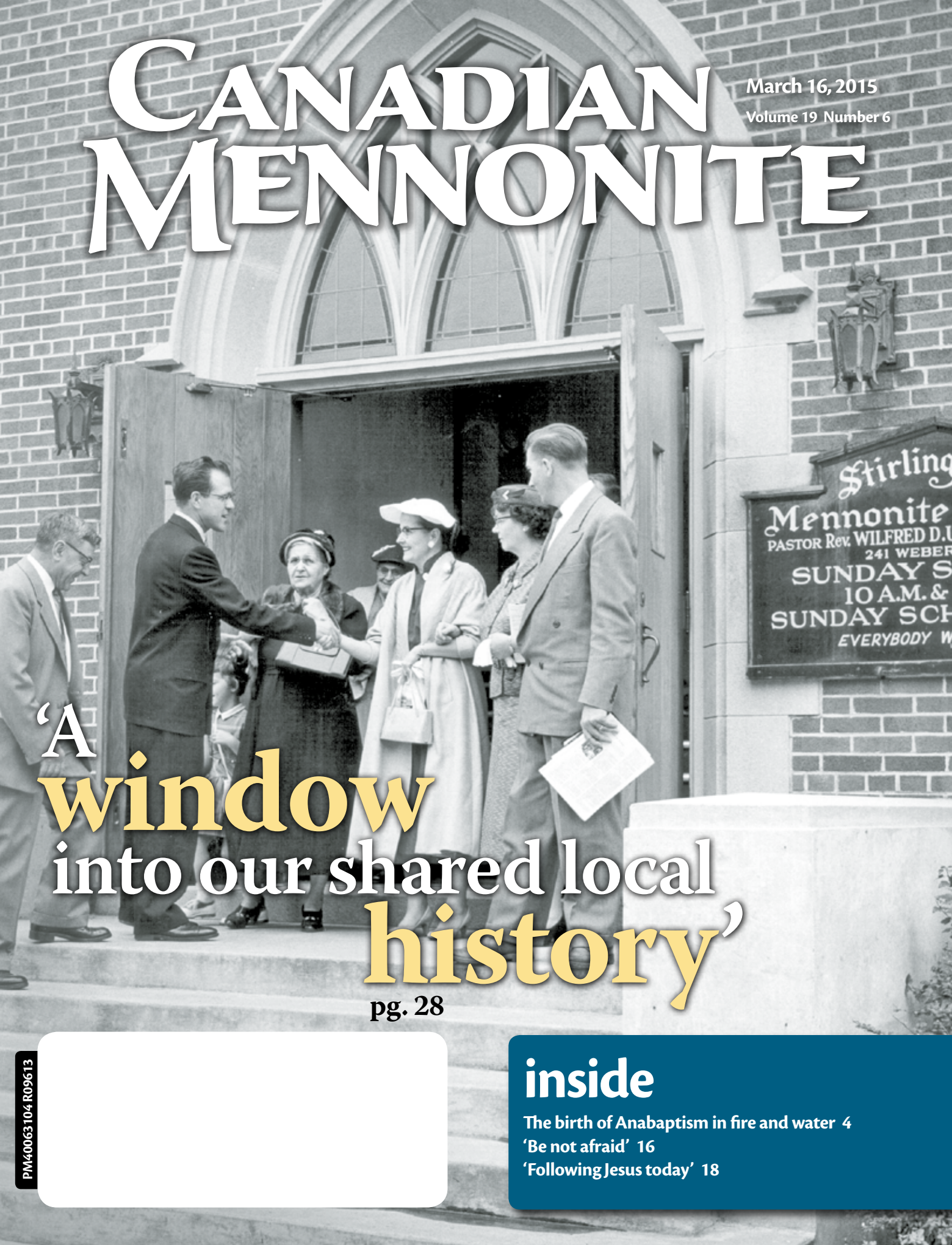


CANADIAN MENNONITE

March 16, 2015

Volume 19 Number 6



‘A
window
into our shared local
history’
pg. 28

PM40063104 R09613

inside

The birth of Anabaptism in fire and water 4

‘Be not afraid’ 16

‘Following Jesus today’ 18

EDITORIAL

Our neo-Anabaptists

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

So how are we doing 490 years later? We who anchor our faith expression in what has come to be called Anabaptism over nearly five centuries now number 1.7 million all over the globe and counting. What began in Zurich, Switzerland, during the Reformation in western Europe with the baptizing of break-away religious leaders George Blaurock and Conrad Grebel (see “*The birth of Anabaptism in fire and water*,” page 4) has now blossomed into 83 countries around the globe.

Dominated for many centuries by leadership and numbers in western Europe and North America, the demographics have now shifted dramatically in this century to Africa, Asia and Latin American countries. Our Mennonite World Conference, to convene this July for the 15th time, is now led by César García of Colombia, having taken over the reins of leadership from a long line of North Americans.

Even in North America, there has been a kind of “homecoming” to the Anabaptist expression as voiced by Stuart Murray, a Baptist minister/scholar from England and the founder of the Anabaptist Network, and by Gregory Boyd, the courageous pastor of a 5,000-member congregation in St. Paul, Minn., who lost a fifth of his membership after preaching a series of sermons on “The cross and the sword.” The cause for the membership exit, according to the *New York Times*, was Boyd’s insistence

that the “church should steer clear of politics, give up moralizing on sexual issues, stop claiming the United States as a ‘Christian nation’ and stop glorifying American military campaigns.”



It is perhaps fitting, then, that we look to these neo-Anabaptists for a report card on how we are doing five centuries later. Murray and Boyd are perhaps the best spokespersons to do this as newcomers to the faith. In his widely circulated book, *The Naked Anabaptist*, Murray strips down the essence of Anabaptism in our modern post-Christendom setting to seven core values:

- **JESUS IS** our example, teacher, friend, redeemer and Lord, the source of our life, the central reference point for our faith and lifestyle.
- **JESUS IS** the focal point of God’s revelation; we are committed to a Jesus-centred approach to the Bible.
- **IN A** culture of churches ill-equipped for mission, Anabaptism has rejected Christendom assumptions and pursued alternative ways of thinking and behaving.
- **WE ARE** exploring ways of being good news to the poor, powerless and persecuted, aware that such discipleship may attract opposition.
- **OUR CHURCHES** are to be committed communities of discipleship and mission, places of friendship, mutual accountability and multi-voiced worship.
- **SPIRITUALITY AND** economics are

interconnected, calling for living simply, sharing generously, caring for creation and working for justice.

- **WE ARE** committed to finding nonviolent alternatives and to learning to make peace between individuals, within and among churches, in society and between nations.

In an address to pastors in January at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., Boyd echoed some of the same challenges facing traditional Anabaptists:

- **DETACH OUR** identity, values and mission from our distinctive ethnicity and culture as much as possible and, instead, anchor these in our distinctive kingdom theology, values and practices.
- **LET GO** of whatever vestiges remain of the isolationist mindset of traditional Anabaptism and, instead, intentionally move outside our comfort zone to forge, cultivate and nurture relationships across ethnic and culture lines. We will need to learn how to not merely tolerate, but authentically celebrate, the diversity of other ethnicities and cultures. Imagine a worship service in which an older white ethnic Mennonite happily dances to loud reggae rock while a Jamaican neo-Anabaptist with waist-length fluorescent dreadlocks joins in four-part harmony, and you have a glimpse of what traditional Anabaptist groups need to strive for.
- **EXPLORE CREATIVE** ways of connecting with the neo-Anabaptists as we assume a learning posture in dialogue with them. Traditional Anabaptists must be willing to receive a rekindled appreciation and fiery passion for the beautiful vision of the kingdom that was given to them 500 years ago, but that has for many come to be taken for granted.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Pastor Wilfred Ulrich greets his congregation at Stirling Ave. Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., on a Sunday morning in 1958. See our cover story on the photographic exhibition of David L. Hunsberger, ‘A window into our shared local history,’ on page 28.

PHOTO: DAVID L. HUNSBERGER, THE MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

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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



The birth of Anabaptism in fire and water 4

From martyrs who died for their faith to new converts to a global Anabaptism, **VALERIE G. REMPEL** reflects on our faith's sometimes bloodied first 490 years.

Frank thoughts on future directions 15

'A quantifiable angst hangs in the church air these days,' says senior writer **WILL BRAUN**, who weighs in on the Future Directions Task Force's draft report, 'God, mission and a people.'

A steep price for following his conscience 23

Mennonite lawyer **EDGAR SCHMIDT**, who took the federal government to court, is still waiting for a decision two years later.

Called to live in hope 26

Syrian pastor **IBRAHIM NSIER** reflects on a day in the life of serving God's church in a war zone.



'A window into our shared local history' 28

DAVID L. HUNSBERGER photo exhibit takes 'community from the farm to the world,' in our Cover Story.

Young Voices 34

'Rebuilding lives and languages' and Top marks for CMU' by **Rachel Bergen**, and 'Reaping the whirlwind' by **JONAS CORNELSEN**.

Regular features:

For discussion **6** Readers write **7** Pontius' Puddle **11**

Milestones **12** Schools Directory **33** Calendar **38** Classifieds **39**

Our neo-Anabaptists 2

DICK BENNER

Conflict is a good thing 7

RIANNA ISAAK

At the heart of all conflict is desire 8

PHIL WAGLER

A case for neighbourly love 9

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

Former editor passes

We sadly note the March 3 passing of a former editor of *Canadian Mennonite*, Larry Kehler, 82, of Winnipeg. He served as associate editor under Frank Epp from 1955-56 and then as Epp's successor as editor from 1967-71. Kehler had the dubious task of announcing the closing of the original *Canadian Mennonite* before its reincarnation as the *Mennonite Reporter*.



Larry Kehler

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

The birth of Anabaptism in **fire** and **water**

A reflection on our faith's sometimes bloodied first 490 years

BY VALERIE G. REMPEL
FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Anneken de Vlaster, an Anabaptist woman, is thrown into the fire in 1571, as pictured in Herald Press's Martyrs Mirror.

Sometimes, a single act can have enormous consequences. In the religious ferment of 16th century Europe, a small group of Christians in the Swiss canton of Zurich gathered in a home on a wintry January day in 1525. One of them, George Blaurock, asked another, Conrad Grebel, to baptize him. Around the circle they went, baptizing each other in what they understood to be their first true baptism. It was a baptism performed upon their confession of faith in Jesus as Lord. It was a radical act that earned many of them a martyr's death.

The 16th century was a time of great change in the religious life and practices of many in Western Europe. A variety of voices from within the church were advocating for change. They were frequently critical of practices and theology that had developed over many centuries of church life.

In an earlier time, the criticisms of a few reform-minded individuals might have had little impact. Technology, however, had a hand in changing that. The printing press had been developed in Europe. Its advent was almost as revolutionary as today's Internet. In short order, the ideas of a few people could be shared among many. Reformation fever quickly took hold.

For centuries, there had been only one church in Europe: the Roman Catholic Church. It exercised complete spiritual authority over all of its members and had little tolerance for those whose thought or practice was different than the official stance of the church.

A primary symbol of that authority was the administration of the sacraments. Rites such as baptism, the eucharist, hearing confession and assigning penance, even the last rites given at the time of death, were understood to be the means by which God's grace was given to the people. In essence, church leaders believed they held the means of salvation firmly within their grasp.

Identity crisis in the church

The practice of infant baptism was especially powerful. The physical act of baptism was understood to actually

cleanse people of their sin. In Roman Catholic practice, the water of baptism was not just a symbol. Baptismal water actually did what it proclaimed. It made sense, then, to baptize infants in order to cleanse them of sin and secure their salvation.

Believer's baptism of adults called into question the church's practice of conferring salvation upon infants who lacked ability, or even the will, to choose faith in Christ. This was more than just an attempt to challenge the authority of the institutional church. The practice of believer's baptism went to the core of the early Anabaptists' understanding of what it meant to be Christian. Christian faith was not something that one was born into. Christian identity came about by faith in Jesus.

In declaring that salvation came through faith alone, early Anabaptists joined a host of other believers who were re-examining Scripture and coming to new conclusions about Christian faith and practice. Martin Luther, the former monk whose efforts to reform the Roman Catholic Church resulted in a new "Lutheran" church, argued against anything that appeared to be "works." He echoed the Apostle Paul, who wrote that one was justified by faith alone and not by works, lest anyone should boast. Others, such as John Calvin in Geneva and Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, also attempted to reform the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Reformers insisted that Scripture was the sole spiritual authority, not the traditions of the church!

Two kingdoms: church and state

Still, to be called an Anabaptist in 16th-century Europe was to be named a heretic. The term referred to being "rebaptized," and it was a punishable offence. Even reform-minded leaders found it difficult to imagine a legitimate church refusing to baptize infants. None were willing to challenge the practice of infant baptism in quite the same way. Anabaptists stood alone.

Unfortunately for Anabaptists, the Catholic Church's spiritual authority was connected to civil authority. Through baptism, one became a part of the church

and a citizen of the state. One's baptismal record functioned as a kind of birth certificate. To be unbaptized was to be undocumented. Neither the church nor the state considered that to be a good thing.

This relationship of mutual support between the institutional church and civil authorities formed a kind of "Christian" kingdom. Christendom provided a way of understanding the world that seemed to bring it into a harmonious whole. The state handled civil life, but the church offered something even more important: eternal life. Each ruled its respective sphere and supported the other.

By baptizing each other, these so-called Anabaptists denied the church's claim of spiritual authority and challenged its relationship to civil authority. Anabaptists were among the first to see a need to separate the church and the state. They declared their true citizenship to be in the kingdom of heaven, rather than to any kingdom or ruler of the world. Anabaptists argued that their primary allegiance was always owed to Christ alone.

A dangerous time for Anabaptists

Civil and religious authorities throughout Europe moved quickly to quell what they viewed as a dangerous movement. Wherever groups of Anabaptist believers emerged—in the Swiss and German regions of Europe and as far north as the Netherlands—they met with great opposition. Thousands were imprisoned and put to death by burning at the stake or by being drowned in a local river. Drowning was considered a particularly appropriate death for Anabaptists. They had, said the authorities, sinned through the use of baptismal water, so by water they would lose their lives.

In spite of severe persecution, groups of Anabaptist believers continued to meet, often in secret. Men and women gathered together to read Scripture and to encourage each other in the faith.

They shared the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, viewing them as symbols of Christ's body that had been offered for their salvation. Here again, they challenged a Catholic understanding of the eucharist as a sacrifice in which the bread and wine became the actual body

and blood of Christ. For Anabaptists, the Lord's Supper was simply a memorial meal shared among believers who were committed to following Jesus in life and death.

Peaceful discipleship

Anabaptists believed that the core of Christian faith was expressed in a life of discipleship. Following Jesus as a disciple meant living as Jesus did during his time on earth. The gospel accounts of Jesus were especially influential for sorting out what that meant. As a result, early Anabaptists became radical Bible readers who tried to put into practice what they read in Scripture.

For example, when Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, said “love your enemies” and “do good to those that hate you,” Anabaptists read this as the way that Christians should truly live. Many refused to arm themselves against those who threatened their lives or their property. That refusal to fight against so-called enemies was viewed as another threat to civil authority. How could Anabaptists be trusted if they refused to bear arms?

