

C A N A D I A N
Mennonite

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Prayers of broken people

There's a long tradition among Canadian Mennonite churches that the year begin with extra time dedicated to prayer. It's a way of offering the first fruits of the year back to God. We want to do the same with *Canadian Mennonite's* first issue of 2005. Prayer is the focus for our Faith&Life section this issue (page 6).

My reflections on prayer have grown darker while working on this issue. The death toll in Asia keeps climbing—150,000 so far—like some kind of macabre fundraising thermometer. The number of injured, orphaned or widowed, destitute: many, many more. Sorrow feeds well in our world.

In September, I wrote about searching for acts of God around us. Earthquakes, according to the insurance industry, are legally considered acts of God—as incorrect as I believe that is. But still, where is God in this?

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:
Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. ...

[W]ho shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?—

when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band,

and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped?'

Even with our ever-so-limited view of the world, we grieve with those who mourn, as, I am certain God weeps with those who are now weeping. And as we leave those who have died with God, so we must passionately embrace those who remain.

This is also an object lesson in how prayer works. As we

pray over the broken bodies of our world, we also pray over the broken body of Christ. As we pray over the brokenness in our churches, so we pray over the brokenness in our own lives. Prayer is the bridge between the outer world and the inner life.

We pray without any certainty that the waves will be stopped before they reach our shores. We pray in grief, in

We pray without any certainty that the waves will be stopped before they reach our shores.

doubt, in ignorance, in anger. Like the wise men, we come at times guided only by starlight, needing to ask the Herods of the world where we can find Christ. Sometimes, we pray only because God so clearly desires it of us. Sometimes, wonderfully, prayer leads us to call out, "Open thou my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise."

I encourage you to pray through 1 Corinthians, the text for the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Praying through Scripture, especially the Psalms, has been a way for me to pray when praying is hard. Mennonite Church Canada's study guide on 1 Corinthians, "Praying over the broken body of Christ," is summarized in this issue (page 6).

I would also commend to you a prayer column we are launching to recognize prayer's importance in our lives. Mary Schertz, a professor well-known for her prayers before classes at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, will be a regular contributor. I find her prayers very moving and I hope you will too (see page 4). I also invite submissions from others.

I pray that God will dwell richly in our lives, our church and our world in 2005.—**Timothy Dyck**

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Web site preview

Get a preview of the next *Canadian Mennonite* before it comes in the mail. Selections are posted on our web site at www.canadianmennonite.org on the Thursday before the issue date. So you can check out the January 24 issue by January 20.

Cover: Jeanette Hanson (left), Witness worker from Saskatchewan, greets Christians in Dongming, China, who had been out of contact with Mennonites since 1947. See page 18. Photo by Rod Suderman.



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Winnipeg, Man.

Directory central to life of prayer

Prayer is central to the life of Clara K. Dyck, but she would like a prayer book that lies flat when opened.

At age 86, and suffering from familial tremors, she cannot hold open the pages of her Mennonite Church Canada Prayer Directory. She demonstrates how she used to hold the book open with her elbows while praying.

She likes to connect with her prayer subjects by pondering their pictures in the directory. To ease the task, she cut open the spine of the book, and with help from her church's secretary, punched holes in the pages for insertion in a three-ring binder.

When the secretary gave her a black binder she said, "No, black doesn't suit prayer. I'm fond of colours." She points to the vibrant front cover.

Dyck likes to live life to the fullest, and is descended from a long line of adventurers. Her great-grandfather reportedly spent 10 years as a gold miner in California, only to see his travelling companion murdered and his fortune stolen on the return trip.

Growing up in Tiefengrund, Saskatchewan, Dyck brought her own sense of adventure to farm life by starting a tennis club. "At first they laughed at me. I had seen it in the city and thought, 'That's something I want to do!'" The tennis club thrived under her direction.

In 1950, she joined three other young women for a term of service in Colombia with Mennonite Central Committee. She remembers the crestfallen faces of her hosts, who had asked for four men to help build a school. "We did plenty of things, but we didn't build a school!"

Her journey from mid-life on has been largely defined by her disability. Unable to continue her nursing career because of the tremors, she went back to school and earned a masters degree in English and German.

She taught for a time, and then



MC Canada photo

Clara Dyck regularly prays for mission workers listed in the MC Canada Prayer Directory.

worked as a hospital chaplain.

Without the benefit of disability insurance, Dyck managed to earn a living with her love of words. In addition to teaching, she has translated books, and written articles.

In 2001, she published a collection of her poetry, personal reflections and prayers.

Prayer has had a significant impact on this independent, thoughtful woman. She credits her mother: "My mother was a wonderful praying lady. I learned it from childhood."

Prayer is the most important part of her spiritual life, she says. "Without prayer I wouldn't know how to be. I don't know how people get along without prayer."—From MC Canada release by **Dan Dyck**

Call to Prayer

Gracious and unfathomable God:

We acknowledge the paradox of life and death,
 delight and despair, laughter and tears, hope and dread;
 Sometimes so closely bound within our human frames,
 as to be experienced in one breath.
 At other times so profoundly pressed by one extremity,
 that we cannot imagine the other.

Enmeshed in our humanity, our limited existence, our brief span of life,
 we look to you for the mystery of warm love,
 the assurance of meaning, our point of orientation in the
 sea of chaos.

We can only, and so do with sturdy faith,
 pray to you in the name of our Lord Jesus.
 Amen.

~Mary Schertz

Allada, Benin

Big house embraces needy children

Although Annette Castillo holds the unenviable position of managing an orphanage during a chickenpox epidemic, she continues to smile broadly. Clearly, she loves the place to which God has called her.

That place is La Casa Grande (Big House), located just north of Cotonou, the largest city in the West African country of Benin. Castillo and her husband, Francisco (Paco), created a home for abandoned children in 2000. Today, more than 20 children thrive in La Casa Grande's care.

Multiple ties link La Casa Grande to Mennonites. Workers with Mennonite Board of Missions, a predecessor of Mennonite Church Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network, helped to lay the groundwork for the orphanage. The vision for La Casa Grande grew out of the Burgos Mennonite Church in Spain, a congregation begun by Mennonite Board of Missions workers about 20 years ago.

Today, MC Canada congregations help support ministry in Benin through Nancy Frey (St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, Ontario) and Bruce Yoder (Martinsburg, Pennsylvania), and in

'I kept begging the Lord to allow me to gather abandoned children together in a centre...'

Spain through Connie and Dennis Byler (Fellowship of Hope, Indiana).

In addition, Heather Shantz (St. Jacobs) is an MC Canada Witness intern at the orphanage, and Canadian Mennonite University student Mariam Entz (Zion Mennonite Church, Kansas) also serves there. Entz's parents are Witness workers in Burkina Faso.

The Castillos have long desired to serve needy children. "After living in the hell of the drug-world, I absorbed the love of God through the ministry of Christians," said Paco. "Having been pardoned, delivered and healed by



Photo by Paco Castillo

Annette Castillo smiles even during a chickenpox epidemic at La Casa Grande. The white kaolin powder is a traditional remedy to help dry the pustules and reduce itching.

God, I received a vivid summons to work among marginalized people."

Annette grew up in a Christian family in Ivory Coast. As she taught Sunday school, she longed to reach out to street kids. However, neither her church nor her family had the financial means to help her accomplish her dream.

"I kept begging the Lord to allow me to gather abandoned children together in a centre," said Annette. "I bless the Lord because now I'm able to do what I've yearned to do for years."

Because the Castillos' ministry shows love to rejected and vulnerable members of African society, their preaching has credibility in the surrounding communities. Many of the children's parents have died of AIDS-related diseases. The Castillos want to prepare the children to thrive in the world and to become healers of their own broken communities.

Each child is sponsored by a family or a member of the Burgos Mennonite Church. The Castillos have acquired five acres of land and dream of building a Christian community that would

include a school. According to United Nations' statistics, only half of Benin's children have the privilege of attending school.

La Casa Grande organizes an annual Bible camp for community children. Last July, 110 children attended, an event that attracted the attention of the national media. Many campers had to be turned away. Volunteers from local congregations helped with teaching, meals and recreation.—MC Canada release by **Lynda Hollinger-Janzen**

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Combining the Summer Ecumenical Institute and Shared Ministries gathering
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and Rev. John Bell, Iona Community, Scotland.
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Praying for the unity of the church

“Praying over the broken body of Christ” is the theme of a Prayer Week guide for congregations. The five sessions, based on 1 Corinthians, probe “the struggle of a divided church towards its destiny to be ‘one,’ as Jesus intended.” Following are excerpts.



In our prayer we must be honest about the things that separate us; we must be honest about Christ’s desire for unity in the church; we must be humble about ourselves and our views.

When it comes to splitting and dividing among religious groups, Christians are the champions; one source indicates that there are as many as 34,000 separate Christian groups today.

Church splits are often about misunderstandings, inadequate or inappropriate communication, personality clashes, power struggles and family or group loyalties. The theological and ethical issues that are named as reasons for divisions are real issues, but it is the non-theological, unspiritual forces that cause broken relationships and disunity.

Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote frequently about the arrogance of the church. It was boasting about their respective leaders that fostered the factionalism in the church (3:21-22), and arrogance had become their characteristic attitude (4:6-7, 18-19).

The history of the church is littered with examples where boasting of spiritual superiority, combined with putting down other people’s convictions and experiences, have led to schism. Pride in denominational distinctives, worship styles, programs and other accomplishments prevents Christians from recognizing the overwhelming commonality that is theirs as a gift from God.

Paul called the quarreling parties back to the foundation of the church. “No one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid,” he wrote, and that foundation is Jesus Christ (3:11). How can we find the unity that God intends? It won’t be done in doctrine, service, institutions, missions, relationships or discipline, but in Jesus Christ.

There are actions we can take to reverse the church’s tendency toward schism. One of those actions is to pray fervently, humbly and confidently over this broken body. In our prayer we must be honest about the things that separate us; we must be honest about Christ’s desire for unity in the church; we must be humble about ourselves and our views.

United in the Spirit

How can we know who is the most spiritual? God’s intention for those who receive salvation through Jesus Christ is that they belong in connection with each other. And they don’t have the luxury (or arrogant self-determination) of choosing with whom they will associate.

“God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose,” Paul writes (12:18). Solo Christians are not

God’s plan. Neither are uniform Christians. The completeness of the body demands variety, diversity and equality of respect between the members. This is not an unfortunate necessity, but God’s own desire.

It seems that there are two polarities that draw Christians in opposite directions. The one pole we might call “rightness” and the other “relationships.” At the extreme end of the “relationships” pole would be a concern to accept and affirm each one. At this pole, doctrine could be sacrificed for the higher value of loving relationships.

At the extreme end of the “rightness” pole would be a concern for correct theology, pure ethics, clear logic and absolute truth. At this pole, relationships could be sacrificed for the higher value of correct doctrine.

Paul was no slouch when it came to correct theology. Repeatedly he corrected the church. On the other hand, Paul was also concerned about relationships. He interrupted the flow of his “rightness” argument in chapters 12 and 14 with a “relationship” statement in chapter 13, which climaxes in saying that the greatest of the abiding values is love.

It was to a congregation divided by opposing claims to spiritual superiority that Paul wrote that oratory and tongue-speaking, prophetic gifts, education, outstanding faith and great personal sacrifice are all valueless without love.

United in worship

Since New Testament times the church has quarreled and divided over liturgical issues. The date of celebrating Easter was one significant factor

in the division between the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Roman Catholic) churches in the fourth century.

In the sixteenth century Reformation, the celebration of the mass was a major conflict, and the division over baptism was a question of worship as well as theology and politics. Virtually every denomination has experienced conflicts over which language to use in worship, which music to sing or play, which version of the Bible to read, whether candles/banners/icons/dance/clerical robes, etc. can be used and how. Questions about limits to women's leadership and of children's participation have been very divisive.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul addressed several aspects of worship practice. Communion gets attention in 10:14-22 and 11:17-34. When Christians partake rightly of the Lord's Supper they focus on Jesus, not on themselves. In communion church members stand on level ground, each one conscious of the grace by which they are saved through the sacrifice of the common Lord.

There have been many debates in the church about the proper components and sequence of worship. Paul did not seem to promote a particular order of worship activity.

But he was concerned that people's contributions not be slighted, that a few people should not dominate, and that everything should be understandable to visitors and members alike (14:26-33). The form and content of worship should not only honour God but reflect God's character, which he described as "not of disorder but of peace" (14:33).

As always in this letter, Paul's concern is for unity to overcome division. Respect for worshippers, inclusion of all and honouring God are the characteristics of worship that he commands.

United in body

Sex is a gift from God, but it is a common experience that sex separates people as strongly as it unites them.

In addition to the separation that happens between people because of a misuse of sexuality, there is a secondary separation that is brought about by disagreements on sexual morals and convictions. The current painful

riffs in and between congregations on homosexual ethics is only the latest in a long history of sexual ethical debates.

Many people are surprised to discover that on matters of sexual activity within marriage Paul was considerably less reserved than some of the Christians at Corinth (7:5). It may also be a surprise that Paul wrote equally of the wife's conjugal rights and the husband's (7:3-4). He was concerned that both spouses should treat the other with respect, honour, consideration and dignity.

Is sex outside of marriage okay—as long as there are no "victims?" There is a lot of discussion these days about what defines "consensual" sex, and that becomes the criterion for legal and moral approval or disapproval. Some of the Corinthians argued that gratification of sexual desire is appropriate and that Christian freedom meant that they were not bound to rigid laws (6:12).

Paul argued that Christians' bodies are "members of Christ" (6:15). So the question of fidelity is not in the first place faithfulness to one's spouse but loyalty to Christ (6:15-17). The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and intended to honour God in all its actions. There is no room in such an understanding for "casual" sex.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Paul's concern for proper use of the physical body (sexual ethics) was primarily because of his over-riding concern for the spiritual body (relationships within the church).

United in hope

Where do we go when we die? When and how will the end of time come? What will the final judgment be like?

The questions the Christians in Corinth had were more about resurrection than about Christ's return. They were especially puzzled about the idea of a bodily resurrection.

In recent years it has become popular for people to distance themselves from "any organized religion" but to claim to be "spiritual." The Corinthians were proud of being "very spiritual." Paul wasn't impressed. He had challenged them earlier on their claim to spiritual superiority. Now he insisted that rather than gloating over their spirituality they should own their physicality. What we do with our bodies is significant in God's eyes.

In his purpose of uniting the church, Paul's ethical instructions build up to the theological climax of chapter 15. Much of the chapter consists of arguments that the hope of a literal, physical resurrection is essential to Christian faith.

Paul opened this letter by urging the unity of the church. He concluded it with a strong statement about our ultimate destiny. In the resurrection, the body of Christ will be one. The things that have divided us in this life will fall away in importance to their rightful place.

As we anticipate the resurrection, we begin now to live into that reality. In light of that final goal and hope, we choose now to set aside those things that divide us from one another and are united in mind and purpose by this fundamental affirmation of our faith: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.—**Dan Nighswander**

The writer is general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada. The full text of the Prayer Week guide can be found at www.mennonitechurch.ca/resources/prayer/pw05.htm.

Why do I pray?

