

CANADIAN MENNONITE

November 6, 2017

Volume 21 Number 21

Covenant New

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PM40063104 R09613

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EDITORIAL

Something old and new

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

On the weekend of Oct. 13 to 15, Mennonite church delegates and others took part in Special Assembly 2017 in Winnipeg. More than 400 of us gathered from across the country to consider the direction we, as Mennonite Church Canada, should take in the years to come.

We were 292 congregational delegates from 128 congregations, 33 delegates from the five regional churches, and 13 youth, five of whom were delegates.

There were MC Canada staff members and staff from the regional churches, and representatives from church organizations. Thirty-one official volunteers gave practical help, and many others volunteered behind the scenes to help pull off this intense weekend.

This assembly was the culmination of a process that began with the Future Directions Task Force and eventually came to be called Covenant New. Faced with changing realities both within our congregations and institutions, and in the larger society, delegates considered—and approved—new structures for being church together.

In the midst of conversations about the new, we did some things just like at any other traditional Mennonite gathering. We made connections with friends and relatives from far away, whether waving across a packed meeting room, hugging in the hallways or sharing a meal. The schedule was packed, as usual, but this time it was extra tight. We relished the

congregational singing of old and new songs led by gifted worship leaders. We expressed our love for the church and for its well-being. We recommitted ourselves to continue seeking God's direction for our life together.



Oh, we had to wrap our brains around some new things too. There was new terminology to catch onto. (See page 16.) We saw new numbers in the proposed financial plan, and heard about different ways of collecting and forwarding the money. We tried to imagine how these new procedures would work.

We were invited to worship and to hear stories of God's faithfulness in new opportunities. As we considered the business of bylaws and financial plans, we were reminded of God's love and were invited to reflect on the question, "What is the Spirit writing on our hearts?" We prayed for each other's emerging ministries.

The plan delegates approved includes increased expectations of the regional churches. So we wondered: Will they be up to the task? How will new vision develop at the congregational level for the work of Witness? How will we fund those dreams for engaging in mission internationally and at home? How will communication happen in the new structure?

We were confronted with the risks of a new venture. We faced the possibility of saying goodbye to long-cherished programs and people. And we received permission to lament.

Contained in the Covenant New

document is something with continuity to the old. In the mid-1990s, when North American "Old" Mennonites and General Conference Mennonites were exploring how to re-organize church structures, they considered what God's call might be for them at that time. Out of their deliberations emerged the 132-word statement called Vision: Healing and Hope. It expressed, in simple terms, our vision for participating in God's reign together. The first paragraph reads: "God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world."

That 22-year-old statement continues to sustain the work of MC Canada and our sister church in the U.S. As a result of the decisions made at Special Assembly 2017, the moderators of the five regional churches signed a Covenant document that spells out some ways we, as a church, intend to live out healing and hope. (*This vision document is found on pages 24-25 of the Discernment Guide at futuredirectionsmc.ca/documents.)*

It's time to reclaim this "old" vision as a direction to aim towards, even as we lament—or maybe even celebrate—old things that are disappearing, and, as we see new ways emerge, of how we will function as a church.

It's also time to challenge ourselves, as individuals, congregations and institutions, to embrace God's new work in our midst. We want to continue to grow into flourishing, nourishing communities that reflect God's healing and hope to the world.

The refrain from Phil Campbell-Enns's specially composed theme song expresses our prayer: "May your Spirit reveal / may our witness magnify / may your Spirit renew / so your church may be inspired / may your Spirit give life."

ABOUT THE COVER:

'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known' (1 Corinthians 13:12, KJV). Just before Special Assembly 2017 was about to begin on Oct. 13 in Winnipeg, this photo of Mennonite Church Canada's General Board meeting for the last time was taken—through a glass. Assembly coverage can be found inside on pages 15 to 22 and on the back cover.

PHOTO: DAN DYCK, MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA ISSN 1480-042X

Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Canada

CANADIAN MENNONITE

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

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Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

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Obituaries/Calendar" by postal mail or fax to our head office.

Reprint requests: reprints@canadianmennonite.org

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

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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One-Year Subscription Rates

Canada: \$46 + tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)

U.S.: \$68 **International (outside U.S.):** \$91.10

Subscriptions/address changes:

(e-mail) office@canadianmennonite.org

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'Wherever Jesus goes, we see God's kingdom descending from heaven to earth.' With these words, **JOHN D. REMPEL** begins his Eternity Sunday reflection based on a sermon he preached in 2016 in St. Catharines, Ont.



Covenant New:

Special Assembly 2017 15-22 and 32

Read about how the delegate vote changed the structure, staffing, finances and programs of Mennonite Church Canada and the newly named regional (formerly area) churches, and the worship that undergirded the process. Included are two Young Voices stories by **NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE** and **AARON EPP** that examine the experience of young people at the assembly and their visions for the nationwide (formerly national) church's future. To read more Special Assembly 2017

coverage online, visit canadianmennonite.org and search for 'Special Assembly.'



Students need to learn anti-racism is a 'lifelong pursuit' 23

African-American author Drew Hart tells students at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ont., that until whites, and especially white Christians, can learn to see from the side of blacks who have been oppressed for 400 years, no significant change will happen. He compared the treatment of blacks in the U.S. to that of Indigenous people in Canada.

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Canadian Church Press



Printed in Canada

ETERNITY SUNDAY REFLECTION

“Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory”

BY JOHN D. REMPEL

Wherever Jesus goes, we see God’s kingdom descending from heaven to earth. Wherever Jesus appears, God’s loving power takes hold. A hemorrhaging woman is healed of her infirmity; a rich man gives away half his wealth. In Jesus’ healing, teaching, dying and rising, God is rescuing the world; the mending of creation has begun. Yet paradise has not yet been restored. Having had a foretaste of its healing makes it all the harder to live with the aftertaste of its brokenness. When innocent children die, when hatred tries to strangle love, when the creation is squandered, we can’t help but ask whether God’s purposes are being thwarted.

Jesus himself taught us to appeal to God in prayer: *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is heaven.”* We long for this to happen and so we pray for it with passion. But with the last words—the shout of praise that ends the Lord’s Prayer—we can barely pray, or pray only wistfully: *“For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever.”*

This struggle to believe that God will really restore what was lost is particularly painful on a day like Eternity Sunday (Nov. 26 this year), when we remember those who have died this year and face the truth of our own mortality. People we love die, most of them—from our vantage point—before their time.

We hear the psalmist crying out: *“All people are grass . . . The grass withers, the flower fades.”* These words assault our ears and we want to cover them. But we cannot.

Psalm 90 is a lament for our mortality. We who came out of the womb and embraced life, we who were loved and learned to love others, we who were awed by the *“beauty of the earth and the glory of the skies,”* we shall all die. The writer of this psalm is in a black space; he has forgotten all that has been good in life and dwells only on its sorrows: *“The days of our life are 70 years and perhaps 80 if we are strong; even then their span is toil and trouble.”*

Human communities everywhere create rituals with



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

‘St. John on Patmos,’ by the Limbourg Brothers, circa 1411-16, tempera on vellum.

BATIK ARTWORK BY NINA BAILEY-DICK, FROM A 2015 ETERNITY SUNDAY DISPLAY AT ERB STREET MENNONITE CHURCH, WATERLOO, ONT.



We hear the psalmist crying out: 'All people are grass . . . The grass withers, the flower fades.' These words assault our ears and we want to cover them. But we cannot.

which to face death. We accompany the earthly remains of loved ones to the grave and comfort those who mourn their passing. Along with other European Protestant churches, some Mennonite groups settled on the last Sunday of the church year to remember and give thanks for those of their company who died in the previous year, and to confess their hope in life after death.

Jesus says: *"Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted."* What is that comfort? It is the promise of eternal life and the fulfillment of God's reign.

Once, when we lived in a Christian social order, the language of life beyond the grave was believable. I was caught up again in that lost age of faith last summer. I discovered a mystery-filled 12th-century church in Strasbourg, France. Standing in the middle I was surrounded by frescoes depicting Jesus walking on water, healing Mary Magdalene, being crucified and rising from the dead. One of the large frescoes—of Jesus as our shepherd—had lost its colour and was barely visible. Suddenly it hit me: that is what it's like today, when the church lives in exile, where Christ can barely be discerned as present in our lives. The people around us are sceptical about religion; its language makes no sense to them. The rich colours are gone; we barely see the outline of the gospel story. Many people

can't make it out at all. Even we, as believers, sometimes find the language of past generations about heaven and the kingdom inaccessible. What can we do? How do we open ourselves to receive anew the gift of faith in things unseen?

The Book of Revelation speaks about the themes of Eternity Sunday—suffering, loss and hope—passionately and vividly. Many students of Revelation believe that it was written to churches suffering from persecution at the end of the first century. Even though their world was very different from ours, we have one important thing in common: In the midst of their suffering and chaos, they, too, longed for a promise that death would not have the last word.

The author, John of Patmos, lifts up Christ as lord, not Caesar. Just before he goes on to describe God's judgment on Caesar and those who are loyal to him, he is given a flash of illumination, a breathtaking glimpse of heaven, where those who have died in faith live on in God's presence. Let us look over John's shoulder to see how this glimpse unfolds.

At the beginning of Chapter 7, John sees all the servants of God—numbering 144,000—from all the tribes of Israel who have been marked with the seal of God's protection. But then he looks up again and sees another *"great multitude that no one could count from every nation"* (7:9).

They are standing before Christ, who is called the "Lamb" because of his willing suffering for us. Around him is a numberless throng, palm branches in their hands, joining the angels and elders in singing God's praises.

John is spellbound. He snaps out of his trance when an elder asks him a rhetorical question: *"Who are these robed in white, and where have they come from?"* (7:13). John replies, *"You know!"* The elder then explains that this enormous crowd is made up of people who remained faithful to Christ no matter what befell them. God's promise of eternal life with him has come true for them! The faithful ones have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and restored their whiteness.

What is the elder talking about? My understanding is that he is referring to those who have been purified of the dirt and grime of earthly existence by Christ overcoming evil on the cross. That is what the author means by washing ourselves in the blood of the Lamb. Do you remember the hymn that speaks this language: *"What can wash away my sin? / Nothing but the blood of Jesus. / What can make me whole again? / Nothing but the blood of Jesus."*

What the author is trying to say is that the people around the throne are those Christ has made whole. The brokenness of human life is now mended. Those

who have died in Christ now live in his presence. It is for good reason that the throngs worship God day and night. God's promise has come true: no more hunger or thirst, no more unbearable heat, no more tears! The Lamb guides the pilgrims to the end of their journey: the water of life awaits them; a mothering God who wipes away their tears is ready to receive them.

Let us step back and catch our breath after this glimpse of heaven. John is claiming that believers who die enter into Christ's presence. They have left time and space behind and have entered into the mysterious orbit of which God is the centre. Exactly what that will be like is beyond our grasp. Our hope is in God's promise; it does not depend on our ability to correctly interpret the details of the vision.

But suddenly we who have been caught up into the brilliant light of eternity realize that we are back on earth. What does it mean for us here, the body of Christ on earth, that part of the body of Christ is already in heaven? The author of Hebrews talks about the "great cloud of witnesses" that has gone before us toward the kingdom. This is what we mean by the "communion of saints": that the living are bound to the dead, or perhaps better, those living on Earth are bound to those living in heaven.

"We feebly struggle, they in glory shine," says the hymn. All of us together make up the body of Christ. We do not pray to them or through them. Rather, they pray with us, though more knowingly, to God: their wills so fully participate in God's will that they always pray for what is best for those still struggling on earth.