Anabaptists repeatedly witnessed that they respected the authority of the state, but that their primary allegiance was to Christ and to the kingdom of heaven. To kill in the name of Jesus, the one who came to bring peace, was simply unthinkable.

Global Anabaptism

By refusing to align themselves with any particular civil authority, Anabaptists left themselves vulnerable to ongoing persecution. They also began to establish a pattern of migration in response to persecution that helped spread Anabaptist practices to places far beyond Western Europe. Through migration and missionary work Anabaptist congregations can now be found around the globe.

What do Anabaptists have in common? Like all Christians who are rooted in the story of Jesus, Anabaptists look to what God has done in Jesus as the basis of salvation. They share with many other Christians a Trinitarian understanding of God who is revealed to humankind as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

PHOTO BY FRANK NACANABO



Lydie Yougbaré emerges from her baptism and into the fellowship of the Bobo Dioulasso congregation of Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso.

Anabaptists place special emphasis on voluntary church membership and believer's baptism. They continue to call each other to a life of discipleship and seek to resist the temptation to find security in political allegiances. As much as possible they seek to live at peace with their neighbours and to practise love of their enemies. In the spirit of the 16th-century Reformation, they look to the Bible as the sole authority for faith and life.

Anabaptism was born as a movement of religious renewal. The varieties of Mennonites, Brethren in Christ, the

Amish and the Hutterites all find their roots in this movement. They are not alone. Contemporary Christians from other church traditions are also being drawn to Anabaptist theology and church practices. These “neo-Anabaptists” are discovering the witness and the message of early Anabaptist leaders, many of whom were martyred for their faith. They are establishing new Anabaptist communities and networks of congregations that are exploring what it means to be Anabaptist in the 21st century.

Almost 500 years after Conrad Grebel baptized George Blaurock, the call to radically follow Jesus is still being answered. ☸

Valerie G. Rempel is associate dean of Fresno Pacific University Biblical Seminary in California, associate professor and J.B. Toews Chair of History and Theology. Meetinghouse is an association of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ publications.



☸ For discussion

1. What does baptism mean for you? What inspired you, or who encouraged you, to ask for baptism? Does your congregation emphasize the need for baptism so that only members can be fully involved in the church? Why do some people today view membership as optional?
2. Valerie Rempel describes how baptism was viewed in the 16th-century Roman Catholic Church. What was it about the Anabaptist stance that threatened the church authorities? How was the view of baptism in the 1500s different from what it is today?
3. Rempel says that the Anabaptists “were among the first to see a need to separate the church and state.” In what ways has freedom of religion served us well? Does freedom of religion eventually lead to religious decline?
4. Rempel says that Anabaptists today “continue to call each other to a life of discipleship and resist the temptation to find security in political allegiances.” Is this an accurate statement for your congregation? How do you work at encouraging discipleship in each other? Do young people today have a different idea of what that means compared to their grandparents?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

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

✉ Which spirit drives the gay marriage discussion?

RE: “A BIBLICAL and better way,” and “It felt like a big deal . . . it was so powerful,” Jan. 19, pages 4 and 13, respectively.

I read *Canadian Mennonite* from front to back and am often greatly encouraged and blessed by articles that clearly present the truth. I definitely agree with Ronald J. Sider’s feature article.

But I was deeply saddened when reading the report in the same issue of a gay marriage celebration in one of our area church congregations. I am led to ask the question: What are these people trying to prove? Are they not putting God to the test? Is this a case of honouring God or honouring the body?

I read in I Corinthians 6:19-20: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, you were bought at a price. Therefore,

(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

Conflict is a good thing

RIANNA ISAAK

Most humans really do not like conflict. We often see it as the brokenness of a relationship. Especially as the church, we desire relationship, we desire wholeness. And conflict feels like it brings separation and pain, even death.

But I would say just the opposite! Conflict is life! Conflict brings with it change. It enables us to face ourselves. Conflict can act as a mirror, enabling us to see where change needs to happen within ourselves. Without conflict, we can stay oblivious to areas in which we need to grow! But when we engage with change, we grow! And growth is life.

Just like our physical bodies, our spiritual bodies also need change in order to thrive. As we come across new thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences, we are able to engage in a new way and grow!

Margaret Wheatley, a peacebuilder



and quantum physicist, tells a story of one such experience in *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*:

“The daily news is filled with powerful changes, and many of us feel buffeted by forces we cannot control. It was from this place of feeling battered and bruised that I listened one night to a radio interview with a geologist whose specialty was beaches and shorelines. The interview was being conducted as a huge hurricane was pounding the outer banks in the eastern United States. The geologist had studied these banks for many years and spoke fondly about their unique geological features. He was waiting for the storm to abate so he could get out and take a look at the hurricane’s impact. The interviewer asked: ‘What do you expect to find when you go out there?’ Like the interviewer, I assumed he would present a litany of disasters—demolished homes, felled trees, eroded shoreline. Be he

surprised me. ‘I expect,’ he said calmly, ‘to find a new beach.’”

Conflict is inevitable, and so is change. Let us approach it with curiosity, actively anticipating what new beach God has in store for us!

One of the most shaping moments in the story of our world is named by the symbol worn around many necks, and placed at the front of many houses, buildings, and churches: the cross. The cross helps us remember one of the greatest conflicts: the wrestling of God and death. Its result was a fundamental change in our story, our meaning, our purpose, our understanding of truth. This change is growth, and this growth is life!

I want to encourage the church! No matter what storm you are weathering—if you are engaging with a personal conflict, a congregational impasse or a denominational dispute—you are doing the life-giving work of the kingdom! May you have the patience and curiosity to take a long walk on this new beach!

Rianna Isaak is the associate program director of *Camps with Meaning*, part of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

(Continued from page 7)
honour God with your body.”

Is this “marriage” fulfilling the desires of the Spirit or the desires of the sinful nature, as spoken of in Romans 8:5-11? I fear that the direction of this whole discussion of human sexuality is driven by the spirit of the age, rather than by the Spirit of God. Is it not time to take to heart the warning of the Book of Jude? Are

we seeking acceptance by God or by our society?

I personally found acceptance by God and other believers after I repented of my self-pleasing lifestyle and surrendered my heart and body to Christ. Is it possible that our national and area churches have indeed discovered a more “enlightened” way? I choose to continue to support the “biblical and better way.”

WALTER DIRKS, FORT ST. JOHN, B.C.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

At the heart of all conflict is desire

PHIL WAGLER

My life is great viewing. Tonight I watched my one-year-old meticulously pick through a small box of knick-knacks looking for something she could treasure. I wanted to interrupt, but then it just turned so gosh-darn cute and I watched in satisfied silence. Ah, joy.

There are other days, though. Well, actually, it can be the same day. The peaceful pleasure of watching a child be fully a child careens into the feuds of children being fully children. Get a few of the squirts together and a squabble over a toy or game can turn decidedly nasty. All those “love one another” Bible lessons go out the window. Every relational tool carefully taught is run over like a dried skunk on a sideroad. The whole thing just stinks.

What’s at the root of such conflicts?

It’s pretty easy to diagnose the origins when elementary kids are having it out. At its most basic, conflict emerges when they want their own way. It’s why the most important part of a game with kids is the rule book or adult presence. Every attempt to manipulate a win can be trumped by either the authority of what the rules say or by an appeal to a “higher

power.” “Dad, they’re cheating!” The reality is, however, nothing will change without submission to an authority and one another.

Human conflict exists. We’re born into it and each contribute our more-than-fair share of selfish desire to it. Now, not all conflict is sin; sometimes it has a purpose God desires. However, the conflict that is outside of God’s will, as Jim Van Ypren describes in *Making Peace*, “springs from . . . need-based, self-absorbed attitudes and actions. . . . We dare not take desire lightly. It is at the heart of all conflict.”

You can see this when things go south in a group of youngsters. The issue is desire. Sadly, you can see it among big people too. “*What causes fights and*



We can always point away from ourselves, but isn't it time to end those childish games? Seriously, let us check our desires.

quarrels among you?” asked James. “*Don't they come from the desires that battle within you?*” (James 4:1)?

These are sobering questions to reflect upon. How do the conflicts I am in find their root in my need-based, self-absorbed attitudes and actions? Yes, others have issues too. Yes, there is

always more to understand, and more truth to comprehend, but even truth can't easily withstand unbridled desire. We can always point away from ourselves, but isn't it time to end those childish games? Seriously, let us check our desires.

Perhaps in all this is a clue as we approach Scripture together in the church. Perhaps the first step in a true community hermeneutic—a reading, understanding, interpreting and applying of the Word of God together—is confessing and naming the desires we bring.

What if we were brutally honest: “I come to Scripture wanting my way and I'm willing to bend the truth to justify my desire.”

Perhaps we're too smug for that, but such authenticity seems very human to me. Would not such vulnerability open the door to another desire birthed only

by the Holy Spirit: “*Lord, not my will, but yours be done?*”

Phil Wagler (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca) sees himself way too much in the ways of his kids. He's still got some desires to work through as he seeks the desire of the Father.

✉ Listen to what our prophets have to say

RE: “A BIBLICAL and better way” by Ronald J. Sider, Jan. 19, page 4; “Stand up for God’s truth” by Steve Hoepfner, Feb. 2, page 15; and “For better or worse we are Pharisees” by Phil Wagler, Feb. 16, page 10.

In our present Mennonite climate, it took great

courage on the part of the authors to speak truth to us and it took courage to publish their words.

These three brothers clearly have been raised up as prophets. Prophecy—the ability to speak God’s direct word into a particular time and place—is both a gift and a calling. As such, it stands next in line only to apostleship in the listing in Ephesians 4:11.

(Continued on page 10)

NEW ORDER VOICE

A case for neighbourly love

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

I’m in the thick of it. I had my second child earlier this year and life is still in the process of reordering itself. The predictable schedule went out the window and is slowly settling back into something new and, well, busy. Finding time to keep up with everyday tasks—dishes, laundry, meal prep—is difficult. Babies change everything.

It would seem, though, that many of our neighbours understand this. I know this because for a month-and-a-half after the birth our family received a meal from someone every few days. As a result, time we would have spent on meal prep we spent on other things, like giving attention to our adjusting three-year-old, keeping up with school work or resting.

I don’t mention this to boast about our robust social circle. I’m writing about this because a bunch of caring people—some friends, but mostly acquaintances from church and school—dropped off food for our family in the biggest outpouring of neighbourly love I’ve experienced in, well, a while.

Church folk know about food and fellowship. The breaking of bread during communion and the church potlucks I’ve attended attest to that. But the giving of

meals is something different. Whether in celebration for a birth, or in mourning for illness or loss, the giving of food, I believe, is one of the most profound gifts you can give.

It’s actually an awkward exchange. People came to our door, handed over the food along with an explanation of how to prepare it, chatted for a couple minutes, often to say, “I hope you like it,” and then gave well wishes and left. I accepted the offering with gratitude, but also slight embarrassment, feeling like I was “getting



I accepted the offering with gratitude, but also slight embarrassment, feeling like I was “getting delivery” from someone I’d normally invite in for tea.

delivery” from someone I’d normally invite in for tea.

But it was an interaction we both understood. Because this is what we, as Christians, do, isn’t it? We help in practical ways that show our love. Love your neighbour as yourself.

I have trouble picturing something more than superficial when I hear that mantra: a pat on the back, a friendly smile or just plain being nice. I think it’s because of the word “neighbour.” To me,

a neighbour is someone I don’t really know well. I live close to my neighbours, but not with them. We live our own lives. Doesn’t this relational distance make love difficult? Don’t you need to know someone well in order to love them?

Love seems to me such a weighty thing. If you love people, you’re in relationship with them. There’s intimacy and investment. When I think about the people I love, I think about those closest to me, those who walk with me along my journey. But the majority of people who came to our door are acquaintances, people I don’t know well but who are part of the communities my spouse and I are part of.

And yet these people did this incredible thing of preparing food for a family they don’t know well. They gave us a gift that helped us carry on, that kept us sustained and living well. Maybe I have my head in the sand, to feel so blessed by what is essentially kindness, or the

“neighbourly thing to do.” But, on the other hand, how else should I feel in response to acts of love?

I usually think Christ calls us to a radical kind of love, not a “neighbourly” one. But, evidently, they’re one and the same.

To all our neighbours who gave us food, thank you.

Katie Doke Sawatzky lives in Vancouver. She can be reached at katiesawatzky@gmail.com.

(Continued from page 9)

The truthfulness of a prophetic word is determined by its adherence to the inspired Scriptures. I believe Sider, Hoepfner and Wagler pass this test and so I urge all of us to pay heed to what they have said to us.
LAWRENCE E. BURKHOLDER,
GORMLEY, ONT.

✉ Testing of our church needs to lead to repentance

RE: "STAND up for God's truth," Feb. 2, page 15.

Yes indeed, what shall we do? The first thing our charismatic brothers and sisters would do is listen to the Holy Spirit. He is speaking through his servants the prophets. A "stunning rebuke" is part of a prophetic calling.

Many important conversations have begun regarding gay marriage at this point in history. Most of us believe God is a God of order, and when he created us he gave us the model for what he wanted a family to be. But having said that, I'm reminded of Ecclesiastes 7:13: "Consider the work of God; who can make straight what he has made crooked?"

The commentary on this is from the March 1 reading of "Streams in the Desert":

"Often God seems to place his children in positions of profound difficulty, leading them into a wedge from which there is no escape; contriving a situation which no human judgment would have permitted, had it been previously consulted. The very cloud conducts them thither. You may be thus involved at this very hour.

"It does seem perplexing and very serious to the last degree, but it is perfectly right. The issue will more than justify him who has brought you hither. It is a platform for the display of his almighty grace and power. . . ."

I know the Almighty contrives situations as a "testing of our faith" (James 1:3). We are thus involved at this very hour. He contrives situations to see what is in our hearts (Deuteronomy 8:16).

When some American preachers "fell" in the 1980s, hate and self-righteousness surfaced. This is what is referred to in Matthew 23:25-26 as cleansing the inside of the cup. The "historic event" of a gay marriage in a Mennonite church may be God's way of testing our hearts. There are those who will react with or in a negative and self-righteous way.

While this should not happen in a Mennonite church, it has. What shall we do? Yes, repent. We have become self-righteous and there has to be a cleansing. Menno Simons wrote about the importance of discipleship and repentance in the life of the believer.

I, too, am asking you—the community of faith—to prayerfully discern what I have said and am saying: "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:1-3).

Did you "read the Book of Jude"?

WES EPP, CALGARY

✉ There are many 'faithful responses' to human sexuality

RE: "STAND UP for God's truth," Feb. 2, page 15.

Thank you for printing Steve Hoepfner's column in *Canadian Mennonite*. Like many from our faith community, he has engaged in a diligent search to find a faithful response to this issue. I recognize that it takes courage to express a conviction that is controversial.

I was taken back to a time when I struggled to gain understanding of, and a faithful approach to, human sexuality. I remember the sense of peace that flowed over me when I recognized that I did not choose my sexuality and that it is the same for others. If different sexualities are a part of God's good creation, then all who enter into an exclusive covenant to share their lives in an intimate spiritual, physical and emotional union should be affirmed, encouraged and blessed by the church.

Over many years and much reflection, I continue to hold to the understanding I gained, recognizing that there are many who hold to different understandings also gained through diligent searching. Like others, I wish to be faithful.

