

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

April 13, 2015

Volume 19 Number 8

## Learning from each other

... over moose nose  
and smoked lynx

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## EDITORIAL

## Changes coming to CM

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Some significant changes are occurring at *Canadian Mennonite*. First, we are bidding farewell to one of our expert regional correspondents, Evelyn Rempel Petkau, after 18 years of her serving, with distinction, as our Manitoba correspondent (see story on page 30). Her 600 stories, written to the highest standard of journalism, had a unique style. She seemed to grasp with unusual sensitivity the subjects about which she wrote and framed her stories in the context of what was happening in the religious life of Manitoba Mennonites. We will miss her writing.

One of her farewell comments struck us as instructive for regular readers of this publication: "I have learned a lot about my church and its constituency, and I have made contacts with wonderful people, and have learned so much from them. It has been truly very rich," she graciously wrote as she enters retirement.

That "learning," dear readers, has high value. For Evelyn, it worked both ways: In her telling the stories of many people, places and events, she both informed us and informed herself, which is the essence of our conversation as a faith community. Compared to other similar church publications, *Canadian Mennonite* has gone to great lengths to hire and pay local correspondents, giving our stories maximum depth and authenticity.

These correspondents, especially Evelyn, with her 18-year tenure, know

the people in their own locales, and can measure, through these connections, what is important and needs to be told. They have a context that is impossible for us at a centralized home office location to know and appreciate. It becomes a sort of

working knowledge as they move among their people that adds both energy and lustre to their stories. It is a great gift.

It also adds value to what the area and national churches are doing. It is, we humbly suggest,

a good return on investment for the financial support we receive from these bodies—a sizeable portion (38 per cent) of our annual budget income. These stories are exclusively about how Anabaptist Mennonites are expressing and carrying out the faith in their everyday lives, serving as inspiration and testimony to their fellow believers across the country.

Our main features are a ready source of education for congregations, with some congregations using the "For discussion" questions as their adult Sunday school curriculum. One of our staff members, D. Michael Hostetler, has further suggested that churches pick a story of some other congregation and use it in their worship setting or committee meeting to inspire and encourage, or to pray in solidarity with that congregation and its needs. That, too, contributes to the enrichment of our national conversation and identity.

A second significant change is how we are delivering the content of *Canadian Mennonite*. In line with the present trend



of readers getting more and more of their information via the Internet, especially through mobile phones and other hand-held devices, we have launched a re-designed website that has a clean, friendly design, with larger text and liberal use of photos (see story on page 32).

While our printed publication is still our flagship product, we know that there are increasing constraints, such as mailing time to our homes and space limitations. Our website allows us to carry web-first or expanded stories to a targeted audience that increasingly seeks timely content of personal interest. You will not have to wait until *Canadian Mennonite* arrives in your mailbox. You can now access it "on the go." And too few readers still aren't aware that if they are a print subscriber, they can also get each issue sent to them digitally in pdf file format up to two weeks early.

### New Manitoba correspondent

Succeeding Evelyn Rempel Petkau is Josiah Neufeld, 34, of Winnipeg, an award-winning freelance writer who has had features in *The Walrus*, *Globe and Mail*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, *Geez* and



J. Neufeld

*Childview*, among other publications. He is a former editor of *Christian Week*. His work has been recognized by the Evangelical Press Association, Canadian Church Press and National Magazine Awards. He holds a master of fine arts degree in creative writing from the University of British Columbia. Parents of two, he and his spouse Mona are members of Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. He will be using a pen name: J. Neufeld. (See contact info on page 3.)

### ABOUT THE COVER:

Charles Simard holds a timber wolf hide as he explains to the Partnership Circle participants in Manigotagan, Man., their relationship with the land along the eastern shores of Lake Winnipeg that has been their home for many generations. For story and more photos, see 'Learning from each other ... over moose nose and smoked lynx' on page 16.

PHOTO: EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU, CANADIAN MENNONITE

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**Guiding values:**

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

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- Syrian refugees: A sponsorship story (MCC seeks more sponsors)
- Lament for those 'suffering in silence' (AMBS service of confession and commitment)
- More-with-Less: Changing the world, one recipe at a time (cookbook gets an update)

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# Out of control

BY ANITA FAST



*Adapted from a sermon preached at Langley Mennonite Fellowship, B.C., on June 22, 2014.*

*“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:24-39).*



**T**he week before this text from Matthew formed the basis of my sermon, many of us at Langley Mennonite Fellowship had the privilege of being witness to a baptism in the rock-studded river at Camp Squeah. I felt the weight and levity of this ancient Christian ritual, and was thankful that the passage was not read as we welcomed a new member into the family of faith, because Jesus reminds us how crappy it's going to be. Since he was called Beelzebul, a name for the devil, Jesus told his disciples just how much more they will be maligned.

On the other hand, though, it is strangely appropriate for a three-fold Anabaptist baptism:

- **FIRST BY** the Holy Spirit;
- **THEN BY** water, the outward symbol of inward transformation; and
- **FINALLY BY** blood and fire, which the Matthew passage is all about.

These verses and those just prior speak unabashedly about the realities Jesus' disciples would face. Indeed, this was exactly what was happening to the small groups of followers in the communities to whom Matthew was writing. They were being maligned for following the devil instead of the true and living God, kicked out of their religious communities, dragged before courts, even killed for their witness. The servant is not greater than the master; as it was for Jesus, so it would be for them.

Nevertheless, Jesus insists, proclaim the gospel anyway. And not just in whispers, but be bold about it. Of course, the powers and principalities will oppose us. After all, they are of the darkness; we are of the light. They are wedded to violence and death; we are the people of peace and love.

Fortunately, we are offered comfort and assurance in the face of such persecutions. Several times in only a few verses we overhear Jesus telling his disciples that they need not fear. God knows us and

loves us down to the hairs on our heads. We are of great worth. Calamity and strife should not be taken as signs that we have been abandoned by God.

But Jesus doesn't stop here at the edge of our comfort zone. Without even clearing his throat, Jesus moves on and delivers the real zinger. It isn't only persecution from outside the community that can be expected. Jesus invokes our worst fear: Not only the world out there will rebuke us and hurt us, it will also come from our own families, our own people. These are incredibly difficult words, particularly for a tradition that makes peacemaking central to its identity.

### ***The sword of Christ***

Some use these verses to show that Jesus wasn't a pacifist: "*I came not to bring peace, but a sword.*" But if Jesus were talking about war, wouldn't he have followed up with, "for I have come to set nation against nation," instead of, "*I have come to set a man against his father*"? The sword

spoken of here is not the sword of state violence, but the sword of God's Word, a common metaphor in biblical passages such as Hebrews 4:12: *"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword."*

This sword that Jesus brings is one that cuts through our illusions and attachments to things that are not of God—even peace when it is not from God. In John 14:27, Jesus says: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives."* Might it be that the peace Jesus is speaking of in Matthew 24—the peace that Jesus has not come to bring—is a peace comparable to the peace the world gives, the peace of the Pax Romana?

The peace of the world is a peace that is

established through the threat and execution of violence. It is a peace that does one of two things to the enemy or the other. It either tries to make the other the same as us, or, failing that, to kill them or get rid of them in other ways. Become like us, get out, or be destroyed.

But this is not the peace of Jesus, which is why Jesus can say that one's foes will be members of one's own household, one's own most precious community. Unlike the peace of Rome, which promises that one's foes will be destroyed, the sword of Christ, which is the peace of Christ, promises that they will remain close at hand.

### **Enemies and others**

Since the beginning of the church until now, the biggest struggles within the

church have not been between those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord and those who do not, although that is often how we like to represent them. The crux of many conflicts in communities of faith is that there are genuine followers of Jesus of all stripes, persuasions and lifestyles. In the church we are set against one other because we are rich Christians, refugee Christians, lesbian and gay Christians, eco-justice Christians and SUV-driving Christians. All of us acknowledge Jesus, sometimes in very loud voices from our rooftops.

"I have come to bring this sword of division," says Jesus. "So don't be afraid."

But how can we not be afraid when our beloved church seems poised to be hijacked by those seriously misguided others who are so wholly mistaken that their very presence among us spells the certain demise of the church?

And so in our fear we usually respond to the threatening other in exactly the same way the worldly powers insist we

*This sword that Jesus brings is one that cuts through our illusions and attachments to things that are not of God—even peace when it is not from God.*

## Correcting a common misunderstanding

BY ANITA FAST

**M**atthew 10:37 reads, *"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."*

These verses have justified the rejection of countless sons and daughters who don't conform to their parents' understanding of what it means to love Jesus. If I really love Jesus, the thinking goes, then I must disown my child. Perhaps she's joined the military. Perhaps he's come out as gay. Perhaps she's married a Buddhist.

Loving Jesus has had the tragic result of tearing apart the love within families. Is this the sword of God's Word that Jesus is saying he came for?

Hardly. To say that we are to love Jesus more than our fathers and mothers, or our sons and our daughters, is not, in any way, to say that we are not to love them. Of course we are, with all of our being.

Cross-reference these New Testament scriptures:

• *"A NEW command I give to you: Love one another. As*

*I have loved you, so you must love one another"* (John 13:34).

• *"IF ANYONE says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar"* (1 John 4:20).

• *"ABOVE ALL, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins"* (1 Peter 4:8).

• *"OWE NO one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law"* (Romans 13:8).

What Matthew 24:37 does say is that our love for our family, whether biological or chosen as our church family, is grounded in the love we have for Jesus, for God, and not the other way around. Loving Jesus is our priority not in the sense that we have a hierarchy of loves, but because we can love our mothers and fathers and daughters and sons rightly when that love is grounded in our love of Jesus. Love for Jesus is not the top, but the ground and source of all other loves.

must: We either try to convert them to our point of view, or, failing that, to get rid of them by revoking their membership, banning their presence or simply making them feel unwelcome. We choose the peace the world gives.

### **A different kind of peace**

But Jesus did not come to bring that peace, which is why his peace is a lot more like the conflict of a man set against his father and a mother against her daughter. The peace of Jesus does not mean fusion or unity-as-sameness. And this is because the peace of Christ is found by taking up the cross and following daily, if we want to be worthy of Jesus.

When we say yes to taking up our cross and following Jesus, we are saying yes to a world that is not of our own making. We are out of control.

Under the Roman Empire, taking up the cross was not, as it has often become today, a metaphor for accepting the hardships of life. Taking up the cross was not even simply a way of saying one should expect persecution and division. More radically and most importantly, taking up the cross indicated the type of response Jesus' followers were to embody in the face of such persecution and division. As opposed to taking up weapons and following Jesus, taking up the cross is a readiness to forsake any and all power we might have in this world, to be stripped naked and vulnerable, and to open our arms wide and rely only on the mercy of God.

When our love for others—whether outside or inside our communities—is grounded in taking up the cross and following Jesus, we can finally lay down our weapons and surrender to the other—letting the other be “other.” Then, perhaps, our love of the other will not seek to make them the same or, failing that, exterminate or excommunicate them.

### **Follow, act, go**

So what do we do with our church full of rich Christians, refugee Christians, lesbian and gay Christians, eco-justice Christians and SUV-driving Christians? We debate, we proclaim our truth from the rooftops, we discern together, and

*Not only the world out there will rebuke us and hurt us, it will also come from our own families, our own people. These are incredibly difficult words, particularly for a tradition that makes peacemaking central to its identity.*

we are, not infrequently, set against one another, just as Jesus promised.

But no one takes up the power to exterminate or excommunicate anyone. That is never a response worthy of Jesus. Rather, we take up the cross and follow. Somehow we hang in together and keep moving along on our journey of faith. It is important to emphasize the following part, as conflict has a tendency to paralyze and adhere to the status quo. But following is a non-negotiable part of the package. We follow, we act, we go.

What will finally save the church will not be another five years of good process and a re-writing or re-confirmation of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. What will save the church will be Jesus—as we faithfully take up the cross and follow—laying down our weapons and surrendering to that which we most fear will destroy us, trusting only in God's assurance that in losing our life we will save it.

We are of value. We are loved. We will

not be abandoned even in our darkest hour. The servants are not greater than the master. This is how it was for Jesus, and this is how it will be for us.

Of course the comfort and assurance offered in the midst of internal, as well as external, strife still stands. But we have nothing to fear. As a friend and colleague of mine has said, “Remember, there is no place for us to fall but always and ever into the arms of everlasting mercy. God has promised that it is so.”

Is this dangerous? Is this risky? Absolutely! But any woman who has given birth can tell you that anything worth its salt is risky! Every promise worth believing in is also a threat. There is just no easy way about it. This is our baptism.

We lose everything. We are out of control. We stand before one another as our vulnerable selves, laying down our power of office, status, race, gender or schooling. And then we follow Jesus. We move. We act. And there we find our life. ☞

### **/// For discussion**

1. What are some of the issues of disagreement in your family or congregation? Under what conditions do these disagreements threaten the well-being of the family or congregation? How can congregations and families get along in spite of differences?
2. Anita Fast says that taking up the cross means giving up power and relying on the mercy of God. Why is it so difficult to do this? Why are we so determined to change other people? Can you think of role models in your church who allow their vulnerability to show?
3. Fast interprets Matthew 24:37 to mean that, of course, we need to love our families, but that the love needs to be grounded in Jesus. Does this interpretation fit with your understanding of Jesus? Are there any circumstances where it is appropriate to disown someone in the family or congregation?
4. To save the church we need to surrender ourselves to “that which we most fear will destroy us,” says Fast. Do we fear loss of control more than we trust that God can preserve us in the midst of calamity and strife? What are our greatest fears?

—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.*

## ✉ Bible contains the word of God but isn't the Word of God

Re: "Bible written without an understanding of genetics" letter, March 2, page 14.

Finally, we have someone pointing out that genetics plays an important part in establishing who we are sexually, and that we do inherit some deviations. I thank Frank Hiemstra for writing this letter. It benefits our understanding of a highly sensitive, polarized cultural topic, a topic that charges the social climate of the day, a topic for which it is hard to find common ground, especially for conservatively religious people. Some of our thinking and understanding needs to be realigned, transformed.

What complicates the matter is that no study has firmly established an underlying genetic cause for homosexuality. The idea that there is a "gay gene" has been dismissed. That there is a gay centre in the brain has also been discarded. Evidence for the role of fetal hormones has been suggested and has some merit.