Not long ago, my five-year old granddaughter was met with mystery when we walked into my darkened staff room at school and the light went on “all by itself!” No one had flicked the switch.

Just by entering the dark space, our movement set off light. Awe was her response, and wonder and delight.

This story is a picture of why I pray. There is a mysterious threshold of transformation when we step out of our

‘O Lord, thou didst strike my heart with Thy Word, and I loved Thee.’

darkness into the shadow of Holy Light!

“With You is the fountain of life,” writes the Psalmist. “In your light, we see light” (Psalm 36:9).

In my Dutch childhood, I learned to say memorized prayers (can I still say them?). Gradually, I began to pray my favourite Bible verses back to God (it seemed a safe way to pray). Many years later, I realize that authentically praying my life into and out of the Scripture has become “my daily bread.”

The probing question “why do I pray?” cannot be answered simply. There are so many layers. But of two things I am sure. I pray because the Word calls me to, and I pray because out of my story I cannot not pray.

St. Augustine wrote, “O Lord, thou didst strike my heart with Thy Word, and I loved Thee.”

These words speak most eloquently what draws me into the mystery of prayer. It is the enormous love of the God of Scripture which beckons me. It is in the shadow of The Almighty and Holy One where I long to rest, to listen, to speak; to weep, to turn, to dance.

It is in prayer where my story intersects mysteriously and profoundly with God’s redemptive story.

It is like “kneeling in a pool of light” (Eugene Peterson, *Answering God*). Peterson writes, “Prayer is a way in, the way to receive and deepen the meaning of the narrative. Faith is the

most interior of human acts. Prayer is the means by which holiness/health is grafted into the unfaithful parts, inserted into the empty parts.”

Prayer helps me to find balance. Regularly, the pushings and pullings, the longings and the losses of our life, knock us off balance. In prayer, the difficult and the unknown of my exterior life are balanced with a growing peace and trust in my interior.

Prayer balances the weariness of the battle (Ephesians 6) with the strength of God’s presence. Prayer balances the pre-occupation with self with the privilege of entering the ministry of others by regularly

praying for them.

Scriptures over and over invite us to “call on the name” of the Lord on behalf of his people: Moses in the

breach (Psalm 106:23), Ezekiel in the gap (Ezekiel 22:30), Amos for his nation (Amos 7:2), John for our brother (1 John 5:16), Paul for the conflict (Ephesians 6:18), Jesus in his teaching “Your kingdom come.” It is an honour to pray for the many who faithfully work to build Christ’s kingdom across the street and around the world. I look forward in church to the pastoral invitation, “Let us pray.”

I recognize the mystery of God transforming us through our praying. Reversion before a Holy God changes us. Living under the mercy of Christ heals us. Aligning ourselves in prayer moves us to serve “shoulder to shoulder” in the kingdom of God (Zephaniah 3:9).

May our praying continue to transform us as we lean into the True Light, always in the name of Jesus.—

Laura Eriksson

The writer, a teacher, attends Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. She also compiles the Prayer Net for Mennonite Church Canada.

Dwelling in the presence of God

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites.... This is how you should pray: Our Father, Abba God... (Matthew 6).

Over the past 10 years, prayer has become my lifeline—the source of nourishment, healing, teaching and correction from God, and times of revelation. An intensive prayer journey began in the winter of 1995 when I was drowning, mentally and emotionally, gasping for life.

I began to do Silent Directed Prayer Retreats and my soul, body and mind were saved. I began to fall in love with God, to know God, to be attentive to God. As someone has said, “Prayer is being attentive to the presence of God.”

Why do I pray? To commune with God. Most significantly, prayer has become a vital discovery of God’s great love for me—His ever larger desire to forgive me, to see the best in me. God has become alive to me. I desire to be transformed into the likeness that God planted into the human being at creation, when God breathed and people became living souls.

I pray to be fully alive, to be healed, mind and soul. I pray when prompted,

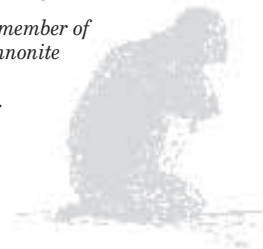
day or night, in intercession for others, not always knowing what or why. Prayer also becomes worship of God, adoration of God, to encourage God and myself. Even when sensing I am lost, I know that I am not. The Holy Spirit stirs remembrance, faith and assurance within when I pray.

I pray with scripture, figurines, pictures, in silence, in the darkness of night—recording my thoughts in a journal. Journal praying releases much heaviness and invites deep joy, hope and peace. I am reminded by a “felt presence” of God’s love for me and others.

To pray opens my eyes to see more as God sees—to accept the difficult and those who don’t believe or act as I do.

And when I pray, I bathe in God. I “behold God, beholding me, and smiling....”—**Gerry Baechler**

The writer is a member of Steinmann Mennonite Church in Baden, Ontario.



Artwork by Lynette Wiebe

Gretna, Man.

New arts centre opens at Mennonite school

Fourteen months after a sod-turning event, the Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) celebrated the opening of its \$3.5 million performing arts centre, named Buhler Hall, with a gala concert on November 28.

The afternoon event included the unveiling of the donor wall, speeches by key donors and design committee members, and a ribbon cutting by student leaders Andrea Dyck and Aaron Loepky. The concert was repeated in the evening. A total of 1,000 people attended the day's activities.

With an introduction by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra's brass section, the concert opened with Victor Engbrecht singing "The Lord's Prayer," accompanied on piano by Laura Loewen. Performances by the MCI Chamber choir, Canzona and the orchestra showcased the outstanding acoustics of Buhler Hall.

Principal Paul Kroeker says that the



Photo by Bert Friesen

Mennonite Collegiate Institute's new Buhler Hall opened with a concert on November 28.

idea of an arts centre for drama and music was a key element emerging from MCI's Think-Tank '99, a strategic planning session. The school decided to launch a \$5.5 million Next Generation Campaign to reduce the school's debt, make significant improvements, establish a student endowment fund, and to build a "state-of-the-art" music/drama facility.

About \$4.1 million has been raised toward the \$5.5 million goal, with much of the funding coming from alumni. Key donors and leaders in the fundraising initiative included Phillip Ens of Triple-E Canada, David Friesen of Friesens Corporation, and Elmer Hildebrand of Golden West Broadcasting. They were on hand to unveil the donor wall at the grand opening.

Buhler Industries contributed the lead gift of \$500,000

towards the hall which now bears the Buhler name. John and Bonnie Buhler's decision to contribute came after hearing the school choir. Two of the Buhlers' granddaughters attend MCI, a school founded in 1889.

Kroeker, who chaired the opening, described the event as "a wonderful celebration—a tribute to God and to all those who have helped to make this project a reality." He explained that initial plans for a smaller, less costly centre were revised as project leaders recognized the need for a better centre to serve all of southern Manitoba.

"A hall by itself is hard to run, but in conjunction with a school it can be operated at much lower cost," said Kroeker. Project leaders encouraged the committee to "build it right."

Winnipeg architect Raymond Wan, an MCI graduate of 1978, designed the concert hall with vision and a creative flair. Wan came to MCI from Hong Kong as an international student.

—From report by **Elmer Heinrichs**



Bonnie and John Buhler (left and right) get ready for the ribbon-cutting ceremony by students Andrea Dyck and Aaron Loepky (centre). In back right is Brian Pallister, local member of parliament.

Christian bestsellers changing the market

Christian books may not get a lot of attention in the media, but some of them are outselling the biggest bestsellers in the American market.

“The numbers are mind-boggling,” noted Rachel Donadio in an essay on “Faith-based publishing” in *The New York Times Book Review*, November 28. For example, *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren (Zondervan) has sold 20 million copies since it came out in 2002. As of late November, this “friendly, nondenominational guide that urges readers to explore what they were placed on earth to do” had been on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 96 weeks.

Your Best Life Now, an inspirational manual by pastor Joel Osteen (Warner Faith), sold 700,000 copies in its first

month. On a book tour in October, Osteen sold out Madison Square Garden two nights in a row. *Come Thirsty* is the latest title from Max Lucado, another Texas pastor, whose 50 books have sold close to 40 million copies.

Other bestselling Christian authors include Bruce Wilkinson, whose *Prayer of Jabez* (Multnomah) has sold 9.4 million copies since 2001, and John Eldredge (*Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul*).

But rising above them all is Tim LaHaye, a California evangelist whose 12-book “Left Behind” series of “gory apocalyptic thrillers” (Tyndale), written with Jerry B. Jenkins, has sold 62 million copies since the first was published in 1995. (To compare with secular bestsellers, Bill Clinton’s *My*

Life has sold about 1.9 million copies.)

Religious books now represent 11 percent of trade sales, or \$1.9 billion out of a \$13.7 billion market, said Donadio. In 1996, Random House started its own Christian imprint, WaterBrook. (In November, Doubleday, a division of Random House, became the first trade house to publish the Book of Mormon.) Warner Books founded Warner Faith in 2001.

Zondervan, an evangelical publisher, was bought by HarperCollins in 1988. It publishes not only religious bestseller Rick Warren, but one of the top-selling Bibles—the New International Version Study Bible, with 7 million copies in print. (HarperCollins’ other bestseller last fall was *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star*.)

It’s unclear, concluded Donadio, whether the stellar sales of Christian books “speak to a newfound spiritual thirst in the culture,” or are more indicative of “great marketing.” Marketing strategies include repackaging for different markets (versions of the same book for women or teens, for example) and selling through mass outlets such as Wal-Mart.—**Margaret Loewen Reimer**

Calendar marks Christian year

Looking for a calendar that focuses on the Christian year? “Salt of the Earth: Christian Seasons Calendar,” created four years ago as a catechism tool by a United Church of Canada congregation in Vancouver, was “designed to remind users that there is a different time going on here—that we’re living God’s time, not the world’s time.”

The calendar is divided into the seven seasons of the church year, not the twelve months of a usual calendar. This may be a bit confusing. For example, New Year’s falls on the first day of Advent.

But that’s the whole point, says Ed Searcy, pastor of the sponsoring congregation. The calendar reminds Christians that they are first citizens of the kingdom of God.

The calendar includes scripture readings for each Sunday from the Revised Common Lectionary, descriptions of each season, unfolding pages for the longer seasons of Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost, and beautiful artwork, which this year features two mixed media images by Lynette (Schroeder) Wiebe of Mennonite Church Canada.

The calendar sells 5000 copies



“Christ standing alone” by Lynette Wiebe, from the Christian Seasons Calendar.

annually. For order information visit www.thechristiancalendar.com.

—**Leona Dueck Penner**

Arts note

Five choirs and two organs

On January 29, five choirs and two organs will be featured in a concert at First United Church in Waterloo, Ontario. Leonard Enns of Conrad Grebel University College will conduct two of the choirs, the Da Capo Chamber Choir and the Conrad Grebel Chapel Choir. Other groups are the Wilfrid Laurier University Chapel Choir, and choirs from St. John’s Anglican Church and First United. The organists are Jan Overduin and Marlin Nagtegaal. Music is by Vierne, Langlais, Mendelssohn, Pärt, Britten, as well as a new work by Canadian composer Patricia Dirks.—From Grebel release

An open letter to Cornerstone church

The Mennonite Church Canada General Board recently met in Saskatoon, at Cornerstone Church Mennonite. For three days, we listened to one another, worried about finances, read reports, ate together.

We reflected on our assembly in Winkler last July with appreciation. We heard reports from a missional trip to Cuba, and from our brothers and sisters in the family of faith we have come to know as Mennonite World Conference. We passed some motions, even as we sought for consensus. We began each day with prayer and meditation.

We shared our differences and agreements as area conferences within MC Canada. We acknowledged that we have different ways of supporting MC Canada financially. We were reminded that we cannot take unity for granted. We listened to Mennonite Church British Columbia representatives raise questions about membership procedures and standards. We agreed to establish a council that would help us to discern theological and moral issues that confront us in our culture.

We were humbled as we read a letter from the Meserete Kristos College in Ethiopia, which concluded with these words: "May the Lord bless Canadian Mennonite Church abundantly both spiritually and other things it lacks." What might we lack?

Yes, we have been blessed as Mennonite Church Canada. But surrounded by our wealth, we do lack some spiritual gifts. We were told that our physical gifts—which are many—become spiritual gifts when they are shared freely and joyfully.

This is what we did from Thursday morning to Saturday afternoon at Cornerstone church, where there was also a 24-hour prayer vigil going on throughout the week.

On Sunday morning, I returned to Cornerstone for the early worship service. I sat with my cousin and his family who are members of this congregation. I read in the bulletin

that a membership meeting would be held to discuss the relationship between Cornerstone and Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and, by extension, Mennonite Church Canada.

Later, on my flight home, I was smitten with regret. Why hadn't I said something during the sharing time in that service? I could have read from Ephesians 4 (the sermon was from Ephesians 3) where Paul asks his readers to "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

And then I could have said: "I am a Mennonite pastor from Leamington, Ontario, and a member of Mennonite Church Canada General Board. I want

to say thank you to this congregation for making your facilities available to us for our three days of meeting. I hope that you have remembered us in your prayer vigil, as we have also prayed for you in our gathering.

"Nevertheless, I am concerned.... I understand that there are some here who have reservations about continuing your covenant connection with MC Saskatchewan and MC Canada. Conference connections give us so many good things that enrich our lives, broaden our perspective, and enable us to serve and bear witness to Jesus Christ, not just down the street, but across the country and around the world.

"May God give you every opportunity to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I will continue to pray for you."—**Darrell Fast**

This section is a forum for discussion and discernment. Letters express the opinion of the writer only, not necessarily the position of Canadian Mennonite, any of the five area churches or Mennonite Church Canada. Letters should address issues rather than criticising individuals and include the writer's contact information. We will send copies of letters discussing other parties to the named individuals or organizations to provide the opportunity for a response. Letters can be sent to letters@canadianmennonite.org or to "Letter to the Editor," Canadian Mennonite, 490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5, Waterloo, ON N2L 6H7.

Letters

Righteousness comes only from God

Your report on the British Columbia "Walking in grace" conference (Nov. 15, page 13) quotes Willard Swartley's comment, "We must each confess our sin, but we do not have an excuse to continue in it." The words are quite true, but those who think they have stopped sinning are deceiving themselves.

This reflects the fundamental problem facing the church as it wrestles with sexuality. Too many heterosexual Christians assume they have succeeded in not continuing in sin. When we talk of the sins of others,

we speak as though we have avoided deceit, arrogance, adultery and other offences. Hence we think we are pleasing to God. This was the dominant standard at the B. C. conference encouraged by Swartley's message.

History has numerous stories of people who embarked on the path to create communities of the sinless. Among the children of Menno Simons and Michael Sattler are spectacular examples of groups deceived into joining utopias of the perfect. Today many Christians keep on striving to expurgate one last sin from their lives so God will accept them.

The fact is that there is no group of humans that can claim preference in the sight of God because they think

Continued on page 12

Letters

they better understand scripture or practice a higher standard of morality.

The only righteousness anyone possesses is that which is accounted to them by God. The opportunity before us is to daily remind others of the divine mystery—that God sets all on their feet and frees them to live in joy, hope and gratitude.—**John Klassen, Fort Langley, B.C.**

Music articles evoke inspiring memories

Thank you for the “Advent and the missional church” by Marilyn Houser Hamm and Marlene Kropf and “Through the song the church goes on” by Leonard Enns (Nov. 15). This was great reading! Music has been an important and enjoyable part of my life.

