

CANADIAN MENNONITE

July 25, 2016

Volume 20 Number 15

Covenant faithfulness

Assembly 2016 coverage begins on pg. 4



PM40063104 R09613

inside



EDITORIAL

Taking down our harps

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

"By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps" (Psalm 137: 1-2).

These familiar words from the Psalmist, cited by Cindy Wallace as she opened the worship of Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon, persisted as a lament throughout the five-day event that brought together more than 500 delegates and congregants from across Canada.

"We gather at a tenuous time," she empathized, giving voice to the many emotions at the gathering. "We are uncertain about our future as a people. We find ourselves divided over questions that shake us down to our roots. If we are honest, many of us have lost a great deal and risk losing more. Some of us are fearful; others are cynical. Some of us are just tired. Maybe we don't feel the need to weep, but we'd really like to just sit down for a while."

Despite our anxieties, though, she asked us to remember and re-live the story and instruction of the people of Israel and Judah who, though negligent in observing God's law, enter into a "glorious new covenant—the covenant that breaks with tradition and writes God's law on people's hearts."

Drawing parallels to our modern dilemmas, she said that we find ourselves "losing cultural power. We find institutions we thought would carry on indefinitely diminished or even dissolving. To be quite frank, at points we find ourselves not so much captive to a foreign land as captivated

by a culture of destruction, distraction and despair. Letting go of how things were—of how we thought things would go on—is painful and costly."



The theme prevailed throughout the deliberations. We hung up our harps in a myriad of ways as the intense debate on issues that matter deeply resonated around tables and at open-mic sessions.

The conversation was forthright but gracious. Opposing views on controversial matters were given in measured, but passionate tones, and were received, appropriately, without applause. The openness of the body was remarkable.

All this did not just happen. It had its roots in strong theological underpinnings articulated by our Egyptian plenary speaker, Safwat Marzouk, assistant professor of Old Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., who insisted that we are part of a "covenantal community where differences are received as a gift, not as a threat, and boundaries are not rigid, but rather porous and mutually negotiated."

He called on us to move beyond a monocultural or multicultural church, to an "intercultural one" that not only respects difference but creates a space for the interaction of diverse cultural groups within a society.

With this refreshing new vision for a new "covenantal community," it is little wonder that the body could then take

down its harps to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, a settler teaching from ancient times that has marginalized and taken rights away from indigenous peoples for centuries.

It allowed, after seven years of discernment, for the Being a Faithful Church recommendation to receive an 85 percent favourable vote to "create space and test alternatives to traditional beliefs on same-sex relationships," while acknowledging the 50 negative delegate votes and 23 abstentions as legitimate and part of an ongoing discourse.

It allowed for a 94 percent favourable vote on the "amended" recommendations of the Future Directions Task Force that authorize Mennonite Church Canada to develop more concrete plans to restructure national and area churches into a simpler, more integrated body. These plans will come back to delegates by 2018 or sooner.

It resolved to assist suffering Palestinian Christians, in response to their plea for the "global church to come alongside them as they suffer under Israel's 49-year military occupation of their lands," while also acknowledging the suffering of the Jewish people in the conflict.

And in all of the deliberations we did take down our harps to sing our laments and hopes, giving a therapeutic outlet for our sorrow and hopes, not to mention the enthusiastic response to the Glowing Embers Ukulele Band from Bethany Manor in Saskatoon. When under stress, or joy, Mennonites sing—in beautiful four-part harmony.

Dan Dyck of MC Canada says this assembly might be a watershed moment in our history. He may be right. In any case, we should take up the invitation by Wallace to "sing the old songs and also write new ones, to dream together—new dreams, free and bold and childlike. The Lord will create a new thing on earth, as Jeremiah promises."

ABOUT THE COVER:

During the opening ceremony of Assembly 2016 on July 6, this quilt made by Alma Elias was presented to a representative of Saskatchewan's Office of the Treaty Commissioner as a symbol of MC Canada's desire to honour its covenant with its indigenous brothers and sisters on whose Treaty 6 land the assembly took place. Said Elias about her creation: "I've attempted to equally respect the indigenous people and the settlers. . . . In the star I see a sunrise, the dawning of a new day."

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund for our publishing activities.

ISSN 1480-042X

Canada

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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JULY 25, 2016 / VOL. 20, NO. 15

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

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General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

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Paid obituaries: obituaries@canadianmennonite.org

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Reprint requests: reprints@canadianmennonite.org

Mission statement: To educate, inspire, inform, and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through an independent publication and other media, working with our church partners.

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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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One-Year Subscription Rates

Canada: \$46 + tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)
U.S.: \$68 **International (outside U.S.):** \$91.10

Subscriptions/address changes:

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GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

Hope through lament and loss

Mennonite Church Canada moves into the future

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

EASTERN CANADA CORRESPONDENT



Harry Lafond of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, left, chats with Ben Pauls during a tour of the Saskatchewan first nation on July 9 during Assembly 2016.

“A season of change,” lament, fear, anxiety, confession, uncertainty, safe space, brave space . . . hope.

Mennonite Church Canada, which held its biennial assembly, “God~Faith~People,” in Saskatoon from July 6 to 10, faced two major decisions after years of study and consultation. Both the recommendations from the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) and Future Directions task forces passed with large majorities in the end, but the tension among the gathered delegates and leaders was front and centre. Large blocks of time were set aside for both task forces to present their findings and for delegates to interact with the leaders and speak to the motions.

Opening thoughts

The opening night included MC Canada “parliamentarian” Peter Peters challenging the delegates to “engage our times of discernment and interactions in a spirit of unity as Christ taught us, relating with one another with respect, patience, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and forbearance, being thankful for the gifts each person brings to this assembly.”

Executive Director Willard Metzger said that “many arrive here with excitement and anticipation. However, others may be arriving with a feeling of being weighed down. The recent massacre of gay patrons at an Orlando night club has produced a heaviness. It has reminded them of their own experiences of painful discrimination. Some may be gathering, afraid that the church they have loved is coming apart—that the theological differences in how we understand God calling us to respond to people in committed same-sex relationships is unmanageable.

“The differences may seem too great,” he continued. “The gap may seem too gaping to bridge. Some may be arriving, fearing that this is the end of the church they have known and loved—that programs that have been meaningful to them for years will be discontinuing. Such changes do not feel like something to be celebrated.”

“But,” he concluded, “we can trust that God is at work even though we do not understand it. God’s people are called to do no more.”



Mennonite Church B.C. moderator Lee Dyck, left, and executive minister Gary Janzen suggest changes to the Being a Faithful Church recommendation on July 9 at MC Canada's Assembly 2016, before discussion and the vote to approve the amended recommendation.

Diversity among views on same-sex issues approved

The BFC motion underwent small changes on the floor, as MC British Columbia requested alterations, claiming that the original motion was seen as naming those who affirm same-sex unions in the church as prophetic, in other words, as leading in God's direction.

The amendment dropped the word "assumed" and replaced it with "understood" to remove this perceived bias in the motion's second clause: "We call upon our family of Christ to respectfully acknowledge that there are those among us—congregations and individuals—whose careful study of Scripture and prayerful journey of discernment lead them to a different understanding on committed same-sex relationships than is commonly 'understood' by readings of Article 19 in our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*."

Delegate after delegate spoke to the motion.

Stephen Swires, pastor of First Mennonite Church in Burns Lake, B.C., shared a traditional biblical exposition, naming same-sex practice as sin, even though he believes that Christians should love and accept homosexuals.

Pieter Niemeyer, pastor of Rouge Valley Mennonite Church in Markham, Ont., who identifies as a gay man, told the delegates that he believes his sexuality is created by God and that God's Spirit is calling the church to live with diversity

The BFC motion underwent small changes on the floor, as MC British Columbia requested alterations, claiming that the original motion was seen as naming those who affirm same-sex unions in the church as prophetic, in other words, as leading in God's direction.

in a similar manner to Paul's call to the Roman church in Romans 14-15.

Between these two poles delegates lined up behind the microphones at the delegate sessions, discussed the matter intensely at table groups, filled meeting spaces for presentations and discussions, and attended workshops.

Dan Epp-Thiessen, associate professor of Bible at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, led a two-part workshop, "Reading the Bible in the light of same-sex relationships." Thiessen stated from the outset that he was attempting to show those with a traditional view of the texts that it was possible for others to hold a reformist view of those same texts, and to show those with a reformist view that the traditional view of the texts has value.

Gerry Binnema, pastor of United Mennonite Church in Black Creek, B.C., later shared in the last delegate session on the BFC that he had come to assembly to vote "no" to the resolution but, after wrestling with Scripture in Thiessen's sessions, had come to see that others had a different "interpretive lens" and might faithfully come to different conclusions

on the issue, and that he would vote "yes."

The resolution passed with 277 "yes" votes, 50 "no" votes, 23 abstentions and 4 spoiled ballots—85 percent in favour, as abstentions and spoiled ballots were not counted in the total.

No applause greeted the results, with the realization that many congregations and individuals did not approve.

Several speakers claimed that only half of MC Canada congregations were represented at the BFC meetings. A check on numbers revealed that 126 of 227 congregations were at Assembly 2016, six more than in 2014 and four more than in 2012.

Randell Neudorf, pastor of the Commons church in Hamilton, Ont., noted that many newer congregations have a hard time sending delegates due to costs and less-stable job situations. Only five new Canadian congregations were represented.

A move to the 'future' gets the go-ahead

Key in the Future Directions discussions were questions about national delegate sessions, who was driving the decision,

missions, and whether this was a “done deal.” Task force members, area church moderators and MC Canada leaders spoke to these issues, saying:

- **THERE IS** room for future national delegate sessions, both to make decisions and to study topics together.
- **THIS WAS** a jointly owned process of area churches and the national church, with moderators being on board to try this new structure.
- **MISSIONS WILL** continue to be an important part of MC Canada, being one of the reasons for the formation of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada early in the 20th century.
- **A CLEAR** statement was made that delegates will have a say on changes in both area and national church assemblies.

Ninety-four percent of delegates approved the move to these structural changes, but there were many questions and comments about whether this was what MC Canada should be doing. Many wondered whether “tinkering” with the structure was enough, or whether questions of purpose and vision needed to be asked. Leadership again responded that, by working together area churches could draw nearer on national agenda and direction items more easily with a more integrated national church.

This did not stop delegates from speaking to the continued shortfall in finances—a deficit of \$652,127 in the latest fiscal year—as a sign that congregations and individuals were not buying into MC Canada’s vision and direction.

Harold Schlegel, interim pastor of Gretna (Man.) Berghaler Mennonite Church, said that, in his 32 years of pastoring, MC Canada had been restructuring the whole time. “Structure is the servant to mission,” he said, adding that he expected the current changes would have a “short shelf life,” but that delegates should “give it a chance,” all the while “giving attention to God and what God wants us to do.”

Other resolutions passed

Delegates processed an amended



Randell Neudorf, pastor of the Commons church in Hamilton, Ont., speaks in favour of the resolution to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. Neudorf spoke of wanting his son, who has an Ojibway background, to grow up in a land that sees him and his people as full members of the human family. The Doctrine of Discovery is an historical belief that lands without Christian inhabitants were empty and open to the predation of Christian princes. The Doctrine continues to influence the law about Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

resolution on Palestine and Israel in response to a plea from Palestinian Christians that “the global church come alongside the Palestinian people as they suffer under Israel’s 49-year military occupation of their lands.” The amendment included acknowledgment of the suffering of Jewish people in the conflict,

and a desire to work with Jewish organizations in Canada as well. *

A resolution to “Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery,” which continues to prioritize non-indigenous ideas, culture and rights over those of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, was also passed by delegates.

In conclusion

In the end, it seemed that treasurer John Goossen’s prayer closing the first worship time had been answered. He prayed, “We ask that before we act, we think. We think of what we will say, we think of the words and their tone, their intention and their consequence. We ask that before we think, we pray. We pray to be open to your Spirit and to know your will. And we ask that before we pray, we humble ourselves. We humble ourselves to think of others as better than ourselves, that we do nothing out of selfishness or conceit.” ☸



Larry Redpath of Trinity Mennonite Church in Mather, Man., takes part in a smudging ceremony in the Our Lady of Guadalupe Roman Catholic Church on the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation on July 9.

* For more information, visit bit.ly/palestine-israel-resolution.





MC CANADA PHOTO

Ready for God's response?

Shape imagination with hope, Wallace urges Assembly 2016 participants

BY DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada

With poetic grace and an invitational tone, Cynthia Wallace of Warman (Sask.) Mennonite Church challenged Assembly 2016 participants at the July 6 worship service to dream boldly and then asked if they were ready for God's response.

Using the "God~Faith~People" theme text from Jeremiah 31, Wallace characterized the Old Testament story as filled with surprises and "tenacious hope." God's people in Jeremiah's day expected neither destruction nor a new covenant.

"God terminates what is most precious, and then gives more again as an explanation," she said about God's promise to a covenant people.

