

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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EDITORIAL

Living with paradoxes

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

In a blog post a year ago, *The Mennonite's* Tim Nafziger references John Paul Lederach's book *The Moral Imagination* in which the author describes what he calls "paradoxical curiosity."

It's an attitude toward conflict, writes Lederach, "that has an abiding respect for complexity, a refusal to fall prey to the pressures of forced dualistic categories of truth and an inquisitiveness about what may hold together seemingly contradictory social energies into a greater whole.

"By suspending judgment and embracing an imaginative curiosity while still holding on to core values, Mennonites might discover deeper shared truths about conflict and church identity that engage seemingly contradictory truths."

Never has this counsel from a respected peacemaker been more applicable. The Mennonite churches of Canada are at a crucial juncture in our history. The Future Directions Task Force states that national structures attempting to hold us together over decades are now unaffordable and should be disbanded in favour of the formation of regional structures.

A strong challenge from Witness workers regarding our international witness and a group of young adults from across Canada calling itself the Emerging Voices Initiative have questioned the Task Force's recommendations, calling for a deeper look into the nature of the witness and the health of congregations to assume major roles of faith formation,

credentialling pastors and a global witness.

We are divided on the sexuality issue, triggering the departure of three congregations already and the coming across the border of a new organization calling



itself the Evangelical Anabaptist Network (Evana), founded in New Paris, Ind., as a result of the acceptance of a gay female pastor in the Mountain States Conference. Evana, of course, denies this as its purpose for coming into existence, but it is instructive that it is led by a youth pastor, John Troyer from a Goshen congregation, Clinton Frame, that in July, 2014, left Mennonite Church U.S.A. over the gay ordination issue.

Some 70 to 80 church members and leaders attended the Jan. 22 Evana workshop hosted by Maple View Mennonite Church in Wellesley, Ont. In a report by Eastern Canada correspondent Dave Rogalsky, Pastor Brent Kipfer noted that Maple View's leaders do not accept Recommendation No. 3 of Being a Faithful Church 7, that "we create space/leave room within our body to test alternative understandings from that of the larger body to see if they are prophetic nudging of the Spirit of God."

Decoded, it means they do not agree that same-sex marriages have any place in MC Canada churches.

We have strong feelings about how sexual misconduct is handled in our area churches, highlighted most recently in

how the alleged misconduct of a deceased MC Eastern Canada pastor was announced to the entire national church.

These are all explosive issues with deep passions issuing from all of them. It goes without saying that these can tear the church apart, or, if handled with more grace and less judgment, could strengthen the fibres that bind us as one body whose founder and sustainer is Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

This seems to be going down the path that we, as passive-aggressive Mennonites, have historically taken. If you don't agree, leave or form a new organization that draws together like-minded believers, leaving a trail of schisms that have marred our witness as peacemakers in a troubled world.

Could we try another way?

Could we, with Lederach, instead use our imagination to develop a "paradoxical curiosity," or work harder on what he calls an "abiding respect for complexity," a refusal to fall prey to the pressures of forced dualistic categories of truth?

In simpler terms, can't we recognize, without antipathy and without surrendering our own deeply held beliefs, the viewpoint of the other, making room for a variety of views within the same system? If this could be accomplished, what a stronger body we would be.

We live in a complex world. Threats to our way of living abound at every turn. While we in Canada live in relative peace, many parts of our globe are embroiled in ongoing cruel violence, something that should preoccupy us more than our sexuality. Peacemaking in every form, including creation care and resettling the world's millions of refugees, should be consuming us, not divisions over gender issues.

Can we put our imaginations to better use?

ABOUT THE COVER:

A pastor holds an ice cube in worship, allowing it to melt in the warmth of her hand, just as human souls are warmed and melt in the corporate worship of God. See our cover story on MC Eastern Canada's annual School for Ministers on page 15.

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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



'LIVING INK' REFLECTION

Encountering the vulnerable Jesus

Easter Sunday biblical reflection on John 20:1-18

BY CHRIS LENSCHYN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



It is by no mistake that those who receive transformative healing from Jesus are those who are the most vulnerable and have nothing to lose, for the painful realities of life have already done that to them.

Lent is a 40-day season on the church calendar that brings the story of Jesus into the nitty gritty of community life. It brings the story into everyone's own particular time and place.

Lent is a time that commemorates the 40 days Jesus spent in solitude, silence and fasting in the wilderness. During this time in the wilderness, Jesus was tested and confronted with his own human vulnerabilities. Through Lent, we are invited into that same space of intentionality, to seek Jesus in the silence, coming to terms with our own vulnerabilities. It is not really all that much fun.

It's intentionally bleak with the promise of hope in the resurrection at Easter. At the very least, however, the journey of Lent is a practice in encountering the resurrected God. Without Lent and coming to face our vulnerabilities, we are left with a hollow resurrection. What we learn in Scripture is that when you encounter Jesus with your vulnerabilities, you will be resurrected, transformed and made whole. It's like Jesus was the "bringer of shalom."

It is by no mistake that those who receive transformative healing from Jesus are those who are the most vulnerable and have nothing to lose, for the painful realities of life have already done that to them. As in many societies, including North America, first-century Palestine had its power structure that marginalized poor and vulnerable populations, and religious and socio-economic elitism saturated that world.

One of the beautiful ways people encountered Jesus in a way that subverted this perverted power structure was through meals. Jesus ate with all sorts of people: tax collectors, prostitutes and other "have nots." Sitting at a table was a beautiful sign of solidarity, as everyone was on the same level. No one was higher than the other, and all shared food and drink together.

PHOTO BY D. MICHAEL HOSTETLER



A Lenten display on the theme of 'Living Ink' at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.

He also hung around lepers, and healed them and other sick and “unclean un-touchables.” The thing is, he made physical contact with the untouchables without fear or reservation in a “bringer-of-shalom” kind of way. The cast-offs were made whole and were given the integrity of relationship, and thus they became a threat to the oppressive structure of first-century Palestine. Shalom subverts empire.

While it was a stunning social movement in that particular place and time, it has more substance than that. The “social gospel” falls flat when we refuse to acknowledge our own vulnerabilities, for it is in our vulnerabilities that we encounter Jesus.

A stunning encounter with the resurrected Jesus

John 20:1-18 gives us a stunning encounter between Mary Magdalene and the resurrected Jesus. Women in first-century Palestine were on the bottom of the

social ladder. Even in the other gospels, women are visible, but do not carry a significant part of the vocal narrative. But in John, that is not the case. Women have a voice and are integral to the overall story. It is a subversive event when a woman, in this case Mary, is integral to a story.

Mary travels to the tomb for no other reason than love. She simply and brilliantly loves Jesus. In Luke 8:2, we learn that Mary was delivered from seven demons. She met Jesus as someone who was in dire need, and completely vulnerable to the control of demons. In the Gospel of John, we meet Mary Magdalene in 19:25, where she is named as one of the women who stood near the cross.

She comes across an empty tomb. Upon this, she runs to Simon Peter and the beloved disciple, sharing about what she saw. Simon Peter and the beloved disciple race to the empty tomb. Simon Peter can't believe it. Yet, the beloved

disciple believes. This was a resurrection.

After the disciples leave, Mary stands outside the tomb weeping over the missing body of the Jesus. As she looks inside, she sees two angels in white. One inquires, “Woman, why do you weep?” Mary responds in distress over her master's body being taken. The moment she turns her head, she sees Jesus but does not know it is him. It seems she does not expect the resurrection. Mary asks what she can only tell to be a gardener if he took the body somewhere.

The gardener speaks again, but simply says her name, “Mary.” She turns to face him and recognizes him as “teacher.” Jesus then asks her to proclaim this to the other disciples and she goes to tell them what she has just seen and heard. The movement of what Mary goes through is quite telling to the relationship she had with her master and defined her encounter. She weeps.

Emotions have a deep sense of truth-telling about them. They expose a core element of the human experience. Mary is devastated that her master has died in the most brutal of ways. She is also devastated that he had been taken from the tomb.

Remember, though, that Jesus' encounters with them made them whole and thus subverted the empire of first-century Palestine.

She recognizes Jesus after first mistaking him for a gardener. She didn't know he was to be resurrected. Yet here he is, and she has the gumption to recognize who he was before her.

What a Christian call!

In Mary's excitement, Jesus calls her to proclaim what she had seen to the other disciples. This is significant, as she is the first apostle to tell of the Easter resurrection event.

Love is a vulnerable thing. Mary loved Jesus. All she did was love. It was love that enabled her to encounter Jesus in a number of ways. She touched, saw and heard Jesus. Of course, this shouldn't be a surprise, as this was Jesus being subversive, pointing to a just, divine kingdom reality that a woman should announce his resurrection. We should be inspired. Let's be like Mary! If we take this seriously, we are to be vulnerable, love the vulnerable, be loved and be transformed. What a Christian call that is! Yet we still marginalize and prey on the vulnerable.

In September 2013, I attended the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Vancouver. The TRC is a national truth-telling commission speaking to the terrible realities of Canada's Indian Residential Schools. The commission travelled to many Canadian cities with the hope that truth-telling will begin a journey to reconciliation with its oppressors. It is there I came face to face with vulnerability in its ugliest, rawest form.

I walked into a sharing circle where Indian Residential School survivors were sharing their stories. I sat on the periphery, seemingly lost in the large number of chairs for people to listen. The testimonials were brutal. Anyone with any sliver of empathy would be heartbroken. One man took the microphone and sat with it for a few moments, not saying a word. After a while, I heard faint sounds of a man weeping. Then after a time he wailed into the mic and said that he was raped when he was 6. I have never heard a grown man cry in such a way. It was as if it echoed through eternity, sounding of a tortured soul.

The indigenous population in Canada has been significantly marginalized. Our

neighbours have significantly higher incarceration rates, poor living conditions and tremendous trauma from a history of being told to live a certain way. A lack of empathy, no desire for solidarity, brutal proselytizing that reeks of colonialism, and a continued "buy-in" to the archaic stereotypes, all contribute to our indigenous neighbours being continually marginalized and vulnerable to the point of death. This "buy-in" crafts before us a people who are villains, so much so that they cannot be seen as human.

The moment we pick on the vulnerable, we are nailing Jesus to the cross ourselves. Jesus himself was vulnerable. He encountered the vulnerable and was persecuted for it. Remember, though, that Jesus' encounters with them made them whole and thus subverted the empire of first-century Palestine.

