

CANADIAN MENNONITE

November 9, 2015

Volume 19 Number 22

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EDITORIAL

The long view

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

The year was 1963. D.W. Friesen and Sons of Altona, Man., publishers of 10-year-old *The Canadian Mennonite* were struggling to keep the first English-language, inter-Mennonite publication financially afloat. The conferences were slow to accept this new communication venture, which had the purpose of “serving the interest of all the groups for the purpose of bringing them closer to each other so that their respective contributions might complement each other,” as described by Ted Friesen at the 1999 annual meeting of *The Canadian Mennonite*.

The paper, launched in 1953, had already seen several incarnations. Friesen and his family had invested heavily in this enterprise, but the burden of continuing was getting beyond their capacity to hold on. They would have been happy if the paper had broken even financially, he said, but that didn't happen. Every year saw a substantial deficit.

They were happy they hired the young Frank Epp, a “person of enormous energy, great capabilities and organizational skills,” as editor. His editorials, Friesen said, “challenged the Mennonite people of Canada to come to terms with either being separate, or being salt and light in Canadian society.”

The paper “died” as of 1971, according to a 2003 historical account written by Margaret Loewen Reimer, managing editor, but the vision didn't. Immediately

after its demise, people began to fill “the communication gap” with a new periodical. “Among the first to take action was the late Aaron Klassen, chair of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario, who found a group of 65 people ready to pledge funds to begin a new publication.” The first issue of the *Mennonite Reporter* was published in Waterloo, Ont., on Aug. 3, 1971, with Epp again named as editor while also serving as a professor at Conrad Grebel University College, later becoming its president.

There is much more to this chequered history, but most important, despite its several manifestations, is that the vision has prevailed, using the words of Friesen as “challenging the Mennonite people to come to terms with being either separate or being salt and light in Canadian society.” That vision is just as applicable today as it was 62 years ago, even though we are far more integrated into our culture now.

Today, Mennonite Church Canada and its area churches are at a crossroads, not *Canadian Mennonite*. The publication enjoys the endorsement and financial support of MC Canada and the five area churches (formerly conferences) through a Partnership Covenant that supports an Every Home Plan, so all who desire can receive biweekly issues. For the denomination, though, diminishing financial support has forced it to take a hard look at restructuring.

One of the options brought forward

by the Future Directions Task Force is to fold MC Canada into a federation, of sorts, of the five area churches. There would be no central office for Witness and Christian Formation efforts, among other functions. These functions would either cease to exist or be picked up in some form by the area church offices. A Leadership Council will take a hard look at this at a Nov. 13 meeting in Abbotsford, B.C.

If this option takes root, there are many details to be ironed out. The process will not be easy; painful decisions will have to be made.

But just as in the troubled history of the survival of *Canadian Mennonite*, it is the vision that has carried it through all of the upheavals. Yes, even as the ground shifted beneath our feet, what survived was that undying impulse to keep alive a narrative that nourished our spirituality, formed our identity as a people with a unique Anabaptist heritage of core beliefs, and sustained a communication vehicle that kept us, despite our different theological and cultural differences, in conversation.

It's the vision, not the structure, that sustains us. Where there is vision, there is energy. Where there is no vision, the people perish; Proverbs 29:18 is ancient biblical wisdom that still applies. Without vision, structures are empty artifices, sometimes echo chambers.

In *Canadian Mennonite's* case, it is the continuing conversation that forms our narrative. No matter the cultural and religious changes, no matter what the communication form, no matter if coming to you on printed pages or accessible digitally through our website, it is the inspiration, the connections, the diversity of views that give it life.

We will watch carefully how the structure serves the vision in the upcoming days. But we hope that the vision stays intact.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Shannon Moroney's art was born of the pain of learning her first husband had confessed to the violent sexual assault and kidnapping of two women in 2005. Read the story of her first exhibition—on display at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, until Dec. 18—on the back cover.

ARTWORK: 'THREE YEARS LATER' BY SHANNON MORONEY
(MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS, 50 CM X 50 CM, 2008, DETAIL)

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Guiding values:

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

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

• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN US FEATURE

Top five reasons why the customer isn't always right

It surely should not be beyond the realm of possibility that some of the reasons people—young people, old people, in-between people—are leaving or rejecting the church have less to do with the church than with themselves

BY RYAN DUECK

But even as I would gladly acknowledge that the church is far from perfect, these articles still annoy me, and for one simple reason: Almost without exception, they seem to assume that if people don't like, aren't attracted to, or can't be bothered with church, it must be the church's fault.

It seems like every second time I open my computer these days I come across the latest instance of what is becoming a very familiar—and obnoxious—brand of writing: the “five reasons for . . .” genre.

Sometimes this takes the form of an “open letter,” a form of writing that is surely unparalleled in its odious ostentatiousness: “Dear church, here’s why no one is interested in you anymore,” or “Dear church, let me explain to you why all your young people are leaving.” Sometimes writers of these pieces come up with really clever and original titles like “Losing my religion”; I’m sure R.E.M. would be pleased.

But more common these days are plain old lists: “Five reasons why nobody goes to your church,” for example, or “Five ways that you as a pastor can stop being so boring and lifeless,” or “Five ways to stop being a soul-sucking, hollow institution and start being spiritually vital and appealing for 21st-century sophisticates.”

Those last three may not have been actual titles, but you get the point.

This morning, after encountering two of these articles before 9, I thought about writing an angry blog post with the title, “Five reasons to avoid hurling your coffee mug through your computer screen after reading the latest ‘Lists for why people don’t go to church’ article,” but I thought better of it. At least I was persuaded that liking my computer was enough of a reason to avoid this course of action.

But I must confess that I almost, without exception, find these kinds of articles spectacularly irritating. Perhaps you might be thinking, “Well of course he would say that. He’s employed by the church!” And you might be partly right.

But most people who know me well would likely say that I am not exactly averse to criticizing the church when the church deserves it. I even agree with some of the well-rehearsed critiques levelled in these types of articles. Churches can do more to create space for honest questions and doubts. Churches should teach more holistic theologies. Churches ought to be more



“authentic”—abused and overused as this term is becoming. Churches must seek to be more welcoming and inclusive and less rigid . . . and to serve better coffee. Yes, yes, fine. All of this is probably true.

But even as I would gladly acknowledge that the church is far from perfect, these articles still annoy me, and for one simple reason: Almost without exception, they seem to assume that if people don't like, aren't attracted to, or can't be bothered with church, it must be the church's fault. The customer is always right. Right?

Wrong. Sometimes, the problem is precisely the customer and her cocktail of perceived needs/wants/expectations of the church.

This should not be surprising, of course, if we take Christian theology seriously. (We mostly don't, but that's another matter.) Central to any remotely Christian anthropology is the basic assertion that human desire is disordered. We are image bearers of God, to be sure, and

gloriously so, but we are also perpetually turned inward. We are selfish, proud and a whole host of other things besides. So, given this general picture of human beings and human nature, it surely should not be beyond the realm of possibility

We like the idea of community far more than the effort it might take to contribute to one.

that some of the reasons people—young people, old people, in-between people—are leaving or rejecting the church have less to do with the church than with themselves.

And what about these selves of ours, these selves that the church is failing, according to all the expert articles, open letters and lists? What do these selves look like? Well, this is some of what I see out there in the broader culture and in

here in my own life:

1. WE ARE obsessed with ourselves. Matthew Crawford, in his book *The World Beyond Your Head*, puts it like this: “[A]utonomy is arguably the central

totem of modern life. It hovers above our concepts of individuality, creativity and any number of other items that convey the existential heroism we're expected to live up to on a daily basis. It is an idea that we moderns have made our dignity hinge on.” The self is the central totem of modern life. Indeed, it is.

2. WE ARE obsessed with entertainment and easily bored. If you don't believe

me, look around next time you are in a public space with other humans, spend 10 minutes on Facebook, or consider the phenomenon of “cat videos.” Increasingly, questions like “Is it true?” “Should this matter to me?” or “What might this demand of me?” take a back seat to “Is it entertaining?” or “Did I feel good afterward.” This is, of course, true both inside and outside the church, to our shame.

3. WE HAVE short attention spans. See No. 2. The Internet is destroying our brains and making us incapable of doing things that once seemed utterly ordinary. Things like spending 20 minutes listening to someone talk without checking our phones every 45 seconds, or being in a public space where there isn’t a screen somewhere with things moving on it. The other day I was in a restaurant where I counted no fewer than 20 television screens all going at the same time. Not that anyone was watching, mind you. They were all staring at their phones.

4. WE LIKE the idea of community far more than the effort it might take to contribute to one. “Community” is a word that makes us feel warm and fuzzy, and it feels like the kind of thing we know we should want, but it requires things like commitment and showing up even when we don’t necessarily feel like it, and interaction with people who aren’t like us or whom we wouldn’t necessarily choose. So we embrace community, we commit to it, we love it. Except when we don’t. Then we go do something else.

5. DEEP DOWN, we don’t really think that any of this God stuff is terribly important. Religion takes its place on the “lifestyle choices” shelf alongside hot yoga, Oprah, scrapbooking, marathon running and spending time with nature. It is one of those things that you do if you’re “into it,” or if it plays a role in making your life meaningful or inspiring. It does not situate us in anything like a grand narrative of existential meaning or hope, and it does not call us to align our thoughts and actions with something (or Someone) external to us. It is a tool to be pressed into the service of the self and its

Sometimes the reason that we walk away from things is because they are calling us to things that are hard or inconvenient. Or because they are calling us away from things that we really like. Like ourselves.

own projects, at best. Which brings us back to No. 1, proving that all roads begin with, and lead to, the self.

There are probably other features of the modern self that play into all this, too, but these are five things that I observe with some regularity out there in the culture and in my own life.

So in light of this general picture, it is difficult for me to start panting after the avalanche of popular diagnoses of the five “real” reasons that Demographic X is leaving the church, has been wounded by the church, isn’t interested in the church or thinks the church should be different.

It’s not that I’m uninterested in helping the church reflect Christ well, or that I think the church shouldn’t repent when it has been less than it is called to be. I am and I do. I’m just convinced that we humans are not always interested in—or drawn to—the things we should be. Sometimes the reason that we walk away from things is because they are calling us

to things that are hard or inconvenient. Or because they are calling us away from things that we really like. Like ourselves.

At least some of the time, the “real” reason people are walking away from the church is a very old and uninteresting one. We are expert idolaters and we prefer our totems. If we want God at all, it’s on our own terms. Ever since the Garden, it has always been easier to leave than to stay. ❧

Reprinted from Ryan Dueck’s May 13 blog post on “Rumblings: Hope, humour and other eschatological goodies” (ryandueck.com). He and his family returned to their roots in Alberta in 2011, where he pastors Lethbridge Mennonite Church.