Wallace, who is assistant professor of English at St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan, grew up in a fundamentalist Baptist church. She said that she chose to become Mennonite because of the gifts Mennonites had to offer the world, gifts like "thriving through loss at the edges of empire."

"We have not always made room for the discomfort of confession," she said. "Heaven forbid that we lose sight of the work that God has called us to do because we're busy focussing all our energies on our conflicts."

When Christians confess their "failures and fears and losses, [they] open space for hope, for life rising from death," she concluded. ☞

With poetic grace and an invitational tone, Cynthia Wallace of Warman (Sask.) Mennonite Church, pictured on the screen, challenged Assembly 2016 participants at the July 6 worship service to dream boldly and then asked if they were ready for God's response.



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To view a video of Wallace's sermon, visit bit.ly/cindy-wallace.



Covenant and law: A matter of relationship

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada

Over two days at Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2016, "God~Faith~People," keynote speaker Safwat Marzouk addressed the topic of covenant that was central to the theme text, Jeremiah 31:33.

During the July 7 worship service, he explained that covenant is an agreement of mutual obligation, in which each party has the ability and responsibility to uphold his or her side.

The assistant professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., said the idea of covenants and law may make people feel uncomfortable and uncertain about their ability to uphold them. He suggested that they might have an easier time of it if they looked at the intertwining threads of God's law and the story of God's people together.

Marzouk said that God's faithfulness and love can be seen through the diversity of God's laws, and how these laws were formulated and reformulated over a long period of time. They moved from conditional laws, where people were required to comply or suffer the consequences, to unconditional laws, which, instead of being inscribed on a tablet of stone, God chose to write on the hearts of God's people.

"What does it mean for us as a discerning church to think of God and the laws as being framed in a relational way, rather than demanding [our] way? God is engaging and responding to human needs,"

he said.

On the following day, Marzouk told delegates at a plenary session that the Bible uses the same word for covenant regardless of whether that agreement is between God and God's people, or between people. It's the same word used in the covenant between God and Noah, between Abraham and his allies, and between Isaac and the Philistines.

God isn't calling people into a monocultural or melting-pot relationship, he said, and God isn't calling them into a multicultural relationship in which cultures are allowed to exist side by side. Those relationships aren't reflective of the kingdom of God, Marzouk said. God is calling people to intercultural relationships, where they truly learn and grow from each other.

"We walk our spiritual journeys in different ways and different paths, and sometimes our spirituality has a specific accent to it or emphasis that we rely on, and sometimes we need to be challenged by the other voice or the other side of spirituality that is present in the biblical text," he said, noting that the church is called by the Spirit to cultivate a covenantal community that fosters a just diversity, where differences are received as a gift, not a threat.

He offered five theological principles to guide covenantal relationships:

- **THE CHURCH** is God's project. Acts 10 reveals dramatic ethnic, religious, political and economic differences between



PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Over two days at Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2016, 'God~Faith~People,' keynote speaker Safwat Marzouk addressed the topic of covenant that was central to the theme text, Jeremiah 31:33.

Peter, Jesus' disciple, and Cornelius, the gentile Roman soldier. While these disparities might render a relationship between them impossible, God makes it clear to Peter that the relationship is permitted—as is the food Cornelius offers. When Peter obeys God, God pours the Holy Spirit over the gentiles.

- **THE NEED** is mutual. When the belief that God is God permeates human worship and relationships, people find value not in the privilege they try to protect, but in joining God in God's mission of peace and justice.

- **CONVERSION IS** mutual. In Acts 10, Peter's theology regarding what was "clean" and "unclean" shifted as a result of his encounter with Cornelius, and his eyes were opened to God's capacity for diversity. At the same time, Cornelius encountered God.

- **FELLOWSHIP IS** vital. It allows people to walk in each other's lives. "In order to move forward, the sharing of stories has to be a part of our journey," he said. "We share stories in order for the Spirit of God to empower the church to move from pain, shame, oppression, into the realm of the kingdom of God."

- **HEALTHY BOUNDARIES** are necessary. In an intercultural covenantal church, "members aren't fixated on their own identities, but they are sensitive to the new thing that the Spirit is creating when different identities worship together, fellowship together and serve together," Marzouk said.

In an intercultural covenantal church, 'members aren't fixated on their own identities, but they are sensitive to the new thing that the Spirit is creating when different identities worship together, fellowship together and serve together.' (Safwat Marzouk)



Marzouk's teaching generated considerable interaction on Twitter. Tim Wenger wrote that "Acts 10 invites us to reconsider the boundaries we construct to protect

ourselves." Others were struck by the big picture of Marzouk's teaching; Michael Pahl simply shared that "@safwatmarzouk is bringin' it." ❧

Making a case for community

Anabaptist emphasis on living together may have lessons for today's church

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ
Saskatchewan Correspondent

"Too often Mennonites have focussed on disunity."

With these words, Gareth Brandt began his seminar, "Running towards community," and he then showed how Mennonite/Anabaptist history is pockmarked with splits and schisms. But Brandt said that he sees these splits as inevitable. "If everybody has a voice, then you're going to have these splits," he said of Mennonite polity.

Brandt invited participants to examine the Schleithem Confession to see if they could discover what the seven articles of the 16th-century document have in common. Working in groups, people noted that each of the articles pertain to community. Brandt said that some people might conclude that, because the confession doesn't mention anything about God or the Bible, the early Anabaptists must have identified these articles as those which made their denomination distinctive. But he suggested that the early Anabaptists may have seen these seven articles as being at the heart of their faith. "Perhaps these items are what's important," he said. "If these tenets are followed, the others will sort themselves out."

Brandt went on to outline several stories of Anabaptists and Mennonites running towards, rather than away from, community. The first occurred in 1526, when Anabaptists were forced to leave the city of Nikolsburg in what is now the Czech Republic. On the run, the people pooled their possessions in order that all would survive. This group would eventually come to be known as Hutterites. Their movement

was characterized by a lifestyle that followed the example of Jesus, pacifism, communal living and hospitality to strangers.

As a second example, Brandt cited the origins of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada at Hochstadt, Man., and Eigenheim, Sask., in the early 1900s. The formation of the conference was a movement towards unity, he said. There was no formal constitution, but their longstanding motto was, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

The founders believed that "each congregation was to be the primary locus of God's kingdom work," said Brandt. "The reason for gathering together was so that each congregation would be encouraged in

their work." They intended the conference to be a consultative, rather than a legislative, body, and understood that "disagreement did not imply disunity," said Brandt.

In his own life, Brandt said that he has always been attracted by the idea of various Mennonite groups coming together. At one point in his life, both Mennonite Church Alberta and the Northwest Conference Mennonite Church of Alberta employed him as a youth minister. Discussions were underway for the two denominations to unite into one area church. Although this plan did not come to fruition, at the time Brandt saw it as an exciting possibility.

Currently, he is professor of practical theology at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C., at which Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren denominations collaborate with each other. "I have always been drawn to these experiences," he said.

Brandt also identified a number of movements that have influenced Mennonites over the years. The mystical or charismatic movement, the progressive movement, the conservative movement and the evangelical movement have all left their imprint on the church. "All four groups of Mennonite make the case that they are the true Anabaptists," said Brandt. "I say 'yes' to all four of them. We need all of those voices to help us to be true to who we are. Each of these streams influences how we read Scripture." ❧



In a seminar entitled 'Running towards community,' participants study the Schleithem Confession to discover what the seven articles have in common.

'Young adults don't need the church'

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent

The seminar title started in response to the young adult "problem."

"['Young adults don't need the church'] is not meant to be a defiance statement, but a statement of fact," said presenter Chris Brnjas, a co-founder of Pastors in Exile (PiE) in southwestern Ontario. "The church is no longer a central force in the lives of young adults."

Brnjas has the background to know what he is talking about. He and others seek to be pastors "outside the church walls," which involves meeting with many young adults. He also works in student services at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, is a member of the Gathering Church in Kitchener, and was a Mennonite Church Canada youth delegate to the 2015 Global Youth Summit of Mennonite World Conference.

The seminar began with participants sharing reasons for their interest in the topic. These included:

- **LIVING AMONG** young families who do not attend church;
- **WANTING TO** support the faith life of young-adult believers who have chosen not to go to church;
- **BEING CONCERNED** about the drop-off in youth engagement with church; and
- **CURIOSITY REGARDING** alternatives to the way church is done.

Brnjas cautioned against painting all young adults with the same brush at the same time, although he pointed out that there are commonalities shared by people who share a generation. Currently, millennials are negatively characterized—mostly by older generations—as cynical, shallow, narcissistic and selfish. Conversely, they are positively identified as creative, connected, confident, and interested in diversity in thought and practice.

A new twist to generational changes is the observation that, because technology

is changing so quickly and changing people with it, every five years results in a unique generation. A 25-year-old may have grown up very differently than a 20-year-old in the same geographic area, he said.

A general understanding among young adults is that the word "church" tends to have negative connotations because of the awareness of things like sexual abuse scandals, the history of residential schools, and exclusion based on things like race or sexual orientation. "I think [churches] should be masters of apology," he said. "Yet we often seem more interested in protecting our institutions than to rectify past sins."

The highlight of the seminar was cross-generational dialogue. Brnjas had participants pair off with someone at least 15 to 20 years different from themselves. The pairs discussed how they grew up, what was happening in the world when they were young, and what attracts them to church or keeps them away.

While it seemed clear that the church today is no longer the centre of community



Chris Brnjas of PiE leads the 'Young adults don't need the church' seminar at Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon.

life as it was years ago, there were a remarkable number of similarities in spite of age differences, and discussion was lively. Community, connection to good people, and social justice were named as things that drew people to church.

One cross-cultural pair—Canada and Sudan—laughed at the discovery that they had both grown up in quiet, rural areas, following cattle on foot, and connecting with a small faith community. Another pair noted that rebelling and rebuilding were parts of both their stories. A pastor from a young-adult-oriented church noted



Young and older adults discuss how they grew up, what was happening in the world when they were young, and what attracts them to church or keeps them away during the 'Young adults don't need the church' seminar.

PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

that it was having trouble holding on to its boomer and senior generations, who kept leaving in search of a “peer group.”

In conclusion, Brnjas encouraged

participants to think of church as people, not as institution, and emphasized the “mutually beneficial” effects of cross-generational conversation. ✎

The future lies in the past

Manitoba pastor shares enthusiasm for biblical storytelling

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

Ken Quiring is convinced that the future of biblical literacy lies in video. This may be one reason why he and others like him have joined a growing movement known as “biblical storytelling.”

“We are reading print less and less, but we are doing more and more video,” said the pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Brandon, Man., during an Assembly 2016 seminar entitled “Back to the future: Telling Scripture by heart,” whose goal was to “demonstrate why Scripture has become, for me, an oral, physical and multi-sensory experience.”

A member of the Network of Biblical Storytellers International (nbsint.org), Quiring has attended a number of “festival gatherings” that the network sponsors every August in the United States.

“Scripture stories are physical poetry,”

said Quiring, adding, “You’ve got to use your body” to tell Scripture effectively.

How tellers use their bodies depends on the text. When preparing to tell a Bible story, Quiring looks for clues in the text. If a story includes a number of different places, he may point to locations on an imaginary map, or walk from one place to another. Physical actions in the story may be mimicked with hand gestures.

Quiring reminded participants that Bible stories were told orally long before they came to be printed text. Audiences would have participated in the telling, and maybe even in correcting the teller when a well-known story was told in a different way. Repetition in Bible stories provides opportunities for audience participation, he said, as in, “*And there was evening, and there was morning*” in the Genesis story of creation.

Every storytelling event is an interpretation. “You cannot tell scripture and not interpret it,” said Quiring. Gestures and tone of voice all add to the interpretation.

While some biblical storytellers don’t appreciate having their craft described as memorization, Quiring doesn’t have a problem with this, but he pointed out that the memorization process is not a purely cognitive one. He described what he does as a “full-body experience” of committing both text and movement to memory. “This is about muscle memory,” he said.

Quiring emphasized that even though biblical storytelling takes a little effort to learn, it is something anyone can do. To prove his point, he invited participants to try their hand at it. Working in pairs, they were given Bible texts to tell to one another.

People often think biblical storytelling is just for children, not for serious academics, said Quiring, noting, though, that this is definitely not the case. “Biblical storytelling is not divorced from academics; it partners with academics,” he said. ✎

For more on biblical storytelling, read “*Sounding the Scriptures*” online at canadianmennonite.org/articles/sounding-scriptures.



Ken Quiring leads a seminar on biblical storytelling at Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon. He says, ‘Scripture stories are physical poetry.’



There is room for laughter in biblical storytelling, as these participants discovered during Ken Quiring’s seminar at Assembly 2016.

'We are all responsible for what happens next'

Future directions for national church affirmed

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada

Although a concrete picture of what Mennonite Church Canada might look like in two years isn't yet determined, 318 delegates voted to approve in principle the direction proposed by the Future Directions Task Force to develop a more integrated nationwide church body; 21 voted against, and 4 ballots were spoiled.

