

C A N A D I A N

Mennonite

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reflections**

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Finding God in the wilderness

We have entered Lent. This is a time to reflect on our need for Christ, repent of our sins and receive the forgiveness that has been prepared for us. It's a time to put aside the things that distract and feel those burrs in the saddle that our consciences and the Holy Spirit leave for us. It's a time of soul-searching and of being uncomfortable. It's not as popular as Christmas.

Lent has not been a traditional part of Anabaptist worship. While it was part of early church worship, it was discarded by Anabaptists along with many other church traditions. I asked a church historian at a Mennonite seminary about Lent and the Anabaptists. "I keep thinking that our forebears threw out things that were indeed abused, but that could be sources of grace and renewal for us today—not least I feel this about our Eucharistic practices. I'm especially keen to restore communion to a central place in our piety, although I have found Lent to be beneficial as well," Alan Kreider told me.

Lent is being used again to call for renewal among Anabaptists. The worship resources distributed by Mennonite Church Canada this year speak of Lent as a desert. At my congregation, we have a series of flat rocks leading up the steps to the platform and a jar full of dry, grey-brown sand. It was poured between vases this past Sunday. As I saw the dust rising in the air from the pouring, I could almost smell the parched and burnt lands it represented.

The idea of desert comes from Jesus' own time of 40 days of solitude. We don't actually know if Jesus was in the desert or not. The Greek word used just means wilderness or

uninhabited place. We do know Jesus goes into this place after his baptism by John in the Jordan River in Judea. Perhaps Jesus went into some of the rocky canyons and mountains that line the west side of the Dead Sea south of where the Jordan enters it. John the Baptist also lived and preached "in the wilderness" (the same word

It's during the times when we find ourselves needing much that we can finally discover what we truly require.

used for where Jesus went), and John had enough water to immerse people for baptism! Going with Jesus doesn't mean having to find a dry place.

What defined where Jesus went was that he was away from inhabited lands. He removed himself from towns, human culture and the activities of ordinary social life.

Entering the wilderness is something all of us do at times, willingly or unwillingly. Sometimes our most lonely times are when we are physically surrounded by people but have no one to be with. Sometimes it is when the person we were with is no longer a part of our lives or when the person we wish we could be with is not. Sometimes it is when our familiar routines are broken up by outside events or by our own actions or inactions.

However we enter it, what can make the wilderness beneficial for us is that it cuts through the distractions of life. In the wilderness, it's easier to see what really matters. David Rensberger writes, "The desert, the *eremos*, lacks everything except the opportunity to know God."

It's during the times when we find ourselves needing much that we can finally discover what we truly require. May this preparation time before Easter be that for you.

—**Timothy Dyck**

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Head office: 490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5, Waterloo, ON N2L 6H7
Phone: (519) 884-3810 **Toll-free:** 800-378-2524 **Fax:** (519) 884-3331
E-mail: office@canadianmennonite.org

Editor/Publisher: Timothy Dyck
 E-mail: editor@canadianmennonite.org

Staff: Ross W. Muir, managing editor; Natasha Krahn, admin. assistant; Tammy Sawatzky, art director; Barb Draper, editorial assistant.

Advertising: Barbara Burkholder **Phone:** 800-316-4052
Fax: (519) 884-3331 **E-mail:** advert@canadianmennonite.org

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National correspondent: Leona Dueck Penner, Winnipeg. Phone: (204) 888-6781, x178
 E-mail: dueck-penner@mennonitechurch.ca

Regional correspondents:

Eastern Canada: Maurice Martin, Phone: (519) 662-1031

E-mail: mauricem@sympatico.ca

Manitoba: Evelyn Rempel Petkau, Phone/Fax: (204) 745-2208

E-mail: erpetkau@cici.mb.ca

Saskatchewan: Karin Fehderau, Phone: (306) 933-4209

E-mail: k.fehderau@sasktel.net

Alberta: Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, Phone: (780) 436-3431

E-mail: timanddonita@attglobal.net

British Columbia: Angelika Dawson, Phone: (604) 870-0494

E-mail: ajdawson@telus.net

Board of directors: *British Columbia:* Henry Neufeld, John W. Goossen
Alberta: Brenda Tiessen-Wiens, Jan Wilhelm. *Saskatchewan:* Bernie Thiessen. *Manitoba:* Aiden S. Enns, Bernie Wiebe, Paul Krahn.
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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 March 7 issue by March 3.

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Cover: California desert.
Photo by Leona Dueck Penner.

Floradale, Ont.

Finding peace in a desperate life

Elizabeth Elias, who has experienced desperate times in her life, believes in the power of prayer. On January 17 she told her life story to a women's meeting at Floradale Mennonite Church.

Elizabeth had a very difficult childhood. She was born in a Mennonite colony in Mexico, and her family moved to Bolivia when she was very young. In the new colony her father suffered serious ill health.

"We were dogs on the street," said Elizabeth, describing how it felt to be the poorest of the poor. "My heart breaks when I think about it," she said, imagining how her mother must have felt as she watched her children go hungry.

Elizabeth remembers being sent to a neighbour to ask for the slop pail. The woman gruffly agreed she could have it, but then sent the dog after her. Ignoring the dog, Elizabeth scooped an orange peel out of the slop pail and ate it.

"It was good," she said. "I couldn't remember ever having an orange before." She also remembers walking a mile to school on the hot, sandy road with no shoes and no hat. It was so hot that an egg would cook by itself in half a day.

Elizabeth is no longer bitter about the Old Colony Mennonite church that ruled their lives. Since she has found forgiveness for her sins, she has also forgiven everyone who made her life so difficult. She remembers her younger brother coming to the breaking point where he was so sick of living with nothing that he disobeyed the church and went to work for Spanish people.

Some of Elizabeth's worst memories came during a six-month drought. There was no water and the cows began to die. Her father was in jail for debt because he had co-signed a loan for a "friend" who wasted the money. One day she found a small green peach with a bite out of it. She carefully took it home and divided it into 11 pieces for her 10 siblings and her

mother. She herself sucked on the pit.

That Christmas there had been nothing to eat for several days and the children became lethargic. That evening, someone brought a small pail of *pluma moos* (fruit soup), a bag of sausage and about two pounds of potatoes. Her mother carefully divided the food so that it lasted for two weeks.

"When I think back, it almost seems like a dream," said Elizabeth. She remembers feeling resentful that in jail her father had food while the family went hungry.

She was 23 when she married Peter Elias. She was surprised when shortly after their marriage he said he would like to have a Canadian passport one day. He didn't know that she had Canadian citizenship papers. When one of Elizabeth's uncles visited, he offered to take the young couple to Canada. In a week and two days they had their papers.

Elizabeth and Peter came to Canada in 1990. She believes that God intervened to help them, even though they weren't Christians at the time.

Starting with nothing in their new country wasn't easy, but Peter found work on a farm near St. Jacobs, Ontario, and soon they were expecting their first child. The baby was still-born, and Peter was suffering from a bleeding ulcer. Over the next few years Elizabeth learned English, made new

friends and welcomed more children, but Peter was drinking heavily.

"They were the worst years of my life," she said. Elizabeth vividly recalls two incidents when Peter threatened to put an end to their lives, driving very fast and planning to crash the car.



Elizabeth Elias shared her life story at a women's meeting at Floradale Mennonite Church.

In each case, Elizabeth prayed to God and she believes that God answered her prayer. The second time it happened, Elizabeth prayed that if God

Since she has found forgiveness for her sins, she has also forgiven everyone else who made her life so difficult.

would show her how, she would live for him. Soon after her husband stopped beside the road and told her to drive.

"I was shaking and I cried. I knew the Lord was there," she said.

Things began to change after a final drinking binge when Elizabeth grabbed the children and ran to a neighbour's apartment. One neighbour called the police. Another neighbour called her minister and through that

Abbotsford, B.C.

Anonymous gift benefits CBC student

Stephen Balzer is a hard-working guy. In his final year in the biblical studies program at Columbia Bible College (CBC), Stephen has always worked to pay his way through school. His job of choice was tree-planting—good money but hard work indeed. So when a sudden injury to his wrists cut short his ability to work and to earn money, he thought his dream of completing his education was over.

It's been a long journey for Balzer to get to this year. He began his educational career as a missions major, but chose to switch to biblical studies part way through, as it would give him more options in the future. Unfortunately, not all of his courses transferred to this program and so he was left having to do a fifth year of schooling, which meant having to find money to cover his school fees. He started tree planting and also applied for bursaries. First his injury cut short his earning potential and then he found out that he wouldn't receive the bursary money he'd been counting on

either. He thought of living at home for the year, but his internship required him to live on campus; the whole situation was just frustrating.

"I couldn't believe it," he remembers. "I kept thinking I should have gradu-



Stephen Balzer is enjoying his final year at Columbia Bible College—made possible by an alumnus who made an anonymous contribution.

intervention Elizabeth and Peter were able to get the help they needed and they committed their lives to God.