/// For discussion

1. What would you put on a “top five” list of why it is important to attend church? What about a “top five” list of what keeps you away from church? How guilty do you feel when you skip church? Have you ever accused the church of not being interesting or not meeting your needs?
2. Ryan Dueck says that we tend to be obsessed with ourselves and that “[t]he self is the central totem of modern life.” Do you agree? Can you think of examples of how the people of your parents’ and grandparents’ generations were less self-centred?
3. Dueck says that we are easily bored and have short attention spans. Do you agree? Does that help explain why some people attend church only sporadically? How can we encourage each other to develop habits of greater devotion to God?
4. Do you agree with Dueck that when people leave or reject the church it is partly because it is “easier to leave than to stay”? How should the church respond to a self-centred culture?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. In light of the many recent letters on the topic of sexuality, we will edit any letter on this topic to a paragraph and post the rest online at www.canadianmennonite.org. All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to letters@canadianmennonite.org and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

✉ MC Eastern Canada 'did what was proper and called for'

RE: "SEEKING REDEMPTION and peace" guest editorial by Joyce Gladwell, Sept. 28, page 2.

I am disappointed that you would give prominence to the letter you published as a guest editorial and seemingly force Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's hand to respond and disclose information that is rightly confidential.

While I am sure many people have some of those same questions, the area church, in my opinion, did what was proper and called for, not only by our denominational policies but also morally. I have worked in the field of clergy misconduct for the past 30 years, both as a prevention trainer and consultant as well as a conference minister. I am well aware of the pain such a situation causes for all concerned.

(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

Jesus poses a problem

MATTHEW BAILEY-DICK

How do questions bring you closer to God?

The Bible includes several hundred instances where Jesus poses a question to an individual, a small group of followers or a large crowd. Rarely looking for information, he often asks questions in order to challenge, encourage, invite or inspire.

The Sermon on the Mount is one of Jesus' most well-known "teacherly moments." In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus asks the crowd, "Are

grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?" On the surface, we see Jesus utilizing this agricultural question to teach how to discern between "good fruit messages" and "bad fruit messages." The question carries a challenge: Although we know that bad trees cannot bear good fruit, how do we make sense of the times when we honestly expect good results from some of our own poor efforts?

Asking questions is just one of multiple strategies that Jesus uses to teach

his disciples. He preaches not through broadcasting treatises or distributing lecture notes, but through nurturing dialogue, enacting hospitality and loving those around him.

Jesus usually asks his questions in such a way as to help people deepen their faith through the lens of their own experience. His references to grapes, figs and thistles are not just snazzy metaphors; these are examples of everyday realities that his followers experience. He invites his followers into dialogue based on this shared experience.

In my current work, I am hearing from both laypeople and pastors who want to learn about the intersection of Anabaptism and contemporary life. We are planning workshops on themes like reading the Bible as a community, figuring out leadership transitions, walking the talk of peace and cultivating spiritual practices. One of the things that excites me the most about the new Anabaptist Learning Workshop I'm a part of, is its vision for participatory learning and its commitment to work within the tradition



of adult education.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, a forebear of the adult education movement, advocates in his famous book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, for what he called "problem-posing education," in which students become co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. According to Freire, the goal is to nurture critical consciousness about the problems of the world and thereby motivate students to change the world.

Those of us who spend time in educational settings—both students and teachers—have a lot to learn about how our educational practices can foster critical consciousness. In the context of Christian faith, to what extent do our Mennonite schools motivate us to change the world?

In chapter after chapter of the gospel accounts, Jesus teaches and challenges his followers by asking a question. Perhaps more often than telling a parable, Jesus poses a problem, and embedded in the problem is a blessing.

Mennonites of 2015: "We want to be faithful!" Jesus: "Who do you say that I am?"

Matthew Bailey-Dick is coordinator of the Anabaptist Learning Workshop (recently launched by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Conrad Grebel University College).

(Continued from page 7)

While I cannot speak directly to the case of Vernon Leis, whom I also knew and worked with during my time in Ontario, I would like to make two points that speak to all cases of misconduct:

- **WE NEED** to be clear about where the fault for our pain and anger lies. It does not lie with the victim(s),

nor with MC Eastern Canada for publishing the name of the offender. Rather, it lies with anyone who violates his/her role as a pastor and engages in misconduct.

- **IF WE** have learned anything over the years of dealing with this issue in the church, it is that we dare not keep secrets. For too long, the church sought to keep such matters secret and deal with them discreetly. In

OUTSIDE THE BOX

A most grievous sin

PHIL WAGLER

One of the greatest days of Jesus' ministry was marked by one of his greatest laments.

He rides toward Jerusalem amid a worshipping throng waving palm branches and declaring Messianic praise (Luke 19:28-38). He is the humble king riding a colt—a most humorous and political cartoon-worthy image. What immediately follows, however, is a Messiah in lament. He weeps over Jerusalem: “*Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes*” (Luke 19:42).

Jesus receives the worship of the crowds—to the disdain of some—while keenly aware of an unstoppable force. No amount of boisterous truth could stem the tide of what comes. The holy city will stubbornly reject him, and with that rebuff will go the peace so many were seeking. Although Jesus the Messiah—God in humanity—was present and loudly proclaimed, the opportune moment was about to pass a generation by (Luke 19:44b). The inability to see God clearly—even in fulfillment of the very Scriptures quoted by the leaders of the people—had brought God himself to lament. Tragedy.

This is a word to be fearfully pondered again. Our learning, histories, strategies and cultural wrestling can unwittingly produce tragic miscalculations. What if we miss the moment of the Spirit's

movement? What if Jesus is lamenting over us?

Religious enterprises can very easily chug along without seeing God. In fact, it is religious work that is so prone to this fatal flaw. When we think we've figured it out, we leave no room for the Lord of glory, and our religious work teeters toward tragedy. And this leads to a grievous sin.

This grievous sin is not about sexuality, judgmental attitudes or whatever else we may rush to name. This grievous sin is self-justification. We justify ourselves—our sexualities, our judgments or whatever else—and then expect God to fit our conclusions. Meanwhile, he is riding among us seeking the surrender of our wills and worshippers. Self-justification is self-worship. It is pride. It is wickedness. And it causes us to miss the movement of

of God to a world of brokenness and self-justification. He was unashamed to declare that God's kingdom was radically unlike the world's fiefdoms. Are we not doing the opposite? Are we not asking how the kingdom of God should adapt to culture? Have we forgotten that the kingdom belongs to the poor in spirit, those aware of their utter poverty, and that there is nothing in them worthy of justification?

Jesus comes as the king of another kingdom, not the king-maker of our self-justifying enterprises. He is Prince of Peace, the humble king, who is the justifier of those who hunger and thirst for a different way. He is the one to whom we must cry “Hosanna!” Which means, “Save!”

Save us from our self-justifications. We surrender. Lead on, King Jesus. We will take up our cross and follow you!



Self-justification is self-worship. It is pride. It is wickedness. And it causes us to miss the movement of the Spirit of God even while we do religious work.

the Spirit of God even while we do religious work. This is what brought Jesus to lament over a city still looking for peace.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, are we guilty of the sin of self-justification in all our ponderings about issues of lifestyle? Any cultural debate Jesus engaged in was connected to revealing the kingdom

Are we ready to do that again? Or are we missing the opportune moment?

Phil Wagler (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca) lives in Surrey, B.C., with his family. He's keenly aware of the need to keep crying out to the King of kings to save him from all his self-justifying.

so doing, we have allowed perpetrators to continue, and victims to remain without recourse.

I want to be part of a church that deals openly and honestly with clergy misconduct when it occurs, for that is the only way to bring healing to everyone involved.

ED KAUFFMAN, CALGARY

✉ Coverage of Vernon Leis called 'disrespectful'

I THINK IT is sickening when I read all the trash in *Canadian Mennonite*. For the last two to three years, it was all about gay and lesbian marriage, which they want to force on us, and now the last report about

(Continued on page 10)

NEW ORDER VOICE

Ready to listen and learn

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

My memories of the church I grew up in are good ones. I liked seeing my friends in Sunday school every week and enjoyed singing in the grown-up service. The Halloween game nights, Christmas musicals and Vacation Bible Schools (VBS) were fun. They were also opportunities—at least the musicals and VBS—for people to accept Jesus Christ into their hearts. Having prayed that prayer when I was three or four, I always waited for the general prayer the pastor was praying to end, wondering if any had been saved.

A large part of my young adulthood thus far has been coming to terms with the dismantling of my evangelical worldview. Some might say it happened because I went to a liberal arts university or because I worked for a faith-oriented-but-radical-left-leaning magazine.

Some might say it's just because I grew up.

I think it's a combination. But whatever the reason, I become frustrated when I read or hear anything about spreading the gospel in the hope of converting others. For example, *Canadian Mennonite* columnist Phil Wagler's piece, "Jesus in a world in upheaval," Oct. 12, page 8—in which he encourages the church to see the Syrian refugee crisis as an opportunity to "look at the fields"

(quoting John 4:35)—is hard for me to digest.

I am not interested in converting anyone to Christianity. The time for "harvesting" is over. It's now time for listening, and for helping with open hands and closed mouths. Hearing survivor testimonies at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission event in Vancouver and reading the indigenous-settler dialogue in *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry* (Herald Press, 2013) played a major part in this shift for me. It's become clear to me that what I "need to do" as a Christian is to listen and love without an agenda.

This makes it interesting as I watch my four-year-old attend Sunday school and learn the Bible stories that I did as a kid.

I don't want [my son] to grow up thinking he needs to tell other people about Christ.

I'm hoping he draws hope and inspiration from them and experiences some sense of wonder when he hears what God's all about.

But I don't want him to grow up thinking he needs to tell other people about Christ. I want him to see Christ in the people that he meets in his daily life, no matter what race, religion or economic status, and welcome them. I want him to hear about displaced people, like the Syrian refugees, and think, how can I help, not, "Oh, these people are ready

to become Christians because they're in such great need." I want him to recognize the religion and culture that people already have, and not assume that his trumps theirs.

I recently read through the Mennonite Central Committee Peace Sunday packet. It's an excellent resource that nudges us in the right direction when it comes to getting to know "the other."

While the theme is "Living as people of peace in a time of fear and terror," I also find the message helpful as I consider the "Christian thing to do" in my interactions with people from different cultures and religions. At the end of the "Welcome and invitation," the Peace Sunday packet states, "When we look around and see

opportunities for healing and mutual transformation, then, perhaps, we are seeing with the eyes of the Lord."

That's what I'm interested in: Building relationships with people with a spirit that is ready to learn, not ready to teach. The colonial history of Christian evangelism is a severe reminder of how damaging it can be to preach Jesus as Saviour to people who seem "ready" for it.

Katie Doke Sawatzky (katiesawatzky@gmail.com) writes and edits from Regina.



(Continued from page 9)

Vernon Leis, a man who has been buried for 21 years and cannot defend himself (“Alleged sexual misconduct against Vernon Leis, deceased pastor,” Sept. 14, page 16.)