Following General Board moderator Hilda Hildebrand's announcement of the ballot results, Aldred Neufeldt, chair of the now-defunct Task Force, answered a question that surfaced frequently leading up to today: What's next?

"With the motion having been adopted, the next steps really will be to get the Interim Council together as soon as possible to do certain things," he said. The Interim Council, which will consist of moderators from each area church and the national church, must now determine who will be on a transition team, create a job description to begin the search for a project manager who will guide the process, determine budget requirements and create a timeline for transitioning.

The vote followed two years of process by the Task Force and intense debate during seminars and plenary sessions at Assembly 2016.

During the plenary session preceding the vote, John Rempel of Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., concisely summarized a concern raised by others. He asked for confirmation that no structural changes would take place until a proposal developed by the Interim Council was presented to the delegate body for approval by 2018.

Neufeldt confirmed that there would be no changes to current structures until additional work has been done, but with a caveat: internal or programmatic changes might be required because of

budget constraints.

Tim Wenger of Springfield Mennonite Church in Winnipeg said that it felt like delegates weren't being heard throughout the Future Directions process. "When delegates ask questions, we are not getting direct answers, but the addendum shows we are being heard," he said. The addendum to the Future Directions recommendations created space for further planning and delegate approval of the final plan before implementation. He voiced his support for the recommendation and his trust in the leadership.

Marilyn Houser Hamm spoke eloquently about her concerns for remaining connected. She feared decision-making would be left to a smaller number of area church delegates while the wider church gathered for enrichment and spiritual building—a structure similar to what she said is currently not working in MC U.S.A. Houser Hamm, who has siblings in the U.S., said,

"I always prided myself [in] saying that we are not like that. I'm asking us: Is this how want to be?"

Another way of looking at it is that delegates will not be asked to process certain decisions twice—once at the area-church level and again at the national level. There is the potential for greater involvement, not less, said Paul Wideman, moderator of MC Eastern Canada.

Over the last several months, debate about the future structure of MC Canada and the process undertaken by the Task Force has sparked a wider conversation about what it all means. Particularly striking is the involvement of the Emerging Voices Initiative (EVI), a group of young adults who are passionate about the church and committed to its future, whatever form it might take.

Jonas Cornelsen, a member of EVI, has experienced many regions of the church in Canada, serving as an intern at Stirling Avenue Mennonite in Kitchener, Ont., and at the MC Eastern Canada offices there; attending his home congregation in Winnipeg; and worshiping for blocks of time in Abbotsford, B.C. "I love my whole national church," he said. "While there has been miscommunication, we have a fantastic opportunity to move forward and do better." He pleaded for delegates to remain critically engaged. "We are all responsible for what happens next," he said. ☞

PHOTO BY MATT VEITH



Delegates, including Julia Thiessen of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg at the microphone, line up to speak about the Future Directions Task Force recommendation to realign Mennonite Church Canada in light of declining donations to the denomination.

A vision for the MHC Archives and Gallery

STORY AND PHOTO BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

Did you know that if all of the textual records and photographs in Winnipeg's Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) Archives and Gallery were stacked on top of each other, they would be taller than the CN Tower?

That was one of the facts Korey Dyck shared during a seminar entitled "History matters: A new vision for the Mennonite Heritage Centre" that he led.

Dyck, as the centre's director, said there is something for everyone in the archives: "We can find stories that everyone will appreciate."

He outlined six strategies that MHC staff have created to ensure the centre's future viability and to help it carry out its mission to facilitate "respectful community dialogues so that faith perspectives engage current events through the collection, preservation and exhibition of curated art and heritage projects."

Those strategies include establishing a national presence through things like travelling art exhibits and digitizing archival material; engaging new audiences by developing the MHC's online presence as well by as hosting diverse public events; and institutional collaboration, like the Mennonite Archival Image Database, which includes material from the MHC as well as other archival partners.

Archival material is important, Dyck said, because it allows people today to learn from those who came before them. "If we collect the material and it's available in an archive, it's just waiting for people to learn from," he said.

Further strategies that the MHC staff hope to implement to ensure the centre's future viability include: income growth through grant writing and promoting legacy gifts and bequests; maximizing operational efficiency by developing a technology replacement strategy and simplifying the intake process; and exploring archival growth opportunities, such as creating

an art bank and developing educational programming.

In addition to serving Christians, Dyck said that the MHC serves many people who have never stepped foot in a church. "[The MHC] is a way to host people . . . so they can understand who Mennonites are [and] why faith is important to [us]," he said. ✎

To learn more, visit archives.mennonitechurch.ca.



Korey Dyck, the director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and Gallery in Winnipeg, speaks about the organization's vision at Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon.

PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD



For Randell Neudorf of the Commons church in Hamilton, Ont., the strains of the Glowing Embers Ukulele Band from Bethany Manor in Saskatoon brought tears to his eyes. His grandmother, who passed away a month ago, had been a resident of the Manor and a member of the band. 'I suddenly remembered that back in the winter before she was sick, that she had told me very excitedly that her ukulele band was going to be playing at the assembly,' he wrote in his church blog. 'Although I was sad that my grandma wasn't up there with her friends, I was happy to be reminded of her and our shared love of ukuleles and twangy old hymns.'

Delegates vote to allow space for differences

85 percent in favour of 'creating space' for congregations to differ on same-sex marriage

BY DAN DYCK AND DICK BENNER
MC Canada / Canadian Mennonite

Nine years of careful study, sensitive listening, deep engagement by many, but not all, congregations—and innumerable meetings of the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) Task Force—led to a large majority vote in favour of creating space for congregations to differ from one another when it comes to same-sex relationships.

With permission to allow abstentions, 277 delegates voted “yes,” 50 voted “no,” and 23 abstained in their response to an amended BFC recommendation that took into account some concerns from MC B.C. about language.

Article 19 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* clearly states that marriage is “between one man and one woman,” excluding room for LGBTQ persons to be a part of congregational life. The BFC recommendation recognizes that

this historical view of marriage may be dated and weighing down congregations, as many of them attempt to be faithful in welcoming everyone into their fellowship.

Outgoing moderator Hilda Hildebrand read well the gravity of the assembly’s discernment process, repeatedly reminding delegates of sensitive etiquette for those on all sides of the debate, requesting that no applause be given for individual comments or when the vote results were delivered. Announcement of the results ended with silent prayer and singing.

Delegate Ray Friesen of Swift Current, Sask., sensed a fulcrum moment when Gerry Binnema, pastor of Black Creek (B.C.) United Mennonite Church, shared that he had anticipated voting “no” prior to attending assembly. While his attendance at a seminar by Dan Epp-Tiessen on

“Reading the Bible in light of same-sex relationships” did not change his mind, it helped him hear that differing understandings can also be valid.

Delegate Ray Hamm of Altona, Man., appealed for equal attention to the science of same-sex relationships. “We owe it to ourselves and those among us to talk about more than Bible verses: genetics, environment, choice,” he said.

Gary Fehr of Blumenort (Man.) Mennonite Church indicated a “no” vote on behalf of his congregation. “I really hurt for those with same-sex attraction, but there has been very little talk about being accountable to the institution of marriage and how God meant it to be prior to sin entering the world.”

Several youth commented at the open mic.

Katharine Penner of Osler, Sask., said, “I want to be a church that focusses on love.”

SueAnne Harms of Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon said, “Friends have come out to me. I cannot full-heartedly say that the church will accept them. . . . You don’t need to understand same-sex relationships, you just need to love them.”

But Reuben Tut of South Sudanese Mennonite Church in Edmonton cautioned whether doctrine needs to spell out whether Christians love those in same-sex relationships or not. “Do we just need to love them?” he asked? “I pray because I know Mennonites are peacemakers, but sometimes Satan comes and diverts your ways when you are moving in a good direction. Let us be careful on this.”

A similar spirit of tolerance and good will seemed to prevail during earlier discussions on the BFC recommendation.

Robert J. Suderman, leader of the BFC process, urged the delegates to look at the recommendation as a whole and not get bogged down with the separate segments. He likened the approach to the four chambers of the heart beating, keeping the body functioning in the spiritual sense of peace, mission, faith and service. “But these need to be seen within the missional context in which we live, taking seriously God’s working in spheres beyond the church that include history, politics and science,” he said.

While many in the session resonated

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Usher Pat Gerber-Pauls gathers the ballot bags from delegates during the vote on same-sex marriage on July 9.



with that analogy, it went down hard with others.

Walter Bergen of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., saw it as a “lightning rod for other difficulties within the body.” He cited a lack of leadership in missions and education on the matter, and predicted that a positive vote would in all likelihood result in a fracture of the body.

Steve Swires of First Mennonite Church in Burns Lake, B.C., a pastor with a Baptist background, said that at first blush the resolution may sound harmless, but he cited Leviticus passages from the Old Testament and Paul’s warning in Philippians to contend that the church is now saying that “God made a mistake” in creating male and female.

But on the other side of the issue, Vic Thiessen, a member of Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and a former staff member of MC Canada, made an impassioned plea for making this a time of confession and repentance for the “ways we have unjustly treated LGBTQ members,” asserting that this is a matter of justice, just as slavery was.

A younger delegate, Jonas Cornelsen, observed that, as a member of both Hope Mennonite and now of Sherbrooke Mennonite in Vancouver, two congregations taking opposite positions on same-sex marriage, he is comfortable in both settings, seeing the diverse viewpoints as making MC Canada much richer as a communion, with every interpretation belonging together.

There was some concern that the new Canadian congregations—having sparse representation at the assembly—could not, from their various socially conservative cultural backgrounds, feel comfortable with the resolutions, but would be reluctant to impose their views on the larger body.

Tim Reimer, pastor at Danforth Mennonite Church in Toronto, confirmed the latter. He read reassurances from an Ethiopian pastor with whom he works closely, citing Ephesians 1:1-14, which calls the body to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Pieter Niemeyer, who identifies as a gay pastor from Stouffville, Ont., said that he and his wife “bear the weight of

this discernment process” because he has chosen to stay in his heterosexual marriage and, at the same time, “walk with those in the LGBTQ community” because of their fear of becoming a part of

the church. “A divided world is watching us,” he said, urging the delegates to not only approve the resolution but to actively demonstrate how much they believe in a God of acceptance. ☸

The place of a ‘confession’ in church life

BY BARB DRAPER
Editorial Assistant

In his seminar “Confessions of faith: Sources of unity or division,” Karl Koop told the story of 3,000 Mennonites who met during a five-hour meeting in Amsterdam in 1639 to bring together three Mennonite groups that had been severely divided.

The most contentious issue that divided them was how congregations should practise discipline. Koop, who teaches history and theology at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, said that in the early years of the 17th century, many disagreements among these Mennonite groups were resolved, and their confessions of faith became a unifying tool.

Within a few decades, however, there was new controversy over confessions of faith, and ministers were being asked to sign a form showing their agreement to a particular confession. Some ministers refused, saying that a confession of faith should not be a tool to determine who belonged and who did not. They said that Scripture and the Spirit of God were more important than confessions of faith. It took another 150 years before these Mennonite groups were able to be united.

Confessions of faith are important, said Koop. They help to teach what Christians believe and to talk to other denominations about their theology. The temptation is to regard them as key or to say they are irrelevant, depending on whether or not one agrees with them.

The introduction to the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* says that confessions serve the church because they “provide guidelines for the interpretation of Scripture,” but that the confession is “itself subject to the authority of the Bible.”

The temptation is to regard [confessions of faith] as key or to say they are irrelevant, depending on whether or not one agrees with them.

Second, confessions “provide guidance for belief and practice,” but “a written statement should support, but not replace, the lived witness of faith.”

Koop pointed out that these introductory statements are important in understanding how to use this confession of faith. Faith evolves over time, said Koop. Mennonite thinking is shaped by Mennonite experiences, and a confession of faith is based on the best discernment in a particular time and place. However, eventually Christians end up thinking about their beliefs in new ways. Just because there are differences of opinion, Koop said that it should not be assumed that one side or the other is unfaithful. Nor should it be assumed that Mennonites of the past were strongly unified.

When asked about how it can be determined when a confession of faith still represents who Mennonites currently are and when it becomes a historical document, Koop responded that this challenge is what makes assemblies so important. Christians need to gather periodically to gather wisdom from across the country to determine what the Spirit of God is saying to the church, he concluded. ☸



PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Ryan Siemens, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's area church minister, left, visits with Willard Metzger, MC Canada's executive director, centre, and Calvin Quan, newly installed MC Canada moderator, after the end of the last business session of Assembly 2016 on July 9.

Decision roundup

BY DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada

Assembly 2016 may become known as a watershed event by delegates in attendance. By turns intense and emotional, joyful and worshipful, the gathered made significant decisions that will impact the Mennonite Church Canada body of Christ for years to come.

On July 6, delegates voted in favour of repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, a settler teaching that has marginalized and taken rights away from indigenous people for centuries. While much education on the Doctrine of Discovery has already begun among congregations, much more is required.