"We are not rich, but we are forgiven," said Elizabeth.

Today Elizabeth and Peter have five healthy children who are no longer afraid of their father's drinking binges. They attend the New Hamburg Conservative Mennonite Church.

Elizabeth is a model of how peace-making happens. In spite of all the anger and hurt carried from childhood, she and her sisters were able in recent years to tell their father that they love him and have forgiven him.

"He broke down," said Elizabeth. They were surprised because they thought he was a very hard man.

Elizabeth tries to share her love with others. She helps Low German-speaking immigrants get settled in Canada by collecting furniture and other material aid. She tells others about how God has blessed her.

—Barb Draper

ated last year. I've spent all this time and money already, I've always had hard physical jobs, but now I've got this injury, and now this!"

However, Balzer had come too far not to finish, so he registered for school and prayed that God would help him find a way to pay for it.

Unbeknownst to Balzer, God would work a small miracle or two in his life using the lives of others as his vehicle.

First, his father offered to pay a portion of his school fees. Balzer had never asked his parents for money and never expected them to do so, so this offer was moving.

"It was an awesome gesture," he says. "I cried. He never does this kind of thing. I've always paid for my education myself, so this was awesome."

At the same time, in another province, Bill, a CBC alumnus, and his wife Linda (not their real names) were praying and considering giving a gift to the college. Bill had enjoyed his experience at CBC and was looking for

a way to give back to the college.

"The people I met while attending [CBC] left an impact on my life," Bill says. "We have been financially blessed and have been seeking an avenue outside of regular giving. Providing someone the opportunity to attend or remain seemed a proper way to recognize the benefits I received from CBC."

They sent a donation to Paul Wartman, CBC president, only saying that they wanted to money to benefit a student in need. Stephen's predicament had come to Wartman's attention just as he received their gift. He summoned Stephen to his office.

"So I go to Paul's office and he hands me this cheque for \$2,000 and says, 'This is God answering your prayer.' I just started crying," Stephen says, now laughing.

Together with his father's gift, Balzer had enough to cover his costs for the semester—his prayers had been answered. But, he says, the story doesn't really end there.

"Still thinking that he needed a job, Balzer applied to Mennonite Central Committee Supportive Care Services, to work as a support worker in one of their homes for those with mental and physical challenges.

"It's awesome!" Balzer exclaims. "I wake up wondering what God's gonna do today. It's like now the more dependent I am, the more down and out, the more I come out thinking God's got a plan, you know? Coming from such a low to now—where I have a job, I'm going to graduate, there's hope!"

Balzer hopes to work for awhile and eventually complete a masters degree. He wants to work with people in a church setting and feels that he's gifted for this ministry.

His anonymous benefactors are grateful that God was able to use their gift in such a wonderful way. "We believed that a good decision would be made, and by the reaction we are confident that Stephen fit the criteria we provided," Bill says. "It is always hoped that there can be multiple benefits from one action. It seems there are to be many benefits as a result of our small contribution. For this, we are grateful."

—Columbia Bible College release

‘Marvelous in our eyes’

Reflections on the Lenten texts from Matthew and John

The theme for these Lent materials, “Marvelous in our eyes,” is paradoxical. A call to rejoice in our salvation sounds good. To recover the awe and wonder of our encounter with the living Christ is truly marvellous. But in my experience, spiritual growth most often happens in times of struggle and difficulty. I have more often kicked and screamed my way through my own conversions than regarded them with wonder and joy.

To be sure, after the fact, I can appreciate that I have come to know God better and to be more trusting. I can recognize that my heart and mind have been stretched, that I am the better for the stretching, and that God has been at work forming, reforming, and conforming me in the ways of love. But the journey through the wilderness toward seeing the transformative power of God as marvelous has certainly required the use of many metaphorical corrective lenses—which, of course, is quite the point!

I take comfort, therefore, in the gospel stories for this

season of Lent—stories of people who also struggled to see the transformative power of God’s love as good news in their lives.

The first person who struggles to understand God’s activity in his life as good news is none other than Jesus himself. We often dismiss the texts that portray Jesus in turmoil—we think the temptations were not real temptations, or that the prayer he prayed before his execution was not a real prayer for deliverance. We let our own understandings of perfection and divinity get in the way of reading what is there.

As Matthew 4:1-11 describes it in the text for the first Sunday of Lent, the scene in the wilderness is Jesus’ attempt to come to terms with his baptism as the beloved Son. Does he, as the Son of God, have the right to act like God—to turn stones into bread to feed the people, to assert his superiority over even the temple, to command all the kingdoms of the world? Or will he understand his baptism to mean he has the responsibility to obey God, to entrust himself and his earthly purpose absolutely to the one who judges justly? There must have been times in those forty days when he struggled to define how he would use the power of his identity, when he wondered whether God’s activity in his life was marvellous.

Nicodemus, the elderly man who comes to Jesus by night, has a different sort of wilderness experience. His wilderness is a desert of the mind, a discussion with Jesus that defies the formal rules of logical reasoning as well as the formal rules of the organized religion by which he has lived his long life. Nicodemus is a Pharisee, a leader of his people, a teacher of



Photos by Leona Dueck Penner

Israel—who still does not understand what God is doing in the world. For all his stature in public life he still struggles to fathom God's love for the world. Understanding the magnitude of that love is a grace that only comes from above, as elusive as the desert wind blowing through the night of his conversation with Jesus.

The woman of Samaria, who comes upon Jesus at Jacob's well, is lost in a tangle of relationships that is depleting her. Some of the mess in which she finds herself is her inheritance as a human being—bitter racism and formidable sexism. Some of the mess is likely an unfortunate combination of desperation and sexuality. But at the well she finds someone who takes her seriously as an intelligent woman and offers her living water, water for living in and through the struggle. Her relational desert fades in a testimony that brings her neighbours also to draw from this unique well.

The story of the man born blind in John 9 is as much a story about the religious community's trouble with sight as it is about the blind man's impairment. It is a wilderness of confusion about what constitutes real vision. In the end the man born blind receives both outer and inner comprehension of the most important reality—the man from God. But the religious leaders persist in their own struggle, their own peculiar wilderness—by denying that they are lost at all.

Lazarus and his family are wandering in the most desolate desert of all—the wilderness inhabited by illness, death and grief. It is a place in human experience that Jesus finds deeply disturbing and he cries. Belief and unbelief, hope and suspicion, pleading and recrimination, love and anger are all part of this most common and most strange human desert. There in the cave of death near Bethany, Jesus overcomes that last desolation—a giving of life, a miracle that brings joy and relieved belief to Lazarus' family but also rouses such an opposition to his ministry that he is forced into hiding.

The last gospel text for Lent, the enigmatic journey from Bethphage to Jerusalem, has its own struggle, its own desert of irony and illusion. The

Lenten gospel texts: Reflection questions

Lent 1: Matthew 4:1-11—What are the struggles with the concept of obedience? Are we tempted to take power or are we willing to designate our power to God? Is the concept of obedience problematic because we have been forced to obey our earthly authorities in damaging ways?

Lent 2: John 3:1-17—How do we meet God in our minds? Are we willing, like Nicodemus, to ask our honest questions, no matter how others may perceive us? Are we willing, also, to let faith push the boundaries of our beloved rationality?

Lent 3: John 4:5-42—Are we willing to be transparent before God with the tangled web of our relationships? How does our contentment or discontentment with who we are in relation to others lead us to greater faith, to greater joy in our salvation?

Lent 4: John 9:1-41—What perceptual illusion, blurred vision or downright blindness are we clinging to unnecessarily or unhelpfully? What is true vision? How do we distinguish between correct and incorrect sight? What are the metaphorical corrective lenses that we can seek?

Lent 5: John 11:1-45—What are the resurrections that are being called out of the deaths in our own lives? How do anger and love resonate in our lives as we deal with the gifts and losses of life?

Lent 6: Matthew 21:1-11—Are we offering our hosannas to God with appropriate awareness of the upside down character of this King Jesus? Can we relax and enjoy, and maybe even chortle at, the ironies of serving this humble master?

king rides on lowly farm animals. The crowds processing with him acclaim him, and the crowds in the city do not know what to make of him—they are perturbed. Triumph, joy, and acclamation are underlain with doom as Jesus comes home to God's most holy city, where he will face his own most intense struggle and be put to death.

We do rejoice in the different aspects of salvation found in these stories, even the multi-layered triumphal entry. The good news is that God is there in the midst of human struggle. God's activity in the wilderness of human pain and pretension is marvellous in our eyes—not an easy marvel, perhaps, and not one that we can always embrace with eagerness. But the desert—with all its hardship, scarcity, difficult life and death choices—is also a place of rare and delicate beauty. It is the place where God meets human need most emphatically. It is the place where the human heart and the divine heart come together in the love that gives life out of death. It is marvellous in our eyes!

—**Mary H. Schertz**

The author teaches New Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana. Reprinted from the winter 2004/05 issue of Leader.