Is there an answer concerning the cause of homosexuality? No one has established an underlying cause, but we do know there is considerable variability in human sexuality. Since the cause has not been settled, we should hold back on our moral judgments and verdicts.

How can we judge if we don't know the cause? The biblical injunctions are best understood if we see the Bible as containing the word of God, not as the Word of God. When we study the Bible carefully, we discover that there are no boundaries, but infinite "shades of grey."

Seeing it as the Word of God puts us in the same camp as conservative, Jews, Christians and Muslims,

a very dangerous place to be. Cultures that claim their Holy Book is the Word of God employ morality police.

We do know there are homosexuals; there always have been in every age and culture on earth, even among animals. Some people are gay. We need to accept that.

It is depressing that all the Scripture quoting, talk of compassion, love, empathy, dignity, acceptance and walking in another person's shoes doesn't seem to go anywhere, doesn't result in transformation. A hundred years in a synagogue, church or mosque seemingly does not alter opinions. Perhaps this is, first, a question for science and not for theology.

ART HILDEBRAND, CRYSTAL CITY, MAN.

## ✉ God is compassionate towards sinners

FOR THE LAST few months we have had so many letters about immorality and still did not find an answer.

Did we really look for answers in the Bible or to what our society thinks is fair and compassionate?

But who shows more compassion than God?

Isaiah: 55 6-8, speaks these wonderful words: "*Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near, let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*"

I was so encouraged by Steve Hoepfner's column, "Stand up for God's truth," Feb. 2, page 15. We need many more to speak up like him.

MARIAN BANMAN, WINNIPEG

## ✉ Resources available for healing indigenous-settler relations

RE: "FACING HISTORY with courage," March 2, page 4.

Just wanted to say *meegwetch* (thank you) to Elaine Enns for her loving and thoughtful feature article.

There are two new resources that the churches would benefit from watching or attending with regards to our relationship with our first nation neighbours and nearby communities.

The first is a 2014 documentary called *Walk a Mile*. It is about current race relations between indigenous and settler peoples of Canada. It was filmed in Thunder Bay, Ont., by an indigenous film maker, and is about the local history between white settlers and the first nation community, racism as experienced by indigenous people and about their hopes for the future, and how we can move forward. The DVD is available for purchase at [www.walkamilefilm.ca](http://www.walkamilefilm.ca).



The second resource is called “Walking with our sisters.” While settlers often call it an “art project,” first nations people refer to it as a “travelling bundle,” in that it is a part of a spiritual tradition that will be presented across Canada to aid in the healing of all people who are touched by the issues relating to missing and murdered indigenous women.

Thunder Bay was the second community to host

the “bundle” and it stayed for several weeks in a local art gallery. It consists of about 1,500 moccasin vamps (the top of the footwear) that were made by families in order to honour members of their own communities who are missing.

To learn more, visit [www.walkingwithoursisters.ca](http://www.walkingwithoursisters.ca).

**BETSY MARTIN, KAMINISTIQUIA, ONT.**

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

# Proud banners that need shredding

PHIL WAGLER

I was on my Monday morning transit commute sitting near a group of people who loudly reminisced about their weekend exploits. Without embarrassment they relived what could be remembered of a wild party’s excitement, exploits and emissions—despite the presence of strangers and a few grandmas. The visualizations were a challenge to forget.

That commute wrecked me for a couple of days. Not only did it bring back memories of what I never want to return to, but I was deeply grieved by the brazenness of it all. Perhaps you’ll say I’m judging or over-reacting, but I don’t think that’s the case.

If I were judging, I would have thanked God that I was not like them. Instead, their conversation led me to the humble realization that we’re all so much alike. The Spirit of God has undoubtedly embraced a large renovation project in messy me. I’m a work in progress, with my own proud banners that need shredding.

We all wear banners—sometimes proudly—when Self is placed on the throne of life. In I Corinthians 6, Paul names a smattering of these: the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers,

homosexuals, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers. There’s more than enough there for all of us to wear at least one. Apart from Christ, these are some of our labels and descriptors. To be proud of them should be seen as a flagrant foul of indignity and met with great sadness. Those who become followers of Jesus come to the end of their ropes with this fruit of our own lordship. In Christ, those things increasingly become what we were.

Listen, this is not about what expressions of sin deserve the most criticism. If



*Those who become followers of Jesus come to the end of their ropes with this fruit of our own lordship. In Christ, those things increasingly become what we were.*

we live in our sin, we will perish in it. All of us. If we think otherwise as Christians, it is because we have forgotten that the gospel is the declaration of another way. The real debate is not about gradations of whatever sin wiggles its way out of us; it is whether Self or God is on the throne of our lives. That is the fundamental issue.

Our culture has been hoodwinked into debates about who gets to call themselves most moral, but morality always flows from our conviction about who has

authority to sit in the driver’s seat of life. If I’m on the throne, I can justify everything and judge everyone against that.

But if God is on the throne, then I begin a life ruled by his truth and grace. I become part of his loving advance in history. I cling to the foolish wisdom of the cross that judges sin in all of us and confronts all our banner-waving. In fact, I no longer wave the banner of anything other than Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. I lower my old flags, but elevate Christ alone. This is our great privilege and the place of our greatest passivity as a church.

Truth be told, this is an unwelcome

message in a culture in which our proud banners and bus-ride boasts get “liked.” But then again, is that really any different than proud Corinth, where the Lord encouraged Paul to not keep silent (Acts 18:10)?

*Phil Wagler (phil\_wagler@yahoo.ca) lives in Surrey, B.C., and is pretty sure John Newton was talking about him when he said, “I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Saviour.”*

## ✉ Stories of 'restorative solidarity' are inspiring

RE: "FACING HISTORY with courage," and "Grace Mennonite meets with local MP," March 2, pages 4 and 22, respectively.

May God bless Elaine Enns for her amazingly brief yet solid exploration of our tragic relationship with

our indigenous peoples. Much food for thought and potential action was provided.

Surely some other courageous congregations could join Grace Mennonite Church of Steinbach, Man., in exploring long-term relationships of listening and dialogue with our indigenous neighbours.

It could benefit the church a great deal if *Canadian Mennonite* would choose to report systematically on

## NEW CANADIAN VOICE

# The last church I visited

RICHARD CHAN

**M**y wife and I arrived in Vancouver in 1994 with our two sons, aged 9 and 12. I had been an air traffic controller, then law enforcement officer in Hong Kong. As a landed immigrant in Canada, I found some odd jobs before going back to school at the B.C. Institute of Technology and beginning a career with a mechanical engineer consulting firm.

My family was completely secular, but I had attended an Anglican high school, so after graduation I accompanied my buddies to their Baptist Alliance Church, where I was eventually baptized in my mid-20s. However, as I started my career, I stopped attending, using the excuse that I had no time for church.

As a young family beginning a new life in Canada, we also felt far too busy to attend church. My wife held down two jobs, we were raising our two sons and we had no contacts.

Around 2010, I started feeling the desire to reconnect with God, and I began visiting some churches in my neighbourhood, both Chinese and Canadian.

In May 2011, I was diagnosed with stage four gastric cancer, which had metastasized to my liver and some lymph nodes, and was given about a year to live. Around this time, as I was beginning an intense course of chemotherapy, I visited Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond,

B.C. This was the last church I visited.

I wasn't comfortable disclosing to my new church about this personal issue, but a social worker at the cancer clinic urged me to consider sharing with my pastor for the spiritual support I needed. When I met with Tim Kuepfer and shared my situation, he suggested that we have a special healing prayer session. My entire family, including my mother who was living with us, joined some of the elders, friends and pastors for this service of prayer and anointing with oil in April 2012. This was a very powerful experience of God's love for me.

I became a member of Peace Church on Jan. 12, 2014. My mother also became a Christian and was baptized recently. I joined the choir for awhile, and also two different Bible study groups at the church, attending as my chemotherapy treatments allowed. I am also an

usher and was privileged to emcee the Christmas banquet last year. I see all these as opportunities to serve God.

Just recently, the doctors changed my chemotherapy treatment again and the effects seem milder. I am blessed with a few more good days between the treatments. I have experienced God's love for me, no question about it. I don't know how long I will live, but for the past three years I have been focussing on God's love for me, rather than on my physical suffering. There is only so much that medicine can do at this point, but this does not shake my faith in God.

Every morning I come to Peace Mennonite to pray in the sanctuary along with my mother. Prayer is our interaction with our living God. Each morning I ask Jesus for his Holy Spirit, and pray for his forgiveness through his love for me. I thank and praise him for his grace to me every day. I ask that he would increase my faith so I can love him even more. I ask God to use this part of my faith journey to fulfill the purposes for which I was created in the first place. God helps me to focus on his joy in the greater plan, rather than on my sufferings.

Romans 5:3-5, which I received in a



*Every morning I come to Peace Mennonite to pray in the sanctuary along with my mother. Prayer is our interaction with our living God.*

Sunday sermon, has become my motto: "We glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

each Mennonite Church Canada congregation that has already begun this significant journey, offering the rest of us powerful examples in “restorative solidarity”

MARY MAE SCHWARTZENTRUBER,  
KITCHENER, ONT.

## ✉ Disabilities should not be equated with suffering

I AM GRATEFUL to *Canadian Mennonite* for the opportunity of submitting a commentary on the Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling on physician-assisted death (“Court turns medicine into ‘death dealing,’” March 2, page 19). But my brief biography reads that I “suffer from polio and glaucoma,” rather than “had polio” and “has glaucoma.” I feel compelled to clarify why one word makes such a big difference.

While I was analyzing the media coverage of the Robert Latimer murder case in Saskatchewan more than a decade ago for my book *A Voice Unheard: The Latimer Case and People with Disabilities*, I found the victim—his daughter—described by her disabilities: she “couldn’t walk, talk or feed herself.” The word “suffering” invariably accompanied the cause of her disabilities: she “suffered from” cerebral palsy.

Her perceived suffering apparently justified her murder. But while researching I found instead a child who loved kittens, red nail polish, outings with her family, watching hockey and teasing people. And she rode a school bus with her siblings until just a few days before she was killed.

Her father told police that her condition had not worsened in her last days. His legal defence claimed the murder was actually assisted suicide, something she would have asked for had she had enough intelligence to do so.

On Feb. 6, Canada’s Supreme Court struck down the ban on assisted suicide, not restricting its ruling to terminally ill people, but reserving it instead for those with “a grievous and irremediable medical condition [including an illness, disease or disability] that causes enduring suffering . . .” Here, too, disability was paired with “suffering.”

The description of me below my commentary followed this familiar pattern. Readers first learned about my disabilities—framed in that familiar word, “suffers”—while my work came second.

Although I do have disabilities, I do not perceive myself to be perpetually “suffering.” Describing me as “suffering” when I do not view myself that way consigns me to the dreary role targeted by the ruling.

If readers really want to show empathy for people with disabilities and other vulnerable Canadians, please join the Physicians Alliance Against Euthanasia,

Living with Dignity and the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition in urging the Canadian government to overturn the ruling by invoking the notwithstanding clause. Readers can sign a petition at <http://bit.ly/1B4b7GM>.

RUTH ENNS, WINNIPEG

## ✉ First we need to define what is sin

RE: “A DIFFICULT debate,” Jan. 19, page 2.

I am not sure if the task is “debating,” as was mentioned in the editorial.

The Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process should not be about how Mennonites or Anabaptists interpret the Bible. A sound theological principle should be “the Bible interprets herself,” and the BFC is to find the truth in the Holy Scriptures. It’s God’s opinion we need, not mine nor *Canadian Mennonite’s*.

I think we need to find out if the Bible defines homosexuality as a sin or not, then let’s talk about discrimination exclusion or other things. In the editorial it was mentioned that “we do not want to be exclusionary.” But the whole world is exclusionary: club memberships, affiliations, unions, churches, etc.

In my congregation—Cedar Valley Mennonite Church, Mission, B.C.—you have to be a “good-standing Christian” to be a member, meaning you have recognized your sinful nature, you have asked forgiveness for your sins and are a follower of Christ. Are we perfect? No, of course not, but we do not celebrate our sins on Sunday. We do not have a “pride day to be drunk” or a “pride day for drug addicts.”

We embrace any kind of people, including the most sinful . . . me!

EDGAR RIVERA, MISSION, B.C.

## ✉ ‘My lament and my promise’

RE: “AN EXPERIMENT in sexuality gone wrong,” Jan. 5, page 4, which is an excerpt of “Defanging the beast: Mennonite responses to John Howard Yoder’s sexual abuse,” published in the January 2015 issue of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

It is encouraging to see the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary board’s commitment to an ongoing transparent process of institutional accountability in the Yoder sexual abuse situation. It offers hope to all of us who have been vulnerable to the clutches of sexual abuse, whether it be through our own suffering or witnessing the suffering of others. It hurts us all.

As I reflect on Yoder’s experimentation, I am reminded of the experience of a friend from my youth who had suffered sexual abuse. The memory and

consequences of my friend's experience lingers today. I regret that as an adolescent I did not know more about the signs of sexual abuse, or about how to assist my friend in obtaining the help she desperately needed at the time. This is my lament.

Now I recognize that I can challenge and change cycles of abuse by recognizing abuse when it is happening, disrupting harmful patterns and creating new ones. Although, as a psychotherapist, I do not have a fool-proof guarantee that those I love and know will not be subject to abuse, there is a lot I can do to prevent it.

Many children, youth and adults are sexually abused by someone they know. As a wife and mother of two teenage sons, I am in a position to teach my sons that they are loved and that their bodies are their own. I have discovered that discussing sex is not a favourite topic of conversation for my teenage sons to have with me, but if it means that they are more protected because of it, their discomfort is a minor concern.

If I could travel back in time and change my understanding and response to my friend's abuse, I would—in a heartbeat or the twinkling of an eye. But those moments are gone. What I can do now is recognize and prevent abuse in the lives of those around me. And prevent misuse of power in my own life as well. Abuse stops here. With me. With us.

I hope my friend is listening to my lament and my promise.