Isaiah had a vision of God: “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.... Holy, holy, holy is the

Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:1,3).

There have been times when I felt a little like Isaiah, usually during singing performances. Some examples: studying music with S.F. Coffman at Winter Bible School in Kitchener in the 1940s; singing school directed by Harold Scheidel; having B. Charles Hostettler and the Mennonite Hour quartet, the Millers and the Masts, in our parents’ home; and hearing the Bender Male Quartet.

One of the highlights of our family was going to Massey Hall in the late 1940s to hear the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the Mendelssohn Choir perform Handel’s “Messiah” under the direction of Ernest McMillan. When they did the Hallelujah Chorus, eight auxiliary church choirs joined them in the four balconies on each side of the stage. That was an unforgettable experience. I wonder what Isaiah would have written if he had been there.

Another highlight was a funeral service at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Waterloo. The organ prelude completely filled that high sanctuary

with music. Another memorable experience was Mennonite Church General Assembly in Estes Park, Colorado, in 1977 when 5,000 voices were raised in praise, and thousands of youth performed “Jesus Christ Superstar” under the direction of Robert Shantz.

When our family travelled to visit cousins in Ontario or Pennsylvania, the hymnals were always an important part of the trip. We may not have had a radio in our 1929 Dodge, but we had lots of music.

Thanks again for the articles on church music. The hymns mentioned are some of my favourites. Keep up the good work, writers and editors.

—**Nevin Gingerich, Kitchener, Ont.**

Police conversations essential for peace church

I was pleased to see the article on police officers (Nov. 29). I want to commend Mennonite Central Committee for creating the opportunity for this conversation, but even more the officers for their willingness to open

Learning new dance steps

It was one of those slightly panicky moments just before a holiday dinner. Guests needed to be welcomed, and dishes needed to be moved from stove to table. So when my husband asked if he could help by mashing the potatoes, I smiled gratefully and passed the mixer to him.

I did pause briefly over his offer. After a few decades of entertaining, we have settled into what might be called a separate spheres approach. Each person addresses his or her task independently. That way there’s less to negotiate, something which requires more time (and patience?) than we generally have.

Later, when I was whipping cream for dessert, the same thing happened. My husband offered to help. I accepted, and turned to make coffee. Later when we were alone, I said, “I really appreciated your offer to help when I was mashing the potatoes.”

“It drives me crazy the way you mix things!” he exclaimed. “You bang the beaters right up against the bowl. It’s so noisy!”

“That’s the way to mix it thoroughly,”

I protested. “Otherwise the cream doesn’t peak.” Even as I uttered the last words, I knew they were untrue. His earlier demonstration—whipping the cream quietly—had produced perfectly acceptable whipped cream.

Why do I use the mixer in such a noisy



fashion? Because that’s how my mother did it, I concluded, recalling the commotion and clutter of the kitchen of my childhood. Come to think of it, my grandmother also had a certain slap-dash, pan-slamming approach to meal preparation, which I had inherited and modified, of course.

But the noise of the beaters drove my auditorily-sensitive spouse crazy. Well, I could certainly learn to mash potatoes

more quietly, especially if he was going to be so gracious. “Can I help you?” is a much sweeter way to signal you’d like a change than a blunt “knock off that blasted racket!”

It’s January. A new month in a new year. A time when many people welcome the chance for a fresh start, and make resolutions to change something in their lives. One thing I value about being a Christian is the way Jesus offers transformation. We don’t have to stay stuck in our same ways of doing things.

Counsellors often use a dance metaphor when advising people about their relationships. Change the dance. Add some new steps. Consider whether that move is getting you where you want to go.

My husband’s little manoeuvre around the mixer was a successful, innovative step. Perhaps there might be a new dance move you could make. Who knows where it might take you?

The writer is a counsellor, author and teacher from Winnipeg. She is currently a Master of Divinity student at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

themselves to critique by the broader Mennonite community.

Although I was not a police officer, I worked for seven years as a Property Control Officer for the Calgary City Police. It was my job to maintain the integrity of evidence in possession of the police service. This brought me into constant contact with police officers. I came to this position through a series of redeployments by the city.

Although I was not thrilled with this position, the work proved to be interesting and I was intrigued to be inside one of the most powerful institutions in society. Equally intriguing was how police officers/co-workers and my Mennonite brothers and sisters responded to me. At that time I was active in the MCC Alberta prison visitation program, M2W2. When people in prison or at work learned of my broader life, the conversations were interesting. Within the Mennonite community people seemed unsure how to respond.

The irony for me was that only after I left this job and took a position with the General Conference Mennonite Church did I realize that I felt the most Anabaptist while working for the Calgary Police Service.

I encourage the continuation of this dialogue. It is essential for the peace churches to be engaged in both the micro and macro world of law enforcement. The participating police officers put a God face to the issues and realities.—**Brad Reimer, Fannystelle, Man.**

Reminder to Congregations

When new people begin attending your church, remember to sign them up for Canadian Mennonite.

Contact Canadian Mennonite at 1-800-378-2524, ext. 221 or office@canadianmennonite.org

CANADIAN
Mennonite

Charities should avoid telephone solicitation

The issue of putting charities on the proposed national “do not call” list seems easily solved—have two lists, one for telemarketing, one for charities. Register your name on both if you don’t want calls from either.

If there is only one list, I would like to see charities on it because there are plenty of other ways to raise funds. I’m guessing that a lot of the money goes to pay callers. The phone method will end up turning people off to giving. I

would like to see charities get more creative in fundraising.

I find charity calls almost as annoying as telemarketing because many callers are disrespectful. They try to prevent you from getting a word in, then when you politely tell them “no,” some try to make you feel guilty.

I will always be a charitable person, but will never give over the phone again for the above reasons.—**Howard Boldt, Saskatoon, Sask.**

Pontius' Puddle



Ministry Opportunity

Mennonite Church Canada Witness invites applications for:
Native Ministry Director and Partnership Facilitator

Full-time position

Starting date: August/September/05

Please submit a letter of intent, resume, and references

Application deadline: **March 10, 2005**

The Native Ministry Director and Partnership Facilitator is responsible to direct Mennonite Church Canada's ongoing relationship with the First Nations people across Canada and to facilitate ministry partnerships and learning between Native communities and non-Native constituencies.

The job profile implements the priorities of Witness' ministry, such as native leadership training and resourcing congregational life; facilitating ministry partnerships; bridge building among Native and non-Native constituencies; and networking with other organizations.

To submit applications or for additional detail in understanding the profile, qualifications, and salary of this position please see our website: www.mennonitechurch.ca or contact Executive Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada Witness

www.mennonitechurch.ca

Toll free: 1-866-888-6785

Phone: 204-888-6781

Fax: 204-831-5675

witness@mennonitechurch.ca

St. John's, Nfld.

Restorative justice moving forward in Newfoundland/Labrador

It was a terrifying night for Margaret when her picture window was shattered by young vandals. For the first time in her long life, she felt unsafe in the home where she was born. A few weeks later, she had the chance to take part in the first victim offender mediation, a new experiment in restorative justice.

The ripples from that groundbreaking effort 30 years ago in Elmira, Ontario, have created waves around the world. Those waves first broke on the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador over 20 years ago, and the restorative justice movement continues today.

On November 20, people from across Newfoundland and Labrador gathered here for a conference on restorative justice. Mark Yantzi, the keynote speaker, had helped to facilitate Margaret's meeting with the two young men who had vandalized her house. Yantzi shared stories from his long career in restorative justice work, as well as some wisdom for the movement in this province.

This is an exciting time to be working in this field here because there is a groundswell of interest in this approach to crime and community conflict. Rooted in aboriginal traditions, restorative justice attempts to bring victim, offender and community together to come up with creative ways to make things right after a crime has been committed.

The conference, part of the national celebration of Restorative Justice Week, brought together people from community-based organizations, government and faith communities. The goal was to create a plan for raising public awareness about restorative justice, and to build a stronger provincial coalition with a unified vision.

There are several restorative justice programs in this province, including

working to reintegrate offenders into the community, offering alternative ways to deal with youth crime, and alternative forms of sentencing. A victim offender program for adults is in its early stages.

The first step will be to raise public awareness about what restorative justice means and how it can benefit our communities.

There are many challenges. We need to make the movement more representative of the vast geographic and cultural diversity of the province. We need to address the cautions of those who see potential dangers in the

restorative justice approach, including the potential to re-victimize, to "restore" women to an abusive relationship, or to subtly coerce victims to forgive those who have harmed them.

With these concerns in mind and a commitment to move forward with intelligent enthusiasm, we can build an effective movement and more programs that respond creatively to crime and community conflict.—**Scott Morton Ninomiya**

The writer, from Kitchener, Ontario, is a community justice worker with MCC Canada in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Akron, Pa.

MCC launches response to Asian disaster

Mennonite Central Committee is making several million dollars available for assistance in the wake of the December 26 earthquake and tsunami in southeast Asia.

The response includes more than \$2.5 million in cash and almost \$1 million in material aid, including food, clothing and medical supplies.

The MCC response includes the purchase of 2,000 metric tons of grain for distribution in affected areas of India. This \$800,000 purchase will be matched through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

In Indonesia, \$90,000 is being distributed to an ecumenical consortium formed to coordinate aid. Already MCC funds have gone to renting cargo transport and warehouses, distributing aid, transporting medical workers, and purchasing medicine and clean water equipment.

"Part of the reason this event is so devastating is that people in the areas affected have lost absolutely everything and are now needing to rebuild from scratch," said Ronald J. R. Mathies,

executive director of MCC.

In India, MCC is working with the India Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA). In Sri Lanka, MCC staff are assisting local churches in packaging relief supplies and accompanying a medical team to damaged areas.

MCC sent an assessment team to

India and Sri Lanka in early January. MCC worker Mark Oxley, along with two doctors and other volunteers, travelled to disaster areas. In Indonesia MCC staff worker Pak Abang will be part of an assessment team visiting the devastation in north Sumatra.

MCC has 10 North American workers, along with five children, in Indonesia. There are two workers and two children in Sri Lanka; five workers in India; and one worker in Thailand. There are dozens of local workers in the affected areas. All MCC workers are safe.

Donations can be made to the Asia Earthquake Fund by calling 1-888-622-6337 or through the MCC web site at www.mcc.org/asiaearthquake.—MCC



Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Vietnam police attempt to shut down church

Vietnamese authorities are determined to close the Mennonite church in this city. The congregation meets in the home of Nguyen Hong Quang, a pastor who was imprisoned last June. His wife, Le Thi Phu Dung, has assumed some pastoral duties since then.

On November 28, some 30 adults and children were at worship when about 50 police and administrative personnel arrived, broke up the meeting, and issued citations for gathering in an unauthorized meeting. Some of the believers have to borrow money to pay the fines.

According to Dung, the authorities asked why she is defying the order not to meet for worship.

"I am the shepherd of the flock," she replied. The building also serves as the office of the Vietnam Mennonite Church.

Vietnam's constitution "guarantees" freedom to believe or not to believe. Six religions have received legal status, but some Buddhists, Christians (especially house churches) and other believers not affiliated with recognized bodies are frequently harassed.

The church meeting in Pastor Quang's home experienced a tolerable level of harassment for several years. That changed earlier this year. After Quang was arrested, authorities gathered area people to denounce the church.

One man claimed that the church welcomed young people in to "scream and sing," using amplifiers and drums, disturbing the people "from 4:00 and 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 and 12:00 p.m.!" The neighbours said the activities were affecting their health. They also complained that their children were in danger of being run over by the church members' vehicles.

The Quang home also served as a training centre for young evangelists. In October, 11 persons were ordered to vacate the premises. When they produced papers showing they were registered to live there, the police confiscated their identity cards.

On November 10, just before Quang's trial, authorities called a community gathering and denounced the church members as troublemakers and

ordered them to stop worship services and to remove the church sign.

Nevertheless, the Mennonite Christians met as usual that Sunday, and the authorities did not interfere. However, police have searched the house several times since then, charging Dung of harbouring people and

confiscating equipment.

In early December, the church divided into groups of 12 to 15 persons, meeting in several locations for worship. However, whenever groups gather at the centre, police continue to come. —From Mennonite World Conference and Vietnamese Ministries report

Calgary, Alta.

MCC Alberta dedicates new centre

As people gathered from across the province at the old Mennonite Central Committee Alberta building on Skyline Crescent, Doug Klassen noted that the place itself is not sacred—it is a space that enabled people to do the work of the Lord.

Klassen, pastor of Foothills Mennonite Church here, led the December 4 ceremonies that decommissioned the old building before dedicating the new location.

Sterling Rempel, chair of Mennonite Mutual Insurance which shared the building, led in reminiscing. Sheryl Janzen and Larry Jantzi read a history of MCC Alberta's development during its 22 years in this location and before that in a warehouse rented for \$1 a year. In those years, Ruth Quiring ran the entire office. A letter from Bill Thiessen, first director of MCC Alberta, described his 15 years of involvement.

With a prayer of blessing, Klassen closed the celebration and people made their way to the new location on 32 Street NE. This new building houses not only the MCC offices, thrift shop and material resources centre, but also offices of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta,

Mennonite Mutual Insurance, and Mennonite Foundation of Canada.

"This is a new chapter in the chronicle of service," said Phil Klassen, chair of MCC Alberta. Architect Rudy Friesen explained that the décor reflects the various countries that MCC works with. Much volunteer labour helped complete the building, and it finished below budget.

Now there is a place that connects



Photo by Irene Klassen

The new location of the Alberta MCC office includes an expanded thrift shop and other Mennonite offices.

six activities of Alberta Mennonites. Representatives from the partners expressed their appreciation for the new space. Bob Veitch of Mennonite Foundation introduced Gary Sawatzky, a new regional representative who will have an office here.

Mark Jantzen from the Dalhousie Community Church spoke a blessing: "This building is just the wrapping of the presence of God, and by faith we dedicate it to God's work." Guests were invited to tour the building and to enjoy the refreshments.—**Irene Klassen**

Winnipeg, Man.

General Board works to mobilize church for common good

In a 160th anniversary address at Knox College in Toronto, TV journalist Brian Stewart said that “there is no alliance more determined and dogged in action than church workers...when mobilized for a common good.” Christians are “on the front lines” of committed humanity today.

“I’ve never reached a war zone, or famine group or crisis anywhere where some church organization was not there long before me,” said Stewart. Mobilizing people for “a common good” takes many forms—critical is organization and leadership, said Stewart.

From November 11-13, the General Board of Mennonite Church Canada worked at organization and discernment on issues that will eventually manifest themselves on the “front lines.” Following are some of the highlights.

Global Gift Sharing

Board members committed most of a day to a Mennonite World Conference (MWC) initiative that asks churches to discern the gifts they have to share with the rest of the world. North Americans represent 88 percent of the MWC family’s estimated wealth, but only 26 percent of its members. But the gifts extend far beyond monetary resources.

Members generated a list of what MC Canada has to offer the global church which included teaching resources, advocacy and solidarity, hospitality, ethnic diversity awareness, tradition of service, peace and justice perspectives, wealth, and conflict mediation skills.