The first person who struggles to understand God's activity in his life as good news is none other than Jesus himself.... We let our own understandings of perfection and divinity get in the way of reading what is there.



Seeking an 'acceptable' fast...

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Isaiah 58.3b-7

It has been three days now since we returned from a visit to Gaza and I have been unable to stop thinking about it. Images of shelled neighbourhoods and children playing in the rubble of their demolished homes continue to fill my mind. The sounds of nightly shelling and explosions that made sleep difficult continue to distract me. The faces of the people whose lives we entered only for a brief time, and the stories of their dispossession and death they implored us to hear, continue to consume me.

"Tell our story.... Please, tell our story."

We had the privilege of visiting several families living in the Khan Younis refugee camp with our friends from the Culture and Free Thought Association—a group that MCC partners with that works with children and women.

On the western edge of Khan Younis, we visited that area of the refugee camp where only days before 17 families had been made homeless by the Israeli military's incursion into the camps. Khan Younis is only one of the many refugee camps that the Israeli military invades on a regular basis, in response to claims of "terrorist" attacks on illegal settlements and military outposts in Gaza.

People, mostly children, were wandering through the remnants of what was a large neighbourhood and market area. A small group was sitting in front of one of the only homes left standing. When they saw us they immediately began to describe the events of the last few days. One man brought us into the home; a group was sitting in front of where—only two hours before we arrived—an Israeli missile had crashed through the roof of the room where a two-year-

old had been sleeping. She was not injured, *nushkur Allah*.

We looked out the back door of the house to see the Israeli watchtower a short distance away, but not for too long, as our host feared more shooting if they saw us looking too intently in that direction.

"Tell our story—wait, just one more minute," he said to the young woman from the Culture and Free Thought Association who was helping us with translation, while trying to move us along as shooting in the distance grew louder from the checkpoint where we had been only 20 minutes before. "Just one thing you must do for me," he said, looking back at us and peering straight into our eyes. "Please, tell our story."

Christ has died. Whence the resurrection?

I have been sitting here trying to articulate some relevant reflection upon Palestinian experiences here for a Lenten audience. But after this experience in Gaza, any reflection upon Lent or any other religious ritual or season seems difficult to undertake. Maybe even a little trivial. Definitely irrelevant if it does not engage both myself and the reader in a critical reflection on "Christian praxis" when it comes to engaging the injustices here.

Lent is often seen as a time of sombre reflection, of humility, of penance and repentance. Lent is often associated with self-denial, especially in the form of fasting. And the writer of Isaiah spoke strongly of the Lord's requirements when the people of God participate in such rituals.

We are told that any fasting that only serves our self-interest, or contributes to the oppression of the weak and the marginalized, is not only what God does not want, but what God abhors. Only the fast that moves beyond empty, conscience-soothing ritual and steps into the action of working towards the liberation of all people from oppression—oppression

We seek you in the desert, God

**We come, leaving behind our cushioned recliners,
our multileveled excuses,
our distractions of mind and media.**

**We come to these wild places,
where the air is thin and the beauty stark,
where the winds are high and rocks jagged.**

**Here, in this untamed landscape, we can but honour
Your vast indifference toward
all that for which we strive: status, wealth, power.**

**Here in this wilderness, we can but be who we are,
in all our human frailty,
and place ourselves more truly in Your care.**

**In Jesus' name,
Amen.**

—Mary H. Schertz

that we are often the beneficiaries of—is acceptable. Indeed, it is demanded.

All our beliefs will not absolve us of our sins.

“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these ... you did it to me.... And just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (Matthew 25:31-46).

So this Lenten season, we will fast and we will pray. But Gaza will still be under attack. Beit Lahiya’s children will continue to be slaughtered. The shelling will continue to deny Khan Younis her sleep.

During this season of Lent, if we cannot respond to their cries, if we cannot make them our own, if the starting point of any Lenten reflection is not “My God, my God, why have you forsaken them? Us?”—then all of our prayers, our fasts, our rituals are not only a nefarious exercise of veiled self-interest but an active participation in the crucifixion of the Christ we only know in the children, women and men of Gaza.

Christ has died. Whence the resurrection?

—**Tim Seidel**

The writer is a MCC peace development worker in Palestine

Hope Mennonite writes Lenten letters

Winnipeg, Man.—During Lent we prepare ourselves for Holy Week when Jesus was tortured and killed. Last year, Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, used this time of preparation to participate in an Amnesty International letter-writing campaign in support of people suffering injustice, torture and facing death. Participating in the campaign raised awareness and gave new insights into the plight of the many who suffer in this world, so the congregation is planning the same involvement this year for Lent.

Amnesty International suggests that each participating church form a group that will meet weekly during Lent to write letters, e-mails, or faxes on behalf of those who are suffering injustice, torture and facing the possibility of death. One common practice is to meet after church on a Sunday morning.

At Hope Mennonite Church, a coordinator was appointed to receive the up-to-date e-mails sent out from Amnesty each week. Tables and chairs were set up in the entry area of the church for members to gather and write letters. They were provided with clear information, instructions, writing paper, pens, envelopes and stamps.

Amnesty provides weekly suggestions for letter content, although participants can choose their own letters from the Amnesty website or from the Amnesty newsletter *The Activist*.

“Letter writing, prayer and conscious actions not only encourage people living with oppression and threat of death, but also transform individuals and congregations into the image of Christ,” says Norm Voth, director of Evangelism and Service for Mennonite Church Manitoba. “God’s desire is for peace and reconciliation for all people.”

For more information, contact Amnesty International at www.amnesty.ca or contact Tom Collings in Winnipeg at 1-204-772-2892 or tomjulie@mts.net.

—**Evelyn Rempel Petkau**

Crucifixion: Sudan—September 3, 2004

**I sit
under a crude shelter
in Beliel Camp
Darfur, Western Sudan**

**Southern Sudanese Dinka elders
gather around
eager to tell their stories**

**Displaced
from Awiel in the South
because of civil war
between the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement
and the Government of Sudan**

**Displaced again
because of attacks
from the government-backed Janjaweed
Forced into Darfur, Beliel Camp
where food, shelter, security
are minimal**

**“We are waiting
for the war to end
in Darfur**

**We are waiting
for the war to end
in the South**

**We hear about the peace
but we do not see the peace”**

**The Dinka elder
thrusts his stick
into the dirt
and clicks his tongue**

—**Annetta Miller, former MCC Sudan co-representative**

Winnipeg, Man.

Former youth pastor loves entertaining children

Over the past two decades, Bryan Moyer Suderman has used his talents to work as a college admissions counsellor, a teacher, and a youth pastor. But what's really getting him excited these days is his ability to breathe life into biblical stories for children through music and song.

"This is just another expression of my passion," said Moyer-Suderman after an energetic performance in front of 150 children at McIvor Mennonite Brethren Church in January. "I've realized that my gift is

to write songs that engage people."

Moyer Suderman is joining the ranks of Canada's children's entertainers, but with a twist—he believes he's been called to tell the stories of Jesus.

"It's vitally important what we sing with our children," he said. "Who doesn't remember the words to 'Jesus loves me'?" There are many ways to make use of our teaching resources in the church, and one way is through music."

Moyer Suderman is a multi-talented musician. Like many young people, he picked up a guitar during his teenage years, penning his own music by age 16. Only recently, however, did he decide to pursue performance as a career.

"I had a strong desire to develop my music ministry, and my wife, Julie, wanted to get back into education," he said. So after spending three years in Winnipeg as youth pastors, the couple and their son moved to Stouffville, Ontario, where Julie secured a teaching position. That stable income allows Bryan to explore the potential of children's ministry.

Most of his songs reflect biblical stories, but he also looks for ideas in everyday life. One of his popular songs came to him while attending a mission meeting in Chicago. A sentence in the conference program—"from across the street to around the world"—became part of the chorus for *God's Love is For Everybody*. The words of *Can't Keep Quiet* and *Enough For All* were also inspired at church meetings.

But the lyrics of *God Loves a Picnic* came to him during a walk, and *Birthday Song* came while driving to the supermarket.

Most of his songs are built around simple folk-based tunes.

"That's how people have been telling stories for as long as people have been around," he noted.

Moyer Suderman believes music as children's ministry is particularly effective because of its tendency to be inclusive. "Music teaches kids about what God is doing in the world, and in a way that allows them to say, 'There's a place for me, too,'" he said.

During the past several years, Moyer Suderman has taken part in numerous musical projects, including raising financial support for Mennonite Central Committee AIDS projects in Africa. In 2002, he released *God's Love is For Everybody*, a 17-track CD of traditional songs (from both North and South America) and original music.

He's already working on his next project. He spent a week in the studio during his trip to Winnipeg in mid-January. He said the new CD should be ready for the Mennonite Church Canada/USA assembly in Charlotte.

In the meantime, he's spending two to three weekends a month travelling to churches and communities in Ontario, performing for children. He wants his songs to be "catchy, fun, and accessible," he said. "The songs we learn as children are with us all our lives."