On the morning of July 9, 85 percent of delegates voted in favour of the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) recommendation to create space for, and test alternative understandings of traditional beliefs on committed same-sex relationships. Congregations that are asked to bless same-sex marriages will now be given space to do so, even as the national family of faith continues testing to see if such discernment is a nudging of the Spirit of God.

That same evening, moderator Hilda Hildebrand announced the results of the Future Directions Task Force recommendation, which passed with a 94 percent

majority vote. The vote authorizes the board to develop more concrete plans to restructure national and area churches into a simpler, more integrated body. Leaders will come back to delegates with those plans by 2018 or sooner. When the transition is complete, it is anticipated that area church delegates will have more ownership of, and influence over, the national church agenda.

The plans also propose changes to the way funding flows. The new model will see congregations fund only area churches. The area and national churches are being given the task of reaching agreements on fair-share funding for national agenda items, passing on agreed-upon percentages to MC Canada for its work. Individual congregations will become members of only area churches, which, in turn, will hold membership in MC Canada.

"The strong favourable vote on the Being a Faithful Church and Future Directions recommendations represent a strong mandate from delegates to move forward on both of these items," said Willard Metzger, executive director.

A following resolution to thank and dissolve the BFC and Future Directions task forces also passed.

Delegates processed an amended resolution on Palestine and Israel on July 9 in response to a plea from Palestinian Christians that "the global church come alongside the Palestinian people as they suffer under Israel's 49-year military occupation of their lands." The amendment included acknowledgment of the suffering of Jewish people in the conflict, and a desire to work with Jewish organizations in Canada as well.

Delegates voiced concerns about what this would mean for relations with Jewish people and organizations in Canada, and observed that the church has been historically complicit in both anti-Semitism and Christian Zionism.

The resolution passed after further discussion, with some speakers noting the weight of making this decision with too little time, knowledge or discussion. The motion was carried, although some abstained since they had not yet consulted their congregations on the matter. ❧

The vote authorizes the board to develop more concrete plans to restructure national and area churches into a simpler, more integrated body.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MC CANADA



Four nominees were acclaimed to their Mennonite Church Canada offices during Assembly 2016. Pictured from left to right: Calvin Quan of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church will be the new moderator, Allan Hiebert of Calgary will be treasurer, Harold Peters-Fransen of Winnipeg will be recording secretary, and Don Rempel Boschman of Winnipeg will be chair of the MC Canada Witness board.

Looking to the future of Canadian Mennonite

Editor Dick Benner invited comments from MC Canada members

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ
Saskatchewan Correspondent

Canadian Mennonite has been around in some form or other for 62 years, and as editor Dick Benner pointed out, the Mennonite church in Canada has witnessed many changes during that time.

Speaking at a July 7 luncheon hosted by Canadian Mennonite Publishing Services, the non-profit organization that oversees the magazine and its online/social media presence, Benner pointed out that in 1953 the Conference of Mennonites in Canada was a “Christendom” church, and the issue troubling many congregations was whether to continue worshipping in German or switch to English. “Women knew their place and it wasn’t behind the pulpit,” he quipped.

Today, language is no longer an issue and women are accepted in leadership, but many Mennonite Church Canada

congregations are declining in numbers while increasing in age in this post-Christendom world.

“We have become captive of our conversation about sexuality,” said Benner. “We talk less and less to each other, and more and more through Facebook. The world is ever with us in ways we had not experienced before.”

But Benner wasn’t just reflecting for nostalgia’s sake. “How does this affect *Canadian Mennonite*?” he asked rhetorically. The magazine enjoys a loyal readership, but 80 percent of readers are over 55 years of age. And these older readers are adamant that they want *Canadian Mennonite* to remain a print magazine. Yet Benner and the publishing service’s board of directors struggle to find ways to

make the publication relevant to younger readers.

Increasing the magazine’s digital presence appears to be the solution, but the web presence is not lucrative. “Neither we nor our publishers have found ways to monetize the digital publication, and advertising revenue has dropped off precipitously in past years,” said Benner.

While the future seems to be uncertain, there is one thing of which *Canadian Mennonite*’s editor is absolutely certain. “In these changing times, you will need *Canadian Mennonite* like never before. You will need us to help you maintain an Anabaptist Mennonite identity, and to be your critic as well as your cheerleader,” he said.

Board member Tim Reimer thanked Benner for his efforts as editor and asked the luncheon guests for their thoughts on the future of *Canadian Mennonite*. “How do you people see *Canadian Mennonite* as having a function in our world as Canadian Mennonites going forward?” he asked.

“The one thing I don’t see reflected explicitly [in the magazine] is any reflection about the role of inviting persons to faith in Christ,” said Tom Yoder Neufeld of First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont. The Conrad Grebel University College emeritus professor said he sees stories about justice issues and the environment, but not many about what some might term “evangelism.” “Does that actually reflect the Mennonite church as it exists, or does it capture what Anabaptism means?” he asked, adding, “I think that’s a missed opportunity for *Canadian Mennonite*.”

Jake Buhler retorted: “I think it depends on what your definition of ‘evangelical’ is.” He added that he might read an article about healing relationships between the church and indigenous people and think, “That’s an ‘evangelical’ point of view.”

The final word went to former board member Bryce Miller. “Reporting compensation is shaped as much by absence as it is by presence,” he said. “You can’t report on what’s not happening in the church. . . . There are stories that haven’t been written because they haven’t been asked to be written.” He wondered, “What do our reflections about Mennonite life say about Mennonite life?”



Canadian Mennonite editor Dick Benner, right, speaks with Dean Peachey during the Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service luncheon held on July 7 at Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon.



Brothers Howie, left, and Lyle Desnomie play and sing 'The Creator Loves Everybody' at the beginning of 'Caring for God's good creation,' a churchwide consultation on creation care and responding to climate change, held on July 10.

How the church can move creation care forward

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent
SASKATOON

Following on the heels of the delegate sessions for Mennonite Church Canada, about 40 interested leaders got

together at Wanuskawin Heritage Park in Saskatoon to think about how to move forward the agenda of creation care,

particularly the issue of climate change, in Mennonite congregations across Canada.

One participant voiced the concern that this would just be another time to gather stories of what Mennonites are doing without moving forward the work on creation care and climate change, but presenters Mark Bigland-Pritchard, Joanne Moyer, David Henry, Christine Penner Polle, and Lyle and Howie Desnomie each in their own way contributed to advancing the cause.

The Desnomie brothers from Treaty 6 Cree land in Saskatchewan spoke to the need for “new/old” ways of living with the creation. Pointing to the posts of a tepee outside the window, they identified the very top as the space for a husband and wife, supported by their families. But the poles are grounded in the whole of the creation: community, animals, plants and the very soil.

Penner Polle, author of *Unfreeze Yourself: Five Ways to Take Action on Climate Change*, led the group in a meditation of “Laudato Si,” Pope Francis’s encyclical on climate change and justice. Decrying a technocratic mindset that looks only to science for solutions, and a religious-like faith in the free market, Francis calls for an “ecological conversion” in which people hear the cry of the poor, who suffer most from the changing climate.

Climate change is about justice, where those who have power act for those who do not, Henry said during his presentation, calling climate change a moral issue. “We have the tools,” he said. “We can and



The Riel Gentlemen's Choir, led by Jesse Krause, right, sings 'Carbon Dioxide,' one of the humorous songs about climate change and creation care that they brought to 'Caring for God's good creation,' a churchwide consultation on creation care and responding to climate change, held at Wanuskawin Heritage Park on July 10.



should take action. We can care for and heal the planet. We can care for and heal the poor.”

Moyer, a member of the Mennonite Creation Care Network, focussed on faith groups already active, and on ways to join or draw on the information already available. A key idea is “watershed discipleship,” in which Christians think about the

watershed in which they live as theirs and for which they are responsible.

Bigland-Pritchard noted that most people do care, but lack the time and energy to act. Political action is necessary, he said, and without compromise. “*God raises up the poor and brings down the mighty*,” he said, quoting Mary’s Magnificat from Luke 1:46-55. Like Ezekiel’s acted-out

prophecy, he called on the group to create civil disobedience.

The day ended with humorous songs by the Riel Gentlemen’s Choir, led by Jesse Krause, son of Henry Krause, a key planner of the consultation. “Carbon Dioxide,” an ode to the top predator in the city—the car, and others brought the themes of the day to an emotional conclusion. ☺

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For discussion

1. Executive director Willard Metzger said at the beginning of Assembly 2016 that "some may be arriving, fearing that this is the end of the church they have known and loved" (page 4). What do you fear most about losing following the decisions made in Saskatoon? What most excites you about the church's future?

2. In "Covenant and law" (page 8), keynote speaker Safwat Marzouk said that the church "sometimes needs to be challenged by the other voice or the other side of spirituality that is present in the biblical text." How do you respond to the "other voice," especially when that "voice" doesn't want to listen to what you have to say?

3. In the 'Young adults don't need the church' workshop (page 10), participants found that "there were a remarkable number of similarities in spite of the age differences," as well as across cultures. How can we get past these seeming differences and focus on those similarities we have as followers of Jesus?

4. After much hand-wringing across the country over the past few months, as reported in the pages of this magazine, delegates overwhelmingly voted to accept the Future Directions Task Force recommendations and move on (page 12). What do you think caused such a sudden shift, and why?

5. In the conversation on whether to permit churches to conduct same-sex marriages (page 14), Gary Fehr of Blumenort (Man.) Mennonite Church said that "there has been very little talk about being accountable to the institution of marriage and how God meant it to be prior to sin entering the world." Why do you think that is? Are concepts such as sin—and evangelism, as mentioned by Tom Yoder Neufeld of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont. (page 17)—no longer welcome in polite company in our churches? What is the future of our church without them?

—BY ROSS W. MUIR

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young
voices

PHOTO BY KRISTA LOEWEN



The rainbow appearing after a brief rainstorm is a fitting reminder of the weekend's theme.

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



Hailey Funk, left, and SueAnne Harms like being part of the delegate sessions relating to Being a Faithful Church and Future Directions.

'We're not your stereotypical teenagers'

Youth gather for canoeing, worship, service and delegate sessions at #CovenantCrew2.0

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

When an intense rainstorm started just as Mennonite Church Canada Youth Assembly 2016 participants set up their tents during the first afternoon of their canoe trip, organizer Krista Loewen was apprehensive.

"I was nervous it would dampen everyone's enthusiasm and sour the trip," Loewen said. In reality, the rainstorm did the exact opposite. The rain soon cleared and a gigantic rainbow appeared in the sky. It was fitting, since the event, entitled #CovenantCrew2.0, explored different covenants in the Bible. Earlier that day, the group had just talked about God's promise to Noah in Genesis.

"They just stood in awe and observed that gift," Loewen said of the rainbow. "There was this sign that continues to be a reminder for us of covenants."

More than 30 youth attended #CovenantCrew2.0 from July 6 to 10. In addition to participating in a two-day canoe trip, youth attended some of the delegate sessions at the MC Canada Assembly 2016 at TCU Place in Saskatoon; #CovenantCrew2.0 also included times of worship and social outings in the city.

Hailey Funk wanted to attend the assembly after positive experiences at last year's Mennonite World Conference event in Harrisburg, Pa., as well as the Fat Calf Festival, MC Canada's 2013 youth assembly in Winnipeg. "It's always so much fun meeting the other youth," said Funk, 17, who attends Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. "We all may go to

different schools, but we come together as Mennonites."

The two-day canoe trip was facilitated by Churchill River Outfitters in Missinipe, Sask., about 500 kilometres northeast of Saskatoon. Ric Driediger, who owns the company and is a member of Rosthern Mennonite Church, served as guest speaker.

Upon returning to Saskatoon, youth met for worship with Chris Lenshyn, associate pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., who spoke with the group about MC Canada's Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process and the work of the Future Directions Task Force.

The following day, youth participated in the delegate sessions related to BFC and Future Directions, and witnessed the votes. For many, being at the sessions was a highlight of youth assembly.

"It's really interesting seeing how all different Mennonites feel about the same issue," said 14-year-old Tieah Lennea from Wildwood.

SueAnne Harms, also from Wildwood, took advantage of the open mic session that preceded the BFC vote to express her frustration that the church is not inclusive of LGBTQ persons. "For me, that is not okay because the church should be something that loves everyone and accepts everyone," the 16-year-old said from the floor.

Later, Harms said that she was glad the youth attended those sessions and were

(Continued on page 22)

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



Clockwise from top left: Karina Valencia, Emma Valencia, Daniel Ayala and Noramy Gonzalia travelled from Kitchener, Ont., to participate.

(Continued from page 21)

able to get an idea of the processes involved at an MC Canada assembly. “We are the future, and we need to learn how to make those decisions,” she said.

After attending delegate sessions on the morning of July 9, youth spent the afternoon participating in a handful of service opportunities around Saskatoon. Afterward, the group spent an hour-and-a-half with Lenshyn, worshipping and talking about their experiences at the delegate sessions, as well as their laments and hopes for the church.

After joining the adult assembly for worship on the morning of July 10, youth headed home.

