends they had made in Japan over the years.

From 2001-08, the couple helped pastor Surrey Mennonite Church with George and Martha Janzen. The church was started by Anna Dyck to serve Japanese immigrants. In a way, it was a family affair; the Janzens and Dyck were also retired COM missionaries who served in Japan, and were friends of the Derksens.

Peter is survived by Mary, his wife of 63 years; his older sister Erna (Jake) Tilitzky; his six children: Vanj (Ernie) Thiessen, Rick (Marilyn), Rose (John) Snyder, Bill (Donna Tennant), Wanda (Bruno) Derksen-Bergen and Lily (Roy Wang) Derksen; 14 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. ❧

ARTBEAT

'Bring the wall down'

Edmonton artist seeks to get past 'arbitrary impediments'

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent

EDMONTON

“Walls became an obsession when I went to Berlin in 2010,” artist Rhonda Harder Epp told the crowd at the opening of her *Walls: Arbitrary Impediments* art exhibition at King’s University College, Edmonton, last month.

In a series of more than 30 oil paintings and paper sculptures, Harder Epp explored ideas of how the barriers people erect physically and emotionally affect individuals and the world. Doors and ladders and ways around obstacles are simultaneously obvious and subtle throughout the works, drawing observers to linger and wonder if there are paths through the darkness and difficulties humanity continues to build, both individually and corporately.

In her address, Harder Epp referred to what she has written about the exhibition on her website: “The paintings in the *Walls* series are meditations of the idea of

separation, arbitrariness and emotional distress, our experience of being separated from our people, our land or our deepest desires. . . . I ruminated and imagined. And maybe with the final panel of ‘Green Lines,’ the barbed wire unravelling, I came to a wishful resolution.”

Abe Janzen, director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta, spoke for a few minutes, reflecting on the tragedy of the many old walls that continue to stand between people and the new walls still going up. In a trip to Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan last November, Janzen noted the growing walls between various Muslim groups and between the West and Islam.

He named physical walls, such as the ones between the U.S. and Mexico, between Israel and the West Bank, and between India and Bangladesh, that all entrench division and misunderstanding.

Quoting from Marcello Di Cintio’s 2012 book, *Walls: Travels Along the Barricades*, he told the audience that research has shown people living near the Berlin Wall had increased incidences of both mental and physical illness: “The only cure for ‘wall disease’ was to bring the wall down.”

Asked why MCC Alberta might seek to partner with a visual artist, it became clear that the fit for this event felt natural for everyone involved.

Heather Prior, a biology professor at King’s University, attends Edmonton First Mennonite Church with Harder Epp and suggested her work for one of the institution’s quarterly exhibits.

Daniel vanHeyst, associate professor of art and drama at King’s, said, “The [MCC Alberta] leadership is familiar with King’s, and that made it a natural fit” for King’s to host the exhibition, since both organizations are keenly interested in matters of social justice.

Adrienne Wiebe, program coordinator for MCC Alberta in Edmonton, said, “The beauty and the power of the imagery and ideas really spoke to me.” ❧

“Walls: Arbitrary impediments” is open for viewing at King’s University College until March 10. For those not able to attend, Harder Epp’s work can be viewed online at <http://bit.ly/1LUKQ7g>.



Rhonda Harder Epp stands beside the final panel of ‘Green Lines,’ where the image of barbed wire unravelling leaves observers with hope for the eventual removal of barriers.

BOOK REVIEW

Author hints at his own personal story

Come Back.

By Rudy Wiebe. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2014; 268 pages.

REVIEWED BY JAKE BUHLER

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

In his latest novel, *Come Back*, Rudy Wiebe imagines that fiction could be real as he hints at his own personal story.

Hal is a pensioned Mennonite professor who is not doing well after the death of his beloved wife, Yolanda. He hangs out at an Edmonton café with Owl, a solid Dene soul-mate who plays back reality when Hal's mind wanders.

Over a coffee on a chilly day, Hal sees an orange-hooded figure on the street who he believes is Gabe, his son who committed suicide 25 years earlier. Hal exits the café and pursues the man across the street, only to lose him when he gets caught in traffic.