Several expressed surprise that MC Canada already has at least 36 formal partnerships with other church organizations in missions. It became clear that the best use of energy will be to build up those relationships, and to adjust to churches that are maturing.

Sven Eriksson, denominational minister, said, “The general value of the whole session [from my perspective] was in putting the General Board work into the bigger context, getting them to think about the implications

of what they do.”

Five-year review

Leaders know that regular reviews are the heartbeat of a dynamic and flexible organization. Following through on a 1999 commitment to review structures and staff, the General Board heard a report from management consultant Aldred Neufeldt (First Mennonite Church, Calgary) that affirmed the current balance of program, support and administrative staff.

Since the merger of the Mennonite Church and General Conference

Mennonite Church in 2002, MC Canada has assumed responsibility for more programs, with a budget increase of about 135 percent. Program staffing has increased proportionately while executive staffing has remained level.

How to proceed on a new purpose statement was less clear. Board members considered proposals from an ad hoc group, and wrestled with whether such a statement should serve the community of congregations or the national institution of MC Canada. The “Vision: Healing and Hope” statement has been widely embraced already. What additional statements do we need to guide our shared ministry?

The ad hoc group will continue to polish its proposal for delegates at next summer’s assembly.

Finances

With a projected donation shortfall of about \$120,000, General Board members devoted time to long-range funding issues. It’s been two years since MC Canada established four program priorities to help define a new direction.

In the light of those priorities, moderator Henry Krause asked a series of questions: Should we spend more inside or outside of Canada?

work globally or nationally? provide resources to our congregations or work on behalf of our congregations?

Sue Steiner, chair of Christian Formation Council, focused the issues by asking “What do churches need from us?” Another board member clarified the issue further, “Do churches need us to provide them with resources to help their programs, or do they need us to do what they can’t do by themselves?” So far, the councils and staff have been attempting to balance the two.

To put these questions into long-range perspective, MC Canada will spend 18 months on a process to understand how

‘It’s clear that people want to give generously. Some want to support a unified budget, others on a case-by-case basis...’

people want to participate in funding the church in the future.

“It’s clear that people want to give generously. Some want to support a unified budget, others on a case-by-case basis,” said Dan Nighswander, general secretary. And there is “anxiety among the older generation who founded institutions that are no longer capturing the imagination of the next generation.”

After debating possibilities, the board was ready to tackle the immediate issue—a possible shortfall in revenue. Fiscal policy requires that projected budgets fall within actual revenue of the previous year, so councils may have to reduce spending for the coming year while accommodating an increased cost of living.

For a national organization committed to ongoing ministries and partnerships, the financial challenge is very real. Finding stable and long-term solutions for advancing God’s mission continues to be an ongoing test of faith and commitment.

Other issues

A committee, appointed by the General Board, will explore forming a council to address denomination-wide questions of theology, polity, ethics and practice. A proposal will be presented

at the 2005 assembly.

MC Canada leadership is in communication with Rosemary Mennonite Church (Alberta) regarding its tabled resolution on “dealing with churches at variance” with the Confession of Faith. A defeated resolution from Niverville Mennonite Church (Manitoba) calling for the *Canadian Mennonite* to be transformed into a wholly church-owned magazine is being addressed by area conference leaders who are working on a partnership agreement with *Canadian Mennonite*. New editor Tim Dyck has been on a listening tour to hear concerns, and affirmations, for the magazine.

A motion from pastors in B.C. seeking a scripture motto for MC Canada will turn into a country-wide suggestion box. A proposed motto will be presented at Assembly 2006.

In response to the ongoing conversation with MC British Columbia over same-sex relationships, the General Board has drafted a letter to all congregations outlining board actions to date. The letter notes that at the November meeting, the board renewed its commitment to work with congregations and area conferences “to encourage and foster conversations between people who are struggling with these issues and questions.”

A meeting for MC B.C. members on polity (how churches make decisions and are accountable to each other) will be held in February as part of an 18-month discernment process on B.C.’s relationship with the rest of MC Canada.—From MC Canada release by **Dan Dyck** and **Karin Fehderau**

The new \$5 million residence at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg has raised issues of property ownership. A resolution at the Mennonite Church Canada assembly last summer acknowledged that the property used by CMU at 600 Shaftesbury was purchased for the purpose of higher education. At its November meeting, the MC Canada General Board heard several legal options for transferring title of this property to CMU. The interests of MC Canada and MC Manitoba, which have offices at 600 Shaftesbury, must be protected under any new arrangement.—From MC Canada release

Winnipeg, Man.

MCC sends letter to prime minister

Delegates at the Mennonite Central Committee Canada annual meeting approved a letter to Prime Minister Paul Martin which urged action on two issues with global implications: 1) the Millennium Development Goals, and 2) the Ballistic Missile Defence system. The delegates also assured the prime minister of their prayers.

The November 27 letter, drafted by Bill Janzen of MCC’s Ottawa Office, says: “The churches we represent have a longstanding commitment to alleviate suffering and to promote justice and peace in accordance with Biblical teaching.” The letter also acknowledged the prime minister’s commitment to international peace and development, illustrated by his recent trip to the Sudan and other places of conflict.

Regarding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted in 2000 by all 189 countries belonging to the United Nations, the letter notes that the international community has been slow in implementing them even though they are modest. The first goal is merely to reduce by one-half the proportion of the world’s people living on less than one dollar a day.

“We urge you to ensure that Canada does its full share toward meeting the MDGs and that Canada press other countries to do likewise.”

Citing scientists’ cautions about the missile defence system, the letter says: “We are not persuaded that this system can provide security.” The letter expresses concern that this defence system represents a major step away from seeking security through arms control agreements and turns, instead, toward a greater reliance on military might.

“In our view, the Biblical call to seek security by doing justice and caring for the needy rather than in ‘chariot and sword’ is profoundly relevant.”

The letter also draws attention to domestic trends “away from community and moral values,” and even religious freedom. “In our view religious communities make very substantial contributions to Canadian society in many ways. We urge you to ensure that public policies are respectful of their role.”

The delegate body requested that copies of the letter be sent to all Members of Parliament. The full text of the letter can be found at www.mcc.org/canada/ottawa.—MCC Canada release



Harrisonburg, Va.

Mennonites return to Dongming after 57 years

For nearly 40 years, North American Mennonites worshipped with Chinese at a church in the Shangdong Province of China. In 1947, they were asked to leave the country. Until October 2004, Mennonites had not been back to that area.

"We have been waiting a very long time for Mennonites to return and visit," said one woman in the rural area of Dongming, where Mennonites first made contact in the early 1900s.

The Mennonite group that visited the area in October included Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers Rod and Kathi Suderman, Jeanette Hanson, and Gordon Janzen, as well as Myrrl Byler of China Educational Exchange, Sheldon and Marietta Sawatzky of Mennonite Mission Network, and Diane Gehman of Mennonite Central Committee. Zhu Qingchun, a pastor from Henan Province who works with the Christian Council, accompanied the group.

In the summer of 2003, Christians in Dongming wrote to Roland Brown, whose parents, Henry and Maria Brown, had been the first missionaries in China from the former General Conference Mennonite Church. The Dongming group invited Brown to visit.

Henry and Maria Brown had arrived in China in 1909 and established mission stations in six counties south of Beijing and northwest of Shanghai. August and Martha Ewert were two workers in Dongming during the 1930s. They made their last visit in 1947; MCC workers delivered relief goods to the region as late as 1950.

Roland Brown, who worked as a mission doctor in Taiwan for most of his career, was a teenager when his parents sent him back to the U.S. Now retired in Kansas, he was unable to respond to the invitation because of a family health situation. He passed the invitation on to Mennonites working in China.

"What we didn't realize is that the believers had been at the church already for five days, taking part in a five-day, all day, revival meeting. When we arrived...on a Friday afternoon, the

church was completely packed with about 500-600 persons," said Byler.

Government officials and church leaders were very aware of the Mennonite beginnings of the church. They proudly showed an enlarged photo of church workers that had been taken during the 1920s.

"Every short blessing and remark which I made was greeted with enthusiastic applause," said Byler. "Afterwards the courtyard outside the church was filled with excitement as the people streamed out to take pictures with us and see the foreign visitors."



Photo by Gordon Janzen

Rod Suderman (right), Witness worker in China, joins Christians in the Dongming church for worship.

Nanchong, China

Million dollar Bible sold at Chinese auction

Okay, it's not quite a million dollars, and it's Hong Kong dollars, but a Bible was auctioned off in Hong Kong this summer for HK \$850,000 (about \$140,000) at an exhibition entitled, "A Lamp to my feet, A Light to my path."

The exhibition included Bibles and Christian artifacts produced on the mainland of China since the 17th century. Performances of sacred music and dance were also included, along with displays of Christian art. The China Christian Council was one of the organizers.

It was a high-profile event, held at the Hong Kong Convention Center, the magnificent harbour-side edifice constructed for the 1997 return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule. The opening ceremony was attended by church

leaders, as well as Hong Kong's chief executive. More than 20,000 people attended the six-day exhibition.

Some visitors brought along their own Bibles to check their accuracy. There have long been claims that Bibles produced in China have been edited in unacceptable ways, like replacing "God" with "Communist Party," leaving out the book of Revelation, or dropping any mention of the resurrection.

None of these claims has ever been proven, and no one at the Hong Kong exhibition discovered any problems, either. A Christian website described a "China-Only Use Bible" that "leaves out parts of the Old Testament, Jesus' second coming, and other parts that are deemed 'not appropriate' for use in China." Recently, the organization removed the accusation from its website

Where there were only several hundred Christians when missionaries left in 1947, there are now 30,000 believers in Dongming County, the largest Christian population of any of the six counties where Mennonites worked.

There is only one ordained pastor in the county—he is a graduate of the Nanjing Biblical Seminary. As is the case all over China, the work of the church is carried on by elders, evangelists and other lay workers.

The churches are not Mennonite in name—the church in China has attempted to do away with denominational distinctions.

“We hope to maintain contact with the church in Dongming, to learn more of their story, to be inspired by their example,” Byler said. “There may also be ways in which we can offer them assistance as this is a very poor area.”

The grounds where the church is located is where Henry Brown had originally purchased land, although the church has been given back only a small part of the original land.

The church building is “one of the older and poorer-looking church buildings I have seen in China,” said Byler.—From MC Canada release by

Melodie Davis

at the urging of a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker.

Witness workers in China have easy access to Chinese (and Chinese-English) Bibles, not only through churches but also on their campuses and in markets. While magazines and books are sold at substantial discounts, Bible prices are marked up so much that customers are charged double or triple the price they would pay at the church.

The inflated prices do not seem exorbitant because the Bibles are heavily subsidized by the United Bible Societies. At churches, the cheapest Chinese Bible costs \$1.25. Chinese-English New Testaments are available for \$1.65, while a leatherette-bound, gilt-edged bilingual Bible with thumb index sells for \$4.60.

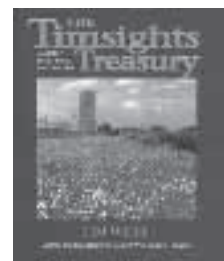
The Bible auctioned off in Hong Kong was a New Testament presented to the Empress Dowager Cixi on her 60th

Publishing notes

Cookbook author Phyllis Pellman Good has hit *The New York Times* bestseller list again. Her new cookbook, *Fix-It and Forget-It Lightly*, arrived in the stores last August and a month later landed on the bestseller list, despite some warnings. “Buyers were telling us that we had to change the emphasis of the new book from low-fat to low-carb,” Good said. “But I was cautious about the long-term health effects of the low-carb diet,” so she stuck to her approach. “By late spring, the same buyers were telling us that they saw low-carb books beginning a decline, and they got behind *Lightly* in a big way.” Phyllis and her husband Merle, publishers of Good Books, have released three cookbooks in the series. The first, published in 2000, was *Fix-It and Forget-It Cookbook*, which became a bestseller. The second was *Fix-It and Forget-It Recipes for Entertaining*. Together the books have sold more than 6 million copies. The fourth book in the series, *Fix-It and Forget-It*

Diabetic Cookbook, is being released in January. The recipes were planned in cooperation with the American Diabetes Association.—From Good Books release

The Timights Treasury is a collection of devotionals for every day of the year by Tim Wiebe, culled from his 11 years of daily radio spots, called *Timights*, on Golden West Broadcasting stations. Wiebe is a teacher at Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Manitoba; he has also taught at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ontario. The hardcover book is published by Mennonite Collegiate Institute and can be ordered by phone at (204) 327-5891, or e-mail: mci@mciblues.net.



birthday. The proceeds of the auction were donated to the Chinese University of Hong Kong for SARS research.—**Todd Hanson**

The writer, a member of Grace Mennonite Church, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, is a Witness worker in Nanchong, China.

Students examine books for sale, including Chinese Bibles on the bottom corner of the table.

MCC photo by Matthew Lester



Odette Mukeshimana (right), 18, and Jean de Dieu Kubwimawa, 14, practise sewing at a school in Kigali, Rwanda. The school, for 94 orphans and street kids, is run by the Evangelical Friends Church of Rwanda. Mennonite Central Committee supports the school with about \$1,450 each year.

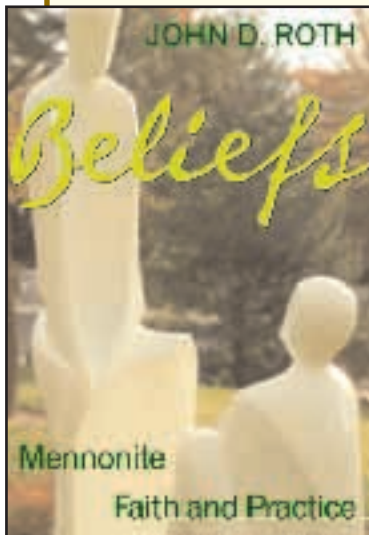
News brief

Kairos urges budget based on justice

Kairos, an ecumenical justice organization that represents 11 Canadian church organizations including Mennonite Central Committee, submitted a brief to the Parliamentary Finance Committee at its pre-budget hearings in November. The brief urges the government to make justice the core theme of its 2005 budget. A budget based on justice, it contends, would redistribute the tax load from low-income individuals to wealthy businesses and individuals who currently find easy ways of disguising income. The brief recommends investment in areas where there is greatest need, such as child poverty and homelessness, and resolving unjust treatment of aboriginals and refugees. It encourages the government to end the siphoning of resources from the poorest countries in the world by the richest by cancelling the debt of low-income countries and increasing development spending. Taxing pollution and phasing out fossil fuel subsidies are also among Kairos' recommendations. More information can be found at www.kairoscanada.org. —From MCC Ottawa Office

U.S. army deserter pleads his case in Canada

A paratrooper in the U.S. army is seeking asylum in Canada because he is convinced the war in Iraq is illegal and morally wrong. Jeremy Hinzman requested conscientious objector status but when that was denied, he deserted the army and moved to Canada with his wife and child. At his hearing his lawyer argued that the U.S. invasion of Iraq violates international human rights and that Hinzman should not be compelled to participate in it. Hinzman and others have testified about the killing of civilians and other atrocities committed by the U.S. in Iraq. He has requested that his refugee hearing be public so that people can hear his case. Four other U.S. army deserters are awaiting similar hearings.—From *Globe and Mail* and CBC reports



Beliefs

Mennonite Faith and Practice

For nearly five centuries Mennonites have maintained a distinct theological identity from the Catholic church and other Protestant groups. This short, engaging book gives a brief account of what Mennonites believe. From the beginnings of the Anabaptist (or Mennonite) movement in the 16-century, to biblical interpretation, baptism, understandings of the church, ethics, and the complex question of denominationalism, popular writer, speaker, and scholar, **John D. Roth** provides a solid framework for on-going conversa-

tions about faithful discipleship in the Mennonite church today. Each chapter includes "Questions for Contemporary Mennonites" for group or individual reflection. Paper, 150 pages, \$13.99



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North Newton, Kan.