Loewen said that she was extremely happy with the way #CovenantCrew2.0 turned out. “Finding ways to celebrate and validate the young people in our church is a really important thing to do,” she said.

The original plans for youth assembly were cancelled due to low registration.

Organizers had initially hoped for 200 youth to attend, but when those anticipated registration numbers did not materialize before June 1, the date when commitments had to be signed for venue rentals, meals, lodging and certain programming plans, the event was cancelled and Loewen planned the more intimate #CovenantCrew2.0 instead.

Jonah Thiessen, a youth from Toronto United Mennonite Church, said he appreciated the smaller group. “We can have better group discussions and experiences, and we’re just closer as a whole,” the 17-year-old said.

Loewen said that she was happy about the numbers. “We can be sad about the fact that 200 youth didn’t sign up . . . [but] to me it’s just a marker on the wall that things in our church are changing, and we need to do different things to be successful,” she said.

Noramy Gonzalia, who works with youth at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., and who accompanied three youth to #CovenantCrew2.0, said that she was excited by the engagement she saw. “[The youth] want to be here,” she said. “They want to be at church, they want to be involved, they want to have a voice.”

Funk agreed. “We care,” she said. “We’re not your stereotypical teenagers.”

PHOTO BY KRISTA LOEWEN



Daniel Ayala, left, and Jonah Thiessen participate in #CovenantCrew2.0.

For more photos of the youth assembly, visit canadianmennonite.org/covenantcrew.



Laments and hopes for MC Canada

Members of the Emerging Voices Initiative reflect on their work, assembly and future

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

When Laura Carr-Pries got together with fellow students at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg last year to discuss the challenges facing



Mennonite Church Canada, she wasn't sure how things would go.

Out of those discussions, she and her peers formed the Emerging Voices Initiative (EVI) in response to MC Canada's Future Directions Task Force. EVI had a strong presence at the MC Canada Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon from July 6 to 10, and led one of the event's seminars.

"I'm way more hopeful coming out of this than I was in January," Carr-Pries said after the final business session at the assembly, adding that EVI had been hard at work since it formed this past January, meeting together to pray and talk about their ideas for the future of the church and discuss the Future Directions documents, as well as to prepare summary documents, blog posts and podcasts of their own for the EVI website. "It feels like we're now breathing at the end of a marathon," she said.

EVI member Tim Wenger added that the response the group received at the assembly was "overwhelmingly positive." "We are just doing something because we love the church," Wenger said. "We're trying to serve the church."

In response to the Task Force's work, EVI has invited MC Canada constituents to explore the following questions:

- **WHAT DO** we find increasing or decreasing our faithfulness in this model?
- **DO WE** agree that congregations will feel revitalized by this model and ultimately called back to renewed relationships with one another in the future?

During their seminar on July 7, EVI members led delegates in a time of expressing their laments and hopes for MC Canada. Peter Epp, an EVI member from Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, asked the more than 70 participants to write something they were lamenting on a yellow piece of construction paper shaped like a leaf. They were then asked to share their lament with the entire group if they felt comfortable doing so.

"I love the fact that we are trying to be local in many ways," said Dori Zerbe Cornelsen of Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. "At the same time, I lament a sense of loss of broad national identity."

After the public sharing, EVI asked each

person to partner with someone else in the room to share their laments one-on-one and then say to one another, "I lament with you." The yellow leaves were then pinned to a painting of a tree.

Epp then asked participants to write their hopes on leaf-shaped pieces of green paper. Many expressed that EVI gave them hope for the future.

"I'm very encouraged by, and have hope in, the Emerging Voices and young lives that remind us that the church is a gift that wants to enrich us," said Kathy Koop, a delegate from First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Willard Metzger, MC Canada's executive director, echoed those sentiments in an interview with *Canadian Mennonite* after the assembly. "I'm excited about their positive input, and the passion and the excitement that they're expressing about the future of the church," he said. "They're expressing confidence that we can figure this out. That's a gift."

Although they are not exactly sure what comes next, EVI members know they want to continue their work.

During the seminar, Epp said that the group is often asked, "What do you think we should all do?" The group doesn't have an answer for that question, but has been encouraged by the work the Task Force has done.

"We would encourage everybody to keep speaking into the process, to keep asking for those opportunities to share about the future of the church," Epp said. "Keep putting your ideas into this planning that will happen over the next few years, and don't expect [MC Canada leadership] to read our minds. . . . I think we find hope in where we see things going, and we find hope in knowing there's a way to grow this future together."

Anneli Loepp Thiessen, an EVI member from the Gathering Church in Kitchener, Ont., ended the workshop by saying that, for EVI, an important phrase throughout the group's time together has been, "I'm glad to be the church with you."

"In the middle of all this diversity of our opinions . . . there's just this sense that I'm so grateful that we're so diverse," she said. "We get to be church together, and that's such a gift." ❧



EVI members Laura Carr-Pries and Peter Epp speak to delegates during a seminar at Assembly 2016.



From left to right: EVI members Alex Tiessen, Anneli Loepp Thiessen, Jonas Cornelsen, Laura Carr-Pries and Tim Wenger stand in front of an art piece featuring the laments and hopes of MC Canada Assembly 2016 delegates.

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

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

✉ Use land for food production, not burying the dead

FOR SOME TIME, I have wondered whether we are good stewards when we use precious real estate to bury our dead. I do not now own real estate, and I question why, upon my death, I should own a piece of land for the next thousand years. Thousands of hectares of land hold grave markers, pay no taxes, require maintenance and are all but forgotten. I will give up my little plot to grow food for a starving world.

My children recently donated their deceased father's body to science, and several months later received his ashes, all at no cost.

Surely our church or some organization on the Internet could keep a memory bank of our deceased loved one's statistics, with a photo and other details.

LYDIA WARKENTIN MATHES,
MACHESNEY PARK, ILL.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Delegates have spoken

WILLARD METZGER

In a much-anticipated assembly, delegates have clearly spoken on behalf of Mennonite Church Canada. After an eight-year Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process, delegates approved the BFC7 recommendation with an 85 percent majority. This is clear affirmation for seeking a way forward together in responding to committed same-sex relationships.

Delegates affirmed that the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* still reflects our common understanding of faith and practice. At the same time, delegates affirmed the need to respectfully acknowledge that prayerful discernment has led some congregations and individuals to embrace committed same-sex relationships in a way that is not reflected in the *Confession of Faith*. In addition, delegates affirmed the need to create space in order to see if these congregations and individuals reflect a nudging of the Spirit.

This is a strong vote for continuing to



hold one another together as a national community of faith in ongoing discernment. It was not a vote to allow congregations to do as they see fit. Rather, it was a vote for us, as a national family, to create space across the country for congregations to be able to express their differences with our *Confession of Faith*. Area churches will determine how that space is best reflected in their regions. A strategy will also be developed so that we will continue to listen to each other as a national community.

After significant conversation, delegates also affirmed the Future Directions' "final report and addendum" with a 94 percent majority. This will result in area churches covenanting together for national priorities. A new transition team will be created to guide the next steps of discernment, feedback and approvals. Working groups will be developed to attend to the future structure of various program and ministry priorities. After further testing and approval by delegates, a new staff and ministry structure will be

initiated no later than July 2018.

This strong affirmation reflects a commitment to a robust national Mennonite/Anabaptist identity that is nurtured by area churches as they strengthen their congregations. While there is still lots of work required, delegates understood the need to imagine new ways of relating together as a national church family.

While the delegates held significant differences of opinion, I was proud of the overall respectful way in which they expressed their convictions. The desire to name a "brave space" for the BFC conversation attempted to recognize that the debate itself is wounding to the testimony of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters.

It is clear to me that our family of faith is passionate about serving God and others. Young adults and seniors together are as excited about the future of the church as they are about the past success of the church. This passionate engagement is an encouraging and inspiring gift.

These strong affirmations are not void of concerns. But the overwhelming sentiment is clear: We are ready to trust God in the next part of our journey together. And for this, I praise God!

Willard Metzger is MC Canada's executive director.

✉ **Yellow Bellies more inclusive than *The Last Objectors***

I ENJOYED VIEWING the premiere of *The Last Objectors*, a film about Canada's conscientious objectors during the Second World War, at the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario meeting on June 18. Produced by Refuge Productions of Winnipeg and

researched by Conrad Stoesz of the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg, it was a wonderful overview with interviewees who served as COs.

However, after the showing a few asked, "Were there no Swiss Mennonites who served as CO's?" One, maybe two, interviewees were from Ontario, but those were from Russian Mennonite backgrounds.

(Continued on page 26)

FAMILY TIES

Healthy diversity

MELISSA MILLER

“What does a healthy congregation look like?” I asked a pastor friend recently. He responded by telling a story of how he had led his congregation through a contentious issue. In the process, people spoke openly of their views, listened carefully, and, in the end, came to a satisfactory understanding about how to live with their differences. “A healthy congregation,” he concluded, “is able to take part in honest, respectful discussions and live with the tension of a variety of views.”

The point of the story wasn't his leadership, although it was a significant factor, to which I'll return. The point was that a congregation's health is related to its capacity to manage differences. The same holds for other groups, like families. People in a healthy group acknowledge the varied perspectives of its members. They provide avenues for open discussion. They believe there is value and worth in each person's perspective, and actively open themselves to hearing all voices. They tolerate—and sometimes enjoy!—the tension of living with differences. They live into ways of being that make space for the expression of divergent points of views.

We can see the value in variety outside human groups. In creation, for example, a healthy environment is one in which

diversity thrives. A single species environment—one kind of tomato plant, one kind of tree, one breed of dog—is vulnerable to disease and decline. One illness or predator can wipe out an entire species. Variations in tomato plants, trees and dogs increase the chances that some forms will be able to withstand threats and survive into the future.

Environment Canada's website says, “Canada is home to over 100,000 plant and animal species spread throughout a variety of climates and ecosystems. [This] variety . . . contributes to maintaining the integrity of our environment.” What an affirmation of the Creator's intention that diversity be a primary feature in environmental health. Awesome!

In spiritual terms, we can look to Christian understandings of the Trinity. God has revealed God's self to us in three distinct and interrelated forms. God as



In creation, for example, a healthy environment is one in which diversity thrives.

Creator, Jesus and Spirit demonstrates oneness, respect and delight in diversity, a model that we are called to partake of and imitate.

As I noted before, my pastor colleague was not highlighting his leadership as the church wrestled with a difficult topic. However, leaders do have a key role. Our churches and families are composed of

increasingly diverse memberships. To be healthy, we need the capacity to name our myriad views, understand and respect each other's perspective, and allow the Spirit to reveal God's activity to us in the midst of such variety.

Churches and families are entities in which differences emerge regularly. It is easy to find examples of how variety has created tension, conflict and enrichment in our settings. Consider events like worship and fellowship, mealtimes and life transitions. How are a variety of songs—or even the multiple voices of Scripture, for that matter—included in worship? How do the potluck dishes enrich us? What happens when the politically left, right and centre gather around the dinner table? How do we unite as a family to raise the young, seal covenants and bury the dead, fluidly navigating the various ways these tasks are conducted?

Leaders—pastors, congregational chairs, Sunday school teachers, parents, elders—bear a weighty honour. Our “relational muscles” are strengthened as we nurture generous space where each person can freely offer his or her perspective, so that the body may benefit from

these God-given variations and live into the mutuality of the Trinity. May we each do our part to create and tend this space. Our health depends on it.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) has a passion for helping people develop healthy, vibrant relationships with God, self and others.

(Continued from page 25)

Laureen Harder-Gissing, archivist at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, said that 2,600 of the 10,000 Canadian COs were from Ontario, where Swiss/Amish would have been the single biggest group.

A week earlier, Theatre of the Beat premiered *Yellow Bellies*, a dramatic version of the same story. Young playwrights Johnny Wideman and Rebecca Steiner

included a range of experiences of Swiss, Amish and Russian Mennonites, both East and West. Coincidentally, funding for this play was entirely from Ontario, mostly from Swiss/Amish donors. I'm glad to see younger Mennonite writers are providing a broader perspective.

FRED W. MARTIN, WATERLOO, ONT.

Fred W. Martin is chair of the Theatre of the Beat board.

GOD, MONEY AND ME

Joy proposition: Give till it feels good

DORI ZERBE CORNELSEN

In my childhood home, we had a unique red velveteen bag. When you pressed on the bag in the right place, you heard the sound of someone laughing, really guffawing. The recording went on for at least a full minute and you could almost hear the person wiping the tears from his eyes.

We often invited guests to press the bag and when the sound of the recorded laughter would start, it would inevitably cause smiles and giggles. Sometimes we would challenge each other to listen to the recording and try to keep a straight face.

Even though we knew what was coming, it was hard to resist laughing along.

One of the benefits of giving is that generous people are happier people. Michael

Norton, a Harvard Business School professor of business administration, has studied the relationship between money and happiness. In a TEDx talk, he says, "If you think money can't buy happiness, you're not spending it right. You should stop thinking about which product to buy for yourself and try giving to other people instead."