**LINDA WEBER, LONDON, ONT.**

*Linda Weber is a member of Valleyview Mennonite Church, London.*

## /// Corrections

- Jon Janzen is working towards his master's degree at Trinity Western University, Langley, B.C. His place of study was incorrectly identified in "Rebuilding lives and languages," March 16, page 34. Janzen also reports that St. Michael's Residential School in Alert Bay, B.C., has now been completely torn down.
- Mennonite Savings and Credit Union's CEO is Brent Zоргdrager, not Frank, as he was named in "A living wage," March 16, page 24. Also, the credit union signed on with the Living Wage Waterloo Region's employer recognition program at the "supporter" level. Incorrect information appeared in the same article.
- The photograph on page 8 of the March 2 issue was taken at Loon Straits, Man., according to photographer Edwin Brant, and not at Manigotagan, as listed on the Mennonite Archival Image Database.

*Canadian Mennonite regrets the errors.*

## ✉ Disbelief of God's Word is another reason why people leave the church

**RE:** "FIVE REASONS young adults may leave the church," March 2, page 44.

I believe that all five reasons were valid and are probably the reason some of our young adults are leaving the church.

However, I believe there is another reason that wasn't discussed. That is when people start disbelieving God's Word, the Bible. I believe that evolution and secular beliefs are a big stumbling block for our young adults and could well be the main reason many of our young people are leaving the church.

We cannot separate God the creator from God the Redeemer. If Genesis 1:1 isn't true, then John 3:16 and the rest of the Bible don't make any sense. In the first 11 chapters of Genesis, we are told how God created the heavens and the earth, and everything in them. We are told how God created us and why we are all sinners in need of our Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

A big problem is when some Christians are buying into evolution. Evolution will make atheists out of people. Most of the scientists who promote evolution are secular atheists who come up with all kinds of unprovable theories that fall under historical science, where there is no eye-witness proof. The theory of evolution is not compatible with the Word of God.

Our young people need answers to many things in the Bible, that even some Christians are starting to disbelieve, including, "Were Adam and Eve real people?" and, "Was there really a global flood?" The answers to these and many other questions are all in God's Word.

There are many Christian scientists who believe in biblical creation. These are the scientist's we should be adhering to, not secular scientists with an atheistic worldview. Some good resources are the Institute for Creation Research and Creation Ministries International.

The Bible should always be our starting point on how we view our world, not the other way around, where we take fallen man's word and try to fit it into the Bible. I Peter 3:15 says: "*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*"

**GLENN GASCHO, ZURICH, ONT.**

*Glen Gascho is a member of Zurich Mennonite Church.*

## VIEWPOINT

# I choose to raise my son in the church

PETER EPP

Children raised without religion are more likely to stay out of jail, avoid peer pressure, love their families and not be racist.

At least this is what new research has concluded, according to a recently published op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times*, “How secular family values stack up.”

Needless to say, as a new parent raising my son in the faith, statements like this give me pause. In case you’re pausing too, here’s why I like this article, and why I still choose to raise my son in the church.

As a Christian, it’s helpful to be reminded that we can learn just as much

to claim that Christianity is “better.” You’ll essentially hear: “We go to jail less than ‘them’ and keep our families together more often than ‘them.’”

“Them,” of course, means those of lower socio-economic status, who mostly don’t go to church. Therefore, Christianity is the better way to raise your children. It’s not the full story there, so I’m sceptical that it’s the full story with this article.

All that is to say, whether or not my suspicions about its demographics are correct, I like that the article’s research challenges the myth that children with-

with and for those who will have to work harder to meet this researcher’s criteria. He should stand with and for a worldview that is speaking to those who struggle, not just those who have succeeded.

Am I certain this can’t be taught outside my faith? How could I be? But I am certain that it’s the deepest, most effective way for me to teach him these things—because it’s precisely how I learned them and keep learning them myself.

So even if a study like this can give me pause, I can still confidently say that I hope to see my son raised with a deep commitment to the church. Because if I do, I can also realistically hope to see him working for a world in which every child will have an equal shot at being labelled “good.” Or even if that won’t happen for all children in their lifetime, at least they will have one more person around to tell them that something bigger than all of this has always considered them “good” anyway—no matter what the researchers say.

*I like that the article’s research challenges the myth that children without a religious upbringing will automatically be worse than my son. But I would also argue against the implication that my son will inherently be more closed-minded, racist and prone to criminal behaviour.*

from non-Christians as we used to—and often still—try to teach. Which is a lot. That said, I do wonder if much of the criteria for success in this article is simply what you find in whatever religious category happens to be the most concentrated in the middle class.

The “no religion” category, I suspect, is mostly middle class, and, as such, you probably find the same results you’d expect to find in any study of the middle class: lower crime rates, more intact families, higher levels of education, and therefore a better means for speaking in more politically correct ways about race and critical thinking.

In fact, I can think of rural areas I know well where Christianity is mostly concentrated among that area’s middle class. In these places, some Christians will occasionally use the same evidence

out a religious upbringing will automatically be worse than my son. But I would also argue against the implication that my son will inherently be more closed-minded, racist and prone to criminal behaviour.

In fact, whatever research category it happens to put him in, I choose to pass on my faith because it asks my son to challenge the economic injustice that makes it easier for him to meet the criteria of a “better” person. And I choose to pass on my faith because it teaches—nay, implores—him to love those who are closed-minded, racist or in prison.

As a child who will grow up in the middle class, my faith tells my son that meeting this article’s criteria for being a “better” person is just the beginning of what he should strive for. He should also strive to love, learn from, and work

If, when he gets there, he finds the children from families of other religions, or no religion at all, working alongside him, all the better. ✎

*Peter Epp is completing a master of arts degree in theology at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, after seven years of teaching Mennonite studies at Mennonite*



*Collegiate Institute, Gretna, Man. He and his partner, Shanda Hochstetler, have begun raising their first child, Oliver, born on Dec. 5, 2014, in the faith.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# A word for ministry: Imagination

JOHN H. NEUFELD

*"Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams'" (Acts 2:15-17).*

*"Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you" (Isaiah 51:1-2a).*

**M**y suggested word for ministry is imagination. Imagination that will break the bounds of predictability, the limits of the status quo, the boredom of repetition and familiarity, and perhaps even the confinement of the lectionary.

Such use of imagination is evident in Scripture if we dare to see Scripture as a compost heap of possibilities, rather than static, abstract truth reduced to bland prose and rigid dogma.

Imagination is always needed in interpreting the ancient texts because they were not addressed to us or to our time, and each one invites interpretation. Imagination is called for when considering options for the work of the church, in worship, in fellowship and in service.

Imagination is essential in having new conversations between life in the text and life in 21st century, thus becoming prophetic in the Pauline sense.

Imagination was at work in the heart and mind of Isaiah when he offered guidance to pilgrims leaving exilic confinement and marching into an uncertain future. He suggested going forward by looking in the rearview mirror: *"Look to the quarry from which you were dug, to the rock from which you were hewn, to Abraham and to Sarah who bore you."*

Don't just look around in your contemporary world for direction, insight,

analysis and hope; look to your own dusty tradition. Look long enough till the dust becomes blood teeming with the stem cells of hope.

Imagination was at work as Peter addressed that crowd on Pentecost, daring to bring together the ancient apocalyptic text of a minor prophet to give insight about a pivotal event in history. These are not drunk as you suppose, with wine, but they are drunk, drunk with Spirit-driven imagination, sons and daughters prophesying, young men visioning, old men dreaming.

Let us dare to dwell in the text, every text, marinating in its setting and detail until the words that were once blood dried into ink, become re-bloodied, alive and relevant once again.

Peter was drunk with imagination and we ought to be drunk with imagination as well.

Let us dare not only to live in the quarry of our tradition and our rich heritage of Scripture, let us also dare to live in the present, immersing ourselves in the bloodiness of life as lived by individuals dealing with memories and questions and fears and doubts and hopes. Let us really imagine the depth of our people's lives in their families, at work, in community, and in church, and become free of clichés and slogans.

Let us ask, if we dare, whether what we do in worship services and preaching and

visitation connect with the concerns that people go to sleep with every night and the concerns they wake up to every morning, and have to deal with in one way or another every day, yes, every day. Let us use Spirit-given imagination to enter into the lives of our people, and listen to the heartbeat of their daily burdens, even as we shape our pastoral prayers, our sermons and our visits.

Get drunk with imagination, with Peter and Isaiah, and envision, dream and prophesy the way Paul thought of prophecy.

Let us dare a third thing. When the dust of the quarry has become a bloodied and steaming compost heap, and when we have been emotionally marinated in our people's realities, we will see new linkages and implications between life today and ancient words, and we will dare to speak helpfully, with insight and compassion. And, like Peter, we will have days when we are truly puzzled and surprised at what God has in mind for all people, including Cornelius and others who are living on the fringe, people from whom we had been insulated or isolated.

Yes, get drunk with Spirit-inspired imagination and discover afresh that maybe our upbringing, our theological tradition and even our confessions of faith are not equipped to stem the tide of what the Lord is up to in his world, in the church or in our lives.

Let us commit ourselves to the discipline of imagination that is ever-more deeply rooted in familiar and unfamiliar texts, ever-more aware of the burdens and the joys that fill the lives of our people. Let us commit ourselves to the discipline of endless reading and never-ending conversations with ourselves and our past, with our people and their memories and fears and questions and hopes, so that together with them we will deal with the present and walk into the future, surprised and energized by lively hope. ☸

*John H. Neufeld is a former president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College (1984-97), a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Winnipeg. Presented at a Leadership in Ministry seminar at CMU in 2010.*

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Andrews**—Joseph Harold Xavier (b. March 2, 2015), to Mark and Elizabeth Loewen Andrews, Toronto United Mennonite.

**Bell**—Anna Lila (b. Feb. 18, 2015), to Koren and Steve Bell, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

**Bena**—Sikila (b. March 13, 2015), to Benjamin Bena and Mamissa Nsimba Kiamawete, First Mennonite, Calgary.

**Enns**—Catherine Amelia (b. March 20, 2015), to Jonathan and Erica Enns, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Gerber**—Olivia Madeleine (b. March 14, 2015), to Thomas and Amanda Gerber, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley Ont.

**Kobold**—Leah Jessie (b. Feb. 25, 2015), to Aaron and Maggie Kobold, Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

**Kulik**—Oslo Arthur Petkau (b. March 9, 2015), to Tamara Petkau and Joel Kulik, Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Nuss Hildebrand**—Raphael Jonah (b. March 23, 2015), to Katharina Nuss and Jason Hildebrand, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Roth**—Walker Clarke (b. Jan. 25, 2015), to Kyle and Meghan (Thornton) Roth, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

**Wilson**—Cohen Neil (b. Feb. 14, 2015), to Ben and Chantel (Dyck) Wilson, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

### Marriages

**Hildebrand/Skipper**—Laura-Lynne Hildebrand and Jordan Skipper, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg, at Neuberghthal, Man., Sept. 20, 2014.

### Deaths

**Baer**—Pauline (nee Dettwiler), 84 (b. Dec. 29, 1931; d. Jan. 3, 2015), Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont.

**Friesen**—Peter, 93 (b. Dec. 28, 1921; d. March 12, 2015), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Friz**—Heinrich Albert, 74 (b. April 1, 1940; d. March 3, 2015), First Mennonite, Calgary.

**Guenther**—Maria, 68 (b. Feb. 1, 1946; d. Dec. 10, 2014), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Heinrichs**—Leonardo, 75 (b. Aug. 31, 1939; d. March 14, 2015), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Hilborn**—W. Rae, 97 (b. Sept. 4, 1917; d. March 4, 2015), Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

**Hildebrand**—Susie, 97 (b. July 15, 1917; d. March 24, 2015), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Kehler**—Larry, 81 (b. Nov. 8, 1933; d. March 3, 2015), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Loewen**—Selma 87 (b. April 21, 1927; d. Jan. 6, 2015), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Neufeld**—Irma (nee Wiens), 79 (b. June 15, 1935; d. Jan. 1, 2015), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Neuman-Beaulieu**—Shirley Anne, 70 (b. May 28, 1944; d. Feb. 2, 2015), Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., in Lady Lake, Fla.

**Rempel**—Susan (nee Martens), 97 (b. Feb. 2, 1918; d. March 20, 2015), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Shantz**—Ralph, 92 (d. Dec. 3, 2014), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

**Toews**—Ernie Carl, 80 (b. Sept. 11, 1934; d. Feb. 23, 2015), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Wiens**—Anne (nee Boschman), 83 (b. Jan. 9, 1931; d. Dec. 10, 2014), Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

**Wiens**—Luella (nee Jantz), 98 (b. May 26, 1916; d. March 18, 2015), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

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

## Pontius' Puddle



## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

## COVER STORY

# Learning from each other

*... over moose nose and smoked lynx*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent  
MANIGOTAGAN, MAN.

Although less than a three-hour drive from Winnipeg, Manigotagan seemed a world away. This Metis community of about 200 lives in the dense forest along the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg. It abuts the much larger reserve community of Hollow Water (population 1,200) whose border has become more porous since the passing of Bill C-31 which returned treaty status to some of the Métis.

"Our people have lived in this area for centuries, ever since our ancestors crossed James Bay from Quebec and came up the river," said Charles Simard, one of the members of Manigotagan Community Fellowship who warmly welcomed the three vans full of people who constituted the spring gathering of Partnership Circles.

Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations have been meeting together with their partner northern indigenous communities twice a year since 2002, to learn from each other and to strengthen their partnerships. For the first time this year, the meeting took place outside of Winnipeg.

Norman Meade, co-pastor of the

Manigotagan Fellowship with Murray and Ruth Martin, told indigenous and settler participants, "The Spirit here is strong. We have built on the strength that people like Jake and Trudy Unrau have brought to us over the years."

He expressed appreciation for the partnership their congregation and community has with Steinbach Mennonite Church. For more than 17 years, they have worked together to deliver a summer Vacation Bible School program. "It has not only influenced the 50 to 60 children that attend each year, but also impacted the adults in our community," Meade said.

The Manigotagan meeting clearly demonstrated that indigenous communities have much to bring to the partnerships. This small chapel, which Simard had for years thought was "the little brown church in the vale that everyone sang about," was a setting that gave the community the confidence to showcase its strengths and gifts.