I think Mennonite Church Eastern Canada should

be ashamed of itself. I think it was very disrespectful bringing up a subject that happened 21 years ago.

I’m 86 years old and I hope I never have to read such disrespectful headlines again.

IRVIN JANTZI, WELLESLEY, ONT.

VIEWPOINT

The magic of war

JOHN EPP

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Capital Hill in Ottawa is about to shake as we hear the 21-gun salute to honour our country’s war dead on Nov. 11. This is especially significant as these shots will echo the sounds of the “Great War” that happened a century ago. The guns will shake and then everything will be silent again until next year. And as the guns go silent again, I wonder if we, as God’s people in this age of war, could begin to speak out loud about issues of war and church.

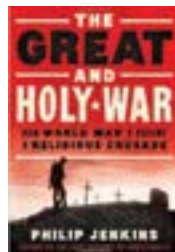
For most of my life I have been ignorant of the places, names and, most importantly, the reasons why countries went to war. I think part of it has to do with my Mennonite faith. I was taught that war was wrong, and so in my mind I simply dismissed the question of war as irrelevant. Why study war?

Recently, I read a penetrating book called *The Great and Holy War* by Philip Jenkins, distinguished professor of history and a member of the Institute for Studies on Religion at Baylor University in Waco, Tex. He takes the reader into the euphoria just before and during the First World War. We are led into the spiritual longings of the soldiers in the trenches, hear the sermons in the churches and listen to the secular policy-makers of the day, all of them speaking as if in a religious trance.

Jenkins argues that the mood of the late 19th century was imbued with a powerful belief that humanity was on the

culsp of a new apocalyptic age of harmony. The old age was about to give way to a new age. Astonishing is that these were “enlightened” industrial nations. This belief worked like a toxic magic in both politicians and preachers; evangelists and occultists; artists and poets; and Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox believers alike.

As a result, when the First World War broke out, the apocalyptic mood of the day concluded that this new utopian age was to be brought in by sacrificial blood. The entire war was soaked in religious language. It was Jesus who rebuked the Kaiser, the Virgin Mary



who led the French troops to the front line, and Michael the archangel who fought for Germany. Church people described the mood on the eve of the war as “a new Pentecost,” occultists as “the age of Aquarius.”

War is a profoundly spiritual event, much more profound, subtle and complex than our secular historians make it out to be. It can’t be simply dismissed as absurd, nor can it be reduced to simple national agendas.

The big question that emerges for me

is, “Will our churches be able to resist this powerful toxic magic?” War is a mass euphoria, a spiritual energy, a national religious cult that cannot be combatted with ideas or beliefs in peace, no matter how radical. “Study” alone will not do. This kind of magic reminds me of C.S. Lewis’s book *The Magic Chair*, or of Jesus’ words when his disciples could not cast out the demon: “*This kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting.*”

Are we, as a church, prepared to combat this kind of mass magic that has drawn all sorts of church people into a tragic delusion, including some of my own Mennonite ancestors in Russia and Germany? This is a magic that cannot be resisted simply by study, intellectual theologies of peace or private spiritualities. Apart from a sustained fellowship with the Spirit of Jesus, in the context of God’s gathered people, and with an intentional focus on grappling with war and Jesus, I wonder if we will be able to

War is a profoundly spiritual event, much more profound, subtle and complex than our secular historians make it out to be.

resist this kind of magic.

For a profound unveiling of the religious dimensions of the First World War and the secular ideologies that emerged out of it and shaped the world we live in today, I highly recommend *The Great and Holy War*. It is to be read, studied and pondered, especially since our own age is now also under the spell of war’s magic.

John Epp (eppjohn@gmail.com) is a biblical storyteller and a member of Toronto United Mennonite Church.

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH



comes to Canada

BY LINDA WIENS

During my first year as a member of the Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (WMCEC) executive, I was fortunate to be invited to an information session about the possibility of Sister Care (a women's empowerment program created by Mennonite Women U.S.A.) coming to Canada. Being quite the "newbie" in 2014, I had no idea what to expect. But I must admit that the idea of being at the grassroots level of anything that empowers women like Sister Care does, is just plain exciting, so I went.

At that meeting Liz Koop, president of Mennonite Women Canada (a former member of the WMCEC executive), spoke about her personal experience with the Sister Care program (mennonitewomenusa.org). Koop explained that this resource addresses issues of inner healing through compassionate listening, and provides tools for women to help themselves and others deal with loss and grief in their lives. In short, it's all about sisters helping sisters within set parameters.

The Sister Care vision is spreading quickly. Seminars have already been held in North, Central and South America, East Asia and the Caribbean, and there are invitations in hand to visit Kenya and Trinidad. The Sister Care manual is currently printed in four languages. Sister Care seminar attendance has reached 3,368, and continues to climb.

Koop's vision was to bring it here, but the logistics seemed overwhelming. After much discussion and prayerful soul-searching, a decision was reached: the WMCEC executive would take the lead to introduce Sister Care to Canada.

Subsequently, program developers Carolyn Heggen and Rhoda Keen were invited to present the first-ever two-day Sister Care seminar in Canada. It was held last month in Cambridge, Ont., and was attended by 42 women.

The seminar leaders demonstrated their passionate support for equipping women for caring ministries by sharing a spiritually rich, thought-provoking, self-enlightenment program. Attendees learned how to find healing for unresolved personal issues and unhealed spiritual/emotional wounds, in a comfortable, intimate environment. Also, a Sister Care working manual was given to each participant.

MENNONITE WOMEN U.S.A. PHOTO



Sister Care co-presenter Carolyn Heggen, right, is a psychotherapist specializing in trauma healing. Rhoda Keener, left, is the Sister Care director of Mennonite Women U.S.A.



The response to the Cambridge experience was enthusiastic. One woman noted that "the combination of light-hearted and serious demeanour in telling stories was a gift. And the living water was a blessing."

Others said they appreciated "the calm spirit, sharing and caring of personal stories," "the recognition that we all have had brokenness and are not alone," and "the validation of my life, my experiences [having new] tools for the future."

By the time this article appears in print, WMCEC—which has churches in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick—will have facilitated another Sister Care Retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp near Kitchener, Ont. Another retreat is planned in the Niagara area for next June, shortly after our annual Spring Enrichment Day. And there is also a seminar happening in Winnipeg next May.

Wouldn't it be amazing to see this grassroots event happen in your area of Canada, so that you also could experience healing and learn to become a more effective healing presence for others, as we walk together in faith? ❧



Linda Wiens is on the executive of Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and serves as its communicator. She is an active member of St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, Ont., where she volunteers in a variety of settings. Further contact information can be found at mcec.ca/content/women-mennonite-church-eastern-canada.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Visiting the Congo with no plan for 'giving'

LINDEN WILLMS

Most of my life, I considered the world as divided between those who have and those who don't, and as one who has, I was responsible to go to help those who don't. I still believe we are responsible to share with those who have less, but I have come to believe that the rich aren't the only ones with something to give.

My wife and I served a couple terms in the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire) back in the 1970s. We fell in love with the country and especially its people. Over the ensuing years, we returned to Africa a couple times, once to Chad on a short assignment with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), and to Burkina Faso for a month to visit our daughter and her family (Tany and Jeff Warkentin).

Again and again I have heard the comment from people returning from assignments of one kind or another, "I received more than I gave." Then why do people insist on being the givers when travelling to Africa, or any other developing nation? Why not just leave our hammers and paint brushes at home and go only intending to receive the riches they have to give? Why do we always present ourselves as the givers?

Over the past four years, I have tested this model. On my first trip, I walked into Kikwit, a city 500 kilometres inland from Kinshasa, with a suitcase and nothing else. The first question was always, "What are you doing here?" My answer was, "Nothing. I'm here to visit you." This concept was difficult to accept because whites just didn't come to Kikwit to visit.

My lodging was at an Oblate Fathers hostel, but I spent a large part of each day on the street. Word travelled fast and soon old acquaintances from the past

PHOTO COURTESY OF LINDEN WILLMS



Linden Willms enjoys a birthday feast with his young friend, Del, who had just had his second birthday.

appeared, and I made some important connections on the street and in the local Mennonite church.

I can't do justice to all the wonderful people who touched my life during my time in Kikwit, but I do have to mention Guy, Yvette and family. They adopted me and I spent most of my day eating, visiting and shopping with them. As Guy was busy doing his daily work, I followed Yvette around for most of the day.

Every day included food shopping at the market. Often we spent the whole day at the market, as she sold used clothing. I sat in the shade and was exposed to a whole new way of life and soon also had a wide range of acquaintances who introduced me to their lives. Yvette soon introduced me as a brother and we often added that we had the same mother and father and our colour difference could be attributed to the environment under

which we grew up.

Since there are numerous Mennonite churches in Kikwit, I was able to worship each Sunday in churches with various styles. I was pleased to worship in the oldest Mennonite Conference church in Kikwit. I noted that they were singing songs resembling some of our hymns, whereas other churches I visited sang more traditional African music. The pastor acknowledged that there was a tension between those who still respected the old mission-introduced hymns and those who wanted to "go African." I told him that tension sounded familiar.

I always realized that I was an intruder in a sense, but there were moments when I felt I was being accepted as almost an equal. These moments included: eating a meal in a home and not being offered cutlery, as though the hosts knew that I ate with my hand and wouldn't embarrass them by using my left hand; getting into a small Japanese taxi and attempting to get into the back seat with four people already seated there, understanding that this is not a photo op to be shared, but a way for the taxi driver to make a small salary; and having strangers on the street address me in Kituba since they heard that I spoke the language.

I no longer felt I had to take a photo of every "strange" situation because these situations were commonplace.

The Congo has many needs that outsiders can help with, especially to encourage and empower those already there addressing many needs. A church leader shared with me that the church still feels a sense of abandonment by the North American church. They have no need of pastors, but perhaps a pastoral visit to share experiences and build mutually uplifting relationships would be nice.

It's okay to go on holiday to unwind and relax, but there may be a time to make a cross-cultural visit that goes beyond relaxing or enjoying cruise buffets. We tend to label these occasions "mission trips," but leave your program at home and go looking to be "missionized." Go to be blessed. ☸

Linden Willms is a member of Springridge Mennonite Church, Pincher Creek, Alta.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Durksen—Jovie Jade Enns (b. July 18, 2015), to Brent and Kari Enns Durksen, Calgary Inter-Mennonite.

Klassen—Cecily Kate (b. Sept. 30, 2015), to Kris and Jenn Klassen, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Klassen Bartel—Jeremiah Walter (b. Oct. 3, 2015), to Adam and Sarah Klassen Bartel, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Montgomery—Liliana (b. Aug. 1, 2015), to Aaron and Karri Montgomery, Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Ogasawara—Rae Lee (b. June 22, 2015), to Ken Ogasawara and Cheryl Lee, Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Wilson—Alex Keir (b. Oct. 2, 2015), to Ken and Natalia Wilson, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Baptisms

Brydon Bell, Dawson Bell, Caidon Bell—Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., Oct. 11, 2015.