The vision of John of Patmos gives us only a glimpse of eternal life. But its message is breathtaking: God is already fulfilling his promise that we cannot be lost, that we belong to him forever. What a treasure God's vow is, especially on a day like today, when we focus on our own mortality and that of loved ones who have died!

Earlier, I indicated how hard it is for us to pray the final lines of the Lord's Prayer. We can barely pray it or we pray it

wistfully. But in light of John of Patmos's flash of illumination, all of that changes. John lets us see that the kingdom has been coming, that those who die in the Lord are already caught up in it. When that truth takes hold of us, we can pray with confidence: "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever."

God's reign was anchored on earth through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It keeps breaking into earthly life but it is already a reality in heavenly life. Our calling in light of this truth is to live in the power of the kingdom now.

What changes on earth because of this flash of illumination we have had of heaven? If we believe the promise that we cannot be lost, that we belong to God forever, then we need not worry about the outcome of our lives. We can start taking risks we could never imagine before, like loving our most different and difficult neighbours—and even our enemies. We

Let us step back and catch our breath after this glimpse of heaven.

can stop hoarding love and act as if we believe there will be enough love to go around.

Let us take heart. We are not alone. When we pray, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever," "the great multitude that no one could count, from every nation and tribe and language," is praying with us.

Hallelujah! Amen. ✚

John D. Rempel is a Senior Fellow at the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre. This reflection is adapted from a sermon preached at Grace Mennonite Church in St. Catharines, Ont., on Eternity Sunday 2016.



/// For discussion

1. As you think of loved ones who have passed away in recent years, what images or rituals bring you comfort? Do you find the glimpse of heaven described in Revelation 7 appealing? John Rempel suggests that we sometimes "find the language of past generations about heaven and the kingdom inaccessible." Do you agree? What images can you think of to describe a place in God's presence that is beyond time and space?
2. Rempel suggests that we sometimes have difficulty confidently praying, "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever." Do you agree? What are some of the present realities that make us wonder whether God's purposes are working out here on earth?
3. Where do you see glimpses of hope that God is in the process of establishing the kingdom? Is the idea that those living in heaven are praying for us an encouraging one?
4. "Our hope is in God's promise; it does not depend on our ability to correctly interpret the details of the vision," says Rempel. Do you find that comforting?

—BY BARB DRAPER

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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. 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.

✉ Manitoba church celebrates pastoral couple's retirement

CARMAN MENNONITE CHURCH celebrated a retirement party on Aug. 27, in honour of Bob and Martha Pauls, who had served our church for 17 years.

The morning service was a more private event, during which we were encouraged to let our tears flow, and we did. The afternoon was more open, and many visitors attended from other churches, especially from Bob's former congregation, Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Back in 2000, our Carman congregation was experiencing a grieving experience after our young pastor, Dave Wilson, passed away due to terminal cancer. In

(Continued on page 8)

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Relationships, screen-free

CHRISTINA BARTEL BARKMAN

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

This fall, Makai started Kindergarten at the same school in Metro Manila as his older brother, Cody, who is now in his second year. Although we are very happy with the school—and Cody loves it—a complaint arose for me within Makai's first three days, after his teacher played a television show during the 30-minute recess as students ate their snacks.

Focussing on a screen changes the dynamics of mealtime, which I think should be a lively community event in which kids are free to chat, share their food and simply interact face to face, so I was not okay with this. My kids don't get to watch TV at all during school days, and video games haven't made their way into our home at all yet.

We see it every time we go out for dinner: Little kids watching shows on smartphones or iPads while their *yayas* (nannies) feed them. Older kids, and even parents, are often on phones too. When we eat out, my kids might climb around in their seats, talk way too loudly

or cry over drinks spilled on their colouring sheets, but the chaos is part of family life. We work with these situations rather than attempt to eliminate them by focusing on a screen while we eat.

We have a policy in our home that applies during Peace Church gatherings too: phones are not allowed at the dinner table. Even if you are new to our table, I enforce it!

Smartphones have become an addictive habit, one that takes us away from personal interactions. Studies show that they are making us less happy and more depressed. Because of this, curbing the use of screen time for some good dinner conversation—and maybe a little chaos—was a pretty easy decision for us.

Limiting screen time and avoiding its use as a behaviour-management tool may be countercultural, but when I shared my concerns with Makai's teacher, she understood. She decided to stop using the screen during recess.

Yesterday, after a screen-free recess break and through a fit of giggles, Makai told me how funny it was when his new



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA BARTEL BARKMAN

Makai Barkman smiles for the camera on his first day of Kindergarten in Metro Manila, the Philippines.

friend's juice box squirted all over her arm and how they laughed together. I'm grateful that this Kindergarten bonding moment wasn't lost to a screen!

Christina Bartel Barkman and her husband Darnell are MC Canada Witness Workers providing pastoral leadership to Peace Church Philippines, a new Anabaptist church in Metro Manila. The Barkmans have also been invited by the Integrated Mennonite Churches of the Philippines to serve as mentors and to provide resources for the youth programs of Mennonite churches in Luzon.

(Continued from page 7)

my last visit with him in the hospital, he encouraged us to promptly fill the vacancy left by his passing.

In our first interview with Bob, the positive signals were overwhelming and convincing. When they were young, both Bob and Martha were baptized and nurtured in Carman Mennonite Church, so it was really a homecoming for them.

After 17 years, the search committee's affirmative recommendation has been fully vindicated. Bob has truly demonstrated the attributes and qualities of spiritual leadership. A remarkable feature of his ministry was performing hospital baptisms to dying patients, at their request.

Bob has also worked well with our first youth pastor, Jarrod Chamberlain, and our current pastor, Karen

KINGDOM YEARNINGS

A country boy in the 'new city of God'

RYAN JANTZI

I wasn't too sure about this idea of moving into a city. It didn't seem much like the utopia I dreamed of.

I'm a country kid. I grew up on a farm, where we had room to roam. Baseball games and kick-the-can could be played in our yard. Gorgeous sunsets could be seen regularly from our dining room table. While I did enjoy my three-year foray into the city, I was quite pleased to return to rural life. I prefer the peace and quiet of the countryside.

In light of this preference, at one time I found the closing image of our Scriptures to be unsettling. Revelation 21 speaks of a city, the New Jerusalem. This image is used to describe the final reality for all whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. This complete, fully restored iteration of the kingdom of God will be akin to a city.

Why a city and not a return to the garden of our origins? I was troubled by this until I stumbled upon the following speculative interpretation.

Over our millennia of existence, humanity has been busy designing and developing, inventing and crafting. This is a reflection of our Creator God, in whose image we have been made. It is

truly remarkable how culture has developed. We've gone from riding donkeys to flying jet aircraft. We've progressed from simple air flutes to magnificent saxophones. We've built astounding towers, prepared exquisite food and crafted mesmerizing art. I wish I had the opportunity to see the look on my great-great-grandmother's face if I had the chance to tell her about Skype! These expressions of culture have created a beautiful tapestry throughout human history.

And so God does not wipe the cultural expressions of the world away to start fresh in the new heavens and new earth. Instead, it appears that he redeems and incorporates them into this final, complete experience of the kingdom. The

over the millennia. It will be perfect. The dancing and music will be pure and beautiful. As swords will be beaten in to ploughshares, so the tools of our hands will never harm another. Perhaps our computers and phones will be manufactured with sustainable materials, fairly sourced from our sisters and brothers.

I like this idea. I find it to be invigorating and encouraging. And so I celebrate that God has journeyed with his people from a garden to a city. I consider it a great honour that he would choose to uphold and utilize the fullness of human creativity, intelligence and skill. What a display of God's glory this will be! Even a



Rather than returning to a garden, the culmination of human flourishing will be joined together in a thriving metropolis.

image of a city is used to communicate this reality. Rather than returning to a garden, the culmination of human flourishing will be joined together in a thriving metropolis.

This city, the New Jerusalem, will put on display how the Spirit of God has poured himself out through his people

country bumpkin like myself can appreciate this.

Ryan Jantzi pastors Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite Church, Ont., where he's fascinated with exploring the interplay between traditional church and new expressions of mission.

Schellenberg.

As a church, we want to sincerely thank the conference, and particularly Sig Polle for his counsel and skills, in helping us navigate through this process of selection.

ERDMAN (ED) KLASSEN, CARMAN, MAN.

✉ Thanks for the challenging editorial

RE: "MAKING SPACE for the Spirit," Sept. 25, page 2.

Your excellent editorial encouraged us to "make space for the Spirit," and, in so doing, to trust that the Holy Spirit can nudge and guide all of us, regardless of our understanding on committed same-sex

(Continued on page 10)

GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

Injera: a symbol of community

BY ARDITH FREY

There is no other food from our years in Africa that symbolizes community quite like *injera*, a type of flatbread.

The most authentic way to serve it is on a large shared platter with family or guests gathered around the table or on the floor. Various sauces are served on layers of *injera* and each person is given a few pieces of *injera* from which to tear bite-sized pieces for enfolding around a small amount of stew, which is then eaten by hand. The last part of the meal is the most tasty, when the sauce-saturated *injera* from the shared serving platter is scooped up by hand and enjoyed. There are so many times we have enjoyed hospitality around a shared feast of *injera*, both in Africa and here in Canada.

I was first introduced to *injera* when we moved with our two-year-old son in 1981 to Somalia, where my husband and I had accepted a shared position as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) country representatives. Fouzia, who worked in our home, sometimes served *injera* when we had MCCers staying in the adjoining guesthouse. She also taught me how to make it.

The recipe from *Extending the Table*, although described as Ethiopian, is close to the taste of Somali *injera*. It is often



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARDITH FREY

Ardith Frey, right, offers a snack to Fouzia's three-year-old son, circa 1982.

eaten with *maraq*, a stew most frequently made from camel meat, which is soft and

The recipe from Extending the Table, although described as Ethiopian, is close to the taste of Somali injera.

delicious when prepared in a pressure cooker with tomatoes, potatoes and other vegetables. Fouzia would entice our two-year-old to eat it by making a special version for him by adding ears and eyes to his pancake-like *injera*. Later, when visiting Ethiopia, we were introduced to a darker *injera* made with teff flour, served with accompanying stews and sauces that are spicier in flavour than in Somalia.

After returning to Canada, we

sought out *injera* dishes in Eritrean and Ethiopian restaurants and cafés in Winnipeg, and Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont., where we lived. I have also continued to make *injera* in my own kitchen, but more recently I started buying it after finding a good source for it and learning that many Ethiopian and Eritrean women also buy theirs.

A year ago, I joined others from my church, Erb Street Mennonite in Waterloo, as part of a sponsoring committee to assist an Eritrean woman and her grandson relocate to Kitchener-Waterloo from another community. What a joy it was to share Eritrean food as we got to know our new friends!

A favourite memory involves sharing food right after several people from our church helped our new friends move into their new apartment. There we were, about a dozen people, many who hadn't met before, and some not sharing the same language, enjoying a feast of *injera* and sauces. The food was provided by Eritrean women who wanted to say thank

you to the movers. It was just one more example of experiencing community over *injera*!

Visit canadianmennonite.org/injera-maraq for recipes from Extending the Table.



Ardith and Marv (deceased 2008) Frey served with MCC in Africa for many years in the 1970s and '80s.

(Continued from page 9)

relationships. You quoted John Paul Lederach, who suggested that we build a life-long friendship with someone with whom we disagree on this question. Thank you for your challenge to us to practise a “Christ-mandated love towards those with whom we disagree.”