Lent has the power to transform us

This is what Lent does. It crafts a vulnerability that, through Christ, redeems this world. Jesus, the "bringer of shalom," crafts us into a people who are vulnerable, acknowledging our brokenness, which is common to all humanity. God in the flesh, in full vulnerability, was killed on the cross by those who did not acknowledge their common humanity and attempted to hold power over those who are "lesser."

To encounter the vulnerable Jesus is to be vulnerable ourselves. If we take the Lenten path of peeling away our vulnerabilities and fully embrace the resurrection, we will indeed meet Jesus, learn to love, and be "bringers of shalom" and love. This is the kind of spirituality that shakes us to our core. It has the potential to change the way we look at the world and the people within it. May we be a people who embrace our vulnerabilities for the sake of being transformed by Jesus and thus empowered to be a people who fully love our neighbours. ☞



Chris Lenshyn is associate pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C. He lives with his wife and two boys in Mission.

☞ For discussion

1. What situations or circumstances make you feel vulnerable? What is it about vulnerability that we dislike? Can you think of someone who graciously lives with vulnerability? What can we learn from that person? What does it mean to "embrace our vulnerabilities"?
2. Chris Lenshyn writes, "[I]t is in our vulnerabilities that we encounter Jesus." Why might we be less apt to encounter Jesus when we feel strong and capable? Does that mean that the poor and the weak have a deeper faith?
3. What practices or rituals help you to remember that you are not in control or keep you connected to your vulnerabilities? How important is it to have periods of quiet reflection? How does busyness prevent us from encountering the vulnerable Jesus?
4. Who are the vulnerable people in your congregation or in your community? How does the church extend love and shalom to them? Is God calling you to increase your participation in this message of love and resurrection?

—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.canadian-mennonite.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.

✉ Church leaders thanked for naming Vernon Leis

I WANT TO publicly say thank you to Mennonite church leaders for speaking up against sexual misconduct in the case against Vernon Leis, even if it is decades after the fact.

There is never a good time to reveal the misconduct of a church leader. This is true whether you cover it up, as in the case of the Roman Catholic priests; dismiss it for decades, as in the case of residential school leaders; or name the indiscretion when it happens. The public will be upset, as they should be, no matter when it is brought to light.

Thank you for taking this seriously and doing your best to disclose the truth. As a victim of sexual misconduct by a church leader, it gives me hope when you, as current leaders, name the specific misconduct and expose the secrets. Your courage and openness is

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FROM OUR LEADERS

The church as 'choir'

KEN WARKENTIN

Recently I discovered Apple Music. This is an amazing deal in which I give the good folks at Apple a few dollars every month and they give me access to more than 30 million songs. Well, I went on a bit of a listening binge. I would think of a song and then look it up and play it. In a few hours, I had relived my youth through music and I had begun to examine my faith through the great choral tradition of Bach.



At one point I have to admit I got a little bit fixated. I listened again and again to the Credo of the "Mass in B Minor" and I recalled how those words, "I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen," have shaped my faith. Then I listened to how many different conductors have interpreted those words and that music.

I was astounded by how subtle

differences in tempo, dynamics and phrasing bring out different elements of beauty. There are so many ways to sing the same song and every performance is new.

Sometimes I liken our church to a choir performing a great choral masterpiece. We sing sometimes in unison, sometimes in harmony. Sometimes one voice takes centre stage, other times that same voice provides quiet accompaniment. We work at breathing together, blending our voices and paying attention to how our diction communicates with the audience. Sometimes our voices clash in dissonant chords, sometimes they resonate in sweet harmony.

While some of us may prefer certain kinds of harmony, the dissonance is vital to the dynamic beauty of the work. In this picture of the church singing a great masterpiece I imagine God to be the conductor. God is shaping the phrases, God is setting the rhythm and God is calling out different voices to communicate

"good news."

As a good conductor, God helps us understand which elements, ideas and words need to be stressed. God knows that the words bear more than one interpretation. The Latin words "Credo in unum Deum" are usually translated as "I believe in one God," but they could also be translated as "I trust in one God."

Our faith calls us to believe in God and it calls us to trust God. The subtle differences in interpretation and translation are important. We are in a time in which our congregations, area and national churches are experiencing change. We are considering several very important reports that will affect our life together. How will this choir stand in the years to come? Where will we perform? What repertoire will God choose for us?

I pray that we will continue to listen for God's leading, so that our rehearsals are times of joy even as we learn to respond to God's nudging, and that our performances share our understanding of our creator.

Ken Warkentin is executive director of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

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appreciated. In the last few months I have received a measure of healing by talking about my experiences with other women who have experienced sexual abuse, some of who have never breathed a word of the inappropriate behaviour because they were too ashamed. Your speaking up has given voice to vulnerable people who were taught by the church and society to live in silence and secrecy.

At a time like this we all need healing. According to Desmond Tutu, healing comes through telling the story, naming the hurt, granting forgiveness and then restoring or releasing the relationship. Some of us will need professional help in this process, which you have

so bravely begun. Thank you.

MIRIAM FREY, PARIS, ONT.

✉ Unsustainable church work must be left to die

RE: "TEN YEARS later," Feb. 15, page 2.

Dick Benner's editorial left me shaking my head for several reasons:

1. **THE FUTURE** is always open and has a range of possibilities, but the editorial assumes almost all of the worst outcomes possible. Perhaps Benner may

OUTSIDE THE BOX

To whom do we listen?

PHIL WAGLER

The real driver of our lives—and even our churches—is whose voice we hear and obey. We make decisions to listen to and give authority somewhere. We quote, footnote and reference. We point to a source, and usually one that agrees with us.

"As you have lived, so have you believed," said philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. Our manner of living depends on who we believe has authority to speak to and for us. The voice we ultimately heed shapes our values, action, community and decision-making. It is this need that is at the root of an authoritative canon for faith and life.

We disregard Scripture to our own demise. The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures—our Holy Bible—has been communally discerned for millen-

nia to be God's speech to us. Scripture reveals the nature and character of God, his plan and activity to save and redeem humanity through Jesus the Christ, and carries transformative power for individual and corporate life that is the mark of the Spirit's work. Where this Word of God is heard, discerned and heeded,

it is often disruptive, for it points a way forward while calling the community of faith back into covenant-keeping and the freedom of following.

Scripture is to be honoured, received, heard—not simply studied—and obeyed. On the other hand, Scripture is not to be worshipped. The book is not God, but it tunes our ears to hear him and opens our eyes to identify his work in every time. Sometimes this Word inspires new direction, as in the Acts 15 discernment of salvation by grace for gentiles, and sometimes it leads back to firm foundations, as in Jesus' call to the Ephesians to come

this Word—doing some cultivating of hard paths and clearing out the rocks and thorns—and we also need to marvel at the power of the Word to do good work and produce good fruit without fancy feats by us. We need ears to hear.

Mark 4 ends in a marvellous way. Jesus is asleep in the boat as the waves rage, and the disciples are confused and sure their ship is sunk. They wake Jesus in a panic, he calms the storm and they can only question: "Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41). The point, in the context of the parables and the seafaring adventure that all happen on the same day (Mark 4:35), seems to be unsettlingly blunt: If the wind and waves listen to him, shouldn't we?

So if the real driver of our lives is whom we listen to and obey, who is really



The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures—our Holy Bible—has been communally discerned for millennia to be God's speech to us.

back to their first love. The lesson is: If we are to be Christian and the church, we need to hear from God.

In Mark 4, Jesus tells multiple parables that essentially contain the same seed of truth: The Word of God seeks good soil and will do a fruitful work wherever it is received. We need to be good soil for

worthy of such authority? Is it not he who speaks in this way? What is it that stands in the way of our hearing him?

Phil Wagler (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca) lives in Surrey, B.C. He serves in pastoral and global mission work, and still marvels at the power of the Word to transform.

consider another editorial that is excited about all the positive ways the Future Directions Task Force's recommendations can go right in the next 10 years.

2. PARTS OF the editorial seem to perpetuate some of the exact myths the Task Force is trying to counter in "Future Directions: Myths and message" on page 15. While there's always room for engagement and improvement in all that we do, Benner, by treating

their work like they wrote it last week on a back of a napkin in a coffee shop, isn't helpful.

3. PERHAPS THE biggest indictment is that by bemoaning the lack of vision and donations, Benner isn't paying attention to what we know about congregational life cycles. When churches realize that they're on the decline, nostalgia often turns to

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NEW ORDER VOICE

Ripples and waves

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

On Feb. 27, I attended a talk given by Seth Klein, director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives B.C., about The Leap Manifesto, an initiative out of the This Changes Everything movement begun by Naomi Klein and her book of the same name.

The manifesto's subtitle reads, "A call for a Canada based on caring for the Earth and one another," and states that the crisis at hand—a warming planet—is an opportunity to transition to a more just society. It's time to switch to renewable energy completely by 2050, invest in low-carbon jobs and public infrastructure, and do so by making sure the poorest are supported first.

Along with signing the manifesto, people held events across the country on Feb. 29 to call for climate action. It's online and anyone can sign. There are 50 celebrity initiating signatories and more initiating organizations. So far, the manifesto has approximately 33,000 signatures.

Although well-presented and convincing, I came away from the talk feeling blue. Klein reiterated what climate scientists have announced: We must curb emissions within the next decade. So, effective immediately.

The bulk of Canada's emissions are from the oil and gas industries, so

pressuring government to get out of their pockets is paramount. But how in the world do we get governments to change their policies so quickly? Fossil fuel subsidies, global trade deals and other excuses for an extractive economy are so ingrained in our national subconscious that such drastic change seems radical. Also, 33,000 signatures? That's less than 0.01 percent of our country's population.

I came across a quotation in my day planner the other week. It's from movie director Rob Reiner: "Everybody talks about wanting to change things—but ultimately all you can do is fix yourself. And that's a lot. Because if you can fix yourself, it has a ripple effect."

As a church-goer, I easily identify with



I'm making what I'd call 'ripples' for climate justice, like getting out of the car, eating less meat

Reiner's statement. I listen to the call of the Spirit through worship and find inspiration from Scripture for inward transformation. During Lent, congregants take time to fast, pray and repent, with the hope of drawing closer to God, turning a new leaf, setting things right. And so I'm making what I'd call "ripples" for climate justice, like getting out of the car, eating less meat, composting, buying more local food.

But when it is absolutely clear that climate justice demands change at the

political level, can I also find inspiration from church community? Does the church have a role to play in waves of change?

There are examples of what can and should be done. Fossil Free Menno, an initiative started in 2013, wrote an open letter to Mennonite Church Canada calling for the denomination to divest any funds from fossil fuel industries. The letter was signed by many church members, and Mark Bigland-Pritchard from Osler (Sask.) Mennonite Church put together a solid resolution for the annual assembly in Winnipeg in 2014.