A feast of moose stew, caribou stew, smoked lynx meat, delicate slices of moose nose, smoked whitefish and goldeye, and



*Charles Simard shows off a beaver pelt.*

fresh bannock was laid out for the guests. The furs and pelts of local animals were shown, and lessons and stories were shared about the animal world around them and how the lives of people in this community are interwoven with their environment and how they work to look after it.

Simard shared some of his knowledge about the medicinal plants that he collects and uses for healing.

Bishop Mark MacDonald, the Anglican Church of Canada's first national indigenous bishop, spoke at both Thunderbird House in Winnipeg and at the Partnership Circles event in Manigotagan the following day. There, MacDonald pulled a small, well-worn Ojibway translation of the Bible from his pocket and read John 3:16.

"The gospel thrives on translation, on being made flesh, on interacting with people," he explained. "In that way, the Bible is very unique. Whenever there is a time of cultural diffusion, that's when Christianity does the best. You have to understand the essence of Christianity in order for it to take root in some other place or culture."

In translating this famous passage,



*Members of Manigotagan Community Fellowship, Charles Simard, left, Chris Martin, Shirley Smith, Norman Meade, Dennis Sinclair and Danny Moneyas, host the spring Partnership Circles meeting on March 14.*





*Manigotagan Community Fellowship prepared a feast of moose stew, caribou stew, smoked lynx meat, delicate slices of moose nose, smoked fish and fresh bannock for their visitors from Winnipeg.*

MacDonald said, “For God so loved the land that he gave his only begotten Son.’ In other words, we understand that we need to cherish this land and treat it with respect and reverence because God loved it so much that he gave us his only Son. It defines our way of living. To grow morally and spiritually as a person is to enhance your ability to care for and sustain life. We have raised a whole generation of people who only know how to destroy the land.”

The visiting partners also learned about some of the difficult issues the community is presently facing. A beach of some of the best silica sand in Canada exists on the first nation’s traditional lands, but the government has granted private industry permission to harvest this sand that is necessary in the fracking process of mining oil. The company estimates that there is 40 years worth of silica sand that can be removed from the area by truck. This extraction will begin once a road has been built into the area. These decisions were all made without any consultation with the Manigotagan or Hollow Water communities.

Traditional hunting and fishing grounds have also been given over to cottage development without consultation. Approximately 200 cottage lots are already developed or slated for development.

“This leads to social and environmental problems,” said Meade. “There was no negotiation in developing this land, including some of the property right in Manigotagan that has been given over to cottage development. Once your homeland is

destroyed, it is gone forever,” he concluded with great sadness.

With trust and generosity Manigotagan Fellowship members shared their food, their stories, their knowledge and their plight. There was much for the Mennonite partners to ponder, realizing that there needs to be much more room for the contributions and wisdom of indigenous partners in these relationships if they are to be true partnerships. ❧



*Mark MacDonald, the Anglican Church of Canada’s indigenous bishop, reads from his Ojibway Bible at a Partnership Circles meeting in Manigotagan, Man., last month.*

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# Western Christians need to 'get out of the way'

*Anglican indigenous bishop addresses annual Building Bridges event*

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

Mark MacDonald is convinced that "it is the time for something great to happen and that the best thing we can do is get up and wait. There is no stopping it." But the Anglican Church of Canada's first national indigenous bishop admits that the church has likely stood in the way of God's work at times and it may need to step aside.

MacDonald, who makes Toronto his home, was invited by Mennonite Church Manitoba and MC Canada as the keynote speaker at the annual Building Bridges event on March 13 at Winnipeg's Circle of Life Thunderbird House.

Last year's speaker, Justice Murray Sinclair, left the audience with the challenge, "Is it possible for churches to make

and made it untrue to its true calling and nature.

"Both Peter and Paul claim in the Bible that God has a specific mission to the Jews and a specific mission to the gentiles," MacDonald told the audience. "There is something that God has created in culture and people that is to be honoured."

With numerous stories MacDonald illustrated how, in the indigenous communities that he visits, Christian faith is very much alive. "When people express their faith in their own values, on their own terms, in their own way, it is very powerful," he said, adding, "They hold on to their identity as indigenous Christian communities much more strongly than they hold

*'This idea of the superiority of western culture has infiltrated the church and made it untrue to its true calling and nature.'  
(Mark MacDonald)*

a statement acknowledging aboriginal spirituality as valid and as an equal means of worship? Can you do it? If not, the relationship will be as bad as the existing one."

In Building Bridges' spirit of learning and building understanding, MacDonald was invited to help the Mennonite community address this question. But he rephrased it and handed it back to this year's audience.

"The real question," he said, "is, 'Can Christian faith survive in North America without indigenous spirituality?' Christian institutions have a capacity for silliness and sometimes corruption, which is deeply troubling. This idea of the superiority of western culture has infiltrated the church

on to any denominational identity."

The biblical way of evangelism and mission, he said, is to unveil the presence of God in a particular culture and place, recognizing the right of the people to be who they are. In the 1970s, when missionaries were sent home from Africa and Asia, many believed the church was going to die, but, in fact, it grew more dramatically than at any other time, according to him.

"That has also happened here in those places where we have seen the church pull out," he said. "Why don't you know the story of indigenous Christianity? Of hymn singing that has taken off across indigenous communities? It was because gospel jamborees didn't look like Christianity.



*Mark MacDonald, the Anglican Church of Canada's first national indigenous bishop, speaks at the annual Building Bridges event at Circle of Life Thunderbird House in Winnipeg on March 13.*

Indigenous Christianity is hiding, waiting to come out."

MacDonald said that many indigenous Christians see beyond the church structures, the imposed western values and residential schools. They recognize the essence of Christianity unconnected to denominational structures, but one that is infused in some of their own culture and understandings. "There is a great spiritual power in the land about to be unleashed in a way that will knock your socks off," he said. "It may be hard to see, but there have been moments when it has happened."

"We are learning today that the church, when it comes to a place, it comes to place where God is already present and has already been working, and that despite all the obstacles that have been put in its way, it is ready to flower. The best thing to do is to get out of the way," MacDonald advised. ✎




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## 'We weren't on the same page'

*Hague Mennonite cites theological differences, including same-sex marriage, in its decision to leave MC Saskatchewan*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
HAGUE, SASK.

**“W**e have not left. Maybe the [area church] leadership has left, but we have stayed with the *Confession of Faith [in a Mennonite Perspective]*.” With these words, Artur Esau, Hague Mennonite Church’s pastor, spoke of his congregation’s withdrawal from Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

The decision, announced at the area church’s March delegate sessions, “has been 10 years in the making, maybe longer,” said congregational chair Keith Heinrichs. When delegates ratified MC Saskatchewan’s Safe Church Policy in March 2014, Hague Mennonite’s leaders realized “we weren’t on the same page,” and that it was time to make a decision, he said.

Church council called a congregational meeting last June to outline concerns and discuss the matter with members. “Some wanted to vote right away,” said Heinrichs, “but council wanted to give people time to think and pray about the decision.”

Last September, congregants were given four opportunities to cast their ballots. When the votes were tallied, 85 percent favoured withdrawing from MC Saskatchewan. A few members left the church as a result of the decision, but “we would have lost members either way,” said Heinrichs. “We can’t follow the *Confession of Faith* and go in the direction that the [area church] is going,” he said.

Esau agreed, noting that within MC Saskatchewan he has witnessed a trend towards an “allegorical way of viewing the Bible. The same-sex issue is just the tip of the iceberg, he said. The iceberg includes liberalism, women in ministry and the peace issue.

“What is taught by the [area church] is peace according to the world, accepting everyone so that we have peace,” he said. Citing Matthew 10:34-35, Esau said, “You’re going to lose some friends if you’re committed to Christ.” But he offered, “When

you want to be loving to someone, you tell them the truth.” That truth is found in the Bible. “This church wants to stay as close as possible to what Scripture says,” he said.

Hague Mennonite formally organized in 1903 when Mennonites moved to the area from southern Manitoba. It was originally part of the Rosenort Mennonite group of churches, which included Eigenheim, Tiefengrund, Rosthern and Aberdeen congregations, under the leadership of Peter Regier. By 1929, it had outgrown its first building and erected a larger one. It became known as Hague Mennonite in 1962, when the Rosenort group dissolved.

Although not as large as it once was, the

congregation has an average attendance of 80 to 100 people, including many young families, single young adults and teenagers. Along with Esau, the church employs Jesse Doell as part-time youth pastor.

Although now an independent congregation, with no plans of joining another denomination, Hague Mennonite will continue supporting some of MC Saskatchewan’s ministries, such as the Person to Person (P2P) prison visitation program and the Youth Farm Bible Camp. “We didn’t want to end in a bitter way,” said Heinrichs.

In a letter to MC Saskatchewan stating Hague’s intent to withdraw, church leaders wrote, “We . . . wish you God’s blessings, God’s peace, God’s direction, and we would covet the same in return.”

MC Saskatchewan leaders, while lamenting the decision, reciprocated the desire for continued interaction. Replying to Hague Mennonite’s letter, moderator Bruce Jantzen and area church minister Jerry Buhler wrote, “As you have blessed us, we wish you God’s blessing, grace and peace as you work at being faithful in your community.” ☸



*Hague Mennonite Church has voted to leave Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, choosing, instead, to become an independent congregation. (Inset) A stone cairn outside Hague Mennonite Church commemorates the congregation’s 100th anniversary, celebrated in 2003.*

# AMBS on abuse: 'We failed you'

*Seminary apologizes for years of covering up abuse by theologian John Howard Yoder*

STORY AND PHOTO BY RICH PREHEIM

For *Canadian Mennonite*  
ELKHART, IND.

**F**or 40 years, women who had been sexually violated by John Howard Yoder were left suffering in silence while the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) professor became one of the most influential theological voices of the 20th

century. On March 22, AMBS publicly apologized for long ignoring their cries for justice.

In a "Service of lament, confession and commitment" in the AMBS chapel, seminary president Sara Wenger Shenk

solemnly told victims and nearly 200 other people: "I am sorry that we neglected to genuinely listen to your reports of violation and that even after hearing your warnings, we failed to raise the alarm.

"I am sorry that by choosing to remain silent about your violation, we isolated you, only deepening your sense of betrayal. I am sorry that in our exhaustion and desire for closure, we didn't listen to those of you who said this is not finished, the full truth of what happened has not yet been named"

The service was a milestone in the decades-long epic. Starting at least in the 1970s, Yoder sexually harassed and assaulted perhaps more than 100 women worldwide, according to historian Rachel Waltner Goossen, who earlier this year published a major article on Yoder's abuses and the church's response, an excerpt of which was published on page 4 of the Jan. 5 issue of *Canadian Mennonite* as "An 'experiment' in sexuality gone wrong."

Then seminary president Marlin Miller tried to curtail Yoder's behaviour through academic discussions for nearly 10 years. While exploring the theological dimensions of sex, love and community, Yoder was able to continue his activities. Miller's efforts were unsuccessful, and he finally forced Yoder's resignation in 1984.

"Whether out of institutional hubris or with every intention for good, we gave pride of place to intellectual prowess, to the powers of the mind, with too little regard for how they can be twisted in self-serving, evil ways," said Shenk, who repeatedly received calls of "amen" and murmurs of appreciation from the audience.

Since 1991, a network of victims has been providing mutual support and pushing AMBS and other Mennonite bodies for a more appropriate response to them and other women who have suffered sexual abuse.

"There is no excuse when a theological school that is dedicated to teach what is good and true and beautiful about the gospel fails in a most egregious way to comfort those who mourn, to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted and proclaim liberty to the captives," Shenk said. "Whether through misnaming, or negligence, or avoidance, or fear of scandal, we failed the sacred trust of the church. We



*A basket of cloth strips was used to symbolize the pain of victims of John Howard Yoder's sexual abuse at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. The note reads: 'Beloved of God, may you go into the complicated places with courage, for darkness will be conquered by light. May you go with resolve, for God has gone before you. May you go with hope, claiming the promise that evil never has the last word. Amen.'*

failed what we know to be most true about the gospel. We failed you.”

The service also featured the announcement of a Mennonite Church U.S.A. Care and Prevention Fund to help people who have experienced sexual abuse. That includes partially reimbursing victims of Yoder or any MC U.S.A. credentialed leader for the costs they incurred “on the road to healing.” The denomination is accepting contributions for the fund through the end of August.

Evelyn Shellenberger apologized for allowing Yoder to continue his misconduct. She is a former seminary board member and chair, and was a participant in some of the theological discussions with Yoder. “I held significant responsibility to guide the disciplining,” she said.

Speaking on behalf of the board, current members Dave Brubacher and Ron Guengerich committed AMBS to do everything possible to ensure that allegations of sexual abuse are addressed quickly and forthrightly, and to provide a safe environment, including the possibility of calling law enforcement. AMBS employees issued a similar commitment.

In addition, off-the-record statements were made by members of Yoder’s and Miller’s families. Miller, who died in 1994, has been heavily criticized for how he handled Yoder, who died in 1997.

Seminary alumna and retired minister Martha Smith Good also spoke. She had rebuffed Yoder’s advances while a student and was a confidant to a number of his victims. Good was also instrumental in the formation of the women’s advocacy network, whose work led to AMBS’s reconciliation measures.

In response to the speakers during the afternoon service at AMBS, Good said, “We have heard. We acknowledge your confessions and apologies. And in response, we extend deep gratitude to you.”

The morning of March 22 was devoted to a closed “intimate gathering of truth-telling, reflection and prayer” for the victims, their supporters and members of the AMBS community. It included a prayer walk through Waltner Hall, the main seminary building and site of much of Yoder’s abuse.

A similar response is expected at MC U.S.A.’s biennial convention this summer. ☞

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*The Canadian Mennonite team*





*Dancers perform to a song of praise at the opening of Mennonite Church Alberta's 86th annual delegate sessions hosted by Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church.*

## Mennonite Church Alberta 'in the black'

*Delegates engage in two days of 'very lively conversations about unity in our diversity'*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent  
EDMONTON

Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Edmonton may seem small, but it is a hosting powerhouse! On March 20 and 21, the congregation of about 70 adults and 23 youth welcomed pastors, delegates and visitors to the 86th annual session of Mennonite Church Alberta.