Meghan Wiens—Herschel Ebenfeld Mennonite, Sask., Aug. 23, 2015.

Sadie Bender, Jessica Barry, Alex Wagler, Cassidy Wagler, Shelby Wagler, Tyrone Wagler, Zachary Wagler, Blake Zehr, Eric Zehr—Hillcrest Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont., May 24, 2015.

Benedikt Isert Bender, Jonathan Wilgress—Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont., Sept. 27, 2015.

Marriages

Chapman/Derond—Grant Chapman and Michelle

Derond, Poole Mennonite, Milverton, Ont., at Creekside Church, Waterloo, Ont., Aug. 22, 2015.

Cressman/Lichti—Blaine Cressman and Leah Lichti, The Gathering Church, Kitchener, Ont., at Floradale Mennonite, Ont., Oct. 3, 2015.

Guenther/Woelke—Helen Guenther and Isaac Woelke, at Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Sept. 26, 2015.

Deaths

Dueck—Sadie (nee Wiebe), 87 (b. Feb. 26, 1928; d. Oct. 1, 2015), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Fehr—Joel Edward, 32 (b. Aug. 23, 1982; d. Aug. 17, 2015), Herschel Ebenfeld Mennonite, Sask.

Pauls—Henry, 88 (b. May 7, 1927; d. Sept. 16, 2015), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Wiebe—Joan E. (nee Rusling), 63 (b. May 19, 1951; d. May 8, 2015), Valleyview Mennonite, London, Ont. (*Correction of a Sept. 28, 2015 death notice.*)

Yantzi—Sylvester, 85 (b. Jan. 25, 1930; d. Oct. 5, 2015), Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event.

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

A moment from yesterday



This photo is of a men's quartet singing for a radio broadcast in a Vancouver Mennonite church basement circa the 1960s. Advances in mass communication such as radio were first met with suspicion and in some cases were banned in Mennonite communities warning about worldly influences entering the home and community. Committees were established to consider the best response to these innovations. By the late 1940s, some Canadian Mennonite groups embraced radio and used it to transmit Christian values into the home. Radio became a vehicle to support the faith community and also to facilitate mission to others. Early programs were a mix of German and English, and did accelerate the acculturation of the Mennonite communities into Canadian life, the very thing feared by those who were suspicious of radio.

Text: Conrad Stoesz, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies

Photo: Artray Limited Photographers / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies



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GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Church geeks serve PiE

Pastors begin ministry to young adults

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Both Jessica Reesor Rempel and Chris Brnjas are fond of puns, as perhaps only geeks are.

Self-professed “church geeks,” they kicked off their new ministry, Pastors in Exile (PiE) at the Queen Street Commons café in downtown Kitchener on Sept. 27, with many pies being consumed by the 85 people who attended.

Taking off from Jeremiah 29:7, “*But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare,*” their plan is to reach out to young adults in the area who are only marginally in touch with the Mennonite churches there. They reason that, instead of being apart from the society in which they and other young adults live, they need to be a part of that society.

Ministry is currently in a foreign place compared to the years of Christendom that preceded it. The church feels like it is in exile. But instead of fear and isolation, the church needs to attend to the culture around it, including its own young adults. To that end, PiE is not a new church, but rather a ministry connected to existing churches.

Brnjas and Reesor Rempel are both graduates of Conrad Grebel University College’s master of theological studies program and attend local Mennonite congregations, Brnjas at The Gathering Church and Reesor Rempel at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, both in Kitchener.

Their plan is hold events that are “non-churchy,” like games nights and potlucks, as well as more “churchy” ones like a “feminist” Bible study, a “theology night for doubters,” and “winter camp for grown-ups”; the latter is scheduled for March 4 to 6 at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp near

Sauble Beach, Ont.

Reesor Rempel notes that PiE is an experiment and they feel encouraged by many to carry it out. Like many experiments, it might not last long, but doing it is the important thing, rather than doing nothing, or only doing the traditional “churchy” things like Sunday morning worship and committee work.

PiE is an accredited not-for-profit organization with two staff and is looking for support from both individuals and congregations. Support currently comes from individuals and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

PiE opened space in the Mennonite Savings and Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement’s Epp Incubator at Grebel earlier this fall, and intends to use that as an opportunity to interact with other non-profit start-ups in the community. In his comments at the opening of the Incubator,



Board member Caleb Redekop, left, cuts the PiE pie with Chris Brnjas and Jessica Reesor Rempel at Pastors in Exile’s kick-off on Sept. 27 at the Queen St. Commons Café in Kitchener, Ont.

Brnjas spoke of the need to see bridging the gap between generations inside and outside the church as a significant peace effort. ❧

Visit pastorsinexile.org for more information.



/// Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Ontario

- **LORA GERBER** began at Crosshill Mennonite Church, Millbank, as a children’s worker on Sept. 20. Her role is to coordinate and facilitate various events at the church and within the community. Monthly events such as Venture Club and Junior Youth are growing in numbers. Gerber is anxious to see what the upcoming year will bring, having been actively involved with the children and youth for the past 10 years. Gerber graduated from Conestoga College in Kitchener, Ont., with a diploma in early childhood education. She has worked in various day care centres and ended up accepting a job with Aldaview Services in New Hamburg. She married Greg Gerber in 1994 and they have three children.

- **ANTHONY SIEGRIST** was licensed toward ordination at Ottawa Mennonite Church on Sept. 27.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Lora Gerber



Anthony Siegrist

Equipped to be Anabaptist

Saskatchewan Mennonites consider what being Anabaptist means today

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

How to engage Anabaptism today? That was the question members of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan explored at the area church's annual Equipping Day, held on Oct. 25 at Eigenheim Mennonite Church, Rosthern.

Planners offered nine workshops, ranging from an exploration of the life of Pilgram Marpeck with Anabaptist scholar Walter Klaassen, to an Anabaptist response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with Cheryl Woelk and Ben Borne.

Karl Koop, professor of history and theology at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, led a popular workshop entitled "Confessions of faith: Source of unity or division." Citing fellow historian C. J. Dyck, Koop said, "Mennonites have probably written more confessions of faith than people of any other tradition." Over the years, these confessions of faith have been used in a variety of ways. At times, they have brought believers together; at others, they have led to disunity.

"We tend to solve our problems by splitting," said Koop. "It's a weakness of our denomination, but is that really the will of God? We will just continue to split unless we come up with a different way of thinking about unity. Unity is not about what we believe, but about what Christ has done for us."

Ryan Siemens, MC Saskatchewan's area church minister of congregational and pastoral relations, led a discussion about baptism and communion, looking at early Anabaptist understandings and comparing how these practices are understood today.

In his "Before Sunday dinner" workshop, Craig Neufeld, pastor of Rosthern Mennonite Church, likened worship

planning to hosting a meal.

Ken Bechtel's two workshops explored aspects of living in Christian community. The first explored how to develop community covenants; the second offered tools for engaging in difficult conversations.

Former Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker Todd Hanson led participants in a look at Anabaptism in international ministry.

The day concluded with a town hall-style meeting.

Monica Dalke of Nutana Park Mennonite expressed appreciation for the

dramatic Scripture readings featured during the morning worship. "Even though Scripture may not be memorized, it can be read in such a way that people really listen," she said. "It was really inspiring."

George Epp of Eigenheim Mennonite said, "I learned that we have a shortage of knowledge of the *Confession Of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, and that we should not neglect reading the introduction."

Referring to Klaassen's workshop, Eric Olfert of Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon, said, "I think we should become a 'Marpeckian' church."

Participants also offered suggestions for next year's Equipping Day. Mental health issues, aboriginal awareness, dealing with change brought about by increasing diversity in the church, and learning to read Scripture well were among topics suggested for future workshops. From the perspective of the planning committee, Siemens said that the day was a success. "It was a good opportunity to build each other up," he said. ☺



Ben Borne and Cheryl Woelk, both of Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, share stories and reflections of their experiences as participants in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluding events in Ottawa earlier this year. Also pictured are Woelk's son Rohan, and Erna Funk of Zoar Mennonite, Waldheim, Sask.

Celebrating the past, anticipating the future

Saskatchewan women explore their creativity in creative ways

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
WALDHEIM, SASK.

Bringing a long-standing and dearly loved institution to an end is not an easy thing to do. The members of Saskatchewan Women in Mission (SWM) have at least shown that it can be done with grace, thanksgiving and, yes, even joy.

When members voted to dissolve the organization at their annual Enrichment Day in April, plans were already underway for a fall retreat. That retreat, held Oct. 16 and 17 at Shekinah Retreat Centre, became a celebration of the role SWM played in the lives of women and also a time for envisioning what the future might hold.

The retreat began with an evening of sharing and reflecting on the past. Participants had been asked to bring items that represented their group in some way. Many of these items reflected the work they did for others. A tied quilt, a bandage roller and photographs of soap-making projects from earlier years told stories of service in the name of Christ. The Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite Women in Mission, from Glenbush, Sask., shared a photograph of the women's correctional

centre in Prince Albert, where, for a number of years, members visited regularly.

Some items were more symbolic than nostalgic. The women of Grace Mennonite Church, Regina, brought a bowl of jelly-beans, the different flavours and colours representing the variety of backgrounds and walks of life within their group.

Esther Patkau of First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, shared the history of a beautifully embroidered quilt that was on display. When Helen Kornelsen, of Watrous, Sask., went to India as a missionary in 1948, Saskatchewan Women in Mission committed to paying her salary. That support continued until Kornelsen's retirement in 1985. At that time, each group contributed an embroidered quilt block featuring the name of the group. These were pieced together around a central block depicting a map of Saskatchewan with the location of each member group. Many of the groups have since disbanded and a number of the churches featured are no longer part of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

Reflecting on the past continued next morning when Pauline Steinmann led the women in a time of lament, mourning the loss of SWM, and, for some, their local women's groups. Steinmann invited the women to name their losses. "How has your world changed with this loss?" she asked.

Steinmann went on to talk about creativity, basing her thoughts on April Yamasaki's Bible study guide, *Spark: Igniting Your God-Given Creativity*. "Creativity is a trust," she said. "It doesn't belong to us. It is to be exercised in service to God and others." This isn't always easy to do, according to her. "It means taking risks," she said, but it also leads to joy.

In a prayer of thanksgiving, each woman

came forward, picked up a prepared cup of water symbolizing her creativity, and poured the water into several common pitchers. Steinmann then poured the contents of the pitchers into a larger vase, which overflowed into an even larger bowl, showing how personal creativity, when combined with that of others, can grow until it overflows.