I humbly acknowledge that mainstream culture is a powerful and often unhealthy influence on all of us, but I also recognize that God speaks to us from places we might not expect. Voices from within the church sometimes lead us astray and voices from outside the church sometimes lead us towards faithfulness.

While this perspective differs from that articulated in article 19 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and is not supported by the Resolution on Human Sexuality affirmed by delegates in 1986, Mennonite Church Canada remains the denomination I feel I belong to because there is so much of what we adhere to and practise that I affirm. I affirm the faithful leadership from our denominational offices as we are called to "continue to dialogue, to discern and to hear from God," and to "continue to show grace to one another and learn to work through our differences."

Like Hoepfner, I believe that miracles continue to happen all around us. If we can continue to be in communion, affirm the many things we believe and do in common, respect and even offer grace to each other where we cannot agree, a miracle is already happening.

JOHN BARTEL, LANIGAN, SASK.

✉ 'Logically' paganism and Christianity are compatible

Re: "MCC Manitoba stands with Buffalo Gals," Dec. 15, page 22, and subsequent letters referring to "pagan practices" both online and in print.

In response to recent letters about pagan practices not being compatible with Christianity, "pagan" is often used as a derogatory word for any non-Judeo-Christian/Islamic religion. The position that I have taken is, for me, a logical response to the issues that were raised in Will Braun's article. My intent is to show that there is an inherent contradiction in stating that paganism is incompatible with Christianity.

Let us set aside previous comments about the common use of the Christmas tree and the Easter bunny, the substitution of the Christian festival of Christmas for the celebration of Saturnalia and winter equinox, and the substitution of Easter for common pagan celebrations of fertility and rebirth at the beginning of the growing season and spring equinox. They took the names of the pagan holidays and gave them Christian names.

Jesus was a Jew. The god-as-man or man-as-god paradigms are considered heretical within Judaism, but match well with the pagan culture in which the early church found fertile ground. Christology echoes many aspects of the pagan cultures that preceded it. The worship of a god-man is a story repeated many times in pagan culture before the story of the life of Jesus.

Let us approach other cultures with the respect and dignity that they deserve. Indigenous culture offers us a deep spiritual connection to this land. Give us eyes that see and ears that hear.

ALFRED REMPEL, KITCHENER, ONT.

✉ Viewpoint column 'exquisitely crafted'

RE: "GOD'S DESIGN revealed in the cosmos," Jan. 5, page 14.

I greatly enjoyed John Klassen's Viewpoint piece. It was exquisitely crafted and bridged the often-contentious gap of creationism vs. evolution. His writing was inclusive and logical, not relying on dogma or debate, and was a joy to read.

HAROLD MACY, BLACK CREEK, B.C.

✉ Letter writer clarifies what he meant

RE: "WHICH CHURCH is closer to God's dream for our world?" letter, Feb. 2, page 12.

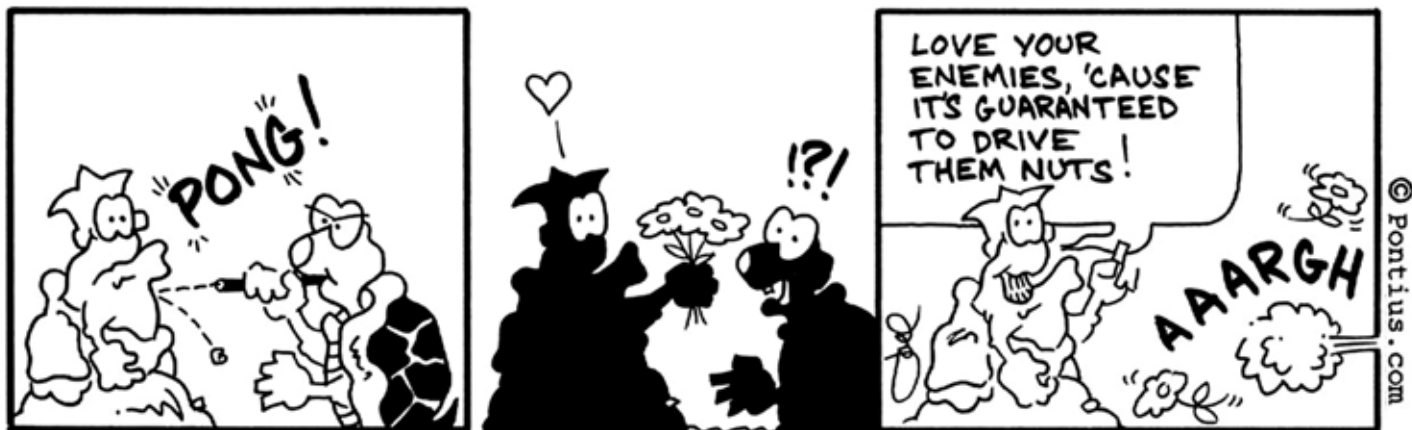
I recognize that two important editorial jobs are shortening pieces when space is at a premium and helping writers say things better. In making necessary changes to my letter, one of the changes unfortunately changed what I was trying to say.

In the paragraph about a young woman who attempted suicide, the editorial changes had her give up on life because of "unkind comments." My original did not reference "unkind comments," but rather statements like the ones made in Saskatoon by pastors and former pastors, among others, about the fact that the church can only be seen as being remotely faithful to Jesus and Scripture if it takes a hardline stand against same-sex relationships.

It is those kinds of statements and that kind of stand by the church—seen often not as unkind but as necessary and even courageous by those responsible for them—that I believe is driving young men and women away from the church and some to attempt suicide.

—RAY FRIESEN, SWIFT CURRENT, SASK.

Pontius' Puddle



/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

- Barkman**—Katie Abigail S. (b. Oct. 15, 2014), to Elisa and Paul Barkman, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Brenneman**—Sophie Rebecca (b. Feb. 5, 2015), to Brooke and Jesse Brenneman, Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.
- Giesbrecht**—Anastasia Lucille (b. Jan. 12, 2015), to Chris and Yvonne Giesbrecht, Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.
- Hoover**—Mira Grace (b. Jan. 2, 2015), to Chris and Tanya Hoover, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Kasdorf**—Grace Sydney (b. Feb. 5, 2015), to Dennis and Kristine Kasdorf, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Neufeld**—Elna Jasmin (b. Dec. 30, 2014), to Josiah and Mona Neufeld, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Penner**—Abby Nicole (b. Jan. 9, 2015), to Ivo and Christa Penner, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Thiessen Unger**—Ezra Jacob (b. Nov. 14, 2014), to Jeff Thiessen and Vivian Unger, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Tonelli**—Elaina Lois (b. Jan. 9, 2015), to Twila and Paul Tonelli, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.
- Vanderlee**—Jeremy Joseph (b. Feb. 10, 2015), to Scott and Yvonne Vanderlee, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
- Wolfe**—Essa Grace (b. Nov. 11, 2014), to Jonathan and Amy

Wolfe, Morden Mennonite, Man.

Baptisms

Jonathan Klassen—Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Dec. 21, 2014.

Marriages

Bueckert/Klassen—Brittany Bueckert and Christopher Klassen (Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.), at Winkler Covenant Mennonite, Man., Feb. 7, 2015.

Epp/Hamm—Ian Epp (Eigenheim Mennonite, Rosthern, Man.) and Kirsten Hamm (Rosthern Mennonite), at Altona, Man., Nov. 10, 2014.

Deaths

Bartel—Magdalene (nee Dueck), 91 (b. May 19, 1923; d. Jan. 29, 2015), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Driedger—John, 88 (b. Sept. 13, 1926; d. Feb. 3, 2015), Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Epp—Verner Jacob, 83 (b. Dec. 6, 1931; d. Feb. 1, 2015), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Fast—Anna, 89 (d. Jan. 20, 2015), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Fehr—Peter, 76 (b. Aug. 20, 1938; d. Feb. 11, 2015), Eigenheim Mennonite, Rosthern, Sask.

Friesen—Anne, 91 (b. Nov. 19, 1923; d. Jan. 26, 2015), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Friesen—Cornelius, 94 (d. Dec. 31, 2014), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Friesen—Neta, 96 (b. July 26, 1918; d. Feb. 1, 2015), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Grenzebach—Helen May (nee Snyder), 93 (b. Sept. 8, 1921; d. Feb. 13, 2015), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Janzen—Helen, 92 (d. Jan. 29, 2015), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Kehler—Henrietta (nee Klassen), 93 (b. June 21, 1921; d. Jan. 17, 2015), Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

Kehler—Margaretha, 89 (d. Dec. 9, 2014), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Kehler—Tina, 78 (b. Aug. 14, 1936; d. Jan. 29, 2015), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Lichti—Louis, 88 (b. May 22, 1926; d. Jan. 4, 2015), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Martin-Baker—Elmeda, 95 (b. July 5, 1919; d. Jan. 30, 2015), Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., and Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Mattis—Katharina, 93 (d. Nov. 18, 2014), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

McCracken—Harvey, 66 (b. June 30, 1948; d. Feb. 5, 2015), First Mennonite, Calgary.

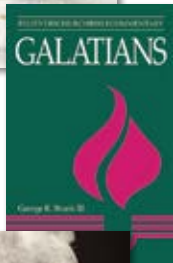
Miller—Harper Ella, 2 (b. June 9, 2012; d. Feb. 7, 2015),

Spring Titles from Herald Press



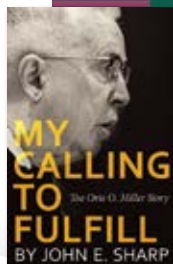
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Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

Regier—Eckhard, 73 (b. Jan. 4, 1942; d. Feb. 7, 2015), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Snyder—Roy, 99 (b. Oct. 23, 1915; d. Feb. 11, 2015), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Steckly—Lydia, 89 (b. Dec. 19, 1925; d. Jan. 6, 2015), Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Thiessen—Mary, 90 (b. June 16, 1924; d. Jan. 5, 2015), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Zacharias—Sarah (nee Friesen), 90 (b. July 5, 1924; d. Feb. 11, 2015), Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

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.

VIEWPOINT

Don't confuse servants with leaders

GEORGE EPP

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

I was having coffee on “coffee row” this morning when an acquaintance who had just finished breakfast walked by and handed me a photocopied column from the Feb. 2 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*—Steve Hoepfner’s “Stand up for God’s truth,” page 15—along with an admonition to “read that and believe it.”

I read it . . . again, and believed that Hoepfner is sincere in his concern for the current impasse in our congregations and area churches. So are we all.

As a recent moderator of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and a member of the General Board of MC Canada, I feel compelled to comment on what this division feels like to those we call leadership. It ought to be understood that authority in our national and area churches rests completely with the delegate sessions; we are not hierarchical, and in terms of governance we are more comparable to cooperatives than to corporations.

The people the delegates choose to serve them are not bishops, are not popes, are not cardinals who might have the power to cause congregations to “be put out of the denomination and [their] clergy defrocked,” as Hoepfner suggested.

As individuals, our chosen servants’

convictions can, of course, fall on either the inclusive or the inclusive-but-with-conditions side of same-sex attraction questions, but my experience has been that neither our “leadership” at national nor area church levels can be peremptorily blamed for promoting one side or the other, as many have claimed—Hoepfner included—although I have to admit that there have been some exceptions.

We mustn’t rename our servants as “leaders,” and then blame them for a problem that we, as individual churches and members, created, but for which we are not prepared to take responsibility and have not given the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process the attention it deserved.

Truth is, we are organized horizontally and the decision to bless a same-sex marriage in Nutana Park/Osler was a congregational decision not answering to, nor endorsed by, the broader church or even surrounding congregations. I’m not saying that this is as it should be. It is, however, a fact that such actions are possible. Obviously, a delegate session can expel individual congregations and it is at the feet of all of us, then, that such a decision would fall.

Stated positively, I’ve witnessed

the hard work of the BFC and Future Directions task forces, as well as the MC Canada General Board deliberations, enough to know that no one else in our national community has expended as much prayer and study, patience and energy, in the interests of unity and in the preservation of all that amazing work that is our legacy as Mennonites in Canada. Fumbling the ball that’s been handed off to us would be a loss and a failure beyond reckoning.

In 2002, David Schroeder cautioned delegates to the MC Saskatchewan assembly as follows: “[W]e are not yet ready to give a final answer to the problem of inclusion or exclusion of Christians who have made a same-sex covenant. We could declare that this is something that we are working on, and that people need to search together for that which would be salvific for all . . . [I]t assumes that with time we will come to know the leading of the Spirit if we are committed to bind ourselves to that which is of the Spirit.”

Are we still at the same place? Have we worked hard enough at BFC together so that the Spirit was given room to speak to us? Or have we all made up our minds too soon?

And if, in the end, we simply break apart into inclusion/inclusion-with-conditions groups, let’s at least have the grace not to expect more from our servants than they are able to give.

You and I are MC Canada. You and I are MC Saskatchewan/Eastern Canada/Manitoba/Alberta/B.C.

George Epp attends Eigenheim Mennonite Church, Rosthern, Sask.

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH *Being still together*

BY ELSIE WIEBE WITH KATHY GIESBRECHT
Mennonite Women Manitoba

There is so much to be done. Extra demands at home and at work. More time with the family. Keeping up with an exercise program. Planning the next holiday. Time out with friends. Involvement in our children's school and extra-curricular activities, and many more. The demands of life draw us into a myriad of activities demanding our time and energy.

As women, we often tend to take on more than we are able to give and gradually our energies ebb away, so we become anxious, unable to set clear boundaries. We need to recognize that all our "busyness" is not always fruitful. The busyness keeps us going when maybe we should be still, in order to evaluate and to hear. To be still and listen to what God is directing us to is difficult for us because it may cause our life to be turned around.



Mennonite
Women
Canada

She also noted "that there are broader forces at play, which work against sane lifestyles, against calm and time for conversation. There are now so many more options available to us. One force at work among us is the professionalization of everything; we over-program our children so that they can learn skills from outside professionals. Gone are the days when we considered a well-rounded child one who could skate, swim and read."

Loewen concluded with a challenge, emphasizing that the "church is uniquely positioned to respond to this pressing need. We have an ancient history of being counter-cultural. We have beliefs and practices which call us to live differently. Women in the church can stand in solidarity and affirm choices that make for a gentle and sane way of life." ❧

Koinonia Ladies Group still going strong after 47 years

BY JOLANDA FRIESEN

Ask any of the 22 members of Koinonia Ladies Group in Altona whether they are too busy to attend Koinonia every first and third Monday of the month and they would answer, "Definitely not."

This is where we continue to be inspired by the applicable lessons in the study guides produced annually by Mennonite Women U.S.A. and MW Canada. This is where we walk with each other in every stage of life. This is where we continue to be challenged, each year bringing its own set of experiences both good and bad. This is where we deepen caring in our lives.

Koinonia continues to be an arm of the church. We incorporate shut-in visitations, a work-night at the local Mennonite Central Committee store, and a singing/visiting night including dessert at our seniors home.

Last September, the social committee planned a kick-off retreat. No need to pack a suitcase, participants came to Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church and stayed for seven hours. With a glass of homemade apple juice in hand, members mingled and perused the 12 worship centres that introduced the 12 lessons in *Practicing Presence* by Terri J. Plank Brenneman.

