

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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World record for relief*

(see back cover for more)

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EDITORIAL

Canadian Mennonite: A lighthouse

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

In reflecting on Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon, one thing is certain: We are entering a period of uncertainty in the life of Mennonite Church Canada and its area churches. The most hopeful sign in this state of affairs is that the delegates had enough faith in our leaders to begin a new process with few specifics.

That says a lot about the strength of our communion, another shining example of one of our founding Anabaptist beliefs—that our particular brand is a “priesthood of believers” and not a hierarchy of top-down leaders who hold most of the authority. We can have this faith because we will all be an integral part of the outcomes.

Even though the shaping of a new union has been assigned to the moderators of the five area churches, there has been a call for a more diverse leadership—one that is less patriarchal in composition and includes younger adults, women and persons of non-European ethnicity. The appointment of a new moderator for MC Canada in this two-year interim, Calvin Quan, pastor of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church, is a good start.

MC Canada will continue to play a role in the next two years, but will defer to a new emerging vision and structure, as a “transition coordinator” works with

all of the entities involved. That person has yet to be hired. We should all pray that a person of deep faith, full of integrity and wisdom, as well as administrative skills, is found.



During this transition process, though, there will need to be some lighthouses that can shed light and give direction as

we travel along what can be some foggy shorelines. As noted, we will need to stay true to the character of our collective faith expression and to the spiritual roots that have grounded us over the past 500 years. In simple terms, our Anabaptist identity should fundamentally stay intact even as the structure changes.

One of those lighthouses is *Canadian Mennonite*. As a 62-year-old national publication, we have been telling the stories of our faith consistently over the decades, even as the culture changes around us, even as we have developed our faith and expanded our witness in our country and around the globe.

During its 113-year history, MC Canada and its predecessor, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, has served as the shaper and guardian of our Anabaptist/Mennonite identity. Even though our numbers have diminished, they have faithfully reminded us of who we are and what is our role as congregations and believers. They have done

this through faith formation, our international witness, leadership training and stewardship education.

This contribution, this gift, should not be lost in the transition. It should be honoured for what it has done to give us new vision, to shape and enhance our spirituality, to see that our pastors and leaders are properly trained to meet the challenges our congregations face in the 21st century.

As its role diminishes over the next several years, there needs to be a keeper of our national identity, a place for national conversation and a forum for all of the “priests” to have a say. That’s why *Canadian Mennonite* is needed more than ever. Every two weeks, we tell the stories that reinforce our shared identity as a people.

These are more than just happy tales. Our five correspondents across the country seek out those stories that represent the best witness to our faith, the most unique expression of who we are. Our columnists and opinion writers give us insights at the forefront of Christian thought and practice. Our Milestones announcements help to keep the family together.

We not only foster dialogue, we monitor and sometimes temper the conversation. Right now the church seems captive—sometimes obsessed—with sexuality. While this topic requires a thorough airing, it is taking our attention away from other issues that ought to consume us more, such as finding our place in a post-Christian culture and extending hospitality beyond our enclaves to our neighbours.

With our independence from the church establishment, *Canadian Mennonite* can be its critic from time to time while still functioning as a partner in leadership circles. This is especially important as we forge the new structures that serve us.

For all of these reasons, *Canadian Mennonite* is a lighthouse during a time when the fog is settling in.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Rose-Bar Farm of Beausejour, Man., brought its antique threshing machine to the July 31 ‘Harvesting hope’ world record attempt at the Manitoba Agricultural Museum in Austin. Funds raised from the event will be split between the Museum and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. See story and more photos on the back cover.

PHOTO: JOHN LONGHURST, CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK

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Guiding values:

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

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

• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

We can always afford to be generous

How churches can better navigate today's changing giving patterns by building trust, gratitude and loyalty

BY LORI GUENTHER REESOR
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Peach Blossom Church almost always meets its budget, although some years involve more drama than others. It still engages a full-time pastor, fixes the roof and supports mission workers. In 15 minutes, it can raise \$5,000 to send the youth group on a mission trip.

But lately it hasn't been giving as much money to the denomination. Nor have its individual members. So, why is this? It seems the good folks at Peach Blossom, like many other Canadian Christians, trust their local church more than they trust their denomination.

There are some loyal champions of the national church, but here is a sampling of what people say about Peach Blossom:

- “**YOU’RE CLOSER** to it.”
- “**IT’S EASIER** to look and see what’s going on.”

People feel most familiar with their local church, but with respect to the denomination they say:

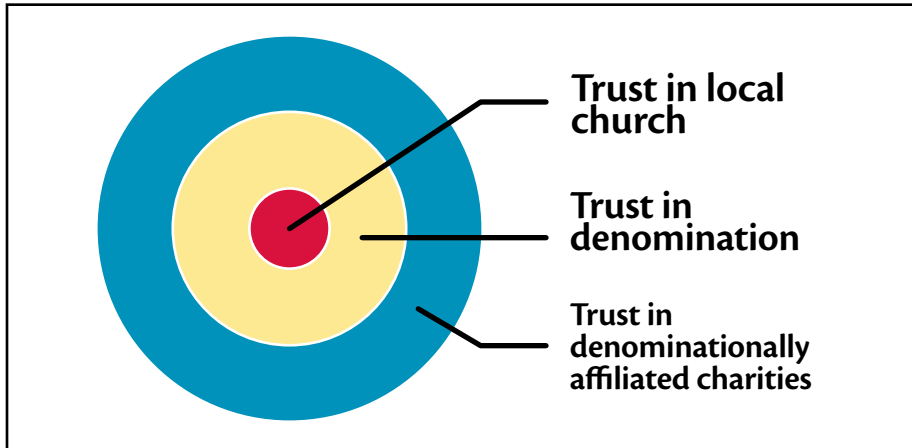
- “**THE FARTHER** away you are from the group . . . the harder it is to be sure that what’s going on is what you agree with.”
- “**I DON’T** feel I know anything about what the denomination does.”

While Peach Blossom is a fictional composite based on churches I have met in my research, the quotes are real. (*When I say ‘my research’ I’m referring to my doctoral ministry research on Canadian Christian giving, research supported by the Mennonite Foundation of Canada. See my website at lgreesor.com for more detailed results.*)

Declining trust in denominations is not just a Mennonite trend. People who trust more, give more. According to a Statistics Canada report on 2014 tax filers, the typical Canadian donor gives \$280 a year. At Peach Blossom, there are people who give more than that each month just to the church, and they support other causes as well. Statistics Canada tells us that the top 10 percent of donors give 66 percent of the money received by all charitable causes.

Gratitude is an effective fundraising practice, but more importantly, gratitude reminds us of God’s generosity to us.

Levels of trust



What are some hallmarks of the top 10 percent donors? They are more likely to attend worship services weekly and to trust charities, especially the local church. Trust diminishes as distance from the local church increases.

What are some hallmarks of the top 10 percent donors? They are more likely to attend worship services weekly and to trust charities, especially the local church. Trust diminishes as distance from the local church increases. (See chart above.)

People give where they feel a connection to an organization, and the national church is only one possible connection. At Peach Blossom, there is a couple who serves with an independent mission agency, not the denominational agency. This difference doesn't matter because the husband grew up at Peach Blossom; their connection is to Josh and his family, rather than to the mission agency itself. Individuals at Peach Blossom support an astonishing range of charities—much broader than the short list of causes that they can agree on in the church budget.

Christian giving patterns are less focussed on the denomination. One older donor noted sagely that younger donors “are more interested in what the group is doing than what the group is.” Not surprisingly, it is the oldest generation that is the most loyal to the denomination.

But attendance and levels of trust in the local church are also declining. Given that churches are typically wary of asking individuals for money, while secular charities are not, the trend does not look promising for churches. Church leaders would do well to pay attention to issues of declining trust, since what is happening to the national church now could happen

to the local church in the future. At Peach Blossom, they are being intentional about wills and planned giving. They have a plan for future ministry so that donors know that their bequest will benefit the church, instead of causing disputes about how to use the money.

Donors: Are they horses or cows?

Too often “you give because you should give” is the unsaid expectation for Christian giving. Churches and Christian charities frequently treat donors like cows. Donors are expected to give, but no explanation is given. But donors are more like horses; training and relationship must come first. Trust must be earned, and building a connection with the donor is essential.

I frequently quote the donor who said, “Testimony is a stronger motivator than guilt.” Relying on obligation to motivate giving is ineffective. Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby notes that giving based on need and obligation (cows) is declining, while giving based on personal connection and vision (horses) is increasing.

At Peach Blossom, congregants used to give to their denomination because they felt they should, but the “should” argument carries less weight than in years gone by. The most compelling vision of what God is doing in the world comes from people who share their stories and testimonies with the congregation, so it's essential for charities and national church staff to visit as many churches as possible.

Fifty years ago, most people at Peach Blossom lived and worked in the community. They did not need to talk about generosity or giving much at all, because you could see how people helped each other. Mrs. Alton learned giving from watching her dad count out money into a church pile on the kitchen table every payday. Those days are gone. The church needs to teach giving and talk about stewardship in ways it didn't need to do before.

Generosity lessons for the church

Many donors in my research lamented the absence of stewardship teaching in their churches, and they had practical suggestions for how the church can cultivate the spiritual discipline of generosity. Hence, my advice to church leaders:

- SAY THANKS.
- PAY ATTENTION.
- TELL STORIES.

The ‘gratitude gap’

In my research I also discovered a “gratitude gap.” The local church is least likely to thank donors for their donations as compared to other types of charities. It seems ironic that the institution with a theology of giving in gratitude for God's grace does not model grateful behaviour as well as secular institutions do.

The local church—donors' most trusted institution—appears to be taking donors for granted. The “gratitude gap” reminds churches that other charities

express thankfulness better.

Sometimes people, usually older people who give more from duty and obligation, object and say that the church does not need to say thank you. Different generations may require different approaches.

For example, seniors who voice concerns about wasting money on postage for a thank-you letter could receive a personal phone call. Givers are increasingly motivated by a sense of connection and shared vision: Gratitude helps nurture generosity and builds that connection.

One donor noted that churches “issue a receipt at the end of January and a nice little form thank-you letter, and that’s it.” Another donor commented on the church bulletin, which gives financial and budget updates, “but it never says thank you for what you gave. And I think that should be added.” I agree!

Gratitude is an effective fundraising practice, but more importantly, gratitude reminds us of God’s generosity to us. It’s impossible to be too grateful: Thank God for donors, thank people and congregations who give, thank volunteers. Gratitude is foundational to giving.

Pay attention

Gratitude requires acknowledging givers. It is also necessary to pay attention to who does not give. The book *Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don’t Give Away More Money* states that at least 20 percent of self-identified American Christians do not give at all.

The deacons at Peach Blossom decided that the pastor should “at least have some information about giving patterns and so forth,” in order to help with counselling people and “ask what’s happening in their lives.” An abrupt change in giving patterns could mean job loss, separation/divorce or problems at church, among others. The pastor had an enlightening discussion with the church treasurer about giving patterns. It resulted in some meaningful pastoral care opportunities, with outcomes far beyond the lines of a church budget.

Tell stories

Stories build trust and connect the donor to the cause. Peach Blossom takes time before the offering to testify about what

God is doing in its midst. It’s kept simple: “We thank God for generous donors who pay to heat the church and keep the lights on throughout the week. A young mom came to the church office on Tuesday and we were able to . . .”

Stewardship consultant J. Clif Christopher gives a number of practical suggestions in his book *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate*. People give to causes, not to budgets, and stories remind people why the church or denomination exists.

And Christian and other charities need to tell their stories differently than local churches because they are farther removed from donors. It is easy for those immersed in Christian agencies to assume that people in the pews know what their organization does. They don’t.