The jolt of seeing his son drives him to open a storage box containing Gabe's preserved notebooks. What follows takes up most of the rest of the book. We learn from the notebook entries about his troubled travels in Europe, where he is constantly obsessed with a pubescent schoolgirl named Ailsa, who, at 14, is 10 years younger than he. We see dozens of unfinished sentences that allow us to see his struggle with meaning and hopelessness. We learn of his deep appreciation for the literary arts through his quotes from the masters. And we learn of his Mennonite roots through flashbacks.

At age 24, Gabe returns to Alberta, where, after a period of despondency, kills himself by pumping carbon monoxide into his pick-up cab. The year is 1985.

There is a link between this novel and Wiebe's first, *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, published in 1962, whose main character, Hal, is an eight-year-old set in the boreal forest of Saskatchewan in 1944. That



makes Wiebe and Hal about the same age. Gabe and Wiebe's son Michael—who also committed suicide—are also the same age.

If the conflict in *Peace Shall Destroy Many* was about the local prejudices held by an insular community of Mennonites, *Come Back* reveals a mature Mennonite professor who, for 25

years, has been in denial and has not resolved his son's suicide. Then in 2010, Hal has a life-altering experience as he reads Gabe's notebooks filled with troubled entries. Hal becomes conflicted with why his son ended his life. If only Gabe could "come back," there would be answers, and that is where the book's title comes from.

Wiebe's ability to write simply about profoundly complex subjects is one reason why he has been one of Canada's enduring authors for so many years. He is a true teller of stories, whether fiction or not. And in many of his books he explores the theme of loss. What if the Cree woman, Yvonne

[Rudy Wiebe] is a true teller of stories, whether fiction or not.

Johnson, in *Stolen Life*, had not been raped, abused and robbed of her life? What if the prophetic Big Bear in *Temptations of Big Bear* had succeeded in freeing his people? What if Helen in *Of this Earth* had not died? And finally, what might it be like if Gabe in *Come Back* came back?

There are a number of fine Mennonite writers, but too many are angry—I think of Miriam Toews—and time and again beat up their loyal Mennonite readers,

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PHOTO
BY JENNIFER KONKLE



Trevor Bechtel, left, the dean of Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., signs a copy of his new book, *The Gift of Ethics*, for student Jesse Yantzi at the book's launch on Feb. 2. Structured on the Beatitudes, the book is a short, readable introduction to the major ideas in Christian ethics. Described by Margaret Adam as a way to draw 'newcomers to the field of Christian ethics into an understanding of Christian identity and practice through personal, scriptural and cinematic stories,' *The Gift of Ethics* provokes thought and reflection.

and I am one. Wiebe is one of the few, perhaps, who towers above most, who provides hope, not anger, and who asks complex questions in a simple way.

In *Come Back* we are not told what it would be like if Gabe could return. Instead, we are left to resolve that ourselves even as we try to cope with untimely deaths in our communities. In his introduction, Wiebe takes comfort in the Bible, quoting in his introduction from Paul in I Corinthians 13:12: "For now we look through a mirror into an enigma, but then face to face." ❧

Jake Buhler is an educator and seminarian who has worked in international development with Mennonite Central Committee and the Canadian government in Southeast Asia. He currently heads the Mennonite Historical Society Saskatchewan and is a member of Osler Mennonite Church.

Faculty demonstrate CMU's commitment to the church

by Kevin Kilbrei, CMU

Canadian Mennonite University is committed to enliven its mission as a university of the church in the world. This commitment takes diverse forms, among them the research, writing and publishing of our faculty. During the 2014-2015 school year three books of importance for the church and the broader community have emerged.

The Collar, a recent release by Associate Professor of English Sue Sorensen, reflects her interest in the intersection of church, literature and film, and her conviction that "all Christians are ministers." Employing a range of novels, plays, TV shows and movies, Sorensen

explores the many ways that ministers have been represented on page and screen, and in so doing opens themes of "pastoral passion, frustration and fallibility."