Kathy Giesbrecht presented an overview of the study guide, and Marilyn Houser Hamm of Altona introduced us to many of the songs suggested with the lessons. We enjoyed lively singing, a lovely catered dinner and a wonderful warm apple platz for dessert. We left feeling inspired and excited, ready for new challenges and ready to practise presence. ❧

Jolanda Friesen is a founding member of the Koinonia Women's Group. She lives in Altona, and attends Seeds of Life Community Church there.



The Mennonite Women Manitoba working group is composed of Evelyn Friesen, left, Kathy Giesbrecht, Elsie Wiebe, Ruth Epp and Jolanda Friesen. Missing was Mary Anne Arndt.

The awareness of the "busyness" prompted Mennonite Women Manitoba to address the realities women live with and how we might walk with one another and with other women in the wider church. With that in mind, last fall we hosted two regional conversation circles, in rural and urban settings, to which we invited women who are leaders in their churches and communities. Lynda Loewen, marriage and family therapist at Recovery of Hope, provided input on the theme of "Rhythm of our lives" and led the discussions.

Afterwards, in an interview with Kathy Giesbrecht, associate director of leadership ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba, Loewen commented that she was "struck by how informed and interested participants were in the concept of the rhythm of our lives, and how much thinking and working they had already done to create more balanced and sane lives. Everyone recognized that busyness could easily overtake them."

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

VIEWPOINT

Frank thoughts on future directions

WILL BRAUN
SENIOR WRITER

A quantifiable angst hangs in the church air these days. Mennonite Church Canada is in decline. There are exceptions and bright spots, but the trend has long been unmistakable.

The numbers, whether in dollars or heads, are likely a bit smaller this year than last. Donations to MC Canada were down by about \$38,000 for the fiscal year ended Jan. 31. Costs were trimmed by about the same amount. That counts as good news.

Executive director Willard Metzger says of the numbers, “This is positive as we continue to navigate through this extended period of uncertainty.”

The real issue, of course, is not in the numbers. It is broader and deeper:

- **HOW DO** we stop the drift of young people?
- **HOW DO** we compete for people’s energies?
- **HOW DO** we connect Christian belief to changing mindsets?
- **HOW DO** we keep same-sex controversy from tearing us apart?
- **AND, TO** be frank, how do we evoke passion about something other than men having sex with each other?

MC Canada’s response to the shifting ground is the Becoming a Faithful Church (BFC) process and the Future Directions Task Force.

The hope for the generically named BFC is that it will draw unity from a well of polarization, not by finding theological unanimity but by creating latitude for varying views along the sexuality



spectrum. The hope is to prevent more departures on either end of that spectrum.

Future Directions focusses on money and structures. It was struck two years ago after an 18-month consultation period.

Decisions are expected at the 2016 national assembly. The question at hand, according to the MC Canada website, is “how to financially sustain ministry” for the national and area churches.

The 10-member task force recently released a 17-page report entitled “God, mission and a people: A draft for conversation and testing.” The report covers everything from who created the world and out-sourcing support services to the balance between congregations and area churches. The crux, though, is a six-page outline of two organizational options:

- **ONE PUTS** greater weight on a national umbrella organization that supports regional “centres of energy.”
- **THE OTHER** gives primacy to three regional offices.

Presumably, both would trim costs mainly by trimming staff.

The task force was given a tough job and it has worked hard. Unfortunately, the report—also available in a six-page overview form—will be largely undecipherable to most church goers, as it was to me. The church jargon is thick and the organizational material requires multiple readings. It sends the wrong message to people with one eye already on the door. That is less a critique than a plea for common sense: When planning the future

of the church, please communicate like regular people.

Despite the complex report, the process may feel familiar. We Mennonites have inherited a discomfort with power and with church structures, which are essentially a form of divvying up power. Our administrators grapple with that by periodically swinging our institutions on a pendulum between centralization and decentralization. But most of us remain on the sidelines.

I’m probably not going to pass up a Sunday afternoon of pond hockey with my boys in order to discuss the “integrated national conference/church with dispersed staff and centres of energy” model versus the “regional conferences/churches working as one on national agenda” model.

Is that because I belong to an elusive, passionless generation? No. I’d show up if the question were, “What are you most passionate about?” or, “What pain do you carry that the faith community might address?” Or if the agenda were Family Day at the rink.

I believe most people carry within them a passion or pain that would compel them to participate wholly in church if they knew there would be space for that passion to find expression or that pain to be touched. That’s the raw material of church and the task of church in any age. I expect that Future Directions members would say their process will help facilitate such expression, but the signal they have sent is hardly one of connecting with people where they are at.

I’m being too hard on the task force. It’s just that in a world of such pain and possibility, it’s hard to see so much institutional energy directed towards a process that will leave too many behind. It’s hard to see a process doomed to miss the tremendous care and creativity that lie further toward the fringes of church than an insider process can reach.

Canadian Mennonite recently ran an article about why young people leave the church (March 2, page 44). In it, Danielle Morton, a Canadian Mennonite University student, is quoted as saying, “Nothing is going to attract people more than to truly be who you are.”

That’s common sense I connect with. ❧

'Be not afraid'

MC Manitoba delegates address difficult issues at annual gathering

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

"Be not afraid" was an apt theme for the 2015 annual delegate gathering of Mennonite Church Manitoba. Delegates were informed of a \$234,647 deficit, the withdrawal of one their fellow member congregations (Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite), an unknown future for camping ministry and scaled-down ministry programs.

"MC Manitoba had a difficult year this past year," said Ken Warkentin, executive director, during the two-day event held on Feb. 27 and 28.

Chuck Neufeld, Illinois Mennonite Conference minister and a singer/songwriter, offered a pastoral presence at the gathering. He acknowledged the fear factor. "Fear is understandable and helpful to alert us to something, but it should not become a resting place," he said. "Trust and gratitude are the antidote to fear. When I trust someone and am grateful for someone, my emotional state is altered. Say thanks for the very person you are concerned about. Thank God for each other. That is the only way to receive the rest

from fear that Jesus offers."

Difficult decisions looming

Some of the challenges of last year were the result of one-time events, such as the closing of Camp Koinonia for two weeks due to illness, the necessity of obtaining professional appraisals for Koinonia and Moose Lake camps, and parking lot repairs at the MC Manitoba offices. However, donations—including those from congregations, camp enrolment and guest group rental income—continue to reflect downward trends.

• **MC MANITOBA** is facing difficult decisions in dealing with these new realities. "We are moving from four to three departments," explained Warkentin. Leadership Ministries will continue to work with congregational health, governance and policy development, and congregations in conflict. A second ministry will be an integration of Camping Ministries and Evangelism and Service Ministries; and a



Chuck Neufeld sings to Mennonite Church Manitoba delegates: 'If you're on the road to where you are going, you are already there in your heart, mind and soul. It will take all your strength.'

third department will be Support Services. "Staffing adjustments will be done accordingly," added Warkentin.

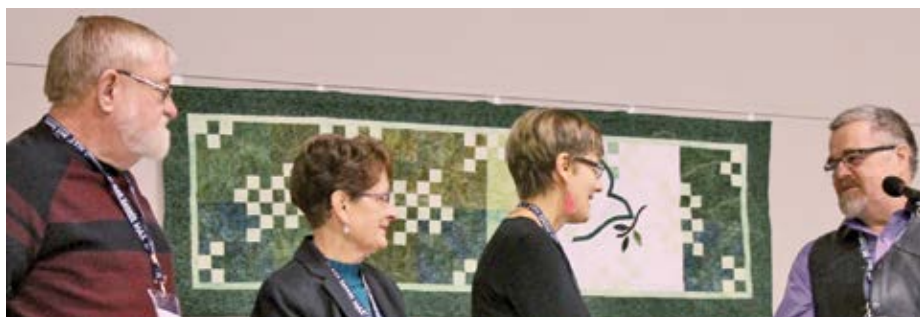
• **LAST NOVEMBER**, delegates approved a 2015 congregational giving budget of \$645,000.

"We are now concerned about its viability," said treasurer Tom Seals. "Three congregations have notified us that they will be reducing their giving. Our guest group rental income and camp enrolment are down, and the ongoing [request for proposals] process may change things as well. We need to take another look at the budget and hope to complete it by the end of March.

• **PETER REMPEL**, MC Manitoba's board chair, presented a draft proposal of the area church's guidelines for congregations and ministers considering policies and practices at variance to MC Manitoba's Confession of Faith. "While some congregations are taking positions that seem to be at variance with the Confession of Faith, we have tried to develop some guidelines in this stage of our discernment," he said.

In the discussion that followed, delegates stressed the need to love each other.

Stefan Froese, pastor of Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite Church, said, "A lot of people have left the church not because of doctrinal issues, but because of how the churches have treated each other. We're being watched by other churches and by the people we're called to witness to."



Peter Rempel, right, board chair of MC Manitoba, welcomes Pinawa Christian Fellowship into membership at the annual delegate sessions on Feb. 27 and 28. Ken and Willa Reddig and Lorna Hiebert, at left, are part of the Mennonite subset of the fellowship. In the 1960s, the government created Pinawa for workers to build and service a newly established nuclear research facility. Christians from a variety of backgrounds and traditions established homes in the community and, rather than forming many little denominational groupings, they formed one body called Pinawa Christian Fellowship in 1963 to convey a message of Christian unity.

• **DELEGATES WERE** expecting to hear a business plan for the sale of the Koinonia and Moose Lake camps, but were informed that the Request for Proposals process is taking longer than anticipated. However, a full summer camp program will run this summer at all three of the camps.

“We are now in the stages of negotiating with the interested groups,” said Warkentin. “We want a partnership so that we can carry on our summer ministry. We are having favourable conversations, but I think it is safe to say, don’t count on a substantial inflow from the sale.”

Norm Voth, director of the former Evangelism and Service Ministries, was given opportunity to outline some of the visioning for Camp Assiniboia, which is not up for sale by MC Manitoba. An expanded summer camp program will build on the already well-established adults-with-disabilities camp program, for which Camps with Meaning has carved out an important niche in the province.

Plans are to look for ways to expand this ministry and share resources. The horse program at Camp Assiniboia will be replaced with a camp farm as part of a creation care program. The ropes course will be further developed, and providing hospitality through guest group rentals will be promoted. School education programs, gap-year opportunities for youth, an indigenous learning centre, and space and resources for congregations to carry out their programs and ministries, are some of the ideas that are being explored.

“High water levels are the new normal,” said Voth. “We have been informed that we can expect that every three to five years there will be flooding. How do we live with that new reality? We need to look at creative ways to provide unique camp experiences that allow us to use that space even in the high-water years.”

“I’m fully aware this isn’t a business plan,” Voth said. “We need to do a good amount of research and develop our partnerships, but we want to present these ideas for testing as a direction.”

Closing words of assurance

As Chuck Neufeld sang, “We have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back,” delegates were reminded

that if they claim Christ to be their centre, nothing else can be. They can’t allow other issues to come so close that they obscure the shared conviction of Christ’s centrality. “For God so loved the world,” he said. “Neither do you remove yourself from the world. Then you don’t bring wisdom and compassion to it.”

Neufeld brought to the MC Manitoba

gathering the question that Jesus asked his disciples in the boat: “*Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?*”

“Wake Jesus up in your life,” Neufeld urged. “Rest assured you are safe, even though the structures may go down. Make sure you don’t do God’s work. Only do the work God has assigned for you to do.” ☸

Unity has been broken

Tofield congregation withdraws from MC Alberta

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent

In a letter dated Feb. 4, Tofield Mennonite Church notified the congregations of Mennonite Church Alberta that it had voted 94 percent in favour of withdrawing its membership from the area church. Congregational chair Brian Goerzen wrote that the congregation feels the basis for unity in the area church has been broken.

“We have come to understand that we view the Scriptures—the relevance, power, authority of the Scriptures themselves, and what they say about God, mankind, sin and salvation—very differently from the conference,” his letter stated, citing II Timothy 3:14-17.

Tofield Mennonite began with Soviet Mennonite immigrants meeting in homes in 1929, and officially organized itself as a congregation in 1936 as Schoenwieser Mennonite Gemeinde zu Tofield. In 1950, the language of worship switched from German to English.

Despite the high percentage of members voting to leave, the decision to leave was a difficult one for the church, as there are many family connections and much shared history between congregants and the larger Mennonite church.

The letter shared this pain: “Please know that MC Alberta and its members are in our prayers.”

Dan Graber, MC Alberta’s area church minister, lamented the withdrawal, but echoed Goerzen’s words. “We wish them God’s blessing,” he said. ☸



Tofield (Alta.) Mennonite Church.



Summer camps in Manitoba for children and youth grades 1-12 completed and for adults with disabilities.

Learn more and register online: www.campswithmeaning.org

Camp Assiniboia, Camp Koinonia
Camp Moose Lake

'Following Jesus today'

B.C. delegates contemplate changes, structures

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent

RICHMOND, B.C.

With a focus on being missional and staying vibrant, healthy and connected, delegates and friends of Mennonite Church British Columbia gathered for annual sessions at Peace Mennonite Church on Feb. 20 and 21.

The Lead sessions on Feb. 20 featured guest speaker Dan Unrau, pastor and Mennonite Central Committee consultant, speaking on "Addressing power and authority in the church: Seeing that no one gets hurt and the work gets done."

Unrau kept the group's attention using a storytelling approach as he explored power in the church. "Pastors and leaders have power," he said. "We lead by permission, but too much power goes into abuse."

He also compared the church to a family system. "The church is the unblemished bride of Christ, but a dysfunctional family," Unrau said. He likened the church family to a mobile in which the elements are tied together and depend on balance, but when something happens to change one part of it, even a positive change, the balance for all is disrupted. "Do we want to be healthy or leave things the way they always were?" he asked.

Three plenary sessions on Feb. 21 included "Anabaptist identity" with Gareth Brandt of Columbia Bible College; "Priority

of empowering people" with Dan Unrau; and viewing of the short film, *How the Wolf Changed the River*, which explains how the reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone National Park caused a "trophic cascade" and positively affected the whole ecosystem of the park. Participants were asked to consider whether there is something that needs to be reintroduced into the church that would bring about drastic positive changes.

This year's theme was "Following Jesus today." MC B.C. moderator Lee Dyck reported on the past year's work of the Reimagining Reference Group approved at last year's meeting. MC B.C.'s three themes in line with this are:

- **ANABAPTIST IDENTITY.**
- **BUILDING CONNECTIONS/trust** between and within congregations.
- **BEING A** missional community.

In afternoon business sessions, delegates formally recognized the 62 years of ministry of the recently closed Clearbrook Mennonite Church in Abbotsford and passed a resolution to authorize the Leadership Board to manage the church property, for which MC B.C. holds the title.



Sarah Lowen of the now-closed Clearbrook Mennonite Church gives thanks for the support of MC B.C. to the small German-speaking congregation over the years.

This would include landlord responsibilities in connection with possible renters and investigating the development and sale of the property. Several ideas were suggested for use of the property, including constructing an apartment building or renting to another local church that may not have a permanent worship home.

Living Stones Mennonite Christian Church, a Chinese congregation, was recognized for its first year of ministry. The congregation numbering 25 to 30 meets at Cloverdale United Church and has an active youth group and cell groups. "People are coming to the Lord," said Pastor Jonathan Deng. "That's exciting. Pray for us."