FRAN SCHILLER, OTTAWA

The writer attends Ottawa Mennonite Church.

✉ **Chosen Nation leaves out the role of Mennonite women**

RE: “MENNO-NAZI CONNECTION unconvincing” Aug. 28, page 31.

As a historian and Mennonite community leader, I agree with Barbara Draper that Benjamin Goossen’s arguments in his book *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era* are unconvincing. Clearly, a more-accurate, less-condemning and much-more-complete account of Mennonite life in Russia during this period needs to be researched and written.

While his understanding of the evolution of Mennonite life in Prussia leading up to and including the Nazi assumption of power in Germany is written with detail and comprehension, his understanding and interpretative narrative of Mennonite life in Russia, particularly from the 1920s to 1940s, is based on erroneous assumptions and a minimal grasp of the Russian Mennonite experience during those tumultuous years. He forgets to explain that in the 1930s most Mennonite men had been exiled, imprisoned or executed, leaving families to be led by mothers and grandmothers, whose only goal and focus was to survive. This was the prevailing experience for the majority of Mennonite families, including my own.

These very mothers continued to plant and nurture seeds of faith in their children. Many of these children, and their offspring, have been faith leaders in our churches, schools and conferences because of their core faith values, which have transcended all ethnic, linguistic, cultural and socio-economic boundaries.

Mennonites were, as a whole, not collaborators, anti-Semites or Aryan, as Goossen argues. They lived next to Ukrainians, Germans and Jews. Although Mennonites under German occupation witnessed how their Jewish neighbours packed up and fled, they did not know about the outcome of this fleeing until much later.

LINDA TIESSEN, LEAMINGTON, ONT.

The writer is the administrator of Leamington Mennonite Home.

✉ **Readers react to ‘a condemnation followed by a scolding’**

RE: “SILENCE HIM. We are speaking” letter, Sept. 25, page 11.

How disappointing it was to see Helen Redekopp’s response to the very positive, forward-moving question by John Neufeld (“Constants in the context of change,” July 24, page 14). Neufeld asked what we might suggest before the church begins restructuring. The question provided an opportunity for an opening of hearts and minds, and an unfolding of visions.

Sadly, however, the only response offered was a condemnation followed by a scolding. The focus of her concern: homosexual relationships and same-sex marriage. She calls for church decisions on this matter to be made “on a biblical basis,” citing Leviticus 18:22 as the support for her position. Further, she contends that decisions based on interpretive readings of the Bible constitute a “sin of insubordination.”

If biblical directives are to be obeyed literally, she would necessarily also have to agree, as further directed in Leviticus 20:13, that couples in same-sex marriages “*must be put to death.*” Surely she would not agree to this directive, but, using this line of reasoning, that would amount to “overruling what God has to say on this issue,” which, in her words, is a “sin of insubordination.”

In the light of even these few examples from Leviticus, it becomes evident that making judgments based on literal readings of selected Bible verses is a fraught endeavour, especially when these judgments are used to take away the basic human rights of people.

RENATE AND BILL SCHULZ, WINNIPEG

✉ **More responses to Maple View’s paid supplement on sexuality**

RE: “HONOUR GOD with Your Bodies” insert, Sept. 25.

Over the past several years, our church has experienced an influx of people. The reasons are varied and diverse, but one of them is that they know we try to create a safe space for the LGBTQ community, their families, friends and allies.

The paid insert that “grieved the BFC recommendations” was unasked for, and runs contrary to the spirit of the Being a Faithful Church recommendations of making space to test alternative viewpoints. Furthermore, the paid supplement hinders the work of local congregations that are trying to create the safe spaces needed for the LGBTQ community.

We trust *Canadian Mennonite* with the home address of our church members. Through Mennonite Church Canada, we help pay for your magazine to be

sent to our houses. After your decision to distribute this paid supplement, I am deeply disappointed.

KYLE PENNER, STEINBACH, MAN.

I FOUND THE paid supplement submitted by Maple View Mennonite Church very refreshing. I thought it could not be stated clearer what it means to be “a faithful church.” Truly, God has given this church leaders who have a clear vision of what the Bible teaches. In the same issue, I found the letter by Helen Redekopp (“Silence him. We are speaking,” page 11) to be very well written.

In our time, we love to read the Psalms in church. Why not also the Revelation of John? In our denomination, we would do well to read the letter to the church at Pergamum in Revelation 2:13-17.

ISAAK EITZEN, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

THE FOUR-PAGE “REFERENCE statement” from Maple View Mennonite Church includes this self-evident observation: “Speech, including humour, which demeans LGBTQ people, has no place in the Christian community.”

It’s ironic and hypocritical, therefore, that elsewhere the statement asserts that the cause of same-sex attraction is irrelevant because “it does not reflect God’s intention and does not render homosexual behaviour acceptable to God.” The conclusion reached is that “we therefore will only authorize and recognize heterosexual marriage.” Those assertions, along with others found in the statement, obviously demean LGBTQ people: their behaviour is unacceptable and their conjugal unions are not worthy of recognition.

The editorial that introduces this issue encourages readers to be open to opposing viewpoints, to “move beyond judgment to a posture of listening and caring.” Perhaps this is good advice, but does Maple View’s statement “move beyond judgment” in its assault on the dignity of LGBTQ relationships? It sound pretty judgmental to me in its claim that same-sex relationships are unacceptable.

It was an affront to have such demeaning material delivered to my home. Please cancel our subscription.
MARK MORTON, KITCHENER, ONT.

THANK YOU TO Maple View Mennonite Church for the insert in the Sept. 25 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*.

It is important to recognize that there are people and congregations that have examined this issue biblically and feel convicted, as outlined in the insert. Is it not okay for a Christian magazine to include this type of information outlining how a congregation is convicted and has interpreted the Bible on this issue?

Many issues of *Canadian Mennonite* have upset

me as well in their liberal thinking on some issues, with sometimes little difference from my local secular newspaper.

In my position as administrative assistant at a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation, I struggle with signing new congregants up for *Canadian Mennonite* due to the almost-secular content.

Christianity is not meant to conform to the beliefs of the world around it. Would the Anabaptists who were martyred for their faith recognize the church they died for?

JANET WEBER (FACEBOOK COMMENT)

IN THE PAST, I have valued the inserts placed in *Canadian Mennonite* by our schools, camps and financial institutions, to name a few. All of them, I believe, have provided us with good information and options to consider.

This Maple View Mennonite Church insert had a very different feel. I do not feel it was intended to invite further dialogue with diverse opinions. I would suggest that *Canadian Mennonite* not allow itself to be bought by paid inserts when the topic at hand is one that is divisive and hurtful to individuals and the body as a whole.

AUDREY MIERAU BECHTEL, SASKATOON

The writer is a member of Wildwood Mennonite Church.

I COMMEND MAPLE View Mennonite Church on the publication of “Honour God with Your Body” in *Canadian Mennonite*. The article is clear and biblical, and should be very helpful to all readers, especially those who went to the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Winnipeg last month.

CORNIE MARTENS, RABBIT LAKE, SASK.

I WAS SADDENED to see that *Canadian Mennonite* chose to include the paid supplement from Maple View Mennonite Church in the Sept. 25 issue.

I am a strong supporter of the Being a Faithful Church decision and I fully acknowledge that Maple View has every right in its local context to reaffirm Article 19 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, just as other churches have been given room to “test alternate understandings.” What I do not support is the publishing and distribution of a hurtful supplement by *Canadian Mennonite*.

Although it may have been written out of a desire for helpful discourse, it was forced upon LGBTQ Mennonites in their homes. That is an abuse of *Canadian Mennonite*’s power. It is this magazine’s job to protect its readership from abuse. Yes, we can talk about hard things together in these pages, but that

is done through the curation of an editorial team to bring context and diversity to the discussion, to be the gentle hand that helps guide the conversation and widens our perspective.

Being a distributor for other people's content who are willing to pay is just not acceptable. I do not believe that this error was done intentionally, but it was a substantial lapse in judgment by the decision-makers at *Canadian Mennonite*.

What might be thought to be just a healthy debate from a person speaking abstractly can be experienced as a traumatic attack to a person who has a different lived experience. The Mennonite tribe is a diverse one that has way more than just two sides, and we need to be equally expansive and sensitive in our discourse. We can no longer write about LGBTQ people as if they are not members within our national church. It is just not true.

RANDELL NEUDORF, HAMILTON, ONT.

The writer is pastor of The Commons in Hamilton.

I APPLAUD CANADIAN Mennonite for publishing the insert on behalf of Maple View Mennonite Church. Many churches in the denomination, and those that have left, still agree with the views expressed by this congregation. Well done.

GARRY FEHR, ROSETOWN, MAN.

IN READING MAPLE View's positional paper, it is apparent the congregation is trying to find a careful but faithful balance between the gracious love of God, on the one side, and the truth of God, on the other.

But I have come to realize that God's love and God's truth are fully realized together when we focus on what brings life to people and ourselves.

Throughout church history, God's truth has often been understood as the knowledge of good and evil. While such knowledge may be tempting to attain, it does not bring life to us. Instead, such knowledge of good and evil soon becomes beliefs and laws that are used against us and others. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8 that the law cannot save us, and he goes on to say that only the spirit of life found in Christ can set us free from the law of sin and death, a fallen law based on eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. But the spirit of life found in Christ is the same fruit that is found on the Tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

When you focus on what brings life to people, you begin to see that truth and love come together as one.

This is why I support Mennonite Church Canada's resolution that allows a space of grace for Mennonite churches that are testing other ways of being faithful in relating to people of different sexual orientations. These

churches are sensing that there must be other ways to minister to all people who are seeking faithfully to follow the way of Jesus, without having to exclude anyone.

GORD ALTON, BADEN, ONT.

The writer is pastor of Mannheim Mennonite Church in Petersburg, Ont.

✉ 'Is there still room for voices like ours?' Maple View pastor asks

IT HAS BEEN painful to learn that some have received Maple View Mennonite Church's "reference statement on sexuality, marriage, gender identity and same-sex attraction" in the Sept. 25 issue of *Canadian Mennonite* as a cruel and violent assault. I know that many in the LGBTQ community already carry a great weight of personal suffering. We do not want to be a church that "ties up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders" without being "willing to lift a finger to move them" (Matthew 23:4).

The LGBTQ Christian community includes people of diverse theologies and convictions about what it means to be faithful to Jesus in the realm of sexuality. Some share our church's understanding of biblical teaching on sexuality and do not experience it as a rejection of who they are: people created in the image of God whose identity is anchored in Christ.

In New Testament scholar Wesley Hill's *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*, for example, the author places his own experience of same-sex attraction within a theological framework quite compatible with ours. As our church was testing and revising our "Honour God with Your Bodies" document, one person among us who experiences same-sex attraction expressed appreciation for its message and made suggestions for strengthening it. He was grateful it makes "clear that homosexual relations of any kind are sinful" while offering "all people the hope of the gospel," whatever their struggle.

As a congregation, we know we have much to learn about how to walk well with people who experience same-sex attraction or wrestle with questions of gender identity. Even so, we believe it is possible to love others even when we do not agree with their sexual ethics.

I believe that Maple View's understanding of sexuality reflects what is still (nominally) the official position of Mennonite Church Canada. Is there still room in the denomination for voices like ours?

BRENT KIPFER, WELLESLEY, ONT.

The writer is pastor of Maple View Mennonite Church in Wellesley.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bang—Aria Georgia Evelyn (b. June 3, 2017), to Jimmy Bang and Johanna Petkau, Carman Mennonite, Man.