Charities need to spend money on telling the stories of how they make a difference, so that donors will support their shared vision and values. Communicating with donors is neither a luxury, nor a frill—it’s discipleship, a ministry of encouraging generosity.

In conclusion

I’m grateful to the many people who shared their stories with me. To sum up, I say: “Trust is everything. Tell stories to build your shared vision and values.

Donors give where they have connections, and they are most familiar with their local church. Don’t treat donors like cows who are expected to give without knowing why they should give. Instead, treat donors like horses, with whom you need to cultivate a relationship and point towards the finish line of a common goal. Don’t assume donors know how to give or know what you do. Practise what you preach on gratitude. Christians give in grateful response to God’s grace, so say thank you.”

In these fearful times, building trust, telling stories of God’s goodness and being grateful are more than merely fundraising advice. When we are grateful, we loosen our grip and our fear recedes. We recognize God’s grace given to us and realize we can always afford to be generous. ❧



Lori Guenther Reesor attends Hamilton (Ont.) Mennonite Church and blogs about fundraising and theology at lgresor.com.

For discussion

1. What motivates you to contribute to the church? Do younger people have different motivations and giving patterns than older people? When do you hear stories about what the church does with your donations? What is today’s attitude toward tithing?
2. Lori Guenther Reesor talks about treating donors like cows or like horses. What does it mean to treat a donor like a cow? Should members of the church regard giving as an obligation? Do you agree that levels of trust in the local and broader church are declining?
3. How do you decide which charities or church agencies you will support? Is giving to the church a top priority? What about church-related agencies? Should your congregation do more to train its people in charitable giving? Should congregations do a better job of thanking their donors?
4. Reesor says that communicating with donors and telling stories of how a charity makes a difference are not luxuries—but duties—of charities so donors can share in the vision. Do you agree? What is the most effective way to tell these stories?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

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

✉ What about the pastors who are forced to refrain from moonlighting?

RE: "MEET THE pastors who moonlight," June 20, page 4.

The flip side of the scenarios presented in this feature is that of full-time pastors who attempt to moonlight in their off hours, but find that their congregations do not agree that they have the right to do so. They understand 24/7 to be quite literally that. Hobbies are fine, giving a change of pace and often even honing skills endemic to the pastor's calling, but a pastime that brings in a few dollars or a small computer business that takes up a few minutes here and there are somehow deemed to leave the congregation bereft of its pastor if any need should arise. The fact that such off-hour activities would be dropped in a moment by pastors if a call came for their services appears to be irrelevant.

(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

Creating space

RYAN SIEMENS

After nine years of working together on the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process, by an 85 percent majority, delegates at Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon approved the BFC7 recommendation.

In essence, the recommendation had four parts: to continue to hold the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* as a unifying document within our body; to respectfully acknowledge that through careful study of Scripture and prayer, some have been led to a different understanding on committed same-sex relationships than is commonly understood within the *Confession of Faith*; to create space/leave room within our faith community to test alternative understandings from that of the larger body, to see if they are a nudging of the Holy Spirit; and to develop ways we can continue listening and engaging one another as we move forward.



For some within our community of faith, this recommendation simply goes too far. As I have heard expressed, such a recommendation opens up the possibility of condoning sin. For others, the resolution doesn't go far enough and that it is a sin that we, as a national church, exclude LGBTQ members from full participation within our church. Both see the recommendation as simply unacceptable.

So what are we to do? If we come down hard on one side, we cut off ourselves off from those we disagree with. That's why I believe the wisdom of this recommendation lies in the concept of creating space.

On the surface, this recommendation could be criticized for being "weak" or "compromised." It reveals our unwillingness to fully side with this way or that. But as we look upon our increasingly polarized world in which violent extremism, both in action and word, seems to win the day, creating space, particularly for those we disagree with, breaks through our polarizations and allows

us to find new ways forward based on relationship, rather than ideology.

This way forward is certainly murkier than clear-cut statements, but by creating space we are actually limiting ourselves from the need to control others or to force others to think as we do. To put it another way, consider this: When was the last time someone successfully changed your mind and heart because you were coerced? Violence is not an effective way to bring about desired change. But when we create space, when we limit ourselves and make room for the "other," not only will it be possible they might change, but, by the grace of God, we might too!

While I am not a fan of the word "nonviolence," I think it's silly that we use a negative descriptor to name a positive reality; maybe "creating space" is a better way to go. And what might seem like a small bullet point in a big recommendation, by creating space for one another, and ultimately for the Spirit of God, we are being a faithful church more than we know.

Ryan Siemens is Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's area church minister of congregational and pastoral relations.

(Continued from page 7)

Is there possibly a concern that it reflects poorly on a congregation when a few extra cups of coffee are earned by its pastor? A tongue-in-cheek response would be for them to claw back their pastor's salary in proportion to the extra income gained, similar to our government's unemployment insurance policies.

L.M. FRIESEN, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

✉ Former 'eight-year-old' has no answer to 'Aryan' system

RE: "BECOMING ARYAN," July 4, page 12.

Ben Goossen raises an intriguing question: "What responsibility do we, as Christians and as members of a peace church, have for the victims of a system that benefited our co-religionists and, in many cases, our

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Battleground

PHIL WAGLER

We have abandoned the battleground.

In a hope-desiring but hope-diminishing article, columnist Robyn Urbeck asks: "How do we know when to stop praying for Orlando and Texas, and start praying for Nice?" This is a penetrating question, as wave after wave of terror and sorrow lap upon the beaches of our age. It's one thing to move on from tragedy into the relative "normal" of our lives, but how do we move on from tragedy to tragedy and news alert to news alert? Reality TV is not all that it's cracked up to be. Can we all just go back to *The Cosby Show*? Well, no; he's got real issues too!

Urbeck's honesty is worth feeling at length: "We want to believe there is a solution lying in wait in a campaigning politician or a few changes in law, but many of us recognize that if people are intent on inflicting harm on others, they will find a way to do so, no matter what. Indeed, it can be exhausting to continually try to convince one's



self otherwise. So occasionally, we give it up and revert back to tweeting about Pokémon, because it's all we can do beyond praying for Boston and Paris and Orlando and Texas and Nice. And at the end of the night we'll turn off the TV, put away the dishes and head to bed, hoping that the next day will be better than the

one before, and trying not to think about the next colours to light up the Eiffel Tower."

What does it mean to be a Christian these days? How do we be the church? We've tried voting our way towards cultural relevance again, but no amount of dancing around the issues of the day to make ourselves palatable to the masses and keep up with the times hits the mark. In the end, it leaves us with nothing left to say and little hope to offer the longing of Urbeck. The church runs the risk of reducing herself to just another activist organization seeking to self-justify while we live in the paradox of a time of unprecedented abundance—and even good—bathed in vitriol and chaos.

So how do we live? What are we to be about? In *The Community of the King* Howard Snyder writes: "The central battleground in the struggle between

We've tried voting our way toward cultural relevance again, but no amount of dancing around the issues of the day to make ourselves palatable to the masses . . .

God's kingdom and Satan's counterfeit is people's minds and hearts." Yale professor Lamin Sanneh, in *Translating the Message*, observes that for the first-century church, "The centre of Christianity . . . was in the heart and life of the believer without the presumption of conformity to one cultural ideal." Jesus says, "My

kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place" (John 18:36).

The first disciples confused the battleground. They weren't at war with political leaders, although for a while they thought they were. Jesus was constantly training them—up to and right through his passion—to look elsewhere: to the battle for hearts and minds, for the advance of a kingdom so foreign we never cease learning its nuances. It is this other place that we are to be conformed to.

If we are seeking to conform ourselves to some human cultural ideal—which is shifting sand—we have abandoned the central battleground and exchanged the gospel of the kingdom—centred in the cross of Christ and his resurrection—for cultural gymnastics that not only twist us around, but leave the world empty for answers as they seek a good night's sleep

in the sad hope that perhaps reality is all just a dream.

Phil Wagler serves the training of missional leaders globally and is constantly learning how wild a hope the kingdom of God is. He lives with his family in Surrey, B.C.

own families?”

I do not have an answer. There is a great ambiguity in living in any system. Maybe one place to start would be to listen to the stories of the people who lived through these experiences. Although I did not become an Aryan, I was definitely informally treated as one.

In 1950, my parents, who came to Canada in 1924, moved into an Anglo Saxon community. We were the only German-speaking family in the area for several years. At that time, I was a Grade 2 student in an 80-student three-room school, the only “Nazi” in a community that saw many young men either killed or wounded in a monstrous war with the German enemy.

Needless to say, I survived the community antagonism. However, to this day, there are still feelings of resentment and bitterness within me, especially when comments made by my English friends are, “That’s how you Mennonites do things.”

One could readily adopt an attitude of being a little eight-year-old victim, initially scared but now scarred for life with this experience. However, who really is the victim of the system?

Were my Anglo Saxon friends victims? Definitely.

Should I today feel a responsibility to them for being a victim of a system when, as an eight-year-old, I didn’t even know what a Nazi was?

PETER J. DYCK, WINNIPEG

✉ ‘A world of incomprehensible inequality’ remains

RE: “THE LUCKY struggle,” July 4, page 4.

This excellent feature on migrant workers brought back long-standing and haunting memories. As a Mennonite Central Committee educator/administrator for almost a decade in southern Africa in the 1960s and ’70s, we witnessed the migrant labour exodus to South Africa. It was routinely referred to as the biggest export that several of these countries produced.

The benefits of this migrant labour were obvious: Cheap and hard-working labour for the mines and farms of South Africa, resulting in substantial profits; higher wages for the workers than they could achieve in their home countries; foreign remittances sent to their home countries, resulting in significant foreign reserves and financial help for the families of the workers.

However, the down-side of migrant labour was tragic, indeed catastrophic: The very humanity of the workers denigrated by the apartheid system of South Africa; men segregated into single-sex hostels for their 12- to 24-month contracts, with little freedom to do anything other than work; men sent home as soon as they couldn’t work because of illness or

injury, with no medical or other benefits; the social fabric of the home communities shredded because of the absence of the husbands/fathers/brothers. Only years later was it discovered that this migrant labour system was one of the prominent contributors to the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has decimated whole generations from these countries, resulting in plummeting life expectancies.

Thanks be to God for Jane Andres and South Ridge Community Church, and others like them! With commitment and imagination, what are the other strategies—more than minimum wage; educational/cultural/sporting activities; family and church relationships; government advocacy on citizenship, medical and others benefits—that can be invoked in even small ways to recognize the humanity of these guests in our midst? But even then the bigger moral issue—“a world of incomprehensible inequality”—remains.

RONALD MATHIES, WATERLOO, ONT.

✉ Who really left MC Saskatchewan?

RE: “HOPE MENNONITE withdraws from MC Saskatchewan,” June 20, page 18.

As I read this article, I am left with the impression that the action of withdrawing has all been done by Hope Mennonite Fellowship. What is meant by the “underlying theological rift” that has taken place?

The *Confession of Faith*, I believe, is our response to the question that Jesus put to his disciples when he asked them, “*But who do you say I am?*” (Matthew 16:15).

As a community of people identified as Mennonites, we have responded to that question as inclusively as possible, with the incarnate Christ being the chief cornerstone. We focussed on the teachings of Christ with a special concern for the areas of peace and reconciliation.

I believe that we have failed by not keeping the balance between truth and grace found in Christ, as it is described in John 1:14. I believe that we have recreated a Christ after our own image. Now we have a Christ full of dogma and sympathetic emotion.

Dogma is teaching based on a shallow understanding, resulting in an “I hope so” attitude, foggy ideas and wishful thinking about knowing truth.

Sympathy is not one of the qualities demonstrated by Christ. Christ demonstrated and exuded empathy.