To aid the women in looking forward, Sharon Schultz, pastor of Eyebrow Mennonite Church, used pregnancy and birth as a metaphor for creativity and imagining what the future might hold. The story of Mary's pregnancy from Luke 1 illustrates how, in spite of her fear and uncertainty, Mary trusted God to guide her, said Schultz. In the same way, she told her audience that they can trust God to walk with them into an unknown future. And just as God provided Mary with support in the person of Elizabeth, he also "has given us each other, sisters, to walk together and dream together," said Schultz.

Forming a large circle around the room, the women were given candles, which they lit in turn, passing the flame from one woman to another. With their left hands on the shoulders of their sisters and their right hands holding their lit candles, the women ended the retreat with a prayer for God's guidance.

What the future holds for MC Saskatchewan women is unclear. The outgoing SWM executive circulated a job



Helen Friesen uses her burning candle to light Melody Neufeld-Rocheleau's candle during a closing prayer at Saskatchewan Women in Mission's final fall retreat.



Linda Schroeder, left, and Anne Retzlaff pour water symbolizing their creativity into a common pitcher at the final Saskatchewan Women in Mission fall retreat.

description for a women's representative who will sit on the area church council and coordinate future women's retreats. Meanwhile, the women of Zoar Mennonite Church, Langham, volunteered to plan next year's retreat. ❧

For more photos of the final SWM retreat, visit canadianmennonite.org/final-swm-retreat.



/// Briefly noted

Jantzen ordained at Laird Mennonite Church

• **BRUCE JANTZEN**, pastor of Laird Mennonite Church, Sask., was joined by his congregation, friends, family and pastors from across Mennonite Church Saskatchewan on Oct. 25 to celebrate his ordination. Jantzen acknowledged his congregation and his fellow pastors as sources of support, encouragement and inspiration. He paid special tribute to his father, Walter Jantzen, the pastor of Horse Lake Mennonite Church, who modelled for him a life of service and ministry. Jantzen has served the Laird congregation since 2007. About his pastoral work, Jantzen said, "This is what I am meant to do." He acknowledged that God blessed him in his decision to enter the ministry, and said, "I really enjoy what I do, and I enjoy who I am when I allow God to live in me."

—STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ



Ryan Siemens, MC Saskatchewan area church minister of congregational and pastoral relations, right, anoints Bruce Jantzen with oil as part of Jantzen's ordination to the ministry at Laird Mennonite Church, Sask.

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Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Eastern Canada

• **NANCY MANN** is delighted to be starting in her new role as associate pastor of Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church. This role includes support for the lead pastor, Fred Redekop, in all things pastoral, as well as some engagement with the children's ministries on Sunday morning and mid-week. There is also a great interest in reaching out to the many young adults who attend Floradale. She is a 2008 graduate of Conrad Grebel University College's master of theological studies program. Previously, Mann served as pastor of Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont.; and as chaplain of the Nithview Community in New Hamburg, Ont.

• **KAITLYN (KATIE) GERBER** began as youth worker at Floradale Mennonite Church in September. She will be building relationships with, and encouraging, the youth in their faith journeys through



From left to right: Nancy Mann, Katie Gerber and Angela Ishaka.

running a Bible study on Thursday evenings, planning and carrying out weekly social or service-oriented youth events, and providing one-on-one mentorship. She attended Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, from 2008-12, and is currently a student in child, youth and family studies at the University of Guelph, Ont.

• **ANGELA ISHAKA** began as minister of music and worship at Floradale Mennonite Church on Aug. 1. In this new position, she will be mainly responsible for enabling volunteers to make music and lead worship. This will take many forms: arranging special

music, accompanying singers, conducting choirs for adults and children, directing dramas for the worship service, organizing song leaders and accompanists for congregational singing, and perhaps helping with a large-scale musical at some point. She received a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Toronto specializing in vocal performance.

• **JOHN DOCHERTY** became pastor of the Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal on Aug. 1. He served as the interim pastor there since February 2013. His other half-time job is spent coordinating a network of therapists working with survivors of torture, and he has provided counselling to some of the people referred to the network. Before taking over the direct coordination of the network, he was director of Maison de l'amitié (House of Friendship) in Montréal.



John Docherty

— **BY DAVE ROGALSKY**



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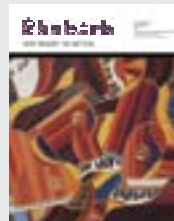
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GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

'Never mind decolonization; learn to love yourself'

Tsimshian theologian addresses MC Manitoba church leaders on how to best respond to TRC calls for action

STORY AND PHOTO BY J. NEUFELD

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

People who want to love their indigenous neighbours must first learn to love themselves, according to Dr. Patricia Vickers, a psychotherapist and Tsimshian theologian. Vickers spoke at an event organized by Mennonite Church Manitoba on how churches can respond to the calls to action made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. About 50 church leaders attended the event, held at Circle of Life Thunderbird House in Winnipeg on Oct. 17.

Norman Meade, co-pastor of Manigotagan Community Fellowship, opened the event with a smudge and prayer. "All of you here today are coming with a spirit of listening and questioning, a spirit of love," he said.

But before Mennonites do the work of righting injustices, they must look deeply within themselves, Vickers said during her reflection: "Christ says not simply to protest injustice and oppression, to demand justice for your indigenous neighbour. . . . He goes further than that. He says to love your neighbour. But don't you know that in order to love your neighbour you must first learn to love yourself?"

There is no question that justice needs to be done, Vickers said, and there is plenty of work churches can do to help heal the wounds left by colonization and residential schools. The child welfare system, the education system and mental health services all need to be reformed to better serve indigenous people, she said.

But first comes the work of inner transformation.

"I say, never mind decolonization," Vickers told those assembled. "Why?

Because colonization was a spiritual act, and anyone who knows medicine will tell you that a spiritual act can never be reversed. It can only be transformed."

Vickers described growing up in a dysfunctional home full of abuse and alcoholism—fallout from her father's and grandmother's experiences at residential schools. "As a family, we didn't reverse that," she said. "What happened is, as a family we turned our hearts and our lives to a God who is mysterious." For her family, that spiritual transformation included traditional ceremonies such as sweats and fasting.

"The transformation that happens is separate from me and who I am. It's a supernatural act. I don't make that act happen. I die," Vickers said. "I'm looking

The transformation that happens is separate from me and who I am. It's a supernatural act. . . . I'm looking to the "master shape-shifter." I'm looking to Christ. That's how the transformation will happen.
(Patricia Vickers, Tsimshian theologian)

to the 'master shape-shifter.' I'm looking to Christ. That's how the transformation will happen."

Vickers also told stories of people she had counselled in her practice as a psychotherapist:

• **THE MAN** whose father had thrown him down the stairs because he was unable to talk about his experience of residential school.

• **THE MAN** who had grown up in 30



Patricia Vickers speaks to church leaders at Circle of Life Thunderbird House in Winnipeg on Oct. 17.

different foster homes.

• **THE YOUNG** mother whose child was seized at birth by a child welfare system that refused to believe she was capable of parenting, despite ample evidence to the contrary.

"They grew up fostered and conditioned by others who did not love themselves and who were conditioned to believe lies about

who indigenous people were," Vickers said. "They grew up to believe themselves devoid of human value—rejects, failures, incapable of grasping goodness."

So how do people learn to love themselves? By examining their thoughts, emotions and the communication of their bodies, Vickers said: "Those who believe in teachings of Christ must continuously open our hearts and minds to the light of truth. Then you will see clearly what needs to be done to love your neighbour." ❧

Walking together . . . rather than around each other

Christians and Muslims gather for dialogue

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON

She is a novelist and world traveller, speaks Mandarin and has a brown belt in karate. Shaimaa Kraba also wears a hijab and is a Sunni Muslim. At the third annual Christian-Muslim dialogue in Edmonton on Oct. 17, emcee Miriam Gross humorously addressed the issue of stereotyping when she quipped, “There is more to her than a ‘scarf-clad’ girl. After all, it’s a hijab, not a halo!”

Clerical collars, *thaqiyah* (men’s caps), hijab and casual western dress were not reliable predictors of attitudes, abilities, personality or even faith perspectives, as the diverse group of 150 Christians and Muslims were intentionally assigned to mixed seating in the gymnasium of St. Charles Roman Catholic Church to encourage interfaith discussion. Questions such as “What do you most like about your faith?” and “If you could change one thing about your faith, what would it be?” helped to focus the interactions and kept discussions lively.

Between table sharing times, a variety of speakers from both Christian and Muslim traditions took a few minutes each to share personal stories and important aspects of their faith, and to encourage respect and love between groups.

Jane Alexander, an Anglican bishop, asked, “Could we walk together, rather than around each other?”

Farroq Maseehuddin, a Sunni Muslim, shared a story about an important friendship he and his wife formed with a Christian couple while they were all spending four years teaching in Kuwait. “We became very good friends, [resulting] in a deepening of faith and appreciation for the others,” he said.

Of the event, Donna Entz, one of the organizers and a Mennonite Church Alberta staff person, said, “My first impressions, as I talk to people, was that they said they had a really good time around the tables.” One of the main goals for this year’s event was to encourage personal sharing. “We worked hard on that,” Entz said.

The dialogue took on special urgency this year, because of the federal election campaign in which the niqab and Syrian refugee issues were being debated.

“One of the planners [of the event] was talking about being born in Canada to a Muslim family and growing up interfaith,” Entz said. “The last two weeks were the first time in her whole life that she felt uncomfortable knowing that her clothes identify her as a Muslim. The dialogue felt

like a positive way to deal with the discomfort that the elections were bringing up.”

Asked about the importance of the dialogue during the election, a Muslim organizer who declined to be identified, said, “It is nice to see the support of our Christian friends because there are Muslims out there who don’t have this.” She expressed concern about “Islamophobia” in Canada, and said that the Muslim community is working on how to deal with it well.

When a few participants came to argue, instead of interact, organizers intervened. The same Muslim organizer sat at the back table with them, respectfully and firmly engaging their particular Christian views, while not allowing them to negatively encounter other participants. “I just didn’t want them to offend anyone else,” she said. “I think they were not educated about anything. All I know is that they were educated wrong if they believe the Qur’an was made of lies. They need to understand that we have Qur’an stories, just like they have Bible stories. Sometimes you can’t just walk away. You can’t walk away when you are an organizer and a promoter of peace and dialogue.”

The disturbance was kept to a minimum, and most participants remained unaware of it. ❧

For more information on Christian-Muslim dialogue, visit acwalberta.com, a website with information on the Christian-Muslim dialogue in Alberta; acommonword.com, a website for international Christian-Muslim dialogue; and ing.org, a website whose mission is to eliminate stereotyping through education.



Roundtable discussions were a highlight of the third annual Christian-Muslim dialogue in Edmonton on Oct. 17. People of a variety of Christian and Muslim affiliations were seated at each table to encourage wide-ranging discussion and learning from each other.