Keynote speaker Brian Quan, lead pastor of three congregations at Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church, challenged the gathering about what it means to be brothers and sisters in Christ, bound together by the Spirit of God for the common good.

"Our Mennonite faith tradition is still quite new for me and I'm still learning about it, but it has been refreshing to see how the church is honestly engaged in conversations about unity," Quan said. "In spite of our differences, we have been engaged in some very lively conversations about unity in our diversity."

A spirit of unity and hope was bolstered by good news from the various ministries of MC Alberta and a budget that was "in the black."

According to treasurer Bill Janzen, the 2014 budget recorded a surplus of \$17,827 as church and individual donations and

fundraising events had exceeded expectations. For 2015, budgeted contributions are forecast at \$224,830. While this is basically the same as 2014, there will be differences in achieving the goal because of the withdrawal of Tofield Mennonite Church from MC Alberta (see "Unity has been broken," March 16, page 17), and projected revenue increases for Camp Valaqua and the North Edmonton Ministry.

Of MC Alberta's ability to make the 2015 budget, Janzen said after the sessions were over, "We believe that if congregations can meet their MC Alberta budget, and we do some fundraisers, and with donations, we can meet, perhaps exceed, our budget."

Moderator Ernie Engbrecht is also optimistic. However, in light of the slowing Alberta economy, he said, "We will have people in our midst who will lose jobs and we also have churches who are struggling."

How positive was the event? At last year's meeting, the North Edmonton Ministry, which builds bridges of understanding between Muslims and Mennonites, had its proposal for a three-year renewal reduced to one because of funding concerns. In contrast, the 2015 resolution was to remove the term limit all together. A generous anonymous donation, cooperation between Mennonite Central Committee Alberta and MC Alberta, a partnership with Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (with donations

### /// Briefly noted

#### Edmonton congregation seeks to be openly inclusive

At the pastors council meeting, First Mennonite Church called for prayer as a letter that will be sent to all Mennonite Church Alberta congregations was shared. The letter presents a motion passed on Feb. 8: "As a congregation, we . . . would like to move toward becoming a publicly open and welcoming faith community for all people, regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, abilities, socio-economic status, family composition, and for any other minority or marginalized individuals or groups. In 2015, we commit ourselves to working alongside those in our fellowship who have concerns. We commit ourselves to working alongside the local, area and national church bodies of which [First Mennonite] is part. At our annual congregational meeting in 2016, we will vote on the tabled motion [for acceptance and inclusion]." Asked for his thoughts after the assembly, Dan Graber, area church minister, responded, "The Alberta [area church] seems to be in a healthy place at this time, despite different views on various issues and coming from different backgrounds and theological traditions. Leaders and members seem to be doing their best to not let our fears lead us."

—BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

coming from the U.S.), and successful fundraisers have provided the encouragement and funding necessary to keep the program as an ongoing ministry in Alberta.

Camp Valaqua reported a 6.5 percent increase in camper numbers, a successful cabin replacement partnership with Mennonite Disaster Service, and the beginning of a garden project to teach food sustainability while providing fresh vegetables for the camp kitchen.

One concern mentioned in director Jon Olfert's report is that, while camper numbers are increasing, especially from local communities, the number of Mennonite campers is declining. "Some of this trend can be explained by lack of reporting and changing demographics in our churches, but it remains a point to be aware of," he said.

In his closing remarks, Engbrecht responded to people who had commented that he has a tough job. "Yes, it can be a lot of work at times, but it hasn't been a tough job, and I'll tell you why," he said. "I have had the good fortune of being surrounded by people with exceptional dedication, commitment and work ethics. The teams



**Ask Donna Dang about lipstick for cows and she'll tell you it takes 170 tubes to buy a cow in Vietnam. At the recent Mennonite Church Alberta annual delegate sessions, Dang, the wife of Chau Dang, pastor of Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church, encouraged churches to donate unused cosmetics, soap, opened and unopened perfumes, used or broken watches, and yarn, which can all be sold to help churches in Vietnam. At the assembly, Dang also sold kitchen towel sets that she had hand-crocheted, with profits supporting the same mission. The annual MC Alberta women's retreat, 'Thrive,' on May 22-24, has chosen 'Lipstick for cows' as its mission project.**

I have the privilege of working with have made my role one where I am not drained but energized, not dismayed but grateful,

not alone but part of a team that watches out for each other. It has enriched my life and has enhanced my faith journey." ❧



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*Ray Martin, left, a pastor of East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, and Herb Schultz, a retired pastor and area church minister, chat with Scott Brubaker-Zehr, right with back to camera, before Brubaker-Zehr's presentation about men's spirituality on March 11 at Conrad Grebel University College.*

## Why is 'God talk' so difficult?

*Pastors ponder why some Mennonite men have trouble articulating their experiences of God*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

**T**his is unique," said Sue Steiner. "There are lot's more men here than women at a spirituality event."

Steiner, a member of the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada group, was remarking on the gender balance of pastors at a lunchtime forum co-sponsored by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Conrad Grebel University College on March 11. At many such events women outnumber men by as much as 9 to 1.

On this day, though, Scott Brubaker-Zehr, pastor of Rockway Mennonite Church in Kitchener, was sharing the results of his doctor of ministry thesis in order to begin a discussion around men's spirituality. In his thesis work, he said he found that in his urban Mennonite congregation men had a hard time talking about their experiences of God.

However, he did find that the men he interviewed had an overwhelming number of experiences of an awareness of unmerited goodness. Somehow in the beauty of creation, community, the gift of

work, skills and vocation, family, spouse and children, intimate friends and coincidental events—meeting a spouse, finding

work, being spared from an accident—they found a sense of mystery they identified with the divine. Such goodness towards them resulted in them wanting to live moral lives, such as the life Jesus both taught and exemplified. But they were loath to define the mystery in very concrete terms, he said.

Leon Kehl, a spiritual director and computer software worker, wondered if framing the interviews around experiences with God had itself put the men off. Some participants agreed with this idea since few in their congregations would use such language.

But others, like Steve Brnjias, interim pastor of Zion Mennonite Fellowship in Elmira, said that in more conservative and evangelical congregations men and women both have no trouble talking about their experiences of God.

Much of the conversation in the two-hour session focussed on the need for language to talk about experiences with God, and for examples of how to do it, both of which are lacking in many Mennonite congregations, according to the 27 mostly pastors and retired pastors in attendance.

Brubaker-Zehr's finding of experience expressed in more "natural theological" terms, rather than in specific trinitarian Christian terms, was shared by many of the participants. ❧

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



**Youth members of the Chin Christian Church in Kitchener, Ont., perform the Bamboo Dance for a crowd gathered at Steinmann Mennonite Church in nearby Baden on March 7. The event was a fundraising banquet of Chin food to help pay for the congregation's new building in Kitchener. The 150 guests raised \$5,502.**



# Mushrooming harvest

BY DEBORAH FROESE  
Mennonite Church Canada

**W**hat could fungi possibly have to do with the future of the Colombian Mennonite Church?

Plenty, if you ask Hippolyto Tshimanga, director of Mennonite Church Canada's Africa and Latin America ministries. Tshimanga is on a quest to bring economic sustainability to churches on the two continents. He has found that one of the best ways to do that is through small enterprise, and fungi—or mushrooms—just might fit the bill in Colombia.

Last November, Tshimanga attended a workshop on growing gourmet and medicinal mushrooms that was led by Professor Carmenza Jaramillo Lopez in Bogotá. The two had met earlier through the Zero Emissions Research Initiative, a global network in pursuit of sustainability.

Lopez, a chemical engineer and

mushroom-growing entrepreneur in Colombia, showed workshop participants from the Colombian Mennonite Church how to use readily available organic materials to grow a variety of gourmet and medicinal mushrooms.

"Most people use straw to grow mushrooms," says Tshimanga. "But in the city, straw isn't available. Carmenza showed us how to plant with used coffee grounds instead."

The process is simple: Mushroom spores are planted in an organic base of coffee grounds. They grow and are then harvested to sell.

Linda Shelly, Latin America director of Mennonite Mission Network, also attended the seminar in Bogotá. "It was great to see the enthusiasm of the participants," she says, noting that the workshop could

inspire other entrepreneurial ideas for sustaining families and church communities.

The mushroom growing seminar in Bogotá prompted Martha Lucía Gómez to point out its potential for projects that could draw people together.

Rodrigo Preciado, pastor of La Mesa Mennonite Church, was impressed enough to subsequently initiate a mushroom-growing project at La Mesa, which Tshimanga says has really taken off. And it is doing more than paving the way for self-sufficiency; it is planting seeds for future church growth. The La Mesa enterprise works not only with church members, but people in the wider community.

Earlier in 2014, Tshimanga served as keynote speaker for the Colombian Mennonite Church's general assembly, addressing the theme of self-reliance and economic initiatives within the church. Shortly after Tshimanga's visit, the denomination created a fish pond 15 metres in diameter to provide fish for its annual retreat camp and for sale to the general public. ☘

PHOTO BY LINDA SHELLEY



*Rocío Bustos, left, Martha Lucía Gómez, David Moreno, Ximena Useche and Vidal Jiménez fill bags with a mixture of coffee residue and mushroom spores while producer Rafael Amaya observes.*

## ▬ Sidebar

### Building capacity

In an effort to provide support for growing interest in economic development for sustainability of the church, Mennonite Church Canada created the new position of capacity building resource



**Tom Roes**

worker in 2014. Tom Roes draws from personal experience with community building and small business to offer MC Canada's global partners short, intensive seminars on entrepreneurial themes and sustainable eco-friendly technologies, and follows up with consultation from Canada. Roes and Tim Froese, Witness executive minister, travelled to Colombia last July to offer a seminar on entrepreneurship prior to the mushroom-growing workshop. —Mennonite Church Canada

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# 'We sit and eat at the same tables'

*Kitchener Mennonite churches host community dinners*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

**"G**rab a coffee and go and sit down. You get served at the table. They're really nice here," said one guest to another on March 14 of the community dinners served every Saturday night from November through April at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener.

Lou Murray Gorvett, who coordinates the dinners, is clear that those being served are guests, explaining that the church is practising hospitality, not charity.

While a few of the guests are homeless, most of them are working poor or people on disability pensions who make the rounds of dinners at Ray of Hope and the lunches at St. John's Kitchen, two faith-based social agencies in Kitchener.

Stirling answered a call for help from Bethany Missionary Church as it began to burn out from hosting a regular Out of the Cold dinner and sleeping centre in

2012. Stirling took over the dinner, at first hosting up to 120 guests every Saturday night. When Bethany closed its doors completely last year—part of the collapse of the 15-year-old church-run Out of the Cold program in Waterloo Region—Stirling now hosts as many as 190 guests each week.

While Gorvett and many of the volunteers are from Stirling, they also come from Rockway Mennonite, First Mennonite and Pioneer Park Christian Fellowship, as well as other congregations and some community members. They range in age from 9 to 95.

The work is divided into cooking, set-up, serving and clean-up. Gorvett estimates that she spends 20 hours a week coordinating the dinners, all the while holding down a full-time job as an elementary school librarian. All the work is done by volunteers,



*Lou Murray Gorvett prepares tea for guests before they arrive at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church's community dinner on March 14. She is constantly on the go making sure the guests and volunteers alike are cared for.*

funding comes from the congregations and individuals, and much of the food comes from the local food bank. One regular guest tithes his Ontario Disability payments to the suppers.

About the time that Bethany was putting out the call for help, Stirling was completing an internal study that pointed to the congregation's desire to be more involved in the community. The dinner seemed to fit that bill, but it didn't want the "soup kitchen" model.

Guests are served a three-course meal of soup, entrée and dessert, with the servers



*Young volunteers Cate, Ruth and Annalee of First and Rockway Mennonite churches prepare the menu board so that guests can see what is being served at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church's community dinner on March 14. Volunteers like these young women help set up the tables and chairs, and are gone by the time guests arrive.*



*Volunteer Kim Barber, standing right, a Wilfrid Laurier University music professor and professional singer who attends Rockway Mennonite Church, serves guests at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church's community dinner on March 14.*

joining them when they can find time to eat. Volunteers hear stories and get to know the guests by name.

“One of the things I like the best about the Saturday suppers is that we sit and eat at the same tables/same space as our church potlucks . . . we are in a sense expanding our church family by eating and fellowshiping with a broader range of people,” said Gorvett. “It doesn’t matter if they come for worship on Sunday morning or not; I am changed and blessed by my connection to this broader family. Of course, in two or three hours a week we’re not breaking down all the barriers, but it’s a start! I think this applies both to the range of volunteers that we have—from many different churches and some not from a church—as well as to the guests.”

March 14 was a typical dinner, with guests rushing in as soon as the doors opened at 5 p.m. for the 5:30 start to serving, many heading for “their” table and then to the coffee and tea pots that are ready for them. Many of the guests know each other, and, according to a study, many are struggling with mental health issues. Stirling has had an openness to dealing with such issues, according to Gorvett. But guests help each other, too.

One server tells the story of a guest, lately sober, looking for an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) group. A guest from a nearby table volunteered to take the person to an AA session after the dinner.

A trained pianist played while the guests ate, but often guests will entertain each

other at the piano. Gorvett said that there has only been one incident that resulted in outside help being called in to deal with a guest whose mental health issues were significant problems that day.

A homeless person who lives in a tent all year was given candles to help stay warm

during the record-breaking cold this winter, but generally the community suppers have been wholly focussed on the dinners, rather than other needs.

Doors close around 8:30 each Saturday and the space is then prepared for Sunday morning church activities. ❧

## ‘Showing up with each other’

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent  
EDMONTON

**Y**ears ago, when Abe Janzen had just started his work as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) director, he was taken to prison for a visit. There, she said, he “realized how biblical and terribly important and endlessly necessary” this ministry is. “It’s not about fixing things, but about showing up with each other.”

On March 28 at Edmonton First Mennonite Church, MCC Alberta said thank you to the volunteers who regularly enter Edmonton area institutions to spend time with inmates.

“The first day I was in minimum was when Restorative Justice [visitors] came in,” former prisoner Debbie Gagne told the gathering. “Your visits meant so much. I can’t tell you how much that meant. . . . It felt like being at home, being normal. I am so grateful for what your organization does.” She then sang “What a Difference You’ve Made in my Life” and “Amazing Grace.”