Perhaps this is obvious to Christians, given Jesus' encouragement in Matthew 6 to not store up treasures for ourselves, but to live instead with generous eyes

as the lamp of our body. According to Jesus, the alternative—when we store up treasures for ourselves—is to have bad or envious eyes that keep us in darkness. Sounds like Norton and Jesus may be on the same page on the connection between money and happiness.

An added benefit of giving is that it is contagious, or "contajoyous," as I like to say it. Studies show that when a person acts generously, it inspires others who witness it to also be generous toward others.

Likely we have all heard of "pay it for-

Next time you find yourself laughing because someone else is laughing, remember that giving is 'contajoyous' in the same way.

ward" stories in a local coffee shop when someone chooses to pay for the order of the next customer. Remember the news reports about the Dec. 21, 2012, phenomenon at a Tim Hortons in Winnipeg, where customers picked up the tab for the people behind them in line for three hours and 228 orders? There was something "contajoyous" going on!

This is what Paul wanted for the church in Corinth when he wrote to them about the generosity of the Macedonian

churches in II Corinthians 8. "Out of the most severe trial," wrote Paul, "their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity." Just like them, "see that you also excel in this grace of giving." Paul not only wanted the Corinthians to support his project, he also wanted them to be infected by the joy of giving experienced by the Macedonian churches.

Speaker and writer Brian Kluth writes, "Some people say, 'Give till it hurts.' But God recommends that we give until it feels good." In Canada, we live in abundance and it's important to be reminded that it feels good to give. When we live generously, we walk a road of joy and may inspire others to do the same.

Next time you find yourself laughing because someone else is laughing, remember that giving is "contajoyous" in the same way. To learn more about the benefits of giving, check out the "re-

sources" tab on the MennoFoundation.ca website. Your example may inspire someone else to experience the joy of giving.

Dori Zerbe Cornelsen is a stewardship consultant at Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) serving generous people in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit MennoFoundation.ca.



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

The pursuit of truth (Pt. 7)

TROY WATSON

American architect Frank Lloyd Wright said, “The truth is more important than the facts.”

I agree, although I’m not sure that I could explain why. What is the difference between truth and fact?

There are differing answers to this question depending on whom you ask. One author on the subject says that facts are more objective, permanent and verifiable in reality than truth. The author went on to use a curious example to demonstrate the empirical reliability and constancy of facts by referring to the sun always rising in the east and descending in the west. I found this amusing, as the example is not a fact but a perception—a false perception no less. The sun doesn’t move up or down in relation to the earth, it only appears that way relative to our perspective from the earth’s surface. If our perspective was from the sun or outside our galaxy, we would see the earth rotating as it orbited around the sun.

This highlights a fun fact about facts. They are not based on reality itself, but on our perception of reality. This means that facts can change as our perceptions change. The truth, on the other hand, does not change, according to my Christian worldview. Our understanding of truth certainly changes, but truth itself doesn’t. It changes us.

With the risk of oversimplifying, I distinguish fact from truth this way: A fact describes a fragment of reality in a particular context from a particular perspective, whereas the truth relates to the whole. For instance, you can use



isolated facts dishonestly, to deceive and move people away from the truth, as some politicians frequently do. But truth is always honest, holistic and integrated.

I realize that this distinction is vague and probably unhelpful, but I’m not sure I can define truth more clearly. You

see, for Christians, truth takes on an even larger and more mysterious synthesis, namely, with God. For Christians, all truth is “divine truth.” As St. Augustine said, “Wherever truth may be found, it belongs to the Lord.”

When I engage “divine truth,” it often

Jesus suggested that many Jewish leaders in his time had become so focussed on the Bible that they were unable to see what it was pointing to, namely, his own being. My hunch is that Jesus would hand the same diagnosis to many of us Christians today.

confounds more than it clarifies. It grasps me more than I grasp it. It is not an objective “thing” that I can memorize and pull out of my conversation repository like a piece of trivia or baseball stat, because it is not something I can simply learn and comprehend. Divine truth is something I encounter and become—or resist.

Many Christians, myself included, have been trained to focus on the facts, rather than the truth of Christianity. Luke said that he wrote his gospel account so that we may “know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed” (Luke 1:3-5).

Many Christians today are well instructed in biblical facts, but do not yet know the truth they point to. Jesus suggested that many Jewish leaders in his time had become so focussed on the Bible that they were unable to see what it was pointing to, namely, his own being. My hunch is that Jesus would hand the same diagnosis to many of us Christians today.

“Divine truth” cannot be communicated by merely presenting the facts about God and Jesus in written or spoken word. Not even if we “speak the truth in love,” whatever we think that means. In my experience, it often means imposing our opinions on others. The interesting thing about Paul’s mandate in Ephesians 4:15 about “speaking the truth in love” is that it isn’t about speaking.

Theologian John Stott explains: “*Speaking the truth in love*” is not the best rendering of this expression, for the Greek verb makes no reference to our speech. Literally, it means, ‘truthing in love,’ and includes the notions of ‘maintaining,’ ‘living’ and ‘doing’ the truth.”

“Divine truth” is deeper than our language, and is beyond it. As Paul writes in I Thessalonians 1:5: “[T]he gospel came to you not in word only, but also in

power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake.”

Paul is saying that the truth of Christ is revealed not merely by communicating ideas with words, but by a spiritual energy, by the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit, and by the kind of people we are as we live in “divine truth.” One of my mentors puts it this way: “The truth of Christ is more caught than taught.” ❧

Troy Watson (troydw@gmail.com) is pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Falk—Hailey Jade (b. March 25, 2016), to Jordan and Marci Falk, Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

Giesbrecht—Taryn Grace (b. April 20, 2016), to Gerry and Cassie Giesbrecht, Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

Janzen—Daphne Evangelia Tsiapalis (b. May 18, 2016), to Henry Janzen and Gina Tsiapalis, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

St. Denis—Nathan Donald (b. June 16, 2016), to Wayne and Robyn St. Denis, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Turman—Blaise Christie (b. Feb. 3, 2016), to Alicia and Michael Turman, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Wood—Finnick Danial (b. May 12, 2016), to Judge and Nicole Wood, Altona Mennonite, Man.

Baptisms

Leah Klassen, Aleah Sawatzky—Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont., May 15, 2016.

Katrina Schulz, Joshua Driedger, Shaelyn Fehr, Shania Ginter—Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man., May 29, 2016.

Cole Bender, Madelynn Jantzi, Sophie Jantzi, Deanna Mainland, Ashlyn Shantz, Laura Weber—Wellesley Mennonite, Ont., June 12, 2016.

Marriages

Fehr/Taylor—Jordan Fehr (Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.) and Laura Taylor, at Moose Jaw, Sask., May 7, 2016.

Friesen/Schwartz—Joey Friesen (Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.) and Morgan Schwartz, in Gretna, Man., May 28, 2016.

Giesbrecht/Thiessen—Jordan Giesbrecht and Jody Thiessen (Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.), at Blumenort Mennonite, June 11, 2016.

Hebert/Pauls—Matthew Hebert and Amanda Pauls, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, June 11, 2016.

Deaths

Balzer—Margaret (nee Dyck), 85 (b. June 23, 1930; d. June 15, 2016), Waterloo-Kitchener, United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Driedger—Rev. Cornelius, 95 (b. Feb. 26, 1921; d. June 6, 2016), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Driedger—John J., 92 (b. Oct. 20, 1923; d. June 10, 2016), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Enns—David, 65 (b. June 18, 1950; d. June 17, 2016), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Friesen—Vickie Marlene, 60 (b. Aug. 20, 1955; d. June 4, 2016), Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

Goertz—Irma (nee Fast), 81 (b. Oct. 27, 1934; d. June 15, 2016), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Leis—Sarah (nee Gerber), 98 (b. Jan. 26, 1918; d. June 12, 2016), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

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

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

A moment from yesterday



An Old Order Mennonite farmer in Waterloo Region, Ont., works the fields by horsepower in 1950, much as his 19th-century counterparts would have done. We take the cycle of the seasons for granted, yet in 1816 Mennonite settlers in Upper Canada (now Ontario) experienced “the year without a summer.” When Mount Tambora in Indonesia erupted in 1815, average global temperatures decreased by up to 0.7 C. Waterloo Region experienced seven heavy frosts in June and July of the next year. A local historian wrote that “food for both man and beast was at starvation prices.” Two hundred years later, does our modern food supply chain have the capacity to adjust to such events?

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing / Mennonite Archives of Ontario

Photo: David L. Hunsberger / Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca


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AMBS window

Stories of lives changed at AMBS

Sara Wenger Shenk, President

The AMBS learning community has been an oasis during this wilderness time in the wider church. One of our professors recently commented: “A student who has been in her own spiritual and social wilderness for some years told me yesterday that, in significant part because of her course work in Spirituality and Peacebuilding and our conversations, she is deciding to be baptized.” If that’s not a testimony to being a place of renewal and refreshment in the midst of wilderness, I’m not sure what is!

During graduation festivities, a student spoke to me about how she’s found healing while at AMBS from wounds the church inflicted on her. She said she wasn’t really a believer in Jesus when she came and now has become a follower of Jesus, full of joy. Members of this year’s graduating class testified over and over to how the deep formational work they experienced at AMBS was life-changing for them. In expressing their thanks to the faculty, they often mentioned the welcoming community the faculty creates and the faculty’s deep

love for the Bible and for Jesus. Without question, the spiritual maturity and humility of our faculty make AMBS a life-changing community.

Recognizing that we have students with many different perspectives, faculty members work hard to engage difficult questions in respectful ways. During spring semester, a professor sent this message: “Just to report that our discussion in Synoptics this morning was very fruitful. We were discussing the Transfiguration . . . All [the tense] issues came to the fore, and we had just about every opinion laid on the table at one point or another. There was goodwill; everyone was taken seriously by everyone. And we had a very good time and came to the interesting and important conclusion that Scripture is the stabilizing bar as we walk the tightrope of life.”



One of our Canadian students recently told me about how restorative her time at AMBS has been. She spoke of the trepidation she had felt before coming, because of all the craziness people in Canada hear about politics in the States and about gun violence. “But I had this vision,” she said, “of AMBS as a nest with a chicken brooding over it—that AMBS is one of the nests Jesus loves.”

People experience God here, as another student told me emphatically. Thanks be to God! •

Top: The AMBS graduating class of 2016 prepared and shared a special ceremony during their commencement service. Shown: Annika Krause, Alyssa Mezsick and Gabe Pennington

STAY IN TOUCH

- facebook.com/followAMBS
- twitter.com/followambs
- ambs.edu/news-events

2016 GRADUATES

Eighteen graduates honored

The 2016 AMBS commencement service took place on May 21. Each of the eighteen graduates received one of the following degrees and certificates.

MDiv Master of Divinity

MAPS Master of Arts: Peace Studies

MACF Master of Arts in Christian Formation

MATS Master of Arts: Theological Studies

Certificate in Theological Studies

James Matthew Branum *Certificate in Theological Studies.* James will continue to serve with Joy Mennonite Church of Oklahoma City as minister of peace and justice, working with the Center for Conscience in Action. He will also continue to produce a monthly Mennonite Radio Show (mennoniteradio.org) that airs online as well as on international shortwave radio stations

broadcasting from the United States, Germany and Australia. He and his wife, Rebecca Faulkner Branum, have one son.

Alexandra Meriwether Brown *MATS.* Allie is a member of Plymouth Congregational Church of Christ in Fort Wayne, Ind. She and Matt Brown, her husband, have two daughters.

Katerina Marie Friesen *MDiv.* Katerina is exploring pastoral ministry possibilities and is gardening and writing in the meantime. She is a member of Fellowship of Hope in Elkhart.

Angela Kay Gamble *MDiv.* Angela attends Union Chapel Church of God in Bryan Ohio, where her spouse, Erik Lightner, is the pastor.

Thomas Kyle Hughes *MDiv.* Thomas will do a Clinical Pastoral Education internship. He is discerning ordination in

the Episcopal Church. He is a member of St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church in Elkhart.

Joel David Ickes *MDiv.* Joel will be working with Global City Mission Initiative in the Bronx, New York. He currently teaches college classes in the social sciences and cross-cultural ministry. He is a member of Delta Community Christian Church in Lansing, Mich.

Elizabeth Annika Krause *MATS.* Annika is pursuing a campus ministry assignment. She is a member of Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

Charlene R. Mast *MACF.* Char will take two classes this fall to complete her degree. She plans to continue offering spiritual direction in the Goshen, Ind., community. She is a member of Walnut



James Branum, Alexandra Brown, Katerina Friesen, Angela Kay Gamble and Thomas Hughes. Not pictured: JoEllyn Chadwick



Gayle Gerber Koontz, professor emerita of theology and ethics, reads a blessing for Alexandra Brown (left) at the commissioning service, which takes place the evening before commencement. During the service, candidates for graduation as well as other students and their families who are leaving at the end of the academic year, receive words of encouragement and sending by someone the student selects from the AMBS community.