The issues pertaining to homosexuality pale in comparison to what is taught about Christ and practised by some pastors.

My question for discussion is: Who has withdrawn from the faith statement of MC Saskatchewan? Is it Hope Mennonite Fellowship or is it the leaders of MC

Saskatchewan? Once that question has been answered, we will know who, in essence, has left the area church.

DAVID SHANTZ, MONTREAL

✉ To my brothers and sisters in the LGBTQ community

LAST WEEK, I watched the video on the listening-church.ca website. The reason I am writing is because one of the speakers said that there is one voice that we consistently do not hear from: mine. The voice of “the allies who didn’t used to be allies,” those who once felt that the LGBTQ community should be limited in its contribution to the church or excluded altogether, and who have now come to think differently.

ANGELIKA DAWSON, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

To read more, visit canadianmennonite.org.

✉ ‘Highly partisan resolution’ harms interfaith relations

RE: “DECISION ROUNDUP,” July 25, page 16.

I was saddened by Mennonite Church Canada’s passage of a highly partisan resolution regarding Palestine and Israel this summer in Saskatoon.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, a respected Canadian Jewish organization, was quick to condemn the resolution containing boycott-divestment-sanctions (BDS) measures. In a July 14 news release, it stated: “We condemn [Mennonite Church] Canada’s decision to adopt a policy that discriminates against Israelis, hinders Palestinian economic opportunity and ultimately serves as another barrier to peace.”

It has always been surprising to me how a certain segment of Mennonites has become so deeply invested in one side of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Logically, pacifist Mennonites might have taken a more balanced approach to this deeply complex conflict in which none of the major parties on either side has renounced violence.

In the end, I suppose it’s a function of who the conversation partners are. After years of Mennonite relationship-building with Palestinians and many learning tours guided by Palestinian interests, it shouldn’t be surprising that there is no understanding of, or sympathy for, Jewish and Israeli perspectives.

MC Canada has surely made itself irrelevant to the already deeply imperilled peace process, and on top of that it has done harm to Jewish and Mennonite interfaith relations here in Canada.

Another excerpt from the news release does not

mince words: “Prior to the vote, CIJA, the Canadian Rabbinic Caucus and our local partners in Saskatoon reached out to the Mennonite church’s leadership to urge the assembly to adopt a positive, peacebuilding approach, rather than destructive and discriminatory BDS measures. Frankly, its decision to join the toxic ranks of the BDS movement is a slap in the face to those of us in the Jewish community who have been building bridges with our Christian neighbours, particularly given our proactive efforts to create opportunities for interfaith partners to support projects that help foster Israeli-Palestinian peace. That the church chose to reject this reasonable alternative speaks to the moral blindness and increasing marginalization of a denomination in decline.”

Ouch.

KATHY SHANTZ, KITCHENER, ONT.

* For MC Canada’s position, visit bit.ly/palestine-israel-resolution.



✉ Canadian Mennonite should add a food section

AT THE RECENT Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Saskatoon, keynote speaker Safwat Marzouk spoke about covenant and mentioned fellowship rituals—a time to talk about our stories while preparing food and eating together—and how important they are to our lives.

When we update our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, perhaps we could add “preparing food and eating together” into Article 18 on “Christian spirituality” together with “corporate worship and singing hymns.”

As I’ve always been attracted to publications that have food articles, I suggest that we share the fruits of God’s good creation from coast to coast within the pages of *Canadian Mennonite*.

I would love to hear from our many ethnic cooks and gardeners, and also from our youth and elderly as to what kinds of food inspire them. We could celebrate Chinese New Year with an abalone recipe or learn how to make the best samosas and hummus with our Middle Eastern congregations. And someone might even share his/her best salsa recipe!

MARGUERITE JACK, CALGARY

✉ More thoughts on Assembly 2016

WHEN I TOLD one of our daughters while on our way home from Assembly 2016 that we had skipped the Sunday morning worship on July 10, she said, “What!

You passed a resolution repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, you passed [the Being a Faithful Church] motion, and you passed a motion supporting boycott, divestment and sanctions with regards to Israel/Palestine, and you didn't want to worship God?"

She is right. We did have every reason to praise God for what happened at Assembly 2016, although we missed Sunday's worship due to fatigue related to some health concerns.

I arrived in Saskatoon on July 5, afraid that I would leave on July 10 with MC Canada in tatters. On the night of July 9, I took one of the plants with me to put in my office to remind me every day that I left the next day believing that MC Canada is on a new trajectory of vitality and hope. May it be so!

I experienced something similar when the assembly was in B.C. several years ago and we decided to become "missional." I was cynical on my trip to B.C. and rejoicing on my way home. Deciding to be "missional" was an important step forward for our denomination and our vision of what it means to be the church.

I believe our assembly this year was another important and helpful step forward in being missional, being, as I have come to define it for myself and our congregation, as "a blessing and healing reminder of God's love."

RAY FRIESEN, WYMARK, SASK.

Ray Friesen is co-pastor of Emmaus Mennonite Church in Wymark.

I'M 74 YEARS old and a member of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary. I attended Assembly 2016 out of

curiosity and to learn more about the current status of the Mennonite church in Canada. I grew up in a Mennonite community in Alberta, but have been away from anything Mennonite for the past 45 years.

The first day was a "downer" for me. A heavy, negative air seemed to weigh on this gathering. I might have gone home had I not spent a good amount of my personal money to come. However, after the second day, something magical seemed to happen. There was a very recognizable air of anticipation and some energy.

It became clear that this assembly was very thoughtfully organized. Led by a very capable moderator, Hilda Hildebrand, attendees from across the spiritual and political spectrum were made to feel comfortable in expressing their views. There were definite "rules of engagement," gently but firmly controlled by the moderator. There was plenty of participation, many speaking from carefully prepared statements.

It became apparent that the worship leaders and organizers were conscious of creating a broad and tolerant atmosphere. The Old Testament was talked about as much as the life of Jesus. There was a definite respect for our Anabaptist history and the suffering of our ancestors. Plenty of younger people seriously concerned about the future were in attendance.

A very safe, open and free atmosphere seemed to prevail by the voting day on July 9. Both of the main resolutions passed by clear margins, but there was no noticeable gloating or protest. Much detailed work and "fleshing out" remain to be done, but I, for one, am a prouder Anabaptist willing to march on.

RICHARD PENNER, CALGARY

A moment from yesterday



Helen Warkentin was a long-term missionary to India from 1920 to 1957, and took many orphans 'under her wing.' She received support from family and friends back in Winkler, Man. Pictured, Manitobans proudly gather around a large crate of goods they are sending to Warkentin, to be used for the care of the poor in India. The sending address on the crate is #1116, Dyck & Kroeker, Winkler, Man., CPR. How do we support our mission workers today?

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Helen L. Warkentin Photo Collection / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies



archives.mhsc.ca

VIEWPOINT

One in our diversity, diverse in our unity

BY PAULUS CHIOU-LANG PAN

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

Like the chambers of a heart, the four Mennonite World Conference (MWC) commissions serve the global community of Anabaptist-related churches in the areas of deacons, faith and life, peace and mission. Commissions prepare material for consideration by the General Council, give guidance and propose resources to member churches, and facilitate MWC-related networks or fellowships working together on matters of common interest and focus. In the following, one of the commissions shares a message from its ministry focus.

When a red blood cell first met a nerve cell, it exclaimed, “Ah, an alien!” “No,” replied the nerve cell. “I am your brother.”

Participating in the Menno Simons 500th anniversary seminar in the Netherlands in the spring of 1997 was my first time partaking in an international Mennonite gathering. My emotional reaction was, to an extent, the same as that of the red blood cell: Are these people all Mennonites? Why does their way of thinking differ so much from mine? At the Pennsylvania 2015 MWC assembly, I experienced this sense even more powerfully!

Whether it be 2,000-year-old Christianity or the 500-year-old Anabaptist church, we were born from the same theological tradition. Due to the passing of time, and differences in cultural backgrounds and social environments, we grew to take on different faces. In the face of the numerous delicate issues of today, we also have different views and stances.

This makes me think of Paul’s metaphor of the body: We really are like a body with parts that have different shapes and functions. The church must be divergent and diverse; this is the DNA placed into the church when God first created her.

The church must accept differences, because this is the church’s vital lifeline.

Through my brothers and sisters from Africa, Europe, Asia and South America, my horizons and perspectives are

PHOTO BY FAITH LIN /
COURTESY OF PAULUS CHIOU-LANG PAN



From this mosaic of the body of Christ emerges a face of the transcendent One: Jesus (detail at right).

broadened. I see a different picture of faith. Yet these cultural “others” come from the same theological DNA; these spiritual blood relations have become an indispensable part of the “me” or “us” of faith. The sisters and brothers from the global family comprise our co-humanity in Christ.

At the same time, however, this differentiation at the “cellular” level is for a greater unity at a higher level: there is only one body. As members, we were integrated into the “divine body.” What we share in common is that we all commit ourselves to Jesus Christ, to radically following him. We also have the seven “shared convictions” in common. Therefore, we are made one in our diversity, while remaining diverse in unity.

The church is full of light and order at times, and of disarray at other times. Nevertheless, from this mosaic of the church emerges a face of the transcendent one: Jesus Christ. He reveals himself through the church’s overall life. The church is the holy image of Christ; its mission is to faithfully demonstrate Christ, so that the world can see the face of the one who transcends.

The image of the face depends on how we connect together. Each of us—as a cell of the ear, eye or nose—will bring beauty to the face if we connect properly. Therefore, we must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. The Lord’s Supper is an excellent reminder of this. Each time we remember the cross of Jesus together, we “re-member” the body of Christ. May God’s will be done. ☩

Paulus Chiou-Lang Pan is a member of the MWC Faith and Life Commission.



/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Eby—Ava Ahana (b. June 27, 2016), to Ben and Hina Eby, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Grieves—Riley George (b. June 21, 2016), to Michael Grieves and Pam Prosser, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Guenther—Benjamin Jacob (b. May 12, 2016), to Danny and Kathy (Warkentin) Guenther, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Horst—Ezekiel (Zeke) Robert (b. June 20, 2016), to Gerry and Jacqueline Horst, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Klassen—Anna Magdalena (b. June 11, 2016), to Jonathan and Angela Klassen, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Neufeld—Blake Lynn (b. June 16, 2016), to Jason and Brianna Neufeld, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Shantz—Duncan Craig Taylor (b. June 29, 2016), to Craig and Davina Shantz, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Yantzi—Rowan James (b. June 12, 2016), to Jessica and Tyler Yantzi, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Zehr—Garner Dale William (b. June 10, 2016), to Lindsay and Brett Zehr, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Baptisms

Meagan Schlorff—Arnaud Mennonite, Man., June 5, 2016.

Leah Klassen, Aleah Sawatzky—Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

Mackenzie Kaufman, Kory Nowak—Crosshill Mennonite, Ont., June 19, 2016.

Cassandra Zehr, Samuel Holst—Crosshill Mennonite, Ont., July 10, 2016.

Leighton Suderman, Kaleb Wagler, Seth Leis—East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont., June 26, 2016.

Claire Hanson—Rosthern Mennonite, Sask., July 3, 2016.

James Carr-Pries—Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., May 15, 2016.

Marriages

Bauman/Phillips—Edgar Bauman and Kaleigh Phillips (both of Floradale Mennonite, Ont.), in Puslinch Township, Ont., May 21, 2016.

Clement/Roth—Kevin Clement and Olivia Roth (Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.), at Steinmann Mennonite, June 18, 2016.

Cressman/Horn—Casey Cressman (Floradale Mennonite, Ont.) and Bryan Horn, at Floradale Mennonite, June 18, 2016.