In July, the MC B.C. Peace and Justice Committee is organizing a one-day conference at the MC Canada assembly in Saskatoon, at which members will be able to brainstorm ways to put "our theological commitments about creation care into practice."

There is a common thread between these church efforts and The Leap Manifesto, something that buoys my spirit

when I consider paltry numbers or buried resolutions: the call for something better. While it's daunting to envision a better future while simultaneously faced with a grim present, much can be borne out of striving for justice. I hope the Mennonite church will continue to equip its members to make ripples while simultaneously voicing its support for the more dramatic climate action we so badly need.

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

(Continued from page 9)

disappointment and anger. Their first reaction is to double down on existing members, try harder doing what they're already doing and complain about leaders not casting an adequate vision. This editorial is a prime example of this. But what leads to revitalization is counter-intuitive: If any of the work we do is unsustainable because of either human or financial resources, we have to let it die, and then organize our efforts and resources around what limited activity that we are excited about, even if that is a new direction or a new purpose.

I guess I expect more from *Canadian Mennonite* than borderline demagoguery based on the speculation of the editor.

KYLE PENNER, STEINBACH, MAN.

Kyle Penner is associate pastor of Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach.

✉ Updated understandings make *Confession* a dated document

RE: BEING A Faithful Church (BFC) 7, released in 2015.

The *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* is a good document, adopted in 1995. But if you read articles about sexuality, you will see that whole new fields of science and research—new levels in physiology, biology, whatever—opened up in the 1990s. Our foundational understandings of ourselves, of identity, of male and female, and of attractions to one another, are different now than they were when the *Confession* was created. We need to understand more, we need more skills and tools, and we definitely need to do some updating.

RAY HAMM, NEUBERGTHAL, MAN.

To read the full letter, visit canadianmennonite.org.



✉ Evana participant wants 'less spin' from reporter

RE: "EVANGELICAL ANABAPTIST Network generates hope and frustration," Feb. 15, page 20.

In his article on the Evana introduction weekend, Dave Rogalsky missed an opportunity to accurately report and reflect on what happened. He included selective background information, Mennonite Church U.S.A. woes and cautionary tales, and long excerpts of e-mail exchanges which the reporter had with an area church leader—none of which were part of the actual event.

I would like to read something in *Canadian Mennonite* about this multicultural gathering with less spin and more about what actually happened: stirring worship led by young adults, engaging speakers, a call to personal/congregational renewal and missional church training.

FRED LICHTI, ELMIRA, ONT.

✉ 'Stand tall, young man!'

RE: "STOP HIDING behind the jokes," Feb. 1, page 28.

How edifying to read an article like this. To author Darian Wiebe Neufeld, I say be encouraged by what Paul says to Timothy: *"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity"* (1 Timothy 4:12).

Stand tall, young man! God has work for you to do, and may the blessing you are to others come back to you multiplied.

HELEN REDEKOPP, WINNIPEG



SESSION I — JUNE 13–17, 2016

RECONCILING OUR FUTURE: STORIES OF KANATA AND CANADA

THE BIBLICAL STORY OF HOPE AND HEALING

PEACE SKILLS PRACTICE

SESSION II — JUNE 20–24, 2016

ARTS AND PEACEBUILDING

PSYCHOSOCIAL TRAUMA HEALING

PEACEBUILDING THROUGH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

PEACEMAKING CIRCLES: PHILOSOPHY AND APPLICATIONS



✉ Reader questions whether 'moral law' applies to gays

RE: "WHAT IS 'good' and 'acceptable'?" feature by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, and, "Where the 'good news' is" reflection by Pieter Niemeyer, Feb. 15, pages 4 and 12, respectively.

I found both articles enlightening and sobering—each very different from the other.

The latter was a long overdue perspective from a gay Christian and pastor. Niemeyer's reflection begs for changes in the church's approach to gays, while Snyder Belousek offers limited change; while gays are to be included in the church, they must abstain from same-sex activity in order to conform to the moral law. I question this.

JOYCE GLADWELL, WATERLOO, ONT.

To read the full letter, visit canadianmennonite.org.



/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bergen—Mason Andrew (b. Feb. 10, 2016), to Kyle and Marci Bergen, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Good—Abigail Joy (b. Feb. 4, 2016), to Adam and Holly Good, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Trach—Miller Kenneth (b. Feb. 10, 2016), to Brett and Emily (Hoehn) Trach, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Deaths

Balzer—Nicholas, 88 (b. May 15, 1927; d. Jan. 24, 2016), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Braun—Peter, 93 (b. July 24, 1922; d. Feb. 22, 2016), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Braun—Peter, 91 (b. Aug. 24, 1924; d. Feb. 22, 2016), Waterloo-Kitchener, United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Dyck—John J., 95 (b. Feb. 13, 1920; Dec. 26, 2015), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Friesen—Ted. E., 95 (b. July 3, 1920; d. Feb. 15, 2016), Altona Mennonite, Man.

Hamm—Mary (nee Schmidt), 90 (b. Jan. 3, 1926; d. Feb. 14, 2016), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Hoover—Maurice Edwin, 93 (b. Sept. 10, 1922; d. Feb. 3, 2016), Wideman Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Leis—Marion (nee Jantzi), 89 (b. May 29, 1926; d. Feb. 14, 2016), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Peters—George, 92 (b. July 21, 1923; d. Feb. 14, 2016), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Peters—Liese (nee Richert), 79 (b. July 31, 1936; d. Jan. 8, 2016), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Roth—Cora (nee Brenneman), 88 (b. May 2, 1927; d. Feb. 11, 2016), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Schroeder—Elsie (nee Martens), 83 (b. Jan. 7, 1933; d. Feb. 11, 2016), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Schroeder—Henrietta, 96 (d. Nov. 7, 2015), Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

announcements within four months of the event.

Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to milestones@canadianmennonite.org.

A moment from yesterday



Freeman Simard is pictured in traditional indigenous regalia in the front of a church in Manigotagan, Man., which is about 200 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg. A small portable record player is helping Freeman as he participates in an event called 'Native awareness' around the Christmas season in 1979. Manigotagan is one of the communities where Jake and Trudie Unrau worked as Native Ministries staff with the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. Canadian Mennonites have a history of working with indigenous communities, including creating space for indigenous people to give voice to their concerns and priorities.

Text: Conrad Stoesz, Mennonite Heritage Centre

Photo: Jacob Unrau, Mennonite Heritage Centre

PERSONAL REFLECTION

People of the plains

BILL SCHROEDER

What is it with Mennonites and flat surroundings?

On a recent visit to the Netherlands we rented a car and drove to the province of Friesland, land of my forefathers. Specific Dutch locations linked to family ancestors have long been lost in the mists of time, notwithstanding my father's considerable research. After five centuries, three intervening countries and several refugee crises, it is understandable that precise documentation was not uppermost in family thoughts as they prepared, yet again, to flee to safer havens.

As we drove along the rural lanes I secretly hoped I might stumble upon a site where I would feel some sort of ancient Schroeder vibe, but that is a bit too "new agey" to be part of the Mennonite DNA. But somewhere near Schraard I duly found a farmer's field where I realized I could, with reasonable confidence, claim that my ancestors might well have lived within a 20-kilometre radius of where I stood. In fact, given the flatness of the area, I could see virtually the entire 20-kilometre radius from my vantage point.

Substitute windmills for grain elevators, a fading Old World architectural icon for its New World counterpart, and the terrain reminded me very much of my childhood home in Southern Manitoba.

What is it with Mennonites and flat surroundings? I grew up by the Morris River, a minor tributary of the Red. If you have ever heard of it, that's likely from periodic news reports of spring flooding. In 1966, when I was 10, the Morris burst its modest banks and merged with the flooding Red to create a lake that was, to use a phrase in its literal sense, ten miles wide and one foot deep.

Both my grandfathers emigrated from the U.S.S.R. in the 1920s, and surviving black-and-white photographs of Mennonite areas of the Ukraine reveal a similarly flat topography. Photography did not exist during our Prussian sojourn



PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL SCHROEDER

A Mennonite delegation in Chortitza, Russia, in 1922.

and Mennonites are not renowned for their landscape painting—Rembrandt stayed in Holland after all—but the Vistula Delta, where Mennonites lived, is another level, breadbasket-to-the-nation type of region.

Paraguay, Kansas, northern Mexico, southern Ontario, Saskatchewan—a similar topographic image springs to mind when one hears these place names, although Abbotsford and the British Columbia lower mainland may be the exception that proves the rule.

Perhaps our propensity for the plains is an extension of our dour worldview. Elders scouting new locations as potential sites for resettlement might have worried that scenic vistas of hills and valleys would distract us from the serious business of farming. If our sons and daughters are tempted by visual splendour, they might also covet fancy jewelry and flashy cars.

I am being facetious, of course. As an agricultural people, finding flat land to farm makes perfect sense. Every available hectare can be planted. The land can be

neatly subdivided into tidy rectangles that lend themselves to efficient cultivation. Less preparatory work, such as moving rocks aside like settlers in other parts of Canada needed to do, is necessary.

The 16th-century Friesian farmers had a good thing going. Although forced to migrate, seeking subsequent Babylons with similar surroundings was eminently sensible. ❧

Bill Schroeder was born in Paraguay and raised in southern Manitoba, of Russian Mennonite background. He currently teaches in Barry's Bay, Ont., where his view is blocked by hills and forests 100 metres from the door.

VIEWPOINT

Praise her at the city gates

MEGHAN FLORIAN

Over the last 10 years or so I've been unlearning the interpretation of Proverbs 31 that I grew up with, a reading that governed much of my adolescence and young adult life, as it does for so many girls in traditions that are concerned with raising godly women, ushering them into carefully defined and controlled ways of being feminine.

Charm is deceptive, beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

As a reminder that one's worth as a woman, or dare I say as a person, doesn't come from physical beauty, this seems fine, but the tyranny of effortless perfection can take on other equally insidious forms. The P31 woman stands in my mind alongside supermodels and professional athletes, an archetype of a different sort, a seemingly unreachable standard to which we nonetheless compare ourselves.

I distrust archetypes. There is too little grace in them, too little of God's love for our imperfect selves.