Bell—Selah Joy Margaret (b. Sept. 30, 2017), to Jon Bell and Kim Harder Bell, Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Hamilton—Mae Florence (b. Sept. 30, 2017), to Kristen (Fouk) (Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.) and Mike Hamilton.

Metsa—Taylor Rena (b. Aug. 31, 2017), to Erik and Katrina Metsa, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Peters—Nikolas Sawatsky (b. Sept. 13, 2017), to Lindsay Sawatsky and Cory Peters, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Vogt—Ava Clair (b. Aug. 15, 2017), to Michael and Andrea Vogt, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Willms—Hunter Thomas (b. July 27, 2017), to Jesse and Stephanie Willms, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Zacharias—Wren Eva Nancy (b. Aug. 27, 2017), to Bryce Zacharias and Erin Maxwell, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Marriages

Baergen/Becker—Josh Baergen (Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.) and Marnie Becker, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Sept. 3, 2017.

Fast/Harwood—Joe Fast and Kailey Harwood (Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.), in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Sept. 16.

Froese/Fyfe—Alex Froese and Melissa Fyfe (both of Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.),

Sept. 9, 2017.

Moyer/Neufeldt—Marie Moyer and Dave Neufeldt, Lethbridge Mennonite, Alta., Aug. 26, 2017.

Deaths

Baerg—Jacob, 90 (b. Jan. 17, 1927; d. Aug. 12, 2017), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Balzer—Elmer, 84 (b. Aug. 6, 1933; d. Sept. 25, 2017), Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.

Brubacher—Ross Denton, 57 (b. Jan. 23, 1960; d. Oct. 8, 2017), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Bullinger—Wilhelm, 82 (b. March 6, 1935; d. Aug. 20, 2017), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Dyck—Heinz, 65 (b. Aug. 13, 1952; d. Sept. 19, 2017), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Howland—Judith Marie (nee Peters), 62 (b. March 7, 1955; d. July 22, 2017), Candle Lake Community Church, Sask.

Martin—Joyce (nee Martin), 56 (b. Nov. 23, 1960; d. Sept. 20, 2017), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Ropp—Emerson, 86 (b. March 19, 1931; d. Aug. 9, 2017), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont. (Correction of Sept. 25 announcement.)

Ruby—Mary Ann, 104 (b. Feb. 10, 1913; d. Oct. 8, 2017), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Shantz—Mervin B. (Merv), 91 (b. Oct. 4, 1925; d. Sept. 26, 2017), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Wiebe—Henry, 80 (b. Sept. 18, 1937; d. Sept. 7, 2017), Kelowna First Mennonite Church, B.C.

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

Please send Milestones announcements by email to milestones@canadianmennonite.org.

A moment from yesterday



Tsar Nicholas II, seated on a chair at centre of this photograph, is surrounded by patients, Red Cross workers and other staff at a hospital for wounded men in Ekaterinoslav, South Russia. Abraham Dick, a Mennonite non-combatant serving in the medical corps, was present that day. He carried this photograph with him when he emigrated to Ontario in 1924. This was probably one of the last public occasions for the Tsar, who was deposed in March 1917. Knowing what was soon to happen in Russia, how does this picture make you feel?

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing

Photo: Sarah Dyck / Mennonite Archives of Ontario

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Grandma, please tell me a story

BY WALTRUDE GORTZEN



Do you remember any of the stories your grandma told you when you were little? I'm not referring to Bible stories, fairytales or super-hero stories, but stories about her life or the lives of other family members? Stories of memories about days gone by.

I had the privilege of having both my grandmas in my life until my mid-30s, and had lots of time to ask many questions. But the stories I remember most vividly are the ones my maternal grandma told me in 1967, when I was a young girl, and she lived in my parental home

in Brazil for six months while working on her documentation to emigrate from Paraguay to Canada.

During this time we shared a bedroom. Each evening before falling asleep she would reminisce about the "good old days," sharing childhood memories with me, such as her father's very polished boots or the sound of music coming from the grand piano in their formal room.

Today, I wish I'd written them all down and had paid much closer attention. But back then, they were just lovely bedtime stories. However, the seeds of history were planted by my grandma, and for that I am grateful.

Thinking back now, I don't recall that she ever told me stories about the horrific experiences she and her family endured while living in communist

Russia. Or the horrors of the Second World War, fleeing for their lives, becoming refugees and starting from scratch in Paraguay. I'm thinking she didn't want to scare me. Bless her heart!

Years later, as an older teenager, I had the opportunity to ask my paternal grandma some questions and discovered that both grandmas shared many similar experiences. But my paternal grandma's memories carried much more pain, and she preferred not to talk about them.

Currently, still having my sweet mom nearby, I continuously encourage her to write down her memories. She just smiles and says, "Why? Who would want to read them?" More encouragement is obviously needed.

But the questions from the next generations will persist, and answers will be expected. Questions like, "What was it like when you grew up, Oma?" Or, "What did you play with when you were a little boy, Opa?"

So be pro-active! Go! Dig out those old picture albums that we all have stashed away somewhere. They're fabulous conversation starters and always lead to much laughter and storytelling. Those old albums are treasure troves, inspiring the questions that will make the stories flow.

Why have I become so passionate about telling our stories? The answer is simple. I'm a volunteer at the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C., where I help guests find or reconnect with their heritage.

Knowing and preserving our stories and recognizing God's guidance in them, gives us a sense of rootedness and belonging. And, most importantly, it encourages us to be grateful for the sacrifices our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents endured as they, by faith, set off on perilous journeys so that we could live in the abundance and freedoms of this country we call home.

Today, I, too, am a grandma. Sometimes I look at my grandchildren and wonder, do I have stories that I should be telling them? I've never experienced war, hunger or being a refugee. What do I have to tell? Then I see all my many picture albums and the possible stories within them, including some from my Brazilian childhood, and I think that, yes, I should start practising what I preach! ☸



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WALTRUDE GORTZEN
A young Waltrude (Nickel) Gortzen, right, is pictured with Maria (Enns) Janzen, her maternal oma, while visiting her grandparents in Fernheim, Chaco, Paraguay in July 1966.



Waltrude Gortzen, pictured with some of her precious family photo albums, represents the B.C. women's ministry on the Mennonite Women Canada board.

FOCUS ON SPECIAL ASSEMBLY 2017

Overwhelming vote in favour of new MC Canada structure

By DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

Delegates voted 94 percent in favour of taking Mennonite Church Canada's existing structures off of life support equipment designed for a society and church culture from a prior century.

In setting up the delegate conversation on Oct. 13, Peter Rempel, moderator of MC Manitoba, noted that the new structure "provides a platform, not a straightjacket, for accepting proposals presented at this assembly in principle," referring to the several recommendations being presented for affirmation rather than a vote. These included the Covenant and Operating Agreement between the five regional churches (formerly area churches), a proposal on International Witness, and a financial plan. The new bylaw, said Rempel, was guided by decisions made at the assembly in Saskatoon in 2016.

The favourable vote means that congregations will no longer be members of a nationwide (formerly national) body, but will speak to nationwide agendas and programming through their regional (formerly area) church bodies at regular regional gatherings. The new structures make room for periodic nationwide study conferences with direct congregational involvement. A new Joint Council replaces the General Board, and will be composed of regional church moderators and other representatives appointed by regional churches. Congregations will now channel funding for nationwide priorities through their regional churches.

Delegate concerns focussed on such things as the lack of "churchy" language in the new bylaw, the danger of creating congregational silos, power imbalances among regional churches and small and large congregations, how to maintain a Mennonite identity in the new structure, and the underlying vision for the change.

They also worried that regional churches

do not have the fundraising muscle to meet their new financial commitments. The Covenant and Operating Agreement among the five regional churches describe a first fruits model that requires them to meet funding commitments to the nationwide church for a given year even if their own funding needs are not met.

The \$1.92-million financial plan proposed for MC Canada is built on past patterns of congregational funding only and does not include individual or corporate giving, which in the past has approached the high side of six figures.

Proposed amendments to the bylaw, which legalizes the new structure, were several. Three were carried. The first sought to add assurance that regional churches take seriously the health of their congregations and that regional churches will carry forward nationwide concerns to the new Joint Council. The second advised revisions to allow for the use of technology

to attend any future special assemblies. The third called for the inclusion of a reference to the Shared Convictions of Mennonite World Conference.

Other counsel from delegates was referred to the new Joint Council for follow-up, such as scheduled reviews of structures to allow for course changes, instead of waiting for crises to develop; determining how leadership development will receive adequate attention; and the continuance of activities shared with MC U.S.A., such as the ministerial information database.

With the new emphasis on congregations as foundational to the nationwide church, about a hundred people found themselves at a break-out group discussion—the largest breakout group—on congregational vitality. Numerous voices expressed excitement and offered creative ways to tap into resources across congregations; to receive support from regional churches; and to connect them to resources compatible with Anabaptist values, even if those resources are from beyond the Mennonite realm.

MC Canada will continue to staff Indigenous Relations, International Witness, Finance, Pension and Benefits. Partnership funding agreements are also in place to support in part the activities of CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Centre, and the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, both based in Winnipeg. ❧



CANADIAN MENNONITE PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Delegates vote 94 percent in favour of a new structure for MC Canada.

Staff transitions in the wake of Special Assembly 2017

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

Decisions made at Special Assembly 2017 have resulted in staff reductions at Mennonite Church Canada and program realignment to regional churches serving congregations.

Staff positions that will continue in the new structure are: executive minister; director of Indigenous relations; bookkeeper/accounts payable administrator; coordinator of payroll, pensions and benefits accounting; director of resources and administrative assistant for CommonWord; executive assistant; web and multimedia producer; and director of International Witness.

Three communications staff have been released, as have four from Witness, one from Church Engagement and one from Operations. The following roles are discontinued: director of church engagement-communications; lead graphic designer; director of news services; executive minister of Witness; Witness director of Africa, Latin America; administrative assistant of international ministries and national ministries; short-term ministry coordinator of Witness; chief administrative officer/director of church engagement-administration; receptionist/administrative

assistant; and director of congregational partnerships. A refocussing on the regional church capacity to serve churches means that these staff roles at the nationwide church are no longer part of the structure.

Jason Martin has accepted the newly created role of director of International Witness. He has previous experience with relational funding from working as an international Witness worker with the Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions. MC Canada will be transitioning the International Witness program towards some form of relational funding in the coming year. Martin previously served MC Canada as director of congregational partnerships.

"We received a strong mandate at assembly and have been given direction," said Willard Metzger, MC Canada's executive minister (formerly executive director). "I am grateful that MC Canada has been an environment of family and community, and I trust the friendships will remain." ❧



Willard Metzger

❧ Briefly noted

Some new terms to get used to

- **NATIONWIDE CHURCH:** formerly national church, aka Mennonite Church Canada.
- **EXECUTIVE MINISTER:** formerly executive director. Willard Metzger continues in the same role under the new name and answers to the Joint Council.
- **JOINT COUNCIL:** the governing group of MC Canada, formerly General Board. It is made up of the moderators of the regional churches, appointees from the regional churches and officers elected by the delegates.
- **REGIONAL CHURCHES:** new name for area churches, which are organized geographically and form MC Canada. Each regional church will send delegates to the annual nationwide church delegate gatherings.
- **COVENANT:** the agreement of partnership signed by representatives of the regional churches.
- **OPERATING AGREEMENT:** the outline of the roles and responsibilities of the regional churches.
- **FOR MORE,** see pages 11 to 31 in the "Covenant New: Discernment Guide" online at bit.ly/new-discernment-guide.
—BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER

Delegates affirm Covenant and Operating Agreement

BY DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

A Covenant and Operating Agreement describing the intent of both the spirit and function of the new relationships among the five regional churches (formerly area churches) comprising Mennonite Church Canada were affirmed in principle after robust discussion by delegates on Oct. 14 at Special Assembly 2017.