In his book *California Mennonites*, CMU Assistant Professor of History Brian Froese tells the story of "being Mennonite" in California. He wonders how a peace witness and a commitment to radical reform fit within a world of surfing, wineries and Disneyland? *California Mennonites* captures the discernment of Mennonites in this setting. This just-published book contributes to Mennonite identity and understanding, and to questions of selfhood



and community, politics and faith.

Associate Professor of Theology and Anabaptist Studies Paul Doerksen edited *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology*, the unfinished theo-political project of the late A. James Reimer. Originally intended as a fully conceptualized political theology, the collection from scholars in a variety of disciplines focusses on the Biblical-Trinitarian foundations for all Christian social ethics, and the importance of faithful engagement by Christians in public institutional life.

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VIEWPOINT

Where is God at the gym?

Use your creativity to honour God with your body

AMANDA ZEHR

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

I am not a huge fan of going to the gym. I know exercise is good for me, but so is eating vegetables, and I'm not really into that either. At the end of a work day, even though I know a trip to the gym will be good for me, it's just so much easier to sit down with some Cheetos and watch Netflix.

So I wonder: Where is God at the gym?

recreational sports, or if you express love through a hug or a handshake. And if you're married, it applies to your physical relationship with your spouse. Honouring God with your body applies to every single follower of Christ.

This makes my gym attendance much harder to put on the back burner. Just as we honour God by giving back a portion

I often teach the children at church that God is everywhere, and if they run into problems at school, God is there. The same logic must apply . . . at the gym.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMANDA ZEHR



Honouring God with our bodies can be difficult sometimes, but ultimately it's worth it, says Amanda Zehr.

Where is God in my eating habits? I often teach the children at church that God is everywhere, and if they run into problems at school, God is there. The same logic must apply here. God is at the gym. God is in my meal preparations. God is in my sleep patterns and the vitamins I take, and in my confidence and self-esteem.

All of these health topics are body related. So what is my relationship with my body? Do I see it as ugly and huge and fat and useless? Do I place any value on it whatsoever? Do I see my body the way God sees it: as fearfully and wonderfully made?

This has led me to think about a theology of the body, which is: Honour God with your body. This applies to any and all stages of life. It applies to how you eat, your body image, whether you drive or walk, if you get to the gym, if you play

of what he's given to us, or by volunteering to help the most vulnerable, so we honour God by taking care of the body he's given us.

This means that I need to take some time to figure out what's going to work for me, as I seek to best honour God. At one point, I was working out three times a week, but it faded. Once I started running in the summer, I realized that I enjoy cardio much more than strength training, and while a combination of both is best, the only way I'm going to stick to doing something I already don't enjoy is to start with the exercise I enjoy the most.

I can go and be on the elliptical for half an hour, and since the gym has cable and I don't, I get to sit and watch the Food Network for 30 minutes. What is the downside to that?

There may be more obstacles for you. You may have children and your gym doesn't have childcare. Maybe you can't afford a gym membership. I don't know your unique circumstances, but I can tell you that I got in a mini-work-out at Junior Youth this week playing basketball with the kids. I am much taller than them, so it was hilariously easy to score a basket, but those kids can sure run! What they lack in height, they make up for in speed.

This is how easy it can be: honouring

God with your body by playing half court with some 12-year-olds. This one's a double whammy too, because you can honour God with physical movement and form relationships in the church!

So use your creativity! Honour God with your body the best way you can, and he'll walk with you every step of the journey. ✎

Amanda Zehr, 27, is the associate pastor at Listowel Mennonite Church, Ont.

'Keeping it Riel'

Winnipeg's Riel Gentlemen's Choir addresses local issues through music

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor
WINNIPEG

If an outsider were to walk into a Riel Gentlemen's Choir practice, it would seem to be a combination of an alternative choral experiment, a boy's club, a Manitoba fan club and a Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) reunion.

It may be like that in many ways, but it's also a supportive environment for men looking to break free of traditional ideas of masculinity, and a way for these twenty- and thirty-something men to exercise their creativity.

Jesse Krause, 29, is one such individual. He's the director and a founding member of this denim-clad choir and grew up attending Langley Mennonite Fellowship in B.C.