Deng also shared prayer requests with the delegate body, saying that his church needs worship leaders, discipleship training, financial support and Sunday school teachers. Would members of sister congregations be willing to commit to teaching one time a month for one year, he wondered.

The 2015 budget was approved, although the Finance Committee reported MC B.C. has been running at a deficit for the last few years. Interest from the Mountainview fund, about \$50,000 per year, is being used to make up the deficit, but will eventually be depleted.

In round-table sessions, delegates also discussed the MC Canada Future Directions Task Force and how MC B.C. might relate to a restructured national body. ❧



Delegates at Mennonite Church B.C.'s annual general meeting discuss future directions for the area church.



Chess and crokinole replace video games at lunch during Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's tech timeout from Feb. 24 to 26.

'Unplug, reconnect'

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate takes a 'tech timeout'

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

KITCHENER, ONT.

According to Sara Wahl, multi-taskers actually do worse at all tasks, including those that require multitasking; having learned to be constantly interrupted by the many bells and whistles around them, they do worse than those who have trained themselves to focus. The head of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's technical department explained how "linear" thinkers can shift their focus from task to task in a multitasking situation better than those trained to follow each new stimulus.

Wahl ran a pilot project in her "comtech" class last year, challenging students and their families to put away devices with screens for a few days. Grade 10 students Abby Willms and Danike Morrison took part in the pilot and also in this year's Lenten three-day "tech timeout," held from Feb. 24 to 26. They found that they were more focussed on the people around them, rather than all of their social media friends.

Morrison said she felt she moved "out of a little bubble" created by her technology and became "aware of the people around" her. Willms also found that she could better focus on her school work without the constant interruptions of Facebook, texting and other social media.



Abby Willms and Danike Morrison, left, both Grade 10 students at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, pose with Sara Wahl, head of the school's technology department, and the giant iPhone created to draw attention to the tech timeout from Feb. 24 to 26.

The same held true for many others.

Ann L. Schultz, Rockway's principal, found that she had 10 more minutes to spend with her husband at breakfast when she didn't carry out her daily morning ritual of texting and e-mailing friends and family. She also noticed that students stayed around the tables in the cafeteria longer at lunch times, interacting with their friends, rather than turning to their devices. Crokinole and chess boards appeared in the Hub, with both players and spectators interacting.

Tom Bileski, the school's director of community relations, was the only staff member allowed to use his smartphone so that media could be in touch with the project. But his daughter gave up hers and organized a tobogganing party with friends. The only difficulty was how to arrange to pick her up, since she had no phone on which to be contacted.

In the spirit of Lent, a "confessional" was set up for students and teachers to record their responses to the experiment, ironically on video equipment.

As Wahl noted, "Even failure is just as valuable . . . because you're examining yourself and your habits," adding that when people "turn off a certain amount of noise in your life [it] creates space for connection for other voices, maybe even God."

Along with the "fast" there were debriefs in homerooms and old tech equipment was collected for recycling. All teachers and board members, more than half the students and 40-plus families pledged to stay away from screens during this time. Some families couldn't because work required them to be available. ☼

PHOTO BY DARIAN WIEBE-NEUFELD



MC Alberta junior high snow campers enjoy a wiener roast in the snow at Camp Valaqua on a sunny January afternoon.

CAMP REFLECTION

A highlight of my year

CLAIRE DUECK

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

On the weekend of Jan. 16 to 18 I attended junior high snow camp at Camp Valaqua in Water Valley, Alta. This was my second time going and it is becoming a highlight of my year.

Snow camp is a get-away from my everyday world where I can spend time with God in his creation. I feel like I am at home when I go to Valaqua. I feel like I am a part of a big family that wants to help me connect with Jesus.

I make so many friends each time I go. I see some familiar faces and some I don't know. I always connect with everyone around me and we work together to support and help each other on our faith journeys.

At snow camp we played lots of great

games to get to know each other. We would walk a mile with a partner—girls had to walk with boys and boys with girls—and ask questions about that person.

Every year we play a great game called Mission Impossible; don't worry, it is possible! Some of the counsellors in training (CITs) stand on a truck parked somewhere on the campus and we have to make it to the truck without being spotted by a big flashlight. There are also two CITs who walk around with mini flashlights looking for you. If they spot you moving with the flashlight, you have to go back to the beginning at the campfire.

The theme of snow camp this year was "Faith in transit." Our speaker talked

about how our faith could be in different stages and how we can improve our faith. He also shared some of his own examples about his faith journey. We talked a lot about trusting God and how this is a really big part of faith. I learned that, no matter what stage I am at, I am well loved by God. We all learned how we can talk and pray together.

It's nice to know that my faith can look different at different points of my life, but God always stays the same and always loves me.

If I had to summarize what I think about snow camp in three words, it would be easy: I love it! ❧

Mennonite men make meals

Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church men learn cooking basics

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

Wally Dirks prepared his first ever meal on Feb. 25. His wife told him it was very tasty.

Dirks was one of 11 retired men who gathered at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church on the four Fridays in February to learn cooking basics.

According to Erika Tubb, who led the series with her son Steven, a trained chef, the goal was to teach the men to be able to prepare "delicious, healthy, homemade food."

The idea for the course came from Betty Lyn Enns on the Health and Wellness Committee's education sub-committee. It got the backing of Karen Watson, the parish nurse, who enlisted Tubb.

Participants learned how to make five dishes per week through a combination

of watching and hands-on participation. Some of the men are widowed, others have wives with disabilities, and still others share the homemaking load with their wives. Besides the learning and getting lunch, the men expressed joy in the camaraderie they experienced both at the Friday sessions and in other situations.

Tubb felt that the basics included making a basic white sauce, an onion/celery/carrot base for French soups, how to measure ingredients for baking, and the importance of using fresh ingredients.

Although purchased products like prepared bouillon were featured in meals, the men also learned how to make multiple meals from a chicken, including how to use the carcass to make stock.

The menu for the final meal on Feb. 27 featured leftover soup with puffed pastry parmesan bread sticks (made from frozen pastry); slow-cooker pork stew/goulash with freshly baked biscuits (from Bisquick); and either chocolate or crumb cake.

Gentle teasing and repartee filled the gymnasium as the men measured and prepared both the bread sticks and the cakes, and they left asking when the advanced course would begin! ❧



Paul Enns, left, and Wally Dirks discuss how Dirks's cake came out at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church's 'Man Made Meals' event on Feb. 27.



Paul Enns, left, Vic Hiebert, Gunther Swarz, Ed Babiarz, Wally Dirks and John Cornies prepare to bake cakes at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church's 'Man Made Meals' event on Feb. 27.

Canadian's speech on North Korea wins oratory prize

Goshen College
GOSHEN, IND.

Dona Park of Abbotsford, B.C., topped four other fellow students to win Goshen College's 2015 C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Contest on Feb. 17. With her speech entitled "Through the eyes of people," Park won the top prize of \$500 and a chance to enter her speech in the bi-national intercollegiate oratorical contest.

Park spoke about North Korean human rights atrocities, including stories from survivors and her own personal connections to the country. Park, who is Canadian and attends Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, has family roots in both North and South Korea.

"Today, I am not here to talk to you about the North Korean stereotypes perpetuated by James Franco's movie or Dennis Rodman's affinity for the young dictator," Park said. "It is my responsibility, beyond my small genetic make-up of being North Korean, to let you know about its concentration camps, and those who have survived and escaped the country."

Morgan Yordy, a first-year history and peace, justice and conflict studies major from Rochelle, Illinois, was runner-up, speaking on "Saving the future: One girl at a time."

Coming in third place, Peter Meyer Reimer spoke on "Dead white men show

us the skeletons we didn't know we kept in our closets."

Speech contests have been part of Goshen College's history since the early 1900s. The C. Henry Smith contest allows the campus community to hear more about relevant, contemporary issues related to peace. ❧

GOSHEN COLLEGE PHOTO BY MARK KREIDER



Speaking on North Korean human rights atrocities, Goshen College sophomore Dona Park of Abbotsford, B.C., placed first in the college's 2015 C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Contest on Feb. 17.

Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Ontario

• **ON NOV. 23, 2014**, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Hagerman Mennonite Church, Markham, celebrated God's call to ministry for Roberson Mbayamvula. He was installed as Hagerman's lead pastor in 2012 and both area church and local congregation reaffirmed their covenant of ministry together with him, recognizing his earlier ordination as a minister in the Mennonite church. As a former Mennonite Brethren leader in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, he became a chaplain at the Protestant University of Congo in 1995. He came to Canada as a refugee in 2007 and was finally reunited with his family in early 2012.



Roberson Mbayamvula

• **TIM SNYDER** became the part-time youth pastor at Living Waters Community Christian Fellowship in New Hamburg on Jan. 1. Snyder was at Urban Promise in Toronto from 2003-06, and attended a Torchbearers School in Germany from 2006-07 with his wife Suzi. After working with youth in their home congregation in Canada from 2007-09, they served for five years do-



Tim and Suzi Snyder hold their children Noah and Ava.

ciate pastor with responsibilities for youth ministry and missions, with an emphasis

Crossworld, providing humanitarian assistance and other support to Muslims.

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Henry Paetkau, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's area church minister, left, ordains Steve Brnjas on Feb. 8.

• **STEVE BRNJAS** was ordained on Feb. 8 at Zion Mennonite Fellowship in Elmira. Brnjas previously served as co-pastor with his wife Linda—now Mennonite Church Eastern Canada regional minister—at Bethel Mennonite Church, Elora, Ont.; as program associate of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario's Circles of Support and Accountability; and as a police officer for the Region of Waterloo. He completed his master of theological studies degree at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., in 2011.

• **MIKE WILLIAMSON** was licensed for "specific ministry" at Leamington United Mennonite Church on Nov. 23, 2014. Williamson is associate pastor with responsibilities for youth ministry and missions, with an emphasis

on serving the congregational neighbourhood. He has been at Leamington since 2011. He earned a master of theological studies degree at Heritage College and Seminary, Cambridge, Ont., in 2009. Before going to Leamington, he worked in youth ministry and occasional preaching at Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church, as an academic assistant at his alma mater, and at the Argus Residence for Young People, a shelter for homeless youth in Cambridge.



Mike Williamson

• **BEN CASSELS** was ordained at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, on March 1. He earned a bachelor of theology degree from Emmanuel Bible College, Kitchener, and a master of theological studies degree from Conrad Grebel University College. He currently serves as Waterloo North's minister of missional formation, a position he has had since 2001. He previously served as a Christian outreach worker in South Sudan with Christian Mission Aid in 2010; youth pastor of Glencairn Mennonite Brethren Church, Kitchener, from 2006-09; and as a pastoral intern at The Dwelling Place, a Mennonite Brethren congregation in Kitchener, from 2004-06.



Ben Cassels

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Briefly noted

Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests gets \$150,000 grant

The Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests (BMC) learned this month it is the recipient of a \$150,000 grant from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation. BMC is a network of groups across the United States and Canada with the united mission of cultivating an inclusive church. It has worked for 40 years at this goal. According to BMC's executive

director, Carol Wise, the council will use the money to establish an online Centre for Queer Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, which will benefit Mennonite and Brethren lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) people and allies everywhere. This initiative will have three areas of focus, including an oral history project with films and interviews collected from individuals,

families and congregations; an online training and resource centre; and a network for LGBTQ scholars and artists. "[The grant] will go a long way in strengthening BMC's work of caring for the Mennonite and Brethren LGBTQ and allied community, and building a more just church and society," Wise says, adding that the online centre will hopefully be a place where everyone can grow in their understanding of LGBTQ people in a Mennonite and Brethren context. She says it's "painfully clear" how badly the church needs these resources.

—BY RACHEL BERGEN

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

A steep price for following his conscience

Mennonite lawyer who took federal government to court still waiting for a decision two years later

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU
Manitoba Correspondent

Despite risk to his reputation and livelihood as a federal lawyer, for more than a decade Edgar Schmidt has consistently spoken out against the federal government's practice of proposing bills to Parliament without taking adequate steps to ensure that the pieces of legislation don't violate the Bill of Rights or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, or, if they do, that Parliament is advised of this and can decide whether to expressly override them.

In December 2012, frustrated that his concerns continued to fall on unresponsive ears, he filed a lawsuit in Federal Court in an effort to persuade his employers that what they were doing was not consistent with the law and not in accordance with the Constitution. (See "Faith' influenced federal whistleblower," Feb. 4, 2013.)

Schmidt, who occasionally attends Ottawa Mennonite Church, was immediately suspended from work without pay and was barred from his office. He disputed any wrongdoing and it was agreed that the Department of Justice would not take disciplinary action.

Schmidt accepted early retirement in May 2013.

"It's not that I didn't foresee this as a possibility," he says. "I have seen from other situations how dishonourably the state conducts itself at times. But a certain realism about what to expect does not justify the conduct. If I'm lucky, the courts will at least scold the state actors, but I doubt

there will be any other consequences for the ones who, in my view, were failing to comply with law."

More than two years later, Schmidt is receiving support from a variety of sources.

"Lawyers who are retired from the public service have been supportive because they are free to speak their minds," Schmidt says. "Lawyers outside the federal public service, including ones in the public service of various provinces, have



Edgar
Schmidt

'If I'm lucky, the courts will at least scold the state actors, but I doubt there will be any other consequences for the ones who, in my view, were failing to comply with law.'
(Edgar Schmidt)

been supportive. Many members of the public who are not lawyers are supportive and do not understand how the minister and deputy minister can so lightly disregard the rights and the interests of citizens and Parliamentarians, including Parliamentarians' interests in making informed legislative decisions."

Although Schmidt says he feels "somewhat isolated, especially as this action drags on," he draws strength from the "tremendous support of families, friends and members of the public over the past two-plus years."

Aside from this being very important on the basis of citizens' constitutional rights, Schmidt says, "it demonstrates a profoundly inadequate understanding of the structure of the state and the duties of state actors. I believe that officers of any organization have a duty to respect and

to seek to comply with decisions that the organization has properly taken. This is equally true of officers of the state [ministers and senior public servants]. They have a duty to respect the state decisions taken to adopt the Charter of Rights and the limitations on regulation-making that have been adopted by the state legislature, Parliament. . . . The Department [of Justice] position takes no cognizance of this duty and contemplates state actors acting in ways they believe are likely or almost certainly unlawful as a matter of the officer's 'risk tolerance.'"

Schmidt is optimistic that the Federal Court will rule in his favour and declare that what is currently being done by way of examination of bills and regulations is not in accordance with law.

"All I am asking for is a declaration of the law, so that is the only substantive remedy that can emerge from the lawsuit," he says. "I think it would be useful if the court would also comment on certain other issues in order to provide guidance to ministers and public employees—issues

such as the relationship between executive officers of the state and the state itself—but I don't know whether the court will do so."

As an Anabaptist Mennonite, he says he believes his actions are consistent with his faith and even compel him to take this action: "The Anabaptist Mennonite experience teaches that the state is not always benevolent with regard to its citizens, and that their watchfulness is appropriate with regard to the possibility of abuse of power." ❧



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

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

A living wage

For three Waterloo Region Mennonite organizations it's 'more than getting to the poverty line'

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO REGION, ONT.