Lee Dyck, moderator of Mennonite Church B.C., introduced the documents, noting that they reaffirm the 20-year-old Vision, Healing and Hope statement. "We're promising to be together for the long haul," she said.

Delegates discussed what would be lost from current activities and programs, and

expressed excitement about new possibilities and opportunities with better-equipped regional churches that are closer to congregations.

Willard Metzger, executive minister (formerly executive director), acknowledged that there would be reductions in work, as well as shifting of some responsibility to regional churches. "There will be substantially less activity than in the past in International Witness, communications, leadership development and with the executive team," he said, noting that "the financial plan gives regional churches the financial capacity to do some of these things."

Palmer Becker of Waterloo North

Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., said, “We need to go home and do some creative thinking in our regional churches. Will we need to add staff to make up for lost staff at national level? This opens up a new range of possibilities at the regional level.”

Gerry Grunau, treasurer of MC B.C., expressed anxiety over the agreement that commits each regional church to meet projected funding commitments to nationwide church (formerly national church) priorities even if its own income falls short. “This pushes us into fundraising when we have no staff for that,” he said.

Metzger responded that the financial plan will be renegotiated with each regional church each year based on the prior year’s income. Additionally, the amount forwarded to MC Canada would be expressed as a dollar amount that could vary from year to year, not a set percentage over a period of years.

Ken Warkentin, moderator of MC Saskatchewan, said he and Ryan Siemens, regional church minister, have already reached out to almost every congregation, asking that they channel MC Canada funding through their regional church, with good success.

Steph Chandler Burns of Bloomingdale (Ont.) Mennonite Church affirmed the covenant but worried that the documents assume that power is equal across the

board, when we know it is not equal in gender composition, nor across regional church size. She said she would like to see the documents address the differing power dynamics.

Ben Cassels, a minister of Waterloo-Kitchener Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., asked the new Joint Council to “bake” into the documents regular reviews of structures to enable “recipe adjustments”

before “crisis casseroles” are served up to constituents.

Concern was also noted about the role of Mennonite schools and their importance in shaping a Mennonite identity. This conversation is ongoing, and will need to be continued with schools and the new Joint Council (formerly the General Board). ☸



MC CANADA PHOTO BY COREENA STEWART

Regional church moderators signed the Covenant and Operating Agreement that form the newly structured Mennonite Church Canada on Oct. 15, in Winnipeg. Pictured from left to right, seated: Ken Warkentin of MC Saskatchewan; Paul Wideman of MC Eastern Canada; Lee Dyck of MC B.C.; Paul Neufeldt of MC Alberta; and Peter Rempel of MC Manitoba; and standing: MC Canada moderator Calvin Quan.

All International Witness workers being recalled next June

New relational funding model in the works

BY DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada

WINNIPEG

To say that the ins and outs of International Witness ministry are complex would be an understatement.

It could take an entire study conference to explore a theology of mission as it relates to congregations, regional churches and the nationwide church as a united body.

Then there are the functional logistics

of administering workers in multiple foreign countries. They may or may not have children in international schools. Housing and language training arrangements must be considered, particularly if the workers are North American; plus there are unique visa requirements of each country; compliance with Canada Revenue Agency rules; managing agreements with partners in

North America and abroad; insurance and health benefits plans; the safety of workers in unstable countries; transferring funds; receiving donations; and more.

Little wonder then that the working group assigned to this task had trouble reaching a consensus on how to sustain it in the new structure passed at Special Assembly 2017 last month. As a result, and in consultation with the International Witness Working Group, the General Board (now the Joint Council) submitted an International Witness Structure proposal containing key principles.

The proposal, affirmed by delegates, shifts to a blended model of funding. This model will include some form of relational funding, through which congregations and individuals pledge to financially

(Continued on page 18)



CANADIAN MENNONITE PHOTO BY AARON EPP

Gordon Janzen, centre, an outgoing director with MC Canada's former Witness program, speaks during a focus group discussion.

(Continued from page 17)

support a ministry or worker, with workers participating directly in fundraising. Congregations are encouraged to continue their financial support of Witness workers they are currently partnered with through designated funding over and above amounts expected from regional churches—especially until June 2018, when all Witness workers will be recalled. All workers will be fully funded until then. Work will begin immediately to help transition Witness work/ministries toward the relational funding model.

In the interim, regional churches will be testing an evaluation grid and congregational support for continuance of International Witness into the future.

All congregations will be invited to begin a partnership with an international partner ministry, even before next June. A cluster of congregations from a regional church or from across Canada could band together to fund an overseas worker to reduce the financial pressure on the 60 or so congregations—out of more than 200—already partnering with overseas ministry. ❧

Is it a financial plan or a budget?

By DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

The terms “financial plan” and “budget” were used somewhat interchangeably in reference to a spreadsheet in the Discernment Guide Supplement outlining how Mennonite Church Canada will be funded following the restructuring taking place after Special Assembly 2017 in Winnipeg last month. Now, only regional churches (formerly area churches)—not congregations—will be members of the nationwide church (formerly national church).

Ken Warkentin, moderator of MC

Saskatchewan, drew the short straw on who would present the financial plan to delegates. Perhaps that was intentional. Warkentin, together with Ryan Siemens, the Saskatchewan regional church minister, have visited most, if not all, of their congregations to describe the new model, so they were very practised at providing explanations and answering questions.

The primary shift is that MC Canada will no longer be directly funded by congregations, since they are no longer the official members of the nationwide church.

Instead, congregations are being asked to add together budget lines currently set aside for nationwide and regional church, and forward that total amount to their regional church, which will forward an agreed-upon portion of that amount to MC Canada.

However, there is one exception. Congregations are asked that designated giving—to CommonWord, International or Canada Witness, for example—be made over and above the combined budget lines for MC Canada and the regional church.

The idea behind the changed flow of donations is that regional churches are geographically and relationally closer to their congregations. On the flip side, it means regional church staff will need to become more aware, and better equipped, to inform and inspire congregations to give to regional priorities such as camps and nationwide priorities as agreed upon by their respective regional churches.

The financial plan proposes a total income expectation of \$1.92 million, a reduction of \$2.53 million from the current year's total income projection of \$4.45 million. The actual income figure for the current fiscal year will be available when the books close and are audited, sometime after Jan. 31, 2018.

Of the total \$1.92 million, \$1.5 million is anticipated to come via transfers from regional churches—which is a portion based on current congregational giving across the board, and expected to come entirely from congregations—plus \$300,000 in designated giving from congregations and individuals, and \$115,000 in self-generated income.

The plan was repeatedly described as “conservative” and based on current giving patterns. Some delegates questioned the wisdom of an income projection based on current giving patterns when donation income has been declining for years.

“You have to start somewhere,” said Willard Metzger, MC Canada's executive minister (formerly executive director), adding that the first year will be a test, and the plan is open to revision based on the response to appeals in the regional churches. Subsequent income projections are expected to align with income from the previous year. ❧

What is the Spirit writing on our hearts?

Worship at Special Assembly 2017

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

“We don’t all see things through the same lenses. We don’t all agree on every little or big thing, but we are loved by you, and we love.”

That prayerful acknowledgement of diversity and unity as God’s community by Vernelle Enns Penner opened Mennonite Church Canada’s Special Assembly 2017 on the evening of Oct. 13 at the Radisson Hotel in Winnipeg.

Throughout the weekend, segments of worship integrated with business discussions, nudging participants to consider what the Spirit is writing on their hearts (II Corinthians 3:1-6).

With structural changes on the table as a result of the multi-year Future Directions process, it could have been a contentious gathering, but the worshipful atmosphere and the sentiment of Enns Penner’s words carried a respectful tone into discussions. A specially produced video encouraged the church to dream, to remember all there is to celebrate and to thank God for these good things. It acknowledged that not all hopes for MC Canada materialized as people dreamed them; that time is required for lament and healing; and that the church is composed of people in

relationship and community, not buildings, programs or structures.

Remembering that is key to implementing new organizational principles for MC Canada: Covenant New.

Song, prayer and reflection were woven between business sessions that discussed bylaws, a covenant and operating agreements, International Witness and finances. These pauses for worship offered continual, gentle reminders that the church is diverse, it is loved by God in its diversity, and that those gathered do God’s work through that diversity.

A new song, “May Your Spirit Give Life,” was written specifically for the event by Phil Campbell-Enns, a member of the worship committee and pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Walter Wiebe of Morden (Man.) Mennonite Church thought the approach to worship helped create a positive experience. “There’s a lot of energy from the worship leaders and the singing has been marvellous, and I really appreciate that,” he said. “So I think that sets the tone for business discussions as well. We sing together, then we can talk together better, too.”

“We wanted it to feel like we were

gathering to discern, but also to worship together, to sing together, to be together,” said Moses Falco, a member of the worship planning team.

“Covenant New,” the theme of Special Assembly 2017, emphasized the importance of growing congregational ability to nurture and equip faith, engage in worship and become stronger centres of mission. To illustrate examples of “Covenant New,” the five regional churches each shared a story depicting how congregations are living into the new reality while exploring the question, “What is the Spirit writing on our hearts?” After each story, a representative from another regional church prayed for the storyteller’s region.

“I really love the stories followed by prayers that we’ve had, because I think they embody the change that we’re doing here,” said Lydia Cruttwell, pastor of First United Mennonite Church in Vancouver and one of the storytellers. “It allows us to see what it looks like to support one another.”

Wiebe concurred. “One of the things that has really added to [worship] has been the stories. We really need more of that kind of thing,” he said.

The final worship service on Oct. 15 took place at the Metropolitan Theatre in Winnipeg, with the same spirit of earlier worship, and included a sermon by Willard Metzger, MC Canada’s executive minister (formerly executive director). He delved into the text of II Corinthians 3:1-6, stressing the importance of trusting God to guide the church and to intervene should it go astray. He introduced six youths attending the assembly, and each of them offered a glimpse of their dreams for the future.

Ken Warkentin, Mennonite Church Manitoba’s executive director, offered a prayer for the nationwide church (formerly the national church) before communion was served to those gathered. ☞

To watch a video clip of the assembly worship, visit canadianmennonite.org/2017-assembly-singing.



CANADIAN MENNONITE PHOTO BY AARON EPP

Anneli Loepp Thiessen, left, Johise Namwira and Vernelle Enns Penner lead delegates in singing at the Oct. 15 worship service that closed Special Assembly 2017.

young
 voices 

'We want these connections to continue'

Youth from across the country participate in MC Canada's Special Assembly 2017

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Manitoba Correspondent
 WINNIPEG



Activities for youth at assembly included meeting for lunch with Willard Metzger, executive minister of MC Canada, top left corner.

On a mid-October weekend, 13 youth from across Canada weren't on the field playing soccer, at their desks studying or settling in with Netflix. Instead, they were helping decide the future of Mennonite Church Canada.

These youth from Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario joined more than 400 others of all ages for MC Canada's Special Assembly 2017 in Winnipeg. Delegates and attendees gathered to vote on a bylaw that would end the current national church structure and focus on regional (formerly area) churches instead. Ninety-four percent of delegates voted in favour of the bylaw.