It all started in 2011, when Seth Woodyard, 31, another founding member, needed an all-male choir to sing for an art installation he was planning, called "Good work." He envisioned the group dressed in denim shirts to represent the working class.

Choir members decided they enjoyed singing together so much that they would perform again the next year at Mennofolk, an annual arts and music festival in Winnipeg for people of Mennonite background. The group is still together, in one form or another, three years later.

And they still wear denim.

"It's a social equalizer," Krause says of their attire.

While the choir may have started out because the group had so much fun together—talking together and singing songs over beers—Woodyard believes it's turned into something much more. He hesitates to call the choir a "fraternity," because of the negative connotations surrounding the word, but he thinks the camaraderie among the men that has come about over the years is something that only happened because of the choir.

"Within the last year, we've started to be more intentional about being a support to one another," he says. "What really keeps a lot of the guys involved is that it feeds them emotionally and spiritually."

Another thing that keeps the members together is their mutual interest in the natural world.

Manitoba: 'God speaks'

Krause, who graduated with a bachelor of music degree from CMU in 2010, writes most of the music the Gentlemen sing. Much of his inspiration comes from Manitoba itself, which means "God speaks" in Cree.

(Continued on page 36)

PHOTOS COURTESY OF
THE RIEL GENTLEMEN'S CHOIR



Members of the Riel Gentlemen's Choir pose in front of a Louis Riel statue in Winnipeg.



The Riel Gentlemen's Choir is pictured at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers in Winnipeg. Jesse Krause is pictured carrying the flag.



The Riel Gentlemen's Choir sings at Festival du Voyageur in Winnipeg on Louis Riel Day, 2012. Thomas Epp is pictured at left.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIKE WIEBE



Working with people with disabilities has given Mike Wiebe a glimpse of the kingdom of God.

(Continued from page 35)

Even the choir is named after the founder of Manitoba, Louis Riel. "God speaks through the natural world pretty loudly," Krause says. "As people living in Manitoba with an interest in the place we live, an interest in the community, and an interest in one another, he's a fine example."

According to another member, Thomas Epp, 28, the Riel Gentlemen's Choir sings songs that are largely lacking in Canadian music. "We like to sing about these things because there aren't a lot of songs about Winnipeg," he says. "Even Neil Young, our most famous ex-pat, doesn't have any songs specifically about Winnipeg."

Epp attends Hope Mennonite Church in the city. While he isn't a founding member, like Woodyard or Krause, he's grown up in Manitoba singing in choirs.

Mennonite work ethic

Another thing the Riel Gentlemen have carried over from their largely Mennonite background is their work ethic.

The Gentlemen perform at some of the most unique music festivals and venues

in the province, including Nuit Blanche, Mennofolk, the Winnipeg Folk Festival, and even at two recent mayoral candidates' parties.

But that's not enough for the choir. Members built their own movable music venue last winter. It's a dome with a steel frame and a denim cover. In order to be more connected to the landmarks they so often sing about, they want to be able to perform near and on the rivers that run through the city.

"We wanted to build a performance space for the river when it's frozen," Krause explains, joking, "It's like a futuristic barn raising."

The choir is hosting a choral concert on the river on March 1. Local choirs, including Horizon, Midnight Choir and the Rainbow Community Choir, have been invited to sing in the dome.

The spirit of working together and making things happen—that brought the choir together in the first place—is the same spirit went into building the dome and it continues to bring the choir closer together. ☼

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Glimpses of God's kingdom

Working with adults with disabilities leads to better understanding of what it means to follow Jesus

MIKE WIEBE

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

Last semester I took a class at Canadian Mennonite University entitled Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology. The course aims to analyze the works of contemporary Anabaptist-Mennonite theologians to gain an understanding of what Anabaptist-Mennonite theology looks like in the church and world today.

On the final exam, Professor Paul

Doerksen decided we were educated enough to answer the question: "What constitutes good Anabaptist-Mennonite theology?"