Joel Ickes (left), stands with his advisor, Jamie Pitts, assistant professor of Anabaptist studies. Jamie affirmed Joel's contributions as a student and blessed him for his new role at Global City Mission Initiative.



Joel Ickes, Annika Krause, Charlene Mast, Alyssa Mezsick and Gabe Pennington. Not pictured: Ben Schlegel

2016 GRADUATES

Hill Mennonite Church, Goshen. She is married to Randy Miller and has two daughters.

Alyssa Rachelle Mezsick *MDiv.* Alyssa anticipates establishing a small diversified farm while working as a stay-at-home mom for the next several years. She and Steve, her husband, are expecting their second child this summer. She is a member of Summit Church in Niles, Mich.

Gabriel Ray Beliele Pennington *MDiv.* Gabe will be associate pastor of Pleasant View Mennonite Church in Hydro, Okla. He is married to Christa Louise Pennington and is a member of Memorial Road Mennonite Brethren Church in Edmond, Okla.

Austin James Roberts *MAPS.* Austin will be training this summer in Montana and then serving two years in Rostrevor, Northern Ireland with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) and Mennonite

Mission Network. He attends Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart.

Karl N. Stutzman *Certificate in Theological Studies.* Karl will serve as director of library services at AMBS. He is married to Twilla Epp-Stutzman; they have three children. He is a member of Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart.

Laurel Denise Mast Swartzendruber *MDiv.* Laurel is pursuing a healthcare chaplaincy position. She is married to Michael Swartzendruber and is a member of Wayland (Iowa) Mennonite Church.

Naomi Ruder Wenger *MATS.* Naomi will continue to serve as co-director of The Hermitage Community, a contemplative prayer retreat community in Three Rivers, Mich. She and J. David Wenger, her husband, have four children. She is a member of Florence Church of the Brethren Mennonite, Centreville, Mich.

Matthew Curtis Yeater *MDiv.* Matt plans to attend graduate school at Hebrew University of Jerusalem or Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Israel. He is a member of Life Tabernacle Church in Elkhart and has three children.

NOT PICTURED

JoEllyn Nowak Chadwick *Certificate in Theological Studies.* JoEllyn will continue in her role as director of adult ministries at First United Methodist Church in La Porte, Ind. She is married to Lester Chadwick; they have four children and 10 grandchildren.

Benjamin John Schlegel *MDiv.* Ben will continue to serve as pastor at Howard-Miami Mennonite Church in Kokomo, Ind. He and Sarah, his wife, have two children. •



Austin Roberts, Karl Stutzman, Laurel Mast Swartzendruber, Matt Yeater and Naomi Wenger. Credit: Steve Echols

Seminary graduates called to live and teach patience

Mary E. Klassen

In his address at the May 21 AMBS commencement service, Alan Kreider, professor emeritus of church history and mission, called 2016 graduates to a life of patience. Scripture texts for the service included Hebrews 12:1-2, which urges Christian to run the race with patience. Of this exhortation, Kreider commented, “What a peculiar way to run a race!”

Kreider recently completed an in-depth study of the early church’s emphasis on and understanding of the virtue of patience, culminating in publication of *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbably Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Baker Academic, 2016). His address gave particular attention to second- and third-century North African theologians Tertullian and Cyprian, and to the example of Jesus. He contrasted their attention to and formation in patience with our culture’s pervasive impatience.

Early Christians were convinced that patience was the very nature of God, Kreider explained. “Patience was not what they were taught but what they were formed to be. I think this was the key to early Christian witness—not what they said but what they were.”



After noting the dangers of impatience in our culture and pointing out how patience was central for early Christians, Kreider said, “God wants those of you who are graduating to be patient Christians, and to minister to other people in such a way that they become patient Christians—Christians whose character and reflexes are patient.”

He encouraged graduates to look to Jesus as shown in the four Gospels, to remember that God is in control and to follow Jesus’ example of praying. “A patient stance for us today is to seek



Graduates Katerina Friesen and Matthew Yeater recite Hebrews 12:1-2. Katerina read in English while Matt read in Greek using braille—one of the tools he relied on in his seminary study because of his vision impairment.



God’s kingdom with our gifts and skills and to pray with passion that God will bring the kingdom.”

Finally he called graduates to help their congregations become schools of patience. Patience needs to be learned, Kreider said, and it is best learned by practicing it with others.”

In the usual AMBS commencement tradition, Scripture texts were read by students prior to the address. Readers from the 2016 class were Katerina Friesen, reading in English, and Matthew Yeater reading in Greek, relying on braille—one of the reading tools he used in his seminary study because of a vision impairment.

Eighteen graduates were honored in the service. Nine earned the Master of Divinity degree, a three-year program of study for leadership in the church. Three earned the Master of Arts: Theological Studies, two the Master of Arts: Peace Studies and one the Master of Arts in Christian Formation. Three people received the Certificate in Theological Studies, representing one year of study.

One-third of the graduates are in pastoral ministry or are seeking pastoral ministry roles. Two are pursuing mission work, one in a U.S. urban setting and one in a European setting. One will pursue graduate studies in Israel, one is entering a chaplaincy program, one is seeking a chaplaincy position, and others have made or are making plans for other forms of ministry.

Jamie Pitts, assistant professor of Anabaptist studies, presented the charge to the graduates. Noting that graduation comes between Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, he gave the graduates a call to three things: to celebrate the “harvest of God’s good gifts,” to renew their commitment to the way of Jesus Christ, and to “rest in the Spirit because the Spirit rests on and in you.” Graduates responded to this charge with silent reflection, and then lit small candles and carried them from the center to the outside walls of the sanctuary.

The commencement service included an announcement that Linda Shelly is the recipient of the 2016 AMBS Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition. Shelly



is regional director for Latin America with Mennonite Mission Network. She has worked for decades in and for Latin America for Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite mission boards. In fall, she will have an opportunity to share with the seminary community about her ministry and will receive fuller recognition at that time. •

Photos (left to right): James Branum receives his degree from president Sara Wenger Shenk, with academic dean Rebecca Slough and registrar Scott Janzen; Alan Kreider gives the commencement address; Graduates Austin Roberts and Charlene Mast stand for the conferring of their degrees.

Faculty present graduate awards

Each year, AMBS faculty present awards to selected graduates at the Dean's Breakfast, the day before commencement. This year's recipients are:

- **Katerina Friesen**, Award for Excellence in Peace Studies and Award for Excellence in Missional Leadership
- **Annika Krause**, Heart of the Community Award
- **Charlene Mast**, Award for Excellence in Christian Formation
- **Gabriel Pennington**, Heart of the Community Award
- **Laurel Mast Swartzendruber**, Award for Excellence in Pastoral Care and Counseling
- **Naomi Wenger**, Willard M. Swartley Award for Excellence in Biblical Interpretation
- **Matthew Yeater**, Millard C. Lind Award for Excellence in Biblical Interpretation

All the graduates received a free webinar registration from the Church Leadership Center, a one-year subscription to *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* from the Institute of Mennonite Studies and access to ATLASerials library resources. They also received a 'golden ticket' from the admissions team, good for one waived application fee, to share with someone considering study at AMBS. •



Graduate Naomi Wenger received the Willard M. Swartley Award for Excellence in Biblical Interpretation from Ben C. Ollenburger, professor of biblical theology.

Developing missional leaders



A **MBS** is announcing the launch of Missional Leadership Development, our newly revised distance education program at the under-graduate or non-credit level.

Missional Leadership Development is for active leaders of congregations, church planters, pastors called to ministry without a college or seminary education, and lay leaders preparing for a variety of ministries in church or community.

The program, which will be administered by David B. Miller, associate professor of mission leadership development, has six units of study and is built on three key elements: online coursework with other students, annual visits to the Elkhart campus or a nearby camp, and biweekly meetings with a pastoral mentor near them. This program grew out of our

formerly-offered Pastoral Studies Distance Education program. Registration deadline for fall semester is September 12. Visit ams.edu/missionalleadershipdevelopment •

AMBS Window SUMMER 2016 Volume 26 Issue 3

Distributed three times a year as a supplement to *Canadian Mennonite* and *The Mennonite*.

Editor: **Melissa Troyer**
Designer: **Nekeisha Alayna Alexis**
Photos: **Nekeisha Alayna Alexis, Jason Bryant, Steve Echols, Mary E. Klassen, Peter Ringenberg, Tyler Klassen, Melissa Troyer, Lynne Zehr**

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A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

ALUMNI NEWS

The April 2016 issue of *Anabaptist Witness* includes several contributions from alumni, including articles by **Richard Showalter (MDiv 1974)**, **Sarah Thompson (MDiv 2011)**, and **Alain Epp Weaver**, and reviews of books by **John Sharp (MDiv 2005)** and **John K. Stoner (MDiv 1997)**. Read it online at anabaptistwitness.org

Alumni Serving as Church-Wide Leaders: Ryan Siemens (MDiv 2007) started serving in 2015 as Area Church Minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan. **Kathy Neufeld Dunn (MDiv 1991)** began work in July 2016 as Associate Conference Minister

for Western District Conference of MC USA. **Doug Luginbill (MDiv 1997)** will begin serving August 15 as Conference Minister of Central District Conference of MC USA.

In Memoriam: Robert Ramseyer (BD 1954), professor emeritus of missions and anthropology, died April 30 in Bluffton, Ohio, at the age of 86. He taught at AMBS between 1972 and 1996, alternating with terms of missionary service in Japan. Bob is survived by his wife Alice Ruth and four adult children.

Alumni, stay connected at [facebook.com/groups/amsalumni](https://www.facebook.com/groups/amsalumni) •



Nurturing the whole Christian learner

Excellent academics are balanced with deep personal and spiritual formation as AMBS develops Christian leaders in body, mind and spirit.



Worship: Students not only participate in worship, they also play an active role in planning chapel services and morning prayers. Worship is enriched by the different styles offered by people from various faith traditions from points all over the globe.



Play: Every fall, new and current students, faculty, staff and their families join in community-building activities at Camp Friedenswald in Cassopolis, Mich. During the year, disciplined study is also interspersed with table tennis, board games, soccer, and frisbee.



Witness: Whether in a Stations of the Cross prayer walk to sites of trauma and healing in Elkhart (above), at a nine-day Trail of Death class pilgrimage retracing the forced removal of the Potawatomi Indians, or paying attention to creation care, AMBS guides today's and tomorrow's leaders in joining God's reconciling mission. ●

Top: Professor Andy Brubacher Kaethler and student Anita Yoder work on building a canoe, which was the group project for the entire Christian Practices in a Technological Culture course. Andrea Baker Dean and Nekeisha Alayna Alexis take part in one of the many special breaks. **Bottom:** Student Sungbin Kim plays guitar in chapel. Students untangle themselves in an activity at Camp Friedenswald. A Stations of the Cross walk, which involved local residents, was coordinated in part by campus pastor Janeen Bertsche Johnson and student Katerina Friesen. **Credits:** Mary E. Klassen, Jason Bryant, Peter Ringenberg and Tyler Klassen.

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

Every October, between Canadian and US Thanksgiving observances, the seminary community gathers for two special morning breaks to celebrate the generosity of our donors. Our students benefit from named scholarships in honor and memory of saints present and past, and we encourage these students to share their seminary calling with scholarship representatives. In some cases, lifelong friendships have grown out of sending a simple thank-you note.

We also thank those who give generously to the Student Aid and AMBS Funds. We are reminded that if we relied only on tuition income, we would run out of money by the end of October. From November on, we are carried by a cloud of witnesses who love AMBS and believe in our mission. We are grateful that we can continue to serve the church by educating followers of Jesus to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. ●

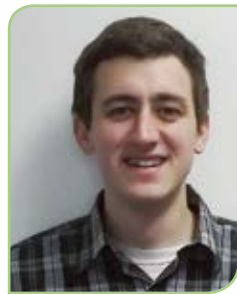


Supporting new leaders with hearts on fire



Karl Malotane International Student Scholarship

Karl is the recipient of this full-tuition scholarship that encourages and supports outstanding international students with gifts for ministry as they prepare to serve the church in their home country. Karl joins the AMBS community from Zimbabwe, where he worships with the Assembly of God. He will be pursuing a Master of Arts: Peace Studies degree, with a concentration in international development administration.



Grant Miller Next Generation Scholarship

Grant is the recipient of this full-tuition award that encourages and supports

outstanding Mennonite students with gifts in church leadership. Grant lives in Goshen, Indiana, and is a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship. He will be pursuing a Master of Divinity degree, with a concentration in history, theology and ethics.