Ens/Loewen—Steve Ens and Nancy Loewen (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg), July 1, 2016.

Hafemann/Weber—Christian Hafemann and Tess Weber (Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.), at the Hafemann farm, July 9, 2016.

Kampen/Visch—Bethany Kampen (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Kyle Visch, June 30, 2016.

Penner/Quiring—Emily Penner (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Rick Quiring, May 14, 2016.

Penner/Surgenor—Evangeline Penner (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Devon Surgenor, July 2, 2016.

Russon/Sandberg—Ashley Russon and Aaron Sandberg, at Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont., June 25, 2016.

Deaths

Bahnmann—Frank, 88 (b. Aug. 30, 1927; d. July 2, 2016), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Bartel—Lowell, 84 (b. Sept. 2, 1931; d. June 18, 2016), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Bender—Edith, 89 (b. May 10, 1927; d. June 1, 2016), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Clarke—Eloise, 92 (b. Aug. 7, 1923; d. June 5, 2016), Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Clarke—Thomas, 93 (b. Aug. 13, 1922; d. July 8, 2016), Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Dyck—Ilona (nee Schäfer), 86 (b. Feb. 9, 1930; d. June 30, 2016), Ottawa Mennonite.

Epp—Elinor, 90 (b. June 18, 1926; d. July 3, 2016), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Epp—Ingrid Ilse (nee Neufeld), 78 (b. May 4, 1938; d. June 25, 2016), Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

Fast—Abe, 84 (b. May 20, 1932; d. June 3, 2016), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

Gossen—Mary (nee Regier), 88 (b. Feb. 18, 1928; d. May 17, 2016), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

Hildebrand—Doris, 57 (b. Aug. 19, 1958; d. June 18, 2016), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Jamieson—Theadora (nee Riediger), 88 (b. June 1, 1928; d. June 20, 2016), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Loewen—Margaret, 106 (b. Sept. 29, 1909; d. June 29, 2016), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Martin—Amsey, 83 (b. May 14, 1933; d. June 5, 2016), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Rahier—Anna (nee Fast), 103 (b. Feb. 3, 1913; d. June 27, 2016), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Shantz—Nadine, 74 (b. April 4, 1942; d. May 26, 2016), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Wiens—Anne (nee Epp), 85 (b. April 18, 1931; d. July 4, 2016), Leamington United Mennonite, 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.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

'What begins in God goes back to God'

Saskatchewan congregation closes its doors after 74 years

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
HORSE LAKE, SASK.

It had probably been a while since Horse Lake Mennonite Church welcomed so many worshippers. Filling every pew, they gathered to celebrate the life of this small country church and to grieve its closing.

During the decommissioning service, held June 26, Pastor Walter Jantzen shared the church's history.

In 1926, four Mennonite families arrived in the rural area north of Duck Lake, Sask., about 90 kilometres north of Saskatoon, with more families following during the 1930s. At first, these families worshipped and held Sunday school in their homes, with ministers from Tiefengrund and Laird Mennonite churches preaching every third Sunday. In 1941, they constructed a small, 50-square-metre church building.

Because of gas rationing during the Second World War, neighbouring ministers weren't always available for pulpit

supply, so the congregation elected readers to read sermons. In 1943, it chose John Reimer and Willy Jantzen to serve as lay ministers. These men were soon joined by Klaas Kroeker, an ordained minister who began an outreach ministry to isolated Mennonite families in the MacDowall area about 30 kilometres north. In 1955, the congregation elected Peter Dyck and Walter Jantzen, son of Willy, as ministers.

By 1958, the congregation had about 75 members, and the church building became too small. Tiefengrund Mennonite was building a new church and offered its old building to the Horse Lake church, which purchased it and moved it onto a site less than a kilometre north of the first church building.

Others who served the church during this time included Bill Zacharias and Frank Sawatzky. Eventually these ministers



Walter Jantzen has ministered at Horse Lake (Sask.) Mennonite Church for 59 years. At the church's closing service on June 26, he shared the congregation's history, which dates back to the late 1920s.

retired and left the community, leaving Walter Jantzen to shepherd the congregation alone.

In 1982, an interest in the charismatic movement led to division, and people on both sides of the issue left the church.

Walter Jantzen retired in 2005, and his son Bruce became the congregation's pastor. But when Laird Mennonite invited Bruce to serve there in 2007, the elder Jantzen resumed pastoral duties once again.

In 2010, Eigenheim Mennonite began providing speakers on the first Sunday of each month. On the second Sunday, Horse Lake congregants made the trek to Eigenheim for worship. After three years, Eigenheim felt unable to continue with pulpit supply, but Horse Lake members continued to worship at Eigenheim once a month.

Bruce Jantzen reflected on his experience growing up in the congregation, and, in particular, what it was like to be the pastor's son. "I never wanted to be a minister because I could see what it cost Mom and Dad to do this," he said. "I accepted the call because Dad said I needed to. My parents saw gifts in me and said I should continue."

He also acknowledged his mother's influence on his father's ministry. "Dad wouldn't be up front if not for Mom pushing and encouraging him," he said. To which the elder Jantzen replied, "Esther was not behind pushing, but running ahead pulling."



Kathy Reidt, representing the congregation, left, Pastor Walter Jantzen and Ryan Siemens, MC Saskatchewan's area church minister of congregational and pastoral relations, lead worshippers in a litany of release and blessing at the closing service of Horse Lake Mennonite Church.

'I never wanted to be a minister because I could see what it cost Mom and Dad to do this. I accepted the call because Dad said I needed to. My parents saw gifts in me and said I should continue.'
(Bruce Jantzen, former Horse Lake pastor)

Shelley Romanuk, the Jantzens' granddaughter, told the congregation, "I learned participation in this church." Her grandparents led by example, she said, with her grandfather leading worship and preaching, and her grandmother playing piano. But, she said, "We never knew when Grandpa would call us up to the front."

Ryan Siemens, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's area church minister of congregational and pastoral relations, preached on John 14, acknowledging that the congregation may be experiencing feelings of lament and, perhaps, relief. He pointed out that Jesus' ministry on earth was limited to first-century Galilee and Judea, and that after Jesus' ascension the work was carried on by his followers. "Many of the cities the early Christians ministered in don't even exist anymore," he said. "This is just part of the ebb and flow of history."

Siemens went on to say, "The seeds of faith get passed on, sometimes because of us and sometimes in spite of us."



Shelley Romanuk holds her daughter as she reflects on her experience growing up in Horse Lake (Sask.) Mennonite Church, while her grandfather, Pastor Walter Jantzen, cradles his great-granddaughter.

Although the church—which was down to 20 members in the end, according to the MC Canada church directory—has closed, there will still be opportunities to serve Christ, he said, adding, "Don't grieve without hope. Jesus is faithful."

"What begins in God, goes back to God," said Bruce Jantzen. "I learned to know that in this place." ❧



Since 1958, this building has been home to Horse Lake (Sask.) Mennonite Church. The congregation purchased the building from Tiefengrund Mennonite and moved it to its current location north of Duck Lake, Sask.

/// Briefly noted

Bethany Vision Group announces plans for a new discipleship program

A year after Bethany College closed its doors in Hepburn, Sask., after 88 years of operation, the college's constituency is anticipating the future, rather than lamenting the past. In a June 1 announcement, the Bethany Vision Group stated that, after months of prayer and discernment, it had unanimously decided to launch a new one-year discipleship program, to be offered at the campus starting in the fall of 2017. In the new modular program, students will live, learn and serve in community with staff and with each other, "experiencing a range of cultural realities," the group stated. In order to make the program financially viable, the group is exploring possibilities for sharing the campus with the local school division and other community organizations, creating a multi-purpose community campus. This, in turn, "will provide opportunities for students to engage and interact as part of a broader community," stated the group, adding that "a significant gifting from a foundation has nurtured the germination of this idea." The group expects to collaborate with the Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren Conference's Developmental Leadership Team to nurture young adult disciples within its congregations.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

BETHANY COLLEGE FACEBOOK PHOTO



Students may enjoy living and learning together on the Bethany College campus in Hepburn, Sask., again soon. The Bethany Vision Group plans to launch a one-year discipleship program there in the fall of 2017.



Hannah Taylor, left, Linda Ramer and Milissa Fortier stand beside an 'open door' welcoming guests to a barbecue and hymn sing that were part of Wideman Mennonite Church's 200th-anniversary celebrations over the weekend of July 23 and 24.

Wideman Mennonite celebrates 200th anniversary

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOANNA REESOR-MCDOWELL

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

MARKHAM, ONT.

Hundreds of friends from near and far attended Wideman Mennonite Church's 200th-anniversary celebrations over the July 23-24 weekend. It was a culmination of special activities over the past few months that helped members mark this significant milestone.

Beginning in January, a few minutes during each weekly worship service were devoted to sharing stories from the past. Monthly Sunday evening hymn sings started in April, with guest musicians and worship leaders returning to Wideman from other communities.

Wideman Mennonite Church is one of the oldest Mennonite congregations in Canada. The group began meeting in homes soon after Henry Wideman, its first minister, arrived in York County in 1803 as part of a migration from Pennsylvania to Ontario early in the 19th century. Sadly, he died in 1810 from a falling tree while

clearing land. The congregation decided to build a log church in 1816, the first of several buildings and subsequent additions that have served the community over the



Martha Reesor Schatti, left, and Lois Hoover enjoy pictures and stories on the timeline depicting the 200-year history of Wideman Mennonite Church in Markham, Ont.

Wideman Mennonite Church is one of the oldest Mennonite congregations in Canada. The group began meeting in homes soon after Henry Wideman, its first minister, arrived in York County in 1803 as part of a migration from Pennsylvania to Ontario early in the 19th century.

next two centuries.

Beginning in the 1870s, tensions and controversies erupted over issues such as having Sunday school or the use of English in the services. During this period, some members left to help form the Mennonite Brethren in Christ congregation—later called the Missionary Church—in 1872, and the more conservative Wisler Church in 1889.

Sunday school and English as the language for worship were established by the 1890s, making Wideman more accessible to the community. J.S. Coffman preached at the first evangelistic meeting in 1892, and 22 converts were received from outside the congregation. Through the years, members of Wideman Mennonite were



Bob Wideman, chair of Wideman Mennonite Church's council, and his young friends wait expectantly for the homemade ice cream to finish churning at the barbecue celebrating the Markham, Ont., church's 200th anniversary.

supportive of sister congregations that formed in the area: Cedar Grove, Danforth and Hagerman Mennonite churches.

The late 20th century brought massive changes to the community served by the congregation, as the Greater Toronto Area experienced unrelenting growth. Traditionally, most families in the church were farmers, and many moved away to other communities in Ontario where land and housing were more affordable.

A smaller and more diverse congregation remains. Although some members can trace their roots back to the original pioneers in the area, many come from other backgrounds. They engage with the community in meaningful ways: providing a space for Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, supporting an active sewing group, and sharing space with the Journey Church, a Mandarin-speaking congregation.

Wideman's leadership group has committed regular time to prayer and is open to change and transformation as it looks to the future of the congregation with the support of Ken and Dawn Driedger, who have agreed to be their co-pastors for a two-year period. ❧

MFC hopes to expand ministry with name change

BY JESS HUXMAN

Mennonite Foundation of Canada

Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) will change its name to Abundance Canada in October.

The decision to rebrand follows 18 months of market analysis, survey research, competitive analysis, and formal and informal discussions with stakeholders and the general public. The new name is an open invitation for generous Christians across Canada to use the services of Abundance Canada to support charities that impact and change lives.

"We want to honour the enthusiasm and vision of our founders by ensuring that our reach continues to grow wider and deeper," says MFC board chair Randy Steinwand.