/// Briefly noted

Refugees are welcome in Edmonton

“Mourn the dead, fight for the living,” was a placard slogan at an Edmonton vigil to remember Syrian refugees on Sept. 8. The vigil, attended by more than 500 people, was an opportunity for collective mourning and support for those with family and friends struggling to escape violence. The many questions arising about sponsorship resulted in a subsequent information session at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers on Sept. 29, to help people understand what is involved in refugee sponsorship and to provide connections with groups already doing the work to bring Syrian refugees to Edmonton. Merryn Edwards, an activist with Refugees are Welcome in Edmonton, said, “It would be great if Edmonton emerged as a leader and example of the kind of response that is possible when people come together.” Orlando Vasquez, who works with Mennonite Central Committee Alberta’s refugee assistance program, spoke to the crowd about the process of sponsorship. Working in partnership with the Islamic Family and Social Services Alberta, the groups have successfully brought several families to Alberta and more are in process. Vasquez described the partnership as “a really good relationship.” Vasquez, who lives in Calgary, was in Edmonton again from Oct. 19 to 20 to meet with people wanting to sponsor refugees.

—STORY AND PHOTO
BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD



Orlando Vasquez, centre, answers questions from people who wish to sponsor Syrian refugees wanting to come to Canada.

PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN



An interactive blanket exercise on Missions Sunday, Oct. 25, shows members of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., a different way of looking at Canadian history. Indigenous representatives had participants—including Pastor April Yamasaki, front left—stand on blankets representing the land of North America in the years before European settlers came. The exercise had people gradually moving off the blankets and rolling them up as the group went through the history of treaty-making, colonization and resistance. The resulting pockets of people on a few small sections of blanket illustrated indigenous people living in Canada today. ‘Thank you for listening and trying to understand,’ said Mary Fontaine of Hummingbird Ministries. ‘More and more Canadians, more and more Christians, are saying ‘I’m sorry.’ God has helped us survive.’

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ARTBEAT

BOOK REVIEW

'Freud might have had fun'

Sons and Mothers.

Edited by Mary Ann Loewen. University of Regina Press, 2015.

REVIEWED BY DAVE ROGALSKY
EASTERN CANADA CORRESPONDENT

Leona (Unger) Rogalsky was born into an Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) family in southern Manitoba in the 1930s. During her childhood, her family spent some time in the Gospel Hall, a Pentecostal church in Steinbach, but they were convinced to return to the Mennonite fold by her father's brothers, a minister and a deacon in the EMC. While she married a Kirchliche Mennonite (General Conference) man with his more cultural faith and looser morals, she kept her evangelical focus throughout her life.

When I had already been a pastor for

15 years, she heard me preach. She later confronted me in a passive-aggressive way, concerned both for my ministry and my salvation. In an effort to use inclusive language about God, I didn't preach about either Jesus or the Father. So, knowing that probably what I preached meant something slightly different to her than it did to me, I sat down with her and told her that I believed in Jesus as God with us on earth, and that salvation was through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. She was comforted, although she would still have preferred that I spoke the actual words of "Jesus," "Father" and "He" in my preaching and testimony.

On Oct. 15, Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo hosted the Ontario launch of Mary Ann Loewen's new book, *Sons and Mothers: Stories from Mennonite Men*, that features men writing about their mothers and their relationships with them. Four local writers—Howard Dyck, Paul Tiessen, John Rempel and Andrew C. Martin—read excerpts from their stories and commented on the process.

Loewen spoke about editing a book by men about women in this time when so much effort has been made to allow women their own voice. While the mothers of all four who read in Waterloo have died, it was clear to Loewen that these men loved their mothers, who were women in their own right.

Martin, a counselling therapist, and several of the other readers, including Dyck, noted that "Freud might have had fun" with elements of these mother/son



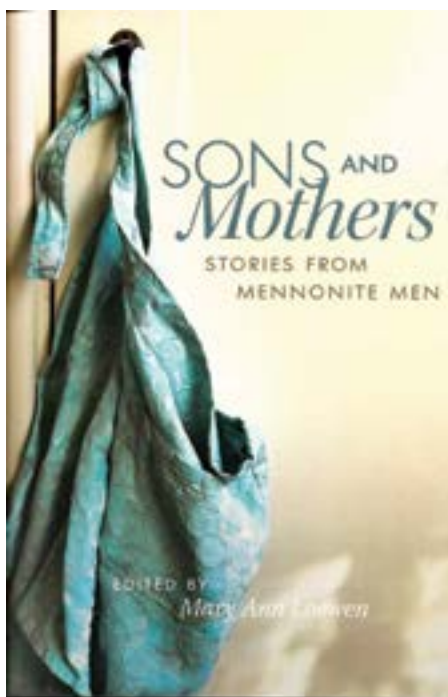
Trevor Bechtel, left, dean of Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., interacts with John Rempel, one of the contributors to *Sons and Mothers*, at the Ontario launch of the collection of stories by sons about their mothers on Oct. 15.

relationships, especially when the father/mother, husband/wife relationship was conflictual and the mother used the son as a confidant, with echoes of Oedipal relationships.

The men writing were painfully honest in their stories, often telling much more about themselves than about their mothers. Conflicts over faith and culture are common themes in the book's stories.

Martin is the only non-Russian Mennonite and the book might have been even more enlightening had more Swiss or Amish Mennonite men written about their relationships, helping to focus beyond the cultural relationships to the common faith elements between various Anabaptist groups. But the stories are moving, and both thought- and emotion-provoking, as they push men and women to consider their first relationship—with their mother.

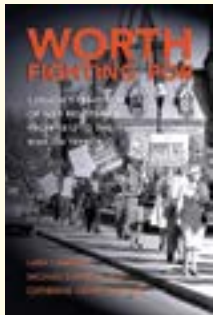
This book is a response to Rachel Epp Buller and Kerry Fast's *Mothering Mennonite*. Will *Fathering Mennonite* and *Daughters and Fathers* follow? The richness of this book suggests that there are depths yet to plumb. ☿



/// Briefly noted

New book and film focus on conscientious objection

WINNIPEG—Conrad Stoesz, Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) archivist, is passionate about pursuing peace and the history of conscientious objection to war. His long-held convictions inspired him to contribute a chapter to a new book on the subject and to successfully pursue a grant for the production of a video documentary. “The experience of Canada’s conscientious objectors in the Second World War is a fascinating and complex part of our history that is often [conveniently] overlooked,” Stoesz writes in “This thing is in our blood for 400 years,” his chapter in *Worth Fighting For: Canada’s Tradition of War Resistance from 1812 to the War on Terror* (www.commonword.ca/go/283), published by Between the Lines in Toronto. However, he notes that commemoration of the military experience through annual events and museums “emphasize the centrality of military activity to Canadian identity,” but ignore the long-standing tradition of opposition to armed conflict, which is also part of the Canadian identity. Stoesz and MHC archives staff, in collaboration with Andrew Wall and Project 31 Films, were recently awarded a grant of \$36,800 from the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages for the production of *Alternative Service in Canada During the Second World War*, a video documentary that will explore the contributions of Mennonite conscientious objectors to Canadian history. —Mennonite Church Canada



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Winnipeg churches throw wedding party for Syrian refugee couple

When two churches in Winnipeg learned that their sponsored refugees had never had a church wedding, they did something about it.

canadianmennonite.org/syrian-wedding-party



Selfies: This generation’s cigarette

A media professor and a religion professor teamed up to analyze “selfie culture” and the potential side-effects of this social phenomenon.

canadian.mennonite.org/selfie-culture

Parkview Home celebrates 50 years of service

Celebrations included historical recollections and gratitude for all the ways that God provided the people and resources needed to meet the challenges.

canadianmennonite.org/parkview-50th



Bethany United Mennonite reaches half-century milestone

Fifty years later, the church’s founding members tell stories about the early days and the challenge to “do a little more.”

canadianmennonite.org/bethany-united-half-century

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Mind-expanding Travel 'Engages and Confronts'

Building bridges through global travel

by Sandra Reimer



It is exhilarating and sometimes frustrating to cross the horizon into another culture and setting—but always worth the effort,” says Nelson Kraybill. Through his work as president of Mennonite World Conference, Kraybill travels extensively. He also leads tours to the Holy Land with TourMagination—a company that builds bridges among Mennonites, other Christians and faiths through global travel.

Kraybill says, “Learning to understand a different worldview helps me think critically and creatively about my own worldview.”

Leonard Friesen, a history professor at Wilfrid Laurier University and TourMagination tour leader, has had similar experiences. He and his wife Mary have been to more than 20 countries. Friesen also leads Mennonite heritage tours to Central Asia as well as to Russia and Ukraine.

On his first trip to Central Asia, Friesen was confronted with the “overwhelmingly Islamic culture” that “did not have its alpha story as a Christian story.” He says, “It was extraordinary to consider a culture based on a completely different faith.” The trip raised questions about his own culture and faith.

Each society develops differently as people adapt to the natural world and decide how to solve common challenges like feeding and clothing themselves. Friesen is looking forward to an

Mennonite World Conference president Nelson Kraybill and his wife Ellen on a TourMagination tour that Nelson led in 2013 to Jordan.

upcoming tour to Spain and Morocco because these two countries on the edges of Europe and Africa are at “the intersection of great faiths, continents and peoples.” He says the two nations are like “labs” where visitors can explore great cultural movements past and present.

Often when travellers leave their context and enter another, new understanding develops. During years of travel to Israel, Kraybill says he grieved as Jewish settlers gradually have moved into Palestinian territory. Kraybill often works closely with a Christian Palestinian guide on his tours. “Being close to the pain of Palestinian people,” he says, “makes me want to do what I can, as a citizen of a powerful nation that supports Israel, to work for justice. My love for Jewish people has not changed, but now I understand Palestinians a bit better.”

Travelling to another nation can also help you see world events from another perspective. In Vietnam, the civil war that lasted from 1954 to 1975, between North Vietnam and South Vietnam (aided by the United States), was called The War Against the Americans to Save the Nation.

On tours to Vietnam, travellers can explore part of an immense network of tunnels that the North Vietnamese used as communication and supply routes, hospitals, weapon caches and living quarters during the war... It’s harder to think of people as faceless enemies when you consider a conflict from their point of view.

However, travelling to a location is no guarantee that a person will truly see and understand it. A guide once

told Friesen that she sees tourists who spend 20 minutes in a museum only to go and sit in the cafeteria for the rest of the visit and later shop for items available at home in North America. Friesen refers to this as “travelling in a bubble.”

According to Friesen, good travel “engages and confronts you.” To get the most out of a tour, Friesen recommends cultivating attentiveness in everyday life. He also suggests reflecting at a few sites, rather than rushing to dozens of locations with little time to catch your breath.

“A mind-expanding tour is a learning experience, not just play,” says Kraybill. His richest travel experiences have included one or more of these ingredients: receiving an introduction to the history or culture of a country with a knowledgeable guide; building friendships with persons from a different background; travelling with others who share a passion for the people and places he is visiting; and dialoguing and worshipping with fellow Christians.