By the end of last year, three Mennonite-related organizations in Waterloo Region were among 10 that had committed to some level of living wage payments for their employees. A living wage in the region for two people with two children, both working full time (37.5 hours a week) means both earn \$16 an hour in salary and benefits.

According to Greg deGroot-Maggetti, Walking with People in poverty programs coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario, there are various degrees to which an organization or business can be said to be paying a living wage:

- **FRIENDS ARE** committed to work toward all full-time employees being paid a living wage within a year.
- **SUPPORTERS ARE** committed to reducing the number of part-time employees not receiving a living wage within a year.
- **PARTNERS PAY** all full- and part-time employees a living wage and are committed to reducing the number of non-living wage employees within a year.
- **LEADERS ARE** committed to having all employees, including contract and student employees, paid a living wage within a year.
- **CHAMPIONS DO** all of the above and are committed to championing the move to a living wage in their sector/industry and within the larger community.

As deGroot-Maggetti notes, a living wage is about “more than getting to the poverty line.” The goal is to get people to be full members of their community, able to take small vacations, and afford music or dance lessons for their children. There is a small contingency amount in the calculation that can be used toward retirement savings or future children’s education needs.

Frank Zоргdrager, chief executive officer of the Mennonite Savings and Credit Union, says his organization is very close

to fitting into the Supporters category, committed as it is to reducing the number of part-time employees not receiving a living wage in 2015. Zоргdrager sees this as a faith and justice issue, quoting Deuteronomy 24:14: “*You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy labourers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns.*”

MCC Ontario is committed to paying all employees some combination of benefits, insurance and salary that add up to \$16

an hour in all of its offices, including students and contracted workers. According to deGroot-Maggetti, this is a continued transition at MCC from volunteer service workers, who have other sources of income that allow them to volunteer, to employees.

Executive director John Neufeld says that House of Friendship (HoF) in Kitchener is currently working to become a Partner-level participant in 2015, with a new salary grid going into place next month. As an organization that sees the working poor in its programs, the HoF board is committed to paying its employees enough so they don’t have to use the programs it runs. This is “tricky,” according to Neufeld, since organizations like HoF are not overly endowed by communities or governments. Rather than jumping in and having to backtrack, Neufeld says the board has been diligently moving in this direction for a few years. ❧

/// Briefly noted

MCC Saskatchewan receives Global Citizen Award

SASKATOON—The lobby of the Roxy Theatre was recently crowded for the 25th annual Global Citizen Awards put on by the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation (SCIC). One of this year’s award recipients was Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan. Marion Jones nominated MCC Saskatchewan for the peer-nominated award for its “50 years of faith in action” in the province. “The work of MCC has deeply affected my life,” stated Jones, who went on to describe how her father and aunt received food aid from MCC in its early days, and how she herself served under MCC in Indonesia. Making the nomination, said Jones, was her way of thanking MCC “for enabling us to try to behave as a global family.” In accepting the award on behalf of the organization, MCC Saskatchewan executive director Claire Ewert Fisher talked about MCC’s international aid and development work in the name of Christ. Community engagement coordinator Myriam Ullah described how MCC Saskatchewan works locally in the areas of refugee resettlement, restorative justice and welcoming newcomers to Canada. Ewert Fisher stressed the importance of MCC’s volunteers, saying of the award, “It’s theirs, not mine.”

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

PHOTO BY ALAOYS FLEISCHMANN,
USED BY PERMISSION OF SCIC



On behalf of MCC Saskatchewan, Claire Ewert Fisher accepts the Global Citizen Award from Malinda Meegoda of the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation.

MCC calls for donations for Iraqi, Syrian people

BY LINDA ESPENSHADE

Mennonite Central Committee

As cold temperatures and snow add another layer of deprivation to Syrians and Iraqis who have fled their homes because of violence, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is renewing its call for donations to address their needs.

Many Iraqis who fled the Islamic State group last fall are staying in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, one of the coldest areas of the country in the mountains near Turkey.

“Some people are living in unfinished shell buildings with no insulation and sometimes with open door and window spaces,” says Kaitlin Heatwole, MCC’s program coordinator in Iraq. “They use tarps, floor rugs and blankets for insulation. Kerosene heaters are the primary source of heat.”

These conditions are repeated with different details in many locations throughout the Middle East, especially in Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, where MCC focusses its response to the Syrian conflict and Islamic State advances.

POPULAR AID FOR RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT PHOTO



A major winter storm flooded seaside houses in southern Lebanon where Palestinian refugees from Syria and Lebanon are living. Mennonite Central Committee is sending blankets and other basic supplies to 270 families in this area.

The cold adds insult to injury, as if being forced from their homes by violence, losing family and friends, spending all of their savings, and living in tents or empty buildings without a job aren’t enough for displaced Iraqis and Syrians.

MCC’s response to the Syrian crisis during the past four years totals \$20.6 million (all figures in U.S. dollars). In Iraq, MCC has spent \$860,000 since August to help displaced people. From blankets and food vouchers to relief kits and educational support, MCC works through churches and other community organizations to address basic needs of the most vulnerable families.

In addition to the ongoing support, MCC has provided more than 18,500 blankets since the fall in all four countries.

Heaters, fuel and fuel containers were key provisions that Zakho Small Villages Project (ZSVP), an MCC Iraqi partner, distributed to 120 Iraqi families in early January. Volunteers from ZSVP worked hard in freezing temperatures to complete the distribution the day before a substantial snowstorm arrived.

In Syria and the Bakaa Valley of Lebanon, kerosene for heat and cooking is in short supply, and what is available is so expensive that people cannot use it for heat.

Houses in Syria, built without central heating, tend to be made of stone, which holds in the cold. Power cuts throughout the day are common. Although temperatures are commonly about 10 degrees C, living without any heat on a daily basis, especially in tents, results in disease and depression, MCC partners say.

“The lack of heat not only chills the bones, but the souls,” says Naomi Enns of Winnipeg, an MCC representative for Lebanon and Syria along with her husband Doug. “Those without heat become depressed even more, as they find themselves without another resource for daily needs.”

In the Bakaa Valley, where MCC distributed relief kits and soup mix last summer,

ZSVP PHOTO BY ABID HASSAN



With temperatures below freezing and snow in the forecast, volunteers with Zakho Small Villages Project, a Mennonite Central Committee partner organization, works hard to distribute blankets, heaters and fuel to 120 families who are living in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

Syrians and Iraqis living in tents have suffered through repeated February snow storms and a wind storm with 80-kilometre-per-hour winds.

A recent shipment of blankets is destined for a Palestinian community of refugees called Jal al Bahar in southern Lebanon, where the same February wind storm flooded waterfront houses where Palestinian refugees from Syria and Lebanon are living. The 270 families living in this area also get food vouchers through MCC’s account with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

“Although the needs feel overwhelming most days, our partners tell us repeatedly that receiving the blanket, the relief kit, or vouchers to pay rent or buy fuel, is as much a message of hope as it is helpful in practical ways,” Enns says. ❧

GOD AT WORK IN US

PASTORAL REFLECTION

Called to live in hope

AS TOLD TO LINDA ESPENSHADE

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

In his own words, Reverend Ibrahim Nsier, a pastor of the Arab Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Aleppo, tells about his ministry in Syria. Mennonite Central Committee, through the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches, supports the work of Nsier's church as it addresses the urgent needs of the most vulnerable.

This morning I woke up early at 4:30 to the sound of a mortar exploding. I said to myself, "A new day is started." This is something normal in Aleppo.

I went to the kitchen, hoping to get some tea or Nescafé, but I had an urgent call from one of our members who was injured by

the shelling. He needed someone to take him to the hospital. I got my shoes and got to the car quickly. Thanks to God, they dealt with his wounds very quickly, and he was in church for our service.

Today, I preached that we should use what God has given us. No one can say, "I don't have," because if God has given

PHOTO COURTESY OF REVEREND IBRAHIM NSIER



Reverend Ibrahim Nsier stands in front of the site where his congregation, the Arab Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Aleppo, Syria, worshipped before the building was bombed.

us even a tiny thing, we can do a lot with this tiny thing in this situation in this community.

The church where we worshipped before the war was bombed, so now we meet in an apartment building. It's up five floors, almost 120 stairs. We have had mortars hit the building, but God saved us and as many as 150 of us continue to worship there.

Being a pastor in this crisis is not as much about preaching as it is being with the people in their difficult time. Even if we cannot give money or fulfill their physical needs, we can at least pray with them, at least try to comfort them.

After the service, I received another call from two older women who had not one ounce of water and had run out of money to purchase water after paying for their rent and medicine. I got my family and went looking for someone in order to get them water, which I am sorry to say costs a lot of money. We need \$300 a month for a family of five for drinking and washing water.

After that, I received more calls asking me to go quickly to look for a home for two people whose houses were damaged from the mortar attacks that morning. We called a family from church that was out of town. They agreed to lend their

Briefly noted

Bishop Selwanos Boutros Alnemeh visits MCC Ontario

KITCHENER, ONT.—In Canada on a personal visit, Bishop Selwanos Boutros Alnemeh took time to visit Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario's offices earlier this month. From the Syrian Orthodox Church in Homs, Syria, Selwanos came both to thank Mennonites for their ongoing care and to paint a picture of the chaos, anarchy and deep discouragement of the people of Syria, Christians in particular. "We ask why this is happening to us?" he said, describing what amounts to religious cleansing by Islamic State and other forces operating in the Syrian civil war. Syrians began fleeing as long as four years ago and are now living in exile in Jordan and Lebanon. The bishop pleaded for aid to move his community out of Syria to safe places, showing photos of the destruction. Raised in a church orphanage himself, Selwanos has a special place in his heart and work for orphans; his group used to care for around 20, a number now swollen to 100, even though the orphanage building has been destroyed. Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of MCC Ontario, said that a campaign to increase aid to Syrians was being launched this month. (See story on page 25.)

—STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of MCC Ontario, left, thanks Syrian Bishop Selwanos Boutros Alnemeh for sharing about his work and needs.

house for a week until we can make repairs.

This day I described is like every day. Even what I have said doesn't describe fully what is going on.

I am thankful to my wife and my family who remain with me in Aleppo during this crisis. Without my wife, I could be failing. She is my supporter.

We have three children, aged 6 to 12. This situation has forced itself over their lives. My children, when they hear a lot of bombing, they come to our room to feel a little bit secure. When we send our children to school, believe me, we say goodbye to each other because we don't know if we'll have the opportunity to see each other once again.

Always we teach the children that, although it is difficult in this time, our security is in God. We try to teach them that we suffer as Jesus suffered and that the day of resurrection will come someday.

We believe we have a lot left to do in this community. As I walk around the neighbourhood, I see the despair on the faces of the people. I see children on the streets begging for money. I can see people walking in the streets without shoes.

In 2013, through the church we distributed food baskets to 100 families for two months. Last summer, we were able to help 118 families with monthly cash allowances, which helps families pay for things like medical treatment, food, tuition. From August to December 2014, 65 of the most vulnerable families got monthly allowances.

We are not only supporting Christians, we are supporting the whole community to teach them that being a human means having a responsibility to the others. Believe me, we never think in ways that this is Muslim or this is Christian. We think differently. We think we are here for a message and this message should be clear for everybody—that God loves all the people and I insist on the word “all.”

We are called to live in hope. We trust God and we do our job, praying, taking care of each other, reading the Bible and being an instrument of love and peace in this community. This is what we do, and this is the hope we live in.

Please don't forget us in your prayers. ❧

Everyone has a story

Ruth Zehr writes second volume about Nithview Community residents

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

Ruth Zehr believes that everyone has a story worth telling.

A decade ago, Zehr overheard a conversation involving Norma Iutzi, program assistant coordinator at the Nithview Community in New Hamburg, about the many stories she heard when she visited the residents of this Tri-County Mennonite Homes multi-stage facility.

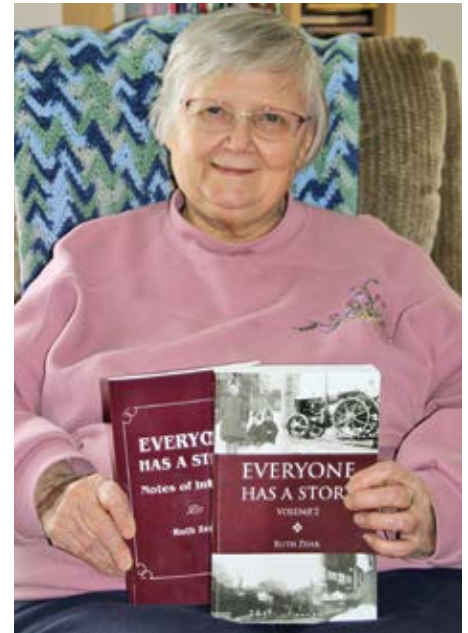
Zehr, a resident in one of the “garden homes” at Nithview, asked if she might take a shot at doing the writing, instead of bringing someone else in to do the work. Having already self-published a series of stories, *Embracing the Ordinary*, which, she says, “are not an autobiography, though I am the thread which connects them,” she got the job.

In 2008, *Everyone Has a Story*, which profiled 48 residents of the community, was published. At that time there was no thought of further volumes, but last November Vol. 2 was published, containing the stories of an additional 43 residents, this time including her and her husband Ron's story.

Over a period of 15 months, pen and paper in hand, Zehr, now 80 and a member of Hillcrest Mennonite Church in New Hamburg, visited Nithview residents and invited them to tell their stories. She felt that a recording device would intimidate them, so she depended on her notes. Most stories went through four to six re-writes, with the subjects being able to add or delete parts of the story.

The volumes include stories of those who lived through the Second World War, and, in the most recent book, all the subjects were all born between 1917 and 1938. Some of the storytellers would have been enemies during the war, but are now neighbours at Nithview.

Vol. 2, with fewer storytellers, is actually longer, and comes with a companion



Ruth Zehr, pictured in her 'garden home' at the Nithview Community in New Hamburg, Ont., holds Everyone Has A Story, Vol. 2, and the companion, Notes of Interest.

book, *Notes of Interest*, containing information from the times of the lives of the storytellers, like the Ontario Mennonite Bible School and Institute. By the time the second volume was released, about half of those whose stories are in Vol. 1 had passed away, along with five of those whose stories appear in Vol. 2.

Nithview residents and people in the surrounding community have eagerly purchased the books, seeing in the pages the stories of neighbours, friends and relatives whose lives were either very much like their own, or, like those coming from Europe, very different. ❧

The books are available from Nithview by calling 519-662-2280.

ARTBEAT

COVER STORY

'A window into our shared local history'

David L. Hunsberger photo exhibit takes 'community from the farm to the world'

BY JENNIFER KONKLE

Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

According to Paul Heidebrecht, director of Conrad Grebel University College's MSCU Centre for Peace Advancement, "Advancing peace requires many hands. It requires shoulders to lean on, and to stand on. It is sustained by the mundane tasks that make daily life possible. Peace becomes possible when we experience genuine community."

Glimpses of peaceful community

experiences are evident in many of David L. Hunsberger's iconic photos. Focused on Ontario Mennonites in the 1950s and '60s, his photos speak to more than Mennonites.