Author Gary Garrison read from his recent book, *Human on the Inside: Unlocking the Truth About Canada’s Prisons*. With more than a decade of experience visiting inmates and coordinating visitation volunteers, Garrison overflowed with stories of both trouble and transformation.

What changed Garrison the most was taking part in an “alternatives to violence” workshop with prisoners, playing the part of a violent man in a skit. “They were a lot like me, but it took this role play for me to realize I was a lot like them,” Garrison said.

Asked if he could change one thing about the prison system, Garrison laughed, then said, “Treat nonviolent offenders differently than those who are violent . . . give people with mental illnesses the treatment

they need, instead of just locking them up.”

A couple weeks before, Garrison had the opportunity to read parts of his book to 90 students at Edmonton’s MacEwan University, half of whom are in training to become prison guards. Afterwards, he said, “Six came to me asking for information about how to get involved [with prison visitation].”

Janet Anderson, the MCC staffer who has coordinated women’s visitation in Edmonton for seven years and the men’s visitation for four-and-a-half years, chaired the appreciation event. She will step back from her work with the men at the end of March, when Jim Shantz will take over the role.

MCC Alberta gave each of this year’s volunteers a copy of Garrison’s book at the appreciation evening. ❧



*Cook Carol Weber of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church shows off the soup stirrer created by set-up volunteer Dan Ulrich when he found out that the church had no spoons long enough to stir the deep soup pots used for Stirling Avenue’s community dinners.*



*Gary Garrison reads from his book Human on the Inside: Unlocking the Truth about Canada’s Prisons. On March 28, Mennonite Central Committee Alberta gave a copy of the book to each volunteer to thank them for their work in visiting prisoners this past year.*

# South Korea's Anabaptist way

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Community, discipleship and peace are considered to be core Anabaptist values in South Korea, but ongoing tensions with North Korea make peace the most challenging concept for people to embrace.

A demilitarized zone imposed between North and South Korea after 1953 created a divided country for the first time in Korea's recorded history. It is also a reminder that the Korean War has not ended, since a peace treaty was never ratified.

"North Korea is a visceral threat [for South Korea]," says Tim Froese, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada Witness. "For the church in South Korea, that's not an easy thing to ignore."

The Korean translation of the Bible also poses a challenge. "There are nine different terms used for the New Testament word *eirene* [peace]," Froese says. "Only one of them defines it as the all-encompassing peace that we refer to and it is only used three times."

In South Korea, two years of military service is mandatory for all young adult men.

"Some groups outside of the church were interested in the idea of conscientious objection and turned to the Korea Anabaptist Center [KAC] for some 'how to,'" Froese says.

Queries about conscientious objection eventually led to the examination of peace from a faith perspective. That sparked the translation from English of resources related to various peacemaking themes, including bullying at school, restorative justice, victim-offender reconciliation programs and peace education.

Mennonites first came to South Korea in 1952, when Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) brought relief, medical care, family child assistance and vocational education to the country, as military hostilities concluded. Although MCC's mission ended in 1971, its workers and programs made a lasting impression on many individuals, particularly those living near the city of Daegu, where the ministry was centred.

The Anabaptist practice of faith as a "priesthood of all believers" offers a more

PHOTO BY WILL LOEWEN



*A symbol of hope for future peace, the peace bell is located in World Peace Bell Park, Gangwon Province, near the Korean demilitarized zone.*

familial appeal than the hierarchical structure of most mainline South Korean churches, Froese observes. The search for more relational models of church in South Korea led a small group of people to establish Jesus Village Church (JVC) in 1996 to embrace those values. JVC later joined Mennonite World Conference (MWC) as an associate member.

Froese, who served in Korea for six years with his wife Karen in a partnership between MC Canada, Mennonite Mission Network and MCC, says the idea of community was the primary initial draw for some Christian Koreans to Anabaptism. "After the Korean War, citizens became urban and industrialized," he explains.

"Historically, they lived as extended families. Culture changed too quickly. [Some Christian Koreans] were drawn to Anabaptism and its understanding of church as family, as something organic, where close, caring relationships could be developed."

South Korean Christians have also expressed interest in Anabaptist spirituality, something that surprised Froese.

"Korean Christians typically experience a deep spirituality, including dawn prayer services, fasting, daily devotions and a rich selection of sacred music. What could they learn from us?" he muses.

He eventually came to realize that those who explored Anabaptism were not seeking spirituality in a metaphysical sense, but as a 24/7 expression of witness and obedience—discipleship—a model that speaks to the mainstream Korean church model.

The Froeses helped further the Anabaptist mission by participating in the establishment of the KAC, launched in 2001. KAC promotes themes of community, discipleship and peacemaking through education, resources, service opportunities, community outreach and networking.

In 2011, Jae-Young Lee, a graduate of Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now Canadian Mennonite University) initiated the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute and the Korea Peacebuilding Institute in 2013, both offering peace training to a network of individuals and organizations across Korea and northeast Asia.

Current MC Canada Witness workers in South Korea include Bock Ki Kim and Sook Kyoung Park, working with KAC, and AnaSara Rojas, on a short-term assignment with Anabaptist congregations near Daejeon.

In late 2014, the 10 Anabaptist congregations in South Korea that form the Korea Anabaptist Fellowship (KAF) began exploring a more formal association as a Mennonite denomination. KAF is beginning to relate to MWC through the adoption of an associate membership previously held by JVC, a KAF member. ❧

## GOD AT WORK IN US

## OBITUARY

# Not in his wildest imagination

Lawrence (Larry) Henry Kehler  
Nov. 8, 1933 – March 3, 2015

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU  
Manitoba Correspondent

When as a young teenager Larry Kehler delivered coal in the Altona, Man., area for his father, his wildest imagination could not have taken him to where his life eventually led.

Born on Nov. 8, 1933, Kehler's childhood was lived out in the Depression years and, although he knew he wanted to experience more of the world, it would have been impossible for him to foresee the twisting path that would eventually take him around the world.

On May 20, 1951, he was baptized and received into the membership of Altona Berghaler Mennonite Church and began a life-long commitment to working in the church.

Three years later, he attended Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC, forerunner of Canadian Mennonite University) in Winnipeg, but the following year Frank H. Epp invited him back to Altona to take on the position of associate editor of *The Canadian Mennonite* while Epp returned to his studies for the year.

This was followed by two more years of study at CMBC to complete his bachelor of theology degree in 1958, the same year he married Justina "Jessie" Neufeld, whom he had met at CMBC.

Together, they accepted an invitation by Mennonite Pioneer Mission to go to Matheson Island, Man., where she worked as a nurse and he provided leadership in worship and Bible study for two years. By then the Kehlers had two children, Daryl and Faye.

Kehler accepted the position of director of information services with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Akron, Pa., for six years. In the summer of 1966, the



Larry Kehler

Kehlers took a road trip to visit MCC units and friends in several states.

While visiting friends in Canton, Miss., Martin Luther King Jr. led a march through the town and Kehler heard him speak that evening. Kehler later wrote, "It was a very moving time for us."

In 1967, Frank H. Epp resigned from *The Canadian Mennonite* and Kehler accepted the invitation to become editor. The Kehlers returned to Winnipeg, where the offices had relocated, but these were not easy years to move into this position. Every year, the paper's financial situation looked bleaker and circulation kept dropping. In 1970, the board of directors decided to close the paper.

Kehler wrote, "I agreed with the board's decision, but it was a painful experience nevertheless."

However, he was also able to say a few years later that "it was a healing experience for me when, within the space of a few years of *The Canadian Mennonite's* death, another national paper, the *Mennonite Reporter*, came on the scene to serve Canadian Mennonites."

In the meantime, Kehler accepted the position of editor for *The Mennonite*, hoping this paper could become binational in its focus since the General Conference churches in Canada were without an English-language paper at this time. For five years, Kehler worked in this role, but by 1976 he realized that, with the emergence of the *Mennonite Reporter*, *The Mennonite* would not be viable in Canada.

It was during his work with *The Mennonite* that Kehler made several overseas trips to Africa, the Middle East

and Vietnam, and eventually these trips came to shape some of his future involvements. From 1976-80, Kehler pastored Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, where he was an active member.

Esther Epp-Tiessen, a longtime church member, said, "He was a wonderful preacher. He tackled the issues of the day." Remembering Kehler as an "encourager" who recognized and drew out the gifts in others, she said, "There was a crisis in Southeast Asia and Larry was called to go there by MCC. Dan and I were asked by the church to fill in for him in his absence. We were very young and very green. We would never have considered doing this without his encouragement."

From 1981-90, Kehler served as general secretary for the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. Helmut Harder, who succeeded him in this role, said, "He had a big heart for MCC and he cultivated a close relationship between MCC and the Conference. He made sure that there was that connection."

Harder recalled that Kehler "was a winsome listener to the voice of ordinary folk in the constituency. He had a heart for the voiceless and highlighted the good intentions of all constituents."

Discussions of integrating the General Conference and the Mennonite Church began under his leadership, and Harder said he appreciated the way in which Kehler kept the constituency informed through a regular column in the *Mennonite Reporter*.

From 1990-92, he was the Asia secretary for the Commission on Overseas Missions.

In retirement, Kehler mentored new pastors; served as interim pastor, interim executive director for MCC Manitoba, and part-time interim conference minister for Mennonite Church Canada; and volunteered as news and copy editor for *Courier*, a publication of Mennonite World Conference.

In 2002, at age 69, he joined a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation in Iraq under tense and uncertain conditions.

Kehler is survived by his wife Jessie, son Daryl, daughter Faye and son-in-law Dennis Lawrynuik and their children Sarah and Peter, brother Marvin and sister-in-law Kathy Kehler, and sister June Krause. ❧

# Canadian Mennonite bids farewell to Evelyn Rempel Petkau

*Manitoba correspondent retires after 18 years on the job*

BY BARB DRAPER  
Editorial Assistant

**E**velyn Rempel Petkau is retiring after more than 18 years of reporting for *Canadian Mennonite*. She was hired as the provincial editor for Manitoba in 1997, just after *Mennonite Reporter* changed its name and format to become *Canadian Mennonite*. Since 1990, when she began writing as a freelancer for *Mennonite Reporter*, she has written more than 600 published articles.

Although she lives in Carman, in southern Manitoba, Rempel Petkau was able to give good coverage to what was happening in Mennonite circles throughout the province. Her excellent listening and writing

*Read her final stories on pages 18, 20 and 29.*

skills made her stories come alive, whether covering Partnership Circles between indigenous communities and more traditional Mennonite churches, or describing the plight of an Old Order Mennonite community that had almost all its children removed by Child and Family Services for nearly a year.

She did in-depth reporting on issues facing Mennonites of today. Some of her features included “The state of Mennonite farming today” (Nov. 12, 2007), “The changing face of mental illness among Mennonites” (Feb. 21, 2011), and “A time to die: The place of faith in the face of death” (May 26, 2014). Her obituaries and stories about art exhibits or church activities always had a personal angle that



**Evelyn  
Rempel  
Petkau**

helped her readers connect with the story.

The church is also important to Rempel Petkau. Her feature “Finding new paths through the wilderness” (June 24, 2013,) helped her readers connect with the story.

described churches across the country that are seeking new ways to come to terms with the modern context.

As her work with *Canadian Mennonite* was coming to a close, she said she really enjoyed her work and would miss the contact with those who work in the church and would miss being closely informed about the issues.

Her plans for her retirement include having more time available for her family, especially as a grandparent and as a daughter. She and her husband Brian attend Carman Mennonite Church. ❧

## /// Briefly noted

### Saskatchewan senior receives Centenarian Award

ROSTHERN, SASK.—W. Donald (Don) Regier has always been community-minded. So it's fitting that his community nominated him for the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism Centenarian Award, given annually to a deserving senior over the age of 90. Regier, who is 91, was a long-time resident of the village of Laird. In a letter nominating him for the award, Wilmer Froese, on behalf of the Laird Seniors, described him as an “outstanding individual” with an “untiring desire to work for the common good.” That work has taken many forms over the years, from cheering for local sports teams and serving on the school board, to taking a personal interest in each customer who frequented Don's Shop-Rite, the grocery store he operated in his hometown for many years. When the village celebrated its centennial some years ago, Regier worked doggedly to help create a local history book. Today, he continues to work at caring for and beautifying the Laird Cemetery. Regier is a member of Laird Mennonite Church and continues to drive from his home in Rosthern to Laird each Sunday for worship. In commenting on the honour he received, Regier simply said, “To God be the glory.”

—STORY AND PHOTO  
BY DONNA SCHULZ



*Don Regier holds the award he received from the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism.*

## ARTBEAT

# 'Inspired by his own vision'

*Historical museum collection opens at Columbia Bible College*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

A one-of-a-kind collection of museum-quality art and artifact replicas has found a permanent home at Columbia Bible College. With the cut of a ribbon, the Metzger Historical Collection was officially opened to the public on March 14 in the basement of Columbia's Resource Centre.

The Metzger Collection contains more than 1,200 replicas of significant archaeological artifacts and works of art. Items of note include a replica of the Rosetta Stone, displayed in the British Museum and famous for providing the key to unlock Egyptian hieroglyphs; and a copy of the Gutenberg Bible, the first mass-produced book in Europe. Frederick Metzger (1920-2011) amassed and curated the collection over several decades with the aim of connecting art and world history to the biblical

story. A Christian minister and missionary, Metzger was honoured for his efforts to rescue Jews in Nazi-era Germany and later to assist more than 4,000 Hungarian refugees in immigrating to Canada. Inspired by a 1967 trip to Israel, Metzger began to collect artifacts and artwork in the hope of helping the Greater Vancouver community engage with the biblical past in a more meaningful way.

Columbia Bible College became owners of the collection in 2012, fulfilling Fred and Florence Metzger's dream of having a permanent home for the items.

"I'm very pleased with the way it can contribute [to the community]," said Ken Esau, director of biblical studies at the college. "We intend to use this for Bible study, illustrative of the biblical story."

Esau added that he hopes the collection



*Columbia Bible College student Shelby Gulka views a life-size replica of the Rosetta Stone on display as part of the Metzger Collection. The discovery of the stone in 1799 was a valuable key to deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs.*

can be inspiring not only for Christians interested in biblical history, but useful as well for educating students of secular world history.