For more information, visit his website at www.smalltallmusic.com.

—Jon Tiessen

The author is a freelance writer and broadcaster in Winnipeg.



Photo by Jon Tiessen

Bryan Moyer Suderman performs at McIvor Mennonite Brethren Church for 150 children. The concert was jointly sponsored by Mennonite churches in the North Kildonan area of Winnipeg, including Douglas Mennonite and River East Mennonite Brethren.

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

CANADIAN
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Abbotsford, B.C.

Competitive game helps students learn Acts

Any teacher knows that engaging students who have grown up in a media-rich environment is a challenge, so imagine teaching the book of Acts to a class of 40 college students. This is the challenge faced by Gary Yamasaki, who has been teaching New Testament at Columbia Bible College (CBC) for 15 years.

Yamasaki is a creative teacher who was thrilled when the audiovisual tech department built a media cart to house a DVD player, VCR, projector, speakers, etc. But he doesn't limit his teaching to electronic gadgets; he is an engaging and dynamic speaker who uses lecture styles and storytelling.

Coming up with Acts: The Game was not a great stretch of Yamasaki's imagination. At first he taught the course in a standard lecture format, but it occurred to him that the book of Acts would lend itself to a game format. A competitive person by nature, the game format would fit his style.

Another incentive for getting to Rome is a pizza party for any team that actually makes it.

He developed a PowerPoint game board that shows a map with a starting line in Jerusalem and a finish line in Rome, with 60 spaces to navigate in between. The class is broken up into teams of five or six, created to ensure students aren't working with people they already know.

"At one level, this is simply a precaution to prevent the formation of cliques within the teams," he says. "At a more important level, however, I want this experience of working in a team to serve as training for the students in working with people they do not know—or perhaps even people they know but do not like—a skill so helpful for functioning in the real world."

"Teamwork is huge for the game to be successful," says Andrew Crosby, a student who took the class last year, reflecting humorously about his own experience. "I was part of a team where

people didn't even always show up; I still have some bitterness about that."

Students earn points as a team and towards their individual mark. There are bonus markers on the map where each person scores one individual point. Points are also scored by individual pop quizzes based on

daily readings, group quizzes, regular attendance and team challenges.

Another incentive for getting to Rome is a pizza party for any team that actually makes it. The members of the team that comes out ahead by the end of the course get their names engraved on a special Acts: The Game plaque.

Kent Thiessen took the class and enjoyed both the game and how it made him learn. "It teaches you that you have to do your readings every day, so it forces daily study," he said. "I also learned a lot about the culture in that society, about the honour system that was going on."

Last year Yamasaki presented the concept of Acts: The Game to a session



Gary Yamasaki created this game board to teach the book of Acts to first-year students at Columbia Bible College.

of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) convention, the largest gathering of religious scholars in North America. As a result of presenting Acts: The Game there, he has had inquiries from as far away as New Zealand.

"I felt honoured to have the opportunity to share my ideas with other Biblical studies professors, and I appreciated the opportunity to get feedback from them," he said.

Perhaps the most satisfying comment comes from a student whose view of the book of Acts was changed because of the experience in Yamasaki's class. "I really didn't want to take [Acts] because I found the book to be long and boring. You made it come alive in your class.... You've cast the New Testament in a whole new and more understandable light."

—Columbia Bible College release

Publishing notes

The fall 2004 issue of *Christian History & Biography* focuses on the topic "Pilgrims and Exiles," and features essays by Anabaptist and Church of the Brethren scholars. Among the articles are discussions of the German heritage of Pennsylvania's Brethren movement by David Eller of Elizabethtown College, an account of life among the Old Order River Brethren by Stephen Scott, and an examination of nonconformity among plain groups by John D. Roth of Goshen College. Although the issue does not describe any mainstream Anabaptist groups, editor Chris Armstrong said he hoped to dispel some of the common stereotypes about plain groups. *Christian History & Biography* is published by *Christianity Today* magazine.

—From *Mennonite Weekly Review*

Winnipeg, Man.

Curriculum on Psalms speaks to children

A young boy smashes into his father's brand new car with a riding lawnmower and feels like an idiot. He attempts to recruit his sister to keep the accident a secret.

This is one scenario for discussion in the Vacation Bible School 2005 curriculum available from Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN), called "Celebrate the Psalms! Our God is Awesome."

The curriculum dramas centre on

"Celebrate the Psalms!" introduces children to the God who creates and guides, forgives and blesses people from generation to generation.

two siblings who are spending a day cleaning up Grandma's attic after she has passed away. They discover her old Bible, and out of boredom begin to read. They begin to identify with the story of David in the Psalms, finding that it has a remarkable connection to their own lives.

Project coordinator Eleanor Snyder, director of Faith & Life Resources for MPN, recommends the new study for Bible school, day camp, after-school programs or all-church retreats. "The Psalms are a wonderful source of inspiration for Mennonite Christians, both in times of joyful praise and in times of deepest despair," Snyder says. "I encourage all our churches to take advantage of this rich Mennonite study resource that can nurture a lifetime of faith in our children."

"Celebrate the Psalms!" introduces children to the God who creates and guides, forgives and blesses people from generation to generation. "Celebration Stations" provide art, drama, games and service activities to help children experience God. Each child will use a "Celebration Journal" containing a chart for reading the Psalms.

The curriculum is based on missional church thinking without using the word "missional," according

to Elsie Rempel, director of Christian Education and Nurture for Mennonite Church Canada. "Celebrate the Psalms' works from the perspective that God is at work in a multitude of ways and places, and we want to join in with that work and celebrate it."

Rempel read through a draft of the material last summer. "I am delighted to recommend this material to congregations," she said. "The

activities allow children to engage the truth and good news of the Bible in the creative and varied ways that children actually learn and relate to God. Best of all, this material is Bible-centred in a way that leads to abundant living with our God and God's people."

Sample materials and order information for "Celebrate the Psalms!" are available at www.mph.org/vbs.

—MC Canada release by **Dan Dyck**



Photo by Dan Dyck

Elsie Rempel displays a draft copy of the new Vacation Bible School material produced by Mennonite Publishing Network.

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Letters

**Rightness, relationship
not mutually exclusive**

Re: "Praying for the unity of the church" article by Dan Nighswander, January 10, 2005.

We'd like to thank Mennonite Church Canada for selecting "Praying over the broken body of Christ" as the theme for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The visual image that this theme evokes is a good starting point for reflection. How can we jointly claim to be "of Christ" and yet remain so visibly separate? How much more effectively might we build Christ's kingdom of peace and love if Christ's body were whole? The author rightly states that the only path to true identity is founded in Christ, whom we all claim to be King and Saviour, and that to travel this path requires humility, honesty and genuine love.

In the first of five sessions, the author describes the tendency toward "rightness" and "relationship" as two polarities that draw Christians apart. He suggests that the pursuit of correct theology, pure ethics, clean logic and absolute truth is often exercised in opposition to nurturing loving relationships. This implies that these polarities are mutually exclusive—that we cannot love, or love as well, if we are overly concerned about knowing and following God's truth. What a disconcerting line of thought. The author then refers to the Apostle Paul, who recognized the importance of both rightness and relationships. We'd like to expand on this second point to illustrate that the path to attaining Christian unity lies in a clearer understanding of the connection between these polarities. That is, we must strive to know God's truth so that we can love better.

If there is one thing that all Christians agree on, it's Christ's new commandment of love. This is clear from the gospels and the letters of the apostles. The inner logic of Christian

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 criticizing 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 in the next issue. 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.

love, which in the gospels is the living source of moral goodness, leads even to the love of one's enemies. Although one might argue that all love is good, regardless of motive or circumstance, true authentic love that fulfills God's purpose can only come about within the reality of God's truth—the truth about God's plan for humanity, the truth about who we are as people, and the truth about how we are to relate to God and others. There is a need to distinguish between a so-called love, whose goal is simply to make others feel good in human terms (e.g. tolerance), and true love borne from a recognition that all men and women receive their essential and common dignity from God, and with it, a capacity toward truth and goodness. Parents know all too well that love sometimes hurts. At times we must act in a way that a child might feel is unloving precisely because of our great love for them.

True unity will become possible when we discover how to live and love in unison with God's truth in its complete fullness—a truth that first and foremost demands that we love selflessly and without limit as Christ loves us, respecting the dignity of every person. All Christians have a responsibility to earnestly seek God's truth and to respond as God calls us. If history is a guide, the road to unity will not be travelled easily or quickly. Even so, we see encouraging signs of good will among many sisters and brothers in our own community and around the world. Through humility, dialogue, fellowship, charity toward one another, and above all, prayer—personal heartfelt prayer and shared prayer with our sisters and brothers in Christ—we can dare to hope that with

God's grace we will someday be reunited, as our Lord intended.