We might emphasize how independent and industrious she is, making clothing, buying property, selling merchandise—she's a producer, not a consumer. Her contemporary equivalent would no doubt have an Etsy shop, and grow and can her own vegetables. She probably does CrossFit or runs marathons, too—not to be beautiful, for beauty is vain, but to be strong. Reading the passage through this lens, I think of every overachieving, over-extended woman I've known. And I honestly wonder, if she is really doing all of this, when does she sleep?

The text says that her lamp does not go out at night, so perhaps she doesn't.

In Proverbs 31, I find a warning about how our notions of virtue can crush us. When I speak with the women around me, they echo my sense that this passage

is a burden—and not the holy kind. Refusing to acknowledge the pain such interpretations have caused perpetuates a cycle of self-doubt and perfectionism that is far removed from who we believe God to be. And so, instead of praising women for “doing it all,” I like to imagine a world where women are multidimensional, imperfect, with needs and desires of their own.

I am many things, as are each of you—women and men alike. But I am not a woman of valour. I don't make my own clothes. My garden consists of a single tomato plant. If my alarm goes off before daylight, I will get up, but I will grumble—even though I'm only going as far as the next room to write in my pyjamas, rather than off to consider a field and buy it. I'm not weaving wool and flax; I'm no good with a distaff.

I'm sure you could make a list of your own, of the ways you fall short of ideals, the reasons you don't deserve to be praised at the city gates by your partner. And while there is much to admire in this passage, much that men as well as women might reasonably emulate, I come back again and again to the fact that society and the church expect so much of women, while still offering so little in return.

Some days, I wear strength and dignity, though often I don't. And we need to be communities where, on the days our strength fails us, others will pick us up. Places where we can speak words of wisdom, but, likewise, places to say the hard things in a community of love that can hear the difficult words, too. Places where it is safe to name our needs, to acknowledge our insufficiency, to ask and receive help.

Charm is deceptive, as Proverbs 31 says. And I think this valiant,

I'm sure you could make a list of your own, of the ways you fall short of ideals, the reasons you don't deserve to be praised at the city gates by your partner.

hardworking “How does she do it?” Proverbs 31 woman is charming. Rather than a mere prescription for “womanhood,” I hear in this passage a warning against the ways society continues to break women's spirits by expecting them to do it all, have it all and give it all away to those around them—always with a smile, for “*she laughs at the days to come.*” And that image is perhaps the worst deception of all—woman as superhuman, perfect without her efforts ever showing sweat and exhaustion—rather than a fellow human who must cope with the inevitable limitations and heartbreaks of our precarious lives.

What if women didn't have to be exceptional in order to be praised at the city gates? What if the options weren't as cut and dried as fleeting beauty versus this perfect, industrious standard of godliness? What if we imaged a Proverbs 31 woman who, like every other person I have ever known, had good days and bad days, and needed to be loved on every single one of them? ❧



Meghan Florian earned a master of theological studies degree from Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C., where she lives, writes and teaches, and a master of

fine arts degree from Queens University of Charlotte, N.C. She is the creative writing editor at The Other Journal. Her work has been published by The Chronicle of Higher Education, Salon, Religion Dispatches, Mennonite World Review and elsewhere. She blogs at femmonite.com, from which this piece was derived.

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Volunteering: Is it still part of our DNA?

STORY AND PHOTO
BY WALTRUDE GORTZEN

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10 NIV).

Many times over the years I have been asked to volunteer here or there, but at the same time I have also been asked, "Why do you do this to yourself?" This has got me thinking, "Why do I volunteer?" Or



The Western Hmong Mennonite Church group prepares spring rolls at the Mennonite Central Committee B.C. annual festival.

rather, "Why do people not volunteer?" Granted that not everyone can physically be a volunteer for various reasons, but if the chance presents itself, why not consider it, given that volunteering can be done so readily from within or outside your home, alone or with a group of friends, during the day or even at night when you can't sleep.

And you can set your own schedule!

Personally, I find volunteering to be fun and invigorating. It has provided me with opportunities that I might otherwise never have encountered. It has brought a multitude of new and interesting friends into my life, and has been extremely educational on so many levels. Also, it has broken down myriad barriers, such as ethnic, religious, gender, social status, age and language, to name just a few. And to top it off, I've been told many times that being Mennonite makes volunteering part of our DNA.

But don't just take my word for these positive aspects

of volunteering. The Bible Gateway website notes that there are 188 Bible verses about "serving," including the verse quoted above. Also, typing the words "benefits of volunteering" into my Google search bar yielded 48 million results from which I chose the "Top 10" that rose to the surface:

10. **IT WILL** change us for the better.
9. **IT WILL** broaden our horizons.
8. **IT TEACHES** us new skills.
7. **IT MOTIVATES** us.
- 6 **IT ALLOWS** us to become part of our community.
5. **IT GENERATES** a feeling of having achieved something.
4. **IT IS** good for mental, physical and emotional health.
3. **IT LOOKS** good on our resume when looking for a new job.
2. **IT WILL** enhance our career opportunities.
1. **IT COULD** even make us live longer, according to some reports.

Wow! So much has been written about volunteering and yet it seems that volunteers should really be labelled an "endangered species" since they are in such short supply in today's society. Most churches, non-profit organizations and schools—including Mennonite ones—complain regularly that they do not have enough volunteers.

Meanwhile, we all know that as Christians we are supposed to love our neighbours and are instructed to serve others with whatever gifts we have received wherever we can. We also know that the benefits of "giving of ourselves," or "volunteering," are many.

And opportunities for service are everywhere. Right now, for example, Mennonite Women Canada needs your help, as do each of the provincial women's ministries across the country, from Mennonite Church B.C. to MC Eastern Canada. So please contact your provincial women's rep if you're interested or have any questions.

So why not step up to the plate, find a niche that suits your calling and, as faithful stewards of God's grace, practise and pass on that volunteering DNA to the next generation! Clearly, volunteering is good for us! When we feel useful or helpful, it just makes us feel happier—and happiness is said to be contagious! ☺



Waltrude Gortzen is MC B.C.'s women's ministry representative for Mennonite Women Canada.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

COVER STORY

Worship warms the human soul

Annual School for Ministers focusses on God, congregation, style

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

WATERLOO, ONT.

Christine Longhurst believes that the style of worship and its elements—songs, music, liturgy, readings, sermons, sharing and prayer—is of least importance for congregations, pastors and worship planners.

Longhurst, who teaches at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg and leads workshops and weekend seminars on worship in churches across Canada, told participants at this year's Mennonite Church Eastern Canada School for Ministers, that of first importance is whether worship is focussed on God. Do the elements help people to know and experience that God is present?

"Worship music," a euphemism for contemporary choruses, "is a gift to the church as it is focussed on God," she said during the three-day event at Conrad Grebel University College from Feb. 17 to 19.

Of second importance is making worship a mostly collective experience, rather than an individual one. Anabaptist worship, she said, is about the group focussing on God together. Worship, according to Longhurst, will have elements focussing on God and others, like sharing and prayers of intercession, which are focussed on the people. As well, there will be times that are communal, like communion, and times that are individual, like silence.

Beginning with a focus on what, for many, is now old hat, she looked at how the sea change of postmodernity and the end of Christendom have created a period of disorientation for all institutions, including the church. The past orientation that worked for worshippers, pastors and

planners is gone, replaced by a sense of loss, according to Longhurst.

But instead of seeing this as a loss, she encouraged the pastors present to think about the opportunities of the time between now and the re-orientation that always follows such a shift. The Reformation, including the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement, arose in just such a time in the change from medieval thinking to modern thinking. The Anabaptist focus on knowing the will of God through the revealed Word of God was very much part of the

Renaissance and Enlightenment focus on knowledge and rationality.

The morning plenary sessions were accompanied by worship times focussing on coming to drink and being renewed from the work of ministry, while afternoon workshops were offered on topics like worshipping with seniors, an outdoor experience of meeting God in nature, singing as a way of transitioning in worship, multicultural worship and silence in worship.

On Feb. 20, Longhurst led a half-day workshop for lay worship leaders and planners focussing on practical aspects of worship. Under her guidance, Lil Quanz of the Wilmot Mennonite Church Formation and Worship Team found herself evaluating the next morning's worship in terms of whether a part of worship was from God, to God, toward fellow worshippers or some combination of these. Longhurst encouraged participants to use simple arrows alongside the items in the order of worship so congregants would know where they were coming from and to whom they were directed. ☼



Sharon Brown, left, of Wellesley, Ont., chats with Christine Longhurst, the keynote speaker at Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's 39th annual School for Ministers, held at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, from Feb. 17 to 19.

God-Faith-People

A covenant celebration at Assembly 2016

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

This summer, our church family will celebrate being a covenant people at Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2016, God-Faith-People in downtown Saskatoon from July 6 to 10.

Assembly 2016 consists of two programs: the general assembly and another for youth, with several opportunities for integration between the two. Both are shaped around a paraphrased text from Jeremiah 31:33: *"This is the covenant . . . I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."*

Keynote speakers for the general assembly include Safwat Marzouk, assistant professor of Old Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and Willard Metzger, MC Canada's executive director. Youth Assembly keynote speakers are Chris Lenshyn, associate pastor for youth and young adults at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Mission, B.C., and Reece Friesen, a pastor at Ebenezer Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., and the graphic artist who created *Pax Avalon*, a graphic novel about the struggle to bring peace and order to our lives.

This year, attendees can choose up to seven seminars from a selection of almost 50. Learn more about the Doctrine of Discovery and how it still impacts Canada's Indigenous Peoples today, or discover the biblical lines of connection between creation care and faith. Hear stories from Witness workers about the church at work in the world, or gain deeper insight into the relationship between young adults and the church. Seminars will also discuss aspects of the concluding reports from the Being a Faithful Church process and the Future Directions Task Force in preparation for Assembly 2016 resolutions.

Youth Assembly planners have worked hard at creating a balance between youth-only and intergenerational activities. There will be shared, as well as youth-specific, seminars, worship services and activities.

Between plenary sessions and seminars, attendees can explore the CommonWord Book and Resource Centre kiosk and its selection of resources that comprise the largest Anabaptist-themed collection in Canada. There will also be a juried art exhibit pulled together specifically for this event. Visit the Prayer Room, or have coffee with friends you haven't seen in a while.

"It's going to be a fabulous event," says Coreena Stewart, MC Canada's chief administrative officer and Assembly 2016 coordinator. "We're thrilled with the venue, our line-up of speakers and seminars, and we are looking forward to hosting our Mennonite Church Canada family in Saskatoon this summer."