“Travel done well makes you think about the people and landscapes you are observing and about who you are,” says Friesen.



Wilfrid Laurier University history professor Len Friesen (farthest right) and his wife Mary (farthest left) led a student learning tour to South Africa in 2011.

Tips for enjoying “mind-expanding” travel

- Do less, reflect more. Ponder five paintings in a gallery, rather than rushing past 100
- Travel with others who want to learn and engage
- Visit local businesses, rather than going to chain restaurants or stores
- Travel with an expert tour leader or in-country guide to learn about a place
- Keep a journal or take photos of more than just the tourist sites

Travel with Nelson Kraybill on Jordan, Palestine, Israel: A Journey of Hope, September 8-19, 2016. Or with Leonard Friesen on Spain & Morocco: A Crossroads of Faith, Art & Culture tour,

*April 3-15, 2016. Leonard is also leading a Mennonite heritage tour to Russia/Ukraine, September 21 - October 3, 2016. **See other TourMagination tours at www.tourmagination.com.***

Jenny and Laura Shantz having fun with children on a TourMagination tour to Morocco.



Promotional Supplement

Schools Directory featuring Conrad Grebel University College

‘Educating students . . . is my passion’

Conrad Grebel University College

“We tend to focus on the tragedy and weakness of refugees,” explains Marlene Epp, professor in the Peace and Conflict Studies and History departments at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont. “We need to understand refugees also as individuals with strength and resilience, and hope that can offer a lot to any community that welcomes them with openness and compassion.”

With research areas that include Mennonite history, gender studies, and the history of immigration and ethnicity in Canada, Epp is adamant about allowing people to tell their own stories, no matter what their ethnic or religious identity, or reasons for seeking asylum outside their country.

“People don’t flee their homes for unknown outcomes without good reason,” Epp says. “Educating students and others about these reasons is my passion.”

Because of her scholarly expertise and community involvement in refugee issues, Epp is looking forward to teaching a new course, Refugees and Forced Migration, in Winter 2016. Students will learn to understand and respond to the current global refugee crisis.

Epp’s interest in refugees stems from her identity as a Mennonite whose family members were refugees. “When I researched the topic of post-Second World War Mennonite refugees for my doctoral work, I was continually reminded of the linkages between past



Marlene Epp teaches a class at Conrad Grebel University College.

and present, as displaced persons who arrived in Canada in the late 1940s compared their own lives to refugees in the present day.”

Epp’s volunteer work with Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support over the past decade has reinforced her commitment to refugee issues.

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PHOTO BY DANIEL PENNER

Being Mennonite 101

Ontario teen uses humorous videos to educate people about Mennonite beliefs and culture

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

It could be that thousands of people have learned about Mennonites from Katie Steckly.

Early last year, the 19-year-old, who grew up in Milverton, Ont., and is a member of Riverdale Mennonite Church near Millbank, uploaded a short video to her YouTube channel entitled “Being Mennonite 101,” in which she listed five characteristics of North American Mennonites. Since then, the video has been viewed more than 19,500 times.

“Being Mennonite 101” was a follow-up to “Ask a Mennonite,” a five-minute video she posted to YouTube a month ear-

In the past year-and-a-half, Steckly has posted a series of other Mennonite-related vlogs (video blogs), ranging in topic from Mennonite jokes to Mennonites and gay marriage.

For Steckly, who has been making videos and posting them online since she was 12, creating content about Mennonites was a calculated move at first. She and her older brother, who also makes videos, were talking about how they could get more views on YouTube. They concluded that producing niche content would help them stand out.

Not that many people on YouTube are

Steckly explains to viewers that there are Mennonites of many nationalities and cultural backgrounds. ‘It’s awesome, because that just means the food keeps getting better,’ she quips.

lier. In that video, which has been viewed more than 16,700 times, Steckly spoke about questions people unfamiliar with Mennonites ask, including “Does your family drive a buggy?” and “Do you live on a farm?”

Shot against a bright blue wall and delivered with a heavy dose of humour, the videos explore not only the Swiss- and Russian-Mennonite culture familiar to many Canadian Mennonites, but also delve into Mennonite history and beliefs. Steckly explains to viewers that there are Mennonites of many nationalities and cultural backgrounds. “It’s awesome, because that just means the food keeps getting better,” she quips.

talking about Mennonites, Steckly reasoned, so she created “Ask a Mennonite.”

“Originally, it was a strategic thing,” says Steckly. “Then I realized I enjoy talking about it, so that’s why I continued with it.”

Steckly has always been interested in Mennonite history and theology, and the videos have given her the opportunity to think through her faith and background. “It’s been good for me to analyze my own beliefs, get to what’s at the core of them, and be able to explain them to other people, rather than relying on assumptions or what I’ve always been taught,” she says.

While at least one YouTube commenter has accused Steckly of being rude and

(Continued on page 28)



Nineteen-year-old Katie Steckly has been posting vlogs (video blogs) on YouTube for seven years. A number of her videos discuss Mennonites.

SCREEN GRAB BY AARON EPP



Katie Steckly’s video, ‘Being Mennonite 101,’ has been viewed more than 19,500 times since she posted it on YouTube in January 2014.

PHOTO BY DANIEL PENNER



‘I don’t think there’s anything wrong with me having an idea and putting it out there for other people to interact with,’ Katie Steckly says.

GRAPHICS COURTESY OF KATIE STECKLY



Katie Steckly's videos are created with a heavy dose of humour.



Katie Steckly has covered everything from Mennonite jokes to Mennonites and gay marriage in her videos.

(Continued from page 27)

sarcastic in the “Ask a Mennonite” video, Steckly maintains that her videos are meant to be humorous.

For Steckly, who also creates vlogs on other topics and writes a blog about fashion and student life, creating content for the Internet is a way to pursue her interests. She objects to the idea that her videos are an example of millennial narcissism. Every generation is obsessed with itself, Steckly says. Her generation is simply one of the first whose young people have the opportunity to broadcast themselves online.

“I don’t think there’s anything wrong with me having an idea and putting it out there for other people to interact with,” she says, adding that posting vlogs and selfies online can be empowering. “[From a young age], women in particular are taught to not love themselves and to critique themselves super harshly,” Steckly says. “I think it’s great that we’re starting to foster a culture of self-love and self-appreciation.”

Steckly has a fan in Orlando Braun, a Winnipeg filmmaker who came across her videos while doing research for his forthcoming documentary, *That Mennonite Joke*, which explores humour in Mennonite culture. Braun says he was impressed by the simple style and playful tone of Steckly’s videos.

“It’s young, it’s fresh,” Braun says. “It’s [Steckly’s] millennial voice that inspired me, because she’s trying to keep alive this Mennonite culture and she’s using humour

a lot to do that.”

Braun was further impressed when he interviewed Steckly for his documentary. “She’s exactly as delightful in person as she is in those videos,” he says. “That was refreshing for me.”

Steckly’s mother, Karen, says she wasn’t overly concerned when her children began posting videos online, so long as they didn’t give out personal information and use chat rooms. She may not agree with everything her daughter says, but wants her to be able to develop her own voice and express her own opinions.

“I don’t know if [it’s my] personal bias or not, but I find her very funny,” Karen says, adding that the videos are also thoughtful. “I think sometimes her grandparents don’t always agree with her videos . . . but she makes them think, and that’s a good thing. Even if we don’t always see eye to eye right away, being thought-provoking is never a bad thing.”

Steckly is currently working on a bachelor of arts degree in English at the University of Waterloo, Ont., with minors in peace and conflict studies, digital arts communication, and Mennonite studies. No matter what she works at after graduation in a few years, she wants to continue creating content for the web. “I just hope I get to continue doing the things I do online, because I really like it,” she says. ☺

To watch Steckly’s vlogs, visit [youtube.com/katherinethe19th](https://www.youtube.com/katherinethe19th).



VOICE | of the marginalized

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATRINA BROOKS



Katrina Brooks

Solace in a subculture

Young woman expresses herself through fashion style originating in Japan

BY KATRINA BROOKS
Special to Young Voices

It takes Anna Chemar almost two hours to dress in her favourite style. The elaborate makeup alone requires 45 minutes. Carefully slipping into the clothes—bell-shaped skirt, blouse and corset—takes another 20 minutes. The rest of the time is devoted to final touches: wig, headdress and painted lips. When finished, she looks

like a Gothic-styled doll.

Chemar developed an interest in Lolita fashion after graduating from high school. She was fascinated by the development of the style in Harajuku, the fashion district of Tokyo.

“It was contradicting western ideals,” she says with a small shrug. “Western

clothing is very revealing. It's there for sexual attraction."

While some people first assume the fashion is linked to *Lolita*, the 1955 novel by Vladimir Nabokov, there is no connection. Rather, the fashion is about modesty. It developed as a call back to the Victorian era, and bloomed in popularity when guitarist Mana from the Japanese band Malice Mizer began wearing it.

"As a streetwear style, Lolita began to take popularity in the United States in the early 2000s—via imported fashion magazines and on Internet message boards," according to a 2014 *N.Y. Magazine* article. "Today, strains of it are even evident in high fashion."

Lolita isn't a passing fad. It involves a conscious decision to devote oneself to dressing this way, a decision Chemar made. For her, Lolita fashion is a way to express herself. Some people close to her have disapproved of the style, though.

"People assumed because I wanted to dress this way, that I wanted my body to look a certain way," she says. Chemar's ex-boyfriend was especially critical. She has painful memories of their time together. In retrospect, she says he was only interested in her body.

Not long after they began dating, she was alarmed at his sexist comments. She remembered watching *Wheel of Fortune* with him and listening to him comment about Vanna White's body. Although his attitudes were clear, she chose not to believe them.

Her downward spiral began in February 2012, only months after making the difficult decision to terminate a pregnancy. Her life was consumed by her relationship. She felt obligated to go to his house after school and work. Her coping mechanism was to stop eating and, at her lowest point, her body was so frail she broke her wrist. She was diagnosed with anorexia a year later.

Chemar's boyfriend treated her better after the diagnosis, but she didn't share his goals of marriage and a family. She was still sick, and her disinterest in spending time with him drove him to call her selfish. Chemar broke up with him in the summer of 2014 after a year of counselling.

Lolita fashion was how Chemar asserted her independence while she was with her

boyfriend. All Lolita items are named, and in 2012 she secretly bought a skirt called Vampire Prelude.

"I didn't want to admit that, yes, I had the power to do that," she says. She bought the skirt for herself, not to impress anyone else. "It was the only thing that I could do." While her boyfriend disapproved, Anna continued buying Lolita fashion items.

She made sacrifices, however. Vampire Prelude alone cost \$350. Despite being a part-time English student at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Chemar is happy spending money on clothing.

"I'd have a lot more money to spend on school if I didn't spend it on clothes, but this is how I express myself," she says.

The Winnipeg Lolita community has been Chemar's support. While the group is small, members enjoy spending time together around the city, accepting positive and negative comments with grace.