—**Cathy Craig/Lynden Penner, Regina, Sask.**

**Tsunami relief supplies
should be bought locally**

As someone who has travelled a bit, I have in years past visited several of the places that were hit by the tsunami. After all the media attention about the need for money—and not direct aid like blankets, clothing and toothbrushes—I was quite surprised when I saw on the web that MCC now is doing precisely what I was led to believe they would not do: send relief kits.

During my travels to that part of the world, I found virtually every conceivable product imagined by man is made there. While I know villagers along the shore have lost everything, and I certainly think we should help them financially, I fail to understand why we, as Mennonites, are being asked to make relief kits in Canada with products made in those very same countries—sometimes within miles of the devastated areas—and then use our donated money to ship those products right back. Does it not make more sense to buy the materials locally and save the shipping costs?

I have a hard time to support MCC after this. I really think Donald Peters, MCC Canada executive director, and Daniel Friesen, MCC Manitoba executive director, should use their own money, not mine, and visit the devastated areas, and reconsider their very inappropriate response on the part of MCC in Canada.

—**Jacob Dyck, Winnipeg, Man.**

Letters

Salvation comes from faith, not works

I have always been impressed by the depth of spiritual insight embodied in the words of many African-American spiritual songs. I recently heard one of these that I had not heard before and a phrase from its refrain has remained stuck in my mind since then. This has caused me to reflect on what that phrase—“Everybody talkin’ ’bout heaven ain’t goin’ there, no, uh uh”—means. Obviously this means that some of those “talkin’ ’bout heaven” will be going elsewhere and scripture is quite clear on what that “elsewhere” is all about.

This brings to mind what Jesus said

in Matthew 7:21 to 23: “Not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” While many who will appear before Christ will claim to have done many wonderful works in his name, he will say to them, “I never knew you, depart from me, you that work iniquity.” How terribly sad for anyone to be in that category.

On the other hand, how wonderful it is to look forward to attending the most beautiful wedding ever to take place anywhere, anytime, ever. Not only that, but to be the bride at that wedding makes it even more wonderful. As a 79-year-old male suffering the effects of a stroke, heart attacks and diabetes, the prospect is even more astounding.

So while it is commendable and praiseworthy to be actively involved in

the institutional church, that in and of itself is simply not enough to ensure being part of the bride of Christ and the wedding celebration. And just think of it, the ensuing “honeymoon” will go on forever.

To be part of that “bride” and the wedding celebration requires confessing one’s sins to Jesus Christ and accepting in faith the fact that he has paid the penalty for all our sins, thereby making us fit for the kingdom of God.

Having done this, we can be assured that we are included among those who form the bride of Christ as referred to in Revelation 21:9, where the angel says to John, the writer of this book, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

See you at the wedding.

—**Frank J. Thiessen, Winnipeg, Man.**

Not my grandma’s world

Two significant events have occurred already in 2005 that should awaken the followers of Jesus to the fact that this is no longer the world our grandmas grew up in (as if typing away on this laptop is not proof enough).

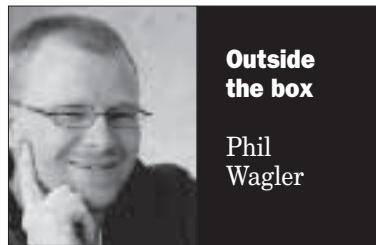
One event occurred January 27, when world leaders gathered in southern Poland to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, that notorious Nazi death camp of World War II. The other took place at a birthday party on January 8 in England, where 20-year-old Prince Harry arrived at a party costumed as a Nazi, complete with red armband and swastika.

What’s the significance for peace-loving Mennonites, you ask? Well, Auschwitz became a signpost for a generation in western culture. It not only destroyed the notion that humanity would create the perfect world through knowledge, technology, solidarity, and lederhosen (modernism), it also served as a boiling-over point for many to abandon God. (“The God of our reasoning would never allow this, therefore we reason God is dead!”) The thought of millions meticulously slaughtered by a “modern Christian” society should always stagger us. Auschwitz reminds us that evil continuously lurks beneath the polished veneer of humanity, and our supposed advancements, even theological ones, do not immunize us from an abrupt retreat into stupidity.

Which brings us to Harry—the sudden poster child of a new world—

who somehow thought it cool to party in a uniform that symbolizes Auschwitz. One young Englishman, interviewed following the abrupt departure of the hamster from the wheel in Harry’s head, declared in classic postmodern fashion, “He can choose whatever he wants; it’s only a costume.” Ah, the great postmodern ambivalence that sees no answers for anything, so do or believe whatever you want so long as you don’t infringe on anyone else’s right to do or believe whatever they want.

These curiously connected events reveal



two vastly different worlds that the church has the privilege of serving in these days. A cultural and social shift of tsunamic proportions has taken place since Auschwitz that may rival the radical wave of the Reformation. The liberation ceremonies and Harry’s wardrobe reveal two starkly different worldviews that exist within our provinces, neighbourhoods, and, yes, even our churches. This is not my grandma’s world!

So how do we declare the kingdom of God to a generation befuddled by the humiliation of Auschwitz (for they are still

among us), while proclaiming the unique authority and liberation of Jesus to a generation marked by “whatever”? (Don’t forget whose modernist experiment they are reacting against.)

This, we are discovering, is a mighty challenge. On the one hand, we wage war over everything from morality to music and the nature of potlucks. On the other, we cluster in ghettos, donning our own costumes and speaking in acronyms while Rome is burning. Or we marry the culture around us, copycatting fads and philosophies of all persuasions, leaving us nothing to say to the world because we are conforming to it, rather than transforming it.

Both hands are mercilessly sad—history reminds us so—given that many grandmas and Harrys we know live without the peace and hope we say we believe Christ alone brings. This mighty challenge demands that we be thoroughly enraptured by the good news of Jesus while embodying a counter-cultural and cross-generational love, inspiring and releasing one another for the sake of grandma and Harry. After all, the kingdom comes as we, and more grandmas and Harrys with us, embrace the cross in discipleship and each other in community.

—**Phil Wagler**

This writer, after having his dream of a professional hockey career ended by reality, has gone outside his box to serve Christ in student development, conference leadership, and pastoral ministry. He is currently leading servant (pastor) of Zurich Mennonite Church, Ontario.

Saskatoon, Sask.

HealthLink teams nurse with pastoral staff

A new initiative by Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan's HealthLink program is prompting the church to ask how Mennonites should be involved in healthcare.

"In the past hundred years, the church has drifted away from healthcare," says Judy Johnson, a congregational nurse at Saskatoon's Forest Grove Mennonite Brethren Church. She is the only nurse working in such a capacity in a Saskatchewan Mennonite church. As such, she may be on the wave of renewed Mennonite involvement in healthcare.

Johnson sees herself as an aid to the pastoral team at this multi-staff congregation with an average attendance of almost 900. She gets referrals from the pastors and has gathered around her a set of eyes and ears in the form of a congregational Health Cabinet. The cabinet is made up of volunteers who let her know who has needs. And who has needs can vary widely. Ranging across the spectrum of medical, social, emotional and spiritual needs, queries come from teens struggling with self-esteem, isolated caregivers, families with disabled children, and people dealing with mental health issues.

Defined as a "Christian nurse in a church setting," a congregational or parish nurse helps in a number of ways.

"It's another way of linking people in the church together," explains Johnson. She sees a definite need to get people away from the constant "me" focus prevalent in society. She also wants to use her role to reconnect the congregation with health issues.

Another goal is to assist pastors who may feel overwhelmed with the medical needs of their parishioners. Congregational nursing covers many integral areas, says Johnson.

"It involves health promotion and education, one-to-one counselling, making assessments and referrals,"

she notes. Congregational nursing involves the heart, too. Most nurses working in this capacity feel called to exactly that role, says Johnson.

One aspect she really enjoys is the chance to speak openly about her faith. As a nurse in the public healthcare system, she wasn't allowed to initiate conversations about spiritual matters. But if the patient had questions, a discussion about God and faith was allowed.



Johnson

Although there are 3,000 parish nurses in the United States, only a handful exist in Canada. However, Laura Kroeger, HealthLink coordinator, admits it has been a long time in coming. A former teacher, Kroeger recalls the early days of trying to make others see the importance of such a program in Mennonite circles.

"We tried to create an awareness of people falling through the cracks, of the need for faith-based care," she notes. But people kept saying that with a good healthcare system, everyone was looked after.

Now that the healthcare system is failing, people are becoming more open to congregational nursing, says Kroeger. MCC is funding the program at Forest Grove for one year. After that, the hope is that the church will take over.

Abe Klassen, Pastor of Care at Forest Grove, believes the program is a good one.

"We realized the value immediately," he says. Seeing the needs of the seven neighbourhoods surrounding the church, Klassen is appreciative of the training that Johnson brings to the care program at Forest Grove. Of over 70 volunteers who help with visiting the sick and connecting with shut-ins, he says Johnson is the only one with

medical training. He thinks Mennonites should be involved in healthcare in the church setting.

"I believe the church has to be alert to the aging generation. The need will be there. We'd better have the resources," says Klassen.