With the weight of an entire belief system resting on my shoulders, I scrawled something to the effect that "good Anabaptist-Mennonite theology should produce a community that looks like Jesus." I'm not sure if this thesis

statement was sufficiently nuanced for my professor. However, I needed to begin where I felt Anabaptism itself originated: by focussing on what it meant to follow Christ in all facets of daily life.

I often consign exam questions to the intellectual back burner as soon as I've completed a course, but the question, "What virtues or actions make a community or an individual look more like Jesus?" has remained active for me.

The question reminds me of my recent experiences working with people with disabilities. Whether steeped in the joy of adults with disabilities programs at Camps with Meaning, or challenged by the more mundane responsibilities of weekly respite shifts, I have encountered Christ's presence in the people with and for whom I've worked.

During an adults with disabilities week at camp, I met a woman who shaped my summer. I first saw her doing a puzzle. I sat down with her and we "puzzled" as a pair.

As is customary and effective at adults with disabilities weeks, I made piles of less-than-funny jokes, prompting this woman to comment: "I don't know about you, Mike." Suddenly, this woman said to me with complete self-possession that she was blessed to be at camp. Everyone was kind to her and she wanted to return next year.

Later that week, she shared about her childhood. I began to understand why kindness felt so real to her at camp. The abuse that this woman grew up with left me speechless. She was a child with disabilities, and people exploited her vulnerability. At the end of the week, she stood up and said thank you to everybody for treating her with kindness and being there to support her.

Her experiences that week were the opposite of the mistreatment she'd dealt with in her life. Hers remains the most real word of thanks I've ever heard. Her miracle of gratitude was the product of God's love as expressed through the community of faith.

Following a fruitful summer camp experience, I needed a part-time job to help pay for school. A friend of mine told me about a job that would involve respite

work in the home of a man with cerebral palsy. I decided to apply. The job sounded appealing. I would hang out with someone my own age, go shopping, watch hockey and make meals.

The job has proven rewarding and I consider this man my good friend. The first few months, however, were full of difficult realizations. I had taken the basic human need to be comfortable and independent for granted. If I lie on my back at night and can't fall asleep, I can simply turn on my side. If I want to send an e-mail to someone, I type it and click "send."

If my friend needs to turn over, someone must wake up and help him. When he wants to send an e-mail, he dictates and his worker tries to express his thoughts. It was stressful to provide such an intense level of support for another human being.

Theologian John Swinton believes that disability is all about time. People with disabilities must complete tasks with a gentle slowness, which is the way God's time works. The kingdom of God is not established quickly or efficiently, because gentleness is not about hands on a clock.

Working respite care has helped me realize that gentleness of true fellowship centres on being patient and accommodating. My respite friend has shown me patience while I've learned to ensure his comfort, and his patience has strengthened my resolve to better accommodate him.

In a community that looks like Jesus, we practise deep thankfulness. We accept and are accepted. We take time to be gentle. Working with adults with disabilities has equipped me to be gentler with my friends, classmates and family.

Perhaps this perspective is a slow walk, but along the way lie glimpses of God's kingdom. ❧

Mike Wiebe, 21, is a communications student at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg. His home congregation is Altona Mennonite Church, Man.



A friend throws a pie in Mike Wiebe's face during an adults with disabilities week at Camp Moose Lake in Winnipeg.

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



Calendar

British Columbia

March 7,8: Lenten vespers with Abendmusik Choir; (7) Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (8) St. Philip's Anglican Church, Vancouver. Both services at 8 p.m. Free-will offering for Menno Simons Centre.

April 2,3: Good Friday blues service, at House of James, Abbotsford, at 7:30 p.m. each evening. All proceeds to support the Cyrus Centre.

April 11: Columbia Bible College Bearcat Prowl, a glow-in-the-dark fun run in support of the college's athletic department. Register by March 31. For more information, visit columbiabc.edu.

April 24-26: Junior Youth Impact Retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope.

Alberta

March 20-21: MC Alberta annual general meeting, hosted by Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church.

Saskatchewan

March 13-14: MC Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions, at Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon. Theme: "Walking with God, with each other, with the stranger, and beyond our walls. For more information, call 306-249-4844 or visit www.mcsask.ca

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

Manitoba

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

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

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

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

Laudamus Auditorium.