God-Faith-People takes place at TCU Place, Saskatoon's arts and convention centre. Located in downtown Saskatoon, TCU Place promises spacious rooms and



The logo for Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2016 reminds us that 'faith' is our connection between 'God' and the 'people' (Jeremiah 31:33). The dove of peace is our common symbol across MC Canada and of the peace-building work to which we are called. The segmented globe reveals the cross at the centre. The hands reaching to each other symbolize how God yearns for his people to love, support and join one another in the redeeming work of Christ. The colours reflect the harmony we seek in the midst of our diversity.

facilities, and is close to many tourist attractions and services.

To learn more and register, visit bit.ly/saskatoon2016 before the closing date of June 15.



Keeping up with #thecovenantcrew

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Kirsten Hamm-Epp says Saskatchewan has a reputation for hosting terrific gatherings, and planners for the Mennonite Church Canada Youth Assembly 2016, Faith-God-People (aka #thecovenantcrew) are eager to continue the trend. "People are really excited to host this event here in Saskatoon," says MC Saskatchewan's area church minister for youth programming.

The event is designed to explore the many ways God continually invites us to board the ship and be part of the everlasting covenant. The youth gathering coincides with MC Canada's general assembly, God-Faith-People, July 6 to 10 at TCU Place in downtown Saskatoon.

Hamm-Epp and other Youth Assembly 2016 planners are striving to provide youth with activities they can get excited about: a pool party, crazy fun gym games, a campfire complete with a marshmallow roast, and space for their voices to be heard.

Hamm-Epp emphasizes there will also be intentional times that bring adults and youth together. "Youth aren't just the future of the church, they are part of the church now," she says. "There are important discussions going on in the church and youth need to be a part of that."

Planners are bringing youth up-to-speed on the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process and Future Directions Task

MC CANADA PHOTO



The planning committee for Youth Assembly 2016, God-Faith-People—aka #thecovenantcrew, meet at Shekinah Retreat Centre, about 50 kilometres north of Saskatoon and the location for a Friday evening event. Pictured from left to right: Kirsten Hamm-Epp, Val White, Sarah Unrau and Katie Wiebe.

Force discussions in advance of Assembly 2016, under the leadership of Moses Falco, pastor at Sterling Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. Each morning, youth will have a chance to further discuss matters on the adult assembly agenda for the day.

Churches are encouraged to register one official youth delegate and have multiple youth attend the BFC and Future Directions sessions, so that they can contribute to the discussions.

“We are encouraging youth groups to use the pre-assembly curriculum, which will be sent out in April,” Hamm-Epp says. “This will give them time to discuss their views well ahead of the event with their entire group. Those who take part in the discussion sessions can then participate as representatives of all the youth in their congregation.”

“The votes we’re having this summer will have a big impact on our future church family,” Hamm-Epp says. “Not to have youth involved in this process would be a missed opportunity. From what I’ve seen here in Saskatchewan and across the country, our youth want to be involved. I think that especially at this assembly the adults need to hear youth voices and the youth need to hear what the adults are saying.”

To the youth, she says, “Here’s your opportunity. Take it. Come and be involved.” ❧



To learn more about, and register for, God-Faith-People #thecovenantcrew, visit bit.ly/covenantcrew.

/// Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Ontario

• **CHRIS HUTTON** became the minister at The First Mennonite Church, Vineland, on Oct. 1, 2015. After receiving a BA and MA in language and literature at the University of Waterloo, he was a chaplain with Navigators of Canada and a church planter with The Meeting House in Ottawa. Although not born into the Mennonite church family, he and his wife Michele and have found themselves at home within Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.



• **RYAN JANTZI** became the minister of Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite Church on Jan. 1. He has a BA in Christian ministry from Briercrest College, Caronport, Sask., and an MDiv from Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Langley, B.C. He most recently worked as a bi-vocational pastor with Kingsfield-Clinton for five years. He grew up at Maple View Mennonite Church, Wellesley, and his connection with Zurich Mennonite Church began in 2006, when he did a four-month internship shadowing Pastor Phil Wagler. He is married to Brittany Jantzi and they have three children.



• **HEATHER WHITEHOUSE** was licensed toward ordination on Jan. 24 at Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil. She received an MDiv from Brock University and also completed courses in clinical pastoral education and spiritual direction. She has served as associate pastor at Welcome Inn Church and has been serving as the community chaplain at Bethany Mennonite Church.



• **CLARE LEBOLD** began as the interim minister at the Gathering Church, Kitchener, on Jan. 4, sharing leadership with Catherine Gitzel. He was involved in education for 34 years as a teacher and principal at Niagara Christian Collegiate, Fort Erie. Since 2007 he has served as pastor in several Brethren in Christ churches, and since 2009 has also served as associate professor at Redeemer University College in the Faculty of Education.



—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Pastoral transitions in Saskatchewan

• **EMILY TOEWS** has completed her term as pastor at North Star Mennonite Church in Drake, Sask., a position she held for the past nine years. She and her husband, **BRYCE MILLER**, will be moving to Winnipeg, where Miller will begin as pastor of Jubilee Mennonite in late spring. Toews is currently on maternity leave, following the Nov. 25, 2015, birth of the couple’s son, Luke.



• **RYAN SIEMENS** has resigned as pastor of Grace Mennonite Church, Prince Albert, Sask., in order to devote more time to his role as Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s area church minister of congregational and pastoral relations. Siemens sees a need for increased communication between the area church and member congregations, and sees his role as a conduit for this. “I hope to strengthen our identity and build relationships” within the area church, he says. Siemens’s last Sunday at Grace Mennonite will be March 27.



• **CLAIRE EWERT FISHER**, former executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, will begin April 1 as transitional pastor at Grace Mennonite on a half-time basis.



—BY DONNA SCHULZ

MC B.C. considers call to missional engagement

Reconciling and relating the theme of annual sessions

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Reconciliation and relationships were the theme when Mennonite Church B.C. representatives met for their annual sessions late last month. The theme of “Leadership in a broken world: Walking in God’s mission of reconciliation” carried through the weekend, beginning with recognition that the meeting place of Level Ground Mennonite Church sits on Coast Salish territory, a gesture of respect to the hosting indigenous people.

Guest speaker Betty Pries, a mediation consultant with ARC Ministries in Ontario, led the group through reflections at roundtable discussions on how reconciliation works in the church—and how it often doesn’t. Pries warned against the danger of falling into “us-them” thinking that serves to alienate, rather than include. Drawing on Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, Pries observed that the church at Corinth was a community struggling with challenging values and a congregation rife with conflict.

“Reconciliation is going beyond the

chasm that is self and other, us and them,” said Pries, who had spoken the day before at the LEAD conference with the theme of “Nurturing a congregational spirit of reconciliation.”

Stories continued the reconciliation theme. Executive minister Garry Janzen told of his son and daughter-in-law choosing to have an indigenous elder come to their 2014 wedding, both to welcome guests to indigenous territory and to bear witness to their marriage.

Continuing on that theme, Henry Krause of Langley Mennonite Fellowship told of his congregation’s relating to the Kwantlen First Nation and formally acknowledging that its church building sits on Stó:lō Kwantlen land. “The idea of breaking down walls is what we’re about,” he said.

Barry Lesser of Yarrow United Mennonite Church related a story about strengthening relationships in the community, and how one couple from his congregation made friends with neighbours by bringing them homemade soup and buns

that they ate together.

Rob Wiebe of Church of the Way, Granisle, shared of befriending an avowed atheist in his community, whose heart was softened because of Wiebe’s walking alongside and acceptance of him.

Pastor Tran Dinh Khanh of the Mennonite Church in Cambodia, who was ordained through MC B.C. in June 2014, was a guest at these meetings along with his wife. Khanh shared stories of the work of the church in Cambodia, including education, agriculture, food distribution and driving out evil spirits. “Many families are changed by the power of God,” he said through a translator.

There were hellos and goodbyes. Northgate Anabaptist Fellowship of Dawson Creek, formerly a member of the B.C. Mennonite Brethren Conference, was officially welcomed as a member congregation of MC B.C. A litany of thanks was read for Surrey Japanese Mennonite Church that closed this past year.

Delegates discussed recommendations from MC Canada’s Future Directions Task Force’s final report, to be considered at this summer’s MC Canada assembly in Saskatoon. Although the necessity for restructuring national and area church organizations generated both questions and lively discussion, the recommendation for approval was passed handily with 89 per cent of the vote. ❧

See more on *Future Directions* at bit.ly/future-directions-mcbc.



Concluding the annual Mennonite Church B.C. sessions, Pastor Rob Ayer of Crossroads Community Church, Chilliwack, left, leads the group in a prayer session for leaders and staff of MC B.C. and MC Canada.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

PHOTO COURTESY OF JANE PHILPOTT



Federal Health Minister Jane Philpott with her husband Pep and their four children.

A Liberal dose of generosity

An interview with federal Health Minister Jane Philpott

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

Jane Philpott was elected to Parliament and appointed Health Minister last fall. Prior to that, she worked as a family physician in Canada and also in Niger from 1989-98. Philpott and her husband Pep have four children and attend Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville, Ont. The minister spoke by phone with Canadian Mennonite's Will Braun on Feb. 29.

WB: What Liberal action are you most proud of so far?

JP: Our work to bring 25,000, and now more, Syrian refugees to Canada and to welcome them as permanent residents of Canada, and in doing so to respond to one of the greatest humanitarian crises of our time.

WB: During the campaign you said the election was “about the soul of our nation.” How do you think the soul of a nation is shaped?

JP: I think the soul is shaped by the values that feed into it and feed into the decisions that are made. I feel like the campaign was a choice between whether we wanted a nation where decisions were made on the basis of fear and division, and sometimes

anger. I was proud that my party was offering policies that were driven by compassion and generosity and equity. I want to be part of a nation that looks on people fundamentally from the perspective of how we care for one another. I think ultimately that's how Canadians look upon one another and I think that's part of why we were successful.

WB: In Manitoba's Bible Belt, where I live, a majority of Mennonites vote Conservative and don't like the word liberal, whether it is capitalized or not. What does the word mean to you?

JP: To me, it means generosity of spirit; it means fair access to opportunities. As a person of faith, to me liberal policies are very much in keeping with my values of

serving people and looking out for the interests of others.

WB: Many Mennonites are old. Your mandate letter from Mr. Trudeau charges you with increasing the availability of home care. Do you have a sense of when changes could be expected?

JP: The work on home care will be part of my work toward negotiating a new health accord with the provinces and territories, who are primarily responsible for the delivery of care. So it's probably a number of months away. It's going to take us the better part of this year to negotiate the details of that accord. In the meantime, I think some provinces are starting to try to work on improving access to home care.