In a June 28, 2004 article in *Canadian Mennonite*, Pam Driedger, executive director for Mennonite Health Services in Manitoba, suggested, "The church must help create an environment in which the dignity of each person is recognized, from conception to death. We are called to help people find alternatives to abortion, support those who have decided to give birth under difficult circumstances, include in our daily lives those who suffer from disabilities, make our churches accessible,

In the past hundred years, the church has drifted away from healthcare.

create a place for the very old, the very young, the physically and mentally challenged."

Mennonites have not moved away from healthcare by choice, says Audrey Mierau Bechtel, former chaplain of Fairview Mennonite Home in Ontario. Due to regulations and government funding, Mennonites have had to give up some control.

"It's not always been the best," she explains.

Klassen disagrees. "The government has done a fine job of building hospitals and care homes, a better job than the church," he says.

Kroeger sees it as a slow process that happened over time. "Instead of the community looking after its own, the sense of responsibility was let go to professionals," she says.

—**Karin Fehderau**

Akron, Pa.

New MCC executive director named

Mennonite Central Committee has announced that Robert William Davis has been appointed the next executive director of the 85-year-old relief, development and peace agency.

Davis, who is currently senior vice-president of program services for Freedom from Hunger in Davis, Calif., will begin his assignment on June 1, 2005. During the month of June he will work closely with the outgoing executive director, Ronald J.R. Mathies, and will assume full responsibilities at the end of the month. Mathies, who announced his retirement in September 2003, has served as executive director for nine years.

A native of Lancaster County, Pa., Davis brings extensive international development, poverty alleviation and public health experience to the job. He holds a master's degree in public health and a Ph.D. in population dynamics, both from Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health, Baltimore, Md. He also

holds a bachelor of science in theology degree from Lancaster Bible College, Lancaster, Pa.

Davis said he is motivated by a strong vision for Christian ministry and a desire "to serve and seek to be an agent of reconciliation, a faithful servant and a community builder." He has also taught at the Summer Peacebuilding



Davis

Institute at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. In May 2005, he will be teaching the course, "Designing learner-centered training for conflict transformation."

"Dr. Davis has a work and life vision that aligns with the vision of MCC," said Donella Clemens, a member of the selection committee and former MCC executive committee member.

According to MCC board chair Karen Klassen Harder, "Rob brings a particular combination of qualities to the position, including having lived and worked abroad, skills to build partnerships across national, language and cultural lines, and experience leading organizations and people."

Early in his career Davis served as a health technical advisor and administrator for World Vision in Mauritania.

Davis is also the chair of the Child Survival Collaborations and Resources Group, a 38-member professional consortium of U.S. nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in maternal and child health work around the world.

Davis was appointed through a selection process that began in April 2004.

Davis and his wife, Nancy, are parents of two children. The couple are founding members of a Mennonite house fellowship in Davis, Calif. —MCC release

Arts note

Krause nominated for two music awards

Larry Krause, who attends Eigenheim Mennonite Church, Sask., has been nominated for two Saskatchewan Country Music Association awards. His album True Blue was nominated for album of the year, while Krause was nominated as male vocalist of the year. Released in June 2004, True Blue has spawned three country music singles heard on Saskatchewan and Alberta radio stations. His three-part harmony on his gospel song Do You Know has made it a favourite with both radio and live audiences. Eight of the ten songs on the CD are Krause originals, reflecting the rural prairie lifestyle with a country music beat. Krause launches his upcoming concert series on March 5 in Prince Albert, where he has become a crowd favourite. For more information about concerts or CDs, email Krause at gandlkrause@sasktel.net.

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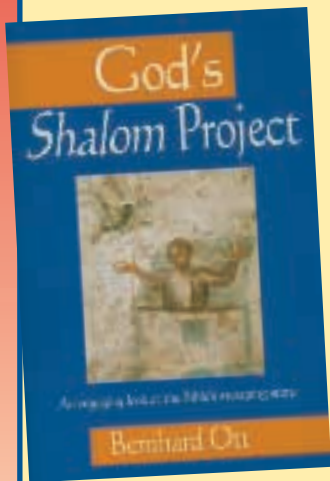
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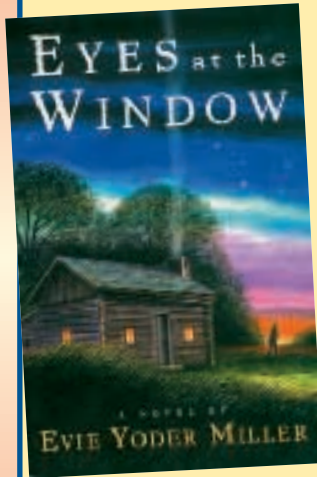
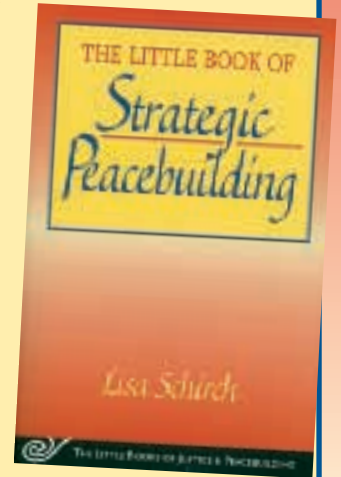


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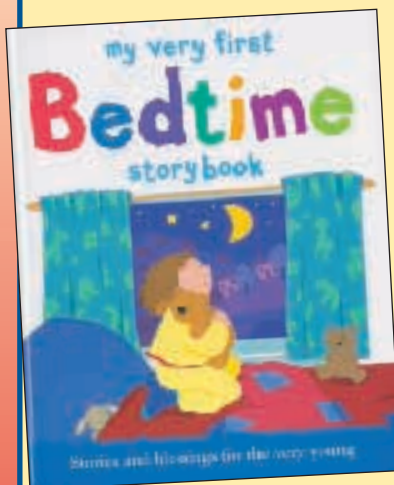
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Cross Lake, Man.

First nation congregation sees church as a community resource

Cross Lake, a first nation community 100 kilometres from the northern shore of Lake Winnipeg, has historic connections to Mennonite Church Manitoba and Mennonite Church Canada. The roots of the relationship go back to the mid-1950s, when the congregation erected its current church building.

The congregation is relatively autonomous, with local leadership and clearly articulated goals and dreams for its community. Formerly known as "Elim," this congregation recently became a chartered church and required a name. Under its new name, "Living Word Church," this congregation is seeking to make some of its visions for this community come true.

The congregation has plans to build a church that will be a resource to the community. The current building has deteriorated and is without heat or plumbing.

The congregation sees a new church building as "a community resource," said Norm Voth, director of Evangelism and Service for MC Manitoba. "They will own it, but it will be a place of ministry for the community."

The congregation hopes to provide a resource centre, a drop-in centre and a support ministry for the handicapped and their caregivers.

"Cross Lake has had a consistent children's ministry, with 50 to 65 children in Sunday school before the old church building was shut down," said Voth. "The church now meets as a house church, but accessibility and space limit their worship and make it impossible to carry on the important Sunday school ministry they are known for."

Excitement has grown in the community as the church puts its dreams into action. While members continue to do local fundraising, they have asked MC Manitoba congregations for financial assistance, volunteer labour and donations in kind for this summer. They are currently waiting for soil test reports.

Living Word Church has also asked



The church in Cross Lake, a first nation community in northern Manitoba, has an important ministry to children in its community.

for someone to provide biblical teaching twice during the year, and someone to provide basic counselling skills and training to local people.

"If they had a couple of partners, they might find a skilled caregiver within a ministry circle to provide some extensive training for a long

weekend," said Voth (see accompanying article on partnership circle). He also noted, "This congregation has resources and insights to offer us and can bring a perspective on so many things—what it means as Christians to live in this cultural context."

—**Evelyn Rempel Petkau**

Winnipeg, Man.

Partnership circle to work with first nation churches

When Mennonite Church Canada made funding cuts to its programs several years ago, first nation congregations in northern Manitoba wondered if they were being abandoned. These cuts elicited strong feelings and considerable dialogue.

Manitoba Mennonite churches have a history of involvement in first nation communities. Despite the drop in national church funding, some congregations have maintained those connections, and strengthened those ties.

Recognizing this, MC Canada and MC Manitoba are evolving a new structure.

"MC Manitoba and MC Canada are

attempting to work with native congregations in a way that doesn't replace what was lost, but rather work with them to help them move forward," said Norm Voth, director of Evangelism and Service for MC Manitoba. This new structure consists of "a partnership circle which encompasses all the native congregations and their partner congregations."

Within the partnership circle are ministry circles. One such circle is the Riverton Fellowship Circle with Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church and Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, as well as First Mennonite Church in Berne, Indiana.

"Those congregations work at identify-

Abbotsford, B.C.

CBC signs historic partnership with Fresno Pacific U.