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

April 11: MDS spring fundraising banquet at North Kildonan MB Church, Winnipeg, at 6 p.m. Speakers include Harold and Sandra Friesen and Janet Plener. Topic: "MDS: Rebuilding homes and restoring hope." For reservations, call toll-free 1-888-261-1274.

April 18: Rescheduled MCC Manitoba 50th-anniversary benefit concert, at Knox United Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m. Keynote speaker: former prime minister Joe Clark. Music by Faith and Life Men's and Women's choirs, the University of Manitoba Women's Chorus and the Buffalo Gals Drum Group. Ticketholders for the previously scheduled event can obtain tickets for the new event by calling 204-261-6381 or online at mccmanitoba.ca/50. Any remaining tickets were made available on Feb. 9.

Ontario

Feb. 21: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents "Grant Us Peace," a concert featuring Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* and Estacio's "The Houses Stand Not Far Apart," at Centre in the Square, Kitchener, at 7:30 p.m. For more information or tickets, call 519-578-1570.

Feb. 27-March 1: Women's retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. For more information, call 519-422-3200 or visit www.slmc.ca/retreats.

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

March 6-7: The Engaged Workshop, a marriage preparation course focussing on communication, is being held at Living Water Fellowship in New Hamburg for engaged or newly married couples. For more information, e-mail denise_bender@yahoo.com.

March 16 or 17: Grandparent and Grandchild Days at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Theme: Helping Others Participate

through Education (HOPE). Leaders: Leigh and Lois Steckley. Each day's events are the same, and include drama, crafts, and making school kits or knotting quilts for MCC. For more information, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

March 16-20: March Break camp at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach, with bus transportation available to and from the camp. For more information, call 519-422-3200 or visit www.slmc.ca/retreats.

March 21: Elmira meat canning fundraiser breakfast, at Calvary United Church, St. Jacobs, at 8 a.m. Speaker: Keith Martin. Topic: "A history of meat canning in Ontario." Call 519-745-8458 to reserve tickets.

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

April 3: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Kitchener Waterloo Symphony, at Centre in the Square, Kitchener, at 7:30 p.m. For more information or tickets, call 519-578-1570.

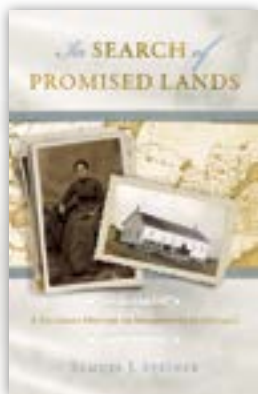
April 10-11: The Engaged Workshop, a marriage preparation course focussing on communication, is being held at Maple View Mennonite Church in Wellesley for engaged or newly married couples. For more information, e-mail denise_bender@yahoo.com.

April 10-11: Oct. 24-25: "Reading the Bible with Jesus" retreat at Willowgrove, Stouffville, with Bryan Moyer Suderman; sponsored by MC Eastern Canada, the Markham-Stouffville Mennonite Ministerial and Willowgrove. Pt. 4: "Luke: All that the prophets have declared." For more information, e-mail miriam@willowgrove.ca.

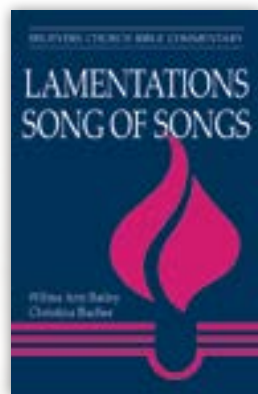
April 10-12: Mentor and mentee retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. For more information, call 519-422-3200 or visit www.slmc.ca/retreats.

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

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Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

Join MCEC in Extending the Peace of Jesus Christ



After 27 years of faithful service, Ester Neufeldt has announced her resignation as MCEC Operations Minister.

Employment Opportunity

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada will be accepting applications in March for a future job opening. Watch for job description and other details coming soon.