"The fashion's just about expressing who you are, rather than not being who you are," Chemar says. "I've made some great friends." ❧

Katrina Brooks, 23, graduated from Canadian Mennonite University this past April with a bachelor of arts degree in English. She lives in Halifax.

This article is part of a series called Voice of the Marginalized. These articles were written by students in CMU's Journalism: Principles and Practice course. Voice of the Marginalized connected writers with people on the margins of the community. Teacher Carl DeGurse is a member of Canadian Mennonite's board of directors and an assignment editor at the Winnipeg Free Press.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA CHEMAR



Anna Chemar has made some great friends in the Winnipeg Lolita community.

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



Family and friends didn't understand Anna Chemar's interest in Lolita fashion at first.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA CHEMAR



Anna Chemar is fascinated by Lolita fashion partly because it contradicts western ideals.

Calendar

British Columbia

Nov. 22: Joint MC B.C./Columbia Bible College services: (10 a.m.) at Living Hope Christian Fellowship, Surrey, with a lunch to follow; (2 p.m.) at Living Stones, Surrey. Music at both services by Columbia students.

Nov. 28,29: Advent vespers with Abendmusik Choir: (28) Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (29) Knox United Church, Vancouver. Both services at 8 p.m.

Alberta

March 18-19, 2016: MC Alberta annual general assembly.

Saskatchewan

Nov. 24: RJC Kielke and Sausage Supper at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon.

Nov. 27-29: "This Will Lead to Dancing," a new play by Theatre of the Beat that addresses LGBTQ inclusion, at Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon. All shows at 7 p.m. RSVP in advance to production@theatreofthebeat.com to ensure a seat.

Manitoba

Nov. 19-21: "This Will Lead to Dancing," a new play by Theatre of the Beat that addresses LGBTQ inclusion, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. All shows at 7 p.m. RSVP in advance to production@theatreofthebeat.com to ensure a seat.

Nov. 22: First Mennonite Church Choir, Winnipeg, performs its annual Memorial Sunday concert featuring Cherubini's "Requiem," at 7 p.m., at the church.

Nov. 23: Annual general meeting at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, 7 p.m.

Dec. 1: An evening with Nick Spaling of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Community Mennonite Fellowship, Drayton, Ont., at Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m. Learn what it's like to be a Christian in the NHL and get an autograph. Free will offering in support of MC Canada's youth assembly and MC Manitoba's Camps with Meaning.

Ontario

Until Dec. 18: "Exploring resilience through the artwork of Shannon Moroney," at the Conrad Grebel University College Gallery, Waterloo.

Nov. 14: MCC Ontario fall conference, "At Peace and Unafraid," at Bethany Community Church, St. Catharines, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Nov. 14-15: St. Jacobs Mennonite Church 100th anniversary celebration; (14) see website, (15) worship service and choir at 10 a.m. and "Simpler times: Stories and songs for the soul" at 2:45 p.m. For details, including choir invitation, visit sjmc.on.ca or call 519-664-2268.

Nov. 16: MCC Ontario presents "The Syrian crisis: What is a small player to do?" at Conrad Grebel University College's Great Hall, at 7 p.m. Learn about MCC's ongoing humanitarian and peacebuilding response to the Syria and Iraq crisis. For more information or to register, visit <http://bit.ly/1O4RJGi>.

Nov. 19: Book launch of Winnipeg author Armin Wiebe's "Armin's Shorts," at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m.

Nov. 20-21: Naim Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig, presents its annual "Spirit of Christmas" juried craft and live music show. One-of-a-kind crafts, Ten Thousand Villages, homemade baking. Music by Randy Grey, Camping's Blessings and the Valleyview Male Chorus (20) 6:30 to 9 p.m.; (21) 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Nov. 21: Annual Fairview Mennonite Home handicraft sale, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tea room and lunch available as well as Christmas decorations, gifts, bake sale and more. For more information call 519-653-5719.

Nov. 21: Annual Nithview Community Christmas tea, silent auction, bake sale and more, in New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Nov. 21,22: Soli Deo Gloria Singers present their fall concert, "Fire and d' Rock"; (21) at UMEI, at 7:30 p.m.; (22) Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For more information, call UMEI at 519-326-7448.

Nov. 25: MennoHomes annual general meeting and concert featuring Janice Lee, at Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church, at 7 p.m. For more information,

call 226-476-2535 or visit mennohomes.com.

For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



Classifieds

For Sale

The Village Casketmaker
Funeral caskets and urns sold directly to public. Sensible and eco-friendly. Made in Winnipeg. Shipping beyond Manitoba available. Learn more: thevillagecasketmaker.com

Travel

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way! Faith based Hotel Tours to Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland and Ukraine, focussing on the Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage. More information online: mennoniteheritagetours.eu

Employment Opportunities

The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Altona, Manitoba, is seeking a full-time interim pastor for our rural congregation of 300-325. We are looking for someone with a strong commitment to Anabaptist values to help us continue in our journey to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

For more information please contact our search committee chair, Stephanie Friesen, at marsteph@mymts.net.



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

MCC BC JOB OPPORTUNITY
Director of Development and
Advancement, Abbotsford, BC

The **Director of Development and Advancement** is the chief marketing officer that provides leadership to donor relations, communications and the general advancement of MCC BC toward its mission by collaboratively developing and implementing strategies that generate awareness, relationships, engagement, support and various types of donations from within our constituency and the broader public.

The position involves proactively seeking out synergies between the various activities of MCC, and finding new opportunities to market and advance the mission of MCC in our constituency and the broader public.

Direct fundraising efforts include fostering relations with over 6,000 donors with an annual goal of raising over \$2.5 million in regular giving plus disaster response and special campaigns. Annual Relief Sales are supported by over 1,200 volunteers with the goal of raising \$600,000 net. Material aid engages 800 volunteers with an annual goal of mobilizing \$500,000 in donated items. Communications engages the public as well as over 150 member churches with 25,000 adherents.

The Advancement Director ensures that activities are focused on approved strategic priorities and are in compliance with standard legal and ethical requirements as well as MCC values, principles and policies.

Only those candidates who are legally eligible to work in Canada should apply. Please send resume and cover letter to Marie Reimer at email: hrmanager@mccbc.ca or by fax 604-850-8734. Start date: January 30, 2016



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Square One World Media is seeking an Executive Director. We are searching for a committed follower of Jesus who is passionate about sharing Christ-centred media with people around the world. This visionary leader will be an excellent communicator, have a proven history of team-building, and demonstrate a good understanding of media production and distribution. For more information, go to squareoneworld-media.com/news/hr@squareoneworldmedia.com



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY Waterloo, Ontario

We are a vibrant Anabaptist congregation located in the heart of Canada's Technology Triangle and within walking distance of two universities. As a welcoming church, we honour our 165-year heritage as well as celebrate our diversity.

Our faith community exists to make a difference:

- in the individual lives of our members
- within the social, academic, and cultural setting of Waterloo Region
- and to a larger post-modern world searching for meaningful connections to the sacred

We invite inquiries from qualified pastors who wish to partner with us in this leadership challenge. Contact Henry Paetkau, MCEC Area Church Minister, at hpaetkau@mceec.ca



Employment Opportunity

We are accepting applications for one full time Personal Lines Insurance Broker with a RIBO License.

Roth Nowak Insurance Brokers is located in Waterloo, Ontario and has been in business for over 30 years. We currently employ 9 staff including a highly motivated team of Insurance Brokers who are committed to honesty, integrity and good judgment.

We thank all applicants for their submission; however, only qualified candidates will be contacted. Kindly submit your resume by Monday December 7, 2015 to:

Sharon Goerz, Office Manager sgoerz@rothnowak.com

The EMU Presidential Search Committee, in collaboration with Mennonite Education Agency, seeks nominations and/or applications for the 9th President of Eastern Mennonite University



Candidates should demonstrate these qualities:

- **Christian Faith:** A mature and committed follower of Jesus Christ who embodies and lives Anabaptist practices, demonstrated through commitment to and involvement with a community of faith in the Anabaptist tradition.
- **Proven Leader** who is mission-driven, relational, collaborative, strategic, able to develop resources and entrepreneurial.
- **Education:** Terminal degree such as Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., D.Min. or M.D.

The new president is expected to assume office between July 1 and Dec. 31, 2016.

Details at emu.edu/presidential-search
Applications to
SearchCommittee@MennoniteEducation.org



Eastern Mennonite University

From shattered to woven together

Shannon Moroney makes art from her pain

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

“You should do something with all this,” was the doctor’s prescription.

“All this” were the art supplies scattered across Shannon Moroney’s husband’s studio in their house. Jason, her husband of only four months, had at that point been in prison for three months awaiting trial for two violent sexual attacks on other women. Moroney was feeling completely shattered, having been told of his arrest while on a business trip.

Two weeks after the doctor’s strong suggestion, she had produced “The Shattering” or “Victim Impact Statement Exhibit 13B,” a mixed media collage, in early 2006. Full of images pasted around her wedding photo, she had begun her journey of healing, a journey as long as the salmon in the piece, swimming, as she says, “a thousand miles upstream.” Also included are images of Frieda Kahlo, the Mexican artist who struggled with both physical and relational pain throughout her adult life. “I was looking for connection and belonging in such a fractured landscape,” says Moroney of the collage.

Moroney’s art is being shown in the Centre for Peace Advancement at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo until Dec. 18. It is

ARTWORK BY SHANNON MORONEY



‘The Shattering’ or ‘Victim Impact Statement Exhibit 13B’ (mixed media collage, 50 cm x 75 cm, 2006).



‘Letting Go’ (gauze, thread, beads and acrylic paint on canvas, 90 cm x 90 cm, 2009).

her first official show. In her more than 150 presentations on trauma and resilience she has used images of her art to illustrate her journey. She says most of her art stays in the garage, the images being too raw and violent to hang on the walls of the home she shares with her new husband and twin three-year-old daughters.

Two paintings that are allowed inside are 2008’s “Three Years Later” (front cover) and 2009’s “Letting Go.” The first of these is a collage of four tulips in a fractured landscape. She had just returned from another painful visit with her first husband in prison and arrived at home to see the tulips pushing up through the snow. The “ground” through which the tulips push is broken glass, but Moroney says, “I was able to start walking again, though carefully.”

The second painting is a large blue field with gauze spread over the centre and around a frame. According to the artist, these denote a torn wedding dress, symbolizing “holding on to something essential in a post-trauma journey, but letting everything else go.” Near the top of the frame is a broken necklace, given to Moroney by her maid-of-honour at her first wedding. “That relationship didn’t last the crisis,” she says. When she tried to wear it, the necklace broke repeatedly, so she “glued to canvas—sometimes what is broken cannot be fixed.”

Moroney now lives in Toronto, Ont. She volunteers with Leave Out ViolencE (LOVE), and is also a contributor to the international Forgiveness Project. ‡