"We want to honour the enthusiasm and vision of our founders by ensuring that our reach continues to grow wider and deeper. I'm confident our name change to Abundance Canada will set us firmly on that path." (MFC board chair Randy Steinwand)

"I'm confident our name change to Abundance Canada will set us firmly on that path.

The lengthy and comprehensive research process revealed that there is a desire and a need for the ministry and services of MFC that goes well beyond the Mennonite denominations the organization has historically served.

"We wanted a name that would broaden the opportunity for our ministry while remaining true to our heritage and our principles of biblical stewardship," says executive director Darren Pries-Klassen. "Our clients value our professional knowledge and our honesty, integrity and flexibility. They often tell us they love working with us because we make giving so simple and easy."

MFC—and now Abundance Canada—has four offices to provide services to Ontario and the eastern provinces, Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and

also British Columbia. The organization works with individuals to maximize their gifts to charity, to assist with donations of securities and to provide estate planning for charitable gifts over time. MFC and Abundance Canada are registered not-for-profit organizations with the Canada Revenue Agency.

MFC has worked with some of the most generous people in Canada. In 2010, it disbursed more than \$10 million to charity. In 2015, that number exceeded \$16 million distributed to more than 880 charities. Since its founding in 1974, more than \$150 million has been disbursed to charities to impact and change lives across Canada and

around the world.

"We believe changing our name to Abundance Canada will invite Christians across Canada to partner with us and experience the joy of generosity," says Pries-Klassen.

The transition to Abundance Canada is already underway and is expected to be completed in October. For clients and charities currently working with MFC, the transition will be automatic. Account numbers and phone numbers will remain the same. Abundance Canada will assume the charitable registration number held by MFC. For those who have named Mennonite Foundation of Canada in their wills, no changes are necessary, as existing bequest plans remain intact. ❧

For more information, visit mennofoundation.ca/abundance.



VIEWPOINT

The future of neo-Anabaptism

HENRY NEUFELD

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

“We are not living in the 16th century, and whatever is called Anabaptism today inevitably looks and sounds quite different,” said Paul Martens during a recent talk entitled “Neo-Anabaptism is dead: Long live neo-Anabaptism” at the Menno Simons Centre in Vancouver. Hence “neo-Anabaptism” is a way of naming the connections between the past and present: a new way of understanding the past.

Martens, an associate professor of theology at Baylor University in Waco, Tex., is a native of Manitoba who studied at Providence College, Regent College and Notre Dame University.

The Anabaptist vision of the past served us well, but we no longer live in that time and place, he said. “The threat of the draft—the threat of turning the church into an instrument of killing—is past. We are part of the dominant culture. . . . The recognition that we are already deeply integrated into a way of life . . . is a new challenge facing Christians seeking to live with integrity in North America today.”

He said that we have yet to come to grips, theologically and spiritually, with the reality that we are the world.

He described our new reality as containing “highly advanced modes of colonizing,” noting that we eat tomatoes picked by “virtual slaves” in Mexico; drink from aluminum cans made from bauxite, which is mined in India and Guyana; recycle our clothing, which is



Paul Martens

shipped to Africa, where it floods the market and destroys indigenous garment-based livelihoods.

Looking at the world with “new eyes” places new demands on those in the Anabaptist tradition. Martens points to Stuart Murray, Shane Claiborne and Brian McLaren, who “don’t look like Mennonites—at least not like those of us who have grown up Mennonite—but they have rightly plundered the tradition.”

It’s important to recognize, said Martens, that those of us with genetic or denominational ties to Anabaptism are few in number but are apparently large in

influence. As we move forward without knowing what the future holds, how should we live with what we have to offer the rest of the world?

With humility, liberality, conviction and hope.

“Even the early Anabaptists didn’t think they had cornered the market on renewal and reformation in the church,” he said, so in humility we need to recognize that we, too, might be in need of renewal and reform. So we should not shy away from uncomfortable questions. “[W]e must humbly admit that we have much to learn

as a community,” he said.

We should liberally share our distinctiveness. “If it’s worth anything to us, it is worth the same to the rest of the Christian church and . . . the world,” he said. In other words, we should not be jealous if others use the gifts of our tradition in their own ways.

Further, we need to live with conviction. Anabaptism is not merely a group of ideas, it is a lived tradition. “[I]f that tradition is to be the salt and light for the world, it has to have something to offer,” he said.

Our world needs hope. While fear of crime, Muslims, immigrants and of the unknown is alive and well, we need to express the hope that love overcomes fear, even if it means giving up one’s life. “To love the other, we do not worry about self-preservation but hope for the future and work in that direction.”

Martens sees hope as new forms of Anabaptism are beginning to breathe

Martens points to Stuart Murray, Shane Claiborne and Brian McLaren, who ‘don’t look like Mennonites—at least not like those of us who have grown up Mennonite—but they have rightly plundered the tradition.’

new life into Christianity in unexpected places. “[W]e ought to listen to and encourage this new life,” Martens said, “humbly recognizing that we do not have all the answers, sharing liberally what we have carefully nurtured and cultivated, with the hope and expectation that even in these days God will pour out God’s Spirit on all peoples.”

To play even a small part in that is probably enough, he concluded. ❧

Henry Neufeld attends Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship in Vancouver.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Jesus behind barbed wire

VERNA FROESE

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

More than 60 participants came to Camp Valaqua in Water Valley, Alta., on June 4, drawn to the annual heritage retreat, whose theme this year was “Refugees: In search of a homeland.” The words, “*Lord, you have always been our home*” (Psalm 90:1), set the tone for the day.

Anna-Lisa Salo, pastor of Bergthal Mennonite Church in Didsbury, compelled those present to open our eyes and hearts to Jesus, himself a Middle Eastern refugee. The picture of Jesus looking right at me from behind barbed wire is imprinted on my brain.

Our ears and hearts were wrenched by refugee testimonials from Paul Phoumsouvanh (Laotian); Chau Dang (Vietnamese); and the Trad family, recent Syrian refugees sponsored by Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary. Charlotte Wiehler, the oldest participant, at 97, also shared her memories of coming to

Canada as a Mennonite refugee.

Weaving through these stories was the strong thread of newfound Christian hope and trust in God. This claiming of the Christian faith means, in some cases, experiencing rejection and suspicion from family and former friends. While devastating persecution and oppression continue, we continue to implore God and humanity to have mercy, and also to embrace and welcome with love the refugees in our midst as children and

Briefly noted

Pastoral ordination in Ontario

• **KEN DRIEDGER** was ordained at Wideman Mennonite Church, Markham, Ont., on June 12. Driedger is currently the congregation’s interim pastor with his wife Dawn; he previously ministered at Zion Mennonite Fellowship in Elmira, Ont.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



joint-heirs of God. ☸

Verna Froese is a member of Trinity Mennonite Church, DeWinton, Alta.

LEAMINGTON MENNONITE HOMES PHOTO



Warm weather with sunny skies and great course conditions prevailed for the 14th annual charity golf tournament organized by the Leamington (Ont.) Mennonite Home at Leamington’s Erie Shores Golf and Country Club on June 18. More than 140 took part, and \$54,000 was raised for the nurse call and WanderGuard system. Over the past 14 years this tournament has raised a total of \$479,000 for the home. Pictured, the best women’s team, from left to right: Diane Penner, Bea Krueger, Annie Pump and Lori Kelly.

PHOTO BY HUGO NEUFELD



Faraj Trad and Manal Oboed, recent Syrian refugees who were sponsored by Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary, are pictured with Pastor Doug Klassen, right, at the Camp Valaqua heritage retreat on June 4. The couple and two others spoke on the theme, ‘Refugees: In search of a homeland.’

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

The right to die and the art of suffering

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

The ongoing discussion about medical assistance in dying has publicly raised questions that extend beyond the realm of politics and public policy to the bedrock of morality.

Should the intentional killing of a person ever be legal? If so, under what circumstances? Do people who face a life of severe pain deserve the right to end their lives? How do we, as a society, balance personal autonomy and respect for life? Do people who have decided to end their lives deserve the opportunity to do so peacefully and accompanied by loved ones, instead of violently and alone? Who should get to decide all these things? And how can we talk about such impossibly sensitive matters in a way that honours the deeply personal experiences of all?

Rod and Susan Reynar raise a further question for people of faith: What does community mean for us in the face of suffering?

While most of us carry deeply personal experiences relevant to medically assisted dying, the Reynars' experience is particularly stark. Due to a congenital condition compounded by a medical error years ago, Rod lives with constant excruciating pain. "Even at my best times, there's rarely some time in the day when I think, 'I just can't do this,'" he tells me via Skype. "Then there are times when things get worse."

He will live the rest of his life in pain. One doctor said his condition is like experiencing terminal cancer but with no end in sight. "That comes as a daily challenge to me," he says quietly.

This is after receiving an implant that reduced his pain significantly. The device, installed by a doctor in the Netherlands, uses electrical impulses to his spine to ameliorate the pain. Before that, he spent more

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN ALDAG



John Aldag, MP for Cloverdale-Langley City, B.C., was one of many to speak on Bill C-14 in the House of Commons this past spring.

than 12 years bedridden, his dream career as an academic gone, and his participation in the life of his two young daughters reduced to them eating meals with him in his bedroom. Every breath was torturous. Conversation took immense effort. He lived life in 10-minute increments. Most, although not all, people who came to visit him were too overwhelmed to return.

More than once during that period he planned his own death. In a Mennonite Church Canada podcast he explains how, on one occasion when his wife Susan observed that something was amiss, she pushed him until he confessed that he had decided to die and knew how he would do it. "She backed me in the corner," Rod recounts. Susan said defiantly that if she and their daughters weren't reason enough to live, then he should go ahead. He didn't.

His point is about how we are not just our own, but that our identities are also held by others. In some sense, he didn't have the right to decide unilaterally to end his life.

Personal autonomy . . . or not

That stands in contrast to federal Health

Minister Jane Philpott, a member of Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville, Ont., who has said of the Liberal government's medically assisted dying legislation: "First, it is about the principle of personal autonomy." She was unavailable for an interview.

The Reynars insist that people are not merely autonomous individuals. But they are not just talking about who gets to decide about death, they are calling the church to take up the responsibility to walk closely with those who suffer and those who are dying. They focus not on how to answer ethical questions, but how to walk with those who suffer.

Rod says we have "lost the art of suffering." He testifies to the need for vulnerability and "an openness to explore that which is shrouded in mystery and uncertainty." How can we nurture the capacity to walk with those who are suffering or dying? Rod says, simply, that we need to be present to such people and "deeply take them on as our own." This must be modelled in community.

Susan recalls the image of their teen-aged daughter climbing into bed with her barely responsive grandfather during his final days, which were lived in the Reynars' home. She had always liked reading with him, so that's what she did.

She adds, though, that not everyone can sit with a dying person. Some can find practical ways to support people and their families.

Through it all, the movement the Reynars speak of is one toward suffering, rather than away from it.

Jason Reimer Greig, a 2015 graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., writes of the modern medical system as one founded on the notions of self-determination and the elimination of suffering. His recent book, *Reconsidering Intellectual Disability: L'Arche, Medical Ethics and Christian Friendship*, says that deep relationship ought to be our response to suffering, rather than the impulse to fix the situation.

Nothing redemptive to say about suffering

Our Supreme Court Justices have nothing redemptive to say about suffering. The

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROD AND SUSAN REYNAR

2015 Supreme Court ruling that led to the medically assisted dying legislation that was passed by the House of Commons on June 16, said it is not acceptable to “[leave people] to endure intolerable suffering.”

I asked Rod what he thinks of that wording. His answer headed back to the fundamental value of community. He says that “what stands out” from his toughest times is “how the presence of others made seemingly intolerable times tolerable.”