WB: Legislation to guide physician-assisted dying is required by June 6. What is your assessment of the safeguards recommended in the recent special joint committee report?

JP: The report just came out a few days ago. I've read it all and I'm in the process of reviewing it. I will be spending some time even this week talking to colleagues in my department and in Justice in terms of how to respond to it. I appreciate the work of the committee.

We're starting to hear some consensus around some of the challenging issues in terms of the work of this special joint committee lining up closely to some of the other reports we've received from the external panel and from the provincial and territorial committee as well, so I think that will be quite helpful to us.

WB: Health care costs in Canada were an estimated \$220 billion in 2015. Hospitals, drugs and doctors are the big ticket items. What role do you see for preventive measures that reduce the need for them?

JP: I'm responsible for the Public Health Agency of Canada, so I'm actually spending quite a bit of time with them looking at some preventative health measures—things like making sure Canadians are more active, that they're making healthier choices in eating, that we're trying to find ways to make sure that people's intake of salt and sugar are better.

The other thing that I would say is that—you've possibly heard the term “social

determinants of health”—and that, in fact, what helps people to be healthy is to be able to access a job, get a good education, have adequate housing, to be able to rise out of poverty. So I’ve said to my cabinet colleagues that, in terms of actually making people healthy, it’s everybody’s job in the cabinet.

WB: *Health indicators in indigenous communities are grim and diet is a significant factor contributing to many health issues, including diabetes. One remote Manitoba first nation is addressing health and other issues by growing healthy food locally. Ironically, a carrot imported by the non-indigenous monopoly retailer is subsidized by Ottawa’s “Nutrition North” program, but a locally grown carrot is not. Would you see potential for using health dollars to put first nation-grown food on equal footing with subsidized fly-in food?*

JP: I will look into that situation because, of course, if people can get access to good-quality, healthy, locally grown food, then that is certainly preferable.

WB: *On election night, Mr. Trudeau said, “Conservatives are not our enemies, they are our neighbours.” How do you include the other parties in your work?*

JP: No party has a monopoly on good ideas. I try wherever possible to encourage the good work of my colleagues, whatever party they’re from. If people are asking me questions [in the House] that I think are good questions, or they are referring to good work that they’re doing, I am happy to support and endorse the work of my colleagues, regardless of the party that they are in. I think our emphasis will continue to be that we need to work together and, if possible, not make these issues partisan issues. [In] the matters that I’m facing, like the health of indigenous communities, there’s no room for partisan politics.

I don’t have patience for political games in those kinds of matters. If you’ve got a good idea, I don’t care what party you’re from. Tell me your idea and let’s try to find ways to look for solutions.

WB: *Is there anything else you would like to say to the Canadian Mennonite audience?*

JP: I would just say, the things that I value about the Mennonite heritage are the focus on peace and social justice and caring for the earth, and I think those are values that

are tremendously important to someone like me in trying to serve my community in a political portfolio. ☘

Homeless people in Abbotsford told to move

MCC pledges to continue ‘good neighbour’ policy

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Tents in Abbotsford’s largest homeless camp, an obvious fixture on Gladys Avenue since 2013, were gradually being dismantled on Feb. 10, the deadline set by the city for residents to remove their belongings.

Abbotsford city council adopted a new bylaw earlier in the month that allows overnight camping only in some city parks, and designated land on Gladys Avenue as “highway,” thus making the homeless camp illegal. Mayor Henry Braun cited safety issues in the decision.

With the camp located directly across the street from the MCC Centre that houses the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C. headquarters and thrift shop, MCC found itself in an ideal position to minister to the down-and-out members of the community. It had supplied water, clothing, hand-washing stations and portable toilets at the camp, and has been serving twice-weekly meals to those in need.

Homelessness has been an ongoing problem in Abbotsford, sometimes attracting national attention. City government officials and homeless advocacy groups have discussed various solutions to deal with the situation and hope eventually to find more permanent housing for camp residents. A temporary 40-bed cold-weather shelter erected last December was full within 10 days. In a controversial 2014 decision, council failed to pass a proposal to establish a 20-suite housing unit for homeless men in downtown Abbotsford.

“Homelessness is an issue in Abbotsford

and we will work with the city and other groups for a sustainable solution,” said Scott Campbell, MCC B.C.’s advancement director. “We want to make sure all residents have access to services they need.”

Jane Ngogu, MCC B.C.’s homeless advocate, and other MCC personnel have maintained close contact with both the city and the homeless, sometimes acting as a bridge between the two. Meals and clothing distribution will continue despite the camp’s dismantling.

“We saw these folks as neighbours and have been trying to treat them as such,” said Campbell, who added that there has been a sense of growing trust and increased interactions between MCC and the homeless camp residents. “Where there are folks in need, that’s where we want to be.” ☘



The homeless camp on Gladys Avenue in Abbotsford, B.C., just across the street from the MCC Centre, has been dismantled by order of the city. MCC plans to continue relating to the homeless residents of the community.



Charles Olfert crosses the river Q'eqchi' style.

Lessons from the cloud forest

A Saskatoon architect sees his 'sustainable' project come to life in Guatemala

By DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Not many Canadian architects can say they've built a school in the Guatemalan cloud forest, but Charles Olfert can. A member of Wildwood Mennonite Church and a partner at AODBT Architecture and Interior Design, Olfert speaks enthusiastically about the project.

In 2005, he and his wife Leila travelled to Guatemala with friends Lorne and Lill Friesen, and a group of 14 Rosthern Junior College (RJC) students. The trip was part

of RJC's Alternative Service and Learning Opportunities program. Their hosts were Rob and Tara Cahill, who were working under Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Heifer International, respectively.

When the Cahills completed their terms with MCC and Heifer, they remained in Guatemala, developing a non-profit organization called Community Cloud Forest Conservation. With programs in



The first building (called the small quetzal) is completed.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHARLES OLFERT



Q'eqchi' teachers with students in one of the Grade 6 environmental classes, learning about birds.

education, reforestation, leadership training, community development and agroecology, Cloud Forest needed a structure to serve as both school and research facility. In 2010, they approached Olfert to design it for them.

What began as a square box gradually took on a unique curved shape, resembling a bird with a long tail. Olfert and his team began calling the structure a quetzal, after Guatemala's national bird. The final design consists of two quetzals with their tails interlocking. The smaller, 930-square-metre quetzal is completed, and work has begun on the larger, 1,100-square-metre structure.

In January, the Olferts and the Friesens returned to Guatemala to see the project and help with construction. "The building was kind of like what I imagined," says Olfert, "but you have to see it to really understand. It's so completely sustainable."

Construction materials are almost all locally sourced, from the foundation stones to the native pine window frames. Eucalyptus trees, an introduced species, are also used, their trunks as beams and their branches as cordwood in the walls. For every mature eucalyptus tree that's harvested, 20 native trees are planted, replenishing the forest. Shingles made from recycled rubber tires are imported from the United States.

Solar panels and a mini-hydro system generate electricity. Fresh water condenses in tanks up the hill. Wood-burning stoves heat the building and also the water for

cooking and showering. Grey water is channelled toward garden beds seeded with corn and other phosphate-loving plants. Human waste layered with sawdust is composted for use in the vegetable garden.

Cloud Forest offers a 25-day leadership-training program for young indigenous Q'eqchi' women. As an incentive to finish high school, they are awarded a \$150 U.S. scholarship upon successful completion of their school year, during which they learn about the vegetables their Mayan ancestors ate by cultivating them in the school's gardens and preparing them in the school's kitchen. When they return to their homes, they take not only their newfound knowledge of agro-ecology, but plants with which to begin their own gardens.

Some of these women are trained to teach ecology to a younger generation. Cloud Forest's environmental education program for Grade 6 students has become part of a government curriculum. Students learn about birds and wildlife, the cloud forest and ecological agricultural practices.

"Seeing a building like this that is so sustainable makes you just shake your head at how wasteful we are [here in Canada]," says Olfert. "Nothing is thrown away," he marvels. "The construction doesn't even have waste." He doesn't know yet how this will influence his work, but says, "I'm going to think more about how that can be done here. We should be able to do at least a little bit more."

Olfert also notes that the Q'eqchi' people possess a marked tolerance towards their environment. They'll walk barefoot through mud on a 12-degree C day and do not seem bothered by it. Here in Canada, people can easily adjust their thermostats and so are intolerant to changes in

temperature and air movement. If people were more willing to open windows or dress more warmly, instead of adjusting thermostats, they would be dollars ahead, he says. "I don't quite know how to make that part of my practice, because I can't say to people, 'You need to put on sweaters and I'll make your building cheaper,'" he says. "But we'll have the conversation now. I've got some basis for discussion."

Olfert says he and his friends enjoyed "a fair bit of discussion around theology" in Guatemala. They questioned how Christians should work in a developing world. He confesses he's not comfortable imposing his faith on others, and says, "It was interesting to see how Rob and Tara

[Cahill] work with this."

"The Q'eqchi' people are very spiritual," he adds. "They had prayer meetings every morning before they went to work." This isn't something one sees Canadian believers doing. "Seeing that challenges us to be a bit more engaged," he admits. "You don't just do church on Sunday." ❧

For more photos and a video, visit canadianmennonite.org/cloud-forest. Learn more about Community Cloud Forest Conservation at cloudforestconservation.org/.



/// Briefly noted

South Sudan on 'brink of catastrophe': UN

While much of the world's attention is focussed on the crisis in Syria and the urgent needs of people affected by that conflict, millions of people in South Sudan continue to face unprecedented levels of food insecurity, according to a news release issued by the United Nations on Feb. 8. "There are many people who are suffering in South Sudan right now," says Barbara Macdonald, Canadian Foodgrains Bank's international programs director. "The upcoming dry season is going to cause even more hardship for people who are already struggling to get by." Since the conflict in South Sudan broke out in December 2013, more than two million people have been displaced by the fighting, either into other areas of the country or into neighbouring countries. Since then, Foodgrains Bank members have committed more than \$4.5 million to nine different projects.

—Canadian Foodgrains Bank

/// Briefly Noted

Food crisis looms in Ethiopia

A food crisis is brewing in Ethiopia. The effects of this year's El Niño weather pattern combined with climate change to produce the worst drought in 30 years. Aid agencies are bracing for a humanitarian crisis in eastern and southern Africa. As many as 10 million people may require food assistance. On a recent visit to Ethiopia, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said El Niño is likely to affect food security in the region for the next decade. In response to the crisis, Canadian Foodgrains Bank has approved four new projects totalling \$2.25 million through its members. World Renew, Mennonite Central Committee, World Relief Canada and Canadian Lutheran World Relief are responding to the food crisis with emergency food rations, food-for-work programs, agricultural training and irrigation systems to assist with growing crops. In December, the Canadian government announced \$30 million in emergency humanitarian assistance funding for Ethiopia.