Rebekah York Church Leadership Award

Rebekah is the recipient of the Church Leadership Award, a full-tuition scholarship that

encourages and supports outstanding Mennonite students with gifts for ministry as they prepare to serve the church. Rebekah is a member of Washington Community Fellowship and currently lives in Alexandria, Va. She will be pursuing a Master of Arts: Peace Studies (MAPS) degree, with a concentration in international development administration. •

ADDITIONAL AWARDS for 2016-17 incoming students

- **Andrew Bodden**
Multicultural Scholarship and Steiner Bivocational Scholarship
- **Meredith Caldwell**
United Methodist Student Scholarship
- **Ian Funk**
Lederach Preaching Scholarship and Steiner Bivocational Scholarship
- **Brian Hendricks**
Steiner Bivocational Scholarship
- **Spencer Husch**
Multicultural Scholarship and Steiner Bivocational Scholarship
- **Josh Janzen**
Special Scholarship
- **Benjamin Krauss**
Multicultural Scholarship
- **Bryan Miller**
Lederach Preaching Scholarship
- **Xinia (Marisa) Smucker**
Multicultural Scholarship
- **Dylan Stillman**
Steiner Bivocational Scholarship and Special Scholarship
- **Janell Warkentin**
Steiner Bivocational Scholarship and Anabaptist Scholarship
- **Jennie Wintermote**
Steiner Bivocational Scholarship

AMBS PANORAMA

Seminary Preview Days

Want to visit campus and explore study options? Please join us November 4 or March 3. ambss.edu/visitAMBS

AMBS-EMS Partnership

AMBS and Eastern Mennonite Seminary have each identified three online courses that students at one school can take from the other school. Cross-listed AMBS courses are History of Christianity in Africa; Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture; and Global Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology and History. Cross-listed EMS courses are Psychology of Religious Experience, Pastoral Care, and Race and Religions in America.

Merry Lea Environmental Center (Goshen College)

AMBS has formed a partnership with Merry Lea Environmental Center, allowing peace studies students to participate in a semester-long residential program in Environmental

Sustainability Leadership. ambss.edu/academics/merry-lea-semester.cfm

Pastors Week

The topic for Pastors Week, January 23–26, 2017, is Cultivating Intercultural Leadership for Diversity-Oriented Churches, featuring A. Brian Leander. Get updates at ambss.edu/pastorsweek

Research for Ministry: Online Seminar

Use our wealth of online library resources to add depth and inspiration to your preaching, worship planning, Bible study, pastoral care and theological reflection. Throughout the term you will study topics of your choice, share and test your learnings with others in the class, and learn from what classmates have discovered. This affordable, non-credit, online course is designed to support your ongoing ministry. ambss.edu/researchforministry

Make 4 Hours Count: How to Streamline Bible Study for Ministry

This six-week, online short course is for pastors, Bible study teachers, and other church leaders who have some education, experience and background in Bible. This course addresses how to fit preparation of a biblical text that one wishes to use in ministry—a sermon, teaching a class, or other use—into a full, real life with its interruptions, short windows of opportunity and many demands.

ambss.edu/shortcourses

Webinars

Upcoming webinar topics include Congregational Leadership and Ministry in the Face of Sexual Abuse, Introduction to Anabaptism, Planting Peace Churches, and Changing the Way the Church Views Racism. ambss.edu/webinars •

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Mennos march for 'Steinbach Pride'

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY

Manitoba Correspondent

STEINBACH, MAN.

The march was set to begin at 11 a.m. on July 9. But at the top of the hour, Michelle McHale, whose fight for civil rights in Steinbach recently brought the city into the national spotlight, asked the crowd to indicate by applause whether they would mind “waiting for the folks on the highway,” as traffic was backed up to St. Anne, nearly 20 kilometres out of town. Steinbach’s E.A. Friesen Park erupted with clapping.

Police estimate that as many as 5,000 attended “Steinbach Pride,” the equivalent of a third of the city’s population. LGBTQ members and allies from across the spectrum of creed, culture and denomination came out: Mennonites, Catholics, Quakers and Anglicans; indigenous and settler; civic bodies and humanitarian organizations; various levels of police; and official representatives from at least two national political parties.

Scott Kolody, commanding officer of Manitoba’s RCMP, said he marched in the parade “to celebrate the importance of diversity and inclusion,” accompanied by officers in dress uniform.

Moral objection, if not religion explicitly, has been the single most cited reason for Steinbach’s heavily publicized resistance to its Pride parade. Nevertheless, the rumoured planned protest that many marchers had braced for never materialized. Furthermore, of all the opinion-based pickets and banners visible at the parade, a huge number were religious in tone. None were condemning, and many were clearly affirmative.

Still more encouraging to many was the strong presence of explicitly “Mennonite” signage, including:

- “I LOVE Dycks and dykes.”
- “WE WANT: rollkuchen, somma borscht, zwiebach, kielke, perogies, equality.”



Police estimate that as many as 5,000 attended 'Steinbach Pride,' the equivalent of a third of the city's population. LGBTQ members and allies from across the spectrum of creed, culture and denomination came out.

- “LESBO? OH ba yo!” (“Oh but yes” in Low German)

- “HOMOSEXUALITY CAUSES cancer? Na oba!” (“No way” in colloquial Low German)

The last one was carried by Curtis and Patricia Penner of Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach.

“Historically, the church has been on the wrong side of many issues, you know, the last to support positive change,” said Curtis of their reason for attending. “We’re here to support the LGBTQ community. Around town there’s a lot of animosity, but that doesn’t discredit this movement. This parade is needed.”

Asked whether they thought Jesus would be marching in the parade if he were there that day, the Penners had no reservations: “Absolutely.” “Without a doubt.”

Tyrone Hofer, a member of the latest

graduating class of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, was a major figure with the media leading up to the parade and during it. Formerly a member of the Hutterite church, Hofer came out as gay to his church and family just over a year ago. Upon his confession, he was excommunicated from his congregation and disowned by his parents.

For a while, Hofer thought this rejection would spell the end of his faith, but with support from affirming friends, LGBTQ YouTube-ers and his biblical/theological education at CMU, Hofer soon reconsidered. “CMU changed my opinion on staying a Christian,” he said. According to him, not all Hutterites are anti-gay. “Many are allied in secret,” he said.

For the parade, Hofer wore a cross pendant flanked on both sides by rainbow bead sequences. The necklace, he said, summarizes his current conviction and his message to young Christians who may be struggling with their sexual identity.

“There is absolutely nothing wrong with you,” he declared. “Tell yourself there is nothing wrong with you. Find a circle of supportive people who will help you believe it. Don’t live in fear and self-hatred. You know the truth inside already. . . . Christ is still at the centre of it all.” ✚



A 'Mennonite' placard at the inaugural 'Steinbach Pride' parade on July 9.



CANADIAN MENNONITE

The church and social justice

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Calendar

British Columbia

Sept. 18: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. fall fundraising dessert banquet, featuring letters out of the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev "thaw," at King Road Mennonite Brethren Church, Abbotsford, at 3 p.m.

Saskatchewan

Aug. 6: Seventh annual Spruce River Folk Festival, at Spruce Home, 20 kilometres north of Prince Albert on Highway 2. Pipe ceremony at 10 a.m. Music from 1 to 8 p.m. For more information, or to volunteer, call Heather Driedger at 306-763-6224.

Manitoba

Aug. 8-12: Pioneer Day Camp at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, for children aged 9 to 12.

Aug. 10: Heritage Classic Golf Tournament fundraiser for Mennonite Heritage Village, at Quarry Oaks Golf Course. Spaces are limited.

Sept. 18: "Supper from the field," at

Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, at 5:30 p.m. Held in conjunction with Open Farm Day.

Sept. 24: Brandon MCC Relief Sale, at the Keystone Centre.

Ontario

Until Dec. 26: New exhibit at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo: "Conchies speak: Ontario Mennonites in Alternative Service."

Aug. 4-7: The Sherk/Shirk/Schürch reunion, in Waterloo. Activities include bus tours, seminars, a children's program, auction and banquet. For more information, e-mail church.gathering@gmail.com.

Aug. 7: Folk and gospel music experience with Diana and Mike Erb, at the Detweiler Meetinghouse, at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call Laurence Martin at 519-208-4591.

Aug. 21: Ontario Mennonite Music Camp leads worship at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, at 9:45 a.m.

Aug. 26: Ontario Mennonite Music Camp presents its final concert at Conrad Grebel University College's Great Hall, Waterloo, at 7 p.m.

Reception to follow the concert.

Sept. 9-11: "Building community" retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Theme: "Gifting our community." Speakers: Catherine Gitzel and Matthew Arguin. For more information, call 519-625-8602.

Sept. 19: MCC Ontario annual general meeting, at the Kitchener MCC office, at 8 p.m. To register in advance, visit mcco.ca/agm.

Sept. 26 or 27: Fall seniors retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Theme: "Our houses, our hearts, our faith." Speaker: Ingrid Loepp Thiessen. For more information, call 519-625-8602.

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



I wonder how Christians in Cuba worship...



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Classifieds

For Sale

FOR SALE: 65 new **Sing the Journey** at \$7.00 each. Email jandienns@shaw.ca or call 780-434-0251.

Announcement

ABNER MARTIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

This annual scholarship is awarded by Menno Singers to a student who is affiliated with a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation and is, or will be, in a full-time program of music study, graduate or undergraduate, during 2016-17.

Applications must be mailed by Sept. 15, 2016. For application documents or further information, contact Lewis Brubacher at phone: 519-884-3072 email: lbrubacher@sympatico.ca

Employment Opportunities



Mennonite Central Committee EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
Program Director

The Program Director for MCC BC provides leadership and support to program staff and ensures that all activities are focused on approved strategic priorities, plans and budgets.

MCC BC programs serve in areas related to abuse prevention and response, indigenous relations, refugee assistance, homelessness, child poverty, sustainable livelihoods, restorative justice and voluntary service.

The Program Director reports to the Executive Director and is a member of the leadership team that collaborates on the development of strategic plans.

Please send your cover letter and resume to **MarieReimer@mccbc.ca** or call **(604) 851-7728** or **(604) 850-6639**.

Only those candidates who are legally eligible to work in Canada should apply. View the complete job description at: <http://mcccanada.ca/get-involved/serve/openings/program-director-mcc-bc>.

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to: a personal Christian faith; active church membership; and non-violent peacemaking. MCC is an equal opportunity employer and invites all qualified candidates to apply.



Conrad Grebel University College

Specialist Position in Spirituality and Aging Public Education and Research Scholar

RBJ Schlegel-University of Waterloo Research Institute for Aging and Conrad Grebel University College invite applications for a part-time (.5) specialist position in Spirituality and Aging to begin as early as September 2016.

The position is focused upon providing leadership to the RIA Spiritual Care for Seniors Program. Creating and collecting a body of research, providing training and resources for long-term care staff (i.e., chaplains, health care professionals) and educating lay leaders as well as family members and others who deal with seniors on issues of spirituality and aging is critical to enhancing the care of seniors in our society.

Review of applications will begin August 15th, 2016, and continue until the position is filled.

See the full position description for specific duties, qualifications, reporting structure, and materials needed by applicants for submission at grebel.ca/positions.



Employment Opportunity
Saskatoon Branch Manager

Mennonite Trust Ltd. is owned and operated by Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches and the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches. As a Church-owned trust company, our goal is to offer estate and financial services from a Christian perspective.

This is a full-time position. Candidate must have training to assume the following responsibilities:

- The Administration of the Branch Office
- Administration of Estates
- Estate Planning and Will Consultation
- Income Tax Return Preparation and Consultation
- Mortgage and Personal Loan Administration

Qualifications:

- A commitment to the Statements of Faith of MTL's Owing Church Bodies
- Trust Company / Banking experience
- Personal and Estate Tax experience
- Estate and Financial Planning knowledge
- Management experience
- Up-to-date Computer Skills
- Degree in Business / Commerce, Economics, and/or Law would be an asset.

Salary and benefits will be commensurate with training and experience of successful applicant. Administrative hours are required. Position to begin as soon as possible. Please submit resume with cover letter to:

Cory Regier, CEO
3005 Central Avenue, Box 40
Waldheim, SK S0K 4R0
Phone: (306) 945-2080
Fax: (306) 945-2225
E-mail: mtl@mtrust.net

Advertising Information

Contact D. Michael Hostetler

1-800-378-2524 x224

advert@canadianmennonite.org



Harry Lafond, executive director of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatchewan, right, welcomes Mennonite Church Canada delegates and guests to Treaty 6 land in Saskatoon on July 6 for their 2016 'God~Faith~People' assembly. Also pictured, from left to right: Ken Warkentin, MC Saskatchewan moderator; Willard Metzger, MC Canada executive director; and Hilda Hildebrand, outgoing MC Canada moderator.



Snapshots

PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD



Leonard Doell, right, and Ed Bueckert enjoy an animated discussion after the Reserve 107 seminar during Assembly 2016. The workshop included the showing of Reserve 107: Reconciliation on the Prairies, a documentary that tells the story of the Young Chippewyan band, their historic land ownership and subsequent loss of it in 1897, when the Canadian government gave it to Mennonite and Lutheran settlers, and the current restorative partnership between the three groups. In 1977, Doell was asked to undertake a three-to six-month research project to examine the history behind the Young Chippewyan claim. 'Thirty-nine years later, I'm still at the same thing,' he told the workshop, saying that now there is 'more history than we have ever known. We are learning a more complete story of [the three groups' relationships] to the land.'