MCEC, 201-50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1
226-476-2500 / 1-855-476-2500 www.mcec.ca



The First Mennonite Church

Employment opportunity

The First Mennonite Church (Vineland, Ontario) seeks a full-time pastor to lead our semi-rural congregation of 75-100 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.

Application deadline Mar 31st. Employment to commence in 2015. If interested contact Henry Paetkau, MCEC Conference Minister. hpaetkau@mcec.ca

GERMAN MINISTRIES CO-PASTOR OPPORTUNITY

Steinbach Mennonite Church (SMC) Located in Steinbach, Manitoba. Steinbach is one of the fastest growing, most culturally diverse cities in western Canada. SMC is seeking a Co-Pastor German Ministries with strong Anabaptist theology to lead us as we strive to continue to develop our relationships with Christ, each other, and the community.

Candidates should have the following:

- strong interpersonal relationship skills
- willingness and vision to help SMC meet challenges
- energy and willingness to work as part of multi-staff team
- fluent in German language
- understanding of Paraguayan and South American culture
- at least 5 years' experience in a Church leadership position is desirable

We have an average Sunday morning attendance of 400 in two services (German & English).

Please send your resumes to 4siemens@mymts.net or contact Jac Siemens at 1.204.326.2697 for more information. Learn about our congregation at www.steinbachmennonite.ca.

Part-Time Administrative Assistant

Kitchener, Ontario

Mennonite Foundation of Canada, a donor-advised charitable foundation committed to helping others live generously, is seeking a part-time Administrative Assistant in its Kitchener, Ontario office.

This person will be responsible for providing general administrative support for staff at the Kitchener office. Key responsibilities include front desk and telephone reception, processing incoming and outgoing mail, faxes, bank deposits and receipts, preparing letters, reports and presentations, and offering information to clients. Strong organizational skills, flexible attitude and team spirit, exceptional computer skills, superb verbal and written communications skills, and professionalism are essential. This role requires the ability to travel for a couple of short business trips per year. The position may move to full-time.

MFC offers a competitive salary and benefits package. Please submit your resume by March 1, 2015 to:

Sherri Grosz, Stewardship Consultant or Denise Mazik, Administrative Assistant

Mennonite Foundation of Canada
207-50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1
519-745-7821 | sgrosz@MennoFoundation.ca or mfceast@MennoFoundation.ca



MennoFoundation.ca

Travel

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

Travel

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.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELMIRA MENNONITE CHURCH

PHOTO RIGHT: Ina Martin completes her “walk across Canada” on Dec. 20, 2014, at the Woolwich Memorial Recreation Centre in Elmira, Ont. Martin, who attends Elmira Mennonite Church, took almost five years to walk the nearly 7,000 kilometres—the distance across Canada—at the centre. Martin, who turns 90 in September, will be remembered by many as a former staff person with Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec (a precursor to Mennonite Church Eastern Canada). When Martin retired from conference work, she did not retire from life and Christian service. She continues to model an active, healthy lifestyle and spiritual vitality. The congregation celebrated her accomplishment on Epiphany Sunday, remembering that the magi also travelled a long distance to come and see the newborn Jesus.



God at work in Us Snapshots

*PHOTO BELOW: Siegfried Bartel, centre, is flanked by two of his sons, Gerd, left, and Alex, right, at his 100th birthday party, held Jan. 6, at Menno Place, Abbotsford, B.C. Growing up in Prussia (Poland) in a Mennonite community, Siegfried enjoyed a privileged life earned by the hard labour of his farming family. It was natural for a man of German descent to enlist in the German army and Siegfried did so in 1937 before the Second World War. When the war erupted in September 1939, he found himself in an army that eventually brought horrors to others, convincing him that pacifism was the only sane response to killing and war. In 1951, he received refugee help through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to re-establish his life in Canada, becoming a dairy farmer in Agassiz, B.C. He became an active participant in the community as well as serving in leadership with MCC from 1972-87, in gratitude for help in his time of need. He is the author of two books, *Living with Conviction* and *Journey to Pacifism*, in which he shares his life story and resulting convictions about pacifism and dedication to others in need.*

MENNO PLACE PHOTO