MCC hosts consultation on globalization

Participants in a Mennonite Central Committee economic globalization consultation stressed the value of eating locally produced food and supporting measures to ensure that producers are paid fairly.

The December 3-4 event, held at Bethel College, brought together about 35 farmers, economists, theologians and development advocates from Canada, the United States, Bangladesh and Kenya. This consultation, the final in a series, focused on the impact of globalization on the United States and Canada.

Anglican rector Cathy Campbell of Winnipeg offered a spiritual framework for the discussion, telling participants that "God's manna food policy...means there is no need for hoarding or greed."

Presenters spoke about the globalization of agribusiness, and how farms are becoming fewer, larger, more specialized, market-oriented and factory-like. But specialization can hurt farmers—such as when the United States stops importing beef from Canada following a mad cow scare. Some presenters suggested that farmers should diversify by finding a niche market, such as free-range chickens, bison or llamas, to help stay afloat.

Part of globalization's impact is spreading new technology, which raises complex concerns. For each person praising that technology, another pointed out risks. For example, long-term effects of eating genetically modified grains are not known. But, noted Derek DiSilva, who has worked with MCC in agriculture in Bangladesh for decades, people there would rather risk dying in 25 years than starving now.

Presenters noted that agribusiness must cater to the desires of consumers in order to thrive, so educating consumers to consider justice when shopping will help create a more sustainable world. There is a need to change the emphasis from cheap food—which often undermines small farmers—to the need for employment and fair wages so that everyone can afford nutritious food.

Participants discussed the value of buying fair trade coffee, even when it costs more, or paying a local farmer a premium for hormone-free beef and fresh vegetables. One person suggested that the extra money paid for fairly traded food as like "putting money into the offering."

The importance of locally produced food for local consumption was raised several times—an idea that fits closely with the new MCC cookbook, *Simply in*

Season. Participants said they hoped the church would lead in education and advocacy for consumers and farmers. Future action includes building relationships between consumers and producers at the local level.

For additional information and practical suggestions, see www.mcc.org/globalizationconsultations/north_america/index.html.—From report by **Susan Miller Balzer**

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Harrisonburg, Va.

Web site fields questions about Mennonites

A few years back, a provincial firefighter pilot was stationed in Williams Lake, B.C. "Our dispatchers were Mennonite ladies and would bring some sausage to the base for us," this pilot wrote to Third Way Café early this year. Now living in Washington state, he said he "would appreciate any help in finding a place near here when I can find some more of your sausages."

Third Way Café (www.thirdway.com/) is a web site for anyone wishing to learn about Mennonites. For years, Mennonite Media, the site developer,

has fielded all kinds of inquiries about Mennonites. Each question is personally answered. "We

receive a rather stunning variety of questions,"

remarked Jodi Nisly Hertzler, who has been fielding most e-mail questions for the last two years. A favourite for Hertzler was the student working on an assignment who asked, "What do the Mennonites do? Why do they do what they do? What benefits do the Mennonites expect from defining themselves as 'other'?"

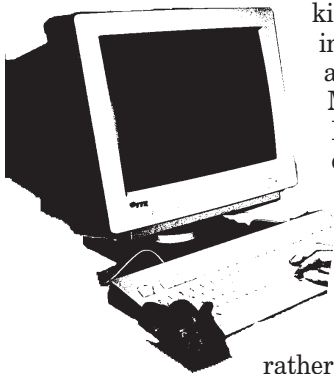
Melodie Davis, Mennonite Media response coordinator, oversees the response work and handles the regular mail and phone inquiries. Some of the more difficult questions are batted to seminary professors, pastors, historians, or genealogical researchers who answer them on a volunteer basis. Another volunteer, Tom Kauffman, handles correspondence with inmates seeking spiritual guidance and pen pals.

A woman who is blind called in response to Mennonite radio spots on grief and almost shouted her frustration over the ineptitude of the church in dealing with persons who are blind. Another woman wondered why, as a divorced person, she didn't feel welcome at a church she was attending.

A man (formerly Mennonite) whose wife filed for divorce the day that he had to go on disability said all he has now is his dog. "We're content being alone but [I] am hungry often and freeze in winter," he wrote in a long letter.

A "glossary" of more than 100 frequently asked questions is now posted at Third Way Café under "Who are the Mennonites?" It answers common questions like, "What are those white hats that Mennonite women wear?" and "Why do some wear beards and some not?"

Still, there always seem to be new questions, such as where to find Mennonite organic farmers.—MC Canada/Mennonite Media release



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Yur called Mennonites?

Following are some of the questions received in 2004 at the Third Way Café web site.

1. *Where was I baptized?* "I was baptized by immersion by a Bishop (Jacob)? Martin, from the Kitchener area in the early 1940s, together with several siblings, but have no record of it. The baptism took place in Fraser Lake...."

2. *Is a mortgage the same as usury?*

3. *How can we get a Mennonite interpreter fast?* An employment office needed a "Mennonite interpreter" by the following day. Someone needing services said his language was "Mennonite." A referral was made.

4. *Are Mennonites punctual or late?* "What do Mennonites believe about their personal space and the use of touch?... Are they past, present or future oriented?"

5. *Can a head covering be worn with regular clothes by a Protestant?* "Do you 'convert' or just decide to become Mennonite? If there isn't a church around, can you teach yourself?"

6. *Puppy mills.* "I hear that there are groups of Mennonites that run puppy mills.... Two words come to mind, greed and callousness. In my opinion, these are not words that should come up when people think of Mennonites and Christians."

7. *Can the third generation of a shunned family return to the Mennonites?*

8. *Y u r called Mennonites?* "I would like to know y u r called Mennonites and were it started. Thank U."

9. *What do you call Mennonite clergy?* "We have a Mennonite clergyman giving the invocation of an upcoming meeting and want to be able to include his proper title in the agenda."

10. *Are Mennonites allowed to get married?*

Nanchong, China

Helping children hear spreads Christian message

Visitors who stare too hard at four-year-old “Little Wen” are likely to suffer the child’s wit. The boy will mimic faces and twist his mouth to match the patterns made by others as they speak. He also tries to imitate the sounds, but he cannot hear well enough to repeat them. At least, he couldn’t before his grandfather brought him here.

In Nanchong, the Early Childhood Hearing Intervention program fits children with hearing aids, then sponsors adults to offer speech therapy and to teach families how to use the devices.

Jeanette Hanson, a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker from Tiefengrund Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan, works with the program, which began through a local government agency called the Handicapped Persons Association. The program currently aids about 60 families.

Hanson said government officials often ask why North Americans care about children in this isolated area. “I am able to talk about faith issues,” Hanson said. “I also talk about Jesus’ teaching to serve others and help the weak.”

In some cases, she said, the children get more support from members of the program than from family. During one home visit, a father told Hanson not to bother him about his son’s hearing aid since he was leaving to work in a southern province. The boy’s mother already was away, working, and his aunt also ignored Hanson’s instructions. So she taught the grandparents, who care for the boy and his cousins—a typical arrangement in rural China.

One woman who brought her son to be fitted for a hearing aid complained about the inconvenience, as she had much to do at her farm. She had another son at home who “didn’t have any problems.”

“I sat with her in the park while waiting for the last children to be tested,” said Hanson. “We talked about her life and the difficulties she faced.” Later, during the training class on how to use hearing aids, she participated

less grudgingly and even expressed surprise that the hearing aids would be easier to maintain than she had expected.

Hanson hopes to build relationships between churches, schools and government offices. In a society where less than one percent of the population worships Christ, social witnessing is

meet Christians.”

Since September, two Sunday Schools from Mennonite Church Canada have raised about \$400 for this ministry through KidsPak. The project is available at www.mennonitechurch.ca/resources/kidspak.—From MC Canada release by **Ryan Miller**



Photo by Jeanette Hanson

Little Zhang tries out his new hearing aid while his mother (centre) and a helper help fit it to his ear.

vital to increasing a trust level between Christians and the rest of society.

Myrrl Byler, director of China Educational Exchange to which Witness workers relate, says, “As Westerners involved in a variety of ministries, we give added visibility and credibility to Chinese churches, which often must struggle against ignorance and mistrust. Chinese believers are beginning to reach out to needs in society.”

“One township party secretary told me, ‘Christians are different from people of other religions in our town. Christians show they love all people in very practical ways. They help the poor and serve society,’” Hanson said. Another nodded when Hanson explained the teachings of Jesus. “He said that one cannot work for long in the area of special education and not

Meat diet worsens water shortage

The scarcity of fresh water is a major reason for the undernourishment of nearly a billion people worldwide, and the western world’s meat eating habits are a contributing factor, according to the International Water Management Institute, based in the United Kingdom. One kilogram of rice needs an average of 2,380 litres of water to grow, while one kilogram of beef requires 9,680 litres. Improving water conservation techniques in agriculture and a growing interest in using waste water for irrigation are beginning to relieve some of the strain, but much more can be done. More information is available at www.iwmi.cgiar.org/ and the Stockholm International Water Institute website at www.siwj.org/.—From MCC Ottawa Office



In the spring of 2004, several Mennonites living in Newfoundland began the Mennonite House Church of St. John's. Members of the group, with some friends, include (from left): Scott Morton Ninomiya, Simon Neufeld, Judith Klassen, Anne Munier, Melanie. Seated: Wendolyn Schlamp and Ryan. The group meets every Sunday evening for worship in homes. "We're a mix of new and ethnic Mennonites from southern Manitoba and Ontario," says Scott. The congregation varies from six to fifteen (depending on who's visiting). Visitors to the "Rock" are welcome to join them for worship, hymns "and maybe even a potluck!"—From report by Scott Morton Ninomiya

News brief

Canada lags behind on the environment

Canada is no longer leading the way on environmental issues, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Canada's emissions of carbon dioxide, a primary cause of climate change, increased by 10.1 per cent between 1990 and 2000. That places Canada at the bottom of the OECD list of developed nations at scaling back emissions. Spending on pollution control is lower in Canada than in other rich countries, and the Canadian coastline, the longest in the world, features only three small conservation areas. The OECD report urges the Canadian government to strengthen its protection of nature and reduce subsidies to industries like mining and oil drilling that threaten the environment. A separate study released the same day by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities found that if every human on earth consumed as much as the average Canadian, it would take four more earths to sustain the human race. Mennonite Central Committee provides environmental resources, including the Seven Days Earth Care Trek, at www.mcc.org/7days/.—From MCC Ottawa Office

Arts note

The Soli Deo Gloria Singers, directed by Paul Dueck, performed their third annual concert in Leamington, Ontario, on November 20 and 21. The theme this year was "God of the children," coinciding with the International Day of the Child. Canadian compositions included a beautiful rendition of Esther Wiebe's "God of the children," and "Dancing, dancing river" by Carol Ann Weaver. Soprano Angelika Guenther Correa sang Brahms' *Wiegenlied*. Old favourites included *Gott ist die Liebe* with tenor Steve Enns and mezzo-soprano Barbara Martens accompanied by the choir. The choir's first CD, called "The Psalms," can be purchased by calling UMEI at (519) 326-7448.—From report by Louise Mulcaster

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FOCUS Finances

B.C. program helps build financial security

For Darcie French, starting her own business is a dream come true and it wouldn't have happened without the help of Future Foundations, a program of Mennonite Central Committee B.C. Employment and Community Development. The program enables lower income and under-employed individuals to build financial security. Together with VanCity Savings and Credit Union, participants concentrate on building assets and learning money management skills.

Organizations such as the Vancouver Foundation also enable participants to make an investment that is matched 3:1 over a two-year period. Participants meet monthly as a group to learn about budgeting and financial planning. Savings go towards training for a career, education for a child, starting or expanding a business, or purchasing a home.

French used her assets to start a new business called Sew French, manufacturing baby blankets and other products. She says that Future Foundations made a huge difference in how she handles her money.

"I am more conscious of where my money goes since taking the program," she says. "My spending is much more pre-meditated now."

James Siebert, program manager, says the project is important because it helps people develop healthy financial habits. He adds that working as a group helps them hold one another accountable. The first Future Foundations group of 16 graduated last spring.

"I can't say enough good things about this program," French says. "It has given me so much hope for the future."

Future Foundations is open to Abbotsford, Mission and Chilliwack residents who are at least 18 years of age and fall in the Canadian Index for low income earners. For more information contact James Siebert at (604) 504 1988 or visit www.mccemployment.bc.ca.—From MCC B.C. release

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Taxes as tithing?

I had just finished speaking to a church group on the topic of tithing and generosity when one participant asked a question I had never contemplated before. "Have you ever thought of your taxes as a kind of tithe?" As a consultant for Mennonite Foundation of Canada, I am ready for the standard questions such as: "How much should a family of four spend monthly on groceries?" or "Should I tithe on my gross or net income?" His question was brand new to all of us.

Not knowing how to respond I asked him to say more. He explained that as Christians we believe that all our resources belong to God and that we are called to share of them—to give of them freely. We give offerings on Sunday morning out of gratitude for what God has done for us and for the gift Jesus gave us by dying as atonement for our sins. Christians also believe that we should share our resources to meet the needs of others, so why not see our taxes as a kind of

tithe? Taxes pay for benefits such as healthcare, education, and roads. So, what if we viewed taxes not as a burden or necessary evil but rather as an act of generosity toward the local and national community?

There was a moment's silence and then, "What if I don't like what the government is doing with my taxes?" someone asked. "What if I don't like the present government?" asked someone else.

The suggestion initiated a lively discussion. It would be wrong to suggest that since we "tithe" in the form of paying taxes we no longer need to give back to God and church ministries. Paying taxes dictated by governments is different than giving freely of the resources God has entrusted to us. There may be waste and mismanagement. We might not like everything our government does. There is also a place to speak to our government when we feel the way it spends resources is unwise.

However, if we view our taxes, or at least that portion that is used for the well-being of everyone in the community, as another form of generosity, it might take some of the sting out of the amount we pay. This tax season, rather than begrudging the amount of tax I have to pay, I am going to ask God to give wisdom and a sense of generosity to those entrusted to use my taxes. May these resources be a blessing to those who benefit from them. Anybody want to join me in prayer?—Darren Pries-Klassen, Mennonite Foundation of Canada



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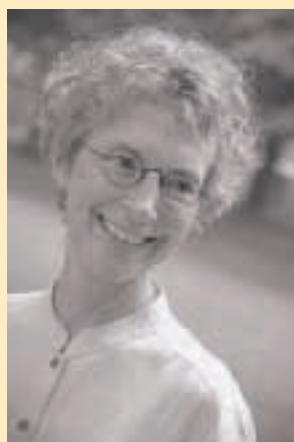
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Good  Books

Waterloo, Ont.