—BY J. NEUFELD



José (Chepe) Toc demonstrates his chainsaw skills.

ARTBEAT

One camera, five continents, seven farming communities

Historian and filmmaker examine Mennonite relationships with the land

STORY AND PHOTO BY J. NEUFELD

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

A filmmaker is teaming up with a historian to document how Mennonite farmers relate to the land in seven different communities around the globe.

“When you get down to grassroots, people bring their faith to bear on their relationship to the land in very different ways,” says Mennonite historian Royden Loewen. “If you go to Altona [Man.] and ask a farmer there who farms 3,000 acres of land, ‘How does your faith affect your farming?’ they’ll say, ‘Well I donate a portion of my crops to Canadian Foodgrains Bank! If you go to Java and talk to a Javanese farmer, they’ll say, ‘God can become angry at you and there will be storms! The land has a spiritual quality to it. If you talk to a Low German-speaking person in Omsk, Siberia, who spent their life on a collective farm, faith means feeding their family in a particular way. In Bolivia, most of the Mennonites are Old Colony people. They’re on the farm because they’ve been called to live a life of simplicity. But they don’t have anything against using GMO [genetically modified organism] crops. So they’ll have a steel-wheeled tractor pulling Monsanto’s Roundup onto GMO soybeans.

“People draw the line on ethics and religion in very different ways,” he says.

In the coming months, Paul Plett, a Winnipeg-based filmmaker, plans to take his camera to seven Mennonite communities in Bolivia, Siberia, the Netherlands, Zimbabwe, Java, Manitoba and Iowa.

The film will be based on a three-year research project led by Loewen, who chairs the Mennonite studies department at the University of Winnipeg. In 2013, Loewen received a \$239,000 grant from the Social

Sciences Humanities Research Council of Canada to explore Mennonite relationships with the land in different parts of the world. He put together a team of seven graduate and post-graduate researchers to conduct interviews and research in seven Mennonite communities.

Other studies have examined Mennonite relationships to the land, says Loewen, but what sets his project apart is its global scope and its historical nature. “The research . . . will tell us what happened in the 20th century in the last four generations,” he says. “What happens during a time when there is a fundamental shift in the way humans relate to land?”

During the 20th century, agriculture around the world was dramatically altered by four things, he says:

- **THE MECHANIZATION** of technology.
- **THE DEVELOPMENT** of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

- **GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT** in how farmers cultivate their land.
- **THE GLOBALIZATION** of food markets.

The research will compare how Mennonite farmers around the world have faced those major changes.

“It’s by comparison that things become more clear to us,” says Loewen. “The different environments are quite striking. We’re comparing the global South and North, we’re comparing the Communist central plan government with governments from the Global South, which had the UN on their backs to join the ‘green revolution’ and modernize their farming. . . . We’re dealing with post-colonial environments. . . . All the big global complexities of the 20th century are seen through the prisms of these microcosms.”

The research project will wrap up in the fall of 2016 with a conference at the University of Winnipeg. *The Journal of Mennonite Studies* will publish research papers on the seven communities.

With the research, Loewen plans to write a book called *Seven Points on Earth*. Meanwhile, Plett is raising funds to allow him to travel and shoot the film. Any donation to the project made through Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg will receive a tax-deductible receipt.

“This story fascinates me and I really want to tell it in the best way possible,” says Plett. “To do that, I need to visit all seven locations.” ❧



Paul Plett, right, is filming a documentary about a research project led by Royden Loewen, left, that explores how Mennonites around the globe relate to their physical environment.



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Jono Cullar was honoured with a 20 under 35 award from MEDA for exemplifying values of faith, service and an entrepreneurial spirit.

canadianmennonite.org/honouree-faith-service



Janzen explores Mennonite representation in Mexican culture

Scholar Rebecca Janzen found signs that the Mexican culture and the Low German Mennonite culture can co-exist peacefully while maintaining their differences.

canadianmennonite.org/janzen-mennonite-mexico



Murray to speak at Rosthern

Stuart Murray, author of *The Naked Anabaptist*, will be the featured speaker at a fundraising dinner for Canadian Mennonite in Rosthern, Sask. The public is invited.

canadianmennonite.org/stories/murray-speak



AMBS recognized for focus on faith and ecology

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary was recognized on a list of 28 North American seminaries that excel in offering courses on faith and ecology.

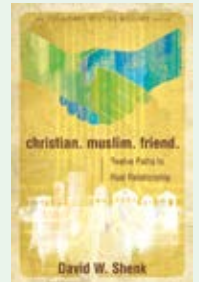
canadianmennonite.org/ambs-faith-ecology



Briefly noted

Book by David Shenk receives award

David Shenk's book, *Christian. Muslim. Friend: Twelve Paths to Real Relationship*, published by Herald Press, an imprint of MennoMedia, was on the list of *Christianity Today's* 2016 book awards.



It was one of 12 awards, winning in the Missions/The Global Church category. *Christianity Today* magazine chooses books that it considers most likely to shape evangelical life, thought and culture.

—From *Christianity Today*

Briefly noted

Guitar sale aids peace ministry

Just before Christmas a brand new Epiphone DR-100N guitar, autographed by more than a dozen well-known Canadian musicians at the 2014 Juno Awards in Winnipeg, was sold on eBay for \$750. Proceeds will support Coffee for Peace, a fair-trade business founded by Joji Pantoja, a Mennonite Church Canada worker in the Philippines.

—Mennonite Church Canada

GRAPHIC COURTESY OF MC CANADA



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GOD FAITH PEOPLE



Mennonite Church Canada Assembly Saskatoon, Sask July 6-10, 2016

This is the covenant... I will write it on their hearts;
and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
- Jeremiah 31:33



Keynote Speaker

Safwat Marzouk, assistant professor of Old Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, will bring his love of teaching, a pastoral heart, and scholarly curiosity of ancient texts to Assembly 2016. Safwat comes from Egypt, where he grew up with the daily influence of interfaith dialogue among Christians, Jews and Muslims. As a Christian, Safwat will help bring a better understanding of God's vision of Shalom from an Old Testament perspective. He is an ordained member of The Synod of the Nile, a counterpart to the Presbyterian Church, and was a pastor in Egypt while completing doctoral studies.

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registration open now

young voices

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VALERIE WHITE



Naomi Chan and Alexa Nicolle enjoy International Student Days at RJC.



Students eat sticky rice, stir fry, spring rolls, dumplings and more on Hong Kong Day at RJC.



Siblings Christie, left, and Valen Lim tell their peers at RJC about their home country on Malaysia Day.

Helping students see beyond stereotypes

International Student Days at Rosthern Junior College celebrate school's diversity

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

When Naomi Chan moved from Hong Kong to Rosthern, Sask., for school, the only thing she knew about the town is that it's small.

Chan, an international student at Rosthern Junior College (RJC), went from living in one of the world's most densely populated metropolises, to living 40 minutes north of Saskatoon in a town of just 1,600 and attending a school with a student body of 75.

"I didn't know anyone here before I moved to RJC, so it was kind of scary," says Chan, who is in Grade 10. Christmas was difficult because she was not able to travel home to be with her family. "I was kind of homesick after the Christmas break."

each semester. Each International Student Day celebrates a different country.

Last month, two days after Chinese New Year, the school celebrated Hong Kong Day—an opportunity to honour the school's students from Hong Kong by hearing stories of their home country during chapel, wearing the colours of the Hong Kong flag, and eating a meal planned by the students that included a variety of food from their home.

Valerie White, admissions director at RJC, started International Student Days during the 2014-15 school year.

"A lot of families don't know where Saskatchewan is," White says. "They know Toronto and they know Vancouver, and

'International Student Days give our students an opportunity to see past the stereotypes we fall into, and give them a glimpse into different places that they may or may not go to.'
(Valerie White, RJC's admissions director)

Still, for Chan and other international students, studying at RJC is an opportunity to take advantage of the school's strong academic program and to improve their English. Each year, about 10 percent of RJC's student body is made up of international students.

To help the other 90 percent become better acquainted with the countries these students are coming from, the school holds International Student Days a few times

that's all. They don't even know Rosthern exists. So for the students to be sent here and take that kind of risk . . . that's pretty brave of families and students to do that. We thought we needed to honour them and find out about where they're coming from, too."

Alexa Nicolle, a Grade 12 student who grew up in Rosthern, looks forward to International Student Days. "Everyone gets excited about it," she says. "We get dressed

up, so everyone's really happy to learn in that atmosphere."

Nicolle's favourite part of International Student Days is the food. Chan and her fellow students from Hong Kong got to choose the menu last month, and were excited to see the cafeteria serve sticky rice, stir fry, spring rolls, dumplings and a cold dessert soup made with sweet potato and ginger.

Beyond the food, the celebrations have helped Nicolle empathize with the school's international students, who have come from places that include Mexico, El Salvador, Germany, Switzerland, Malaysia and Kayin State in Burma.

"It gets us to understand the culture shock that they go through a little bit more, because most of us don't know what it's like to move that far from what you know," Nicolle says.

Fostering that sort of understanding is what International Student Days are all about, says White. She recalls celebrating Mexico Day last year and hearing one student talk about how his home is much more than what is portrayed on television and in the movies.

"International Student Days give our

students an opportunity to see past the stereotypes we fall into, and give them a glimpse into different places that they may or may not go to," White says. "It also gives our international students an opportunity to boast a little and show off from their home."

While she was homesick at Christmas, Chan is glad she came to RJC to study. The class sizes are significantly smaller than they were at home, and the academics are rigorous without putting as much pressure on students as in Hong Kong.

"It's fun to study here," Chan says.

RJC's next International Student Day is scheduled for April 6 and will celebrate a student from the Karen people who was born and raised in a refugee camp on the border between Thailand and Burma. The student came to Rosthern as a refugee.

White sees great value in the events, and she hopes they continue for a long time.

"It's not just about our international students coming to Canada to learn the English language and Canadian culture, but it's about the sharing of their culture as well," she says. "We learn from each other. I think that makes a really enriching program for all of our students." ❧



International Student Days allow RJC students to learn more about where their classmates are from.

Savvy students scrutinize 'digital citizenship'

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate teaches students how to be good neighbours online

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

For Ruth Charette, spending time online is a good way to both get her homework done and have fun playing games and watching funny videos. Using social media apps like Instagram and Snapchat, meanwhile, allows her to connect with her friends through pictures and videos, so they can keep each other updated on what they're doing.