Partnering with the Hunsberger family, the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, the Institute of Anabaptist Mennonite Studies and the MSCU Centre for Peace Advancement have created a photo

Glimpses of peaceful community experiences are evident in many of David L. Hunsberger's iconic photos.

exhibit—Taking Community from the Farm to the World—featuring a select number of Hunsberger's iconic photos.

There is a photo of a barn raising (*see back cover*), an iconic image of mutual aid that has come to define the essence of community for many, including David Johnston, Canada's current Governor General and former University of Waterloo president.

There are photos of family and friends sharing food, fellowship and fun.

It is important to note that these photographs were taken during a time of transition for Mennonites in Ontario, a time when more and more Mennonites were pursuing their vocational callings in towns and cities. This was also a time when new institutions such as Grebel and the Mennonite Savings and Credit Union were first envisioned, and a time when there was a new awareness of the diversity of the global Mennonite church community.

No doubt this transformed context brought with it many challenges, but it also carried the blessings of a new understanding of just how far the bonds of community could be stretched. It included a renewed commitment to peace and to sharing the gifts of the Mennonite community with the world.

Almost 5,700 of Hunsberger's images were donated to the Archives in 2005 and many of these images are available to be viewed online through the Archives' database.

Archivist Laureen Harder-Gissing says of the collection, "For 40 years, David Hunsberger's camera was present at special occasions and ordinary days in the lives of Waterloo Region Mennonites. His love of his craft and of his subjects comes through in every frame. His collection continues to be a source of discovery and delight for anyone seeking a window into our shared local history."

Born in Kitchener, Ont., Hunsberger was



With his camera and notepad, David L. Hunsberger captured on film Mennonite life in Waterloo Region in the 1950s and '60s.

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO



The 1962 Mennonite World Conference assembly at the Kitchener Memorial Auditorium, Ont.

a self-taught photographer. Inspired by photojournalism, he learned from books and magazines. His years as a professional photographer coincided with many debates among Mennonites as to what was appropriate for Mennonite dress and what sort of technology was acceptable in Mennonite homes.

Hunsberger's photos of Old Order Mennonite adults are often taken from a back or side view, respecting beliefs that photographing adults was not

generally accepted since it was counter to their teachings regarding vanity and pride. In contrast, for more "progressive" Mennonite groups, this was an era of institution-building and outreach to the world, and he was often commissioned to record these activities for posterity. ☼

Taking Community from the Farm to the World runs until the end of April at Conrad Grebel University College, with a partial exhibit continuing until August.

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Abner Martin, founder of the Menno Singers, examines one of David L. Hunsberger's photographs on display at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., at the show's opening on Feb. 27.

'Promoting the telling of stories'

Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan launches three new books of Mennonite life and history

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

A buzz of conversation filled the Bethany Manor fellowship hall as about 150 people gathered to celebrate the launch of three new books by Saskatchewan authors.

Jake Buhler, president of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, which hosted the Feb. 22 event, said that "promoting the telling of stories" is something his organization needs to do.

Stories can take many forms, as evidenced by the books being introduced that day. In their own ways, they explore the impact of social change on Mennonite families and their faith communities.

Henry A. Friesen of Regina set out to learn the stories of his great-grandfather when he undertook research for *Johann Friesen of Poland and his Descendants*. In 2001, he travelled to Ukraine to find the village of Blumengart, from which his ancestors came. Although the village no longer exists, Friesen said, "seeing the land [where it once stood] was a deeply moving experience."

Friesen's great-grandfather emigrated to Canada with his family, settling first in Manitoba and later in Saskatchewan. But when government regulations challenged Mennonite autonomy in the area of education, his great-grandfather, at age 64, and after 47 years in Canada, chose to emigrate once more, this time to Mexico, where he lived until his death at age 86.

In 2006, Friesen travelled to Mexico and located his great-grandfather's grave. Reflecting on what he learned about the man, Friesen said, "Now I feel that I know him, at least a little, and I'm sure that I would have loved him."

The stories Bob Wahl tells in his book are those of the school he attended as a boy growing up at Clark's Crossing, near

Warman. *The Story of Saskatchewan School No. 99* depicts the early non-Mennonite pioneers who first settled the area and the Old Colony Mennonites who arrived later.

Needing a school for their children, the pioneers established the Saskatchewan Protestant Public School District of the North West Territories. The name matched its geographic size of 32 sections, or 8,900 hectares, of land. Later, the name was shortened to Saskatchewan School No. 99. The numeric designation indicated it was the 99th school established in the province.

Old Colony children attended school

alongside their non-Mennonite neighbours. When the law decreed that their children must be taught by government-certified teachers, Old Colony leaders elected to leave Canada for Mexico. However, most of the Clark's Crossing Mennonites decided to stay.

A leadership vacuum resulted, with the eventual outcome being that "few children of Old Colony parents have followed in their parents' footsteps," said Wahl. "They either joined other evangelical churches or none at all."

Significantly, about 20 former students of Saskatchewan School No. 99 attended the book launch.

Nettie (Friesen) Balzer's book *Raising Eight on 80* is a collection of short stories based on her family's experiences living on a farm east of Osler. "Faith, work, music and humour shaped our lives," said Balzer, who still resides in Osler. While her parents once owned a quarter section of land—65 hectares—they lost half of it to a government airfield when the Second World War began.

The book's title refers to the fact that Balzer's parents raised eight children on



*The Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan launches three books by Saskatchewan authors on Feb. 22 at Bethany Manor in Saskatoon. Pictured from left to right: Bob Wahl with his book *The Story of Saskatchewan School No. 99*, Nettie Balzer with her collection of short stories *Raising Eight on 80*, and Henry A. Friesen with his history of *Johann Friesen of Poland and his Descendants*.*

their remaining 80 acres.

Many of her stories are based on the works of her brother Julius Friesen, which were originally published in the Young Co-operators pages of *The Western Producer*.

In one of Balzer's stories, Julius discovers a discarded white flight suit on the edge of the airfield, which he uses for trapping rabbits. He reasons that the white suit will camouflage him against the snow and the rabbits won't see him coming. Like the rabbits her brother trapped, said Balzer, the world at that time was also "trapped in a snare of war."

All three books are self-published, and are available for online purchase from the historical society at <http://mhss.sk.ca>. ❧

PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN




Gareth Brandt signs copies of his new book, *Spirituality With Clothes On*, at a book launch at the House of James bookstore in Abbotsford, B.C., on Feb. 26. Brandt, who teaches practical theology at Columbia Bible College, read from the book and told what led to its writing. Noting that there have been a number of spirituality books lately with 'naked' in the title, Brandt said, 'there's no such thing as "naked" spirituality. We're always wearing the "clothes" of our experience, all the other things that shape us. Who we are is made up of many things.' The book, subtitled 'Examining what makes us who we are,' is published by Wipf & Stock.

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The Canadian Mennonite team



FILM REVIEW

A film full of hope

Conversations After Church.

A documentary by Bevan Klassen and Mark Humphries.

A 40 Below Films production, 2015.

REVIEWED BY VIC THIESSEN

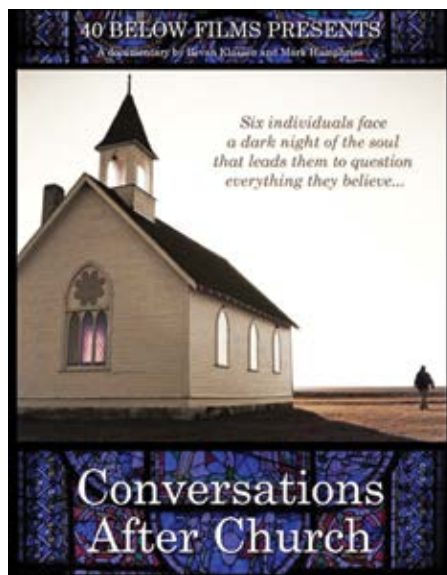
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Sam's Place, a project of Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, is a used bookstore, café and music venue in Winnipeg's Elmwood neighbourhood. Once a month, it hosts a film night followed by discussion.

On Feb. 9, more than 40 people—a full house—attended the world premiere of *Conversations After Church*, a documentary by Winnipeg filmmaker Bevan Klassen (co-directed by Mark Humphries). The 38-minute film, which explores the faith journeys of six Winnipeggers (including former Mennonites), was greeted with overwhelming enthusiasm, with praise for its style and cinematography, as well as for the amazing set of interviews which form the heart of the film.

I had the privilege of viewing and critiquing earlier and much-longer drafts of the film, giving me a unique insight into the challenges and accomplishments of the editing process. That process resulted in a very tight set of interviews that capture in remarkably few words the essence of the faith stories of the six subjects who shared their stories on film.

Conversations begins with the subjects describing the faith that initially shaped each of them. As they move on to discuss the questions that arise in early adulthood, we learn that each of them has faced a “dark night of the soul” that has impacted their attitudes toward God and the church. For Mark, it was depression; for Julia, it was the consequences of her sexual orientation; for Derek and Joy (interviewed separately), it was the death of their child; for Karen, it was the response to a unique relationship; and for



Allen, it was the death of his wife.

In response to a question from the audience following the screening, Klassen and Humphries noted that the idea for the film grew out of sharing their own journeys with each other and then hearing of others with similar experiences. The six stories in the film were chosen specifically because the changes in faith they describe were all precipitated by a crisis.

“These changes, made by people on the margins, led to a rethinking of ideas about God,” Klassen told me before the screening, “leading to new and perhaps stronger ideas about God.”

All of Klassen’s films, including the feature-length film, *Of Games and Escapes*, are sympathetic portrayals of “outsiders.” “*Conversations After Church* is still about the outsider,” he says, “but I’m seeing beyond the walls and now want to find doors.”

While some audience members found

the stories a little shocking and difficult to relate to, others resonated with the interviews and some noted that hearing stories from people on the margins helps us to increase our understanding. People commented on the courage required to be one of the subjects, to make oneself vulnerable by opening up one’s faith story for all to hear.

When someone asked about the lack of a final word from each subject to indicate where their faith was at, another member of the audience responded, “The faith stories are part of a journey that is ongoing, not one that has a neat resolution.”

For myself, I found the subjects to be remarkably honest, intelligent, eloquent and easy to listen to, full of profound questions and observations that can open up thoughtful discussions among viewers. “I don’t believe in the God I was raised with,” says Allen. Many viewers will resonate with that statement and hopefully engage each other about what that means for them. For me, none of the six stories resembles my own, and yet they all do.

Framing the interviews are scenes of Klassen at Winnipeg’s The Forks (of the Red and Assiniboine rivers), beginning in winter in black and white and then moving to spring and colour. This framing, which received glowing reviews from the audience, provides a unique contemplative way of helping us reflect on the different seasons of faith.

While some audience members found sadness in the six stories, I found the film hopeful. At a time when people are leaving traditional forms of church in record numbers, *Conversations After Church* provides examples of why this is happening and why this is not a cause for despair. People are resilient and, to me, the film is full of hope for the future of Christianity. ☿

Conversations After Church is an ideal length for church groups of all kinds and is available free online at <http://bit.ly/1EuyuQ7>, where the film trailer can also be found.



Breaking down walls

By Byron Thiessen, Principal, Menno Simons Christian School

The spiritual theme for this school year at Menno Simons Christian School is "Breaking down walls: Christ's message of love." Christ came to restore God's relationship with the world. His life was a fulfillment of prophecy and a reflection of God's love, and provides us with a glimpse of God's kingdom. Christ lived and preached mercy, justice and humility. In a world that is filled with fear and broken relationships, we look to Christ's life, stories and example, and we pray for guidance, strength and hope.

Our theme has a specific emphasis on justice during the student chapels. Justice in the biblical perspective is much more than a judge making fair decisions when someone

has been wronged. The Bible proclaims that justice is a pivotal part of God's wish for peace for his people and for the world. We are exploring four different areas of justice: creation, economic, social and restorative.

The music program at Menno Simons enriches the spiritual theme. Two of our music teachers, Deanna Willms and Fonda Wiebe, pictured at right, direct the Grade 4 to 6 choir, as well as lead music at our weekly chapels. Music, a key component of worship, is carefully chosen along with students to teach the community about Christ's example of restoration and challenges us to follow his example.

At our Peace Festival in November 2014,



the Menno community brainstormed together about how we can break down the walls in our world. Posted in the school atrium are the results of that session in the artform of graffiti. The art reflects the ideas of Christ's message of love. At Menno we understand and believe that as Christians we are called to restore relationships in our world.

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Rebuilding lives and languages

Vancouver family travels to Alert Bay to witness demolition of B.C. residential school

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor

PHOTOS COURTESY OF
JANNA AND JON JANZEN



St. Michael's Residential School was open for 50 years. It now stands empty and decrepit, serving as a dark reminder of past abuses, awaiting its final demolition.



Taza rides on mom Janna Janzen's back in Alert Bay, B.C.

Jon and Janna Janzen stood in front of St. Michael's Residential School in Alert Bay, B.C., in February and they say they felt darkness in its presence. During the half-century its door were open, it was the largest residential school operated by the Anglican Church of Canada, charged with "taking the Indian out of the child." Survivors say it is haunted and pray for the day it would be demolished.

"The whole building does feel pretty ominous and creepy," Janna recalls. "It's one of the first things that you see when you take the ferry into the bay. For that reason, many survivors didn't want to come back."

"The building itself is a lot more than a symbol," Jon says. "Everybody who lays eyes on the red brick building knows it's a bad place. You just know it's a painful place without having to be told any of the stories."

Just a few weeks ago, prayers were answered and the demolition process began at St. Michael's. The Janzens were there for it, and for the celebrations that took place in the community.

Jon, 30, and Janna, 26, hail from Vancouver and attend First United Mennonite Church there. They decided to make the trip to Alert Bay with their two-year-old daughter, Taza, for several reasons. "I wanted to bring Janna and Taza to see where I grew up," says Jon of one of them.

Going up to Alert Bay

Jon grew up in Port Hardy, B.C., with

strong ties to the Gwa'Sala-'Nakwaxda'XW Sda First Nation on Vancouver Island. His father Art worked for the first nation and was named during the family's time there.

At a young age Jon developed a passion for languages, including those spoken on the reserves in his hometown. Now, more than 15 years later, he's studying linguistics in a graduate program at the University of British Columbia. He is doing his thesis on the Kwak'wala language, which is the native tongue of the Kwakwaka'wakw people from the northern Vancouver Island region and the same language spoken in the Port Hardy area. There are fewer than 200 fluent speakers of this language.

Jon says he feels called to linguistics not with aspirations of becoming wealthy, but to do his part to help people rebuild their fractured identities through language.

"Helping to document and revitalize one of these languages isn't just important for posterity's sake," he says. "It's important for people whose hereditary language this is. With the language they become more rooted in their own identity. They just feel more whole."

Jon, Janna and Taza drove to Alert Bay along with Jon's language teacher, Ruby Dawson-Cranmer, so she could see St. Michael's demolished. Jon has studied with Dawson-Cranmer for more than six years, but had never heard her speak Kwak'wala with another fluent speaker, that is, until the trip to Alert Bay.

Jon's research requires hearing people converse naturally with one another in Kwak'wala, which can be challenging to

find with so few speakers. But there he heard Dawson-Cranmer and her sister speak in their native tongue.

'We are richly blessed'

Years ago, Dawson-Cranmer and her sister attended St. Michael's together. Janna says she was told that students were forbidden to speak their native language there and suffered other abuses too.