Christmas drama inspires 'gifts of love'

Last fall, the youth group at Erb St. Mennonite Church began discussing the increasing "affluenza" of our society, and the commercialization of Christmas. Together with teacher Jane Snyder, they began to brainstorm about how to reverse the trend.

One of the youth, Emily Kennel, wrote a Christmas drama called "The Gift of Love," and it was performed by the Erb St. children on December 12. The play is set at a local mall where the children line up to visit Santa.

As the story unfolds, the children's wish lists become longer and their voices more strident. One lad says: "For starters, I need a new laptop computer, iPod, leather briefcase, and cell phone. My limo is waiting for me so I've gotta run. I'll expect the gifts pronto on Christmas morn...."

Triplets demand a vacation to somewhere warm. "While you're at it, we'll need a complete vacation wardrobe, with matching hats, shoes, shorts, t-shirts and bathing suits!"

"Santa was aghast!" said the narrator. He threw up his arms and said to his elves, "All this commercialism is getting me down. Can you help me remember my origins as Santa Claus?"

The elves recount the story of Saint Nicholas, a bishop in the 4th century, known for his generosity. And then Santa has the idea of telling the Christmas story to all the shoppers. After the story, the demanding children return, one by one.

"I'm totally fine with the roller blades I already have.... Instead, do you think you could drop some gifts off at Sunnydale Community Centre?" says one girl.

A boy adds: "Hey Santa, about the new laptop computer and iPod.... I've been thinking about all the kids in Iraq who have been affected by war.



Santa reminds shoppers of the Christmas story in "The Gift of Love" performed by the children at Erb Street Mennonite.

Maybe you could send a few health kits to MCC on my behalf."

In the spirit of the drama, the youth at Erb Street agreed to each forego one present and divert the money to the Christmas party at the Sunnydale Community Centre. Sunnydale is an ethnically diverse neighbourhood, with many refugee families and people on fixed or low incomes.

One grade 5 girl raised almost \$100 through a bake sale at her school. A

boy donated an honorarium he received for his role in a musical. The youth class also did a media blitz promoting a "Buy Nothing Christmas," and were interviewed by 100 Huntley Street (shown on December 23).

Sandi Hannigan, director of Christian Education at Erb Street, directed the children's drama. A script is available upon request. Hannigan can be reached at (519) 650-3806.

—Maurice Martin

St. Agatha, Ont.

Congregation celebrates 180 years

The St. Agatha Mennonite Church celebrated 180 years of God's presence on November 14 with its meetinghouse packed to capacity.

Many former pastors and members joined the congregation in the celebrations. The service included reciting the confession of faith from the hymnal, singing many hymns, praying, and sharing memories.

People heard about the humble beginnings of the congregation when Amish Mennonites from Alsace, who came to Upper Canada in 1820, formed a congregation in 1824. Over the years there have been many changes and many challenges—changing from German to English, the potential for

division over Sunday School, sending missionaries, using musical instruments and uniting with other conferences to form Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Special music by two former church groups and a solo by Roma Ruth underscored the value of music in the congregation. Guest speaker John Ruth, Mennonite historian, cinematographer and minister from Pennsylvania, used Psalm 84 as a way to claim God's presence and project into the future.

The day ended with a fellowship meal which was far more elaborate than the bean soup which was a staple following worship services in 1824.—From report by **Doug Snyder**

Abbotsford, B.C.

Church and community respond to fire

On December 11, members of the Olivet Mennonite Church were looking forward to their Third Advent Sunday service the next morning. But beginning around 10:30 p.m., many were already gathering at the church for a reason they had not anticipated.

Flames were shooting from the roof of the 41-year old building, and onlookers could only watch as over 50 firefighters worked to save their church. By the time the fire was put out at 1:15 a.m., the sanctuary was gutted and part of the roof had caved in, though the office and educational wings remained intact.

Officials estimated the damage at over \$1 million. Though no cause of the fire has yet been confirmed, it is believed that equipment from torch-on roofing work done earlier in the day may have sparked the blaze.

The next morning church members gathered for worship in a meeting room of the seniors' high-rise, their sanctuary in ruins but their faith intact. Many took comfort in the fact that the fire was ruled accidental, and that no one was injured.

Hank Klassen, Olivet board chair, was one of those who had watched from across the street as the fire burned.

"It was almost impossible to believe," he said. "I knew at that moment that my job description would change." Klassen, along with the pastoral staff and other members of the church board, spent the remainder of December planning the church's future rather than preparing Christmas services. While Klassen dealt with insurance adjusters, pastors Jim Ratzlaff and Stacey O'Neill concentrated on securing facilities.

Within a week, arrangements had

been made for Sunday worship to take place in the Columbia Bible College chapel. The children's clubs will meet at a nearby elementary school. Repair and reconstruction of Olivet's church building will take a little longer. Main structural damage was to the sanctuary, though other parts of the building suffered smoke and water damage.

"I think it's safe to say that everything in the sanctuary will have to be torn down," Klassen said. He estimated that it could take up to a year to rebuild.

Klassen remarked on the overwhelming support shown by the local community and wider church. Strangers have dropped by to donate money, church organizations have offered their facilities, and messages of support have come in from all over the country.

Members alike are now looking to the future and trying to find meaning in the tragedy. As Klassen noted, "God doesn't

make mistakes.... It was ruled as accidental, but God allowed it to happen."

Jim Ratzlaff, lead pastor, commented, "We just know that God has a purpose in this."

With services Christmas services cancelled, members were encouraged to attend services at sister churches.

—Amy Dueckman



Photo by Laura Wiebe

The burned-out organ stands in the blackened ruins of the Olivet church sanctuary.



Former pastors and spouses who attended St. Agatha's 180-year celebration included, from left: Emmanuel and Maurine George, Gerald and Martha Schwartzentruber, Steve and Edna Gerber, Victor and Viola Dorsch, Sarah and Brent Kipfer, Wilma Martin, and Darrell and Florence Jantzi.

Check out the
Canadian Mennonite web site
www.canadianmennonite.org

CANADIAN
Mennonite

Vancouver, B.C.

Concert raises funds for AIDS

Attendance at the Oratorio for AIDS, performed at the First United Mennonite Church here on December 1—World AIDS Day—exceeded expectations, said conductor Frank Klassen. It was a gratifying response to weeks of rehearsals by musicians who offered their talents to support Generations at Risk, a program of Mennonite Central Committee for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

“AIDS concerns us all,” he said prior to the concert. “The need is huge and every possible means should be found to rid the world of this scourge.”

Singers and concert-goers seemed to agree. More singers auditioned for the concert than Klassen could use. The audience responded with emotion to both the music and to the story of Perdu, an AIDS orphan in Chad, told by Phil Schafran, director of Resource Development for MCC B.C.

When MCC staff on tour in Chad first saw Perdu, which means “lost,” he was naked and showing obvious signs of malnutrition. He was being cared for by Janvier, another AIDS orphan. Janvier and his brother had been abandoned by their mother shortly after their father died of AIDS. They



MCC B.C. photo

Singers perform at First United Mennonite in Vancouver on December 1 to raise money for MCC's AIDS program.

took Perdu into their care.

“They didn’t have money or food or clothes to offer him,” Schafran said, “but they did have a home and hearts that couldn’t bear to see another child be abandoned.”

The story moved people to give. Klassen said that he was also approached by several people who could not attend the concert but wanted to make a contribution to MCC. The event raised \$1,492 for MCC’s work.

Henry Neufeld felt the event was an opportunity to hear an excellent concert and support a meaningful cause.

“The operatic evening was a rare opportunity to hear emerging opera singers perform in support of an excellent MCC program,” he said.

The concert included selections from works by Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Vivaldi and Beethoven.—From MCC B.C. release

Waterloo, Ont.

Churches join Habitat building project

Recently, 12-year-old Allegra Friesen walked into the Habitat for Humanity office here and handed the receptionist \$50. At her birthday party, she had asked friends for a donation to Habitat in place of a gift. She had heard at church that Mennonite churches of Waterloo region are partnering in an “Adopt-a-Home” build project in 2005.

Allegra’s gift kicked off the fundraising campaign. Churches in Waterloo Region will work together to raise the \$65,000 sponsorship (plus 10 percent for homes in a third world nation), dig holes, operate equipment, swing hammers, and provide lunches to the volunteer crew, all so that a low-income family can own a home.

One pastor wrote: “No other outreach ministry has rallied our church members to get involved in Christ’s work quite



Last June, a number of Habitat houses were built in Waterloo Region. This is a scene from one of the building sites.

like the Adopt-a-Home ministry of Habitat for Humanity. From serving as sandwich makers to carpenters to homeowner friends, our members’ lives have been enriched, and at times transformed by this wonderful, faithful ministry.”

Since its inception in 1988, Habitat for Humanity Waterloo Region has built 59 homes. The Waterloo Region Mennonite build is scheduled to take place in August 2005.—Habitat release

Salatiga, Indonesia

Program trains teachers for isolated areas

Barbalina Ibo's heart was turned to teaching through her own struggles.

Growing up in a village in Papua, Indonesia, Ibo had teachers who travelled in from the nearest town every few weeks. She learned little. By junior high, she was on the verge of being removed from school.

"In the classroom, none of my classmates would like to stay nearby, because they assumed that I was stupid," Ibo said. "I was very sad. I prayed to God asking for help. God answered my prayer."

Caring teachers helped her learn. In response, she made a commitment to God that she work to improve education in Papua for the next generation.

But even as she worked as an instructor in a Christian school, Ibo remained keenly aware that she lacked education—she could not afford university study.

Through a Mennonite Central Committee-supported program to train teachers from isolated areas or

areas of conflict, Ibo is studying primary education at Satya Wacana Christian University.

The two-year teacher training program began after MCC workers teaching in Indonesian universities noted that students from remote areas are often inadequately prepared for university. In 1990, the Indonesian government



Ibo

closed all elementary teacher training schools, saying that they were ineffective. New training schools have not yet emerged. Since 1990, Satya Wacana Christian University is one of the few institutions with official permission to offer a two-year diploma program for primary school teachers.

The 46 students in the program are from isolated areas across the western and easternmost islands of Indonesia.

Coming to the island of Java to attend university, and learning with students from different ethnic groups, is a stretching cross-cultural experience for the students. Candidates come from their local areas in groups of at least two, which will provide students with support during the course and upon their return.

Students sign a commitment to return to teach in their local area for at least six years upon completion of the program. If they do not return, the scholarship will be treated as a loan and must be repaid.

Ibo, for her part, looks forward to returning to Wamena with additional tools to educate students there.

"In the future I want to improve the quality of primary education in Wamena, Papua," she said.—From MCC release by **Marla Pierson Lester**

Akron, Pa.

MCC volunteers begin assignments

Forty-one people participated in orientation at Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) headquarters here October 26 to November 9. Of these, 17 are beginning overseas assignments and 24 are in North American placements.

Each year some 250 people enter MCC assignments in more than 50 countries. Currently there are 867 MCC workers in assignments such as community development, education, health, food production, emergency response and administration.

Canadians beginning overseas assignments include Sara Cressman and David Martin, of Waterloo, Ont., who will be development managers in Serbia for three years. They are members of Nith Valley Mennonite Church.

Adolf Dueck, a member of Breaside Evangelical Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, will spend two years as MCC assistant director in Mexico. Dueck has a master of divinity degree

from Providence Theological Seminary in Manitoba.

Alisa and Ben MacBride-Smith of Toronto are beginning a three-year assignment in Laos. Alisa, who has a nursing degree, will be a health worker. Ben will teach English.

Larry Nafziger and Jane Snider of Ottawa, with son Zakary, will spend three years in Laos as handicraft designer/marketers. They previously served with MCC in Kenya and Uganda. They are members of Ottawa Mennonite Church.

Donovan Jacobs of Winnipeg is on a two-year assignment as restorative relationships coordinator in Winnipeg. Jacobs, a member of Weston Gospel Church, worked previously in Native Ministry for Mennonite Church Canada.

John Loewen of Winnipeg is spending two years as marketing manager for MCC in Winnipeg. He is a member of St. Luke's Anglican Church there. Emily Peters of Winnipeg is on a two-year assignment as adult literacy tutor. She is a member of Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship.

Deo Namwira is continuing a two-year MCC assignment as international grants manager in Winnipeg. Namwira has a master's degree in international development from the University of Guelph and previously served with MCC in Congo. He attends Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship.

Alexander Penner is beginning a two-year assignment as repair and maintenance worker in Abbotsford, B.C. Donna Sawatsky of Abbotsford is beginning a two-year assignment as receptionist there. Dolores and Len Warkentin are material resource assistants in Abbotsford. They are members of Grace Evangelical Bible Church in Abbotsford. Johann Peters of Detmold, Germany, is working as a shipper for two years in Abbotsford.

Bradley Reimer, of Fannystelle, Man., is spending two years as resource generation team leader in Winnipeg. He is a member of Springstein Mennonite Church in Manitoba. Lyris Short-Goetzke is a youth resource worker in Winnipeg. She attends Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.—From MCC release

Transitions

Births/Adoptions

Braun—to Brigitte and Bryan, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, a daughter, Karissa Faith, Dec. 12.

Claassen—to Quinn and Harry, Niagara United Mennonite, Ont., a son, Eric James Justice, Nov. 19.

Friesen—to Jennifer and George, Niagara United Mennonite, Ont., a daughter, Logan Alexi, Nov. 2.

Grell—to Elissa and Thomas, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, a son, Samuel Riley, Dec. 7.

Martin—to Jennifer and Craig, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, a daughter, Emerald Jean, Dec. 16.

Neufeld—to Jodi and Tim, Coaldale Mennonite, Alta., a son, Ryan James, Dec. 5.

Peters—to Debbie and John, Niagara United Mennonite, Ont., a daughter, Katrina Elsa Maria, Dec. 9.

Price—to Allison and Darcy, Niagara United Mennonite, Ont., a son, Nolan John Victor, Dec. 5.

Schroeder—to Shelley and Sean, Pleasant Point Mennonite, Clavet, Sask., a daughter, Tyrell Kathy, Nov. 23.

Marriages

Bollman-Redekop—Scott and Marnie, North Kildonan

Mennonite, Winnipeg, Nov. 6.
Driedger-Dyck—Peter and Valerie, Graysville Mennonite, Man., Dec. 18.

Deaths

Bowman—Viola, 88, Breslau Mennonite, Ont., Dec. 13.

Friesen—Sarah (Peters), 79, First Mennonite, Saskatoon, Nov. 17.

Hoock—Helen (Friesen), 92, Clearbrook Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C., Dec. 8.

Kuhl—Elfrieda, 62, Graysville Mennonite, Man., Dec. 14.

Patkau—Kathe, 97, Toronto United Mennonite, Dec. 14.

Schroeder—Adelia, 88, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Dec. 20.

Tobert—Marian, 57, First Mennonite, Edmonton, Dec. 3.

Wagler—Almeda, 93, Steinmann Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont., Dec. 7.

Wall—Helen (Bullin), 92, First Mennonite, Saskatoon, Nov. 6.

Wiebe—Helena (Penner), 85, First Mennonite, Saskatoon, Nov. 7.