Columbia Bible College (CBC) marked a milestone in its history on February 5, when president Paul Wartman signed a new partnership in Christian education with Merrill Ewert, president of Fresno Pacific University. The memorandum of understanding declared the partnership of two schools with a similar sense of purpose, a common foundation, and a unified vision for academic excellence and spiritual growth.

Wartman told the hundred or so guests in attendance that we live in an “urgent time” in which “Christian education has an integral role to play” in addressing the needs of society and producing leaders that have a “moral compass.”

Ewert talked of the need to work collaboratively on on-line coursework and student exchanges between institutions. “People with shared visions and passions can more effectively serve Christ,” he said.

Both leaders spoke of how teamwork would not only enhance their institutions, but also strengthen the mission of the church by transforming lives for leadership and service.

Walter Bergen, CBC vice-president of advancement, emceed the evening. “We live in a global village,” he said. “In a time of change, we are called to

be the church and do the work of the church in ways we haven’t done before.”

Patmos, a trio of Moldavian musicians (one of whose sons attends Fresno Pacific University), performed at the historic CBC event, reinforcing the themes of mission and partnership throughout its repertoire. With their unique Slavic sound, Patmos brought to life the story of God’s work in history as they played songs about sin, rebirth and new life. In their concluding number, the group presented a Moldavian folk song in which the violin and pan-flute gave the illusion of songbirds swishing their wings in flight—all glorifying God’s creation.

As guests departed, many expressed positive comments about the collaboration of CBC and Fresno Pacific University. Gratitude for the beauty



Photo by Janet Bergen

Paul Wartman, left, president of CBC, and Merrill Ewert, president of Fresno Pacific University, signed a memorandum of understanding on February 5, declaring the partnership of two schools with a similar sense of purpose, a common foundation, and a unified vision for academic excellence and spiritual growth.

and meaning of the music presented was also expressed to Patmos with a standing ovation and a flurry of CD sales.

—Rachel Bergen

ing the needs of the (native) congregation and the community. The native congregation clarifies their goals and objectives and together with the partner churches works to fulfill those objectives,” explained Voth.

Steinbach Mennonite Church youth have worked together with Manigotagan youth on Vacation Bible School programs for several years and have had exchange visits throughout the year. Grace Mennonite Church in Winkler has had similar exchanges with Pine Dock and Matheson Island.

The new structure is still in its formative stage. “We have met two times in these circles. We are still formalizing what these circles would look like and do,” said Voth. “My role is to facilitate these circles more than to participate in any one of them in an

ongoing way.

“Our four areas of ministry continue to be involved,” added Voth. “John Klassen, director of Leadership Ministries for MC Manitoba, and I partnered for the credentialing of pastors at Cross Lake. A young adult learning tour through Education Ministries is coming up in mid-February to build bridges across the cultures.”

The partnership circle is a place for processing and sharing information, storytelling and listening, connecting and mentoring. It is an opportunity to model a shift from a mission outreach approach to a partnership.

Three independent congregations at Manigotagan, Cross Lake and Riverton, as well as a half-dozen other communities, have long-term connections with the Mennonite church. Different levels of

partnership are being worked at.

“We invite congregations to participate. A preliminary level might be to exchange prayer requests, exchange newsletters, and a once-a-year visit. A larger involvement might be to work at joint mission projects,” said Voth.

Voth and Walter Franz of MC Canada see many possibilities in these reciprocal relationships. “We don’t have a native congregation in Winnipeg. Young people and others are moving into the city. These native communities have raised questions about how we can facilitate the spiritual growth of these people,” said Voth. “Any number of initiatives can come out of this.”

“We are aiming to meet quarterly as a partnership circle and ministry circles will meet as needed,” said Voth.

—Evelyn Rempel Petkau

Akron, Pa.

Tens of thousands join tsunami relief drive

In the weeks following the tsunami that devastated much of southern Asia, more than 30,000 donors have contributed a total of \$12 million to the relief effort, making it the single largest humanitarian effort by MCC and its constituents since World War II.

Large and small donations abounded, from benefit concerts, collection jars, chequing accounts, fundraisers and piggy banks.

A chain of 21 radio stations operated by Golden West Broadcasting in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta spent a whole day encouraging listeners to make donations to MCC and the Red Cross at participating credit unions.

Palliser Furniture, a manufacturer based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, encouraged its 4,300 employees to donate an hour's wages, promising that the company foundation would match up to \$25,000. The employees far surpassed the goal, donating an average of two hours' pay per worker, or \$51,000.

A hundred and fifty students at Goshen College, Ind., went without a weekly cafeteria meal to save money for donations. Children at Grand View Elementary School in Dinuba, Calif., collected change for three days and donated \$2,000 for the tsunami relief.

Desmin and Cohen Peifer, ages 9 and 7 respectively, brothers in Lancaster County, Pa., decided to sell decorations they learned to make in art class.

Using Popsicle sticks and yarn, the boys made colourful crosses called "God's eyes." These garnered anywhere from 50 cents to \$240 apiece and raised more than \$1,200. Their efforts were matched by their parents.

MCC is continuing to collect relief kits for tsunami survivors until February 28 along with financial contributions for tsunami relief

and redevelopment. However, MCC now recommends contributing funds for other worthy projects, such as providing clean water in many parts of

the world, supporting disadvantaged children seeking education, working for peace and reconciliation in areas of conflict, helping people with AIDS and



Photo by Jenna Stoltzfus

Cohen, left, and Desmin Peifer decided to make and sell "God's eyes" to help survivors of the December 26 Asian tsunami. They raised more than \$1,200 for MCC's response.

fighting the causes of AIDS, and also for much other work supported by MCC's general fund.

—MCC release by **Tim Shenk**

Aceh, Indonesia

Tragedy's enormity stuns MCC assessment team

In three days of touring in Indonesia's tsunami-ravaged Aceh province, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) assessment team members found themselves stunned by the enormity of the devastation.

"It was square kilometre after square kilometre of churned-up rubble," said Ed Martin, MCC's director of Central and Southern Asia programs. "It's not just broken buildings, but the thrashing together of materials, everything of human existence, all in a jumble."

As part of a more than \$15 million aid package, including more than \$6 million for Indonesia alone, MCC is providing trauma counselling in Aceh province and has provided medical and material aid, including food, to survivors. Longer-term plans for Aceh are being developed and will concentrate on village reconstruction, with affected residents helping to establish priorities among such needs as housing, water and sanitation, livelihood issues and schooling.

Some of the response will be through partner agencies of

MCC Indonesia. These partner organizations are small, however, with well-defined goals, such as medical assistance. Therefore, the assessment team is recommending that MCC, working with the Indonesian Mennonite synods and possibly the Indonesian Mennonite business community, also administer a reconstruction effort of its own, staffed primarily by Acehnese.


Recognizing that MCC's strength lies in intermediate- to long-term disaster recovery, the assessment team recommends three to five years of involvement in Aceh province. Steve Steiner, of Dalton, Ohio, and John Williamson, of Akron, Pa.—experts in water, sanitation and housing—will arrive in Banda Aceh over the next month to assist Ken Snyder of Salem, Ore., short-term MCC tsunami response consultant, in planning MCC's long-term response.

—**Emily Will**

Emily Will is an MCC writer based in Indonesia.

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Kitchener, Ont.

Volleyball tournament brings cultures together

Volleyball is a universal sport for Mennonite young adults. On January 22, close to 100 young adults came together at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate here to watch and play volleyball at the annual Mennonite Church Eastern Canada Young Adult Co-ed Volleyball Tournament. This is perhaps the most integrative multicultural event in MCEC. Close to half the participants were non-Anglo, with multiple teams from First Hmong Mennonite, Grace Lao Mennonite, and Toronto Lao United Mennonite Church. Several Mennonite Central Committee exchange program participants joined other teams.



During an afternoon break, the group welcomed a delegation of international young adults from the Global Youth Summit. This group is connecting Mennonite young adults around the world, and helping to plan events at the next Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay in 2009. They spoke with passion about the growing interest in the church by young people around the world.

Grace Lao Mennonite, Waterloo-Kitchener (W-K) United Mennonite, and two teams from Nairn Mennonite made the play-offs. After some top-notch volleyball, W-K emerged as the new champions. Each year the winning team helps plan the following year's tournament.

—Mark Diller Harder

Edmonton, Alta.

Young adults share their overseas experiences

During last month's "World Fellowship Sunday" at First Mennonite Church in Edmonton, young people were given the opportunity to share with the congregation their insights of living abroad in other cultures. Rob Heinrichs spent two months in Uganda during the summer of 2004, working at the Azur Christian Clinic in Hoima, and Paul Neufeldt attended the Mennonite Global Youth Summit in Zimbabwe the summer before.

Rob Heinrichs

Recalling the day when a father, his frail daughter and some baggage arrived at the clinic from the village on a motorcycle taxi, Heinrichs spoke about the need for compassion even when it can be costly.

"The girl was so thin, her arms like narrow rails that hung at her sides," he said. "Her neck so small, her cheeks drawing her lips to a tight, pursed line.

"They sat on the bench across from me and waited.