Still, he says that if a person and his or her community decided it was time to let go of life, he would have a responsibility to “step away” from his “idealistic statements of truth” and trust those who have walked with the person and paid “respect to what the individual is experiencing.”

The Reynars deal more in graciousness than ethical absolutes. It is hard not to notice the phrase “without judgment” dotting their comments.

The ‘best thing’

Novelist Miriam Toews has written about the suicides of her father and sister. In a CBC interview last year, Toews said that her sister, who was tortured by severe mental illness, “begged” Toews to take her to Switzerland, where she could legally and safely end her life.

“I was paralyzed,” Toews said. “It seemed an impossible thing to do.”

Her sister died alone on a train track.

Later, Toews says, she realized that a medically assisted death “would have been the best thing.” Her sister could have died with someone “holding her . . . giving her what she was entitled to have.”

She acknowledges the controversy: “I understand all the resistance to it.”

My friend Dave also died violently and alone. Although he was young, brimming with passion, and loved by many, he could not endure the mental illness that tormented him. With anguish, his friends later recognized that he had systematically spent time with key people before his death, something that must have been an impossibly lonely farewell tour.

‘One or the other’

Our country’s new law does not extend to situations like these. It stipulates that medical practitioners will not be



‘She backed me in the corner,’ Rod recounts. Susan said defiantly that if she and their daughters weren’t reason enough to live, then he should go ahead. He didn’t.

criminally culpable if they assist in the deaths of “competent adults” who have “a grievous and irremediable medical condition that causes them enduring and intolerable suffering,” and “whose deaths are reasonably foreseeable.”

The legislation provides various checks and balances to help protect vulnerable people. It also ensures freedom of conscience for medical practitioners not comfortable with medically assisted dying. The government has called for more study on the legally complex matter of advance requests, as well as circumstances involving “mature minors” and instances in which “mental illness is the sole underlying medical condition.” The current law does not apply in these cases.

While the law purports to strike a balance between personal autonomy and respect for life, ethicist Margaret Somerville says that “those considerations can’t be balanced; we have to choose one or the other.” In an email, Somerville—a professor in the faculties of law and medicine at McGill University in Montréal, and presenter of the 2006 Massey Lectures—says the new law is unnecessary and “very dangerous.” She believes that it will erode respect for life both in specific cases and in “society as a whole.”

Noting a report of 166 “medically inflicted deaths” in Québec since December 2015—Québec jumped ahead of the

Supreme Court and the federal government in this regard—Somerville says this shows that such deaths will not be rare in Canada. She has written previously that assisted deaths ought to occur only in exceptional circumstances and not become the norm.

In response to my question about whether the government has considered or estimated how prevalent medically assisted deaths may become in Canada, a Health Department spokesperson said only that the legislation makes provision for data collection.

Somerville believes the law puts us on an “unavoidable slippery slope, as has already happened in the Netherlands and Belgium.”

‘I value life’

Ironically, the Reynars spoke to me from the Netherlands, where Rod is having adjustments made to his implant. Obviously, he is aware that there he “could be granted authorization” to take his life. “It’s an odd thought,” he says, adding, “I fully understand those feelings, and have had them, where I wanted nothing other than to die. And yet I value life.” ☞

To learn more about visiting people with chronic pain, visit bit.ly/tips-for-visits.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

'Kanata' is a verb

ALLISON GOERZEN

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ALBERTA

“**K**anata” is an Iroquoian verb that means to “make clean, pure, and sacred,” according to Lewis Cardinal of the Parliament of World Religions organization. It also invokes a sense of inclusive relationship, like being born of the land, harmony and balance within ourselves and all of our relations. How ironic, then, that our country was named after a call to right relationship and harmony with the land.

It's been 524 years since Columbus first made contact with Turtle Island, now known as North America, and seven months now since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) officially closed its doors. With the publication of the 94 Calls to Action, Mennonite churches have begun the difficult task of knowing what it means to foster understanding and right relationship with indigenous communities.

As co-coordinator of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta's Indigenous Neighbours Program, along with Jim Shantz of Edmonton, our mandate is simple: Educate ourselves, foster relationships and show up when invited.

I personally have a desire to learn more about our Mennonite story and how it co-exists with our indigenous neighbours. My family, which moved to Canada in the 1920s, would have moved onto someone else's land, and I haven't reconciled that yet. I have too much to learn and many indigenous folks to meet before then.

With “Kanata” in mind, we have begun to sort out how MCC Alberta will respond to the 94 Calls to Action. We've started small and continue to work as the Spirit leads, networking, educating ourselves and listening to stories. The first step always seems to be education. We can't even begin to imagine a relationship if we haven't first done our homework and taken the time to learn. So we've been getting creative and are waiting to see what inspiration will help guide us to a place of friendship and understanding.

The “blanket exercise” is an interactive workshop that teaches the history of indigenous-settler relations in a way that is both truthful and impactful. MCC facilitated a training session at Camp Valaqua this spring, and there are now more than 20 church members and leaders able to

facilitate the exercise across the province.

We also have been working towards a learning tour that would provide participants with the opportunity to have intentional time learning with indigenous organizations, meeting members of indigenous communities and participating in their ceremonies.

The other part of education—the part I've been venturing into lately—is where we just start showing up. It's the part that can be the scariest or furthest out of our comfort zone. It's the part that's messy or may place us in the role of newcomer. It requires effort and discipline, an active seeking out and making space for new people and events in our lives. This is where we have to earn trust by investing our listening ear. This is not about mending, fixing or doing. It requires patience, selflessness and honesty. It may even mean growing in our understanding of faith and what it means to be children of God.

I attended a powwow on June 24 at the Alex Youth Health Center in Calgary, where I found myself eating Indian tacos, watching youth dance and chatting with community members. In a culture I wasn't familiar with, I sat at a table with a unique collection of people. One man told me that he was in search of a job and a home, and a woman said that she'd lost most of her mobility and teeth over the years. Not exactly what you'd expect during a Friday afternoon outing! But it was worth spending the time. I am growing, being shaped and letting in some much-needed reality-checks. I know my spirituality will grow, too, as I learn more about who the Creator is to indigenous people.

So now I offer a challenge: We've got the Calls to Action from the TRC and a country filled with broken relationships. We've got “Kanata” as our common ground and a mandate to make our relationships clean, pure and sacred. How will we respond? ☞

My family, which moved to Canada in the 1920s, would have moved onto someone else's land, and I haven't reconciled that yet.

PHOTO BY ALLISON GOERZEN



Jim Shantz, co-coordinator of MCC Alberta's Indigenous Neighbours Program, left, and Eugene Cardinal stand in front of the Indian Residential School monument located outside of the Tribal Chiefs Ventures office in St. Paul, Alta., on June 22.

GOD AT WORK IN US

Jake and George

A story of intergenerational friendship

STORY AND PHOTOS

BY FRAN AARNOUTSE

Southview Child Care

EDMONTON

George and Jake are great friends. George, 3, is a child who attends Southview Child Care, located in the First Mennonite Church building. Jake Baergen is a member of First Mennonite and 77 years George's senior.

Jake can often be seen on the church grounds operating the riding lawn mower, pruning trees and doing other odd jobs. George loves machines of all sorts: tractors, diggers, dump trucks and any other industrial vehicle. The first time George saw Jake mowing the lawn, he was entranced as Jake went around and around on the mower.

One day, Jake got off the mower and



Southview Child Care staff hosted a family hotdog roast on June 20, and George was so excited to see Jake Baergen's tractor in the garage at Edmonton First Mennonite Church. The joy on George's face while 'riding' his favourite hero's machine tells the story.

George was so excited to meet the "guy" who operates the machine. Jake introduced himself to George and that was the beginning of their friendship. Whenever Jake is around, George can be seen talking about "Jake" and wanting to know what Jake is doing that day. George likes to watch Jake doing anything and, truly, Jake is his hero.

One day during lunchtime an early learning educator said, "George, drink all your milk so you can be big and strong like Dad." George responded, "No, like Jake!"

Another day, George was so excited to see Jake that he jumped up and down so hard that his pants fell down around his ankles.

If you ask George what he wants to do when he grows up, he says, "Jake."

At nap time, if George hears the mower starting up, he'll say, "Jake's mowing the grass."

If Jake isn't around, George will comment, "Jake went home," or, "Jake's having lunch."

George did not say much when he started at Southview, but his relationship with Jake has made him quite the conversationalist. George now uses full sentences and will discuss Jake and what he does at length, something George couldn't do before. Their friendship has helped George's



George, left, a child who attends Edmonton First Mennonite's Southview Child Care program, is all smiles when photographed with his 'hero,' Jake Baergen, who mows the church's lawn.

language development blossom more quickly than anyone could have imagined.

George's parents comment that often he speaks fondly of Jake at home and describes what he does. He talks about all the jobs he sees Jake do around the daycare centre. ❧

Fran Aarnoutse is the director of Southview Child Care, which is owned and operated by Edmonton First Mennonite Church.

Obituary

Siebert remembered as former writer-editor

Excerpts from his work as a writer-editor of the *Mennonite Reporter* in the early 1960s were read as a tribute to Allan J. Siebert, 62, at his memorial service at River East Mennonite Brethren Church, Winnipeg, on June 29. Siebert (b. July 31, 1953) died June 1, 2016, at his cottage on the Broken Head River, Beausejour, Man. A journalist with the *Mennonite Reporter* and the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, he was the first Manitoba bureau chief for *The Reporter*, gathering stories from the western provinces. "Even though your territory was regional," wrote editor Ron Rempel in a farewell to Siebert in October 1985, "most of your stories had wider implications. Even though you tussled with the bad news alongside the good, your faith never hardened into cynicism. Even those who squirmed under your investigative questions learned to trust your work." Siebert is survived by his wife Judith Kehler Siebert of Winnipeg; daughter Clarisse and her husband Leif Holmberg and daughters; his mother Nita Siebert of St. Catharines, Ont.; three brothers and their families: Paul Siebert and Moira Toomey of Ottawa, Lorne Siebert and Colette Schmitt of Calgary, and John Siebert and Carolyn Wiens of Waterloo, Ont.

—BY DICK BENNER



Allan Siebert

ARTBEAT

'Living autonomously' in the Age of the Spirit

STORY AND PHOTO BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher
PARIS, ONT.

TTrue to its name, this year's Skylight Festival focussed on how the church can regain its place in a post-Christian society, exploring a larger movement of faith, arts and justice for this time.

Citing the story of God calling Abram to leave everything and "*depart for a land I will show you,*" Brandon Robertson insisted that this biblical narrative is where the church is today, needing to abandon its institutional moorings to discover new ways of reaching out to its neighbours and especially embracing the spirituality of a new generation of millennials.

Himself a progressive evangelical speaker and writer who casts himself as a millennial, Robertson said that life is not about achieving goals, gaining notoriety or reaching a destination. "It is about the journey," he said. "To be a follower of Jesus is to commit to being a nomad, wandering the vast landscapes of life and eternity, never completely sure where you're at or where you're heading, but completely trusting that if Jesus is the one leading, everything is going to be just fine."

He described millennials as "living autonomously" in an the Age of the

Spirit—an intra-spirit time where there is an "undoing of clan and colour," separated from religious ritual and staying away from systems and hierarchies. It is about "reconstruction," rather than "deconstruction" of religious ideals, doing away with a mythic God but experiencing instead a true and living Christ in you, "where we live and move and have our being."

This theme prevailed throughout the three-day holiday weekend of July 29 to 31, with such high-profile speakers as the U.K.'s John Bell among the 27 contributors, as well as many home-grown speakers. Scattered over the grounds in two tents and a main stage, the 500 registrants included as many as 100 children and youths.