Katherine Penner, a youth from Osler (Sask.) Mennonite Church, said that being informed on what's happening in the church is important to her. "There's all these older people involved in the church, but eventually I will be the older person," said Penner, who attended the MC Canada assembly in 2016 and also serves on the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization. She wants to learn about church procedures and structures so she can actively participate in the church and be ready for the next assembly.

Aidan Morton-Ninomiya of St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church agreed that he also wants to learn more about the broader Mennonite church. He said that, while his family has a background in the Mennonite church, he's just started attending his church in the past few years.

He appreciated the chances during assembly to debrief with other youth, organized by the Emerging Voices Initiative (EVI).

EVI is a group of young-adult Mennonites who have spent the past two years engaging people across Canada in conversation around the future of the nationwide (formerly national) Mennonite church.

As young people themselves, EVI knows the importance of including voices of all ages in conversations about church. "The decisions that we're making this weekend, and the conversations that we're having, are going to affect us for generations to come, and I think if we don't have investment from our youth, it's going to be hard for this to be sustainable," said Anneli Loepp Thiessen, an EVI member who is originally from Kitchener, Ont.

In order to begin passing the torch along to the next generation of youth and young adults, EVI called for people to make donations so youth could afford to come to Special Assembly 2017. EVI collected around \$10,000, half of its \$20,000 goal. As a result, EVI was able to reimburse all the youth who chose to attend the assembly.

In addition to organizing financial support, Loepp Thiessen and fellow EVI members Alex Tiessen and Katrina Woelk led the youth in activities throughout the weekend to make the assembly accessible and enjoyable. Instead of a separate youth assembly, "it's sort of an organized integration of youth into what Special Assembly



EVI members Alex Tiessen, Anneli Loepp Thiessen and Katrina Woelk organized fun activities for youth and also helped them debrief after the sessions.

[2017] is,” Tiessen said.

Youth still participated in all the regular assembly sessions, but EVI planned activities for the evenings and break times. On the evening of Oct. 13, they had a pizza party, played games and got to know each other. The following evening, the group explored some of Winnipeg, and they wrapped up the weekend with a special brunch after worship on Oct. 15.

Tiessen, Woelk and Loepp Thiessen also provided extra support for the youth during the assembly. They checked in with them throughout the day and held debriefing sessions at which youth could ask questions.

Willard Metzger, executive minister of MC Canada, joined the youth for lunch during one of these sessions. “What do you feel that God’s been stirring in you?” he asked the youth. He encouraged them to share their hopes for the church, which some of them did during the final worship service. Some of their suggestions included a national youth council, a regular service trip, and an MC Canada app to help youth in different regional churches

build relationships with each other and share ideas.

“When we bring some new voices into the conversations that we’ve had a number of times, we learn something new and we find new energy in ourselves to continue the conversation,” Tiessen said.

Loepp Thiessen added that, at the same time, the youth remind the rest of the church body of its vision. “It’s pretty easy for them to keep that mission in sight because they haven’t been bogged down by all the logistics,” she said. “They’ve been reminding us of what we’re here to do and what goals we celebrate together.”

Almost every youth emphasized how much the goal of community is valued. Zoe Neudorf from the Commons in Hamilton, Ont., said that her assembly experience helps her remember there is a broader community of young people like her.

Penner agreed. “[Assembly] gives you a sense of pride in being Mennonite. It makes it feel like you have people on your side,” she said. “We want these connections to continue on.” ❧

Ready to take the next step

Young adults reflect on their experiences at Special Assembly 2017

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor
WINNIPEG

Madeleine Wichert, 23 **Volunteer**

When she missed the deadline to register for Mennonite Church Canada’s Special Assembly 2017, Madeleine Wichert found another way to get in the door—as a volunteer.

“I was originally a little disappointed that I wasn’t going to be a delegate . . . but I’m really enjoying being a volunteer,” she said as she helped usher assembly participants through the supper line on Oct. 14.

Originally from Toronto, where she

attends Toronto United Mennonite Church, Wichert currently lives in Winnipeg and worships at Hope Mennonite Church.

Over the past few years, she has become increasingly involved in both congregations. She is also a member of the Emerging Voices Initiative (EVI), a group of young adults who have spent the past two years engaging people across Canada in conversation around the future of the nationwide (formerly national) Mennonite

(Continued on page 22)



Youth and EVI leaders explore Winnipeg during a break from Special Assembly 2017 sessions.



Madeleine Wichert

(Continued from page 21)

church. As such, she wanted to be at this assembly.

“It’s the first assembly I’ve actually been to,” she said. “Engagement has been fairly respectful. Sometimes it feels like there needs to be a little more conversation around certain things, and there have been times where there have been some tensions, but, overall, it seems to be a fairly positive atmosphere.”

Wichert added that volunteering was a unique way to experience the assembly. “You get to hear the themes people are talking about, and the questions and concerns they’re raising,” she said. “It has a different kind of value because you’re getting snapshots of what people are saying rather than an in-depth conversation, but then it provides with you with a bigger picture. That’s what I’ve really enjoyed.”

The majority of the volunteers at the assembly were middle-aged or older, Wichert noted. She encourages young people to get involved as volunteers at future gatherings of the nationwide church. “It’s a different kind of engagement,” she said, “which might be more conducive to a younger audience.”



Sarah Ens

Sarah Ens, 25
Delegate for Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg

Sarah Ens wanted to attend the assembly because she cares about MC Canada. “It’s complicated and confusing, and [there is] a lot of material to read through, but I think it’s important and I felt . . . a certain amount of responsibility,” she said.

Ens serves on Bethel Mennonite Church’s council and worship committee, and this past year she was an artist-in-residence at church. Special Assembly 2017 was her first experience attending a nationwide church gathering.

“The church is anxious and tense and confusing, but also I found this weekend very hopeful,” she said. “There are so many anxieties and fears, and nobody knows what’s going forward, but at the same time I think it’s profoundly hopeful to meet together with people who are coming from different places and have very different fears, and to be able to speak [about] them and ask questions about them, and just do

that together.”

Worship was a highlight for her, particularly being able to sing together with other delegates. “What a nice, unifying feeling, after some tense moments, to be able to do that,” she said, adding that she is thankful for all of the effort that went into the Future Directions process. “I’m grateful for the work that’s been done, and the people that have done the really hard work of sorting this out.”

Alex Tiessen, 23
Delegate for MC Manitoba

The church is important to Alex Tiessen, and the transition to a new structure is a big one, so he wanted to make sure to be at Special Assembly 2017 in Winnipeg.

“Assemblies are just a great way to connect with people,” said Tiessen, a member of Trinity Mennonite Fellowship in Mather, Man. “That’s the other part I get excited about. You connect with people from across the country and friends from all over.”

Going into assembly, Tiessen was especially curious to see how delegates were feeling about the work that went into the Future Directions process and the preliminary decisions that were made at the assembly in Saskatoon in July 2016.

He described the feelings he encountered from the majority of people as a combination of hesitancy and excitement. He himself feels hopeful, at the same time noting the MC Canada staff who have been released from their jobs as a result of the restructuring.

“Those are things you lament for, and things that make you a little bit sad about the transition, but overall I [think] this is an opportunity for the church to reimagine the work it wants to do, and reimagine how we understand relationships as people in this [nationwide] church,” he said.

“I left assembly feeling it’s time for people to see what this change is going to look like,” he added. “It’s time for people to trust, and I felt people were ready for that step after leaving assembly.” ☞

To read more Special Assembly 2017 coverage online, visit canadianmennonite.org and search for “Special Assembly.”



Alex Tiessen

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Students need to learn anti-racism is a 'lifelong pursuit'

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate students wonder what 'taking the knee' means for them, and what they can do

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

KITCHENER, ONT.

“It’s taken us 400 years to get to here,” said Drew Hart at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate’s 2017 Spiritual Emphasis Week, held over three days in late September.

The assistant professor of theology at Messiah College, a private Christian college founded in 1909 by the Brethren in Christ Church in Mechanicsburg, Pa., was speaking of his lived reality as an African-American man in a racially divided country. Hart is the author of the Herald Press book *Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*.

In his public address to a gathering of parents, pastors and local educators, he summed up what he had earlier been sharing with the students and teachers.

He first focussed on “Taking Jesus seriously,” looking at “how Jesus can help us face oppression in our society.” He noted that Jesus told his disciples to “not lord it over each other like the Gentiles do.” Jesus, he

said, was speaking in occupied Galilee with the tramp of Roman soldiers everywhere. The story of Zacchaeus caught the students’ imagination, as he learned jubilee principles and applied them. Jesus himself went to Jerusalem and clashed with the authorities, dying under the hand of the oppressors.

He told many of his own stories in his second presentation about growing up in both majority-black and -white communities, and how his black body was a source of pride or tension, depending on the community. He found the worst place to be black was on the campus of a mostly white, evangelical Christian college, where black men were regularly called thugs and people acted in fear of them. This was a shock to him, as he had expected his Christian sisters and brothers to know him in Christ and not in a racial manner. He wondered about Canada’s parallel history in regard to racism and oppression, mostly

with Indigenous people.

His last presentation looked at what socially and politically aware Christians might do. Telling the story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s American education at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, his friendship with Frank Fisher, an African-American theology student, and his attendance at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, Hart described how Bonhoeffer learned to “see society from below, how to read the system differently,” and “look at how racism affects us all.”

He then turned to the story of a friend and colleague of his at Messiah College. Todd Allen had been asked to speak to a white congregation; just before the African-American began to speak, an older, white man shouted, “When are you all just going to get over this?” “Get over it?” mused Hart. “When did we get on it?”

Most of the attempts to solve racism are superficial, Hart said. He told the story of sitting with a white pastoral colleague who placed a cup between them with the restaurant’s logo on one side and writing on the other. “Tell me what your side looks like, and I’ll tell you what my side looks like,” said the man, talking about living in the United States. Hart responded by telling him that, while the white friend didn’t know what life was like for blacks, he, a black man, had to know what white life was like in order to survive every day in the highly racialized society, with white supremacy knit into everything.

Hart’s point was that until whites, and especially white Christians, can learn to see from the side of blacks who have been oppressed for 400 years, no significant change will happen. He also suggested that white supremacy functions in very similar ways in anti-black and Indigenous erasure.

An active question period followed, with Ryan Graham, an African-Canadian parent of students at Rockway, asking what was the most frequent question students had asked of Hart. He noted two:

- “TAKING THE KNEE” at National Football League games.
- “WHAT DO we need to do?”

According to Hart, anti-racism is “a lifelong pursuit.” ☞



Drew Hart discusses his public presentation with Noramy Gonzalia Diaz, the youth worker at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., during Rockway Mennonite Collegiate’s 2017 Spiritual Emphasis Week.

Community: 'The easiest way to live the Christian life'

BY HENRY NEUFELD

Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship
VANCOUVER

After 11 Koreans—two families plus two teenagers—began attending Point Grey in late 2016, interest in their intentional communal living was piqued. The 11, ranging in age from 11 to middle age, live in one home in Vancouver. They share meals, household tasks, money (one adult handles the finances), and all major decisions. They operate several home-based businesses, mostly of a high-tech nature, along with book publishing.

Sue Kim and her college-age sons, Chan and Caleb, were asked during a recent church service Q&A about their communal life. Sue said that, as biblical Anabaptists, they seek to follow the directions in the Book of Acts about living communally.

Implementing Jesus' command to love one another by meeting once a week was not enough, she said. "It needs to be practised every day. Being responsible for each other is important."