Baptisms

Steinbach Mennonite, Man.—Justin Schinkel, Kara Penner, Dec. 19.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes transitions announcements within four months of the event. When sending by e-mail, please identify congregation (name and location).

People & Events

Elkhart, Ind.—Members of the United Native Ministries and Mennonite Indian Leaders Council met in late October to unite in a new organization, Native Mennonite Ministries. This new U.S. organization reflects the merger of the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church, to which these organizations related. Mennonite Church Canada's Native Ministry will be a partner organization of the U.S. group—they will work together on programs such as leadership development.—From MC Canada release

Takoma Park, Md.—On November 13, the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service presented its Father George Mader Award to a group outside the Catholic tradition for the first time in its 15-year history. Mennonite Mission Network accepted the award on behalf of Mennonites in mission across the world, including Mennonite Central Committee. The award singled out Mennonite Voluntary Service for special acclaim. "MVS has been a powerful influence on the church," said Jim Lindsay, director. Thousands of MVSers have served "marginalized people of North America. In the process, they themselves were served and transformed...."—MCC/MMN

Kitwe, Zambia—Domestic abuse is common in Zambia, and incidents of violence are known to be high in police and military camps. Over the summer, Mennonite Central Committee held a training course here on gender and nonviolence for wives of police officers. Through interactive exercises and group work, participants reflected on violence in the community and in their homes. By the second day some participants were brave enough to share their own stories of domestic violence. The trainer agreed to offer a second event if participants would bring stories of how they used what they had learned.—MCC release

Akron, Pa.—Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Women's Concerns has compiled a packet entitled "Pornography, The Secret Sin: Keeping ourselves pure." The packet has articles and information to help families and congregations better recognize and understand this problem. It also includes sections on prevention and recovery. Pornography is a multibillion-dollar business in the U.S.—and a threat even to Christian families and marriages. To order, call 1-888-563-4676 or e-mail: lgp@mcc.org.—MCC release

Akron, Pa.—The Transformation Resource Centre in Lesotho, Africa, is acknowledging MCC's role in its development over the past 25 years. MCC helped form the organization and has supported it with funds and workers. Today, the centre trains teachers in democracy and voter education, and helps individuals and communities stand up for their rights. Tesfatsion Dallelle, co-director of MCC's Africa program, was present at the November 12 anniversary celebrations where Lesotho's king urged the centre to continue "fighting the battle against poverty and marginalization."—MCC release

Rie and Gerald Neufeld, self-supporting Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers in Japan, have a dream of rejuvenating a camp ministry near the city of Miyazaki, where they live. (Their children are Rena, 4, and Jay, 2.) There is a property with buildings, but it has fallen into disrepair. Aging church members want to sell the property. Gerald writes, "The big question is 'If we [re]build it will they come?" He adds, "We feel it could be a place for much needed spiritual renewal for many who are stressed out in this fast-paced society. It could also be a place for any young people to become more involved in Christian programs." The Neufelds welcome prayers as the church in Japan discerns how to move forward.—MC Canada release





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Mennonite Church Canada

Suderman to assess Witness program

Robert (Jack) Suderman, executive secretary of Mennonite Church Canada



Suderman

Witness, is on professional development leave from January through mid-April. He plans to research missional

church ecclesiology and leadership, and to evaluate Witness as an organization in order to develop tools for the church's next steps in its missional life.

The Witness Council wants to assess its ministries to decide how best to focus

financial resources and staff. Suderman will also lead a Learning Tour and a week of leadership training in Cuba. Janet Plenert, the executive director of International Ministries, will take over Suderman's duties until his return.—From MC Canada release

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

Pastoral changes in Ontario churches

There are several congregational leadership changes in Ontario congregations of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Erie View, in Port Rowan, has called Charles Byer to be its new pastor, beginning December 1. Charles has many years of experience as a pastor in the Brethren in Christ Church, both in Canada and

the United States.

Craig Frere began as pastor at Living Water, New Hamburg, on January 1. Craig has been a pastor in Mennonite Brethren and Brethren in Christ churches in Ontario.

Jason Erb began as part-time youth pastor at Living Water in September. He continues to work also as a Youth For Christ chaplain at Waterloo Oxford Secondary School in Baden.

Rudy and Sharon Dirks have accepted a ministry assignment at Niagara United Mennonite Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, after having served for several years with Mennonite Church Canada Witness in Botswana. Rudy is lead pastor and Sharon is Minister of Visitation.

Karen Sheil has begun her ministry as pastor of Rainham Mennonite Church in Selkirk. She had been attending Hamilton Mennonite Church and is a student at McMaster

Divinity School.

Randy Dueck began serving as pastor at Vineland United Mennonite Church on January 5. He was youth pastor at St. Catharines United Mennonite. Prior to that he was youth pastor with the Mennonite Brethren conference.

Mennonite Church Manitoba

New camp programs in Manitoba

Two new programs are planned for Camps with Meaning for this coming summer.

Last summer the "Boys only" week was quite popular, reported Sandy W. Plett, director of Summer Camp/Youth Ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba. This summer, Camps with Meaning plans to give opportunity for girls and boys to have

Select assembly delegates prayerfully

It's time for congregations and area conferences to be naming their delegates to the annual assembly of Mennonite Church Canada. The 2005 assembly will be held July 4-9 in Charlotte, North Carolina, as part of a joint assembly with Mennonite Church USA. (Watch www.mennonitechurch.ca/events/charlotte and church mailings for details.) Registration forms have been posted on the internet, with printed copies soon to follow.

Last spring I received a letter that was critical of decisions made at previous assemblies. The writer (who had not attended previous assemblies) claimed that delegates are simply volunteers who want the congregation to pay for them to have a holiday. Another member of the same church said that their delegates are not "the leaders and thinkers" and do not represent their congregation.

I challenged these assumptions. I am generally impressed by the wisdom of the delegates, their commitment to Christ and the welfare of the church,

and their ability to articulate convictions and vision.

But perhaps in that congregation too little thought is given to selecting delegates who can speak for the congregation and bring the issues of the national church back to the congregation. Perhaps the first people to offer are accepted, or the congregation says okay to those who are "planning to go anyway." Perhaps that church is not as well represented as it could be.

Delegates to national church assemblies (and to area conference annual meetings) have serious legal responsibilities. Within the corporate structure they bear the responsibility of "shareholders" to review the work of the corporation, approve budgets, elect officers and make or amend bylaws.

More important are the spiritual responsibilities. The bylaws state that delegates "discern MC Canada's participation in God's work as reflected in its mission statement." Furthermore, they "debate issues facing the church and, from time to time, issue statements, including, but not limited to, statements pertaining

From our leaders

to faith and life, position statements, and statements to governments."

Who are the people of your congregation with the gifts to fulfill these responsibilities? Are they lay leaders as well as pastors? Are they women as well as men? Are they younger as well as older? Are they new to the church as well as seasoned members? Are they people of whom you can proudly say, "These are the people whom we send to discern and decide on our behalf?"

Please pray for God's guidance for the planners and leaders of the assembly. Offer to God the tools that are needed for wise discernment by selecting the people that best represent your congregation and God's work in the world. And do the same for your area conference.

See page 38 for guidelines for selecting delegates.

Dan Nighswander, General Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada



separate adventures simultaneously during the same week.

August 1-6 will be "Boys/Girls Extreme Adventure Week," based at Camp Koinonia. The two groups will participate in an extended canoe trip, extreme camping, mountain biking and rock climbing adventures. At the end of the week the boys and girls will come together for an all-camper day.

Service Encounter 2005 is another new program. "I have had numerous campers ask why there is no youth camp at Camp Assiniboia beyond grade 9," said Plett. Youth camps have taken place at Camp Koinonia and Camp Moose Lake. They generally focus on learning and retreating, not on service.

Service Encounter 2005 offers service opportunities that "acknowledge that CIT (Counsellor-in-Training) and camp staff are not the only service opportunities," said Plett.

Service Encounter, August 21-27, will be open to 16 youth who have completed grades 9, 10 or 11. Planned in partnership with Mennonite Central Committee's "Urban Plunge" program, this week will include three days at Camp Assiniboia developing group skills and team building. The second half of the week will take place in the inner city.

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

Songfest choir to join with CMU Singers

The annual Songfest, organized by the Music Committee of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, will be slightly different this year.

In the past the Songfest choir, which has drawn participants mostly from Saskatoon and surrounding areas, was a chance for Saskatchewan Mennonites to gather, make new friends and learn some challenging repertoire.

This year, the Songfest will be held earlier and the choir will join with the CMU Singers as they travel across western Canada. The college choir normally joins with Rosthern Junior College Chorale in a fundraising dinner and concert. However, RJC will be busy preparing to host the CAMS Music Festival in May.

Duff Warkentin and Sharryl Riekman are directing the Saskatchewan group of singers. Rudy Schellenberg from CMU will be participating in rehearsals and conducting in the final concert at Songfest.

Registration for the Songfest choir should reach Linda Decaire by February 5.

The Songfest will take place February 11-12 at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon.

Mennonite Church Alberta

Study week postponed til May

The annual Theological Studies Week held at Camp

Valaqua has traditionally been the third week of January. In 2005, however, the retreat will be held in Spring, from May 30-June 2.

The change of date was made in response to speaker John Neufeld's health concerns and cancer treatments. The Congregational Leadership Commission postponed the event until May in hopes that Neufeld's health will improve by then.

The theme for the study event this year is marriage and family. The leadership commission anticipates that the theme will be practical and helpful as congregational caregivers seek to provide pastoral care to people struggling with dysfunctional relationships, divorce, and blended families.

While theological studies week is planned with pastors and lay leaders in mind, anyone interested is welcome to attend.

Registration information will be sent to all Alberta congregations early in the New Year.

Mennonite Church British Columbia

Retreat to focus on Middle Earth

For those who can't get enough of Middle Earth, Camp Squeah is offering a retreat entitled "The spirituality of Middle Earth: Entering fantasy to engage with reality."

Participants will watch the extended editions of all three *Lord of the Rings* movies and discuss Christian theology and spirituality in author J.R.R. Tolkien's work. The retreat will be held at Squeah's new retreat facility, Hidden Firs Lodge, on Sumas Mountain in Abbotsford.

For more information visit Squeah's web site at www.squeah.com or call 1-888-380-2267.

Unless otherwise credited, the articles in TheChurches pages were written by: Leona Dueck Penner (Mennonite Church Canada), Maurice Martin (Eastern Canada), Evelyn Rempel Petkau (Manitoba), Karin Fehderau (Saskatchewan), Donita Wiebe-Neufeld (Alberta), Angelika Dawson (B.C.). See page 2 for contact information.

Urgent prayer request for Asia

Mennonite Church Canada Witness has sent out the following prayer request, with information from the church in Indonesia.

Pray for the victims, governments, and families affected by the devastating earthquake and flood in Asia. Pray also for our partner churches in India, Thailand, and Indonesia as they struggle to find appropriate ways of responding to the multiple disasters of the tsunami in their regions.

Pray for Mennonite Church Canada Witness as we discern how best to support our partners in those regions. Pray also for Mennonite Central Committee as it discerns the best ways to use donations.

Eddy Sutjipto, Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee member representing Asia, and former moderator of the Mennonite Church of Indonesia (GKMI), recently wrote to Samson Lo, director of Multi-Cultural Ministry for Mennonite Church Canada Witness:

"The GKMI Conference will work alongside MCC [other Mennonite groups and

conferences] in coordinating relief efforts. Abang Rahino, MCC officer in Indonesia, will go to North Sumatra and Aceh tomorrow to assess needs and identify areas that have not been reached by government and NGO aid." The Indonesian Mennonites plan to distribute aid in two stages:

1. Collect funds to buy basic necessities, such as medicine, drinking water, food, body bags, tents and sleeping bags. They will work with other organizations because "speed is important."

2. They also plan to dispatch a team to help with recovery efforts in areas that haven't been reached by other aid.

The GKMI has opened a bank account to which Indonesian Mennonites can direct their donations. Special offerings are also going to the relief efforts.

"We will continue to update you with information on the relief effort and of the situation in our country," wrote Sutjipto. "We highly appreciate your concerns, prayers and assistance in this time of needs."—From MC Canada release

Employment opportunities

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary seeks

**FOUR EVENT PASTORS
(two male and two female)**

for **!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth.** The position is full-time for one of two dates: June 6–July 2 or July 8–August 6, 2005. These pastors will accompany the 15 high school !Explore participants for their intensive 18-day group experience. Qualifications include several years experience as a congregational pastor and working with youth; ability to nurture youth through times of spiritual, intellectual and emotional growth; creativity in styles of worship, prayer and spiritual disciplines; knowledge of and commitment to the Anabaptist/Mennonite faith; and an undergraduate degree with additional seminary education preferred. Responsibilities include assisting in preparations for the youth's group experience, leading and directing worship and discussions, and being physically, emotionally and mentally present with youth during this experience.

To apply, send resume and letter of application by February 15, 2005 to:

**Andy Brubacher Kaethler, !Explore Director
AMBS, 3003 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN 46517
E-mail: andybk@ambs.edu**

A complete job description is available on the AMBS web site: www.ambs.edu/!Explore



ART DIRECTOR/GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Canadian Mennonite is seeking a part-time Art Director/Graphic Designer for the biweekly Mennonite periodical. A resume, design samples and rates should be submitted by Feb. 4, 2005. The position begins Feb. 24, 2005.

Duties include:

- issue design and layout;
- helping solicit and select artwork;
- creating and placing ads;
- troubleshooting ad and print problems;
- posting issue contents online on our web site

Applicants should have experience in print publishing; strong print and web design skills; technical knowledge of electronic page design, image editing and web technologies; and be adept at using leading desktop and web design tools.

We are open to flexible working arrangements in terms of location (preferably at our office in Waterloo, Ontario, but we will also consider remote arrangements) and method of payment (salary or a per-issue payment). However, the designer needs to be reachable during production periods to work with staff on the layout.

Applications should have a passion for the church and for *Canadian Mennonite's* ministry and mission. Come to serve and build up the church in this exciting way!

Direct inquiries and applications to:
Timothy Dyck, Editor and Publisher, Canadian Mennonite
490 Dutton Dr., Unit C5, Waterloo, ON N2L 6H7
Phone: 1-800-378-2524, x225
E-mail: editor@canadianmennonite.org

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary invites applications for the following:

DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CONNECTIONS to bring pastors from across North America and AMBS professors together for dialogue in a variety of settings. The qualified candidate will have at least several years of pastoral experience and will possess a seminary degree (preferably the Master of Divinity), strong communications skills, ability to organize efficiently, ability to work effectively with a wide variety of people, commitment to Anabaptist/Mennonite faith and the mission of AMBS, and knowledge of MC USA and MC Canada conferences and congregations.

DIRECTOR OF LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS to oversee AMBS's growing non-degree pastoral and theological education initiatives. The qualified candidate will possess a seminary degree, love of and experience working with pastors of diverse backgrounds (especially those without formal theological training), strong communications and organizational skills, ability to work effectively with a wide variety of people, commitment to Anabaptist/Mennonite faith and the mission of AMBS, and knowledge of MC USA and MC Canada conferences and congregations.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT This person will support the work of the AMBS Church Leadership Center. The qualified candidate will have completed at least two years of undergraduate education and will possess the ability to organize efficiently and work accurately with detail, ability to take initiative as needed, ability to work effectively with a wide variety of people, and a commitment to Anabaptist/Mennonite faith and the mission of AMBS. Knowledge of MC USA and MC Canada conferences and congregations a bonus.