Jason Thomassen, a member of the Metzger Collection staff, commented that he thought Metzger was "inspired by his own vision: How do we make this world a better place ourselves?"

The Metzger Collection is open for public viewing Wednesdays and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and also by appointment. ☘



*Ken Esau, right, director of biblical studies at Columbia Bible College, cuts the ribbon opening the Metzger Collection to the public. At left is Greg Thiessen, collection manager.*

## A LETTER FROM OUR WEB EDITOR

# Canadian Mennonite 'on the go'

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

If you are one of our online readers, you have probably found our new website. We're excited about it!

How will the new *Canadian Mennonite* website better serve our readers?

In the almost five years since our last redesign, some things have changed in the delivery of content online. Perhaps the biggest change is in the way many of us access the content through our mobile phones and other devices. Responding to that change, we have designed the new website to be responsive to a variety of devices. So now you can read and respond to *Canadian Mennonite* "on the go."

The website has a clean, friendly design, with larger text and liberal use of photos, thanks to Dan Johnson, our designer. The home page offers readers several entries into our content; in addition to the menu, you can click on "News briefs" or on "Recent comments," listed on the right. As before, the most recent features appear at the top of the screen. Plus, you can sort content and easily find news articles, blogs or opinion pieces.

Until now, the Young Voices stories appeared on a separate site. Those past stories are still accessible at that site, but moving forward we are integrating new stories about and by younger readers in with the rest of *Canadian Mennonite's* content. If you want to see Young Voices stories in a list, you can sort them that way.

You may have noticed that our website carries only a percentage of the editorial content that appears in print. We believe that our print edition still has a role to play, and we encourage you to use it. But our online stories are less tied to the print conventions of volume and issue numbers. Each online story is dated according to when it was posted, which occurs before the print edition reaches your mailbox. If you want to see the content collected according to its publication date, you can sort the stories accordingly, or read the pdf file for each issue, in the "Past issues" section.

Given the fast pace of news in the larger church and the space limitations in our print edition, we have an ongoing

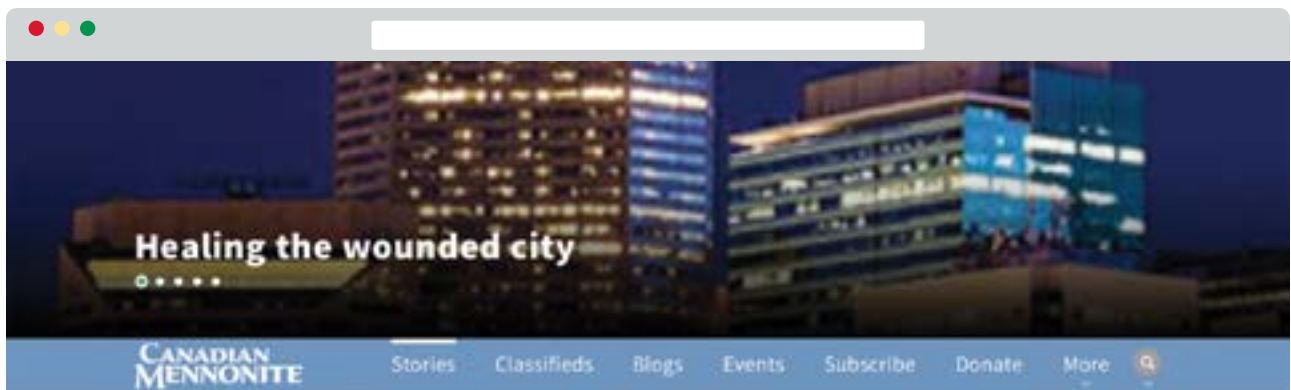
commitment to carry more web-first stories. Watch for them and feel free to share them with friends who may be interested.

Our parents taught us that sharing is good. The "Share" buttons at the end of each story make it easy for you to tell your network of friends about the content you read on our site.

*Canadian Mennonite* invites people across the church to have conversation about the topics that matter to them. As before, our website gives you the opportunity to make comments online. We welcome your response. Our comments are now moderated, which means that there will be a slight time lag between when you make a comment and when it appears online. We require that you use both your first and last names, and that your comments are respectful of other readers. Join the conversation!

If you are an advertiser, thanks for supporting the ministry of *Canadian Mennonite*. You will notice that our online space for advertising has increased, as well as the size of the online ads. Hover on the "More" button to find information about advertising with us.

Thanks for visiting *Canadian Mennonite* online at [www.canadianmennonite.org](http://www.canadianmennonite.org). We invite you to explore the new site and to send us feedback about your experience there. Please send your comments and suggestions to [webeditor@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:webeditor@canadianmennonite.org). ☞





Promotional Supplement

Schools Directory featuring Westgate Collegiate

# Cross-cultural trips make an impact

## Westgate Collegiate

James Friesen, a Westgate teacher since 1992, takes a unique approach to teaching youth how to become people of peace and a church that points to the kingdom of God on earth. He has taught math, English, science and social studies, but one of his strongest callings lies in the course, Christian Response to World Religions. This course is directly linked to at least seven student study tours to the Middle East, including Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, as well as to Mennonite World Conference in India and Nepal.

James works at giving students a wider and deeper understanding of peace, religion and hospitality, but his greatest hope is that students build friendships with people from the

Middle East. He believes this will help them to speak honestly to each other with care and concern.

During their three-week visit to the Middle East, students experience extravagant hospitality and discover that world conflicts are anything but simple. They meet with groups that are attempting to address Middle Eastern conflict: Father Chacour and Mar Elias School (whose Muslim and Christian students visited Westgate), staff and students, MCCers, CPTers and Israeli citizens who oppose house demolitions, providing unique opportunities for learning.

They travel with James as a mentor, benefiting from his and his family's immersion in Middle



James Friesen

Eastern communities (2000-03) as an MCC volunteer.

The entire Westgate community is impacted by these trips, as assumptions are challenged, prejudice confronted and platitudes addressed. As students walk where Jesus walked, they also learn to walk in the way of Jesus during the trip and throughout their lives.

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## SOS for Syria

*Peer-to-peer fundraising campaign contributes to largest MCC relief effort ever*

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEREMY ENNS



*Jeremy Enns is asking more than 50 of his friends, relatives, colleagues and acquaintances to participate in his SOS for Syria campaign.*

In the early 1900s, SOS became the worldwide distress signal, but typically in maritime situations. These days it's used as a sense of urgent message or appeal for help from anybody in any situation.

That's what Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario is doing. It's sending out an urgent appeal for help on behalf of the estimated 12.2 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance, the 1 million injured in the fighting, and the 7.6 million internally displaced people.

MCC's response to the Syrian conflict, which is still ongoing after five years, has surpassed its response to the 2004 tsunami

overwhelmed by the tragedies occurring in Syria, he says, "It's really easy to shut your mind off to the atrocities that are happening and forget there are real people like you and me who are being displaced by the violence. It's easy for me to go on about my daily life and do nothing about it."

But when he heard about SOS for Syria, he felt relieved there was something he could do. "It wasn't a question of why I would do this, but why wouldn't I do this?" Enns says.

### **Appealing to young donors**

Allan Reesor-McDowell is the community

*'It wasn't a question of why I would do this, but why wouldn't I do this.'*  
(Jeremy Enns, on the SOS for Syria campaign)

in the Indian Ocean.

It's newest effort—SOS for Syria (<https://sosforsyria.mcco.ca/>)—is a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign that starts with one person recording a video message and then sending it to his or her friends' e-mail addresses. If the person can get 33 people to donate \$3.33 a day—the cost of a cappuccino—for three months, that can raise up to \$10,000.

That sum is enough to provide relief, including important hygiene, for a thousand people or 200 families.

Jeremy Enns, 23, who grew up attending Niagara United Mennonite Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., is one of the campaigners. He's asking more than 50 of his friends to get involved.

After watching the daily news and being

engagement coordinator for MCC Ontario who helped create the SOS for Syria campaign that provides people a new platform for giving, including young people like Enns.

"My hope is that SOS for Syria taps into some pent-up energy within a younger demographic, perhaps some of whom have not yet found a way to get involved in MCC," he says.

The simple, technology-driven, peer-to-peer nature of the campaign is more effective than cold calling for donations, Reesor-McDowell says. "Getting people like Jeremy on board and willing to invite friends and family to get involved in SOS for Syria is the basis of the whole campaign. It allows us to spread the word much beyond what I or MCC could do on our

own,” he says.

### **The end result**

Enns says he grew up in a family where giving was a priority. If he was out shopping with his mother and there was a sale on something like pencil crayons, she would fill her cart with them to make school kits for MCC.

“I remember sitting in our living room and it was stacked wall to wall with notebooks, pencils and erasers,” he says. “My mom would pray over these kits that some of them would help kids become doctors, teachers or change agents in their countries. She hoped the kits would be one small step in their journey.”

Still, Enns says it’s tough for him to give when he doesn’t see the results—and he

believes many of his peers feel the same.

That’s why he likes SOS for Syria. After the participants raise \$10,000, they are invited to MCC’s Kitchener warehouse to pack relief kits. They also get an e-mail with pictures when the kits are ready to leave, and a link to track the ship’s progress across the Atlantic Ocean to Syria.

Once the ship arrives and clears customs, participants will be notified. Finally, they’ll receive a report including photos of people who receive the kits.

“It’s good to reach out in a campaign like this where you can see the results,” Enns says.

According to Reesor-McDowell, 12 campaigns were launched in the first week. MCC Ontario hopes to raise \$100,000 and provide relief for 10,000 Syrians. ❧

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# ‘The best possible reward’

*Cross-cultural experience a chance to reflect on how relationships are formed*

LISA OBIREK

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

“I’ll intentionally call you my sister, for I have two and I love them so much. Now I have three and I love them all to the degree that I’m ready to die for them. So you are really beyond a friend for me.”

That is part of an e-mail that a man I will call M wrote to me the day before he left Winnipeg. He was part of a group of Shia Muslim graduate students who travelled from Qom, Iran, to study an intensive course on systematic theology at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg.

From March 7 to 19, I spent every single day with M and his six companions as one of their hosts at CMU. I welcomed them at the airport with my professor, Harry Huebner, and my spouse, Gerald Ens. Harry and Gerald received hugs. In contrast, our guests nodded at me with a hand laid over their hearts.

When class began each day, the Iranian students greeted the male professors teaching the course with a handshake and sometimes a hug. They greeted me with a slight bow and asked, “How are you, Lisa?” I was in Iran last year, so I expected this discrepancy. According to the teachings of Islam, it is not permissible for members of the opposite sex to touch when not related.

Although I was expecting it, there was something about the difference of interaction that still bothered me. Still, even before we left the airport, I’d had more conversation and eye-contact with these visitors than I’d had with most of the men I met in Iran. In some ways, our first interactions were similar to meeting distant relatives.

This was exciting, and I was eager to see how our time together would play

*(Continued on page 36)*

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



*Lisa Obirek, a student at CMU, was one of the hosts when a group of graduate students from Iran visited the university in March.*

PHOTO BY HARRY HUEBNER



*Iranian graduate students meet with Charlie Nelson, an indigenous elder from Roseau, Man., third from left.*

*(Continued from page 35)*

out. How would they respond to North American culture? Would they take me seriously in spite of my gender? Could I expect authentic engagement or a mixture of dismissal and condescension? In my effort to be taken seriously, would I harden my heart and make friendship impossible?

Over the 12 days we spent most of our times eating or waiting. We ate halal chicken and rice in the CMU cafeteria; ice cream sundaes at Harry's home; and nachos, mini donuts and perogies in downtown Winnipeg. We waited at a clinic when one of the men required medical attention, at the Apple Store to get a broken iPad fixed, in the zoo's glass tunnel for the polar bears, and for some of the men to find just the right gift for their wives.

Nothing extraordinary happened when we ate together and nothing extraordinary happened when we waited together. Nevertheless, a Canadian Mennonite feminist eating and waiting with Shia Muslim Iranian men is not an ordinary thing.

When the group left Winnipeg and we said our goodbyes at the airport, there were no handshakes or hugs between me and them. Even though I know how seriously they take their religion and its teachings about women, I still felt like I failed as a feminist and that I failed at forming relationships.

A few days later, I received an e-mail

from one of the men. He sent me greetings, a prayer request, photographs of his children and a note of gratitude: "I really appreciate all efforts you have done for this peaceful trip. . . . We ask God to give you the best possible reward." This showed me the most beloved people in the man's life.

In another e-mail, one of our guests referred to me as "sister." I have a tough time using the word "friend" for someone who won't shake my hand, but these e-mails demonstrate some kind of relationship between us.

We could not really connect on politics, culture or ideas, but through ordinary acts like eating and waiting, we forged a relationship.

Eating and waiting are two things we learn in church. We eat and drink the body and blood of Christ, and we wait for Christ's return. We do this not so much as friends, but as strangers who have been made family under God. Perhaps a few of the Iranians, while not exactly my friends, have become like siblings to me.

I hope that I will get to meet with some of these young men again in the future. If we do, it will be interesting to see what and where we will eat together, and what we will be waiting for. ❧

*Lisa Obirek, 28, is a theology student at Canadian Mennonite University and a painter. She lives in Winnipeg and attends Bethel Mennonite Church there.*

PHOTOS BY AARON EPP



*Olivia Klippenstein grew up in Altona, Man. She explored her Mennonite heritage during a practicum placement at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives.*

## VIEWPOINT

# Growing Mennonite

*Archives provide deeper understanding about who we are*

OLIVIA KLIPPENSTEIN

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

**I**t wasn't until Grade 6 that I realized it was possible to be more than just a Mennonite. Our teacher asked us to come up with one word to describe ourselves. One of my classmates chose

the phrase, "Russian Mennonite."

It leaped out at me, along with a jealousy of my classmate's confidence in claiming that cultural identity. I had always been just a Mennonite, but here

I was being informed that all this time I had been lost in an ethnic melee, unaware of where I or my family fit into this startling new world of options. My classmate spent the better part of five minutes explaining to the rest of us ignorant peons how exactly he came to be of such a specific breed of perogy-eating, knippsbratt-playing people. Ever since, it has stretched into a long series of personal questions about what it means to be Mennonite, satisfied by very few facts.