Music was an integral part of the experience, with Bryan Moyer Suderman of Kitchener, Ont., who is sometimes described as an Anabaptist Pete Seeger, performing music from his recently released CD, *I'm Glad You're Here*, for both adults and children. (See below.)

In another presentation to the primarily United Church and Anglican participants,

'Welcome the stranger'

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

Describing his latest CD as "as a kind of soundtrack for the church engaged in hard conversations," making it pertinent for some of the conversations Mennonite Church Canada had earlier this summer, singer-songwriter Bryan Moyer Suderman released *I'm Glad You're Here: Songs of Hope and Struggle*, on May 6 in Stouffville, Ont. The release coincided with a fundraising concert for the "Welcome the stranger" initiative for refugee support—an undertaking of the Greater Toronto Area Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches—that raised almost \$10,000.

I'm Glad You're Here has been a long time coming.

"Sometimes, for me, songwriting can follow a regular rhythm, like the growing of a crop and its harvest in due time, year after year," says Moyer Suderman. "Other times it feels more like an old-growth forest that takes much longer to grow and mature. Many of these songs—and this collection as a whole—feels . . . more like that. . . . A number of the songs have been around for quite a while, but never seemed to quite fit

on a previous collection. With all that's going on in the life of our church, this seemed to be the right time for this collection of songs."

Suderman has been using a number of these songs in recent "Reading the Bible with Jesus" teaching sessions he has been doing in various Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregations; at pastors week at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary; while in India in February; and in Goshen, Ind., with Hispanic pastors and leaders from across MC U.S.A.

For more information about Moyer Suderman's teaching schedule and music, visit smalltallministries.com.



Max Kennel, a Mennonite also of Kitchener, reinforced the idea that the religious tide is turning and that the “shattering of historic ideologies is taking us into uncharted waters.” He observed that the fastest growing groups in Canadian churches are those in the LGBTQ community, women and non-whites, forcing Christians to re-examine a world that is both secular and religious.

A doctoral student at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont., he asked his listeners to take this opportunity for deeper thinking about what it means to oppose violence, not just in action but on a deeper level. He called for re-forming ways of thinking about nonviolence:

- **REDUCTION:** Limiting everything to what is manageable, getting caught in the appearance of things and not their essence.
- **ESSENTIALIZATION:** Taking something that is large and complex in scope and making it small.
- **ANACHANISM:** Being against time, overlooking the fact that people change over time and do not stay in fixed positions.
- **EXOTICIZATION:** Objectifying persons, such as having a fixed view of a person’s identity, such as those associated with a western identity compared to an oriental one.
- **TOTALIZATION:** Seeing the world without exceptions and contradictions.

Recognizing these pitfalls, he challenged his listeners to “live into this new conversation.”

In a new initiative to stimulate ministry innovation by the United Church of Canada, which is suffering a downturn in church membership, five church leaders outlined their visions and actions to make their congregations more invitational and hospitable. Among them was Jeff Steckley, co-chair of the Festival Visioning Team and a former minister of congregational ministries for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Calling for leadership “on the edges of the church,” he urged more engagement with character and culture, rather than strategies and structures, constructing a welcome that is aesthetically pleasing and engaged in life-long learning, perhaps



Bryan Moyer Suderman engages children with songs from his new CD, I’m Glad You’re Here, under the sky tent at the recent Skylight Festival in Paris, Ont.

having a craft brewery for financial support, and featuring contemplative practices and a gracious hospitality through which sustained relationships are formed.

In a name contest for labelling this new initiative, the name “Chasing the Spirit” won out over some 200 entries.

Modelled after the Greenbelt Festival in

the U.K. and the Wild Goose Festival in the U.S., the Skylight Festival gives voice in the Canadian context to a transformative narrative of hope that celebrates diversity and inclusion. Vic Thiessen, a former MC Canada staff person, is credited with the vision and tireless efforts in shaping the Festival. ☼



ONLINE NOW!

at canadianmennonite.org

A refugee finds a home

From Ukraine, Germany, Austria, Paraguay, and finally to Canada, refugee Peter Krause sought—and found—a home. canadianmennonite.org/refugee-home



Mennonites in Brazil face diversity and challenges

A review of 85 years of Mennonite presence and witness in Brazil. canadianmennonite.org/mennonites-brazil



Grace New Life Mennonite turns 25, looks to future

This Hamilton, Ont., congregation experienced growth and decline, and is emerging with a vision extending beyond its Southeast Asian origins. canadianmennonite.org/grace-new-life



TREE receives Hallman grant for peace education

An initiative based at Conrad Grebel University College gets funding to expand its program into public schools across Waterloo Region, Ont. canadianmennonite.org/grant-peace-education



Balance and beauty found in *The Harmony Tree*

BY DEBORAH FROESE

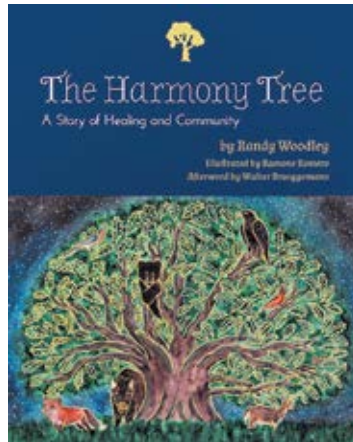
Mennonite Church Canada

Yearning for *eloheh* (ae-luh-hay) is clearly evident in Randy Woodley's new children's picture book, *The Harmony Tree*, published by Mennonite Church Canada this year. Richly illustrated by Ramone Romero and with an afterword by theologian Walter Brueggemann, the story speaks about healing and community through a deeply rooted, God-centred indigenous view of creation.

Woodley, who describes himself as a teacher, poet, activist, former pastor and farmer, says *eloheh* is the Cherokee concept of harmony, balance, well-being and abundance that is synonymous with shalom. His Keetoowah Cherokee heritage intricately connects all of those qualities with the beauty and wisdom of God's creation.

In *The Harmony Tree*, Grandmother Oak is spared by loggers who clear-cut her forest, leaving her alone until new houses—and newly planted trees—appear. Her new companions are shallow and self-centred until they are faced with their innate frailty in the midst of wind and storm. They turn to Grandmother Oak for advice. Grandmother Oak shares her history and wisdom about the land and how she came to have such deep roots, and through her stories the other trees gradually learn to grow stronger, too.

The Harmony Tree unfolds in poetic language that is gentle on the ear even as it



issues a warning. Between these tensions, the story evokes a sense of ancient wisdom and hope for the current generation and those to come. The dedication reads: "To my grandchildren, and to yours, and to theirs."

As a distinguished professor of faith and culture and director of intercultural and indigenous studies at George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Portland, Ore., Woodley might seem busy enough. But he is also co-founder of Eagle's Wings Ministry and Eloheh Farm with his wife Edith. They live on the farm, a sustainable, regenerative agricultural operation that uses no chemicals or genetically modified organisms, and practises "traditional indigenous knowledge."

"It's a model farm so people can learn and repeat what they see and be inspired to get started on that path," Woodley says. "Maybe it's just growing one tomato, and sharing and saving seeds. They have the opportunity to see the cycle of creation repeat itself over and over again."

The farm feeds its own small community and donates food to homeless groups.

"Some people might call it [the community] a church, but we don't," Woodley says.

Woodley is convinced that the surest way to *eloheh* or shalom is through the indigenous worldview that holds all aspects of creation in relationship. Although he has spent most of his career sharing these perspectives with adults, he knew he needed to do more. "I realized I needed to start with children and get them thinking about these kinds of things: harmony, the need for people to get along. The trees are a metaphor for peoples of all nations."

He has three clear objectives for the book:

- **INTRODUCE CHILDREN** to the idea that there is more life in nature than western society tends to ascribe to it.
- **ILLUSTRATE THE** destabilizing ecological impact of clear-cutting trees.
- **SET THE** stage for settler people to hear the wisdom that host peoples have to share about the land and creation.

"I wrote it for kids, but it's also for adults," he says of *The Harmony Tree*.

Woodley's multi-faceted career began to take shape after he spent two years as a Baptist minister in Alaska. He calls them his "missionary oppressor years." "I came out of there thinking there must be a better way to share [faith] with my people than what I was taught," he says.

Since then, he has actively pursued inclusive expressions of faith amid ethnic and racial diversity. He is a founding board member of the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies and an avid writer. Woodley, who was invited to write *The Harmony Tree* by Steve Heinrichs, MC Canada's director of indigenous relations, has collaborated with him on a number of projects, including the book *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry*. ❧

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On the outside looking in

Small ecumenical presence included at MC Canada's Assembly 2016

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

“Three people in their early 20s—a Catholic, a Mennonite Brethren man and a United Church member—walk into a Mennonite Church Canada assembly.” It may sound like the set-up to a joke, but it’s exactly what happened last month.

Although they do not belong to MC Canada congregations, Catherine Richard, Nick Czehryn and Matthew Dyck each travelled from their homes in Winnipeg to Saskatoon to participate in Assembly 2016. For each of them, it proved to be a meaningful experience.

Richard attended because she was asked to play piano with the worship team that

work. The 22-year-old, who studies at Canadian Mennonite University, wrote a paper for a sociology class this past spring for which he interviewed six MC Canada pastors and explored the cultural conditions that have led to the Future Directions discussion.

“It was about hearing how pastors are talking about the way they work and the way that the [wider church] is working, and using that to analyze the connections from culture into [MC Canada],” said Dyck, whose friend Nick Czehryn convinced him to go to assembly.

“I’m close friends with Matt so I kept

*‘In the Catholic Church, big decisions aren’t made in this manner, so I haven’t experienced a church making decisions in that type of communal way [that involves] all the lay people.’
(Catherine Richard)*

led the congregational singing. And the prospect of witnessing the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) and Future Directions Task Force discussions intrigued her.

“In the Catholic Church, big decisions aren’t made in this manner, so I haven’t experienced a church making decisions in that type of communal way [that involves] all the lay people,” said the 21-year-old who attends Our Lady of Perpetual Help Roman Catholic Church. “That was very neat to see. It was very inspiring.”

For Dyck, who attends Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church, attending the assembly was the culmination of a semester spent studying the Task Force’s

tabs on his project,” Czehryn said. “When he presented, I found it really interesting. . . . I thought it would be nice to go [to Saskatoon] and see how it plays out.”

Czehryn, 22, has had a truly ecumenical upbringing. He was born into the Catholic Church, but his family joined a United Church of Canada congregation when he was 7. He grew up attending and working at a Lutheran summer camp, and studied at a Mennonite Brethren high school.

“I’ve always been fascinated with how the different denominations make the decisions that they do—how they come to those conclusions, and how those

(Continued on page 28)

PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY AARON EPP



Catherine Richard, a Catholic, was interested in witnessing how decisions are made within MC Canada.



Matthew Dyck, who worships at a Mennonite Brethren church, attended Assembly 2016 after writing a university paper about MC Canada’s Future Directions Task Force.

(Continued from page 27)

[conclusions] impact the people who attend the churches,” he said.

He was particularly interested in the BFC discussion because he was too young to participate when the United Church of Canada affirmed that human sexuality, including homosexuality, is a gift from God. This led to the United Church becoming generally accepting of homosexual members. In 2012, the church elected Gary Paterson, an openly gay man, as its moderator.

“We’re at a very different place,” Czehryn said, adding that he thought the BFC vote, which resulted in delegates voting in favour of creating space for congregations

to differ from one another when it comes to same-sex relationships, would be closer than the actual 277 “yes” votes, 50 “no” votes and 23 abstentions.

Czehryn was also struck by the tone of the conversations leading up to the vote. “People seemed to really want to respect other people’s opinions,” he said.