Their communal living started more than two decades ago in Korea, when the two couples spent time working with Youth With a Mission. Through that experience, they learned to live together and to regularly confess their sins to each other. Later, living together gradually emerged as a biblical and practical way of life. They left Korea in 2000, and lived in Pennsylvania, Ontario and Manitoba.

They were surprised to learn that the Amish, Hutterites and Mennonites have been around for more than 500 years. They had assumed their communal lifestyle was new, and rejoiced at finding groups that shared their Anabaptist values. They were inspired particularly by Hutterites and wanted to learn from them. Over time, they developed continuing relationships with Hutterite colonies on the Prairies and attended Carman (Man.) Mennonite Church.

The group returned to Korea in 2011, but after a few years decided to resettle in

Vancouver. They were concerned about the influence of the "prosperity gospel" in Korean churches. The decision to leave Korea was accelerated by the South Korean government removing the alternative-service option, meaning that Chan and Caleb would be required to perform military service or face jail time.

"We believe in pacifism," said Chan.

Caleb said that having a home-based business was important, since it provided an opportunity to serve each other and to work for the same goals.

Chan said that most people work in 9-to-5 jobs and are isolated from family.

"We think it's better to work and live together," he said, citing a study pointing out that in the 2008 economic slowdown 90 percent of new businesses closed, while 95 percent of Amish businesses survived. "Community-based businesses have something to fall back on. . . . There's risk minimization in communal work."

With a prediction that 80 percent of current jobs will be replaced by technology by 2025, "it's important for young people to band together to live and work together," he said.

"Community is the easiest way to live the Christian life," said Sue, adding, "You have to forgive and be forgiven every day." When asked about the core value of their community, her answer was simple and profound: "Relationships. . . . Jesus said we should love. . . . It's important to understand the other person. . . . We need to take time to listen and try to understand each other."

She pointed out that both Korean and North American cultures affect the nature of faith communities. The Korean culture is communal and blends well with communal living, but a negative aspect is excessive reliance on one leader. This is seen in Korean churches. American culture is individualistic, an advantage in that every



PHOTO COURTESY OF HENRY NEUFELD

Chan Yang, Sue Kim and Caleb Yang provide an insight into their communal living arrangement during a recent service at Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship in Vancouver.

individual has a relationship with God, but North American churches can be too individualistic. Her goal for their community is to build a culture that fuses the good of both.

When asked about communal decision-making—for instance, if a teenager wants a motorcycle—Caleb said, "We all come together and decide whether it's helpful [to the community] or not. If not, the teenager has to live with [the decision]."

And what if one of the young people marries someone not accustomed to communal living? "It's my personal choice to stay [in community], and my future wife would have to agree to the communal life," Chan, 22, said.

Their vision is to eventually provide a re-entry service for returning missionaries and their children. Sue said, "When missionaries return, there's often a gap in their life. We want to help mend that gap." ❧

A hundred years of helping others

Trust company marks anniversary by giving back to community

By DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
WALDHEIM, SASK.

For many Saskatchewan Mennonites, the name Mennonite Trust is synonymous with wills and estate planning, but executive director Cory Regier is quick to point out that the company has not forgotten why it was founded a century ago.

In 1917, representatives from three conferences—the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches, the Saskatchewan Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches and Mennonite Church Saskatchewan—joined forces to establish the Mennonite Union Waisenamt. Their

primary concern was to care for the widows and orphans in their congregations, and the *waisenamt*, or orphan's office, was a model they were familiar with from Russia. They established their office in Waldheim, about 56 kilometres north of Saskatoon.

Over the years, as Mennonites became more affluent, the Waisenamt's focus gradually shifted away from providing food and shelter for the disadvantaged to drafting wills, managing estates, helping with taxes, and providing loans to individuals

and churches. However, the company still has a large number of low-value estates, which other trust companies would not likely consider. "That's the reason we're here," says Regier, "to help anybody, any estate, no matter the value."

The company's name changed to Mennonite Trust Ltd. in 1968. It opened branch offices in Swift Current in 1995 and Saskatoon in 1997.

Today, the three founding groups each have two representatives on the Mennonite Trust's board of directors. Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's representatives are Char Bueckert of Zoar Mennonite in Langham, and Ian Epp of Eigenheim Mennonite, near Rosthern.

In a video produced for the company's centennial, former general manager Tim Redekopp describes the concept behind the organization: "There are some people who don't get a fair shake in the world, and we're here to make sure that they get a fair shake when they come and deal with us." He adds, "We were given the freedom to show God's love and were encouraged to do so. To me, that was totally foreign in the business world."

To mark its centennial, Mennonite Trust established the Widows and Orphans Foundation. Administered by Abundance Canada, the Foundation is a way for staff, board members and clients to give back to the community. "There's no formula for giving," says Regier. "We're just trying to balance our growing capital with doing as much good as we can."

Funds from the Foundation have already benefitted the Rosthern and District Food Bank, Southwest Crisis Services in Swift Current, Saskatoon Interval House and the Prince Albert Literacy Network.

Regier welcomes Mennonite Trust's slow growth, but says it is "growth for the purpose of helping as many people as we can." He adds, "If all we were after was the bottom line, it wouldn't be hard to do it more profitably. We are here to do [what we do] from a faith-based perspective." ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNONITE TRUST LTD.

Founding directors of the Mennonite Union Waisenamt represented three Mennonite conferences. To learn more, visit mtrust.net/history/.

Lutherans and Mennonites

Equal expressions of love for God

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Serving communion at the 16th biennial convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) was a profoundly humbling experience for Willard Metzger.

“I felt as though I was surrounded by a huge cloud of Anabaptist witnesses from the past,” said Mennonite Church Canada’s executive director (now executive minister), of his participation in the event that took place in Winnipeg in early July.

The significance of that statement is deeply rooted in history. This year marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, a time when distinct theological differences—such as infant baptism versus confession-of-faith baptism—separated many brothers and sisters in Christ and brought persecution on Anabaptists, including Mennonites.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a global church body similar to Mennonite World Conference, invited Mennonites to join in celebrations for the 450th anniversary of the Lutheran’s Augsburg Confession of Faith in 1980. However, it was tough for Mennonites to celebrate a confession of faith that condemned their views, even though the centuries-old memory of persecution had faded.

The invitation sparked a 30-year reconciliation process. In 2010, the Lutheran church explicitly asked “God and our Mennonite sisters and brothers for forgiveness for the harm that our ancestors have brought upon the Anabaptists.”

Ever since, the ELCIC and MC Canada have sought ways to build on that apology, says Reverend Susan Johnson, ELCIC’s national bishop.

The LWF planned for an ecumenical approach to the international commemoration of the Reformation. “The ELCIC adopted the same principle moving forward,” Johnson said in an email interview. “We also want to focus not on the division of the past, but on the ways we have been able

to work towards reconciliation of relationships and the ways we are being called forward onto a further journey of reconciliation.”

Fast-forward to 2017 and the ELCIC convention. “So when we asked ourselves, ‘Who needs to be at our convention as we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation?’ [MC] Canada and Willard Metzger’s name had to be on the list.” Johnson said. “We wanted to hear from different voices in preaching and we wanted to honour our guests by having them as involved as possible in our national commemoration worship service.”

“In this single act of reconciliation, of inviting me, an Anabaptist, to serve communion, Lutherans accepted our divergent understandings as an equal expression of love for God,” Metzger said. “Being invited to offer communion was not a statement of agreement. It did not mean that we are all of one mind. But it did acknowledge that we serve one God. We come to the same source of mercy and forgiveness. We go to the same place for redemption and

restoration.”

Johnson reported that the convention welcomed Metzger to its event as though he were family. “Many of the delegates have family connections with Mennonites, so they really appreciated this sign of welcome and inclusion,” she said. “Willard has been a blessing to me as a colleague, and it was a joy to have my church experience his faith, wisdom and warm sense of humour.”

Reconciliation and change were also the subject matter of a sermon Metzger presented to the convention. He suggested that after 500 years it might be time for another reformation: “I think we have a youth and young-adult population ready to be our reformers, so can we embrace their prophetic presence, or will we resist them in our own denominational tribe?”

All of this, he mused, provides Anabaptists with a challenge for their own community: Can Mennonites accept disagreeing viewpoints as equal expressions of love for God and learn to live with acceptance? ❧



EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA PHOTO


Willard Metzger, Mennonite Church Canada’s executive director (now executive minister), shares a sermon with delegates to the 16th biennial convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada this past summer.

Staff changes

Pastoral, vocational transitions in Alberta

- **DONNA DINSMORE** began a one-year term as interim pastor of First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, on Oct. 1. Dinsmore is an ordained United Church minister who has served in various congregations. Most recently she was in Bella Coola, B.C., ministering to Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Dinsmore has a master's degree in Christian studies from Regent College in Vancouver, as well as a master's degree in music education.
- **EDMUND LEE** is the new Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Thrift Store manager in Edmonton as of the beginning of October. Formerly he served as a youth pastor and is excited about the vision and mission of MCC in Alberta and around the world.
- **STACY PETERS** began serving as the Mennonite Guest House host in Calgary at the beginning of September. The guest house is a ministry of Foothills Mennonite Church. Since 2007, the house has provided a safe, comfortable, welcoming place for anyone who has loved ones in the hospital.

—BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD





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Unit 1
Believe in God

Session 2 Believe in Jesus, Interview with Bruxy Cavey

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Fall Leadership Assembly

Saturday, November 25, 2017
9:30-3pm at Osler Mennonite Church.

For: Congregational, Commission & Board Leadership

Purpose: To discuss changes to MC Canada and MC Sask and implications for the congregation. Willard Metzger, Executive Director of MC Canada will be with us for this conversation. The afternoon will give each commission/related organization time to highlight their work.

Register: www.mcsask.ca

Cost: \$15 to cover lunch.




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'Menno(comedy)nite' keeps audience in stitches

Plenty of jokes, humour and laughs delighted the audience at a Mennonite Historical Society of B.C.-sponsored event.
canadianmennonite.org/menno-comedy



Open the Islands campaign seeks to prevent refugee deaths

Christian Peacemaker Teams joins other solidarity groups calling for action as winter approaches for refugees in Greece.
canadianmennonite.org/refugees-lesvos



Funny GIFs and heartfelt expressions

Some delegates used Twitter to report on Mennonite Church Canada's Special Assembly.
canadianmennonite.org/twitter-special-assembly



Celebrating a legacy of respect

The late Jeremiah Ross, a Cree man from Cross Lake First Nation in Manitoba, served as pastor of Elim Mennonite Church there for 30 years.
canadianmennonite.org/ross-legacy



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Conrad Grebel University College

Schools Directory featuring Westgate Mennonite Collegiate

A gift of time

By Karl Langelotz

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg

When my wife Marla and I heard about a volunteer opportunity in Germany last year, we didn't need to hesitate to respond. Once we decided we could do this, we approached our employers—Westgate Mennonite Collegiate and Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church—about allowing us a leave of absence. Both responded quickly with positive responses: "What a wonderful opportunity!"

What a gift! I didn't realize how significant this was until I returned. We were able to leave our places of employment with the assurance that we would have work when we returned. This allowed us the time to fully engage in our experience helping build Friedenshaus, a "house of peace."

This community project had already started under the leadership of long-term Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker

Greg Rabus. We joined him, offering German-language assistance, planning social events, organizing a quilting group, and much more.

Rabus's goal was to create a "house where love can dwell and all can safely live." These words (from the hymn "Let Us Build a House") epitomize the place that Friedenshaus became for so many people.