For all the benefits that the Internet and social media provide, Charette knows it is important to be safe. Her parents have

taught her to be careful online, and to never give out personal information.

"The company . . . might be giving your information out to other people," says Charette, a Grade 8 student at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ont. "You don't know who can take that [information] and do things you didn't give them permission to do with it."

The importance of online safety was reiterated for Charette and her Grade 7 and
(Continued on page 28)

PHOTOS BY CHARLES KRUGER



Ruth Charette knows it's important to be careful when using social media.



Micah Neufeld, left, pictured with Aidan Morton Ninomiya, says Rockway's digital citizenship event reinforced the importance of communicating with care online.



Rockway students are very savvy when it comes to digital connection, says Helmi Wiebe, the school's librarian.



Students Emily Woodall, left, and Emily Loberto answer questions about bullying.

(Continued from page 27)

Grade 8 peers at Rockway during a half-day session the school organized to explore the topic of "digital citizenship." Held on Jan. 29, when the rest of the school's students were writing exams, the event was meant to raise awareness about how students interact with each other through social media and to teach effective ways to communicate online.

Rockway's mission includes "forming faith . . . building character" in its students. The event on digital citizenship was an extension of the school's desire to teach students what it means to make positive contributions to their community.

Helmi Wiebe, Rockway's librarian, led the event and wanted students to explore the question: "What does it mean to be a good citizen when you're not just physically in the world, but connected to the

to learn about this kind of thing," Neufeld says. "People had fun, but they were still learning."

Using social media has benefits for young people in junior high, Neufeld adds. Watching YouTube clips helped him learn how to tape his hockey stick, and visiting his friend's page has helped him keep up with his friend, who is living in Europe for a year.

The digital citizenship event was a reminder to be careful, and that once something is shared online, there's no telling where it will end up. "There is no unposting," Neufeld says.

He adds that, while many of his classmates had learned about the topics presented during the event before, it is still important to review the information. "It reinforced the way I communicate and it just brought back to my attention that, yes,

The event on digital citizenship was an extension of the school's desire to teach students what it means to make positive contributions to their community.

world digitally?"

The session began with students watching a short video called *Bully Dance* from the National Film Board of Canada that explores bullying. After watching, students logged onto an interactive website and worked in pairs to answer questions about bullying that popped up on the screen. The questions looked at the meaning of words like "bully," "bystander" and "victim."

Next, students read a story about a boy named Kevin who is bullied online after a video he made that was only supposed to be seen by a friend is shared publicly and viewed millions of times.

In an effort to teach students that they have opportunities to change the outcome of these kinds of experiences, Wiebe asked the students to work in groups and write an alternate ending to the story by making a storyboard on their iPads or creating short skits.

For Micah Neufeld, a Grade 7 student, this activity was a highlight of the event. Neufeld's group created a skit in which Kevin empowers himself by posting a follow-up video online that garners positive reviews. "It was a new twist on how

you have to be careful," Neufeld says.

Charette says that learning about the difference between being a "passive bystander" and a "brave upstander" during the event impacted her ability to recognize online bullying. "It changed the way that, if I see it happening, I know then I can react on it faster than I normally would have," she says.

Wiebe was happy to see students engaging with the material. "Our students are actually very savvy when it comes to digital connection," she says. At the same time, it was good to review the topics presented. "Even though these kinds of issues are pertinent and right on the surface for adults, [they're] kind of underlying for students and need to be brought to their attention." ❧

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Peace is precious

By John Derksen

One of my favourite activities at Canadian Mennonite University's Menno Simons College is editing the academic journal, *Peace Research: The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*.

In continuous publication since 1969, *Peace Research* is Canada's oldest and primary scholarly, refereed journal in its area, with authors and readers in Canada and all over the world.


Convinced that peace is precious and peaceful methods are the most desirable form of conflict transformation, *Peace Research* publishes broadly on issues of conflict, war and peace, including militarism, conflict resolution, peace movements, peace education, economic development, environmental protection, international

development, cultural advancement, social movements, religion and peace, humanism, human rights and feminism. Normally we publish twice a year.

Editing work is rewarding, although it can be long and tedious at times. Normally each issue of the journal includes a table of contents, four articles, book reviews and biographical notes on the authors. Scholars from all over the world send in papers. The editing process includes sending submitted articles to scholars with expertise in the field for their assessment and sharing their recommendations with the authors. I make edits, as do a copy editor and a layout editor. The whole process takes months, but when the published issue

(Continued on page 30)

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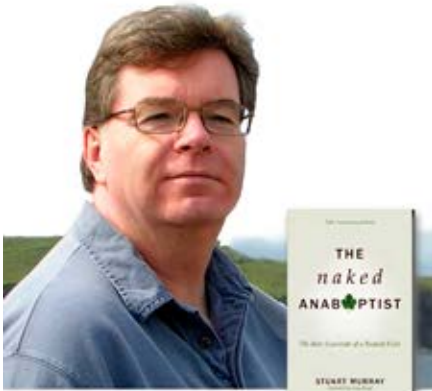


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Please RSVP by April 16 at

canadianmennonite.org/banquet or brycelm@gmail.com

Proceeds and freewill offering will support the work of *Canadian Mennonite*. Gifts above \$20 gratefully received.



(Continued from page 29)

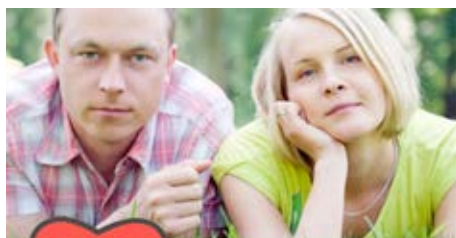
comes out, I feel very good! The finished journals are sent to more than 200 subscribers in 15 countries!

Peace Research is important work. In addition to students, practicum placements, staff and faculty, this is one more way our institution connects with the world. Scholars are sometimes like poets and prophets: their ideas may be 50 years ahead of their time, but they sow seeds for

a better tomorrow!



John Derksen is associate professor of conflict resolution studies at Canadian Mennonite University's Menno Simons College campus.



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Calendar

British Columbia

April 2: Early marriage seminar for the engaged or newly married, "Love for Life" led by Ken Esau and Claire Weiss at Columbia Bible College, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

April 9: "Journey of reconciliation: Listening to indigenous elders," with Chief Robert Joseph and Patricia Victor at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, 9 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Register by March 30.

April 15-17: MC B.C. Junior Impact youth retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope.

April 16-17: Camp Squeah paddle-a-thon.

Saskatchewan

April 10: RJC Guys and Pies events, featuring A Buncha Guys.

Manitoba

March 25: First Mennonite Church choir with orchestra presents Karl Loewe's passion oratorio "Das Suehnopfer des neuen Bundes" on

Good Friday at First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, 7 p.m.

March 30: Open house at CMU. For more information, visit www.cmu.ca/campusvit.

April 8: Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives third annual spring dessert fundraiser at 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg.

April 9: Eden Foundation presents "Stories of hope, healing and community," at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m., a fundraising event for Eden Health Care Services. The Faith and Life Male Choir will also perform.

Ontario

March 30: "The Power of Partnership" dinner and evening with Stephen Lewis sponsored by MCC Ontario at St. George Banquet Hall, Waterloo, 6 p.m. More info at powerofpartnership2016.ca.

March 31: Benjamin Eby Lecture with Troy Osborne. "The bottle, the dagger and the ring: Church discipline and Dutch Mennonite identity in the 17th century" in the chapel at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m.

April 2-3: "Connecting with our indigenous neighbours: Seeking openings for relationship" event, at Shantz Mennonite, Baden. (2) To register for the Saturday event, which includes speakers and a "blanket exercise," e-mail the church at shantzadmin@shantzmc.ca.

(3) Worship at 9:30 a.m. followed by an interactive panel discussion that includes Saturday's speakers.

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



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

Employment opportunity

Nutana Park Mennonite Church is seeking to hire a co-pastor. Please contact Ryan Siemens, MC Saskatchewan, 306-249-4844 for details. More information to be provided in the next Canadian Mennonite edition.

MENNONITE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Mennonite Collegiate Institute, located in Gretna, Manitoba, is searching for a principal to start in August 2016.

Our mission is to educate young people in an Anabaptist-Christian context, seeking to develop each student's God-given potential, providing a practice ground for maturing faith in Jesus Christ, in thought and love and action.

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To find out more about this exciting position or to submit a resume, please contact the search committee at searchteam@mciblues.net. Applications close March 31, 2016.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ONTARIO



On Feb. 22, several Syrian newcomers joined families from the Apostolic Church Nazarene in Kitchener, Ont., to pack urgently needed relief kits and hygiene kits bound for Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon. In all, 1,600 relief kits and 2,000 hygiene kits were packed, containing emergency relief items such as toothbrushes, soap, towels and other hygienic care items. Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario, said, 'It's . . . incredible to see Syrian families so recently arrived already actively engaged in working alongside their sponsoring community to play a part in addressing the massive humanitarian crisis in the region.'

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Rose and Marlin Brubacher share their thoughts at the 2016 Mennonite and Brethren Marriage Encounter fundraising dinner on Feb. 13 at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont. The couple, who admitted 'struggling in our marriage,' attended their first Marriage Encounter last fall, and have 'kept on talking' ever since. A repeated refrain of the evening was to not criticize couples who seemed to be struggling in their marriages. Instead, the image of the family car, in need of constant upkeep to remain in good running condition, was used. Marriages, much more important than cars, also need upkeep in communication and understanding techniques, something Marriage Encounter weekends provide tools to do.



God at work in the world Snapshots

PHOTO BY PRISCILLA EPP



Marcella Costilla and Sharon Janzen, store manager at the North Battleford Mennonite Community Closet, prepare to serve the anniversary cake at a celebration held at Hope Mennonite Fellowship in North Battleford, Sask., on Jan. 10. The thrift store is owned and governed by Hope Mennonite and the Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite congregations of Glenbush, Mayfair and Rabbit Lake. Dave Neufeld came to North Battleford in 1973 as a pastor and also worked at indigenous relations. When indigenous women expressed the need for a thrift store, he spearheaded the founding of the Mennonite Community Closet in late 1973. In 1999, the store moved to its present location, and adjoining property was purchased in 2005. In the fall of 2015, the board finally obtained permission to open the wall between the buildings. Profits of more than a half-million dollars have been donated to local charities and Mennonite Central Committee over the past 40 years.