Richard agreed. “I could tell it was complex and I could tell it was messy and I could tell it was painful, but what came across to me was this sense of unity regardless,” she said. “Everyone seemed to recognize that their voice was integral and there seemed to be a desire to stay unified.”

Dyck is interested to see what happens next, particularly with the church’s Future Directions. What form MC Canada takes in the future will depend on the commitment and involvement of lay people, he said: “These new structures, whatever they are, are not necessarily going to work. It’s going to take that commitment to be volunteering, to be funding it, to be assisting it in doing what [the wider church body] has mandated it to do.”

The level of engagement at Assembly 2016 showed promise, they said, with Richard describing the atmosphere there as one of excitement. “Even with [their differences], everyone was there,” she said. “They weren’t in their homes mulling it over or being passive. There was a real desire to participate.” ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF MC CANADA



Catherine Richard, who played piano as part of the worship team at Assembly 2016, sensed a desire for unity by delegates.

Learning to be grateful

Voluntary service in Paraguay is an eye-opening, meaningful experience for one young woman

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CLAUDIA DUECK



Established by Mennonites, Kilometre 81 treats people with leprosy, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

When Claudia Dueck thinks back on the voluntary service she did in Paraguay earlier this year, it’s the Tuesdays that stick out the most.

Dueck, 19, spent three months volunteering at Kilometre 81, a Mennonite hospital in eastern Paraguay that treats people with leprosy, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Every Tuesday evening, Dueck and the other volunteers at the hospital would

gather to sing for their patients. It was one of the only times when the volunteers had direct contact with them.

“It was so meaningful to see how much they enjoyed us singing for them, and how much they enjoyed seeing young faces and seeing people that were there just to be there for them,” says Dueck, who lives in Winnipeg, where she attends Douglas Mennonite Church.

At Kilometre 81, volunteers sing on Tuesday evenings in an attempt to give patients some peace of mind before their operations, which happen on Wednesdays.

Dueck recalls one Tuesday evening when she encountered a woman who was scheduled to have her leg amputated the next day. “She was very nervous [but] she said when we came in, she was overcome with a sense of calm and [was] reassured that everything would be okay,” Dueck says. “It really made me value music and being there for people, and the power that

and spend time together that way,” Dueck says. “I made . . . very meaningful, deep friendships.”

She adds that her time in Paraguay was eye opening and challenging, particularly when it came to the poverty she witnessed.

“You learn to be very grateful for how you grew up, and you realize just how privileged we are here in North America,” she says. “I think that is something I will remember from that trip for us, just very clearly how good we have it here, and how that sometimes clouds our judgment of

*‘I thought of each patient while I was making their bandage. That way I could always stay grounded in what I was doing there, as opposed to maybe just feeling like I was cleaning a lot.’
(Claudia Dueck)*

can have in someone’s life.”

Those Tuesday evenings were markedly different from the rest of Dueck’s volunteer work at Kilometre 81. She spent the majority of her three months ironing and folding laundry, cleaning guest houses and doing dishes.

With minimal contact with patients, it can be easy to forget why one is volunteering at a place like Kilometre 81. One of Dueck’s jobs in the laundry was to sew bandages that were used to cover patients’ wounds, and she used the task to consciously think about why she was at Kilometre 81 and who she was helping.

Each bandage was blank on one side, with a pattern on the opposite side. Dueck made sure to fold the bandages with the pattern facing out, so that when it was wrapped around the patient’s limb, the pattern would be visible.

“I thought of each patient while I was making their bandage,” Dueck says. “That way I could always stay grounded in what I was doing there, as opposed to maybe just feeling like I was cleaning a lot.”

She spent her evenings with the other 10 volunteers, a group that included two Germans and eight Paraguayans. The volunteers were expected to participate in a variety of activities, including Bible studies and social activities like playing volleyball.

“We really got to know one another

what’s really important.”

“Poverty was just around me in its rawest form,” she adds. “I really got to see and hear stories of people that live in horrible conditions and are kind of okay with it because they don’t expect much more. That was hard for me to grasp, because they don’t expect to be wealthy and have everything they need, or that I think they need.”

The Mennonite communities Dueck experienced there were more conservative than she was used to, and the gender roles were clearly defined. She found this challenging. At the same time, she admired the way she saw Mennonites in Paraguay living out their faith.

“Something that I’ve missed [after] coming back is this intentional community that is there,” she says. “That’s something grounded in their understanding of the Bible. They’re incredibly close with one another, always there for each other, constantly praying with one another, very open about their beliefs and very heartfelt.”

As she prepares to begin university next month, Dueck is grateful that she took the time to visit Paraguay and she encourages other young people to do voluntary service. “It is one of the most life-changing things you can do, especially if you can do it in a developing country,” she says. “It’s an amazing experience.” ❧



Much of Claudia Dueck’s volunteer work at Kilometre 81 involved doing laundry.



Sewing bandages for Kilometre 81 patients was meaningful for Claudia Dueck.

Calendar

British Columbia

Sept. 16-17: MCC Festival for World Relief, at the Tradex, Abbotsford; (16) 5 to 9 p.m., (17) 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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.

Oct. 14-16: Women's retreat, "Piecing together our identity," at Camp Squeah, Hope, with speaker Song Yang Her. Register at mcbc.ca/womens-ministry.

Nov. 18-20: MC B.C. "Impact" youth retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope.

Alberta

Aug. 27: MCC Alberta fundraising golf tournament at LaCrete, at 1 p.m. For more information, call 403-275-6935.

Sept. 10: MCC Alberta fundraising golf tournament at Tofield, at 7:30 a.m. For more information, call 403-275-6935.

Sept. 11: MCC Alberta fundraising

golf tournament at Okotoks, at 1:45 p.m. For more information, call 403-275-6935.

Oct. 1: Camp Valaqua fall work day. Lunch is provided. For more information, call 403-637-2510.

Saskatchewan

Oct. 22: RJC corporation meeting, and appreciation/fundraising banquet, at 5 p.m.

Oct. 28-29: RJC alumni volleyball tournament.

Nov. 15: RJC kielke and sausage supper, at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon.

Jan. 13-14, 2017: RJC alumni tournament of memories.

Manitoba

Sept. 9: "Somos su futuro/We are your future" exhibition from Mexico opens at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg. Featured artists Alejandro Arando, Ray Dirks and indigenous women weavers. Until Nov. 12.

Sept. 10: Eden Foundation's 14th

annual "Head for the hills" ride for mental health, near Morden. For more information, or to register, visit edenhealthcare.ca.

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.

Sept. 30: Fundraiser for the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 30: "Along the road to freedom" exhibition opening celebration at the Manitoba Legislative Building, Winnipeg, at 2:30 p.m.

Nov. 19: Megan Krause and Dale Boldt exhibition at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. Until Jan. 21, 2017.

Ontario

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

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.

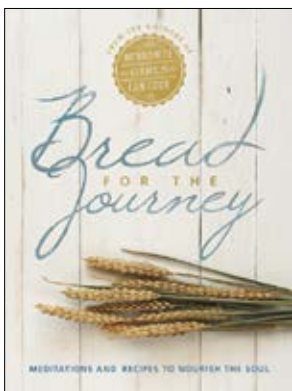
Sept. 19: MCC Ontario annual general meeting, at the Kitchener MCC office, at 8 p.m. To register in advance, visit mcco.ca/agm.

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.

Oct. 30: Menno Singers present "Romantic Rarities," featuring Widor's "Mass for Two Choirs and Two Organs," at Church of St. John the Evangelist,

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Kitchener, at 3 p.m.

Dec. 10: Mennonite Mass Choir with the KW Symphony and soloists perform Handel's "Messiah," at Centre in the Square, Kitchener.

Nov. 5,6: Pax Christi Chorale, with the Bicycle Opera Project, presents Mendelssohn's "Elijah," at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto; (5) 7:30 p.m.; (6) 3 p.m.

Dec. 10,11: Pax Christi Chorale, with Shannon Mercer and the Aslan Boys Choir, presents, "Ode on the Nativity" by C.H.H. Parry, at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto; (10) 7:30 p.m.; (11) 3 p.m.

Quebec

Sept. 18: Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal hosts a meal and discussion for young adults interested in community and fellowship at Maison de l'amitié, at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call 514-849-9039.

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.



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Employment opportunity
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MacGregor EMC in MacGregor, MB is seeking a full-time lead pastor. Applicants must have a love for God and the Church, a commitment to Anabaptist beliefs centred on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and be characterized by an attitude of servant leadership and personal integrity in following Jesus. The successful candidate will preach regularly, visit and support individuals in the congregation and advise the ministerial, board and other participants on matters of faith.

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To submit an application, please email a resume with three references to **Dan Sawatzky** at dsawatzky@gmail.com. To request more information about us or the posting, email Dan Sawatzky or call him at 204-685-2252.

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Transition Coordinator

Following an agreement in principle by area and national church delegate assemblies, Mennonite Church Canada, Area Churches and congregations are embarking on a process to create a simpler more integrated organizational body that will strengthen congregations as cells of Christian witness and nurture.

Working with a core of volunteers, the Transition Coordinator will lead the design, development and delivery of targeted organizational change and development initiatives consistent with directions approved in principle by delegate assemblies (FDTF Final Report and Addendum).

The successful candidate will have strong leadership, collaboration and interpersonal skills with the ability to build effective working relationships with clients and colleagues.

A minimum of 5 years relevant work experience with a demonstrated focus on organizational development, project management and change management, preferably within a church organization, public sector, or human service environment is desired.

Beginning no later than October 1st, 2016 this contract position of up to two years will be accountable to the Interim Council (Area and National Church Moderators). Detailed job description is available on request at home.mennonitechurch.ca/jobs.

Send your resume attention: Moderator, in care of wmetzger@mennonitechurch.ca

Closing date: September 12, 2016

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World record for relief*

139 antique farm machines break Guinness World Record to help end global hunger

STORY AND BOTTOM PHOTO BY SHAYLYN MCMAHON /
PHOTOS AT LEFT BY JOHN LONGHURST

Canadian Foodgrains Bank
AUSTIN, MAN.



Manitoba became home to another world record on July 31 when 139 antique threshing machines harvested a field simultaneously for 15 minutes at the 62nd Manitoba Threshermen's Reunion and Stampede held at the Manitoba Agricultural Museum in Austin. Nine others started, but, for various mechanical reasons, couldn't finish the 15-minute test.

"This was a once-in-a-lifetime event," says Elliot Sims, co-organizer of "Harvesting hope: A world record to help the hungry," adding, "You just don't see stuff like this anymore. The energy from the participants and crowd was amazing. You could feel the pride and excitement."

Nearly 8,000 people came to the Museum to watch 750 volunteers from across Canada and the U.S. break the Guinness World Record for "most threshing machines operating simultaneously." The previous record of 111 machines was held by a group from St. Albert, Ont. (* *The new record is unofficial until it is certified by the Guinness World Records organization.*)

Altogether, more than 30 hectares of winter wheat was bound and 30,000 sheaves were cut to be threshed during the event. Combined, the machines were capable of threshing approximately 17,000 bushels of wheat per hour, with 6,100 horsepower of engine capacity driving them.

"This was truly a celebration of our agricultural heritage," says Sims. "We're all very happy to have succeeded, and the feedback we're getting is great. Everyone seems to have really enjoyed themselves."

Funds raised at the event will be split between the Manitoba Agricultural Museum and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. A final tally will be available in a few weeks.

The funds going to the Foodgrains Bank will be used to help small-scale farm families in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya learn to grow more and better food, so they can better provide for their families. The funds going to the Manitoba Agricultural Museum will be used to help it continue to preserve Manitoba's agricultural heritage. ☘