For more information contact:

Jewel Gingerich Longenecker
Associate Dean for Leadership Education
AMBS, 3003 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN 46517
E-mail: jglongenecker@ambs.edu
Phone: (574) 296-6207
or visit www.ambs.edu/php/welcome/wel_news.php



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PASTOR

Faith Mennonite Church, in Leamington, ON has an opening for a full time pastoral position. The position will be available in early summer 2005. Experience would definitely be considered an asset. Faith Mennonite is a church of about 200 members with many young families. We are located about 35 minutes from Windsor.

Any interested person/persons may ask for a church profile and/or apply at:

Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada
4489 King St. E
Kitchener, ON N2P 2G2
Attn: Muriel Bechtel
E-mail: Muriel@mcec.on.ca

Employment opportunities

EXECUTIVE MINISTER

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) seeks an Executive Minister to begin serving no later than October, 2005. As the chief executive officer, the Executive Minister will be responsible for implementing the mission and vision of MCEC. Appointed by and reporting to the executive council, the Executive Minister will carry the primary responsibility to lead the team, to oversee the supportive ministries with the congregations, to supervise the staff and to maintain relationships with the broader Mennonite Church and its organizations.

Important qualifications include a strong personal faith rooted in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, a love for the church, theological training and pastoral or church leadership experience. Strong leadership and communication skills, organizational and administrative strength and personal flexibility are essential.

The position is based in Kitchener, Ontario. Job descriptions are available from the moderator. Please submit inquiries, applications or nominations by March 1, 2005 to:

Darrell Fast, MCEC Moderator
36 Malibu Drive
Leamington, Ont. N8H 5G5

OVERSEAS OPPORTUNITY

Mennonite Central Committee seeks a couple for a three-year assignment in Iran as part of a student exchange. Interest in studying Islam is essential and a degree in religious studies, including Anabaptist theology and history is preferred. Visit www.mcc.org/servicetree to view the "Iran Student Exchange" job description. For an application contact your nearest MCC office or

Goldie Kuhns
Phone: (717) 859-1151
E-mail: gpk@mcc.org

Violin Teacher needed in the Menno Colony (a Mennonite Community) in the Chaco of Paraguay, S.A. Starting date either March or July 2005. If you have any questions in regards to salary or accommodations please contact Willi Falk (Director of Music) at wlfalk@telesurf.com.py

For rent

Sleepy Hollow Cottage. All season, 3 bedroom cottage/home in a peaceful wooded valley in the heart of the Niagara region. Excellent as a small retreat center or for family holiday. Walk to the Bruce trail. Minutes from other Niagara attractions. For further information and rental costs phone (705)476-2319 or e-mail coffmanjohnh@hotmail.com

For sale

Caskets and urns handmade in Winnipeg. Call Rick at (204) 228-4741 or visit www.thevillagecasketmaker.com

Wanted

Cash paid for any antique or old items such as wagon wheels, parts, cast iron, brass, copper, tools, cupboards, furniture, dishes, linens, toys, tins, horse accessories, milk cans, etc. Absolutely Anything! Call Jenny at 519-240-7384 or 519-740-1099 Cambridge, ON.

Biography on Cheyenne leader

Raylene Hinz-Penner, a poet and English professor from Kansas, is writing the biography of Lawrence Hart—a Cheyenne peace chief and Mennonite pastor. Hart is a pastor in Clinton, Oklahoma, across from the Cheyenne Cultural Center which he and his wife, Betty, have operated. "Lawrence is the memory for the connections between Cheyenne history and Mennonite history and how they have intersected," said Hinz-Penner. "He is also considered an Oklahoma treasure, and many people are waiting to read his story—not only Mennonites." Hart has lectured at Canadian Mennonite Bible College and led workshops for Native Ministry in Canada. In July, he spoke at the North American Native Assembly in Riverton, Manitoba. The book is to be published for use in a conference on connections between the Cheyenne and Arapaho and Mennonites in the spring of 2006.—From MC Canada/MC USA release



MC USA photo

Lawrence and Betty Hart, left, enjoy a light-hearted moment with Raylene Hinz-Penner at a church conference in Oklahoma City last July.

Words on war

- War is the blackest villainy of which human nature is capable.—Erasmus
- An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind.—Gandhi
- If you want to take revenge on somebody, you better dig two graves.—Chinese proverb
- As far as I am concerned, war itself is immoral.—U.S. General Omar Bradley
- Does the commandment 'Thou Shalt Not Kill' mean nothing to us? Are we to interpret it as meaning 'Thou shalt not kill except on the grand scale,' or 'Thou shalt not kill except when the national leaders say to do so'?—Linus Pauling, U.S. scientist
- The more I study the history of the world the more I am convinced of the inability of brute force to create anything durable.—Napoleon, in exile
- But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.—Jesus

Groups urge national prayer for marriage

Toronto, Ont.—The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) has joined with six other groups in a “national call to prayer for marriage” on the weekend of January 29-30.

A message addressed to church leaders begins, “The attempts to redefine marriage are an affront to this God-ordained institution, its righteousness and sanctity....

“God’s Word including instruction about marriage will not pass away regardless of what man decides. But we must realize the harmful consequences if we, the church, do nothing and allow man to redefine the institution of marriage,” says the message.

The message also draws attention to EFC’s Marriage on the Rock event in February.

Signers along with the EFC include the Canada Family Action Coalition, Focus on the Family, Seventh-day Adventists, Christian Legal Fellowship and Real Women.

Indonesian art being sold for relief

Winnipeg, Man.—The Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery here houses a significant collection of contemporary Indonesian art. The collection, entitled “In the shadows of volcanoes,” just completed a North American tour.

Curator Ray Dirks and the artists have decided to offer the art for sale, with proceeds going to Indonesia in the wake of the earthquake/tsunami in December. The gallery will donate all of its commissions and the artists 50 percent of their portion of sales to MCC for relief work. The other 50 percent will go the artists’ families in Indonesia.

People can come to the gallery (on the Canadian Mennonite University campus), or call Alf Redekopp or Connie Wiebe at (204) 888 6781 for sales information. (Dirks will be in the Democratic Republic of Congo from January 1-19.)—From Gallery release

Guidelines for selecting delegates

Winnipeg, Man.—Every Mennonite Church Canada congregation is entitled to send delegates to the assembly—1 delegate for every 50 members or part thereof. (For example, a congregation of 152 members can send 4 delegates.) Churches with fewer than 50 members are entitled to 2 delegates.

Every area conference is entitled to send 1 delegate for every 1000 members, with a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12. There are no proxy votes.

Delegates must be members of MC Canada congregations. Pastors are not automatically delegates, but they are the most important link between the congregation and the larger church, so it is to the advantage of both that pastors serve well in this bridging capacity.

Delegates should be able to speak both for and to their congregation or area conference. They should represent the whole church in their convictions and life experience.

Congregations and area conferences must submit a delegate list in order for their delegates to be recognized. Prepare your delegates in advance of the assembly.

Engage delegates in the topics and resolutions in advance of the assembly. Perhaps there are experienced delegates from your congregation who could mentor newer delegates.

See “From our leaders” on page 34 for more on selecting delegates.—From report by **Dan Nighswander**

Calendar

British Columbia

February 4: Prospective Student Day at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford. Call 1-800-283-0881 or e-mail: admissions@columbiabc.edu.

February 4, 5, 18, 19: MCC B.C. fundraising banquets, at Greendale Mennonite Brethren Church (4); South Langley MB (5); Bakerview MB, Abbotsford (18); Peace Mennonite, Richmond (19).

February 5: Annual meeting and banquet of Canadian Mennonite at First United Mennonite Church, Vancouver. Meeting at 4:00 p.m., banquet 6:00 p.m. For tickets phone Angelika Dawson at (604) 870-0949 or John Goossen at (604) 940-8208.

February 5: Columbia Bible College Alumni Dessert Evening featuring PATMOS, a music ensemble from Moldova, 7:00 p.m. For details contact Walter Bergen at (604) 853-3358.

February 12-20: MCC Arts and Peace Festival.

February 25-26: MC British Columbia Church Polity Seminar at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond.

February 26: Mennonite Church B.C. annual delegate sessions at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond.

March 5: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. lecture by Bruce Guenther on “Wrenching our youth from frivolous pursuits,” at Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, 7:00 p.m.

March 11, 12: Columbia Bible College Kingdom Players present “The Importance of Being Earnest.” Call (604) 853-3358 for tickets.

March 18-19: Youth workers conference at Columbia Bible College with Tony Campolo. For details, call Gareth Brandt at (604) 853-3567, ext. 323.

March 18: Prospective Student Day #2 at Columbia

Bible College, Abbotsford. **March 19, 20:** Abendmusik Lenten Vespers at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford (19), and Knox United Church, Vancouver (20), 8:00 p.m.

April 15-16: Columbia Bible College graduation weekend. Spring concert at Central Heights Mennonite Brethren Church, Abbotsford (15). Grad ceremony (16).

May 15: “Mennonite Piano Concerto” performed by Irmgard Baerg, at Central Heights MB Church, 3:00 p.m. Sponsored by Mennonite Historical Society of B.C.

Alberta

January 30: Skate-a-thon for Menno Simons Christian School at Olympic Oval, Calgary.

February 18-20: Senior high Snow Camp at Camp Valaqua.

February 25-26: Mennonite Church Alberta annual delegate sessions at First Mennonite Church, Edmonton.

February 25-27: Senior high Snow Camp at Camp Valaqua.

March 4: Peace Fine Arts Festival for youth, sponsored by MCC Alberta, at Rocky Mountain College, Calgary.

March 17: Discussion on future of youth ministry in Alberta. Contact Mary Ann Van Oevern, phone (403) 335-8264, e-mail: gmaster2@telus.net.

April 28, 29, 30: Musical at Menno Simons Christian School, Calgary.

May 30-June 2: Theological Studies Week at Camp Valaqua. Lecturer John Neufeld on marriage and family.

June 5: Benefit evening with Stephen Lewis for MCC’s Generations at Risk program. Details pending.

July 15-16: MCC Alberta Relief Sale in Sherwood Park, Edmonton.

Saskatchewan

January 21-23: Portable CMU/Restorative Justice Workshop at Grace Mennonite Church, Prince Albert.
January 28-30: Senior high retreat at Shekinah.
February 4-5: Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan annual meeting at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon.
February 11-12: MC Saskatchewan Songfest at First Mennonite, Saskatoon.
February 25-26: MC Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions at Rosthern Junior College.
March 4-6: Poet/hymn writer Jean Janzen at Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.
March 18-20: Portable CMU with Dan Epp-Tiessen at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.
March 20-21: Portable CMU with Gordon Zerbe at Rosthern Mennonite Church.
April 2: Women in Mission Enrichment Day.
April 16: "Touring Mission Fest" by MC Saskatchewan Ministries Commission.
May 14-15: 40th anniversary celebration at Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.
June 17-19: Youth Farm Bible Camp 40th anniversary celebrations.
June 25-26: Camp Elim 60th anniversary celebrations.
July 23-24: 50th anniversary celebratons at Grace Mennonite Church, Regina.

Manitoba

January 23: Alumni concert at Performing Arts Centre, Mennonite Collegiate Institute, Gretna.
January 27, 28: Three One Act Plays by Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Junior High at Franco-Manitoba Centre, Winnipeg.
February 4: CMU choirs and Winnipeg Symphony premiere Patrick Carrabré's "In the Beginning" at New Music Festival, Centennial Concert Hall, Winnipeg.
February 4-6: Senior Youth Retreat at Camp Koinonia.
February 8: Open House at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

February 11-13: Junior Youth Retreat at Camp Moose Lake.
February 12: Retreat on "Sacred search: Encountering God during Lent," at Camp Assiniboia. Resource person: Angela Reed.
February 18-19: Mennonite Church Manitoba delegate sessions at Sargent Ave. Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.
March 4-6: Retreat for families with mentally-handicapped person, at Camp Assiniboia.
March 6: Choral Connections concert at CMU, 7:30 p.m.
March 11-13: Peace-It-Together youth conference at Canadian Mennonite University.
March 11-13: Junior Youth Retreat at Camp Moose Lake.
April 14, 15, 16: Westgate Senior High musical, "Oliver," at Tech Voc Collegiate.
April 23-24: Graduation weekend at Canadian Mennonite University: Spring concert (23), convocation (24).
May 26: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate senior concert.
May 27-29: Birding Retreat at Camp Moose Lake, with Adolf Ens.
May 30- June 1: Plus 55 Retreat at Camp Moose Lake with speaker Jim Brown.
June 6-8: Plus 55 Retreat at Camp Koinonia with speaker Jake Neufeld.

Ontario

January 15: Ministers, deacons, elders conference at Listowel Mennonite Church, 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Topic: "Fostering good mental health in the congregations," with Al Dueck.
January 18: RRSP seminar, Mennonite Savings and Credit Union, at Lion's Hall, Elmira, featuring Carl Hiebert's "Gift of Wings," 7:30 p.m. Phone (519) 746-1010.
January 20: MEDA Breakfast Meeting, Stone Crock, St. Jacobs, with speaker Nolan Andres, 7:30 a.m.
January 22: Multicultural Leadership Training at First Hmong Church, Kitchener, 9:00 a.m.
January 28: Heifer Relief Sale at Brubacher Sales. For details phone (519) 669-2164.

January 29: Concert by two organs and five choirs, conducted by Leonard Enns, at First United Church, Waterloo, 8:00 p.m.
February 15-17: School for Ministers and Chaplains at Breslau Mennonite Church.
March 16, 17: Bechtel Lecture with Fernando Enns of Germany at Conrad Grebel University College, 7:30 p.m.
March 24: MEDA Breakfast Meeting, Stone Crock, St. Jacobs, with speaker Jim Erb, 7:30 a.m.
March 29: Mennonite Savings and Credit Union annual meeting, St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, 7:30 p.m.
April 1, 2: Menno Singers and Guelph Chamber Choir

perform at Benton St. Baptist Church, Kitchener (1) and River Run Centre, Guelph (2), 8:00 p.m.
April 17: Convocation at Conrad Grebel University College.
April 23: MEDA banquet at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, with speakers Robert and Lisa Shuh.
May 15: Menno Singers perform Bach's *Mass in B Minor* at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Kitchener, 3:00 p.m.

United States

July 4-9: Charlotte 2005, Mennonite Church Canada and MC USA assembly in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Subscriber services CANADIAN Mennonite

How to subscribe:

1. Individuals who are part of Mennonite Church Canada or one of its five area conferences can ask to be placed on their congregation's group subscription list. The subscription is paid by the conferences.
2. Others who wish to order a subscription can use this form. See contact information below.
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3. Changes will be made immediately but may take 4-6 weeks to take effect because of printing schedules.

Contact information:

Canadian Mennonite, 490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5,
 Waterloo, Ontario N2L 6H7
 Phone: (519) 884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 ext.221
 Fax: (519) 884-3331 E-mail: office@canadianmennonite.org



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