Our friend Mohammed was adamant that we take a picture beside the Friedenshaus poster before we left. For a man who left his wife and children behind to come to Germany, Friedenshaus has become this house "where all are named, their songs and visions heard."

Our time in Germany allowed us to be fully present in our work, to find the image of God's face in all we met. I pray that theme will continue in my work at Westgate.

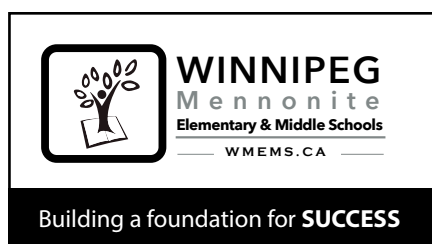


PHOTO COURTESY OF KARL AND MARLA LANGELOTZ

Pictured at Friedenshaus, a 'house of peace' in Germany, are, from left to right: Mohammed, a refugee, and Karl and Marla Langelotz.



A **SMALL SCHOOL**
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Calendar

British Columbia

Nov. 19: Symphony of Hymns II fundraiser to benefit MC B.C.; featuring Calvin Dyck, violin, and Michael Berg, tenor; at Level Ground Mennonite Church, Abbotsford; at 3 p.m.

Nov. 20-25: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. annual Christmas market at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford. Visit mennonitemuseum.org for more information.

Nov. 23: Columbia Bible College view day.

Dec. 9,10: Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir: (9) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (10) at St. Philip's Anglican Church, Vancouver. Both services at 7:30 p.m. In support of the Menno Simons Centre.

Alberta

Nov. 25: Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta conference, Tapestry of Two Uprooted Cultures: Japanese

and Mennonites in Southern Alberta, featuring authors Joy Kogawa and Rudy Wiebe, followed by cultural dancing, music and food; at 1 p.m. Call the historical society at 403-250-1121 by Nov. 16 to register.

Saskatchewan

Nov. 18: Mega Menno youth event at Osler Mennonite, at 7 p.m.

Manitoba

Until Nov. 18: Colourful Faith exhibit by Segun Olude and Gibril Bangura, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery.

Nov. 21: Evening of the Arts, at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Nov. 27: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate annual general meeting, at 7 p.m.

Dec. 2: Ready my Heart: Preparing for Advent retreat, in Winnipeg, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Learn focal practices to use in the season of Advent and make Advent wreaths. For more information, or to register, visit butterflyjourneys.webs.com.

Dec. 3: First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, presents an Advent concert featuring Vivaldi's "Gloria," at the church, at 7 p.m.

Dec. 4: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Christmas concert, at Westminster United Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Dec. 16,17: Faith and Life Women's Chorus and Male Choir Christmas concerts: (16) at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.; (17) at Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m.

Dec. 17: Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church Adult Choir presents "Historia van der Geburt Jesu Christi" (The Christmas Story), with soloists and instruments, at the church in Winnipeg, at 11 a.m.

Ontario

Until Nov. 11: The World Remembers: 1914-1918. For 48 days, the names of 661,818 soldiers and nurses on all sides of the First World War killed in 1917 will be digitally displayed at more than 60 locations around the world, including at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

Until Dec. 15: Painting a Picture of Dignity exhibit explores the theme of dignity through paintings created by

people with Alzheimer's and dementia, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

Nov. 10: "Brave," an evening of music celebrating courage, compassion and community, with Amanda Kind, Distinguished Alumni Award winner, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m. In support of Aurora House.

Nov. 11: MCC Peace Conference, at Cornerstone Christian Community Church, Markham, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Focus: MCC's Cry for Home advocacy campaign on Palestine and Israel.

Nov. 12: CPT presents The Journey Continues: Re-igniting the Passion for Peace in Palestine and Israel, at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, Waterloo, from 3 to 6 p.m. Speakers: Jonathan Kuttub and Rabbi David Mivasair.

Nov. 17: Spirituality and Aging Seminar: The Need for a Spiritual Revolution in Residential Care, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information, email Rebecca.gibbins@uwaterloo.ca.

Nov. 17-18: Spirit of Christmas celebration at Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig, featuring

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UpComing

Resonate calls for visual art submissions

As the Resonate team gathers material for a new hymnal, it is rolling out a call for a first-of-its-kind feature within Mennonite hymnals: a vision to include visual images that complement the musical and verbal rhythms of worship found in the collection. The introduction of visual art is one way the Resonate team seeks to draw in worshippers of diverse languages and ages, who learn and express themselves in different ways. The Resonate team is calling for visual artists to submit content to be considered for inclusion in the new collection. Artists are encouraged to explore the "Theological inspirations and possibilities" and to take seriously the "Aspirations for the use of visual imagery" outlined in the "Call for submissions of visual art" available online at bit.ly/visual-submissions. Important technical requirements are also delineated there. Artists may submit a single image or a series of pieces. Submissions are welcome until February 2018.

—MennoMedia



homemade treats and crafts by local talent and Ten Thousand Villages, plus music of the season. Canned goods welcomed for the local food bank.

Nov. 18: Nithview Christmas Bazaar, in New Hamburg, featuring a bake sale, silent auction and community vendors, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Nov. 18,19: Soli Deo Gloria Singers present their fall concert, To God Alone be the Glory; (18) at UMEI, Leamington, at 7:30 p.m.; (19) at Leamington United Mennonite, at 3 p.m. For more information, call 519-326-7448.

Nov. 25: The Balinese Gamelan Ensemble offers a taste of Balinese music and culture, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m.

Nov. 25: MennoHomes annual general

meeting and Inshallah ensemble concert, at Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit mennohomes.com.

Nov. 26: Fifth annual Welcome Advent event at Detweiler Meeting House, Roseville, at 2:30 p.m. Featuring Lifted Voices. For more information, call Sam Steiner at 519-884-1040.

Dec. 1: Conrad Grebel University College Chamber Choir performs its term-end concert, Rejoice in the Lamb, at Knox Presbyterian Church, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 2: Conrad Grebel University College's Peace Society presents its Make-a-Difference Market, featuring local and fair-trade vendors, food and music, in benefit of Direct Relief, at Grebel beginning at 10 a.m.

Dec. 3: Menno Singers presents Come

Emmanuel with Menno Youth Singers and Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir, at St. John's Lutheran Church, Waterloo, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

Dec. 7: Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies hosts a double book launch at Conrad Grebel University College, at 7 p.m., featuring new works by Hildi Froese Tiessen and Connie T. Braun.

Dec. 15-17: Listowel Mennonite Church presents An Advent Journey Marketplace: (15 and 16) from 7 to 9 p.m.; (17) from 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. For more information, call 519-291-2350.

Dec. 16,17: Pax Christi Chorale presents "Gloria" by Poulenc, and other works, including French carols, at Grace Church on-the-Hill, Toronto: (16) at 7:30 p.m.; (17) at 3 p.m.

Dec. 17: Menno Singers presents Singalong Messiah, at St. Jacobs

Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

Nov. 18: Fairview Mennonite Home in Cambridge presents its annual handicraft sale, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; includes decorations, gifts, sweet shop, wreaths, knitting, woodworking; refreshments in the tea room.

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



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY invites applications for the following full-time, tenure-track faculty positions beginning fall semester 2018. Choral Music/Director of Choral Activities: Doctorate preferred (ABD considered) in choral conducting. Social

Work: MSW required (PhD or ABD preferred). Review of applications for these positions begins December 1. For full position description and Equal Opportunity Employer statement visit www.bluffton.edu/employment. EOE.



Employment opportunity
FULL-TIME PASTOR

Calgary First Mennonite Church, a multi-generational, hospitable congregation with approximately 90-100 in attendance for worship is seeking a FULL-TIME PASTOR.

We welcome candidates with youthful energy and those committed to Anabaptist theology to become part of our church family. Applicants should have demonstrated gifts in communication and pastoral care. All inquiries or resumes can be submitted to tim@mennonitechurch.ab.ca.

<http://calgaryfirstmennonite.ca/>




Employment opportunity

IT Analyst and Consultant – JDC.ca Inc.

We are an IT firm based in Leamington Ontario providing network support to mid-sized business clients in the surrounding area.

The ideal candidate will have a college or university diploma in computer engineering or science and experience with Windows Server 2008-2016, excellent troubleshooting skills and an understanding of related network infrastructure including routers, switches, cabling, patch panels, access points, workstations, printers and mobile devices.

Please email your resume to: fiona@jdc.ca or call **519-324-0090 x101** to discuss this opportunity.




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Congreso Mundial Menonita
Una Comunidad de Iglesias Anabaptistas

Conférence Mennonite Mondiale
Une Communauté d'Églises Anabaptistes

Employment opportunity

Mennonite World Conference is looking for a North American regional representative (50 percent) who will carry relationships with member churches in Canada and the USA starting in 2018. Please email arlklassen@mwc-cmm.org for more information.



Employment Opportunity

Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, seeks an executive director to lead a vibrant organization with programming at three sites on two campuses. Information about the position is available at www.lmhs.org/about/employment/. Applicants should provide a letter of intent that includes their vision for LMHS, a résumé, and three references. Submit materials and inquiries at search@lmhs.org. Applications will be considered until the position is filled.

It's all about trust

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

“**W**hat are the dreams that have been placed in us? What has God whispered in our ears? How has God invaded our thoughts?” asked Willard Metzger, Mennonite Canada’s executive minister (formerly executive director). Thus began his final address on Oct. 15 to those who gathered for Special Assembly 2017.

Those questions arose from the assembly’s theme text, II Corinthians 3:1-6, that were pondered throughout worship sessions on the two previous days. During the final worship service, Metzger took the text further and explored the bold confidence displayed by the Apostle Paul in the face of challenge.

“The Apostle Paul was facing a pretty serious threat,” he said. “False teachers had infiltrated the congregation and gone out of their way to discredit Paul.” They called him a false teacher, but Paul’s response offered an unconventional understanding of how God works, by displaying a “bold, crisp, shameless confidence” against their accusations. Paul had greater confidence in the testimony of the Corinthian congregation than anything his accusers offered against him.

Paul’s confidence came not from his wisdom or capacity as a teacher. His confidence came from the transforming power of Christ at work in God’s people, Metzger said.

To be in fearful anxiety of getting it right is actually doubt in God, Metzger said, relaying an experience from his own life. As a young man, he was fearful about making a wrong decision regarding two ministry options. Although he prayed and waited, no clarity came. He grew anxious about making the wrong decision. A friend offered this counsel: “I think you have sought God, so now you make a choice and trust that God is leading you.”

“But how do I know if I am getting it right?” Metzger countered.

“Trust that God will stop you if you’re getting it wrong,” was the response.

Discernment is not as much about the ability to get it right as it is about trusting God’s ability to direct Christians. Metzger pointed to Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge God and God will direct your paths.”

In the midst of a changing environment, shifting structures and theological differences, Metzger invited church leaders and congregants to embrace the confidence that is theirs as the people of God. “God’s yearning for redemption and restoration will prevail when the people of God humble themselves and seek God in worship and prayer. God will respond. That’s our confidence,” he said. “This is about the ability of the Spirit of Christ to bring to life the words that have been inscribed in our hearts.” ❧



CANADIAN MENNONITE PHOTO BY AARON EPP

‘God is at work,’ said Willard Metzger, executive minister of MC Canada, at the end of his sermon on Oct. 15. ‘The Spirit of God is active. Therein lies our competence. Therein lies our confidence.’

To read more Special Assembly 2017 coverage online, visit canadianmennonite.org and search for “Special Assembly.”