"It was intentional murder of the language," she says. "They were restricted from speaking their language except on Sundays and far away from the church."

Jon couldn't believe how open the people of Alert Bay were to his research. After Christians tried to kill their culture and language through the residential school system, there he was, another white Christian handling their language. "I'm astounded by how easy it is for survivors to be okay with a Christian coming in and messing around with their language," he says. "They seemed to know my heart and my intentions."

"They can tell you're not doing it for academic pride," Janna tells him.

During their time on Vancouver Island, the couple say they saw the community's resilience in spite of the abuses they faced in the past. Before the demolition began, the community gathered together for cultural ceremonies and celebrations.

"The overall theme was, 'They tried to take our language and our culture, but we are richly blessed, we have our elders here, we have our children,'" Janna says. "It was such a positive outlook to the entire event. The answer was love and forgiveness, and to invest in traditions and perpetuate them."

St. Michael's isn't fully demolished yet. It was made with asbestos and is costly to bring down. The couple think the community will likely gather together again when the last piece is knocked down.

"Hopefully when it's all gone, that won't be such a barrier to people going there," Janna concludes. ❧



Jon Janzen explores the first nation communities in Alert Bay, B.C.

Top marks for CMU

Winnipeg school ranks highly in Maclean's Magazine university issue

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor

According to a recent *Maclean's Magazine* report, students at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg are very satisfied with their education and their experience at the Christian liberal arts school.

A feature published in February gave a snapshot of the 2014 Canadian University Survey Consortium's findings. CMU placed in the top four out of 28 universities in four categories, reflecting how students feel about their professors and how comfortable they feel at the university.

Fifty-eight percent of responders from CMU said that they strongly agree with the following statement: "Generally, I am satisfied with the quality of teaching I have received." CMU earned first place in this category.

CMU students strongly agree that most of their professors treat them as individuals, not just as numbers. Again, CMU earned the top spot in the category.

It placed second when students were presented with the statement, "Most of my professors are intellectually stimulating in their teaching," and fourth when responding to the statement, "I feel as if I belong at this university."

According to CMU president Cheryl Pauls, it's encouraging to be recognized by the students. "It's as if students are saying, 'Thanks for the fine teaching. We learned a lot, and that's because you took us seriously both inside and beyond the classroom. You bothered to get to know where we're coming from,'" she says.

(Continued on page 36)



PHOTO COURTESY OF CMU

Brian Froese, CMU's assistant professor of history, teaches a class. According to a recent Maclean's Magazine report, students at CMU in Winnipeg are very satisfied with their education and their experience at the Christian liberal arts school.

(Continued from page 35)

Abram Thiessen, 21, attends Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C. when he's not in Winnipeg. He says he has experienced CMU's care and concern both in and out of the classroom. It was especially evident in his first year when he had a near-death incident.

"I went into cardiac arrest as a result of an unattended heart condition that had been going on for the last year-and-a-half," he says. "After I emerged from my induced coma after having a successful heart procedure, I was greeted by two large poster boards with dozens of CMU students' condolences, encouragements and prayers, which I still have in my bedroom to this day."

Thiessen says students and professors visited him in the hospital with care packages and kind words over the following weeks. Much of the school got together while he was in hospital to pray for him, as well. When he returned to school, professors accommodated his needs and gave him time to complete unfinished school assignments.

"That, to me, was a truly CMU experience," he says.

Anna Bigland-Pritchard is in her fifth year and is about to graduate from CMU with a bachelor of music in voice

performance degree. The 22-year-old is from Saskatoon and attends Osler Mennonite Church.

She says that at CMU she was able to pursue all of her passions in one place, including peacebuilding, composition, performance and theology.

"It has been nice to not have to fit myself into a very specific box, but to rather be able to branch out into more areas that I am interested in," she says. "It means a lot to me that CMU as an institution has the space to respect and support that."

Bigland-Pritchard says that her professors have proven time and time again that they are invested in her education and personal life. "They have always made extra time for me to help me achieve and grow," she says.

Even when tragedy hit her family, she says that her professors and school friends were by her side. "When my grandma passed away in second year, my professors were very understanding and supportive, even prayerful," she says.

CMU's president hopes that students will take away more than just lessons they learn in class or in their textbooks. "I'm persuaded our students will show a similar interest and care to others," Pauls says. "That's what happens with good mentoring." ❧

Reaping the whirlwind

Lecture on Just War theory explores 'the restraint of force in the use of force in the restraint of evil'

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JONAS CORNELSEN

Special to Young Voices
WINNIPEG



Rev. Dr. David Widdicombe, rector at St. Margaret's Anglican Church in Winnipeg, speaks about Just War theory at CMU last month.

Late arrivals had to find their own chairs as students, academics and community members filled Marpeck Commons at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) on Feb. 26 to hear Rev. Dr. David Widdicombe explain what it means to "sow the wind" by misusing Just War theory.

If people go to war for any reason other than restraining evil, the consequences will be worse than their actions, according to Widdicombe, saying, "You reap the whirlwind." He went on to critique the West's

response to Islamic State, and invoked Pilgram Marpeck, the venue's namesake.

A centrepiece in the Anglican priest's view is his "key formulation" of Just War: "The restraint of force in the use of force in the restraint of evil." Force, or violence, must be tightly controlled, and used for specific reasons in conflict, he said. For Widdicombe, "what is right in war matters as much as whether it is right to go to war."

Widdicombe said that the U.S. misuses

Just War theory “to justify the waging of war where and when it sees fit.” He said he is against using causes like freedom, equality and democracy as reasons for violence, maintaining, “The use of force is for the restraint of evil, and nothing more idealistic than that.”

In response to the lecture, Justin Neufeld, a CMU philosophy instructor, reminded the audience that this point is critical for understanding Just War. “It isn’t even about justice,” said Neufeld.

Because today’s war on terror is framed as a positive mission of liberation, rather than a last-resort containment of atrocity, it is not a Just War, in Widdicombe’s view. He said this is why the conflict keeps escalating: the West has sown the wind.

Those using force must consider who it is used against, and to what it responds. Widdicombe separated terrorist supporters from their leaders, saying force can be “punitively harsh toward the doctrinaire without closing the door of peace to the supporter or the civilian.” Asking what prompts violence is important because violence may be the desired response, he said, claiming, “Military overreaction is one of the terrorist’s goals and therefore should not be one of ours.”

Since just force is limited, Widdicombe said it should never be the only active route. He focussed on the common humanity of all sides as a basis for political negotiation. “Those who make war have their reasons,” he said, as a reminder that perceived enemies are being rational and seeking what is good in their view. Widdicombe said to never give up on dialogue with others, “even as we wage war against them.”

Although speaking to current issues, Widdicombe showed his academic background with a deep catalogue of theological sources. Concepts and quotes from Augustine’s classic *City of God* were woven throughout his lecture.

Widdicombe also referenced early Anabaptists. Drawing on the Schleithem Confession, he said that “while the sword may be outside the perfection of Christ, the sword is not outside the providence of God.” Violence is not ideal, but there is some role for it.

When asked if peace churches have

any part in Just War, Widdicombe tied in Pilgram Marpeck. For him, Marpeck’s idea of “critical participation” in civic life meant “the Christian must at least have had something to say to the government on the use of the sword.” In terms of his key formulation—restraining force while using force to restrain evil—Christians can at least call for the restraint of force so it is not overused, he said.

Although Just War was the main idea, young members of the more than hundred-strong audience were most drawn to the theme of common humanity.

Peter Brown, 24, said Widdicombe’s perspective “denies us the easy way out of demonizing” people the media labels as terrorists, and “pushes us to recognize the ambiguities of living in this world.”

Lisa Obirek, 28, was struck by the possibilities for negotiation between conflicting groups. “There will be a rational principle that guides someone,” she said.

Although encouraged, she would have liked to have heard more about the role of average citizens. “What about people who are not directly involved with the state?” Obirek asked. She travelled to Iran for an interfaith dialogue last year and now wondered, “Could that be considered an effort to connect in those ways?”

There was also a sense that clear distinctions between groups remained. “It’s polarized,” said Matthew Dyck, 20. “It’s focussed on how we respond to the Islamic State . . . although it is geared toward working with them, it acknowledges we’re separate.”

In a CMU news release, Karl Koop, professor of history and theology, said that, while Widdicombe is not a pacifist, he is not enamoured with Just War reasoning either, at least not in the way in which it is applied in the contemporary context.

“We may differ with Dr. Widdicombe’s point of view, but he is the kind of conversation partner that we need beside us as we together think through what it means to be faithful in a year of war and conflict,” Koop said. ☞

Jonas Cornelsen, 21, is a student at CMU. He attends Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.



Peter Brown



Lisa Obirek



Matthew Dyck

Calendar

British Columbia

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.

May 2: MC B.C. Women's Inspirational Day, at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford.

Saskatchewan

April 25: Saskatchewan Women in Mission annual meeting and

Enrichment Day, at Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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

May 30: RJC fundraising golf tournament, at Valley Regional Park.

May 31: 70th-anniversary celebrations at Superb Mennonite Church, Kerrobert; from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, visit www.superbmennonite.com; to RSVP, e-mail superb70anniversary@gmail.com

Manitoba

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 3: Winnipeg's First Mennonite Church Choir, with orchestra, presents Schubert's "Deutsche Messe" and Rutter's "Requiem," at the church, at 7 p.m.

April 3: The 45-voice adult choir of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, is performing Bach's Kantate No. 4, "Christ lag in Todesbanden," and other music on Good Friday, at 11 a.m., at the church.

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 Plenert. Topic: "MDS: Rebuilding homes and restoring hope." For reservations, call toll-free 1-888-261-1274.

April 12: Mennonite Community Orchestra presents its spring concert at CMU's South Campus chapel, at 3 p.m. Program includes Stravinsky's "Pulcinella Suite," Mozart's "Exultate

Jubilate," and Dvorak's "Symphony No. 6."

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.

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

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

May 2,3: Faith and Life Male Choir and Women's Chorus spring concerts; (2) at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.; (3) at Altona Berghaler Mennonite, at 3 p.m.

Ontario

Until April 30: David L. Hunsberger photo exhibit, "Taking community from the farm to the world," at the Grebel Gallery and MAO Gallery at

UpComing

Good Friday Blues Band set to raise funds for Cyprus Centre

PHOTO BY KEVIN JESKE



Angelika Dawson, left, and son Aaron sing and play at 2014's Good Friday Blues service. This year's event will be held on April 2 and 3 at House of James in Abbotsford.

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—The Good Friday Blues Band is holding its annual Good Friday Blues evenings of worship on April 2 and 3 at 7:30 each evening at House of James in Abbotsford. The unique experience, focussed on blues music, also supports Cyprus Centre, a Fraser Valley ministry that serves street-entrenched youth. "Our theme this year is 'Trouble and woe,' which we borrowed from a Ruth Moody tune that we'll be performing," says organizer Angelika Dawson. "Given everything going on in the world around us, and keeping in mind the kids who access Cyprus Centre, it seemed a fitting theme. Last year's Good Friday Blues raised more than \$5,000 for this ministry because of matching donations from a generous donor. Dawson is thrilled that the same generous couple is set to match donations up to \$2,500 again this year. Now in its fourth year, Good Friday Blues include prayers, readings and a "sermon" delivered by actor John Dawson. People will have an opportunity to nail their "blues" to the cross again. The evening will also include an original poem presented by Adriel Brandt. Although the structure of the worship experience is fairly traditional, it's the addition of more than a dozen blues tunes that makes Good Friday Blues truly unique.

—Good Friday Blues

Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

March 28: Conrad Grebel University College's Institute for Anabaptist Mennonite Studies and the Mennonite Historical Society celebrate the release of Sam Steiner's new book, "In Search of Promised Lands"; in the Great Hall, at 2 p.m.

March 28,29: Conrad Grebel Student Council presents "Fiddler on the Roof," with an all-student cast and orchestra; at the Conrad Centre, Kitchener.

March 31: Open rehearsal for the Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir, at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo; (6:30 p.m.) children aged 6 to 9; (7:30 p.m.) children aged 10 to 15. For more information, e-mail imcc.conductor@rogers.com.

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.slmcc.ca/retreats.

April 14: Mennonite Savings and Credit Union's 51st annual general meeting, at Creekside Church, Waterloo; registration at 6:30 p.m., followed by meeting at 7.

April 18: Toronto Mennonite Festival/ MCC Relief Sale at Black Creek volunteer appreciation breakfast and annual general meeting, at Rouge Valley Mennonite Church, Markham, at 9:30 a.m.

April 20: New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale annual promotion dinner, at Bingemans in Kitchener, at 6:30 p.m. Guest Speaker: Issa Sadi Embombolo, founder of MCC's Peace Clubs in Zambia. Tickets available from the MCC Ontario office by phone at 519-745-8458.

April 27,28: Spring seniors retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Speaker and song leader: Mark Diller Harder. Theme: "Singing our faith: Heart songs and hymnals." Same program each day. For more information and registration forms, e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca or visit www.hiddenacres.ca.

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

Classifieds

Travel

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

Announcement

Mennonite Support and Advocacy Group for Parents and LGBT persons in Southwestern Ontario
We provide confidential group and individual support, resources, fellowship and opportunity to dialoge for family members and LGBT persons. For more information contact rvfast@rogers.com, pmsnyderangel@rogers.com, or Roy & Mary Gascho at 519-742-1850.

Employment Opportunities

Employment Opportunity

Bergthl Mennonite Church is seeking a full-time pastor to lead our small congregation of people in various stages of life.



We are a rural church, located an hour north of Calgary, Alberta. We are looking for someone to help us live out our mission to be an "Anabaptist Church, welcoming all who seek to know the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

For more information about our church, please check out our website at www.bergthalmennonitechurch.com. If interested please contact Brian Hildebrandt at bdhilde@xplornet.com.

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) is seeking a Financial Manger to oversee the financial operations of the Church. The position begins in June 2015 and will be a .5 FTE.

Responsibilities:

The person will be responsible for the overall management of the financial affairs of MCEC including the following:

- Supervise the bookkeeping function – ensuring that all accounting transactions are properly recorded, and balances are reconciled.
- Supporting the Leadership Team in development of operational and capital budgets.
- Management of investments.
- Ensuring adherence to accounting standards and requirements – including those specific to Not for Profit / Charitable organizations and Revenue Canada.
- Preparation and presentation of Financial Statements for Management and Council reporting.
- Liaison with the Auditors.
- Analysis as required to support the MCEC Leadership Team and Councils.
- Manage and optimize the computerized Accounting System.

Qualifications:

- A University degree, with training in Accounting. A professional designation is preferred.
- Several years of accounting experience, ideally with some of it in the Not for Profit sector.
- Experience in Revenue Canada reporting for payroll and Charitable returns.
- High degree of competency in accounting software and Microsoft Office (Excel, Word).
- A passion and commitment to faith, the Church and its ministry.

Resumes are due by April 15th, 2015. Please forward to:

Brent Charette, Church Engagement Minister
Phone: 226-476-2500 or 855-476-2500 Ext. 709
bcharette@mcec.ca, www.mcec.ca



'Barn raising' an iconic image by David L. Hunsberger of mutual aid, has come to define the essence of community for many, including Governor General David Johnston. See story on page 28.