A practicum placement pushed me through the doors of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives. There is a terrifying amount of paper documenting Mennonite history, and more than a few gems hidden in the vault.

Who would have guessed that my neighbour's father had served as a conscientious objector (CO) during the Second World War? A photo in the Archives captures this man as he poses with his fellow workers in front of a tent nestled in Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park. These are the fresh faces and lanky limbs that spent hours at the side of the road clearing weeds and doing other manual labour. These are the men who now lie silent beneath our southern Manitoban soil, the unassuming remains of the alternative to the bloody battlefield.

Lying next to these powerful pictorial testimonies on the table before me is also the example for a transcript I will make for the voices of Mennonites who have been muted within their own community. The wives and daughters of men who went against their families' beliefs and believed that pursuing active duty overseas was the best way to end the war. What of these Mennonite voices who are nodded to during the required memorial services and then are lost between being known as veterans and being appreciated as such?

As I spend hours listening to the voices of devoted church women, the idea of "Mennonite" grows in diversity, in tenacity and in passion to God. It becomes more than perogies, bargain-hunting and church politics. To be Mennonite becomes a mouthpiece for what it is to be a human struggling to pursue a way of life that not only satisfies the desire

for a roof over your head and bread for your table, but fills that inner longing to be more than just a momentary mortal life. It is more than Russian or otherwise. It is the struggle to be a child of God in the kaleidoscope that is community, both local and global.

Yet who will remember the horrors of war? The cost of refusing to fight, or of stopping short at nothing less than fighting? Who will take up the testimonies of this war-weary generation and place them gingerly in the hands of our youth as a writhing reminder of what it means to face hatred and familial love and self-identity? Who will make "Mennonite" more than just a title lost among tired old history books?

Archival resources are only as rich as the use we make of them. If we don't, the faces and the voices lose their stories. The dusty CO worker becomes a spineless man who wants peace without fighting for it. The Mennonite soldier becomes an anomaly who, instead of encouraging discussion, ushers in a fidgety silence. There can be little true movement forward if those who came before us stop breathing in our memories, and cease to be the trailblazers of their time. We share the kinship of a fumbling youth with the inhabitants of the past, so let us embrace them.

Remembrance, and, more importantly, appreciation, for the lives of those who went before us must be maintained and grown, preserving the wisdom that can only be gained by personal experience. Yet this need not only be for those who fought a war. There are innumerable other stories waiting to be discovered.

Archives are bursting with life. Let us hear the voice of a freckled immigrant girl, feel the pain of a widowed housewife, see the sweat of a struggling farmer, and make it matter. Together, let us grow "Mennonite." ❧

*Olivia Klippenstein is a student at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg.*



*There is a terrifying amount of paper documenting Mennonite history, and more than a few gems hidden in the vault.*



*Photos in the Archives document the experience of conscientious objectors during the Second World War.*

## Calendar

### British Columbia

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

**May 9:** Sto:Lo Nation Cultural Learning Day bus tour, Sto:Lo Nation, Chilliwack, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### Alberta

**April 25:** Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta annual general meeting (11 a.m.) and celebration of the work of Peter Rempel and the Youth Orientation Units (1 p.m.), at Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church, Edmonton.

**June 1-3:** MC Alberta Christian faith studies event, "Understanding Anabaptist approaches to Scripture," with Loren L. Johns from AMBS, at First Mennonite Church, Calgary. For registration information, e-mail Dan Graber at dan@mennonitechurch.ab.ca or call 403-909-5105. Johns will also deliver two public lectures at 7 p.m. each night: (1) "Understanding

Anabaptist approaches to Scripture: What's different and why?" and (2) "The impact of the 20th century on reading the Bible."

**June 3:** All-day heritage retreat for people 50-plus, at Camp Valaqua, Water Valley, with MCC storyteller Abe Janzen and the Corpus Christi Male Chorus. To register, e-mail Hugo Neufeld at hdneufeld@shaw.ca or call 403-201-4358.

### Saskatchewan

**April 25-26:** Saskatoon's Nutana Park Mennonite 50th anniversary celebrations include: (25) a choir practice from 3 to 5 p.m. and a coffee house where stories and pictures will be shared at 7:30 p.m.; (26) worship service at 10:30 a.m. with lunch to follow.

**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](http://www.superbmennonite.com);

to RSVP, e-mail [superb70anniversary@gmail.com](mailto:superb70anniversary@gmail.com).

### Manitoba

**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 Bergthaler Mennonite, at 3 p.m.

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

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

**May 21:** University of Winnipeg hosts a public lecture by Perry Bush, chair of the Department of History at Bluffton University, Ohio, in Convocation Hall, at 7 p.m. Topic: "The professor as peacemaker: C. Henry Smith and the Mennonite intellectual tradition, 1918-48."

**May 22-24:** SpringFest, MCC Manitoba's annual quilt show, plant sale, walkathon and barbecue, in Winnipeg. For more information, visit [mccmanitoba.ca/events](http://mccmanitoba.ca/events).

**May 24:** MCC Manitoba's fundraising lunch at Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church, Winnipeg, from noon to 2:30 p.m. Come-and-go faspastyle meal.

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

**May 28:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Grade 10 to 12 spring concert at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

**June 9:** CMU President's Golf Classic at Kingswood Golf and Country Club, La Salle.

### 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

Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

**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 22-23:** MCC Ontario comforter knotting event at Elmira Produce Auction. Comforters made will be shipped to the Middle East in June to respond to the ongoing crisis in Syria. To volunteer, call Keith and Diane Snyder at 519-669-4084. To donate completed tops, call Wendy Cotter at 519-745-8458 x248.

**April 26:** Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, hosts a "Gospel Echoes" concert featuring the Gospel Echoes Cross Connection Team, at 7:30 p.m. Besides the music, there will be a multimedia presentation of the group's prison ministry and inmate testimonies. For more information, call 519-634-8311.

**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](mailto:info@hiddenacres.ca) or visit [www.hiddenacres.ca](http://www.hiddenacres.ca).

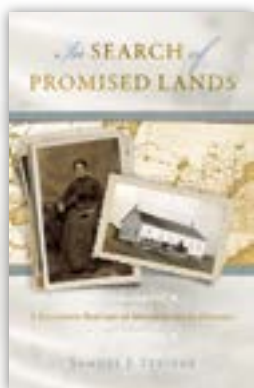
**May 1-3:** Silver Lake Mennonite Camp spring work weekend. For more information, call 519-422-1400 or visit [www.slmcc.ca](http://www.slmcc.ca)

**May 2:** "Enjoy a taste of Southeast Asia" fundraiser for MCC Ontario's refugee sponsorship, cohosted by Grace New Life Mennonite and Hamilton Mennonite churches, at Hamilton Mennonite, from 5 to 7 p.m., followed by a musical concert. For more information, call 905-528-3607 or e-mail [hmc@cogeco.net](mailto:hmc@cogeco.net).

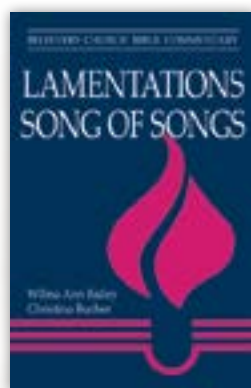
**May 2:** Theatre of the Beat performs "Bicycle Built for Two," at Valleyview Mennonite Church, London, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit [www.valleyviewmcc.ca](http://www.valleyviewmcc.ca)

**May 2,3:** Soli Deo Gloria Singers present their spring concert, "Foretaste of Glory: (2) UMEI, at 7:30 p.m.; (3) Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For more information,

## New from Herald Press



**In Search of Promised Lands**  
Ontario Mennonites and Amish are among the most diverse in the world. This engaging and comprehensive volume includes the wide-ranging story of migration, theological diversity, and interaction. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, volume 48.



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call 519-326-7448.

**May 3:** Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir presents "Songs of the Psalms" at Breslau Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. Tickets available at the door.

**May 3:** Pax Christi Chorale presents Sir Hubert Parry's oratorio "Judith" with orchestra and soloists, at Koerner Hall, Toronto, at 3 p.m. Pre-concert chat with Parry scholar Jeremy Dibble of Durham University, England. For more information or tickets, visit [www.paxchristichorale.org/judith](http://www.paxchristichorale.org/judith).

**May 7,20:** 18th annual Low German Networking Conference; (7) at Bradley Street Church of God, Aylmer; (20) at Meadow Brook Church, Leamington. For more information, e-mail Lily Hiebert Rempel at [lilyhr@mennonitecc.on.ca](mailto:lilyhr@mennonitecc.on.ca).

**May 9:** "Paddle the Grand" fundraiser for Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, from West Montrose to the Kaufman Flats, where there will be a barbecue dinner. For more information, call 519-422-1400 or visit [www.slmc.ca](http://www.slmc.ca).

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

**May 24:** Silver Lake Mennonite Camp annual general meeting at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, at 1 p.m.

**June 3:** Retired ministers and spouses

retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Palmer Becker will share about his recent ministry in Israel and South America. No pre-registration required. Participants are to bring their own lunch.

**June 20:** MennoHomes "Out-spok'n for Affordable Housing" bike-a-thon, at Elmira Mennonite Church. Options for hikers, cyclists and motorcyclists. For more information, contact Dan Driedger at 226-476-2535 or [ddriedger@mennohomes.com](mailto:ddriedger@mennohomes.com).

#### U.S.

**Aug. 20-23:** 14th annual Bridgefolk (Mennonite-Catholic) conference, "Ecumenical healing and the mystery of the communion saints," at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. For more information, visit [www.bridgefolk.net](http://www.bridgefolk.net).

**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](mailto:calendar@canadianmennonite.org). For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](http://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).**



## Classifieds

### Announcement

**Visit Europe the Mennonite Way!** Multiple Hotel Tours focussing on Mennonite-Anabaptist history in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Poland and Ukraine. Organized by Mennonite Heritage Tours, [www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu](http://www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu)

## Advertising Information

Contact

D. Michael Hostetler

1-800-378-2524 x.224

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[canadianmennonite.org](http://canadianmennonite.org)

## Employment Opportunities

### Full-time Administrative Assistant

Calgary, Alberta

**Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC)** has an opening for a self-motivated, organized, and capable individual to work as a full-time Administrative Assistant in its Calgary office (37.5 hours per week). Expected start date for this position is July 6, 2015.

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

MFC is a donor-advised charitable foundation that serves the Christian community in the areas of gift planning, charitable estate planning, and biblical stewardship education. Formed in 1974, MFC is an organization committed to helping others live generously with the financial resources God has entrusted to them. Further information can be found at [www.MennoFoundation.ca](http://www.MennoFoundation.ca).

MFC offers a competitive salary and benefits package. A complete job description is available at [www.MennoFoundation.ca](http://www.MennoFoundation.ca). Applications will be reviewed upon receipt. Only those selected for an interview will be contacted. Please submit resume to:

Shelly Wilcoxson  
Mennonite Foundation of Canada  
12-1325 Markham Road  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 4J6  
Email: [swilcoxson@MennoFoundation.ca](mailto:swilcoxson@MennoFoundation.ca)  
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Fax: (204) 488-1986

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[MennoFoundation.ca](http://MennoFoundation.ca)

## UpComing

### Healthcare gathering to consider healthy communities worldwide

HARRISBURG, PA.—Healthcare workers from around the world will gather immediately prior to the Mennonite World Conference assembly for inspiration, learning, fellowship and networking in a special event sponsored by the Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF). The MHF Annual Gathering 2015 will be held from July 19 to 21 in Harrisburg under the theme, "Walking together for healthy communities." Plenary presentations include a performance by Ted & Company entitled *The Jesus Stories*, a challenge by Christian community-builder Shane Claiborne to "another way of doing life," and a testimony from Indian physician Ann Thyle on her calling to serve the poor. For more information, visit [www.mennohealth/gathering](http://www.mennohealth/gathering), e-mail [info@mennohealth.org](mailto:info@mennohealth.org) or call toll-free 1-888-406-3643.

—Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship

## VIEWPOINT

# 'Islam is not ISIS'

STORY AND PHOTO BY VALERIE PROUDFOOT

SPECIAL TO *CANADIAN MENNONITE*

A little girl stood on the snowy steps of Alberta's Legislature in Edmonton, holding a sign that declares, "ISIS is not Islam," during a rally by members of the local Muslim community on March 22, to exclaim that they do not support Islamic State (IS).

According to a release handed out at the event: "[IS] is the predictable outcome of the Salafist religious interpretations that have grown their movement under the radar of the mainstream media in the countries that are the very allies of our government. Interestingly, the Canadian government has continued to sell billions in weapons to these countries who openly support and train [IS] while at the same time also targeting other regional countries that are completely against Salafist ideology.

"While we believe the Canadian government should completely stay out of this conflict, we also believe that Canada should stand firmly behind the people of Iraq and support their fight against [IS] and stop any selling, or exporting, of arms to the known backers of [IS] in the region.

"We are protesting [IS] and their genocidal designs, and the Harper government's and NATO's reaction and misplaced support in the region."

Donna Entz, an outreach worker for the North Edmonton Ministry, spoke in support of the Muslim people assembled, many of whom are her friends. She told the story of a little Islamic girl who had been displaced in the Middle East and how she could not understand why IS did such bad things, yet maturely understood how important it was to forgive.

Entz read from the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5:44: "Love your enemies," saying that Jesus taught people, who, with love, respect, compassion and forgiveness, can learn to live together.

As the war crimes of Islamic State terrorism were declared from the steps of the Legislature, a woman's voice beside me answered "Shame!" to each one.

At times IS reminds me of the Nazis, and the evils that happened during the Second World War. The effects of being associated with the works of Nazi Germany were felt by my German-Canadian family during the 1930s and '40s, even from half a world away. So Mennonites have felt the same stigma as today's Muslims in Canada. But Mennonites were not Nazis and Islam is not Islamic State. ❧



*A little girl stands on the snowy steps of Alberta's Legislature in Edmonton, holding a sign that declares, 'ISIS is not Islam,' during a rally by members of the local Muslim community on March 22, to exclaim that they do not support Islamic State.*