"I smile at the girl, hoping she'll smile back and ease the direness of the situation, as looking at her I wonder if death sits as close to her as I do. She does not smile, but locks my eyes in a gaze, so deep, so black and so absolute that I might be looking into the very void past this life, as though she were by some means a vessel to what lay beyond. After a few moments I fail to continue and cannot face her, so I glance away and lamely begin to look about."

The girl, whose name is Annet, was brought to the clinic suffering from congenital heart defects after her father learned that they were being denied government funding to send her to Kenya for a life-saving operation.

"Thirty thousand dollars US is required to fly Annet to Kenya for her operation," Heinrichs told the congregation.

"Suddenly I find myself thinking about the \$60,000 I'll be spending to do my master's degree...or that if I



Heinrichs

buy a new car someday I'll need at least \$20,000," he admitted. "All of my possessions and costs of living in Canada rush to my mind."

"That was in June. Now, it's January. I'm back in Canada, and I'm going to university. I didn't give my money to help in that situation."

"Do I give only as far as I'm comfortable giving?" he wondered.

"I pray that I would discover how it is I am called to help, to serve, and how I can use my time, my resources, and my abilities, in faith, to act as a vessel of God's love in the world around me. And also that I may find the courage, and the faith, to do what I haven't had the strength to do before.

"Please pray for all of us gathered here today, for Annet, and for myself," he concluded.

Paul Neufeldt

During his time at the Global Youth Summit, Neufeldt discovered innumerable differences between African and North American cultures. The most noticeable difference for him was the concept of time.

"In Africa, things will happen when they happen," he explained. "Until you accept that fact, you will be continu-



Neufeldt

ously frustrated with the African people. In Africa, things don't happen on time; because of this it becomes very difficult to schedule tours and other events too closely together."

Neufeldt soon learned that "the time that you spend waiting for such things to happen allows you to take a look around and interact with your current surroundings. By playing a game, talking to your neighbour, or just watching what's happening around you, you will find out something more

Many of us in the more developed world are so busy...that we don't take the time to completely observe and grasp our surroundings.

about the African culture."

During the Global Youth Summit, continental caucuses were used as a forum for discussing various issues. "It was interesting to note the differences in how each continent ran their caucuses time-wise," he said, noting that the Asians quickly got down to business and moved rapidly through their agenda. The North Americans were nearly as punctual, and the Europeans would have also finished quickly, he said, except for some apparent language barriers. On the other end of the spectrum, the African and Latin American groups took the longest to get both started and finished.

"Many of us in the more developed world are so busy, stressed out and rushed, that we don't take the time to completely observe and grasp our surroundings," Neufeldt observed. "We miss the little things in life that make the big differences. In Africa, the time allows you spend that extra minute or hour to look around and fully reflect on what surrounds you."

See also back cover.

Kitchener, Ont.

Ontario students join protest of U.S. military school

Three high school students from Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church joined the throng of peaceful demonstrators on November 19-21 at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at Fort Benning, Georgia. The students were Marshal Hett, Ewan Stringer and Rachel Collins, and they travelled with four others from Ontario.

human rights abuses in Latin America. Critics of the training school agree that any changes to the school in 2001, when the name was changed, were purely cosmetic.

Besides the peaceful rally at Fort Benning and a funeral march to remember the hundreds of victims of the SOA graduates, the weekend activities included seminars on peace-making and nonviolence training, along

Mennonites), there were secular groups such as Veterans for Peace and a number of celebrities, notably Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*. Hett's favourite quote from the event came from a Catholic priest: "A pacifist works with time, where governments fight with money. As long as the dream stays alive, our time will outlast their money."

Hett described the protest as very calm, "definitely not what I expected a protest to be."

Stringer's perspective on protest was also changed by the event. In his experience, people use protest as an aesthetic—an attitude without much meaning behind it. At this rally, he said, "The people were there truly to protest and did so by their behaviour." More than any one speaker or cause, the atmosphere and the constant music-making inspired him. There was a "vivid, life-filled ambience because of the music."

For Collins, the experience was "completely overwhelming," particularly the funeral march on the Sunday morning. As the thousands of people marched slowly along the street leading up to the army base, the names of those dead at the hands of SOA graduates were chanted. Near the end of the march, a number of protesters climbed over the razor-wired walls of the fort to be arrested by police who, after 15 years of such protests, seemed confident that the protestors would be entirely nonviolent.

"To have that many people in the same place who believe the same way as you do...it's incredible," said Collins on meeting so many other protesters.

—Ben Bolt-Martin



Photo by Jennifer Mains

Ontario protesters at Fort Benning, Georgia, from left: Jim Hett, Ewan Stringer, Chris Buhler, Rachel Collins, Marshal Hett and Kristen Mathies.

The institute is the former U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA), which trains Latin American soldiers in combat, counterinsurgency and counter-narcotics. Each year, SOA Watch, a nonviolent movement standing in solidarity with the people of Latin America, organizes a protest at the site. This year's event drew 16,000 protesters.

With the rally, SOA Watch hopes to force the American government to close the training school and change what it sees as oppressive U.S. foreign policy. According to SOA Watch, SOA graduates—including notorious dictators Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama, Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola of Argentina, Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru, Guillermo Rodriguez of Ecuador, and Hugo Banzer Suarez of Bolivia—have been responsible for some of the worst

with displays by a huge variety of international justice organizations.

For Hett, the idea of attending the protest began about a year ago. After seeing films produced by SOA Watch, he was stunned. "It was shocking to see the extent of the brutality," he said.

At Fort Benning, Hett was struck by the diversity of the groups represented. Besides the numerous religious groups (ranging from Buddhist monks to

Pontius' Puddle



Elmira, Ont.

Snyder family helps Heatley avoid jail

A year-and-a-half ago, Graham and LuAnn Snyder of Elmira lost their son—former Atlanta Thrashers centre Dan Snyder—in a car crash in Atlanta, Georgia. Earlier this month, the two were in an Atlanta courtroom, along with their son Jake, testifying that the driver of the ill-fated vehicle, teammate Dany Heatley, did not deserve to go to jail or lose his hockey career for what he did.

"Forgiveness in our hearts has helped us move on," Graham Snyder is quoted as telling Atlanta judge Rowland Barnes in an Associated Press story on the front page of the February 5 *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*. "We forgive because Dany has shown remorse to our family," he stated, adding that Heatley "has a burden that he will carry for the rest of his life."

Jake Snyder echoed similar sentiments in the same story. "I know he [Heatley] never intended for this to happen," Snyder said. "I don't want to see my friend go to prison. I know Dan would feel the same way."

In granting their request—and sentencing Heatley to three years probation, during which time he must give 150 speeches to young people about the dangers of speeding and be prohibited from driving except to go to work, the doctor, the grocery store or to his speeches—the judge admitted, "I don't know that I could do this if I were you."

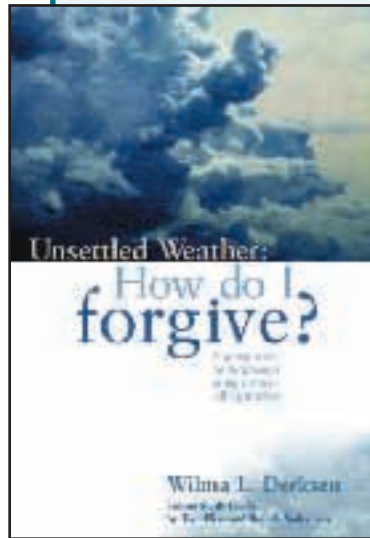
Dan Snyder, 25, was a passenger in Heatley's Ferrari convertible the night of September 29, 2003, when it struck a brick pillar and iron gate in a residential neighbourhood of Atlanta, Georgia. Experts estimated that Heatley was travelling between 34 and 77 kilometres per hour over the posted speed limit of 55 kph at the time of the accident.

Heatley pleaded guilty to second-degree vehicular homicide, driving too fast for conditions, failure to maintain a lane, and speeding. Charges of first-degree vehicular homicide and reckless driving were dropped by the Atlanta prosecutors.

"The mistake I made that night was speeding," Heatley is quoted as admitting at his February 4 sentencing hearing. It "will stay with me the rest of my life."

The Snyder family's decision to stick by their late son's teammate and friend during the last 17 months bears out a statement made by Elmira Mennonite Church pastor Ruth Anne Laverty at the October 10, 2003, funeral: "This is becoming a story about God's grace, God's love."

—Ross W. Muir



Unsettled Weather *How do I forgive?*

When Wilma and Cliff Derksens' daughter was killed in 1984, they chose the word "forgiveness," hoping it would somehow spare them the horrors of the aftermath of violence and the ensnaring justice issues. But Wilma confesses: "I soon came to resent anyone who said: 'Just forgive' as if it were that easy."

In this study guide **Wilma Derksen**, **Tym Elias**, and **Brenda Suderman** share a seven-session tested approach on storytelling. This is a vital resource for persons in classes, study groups, and congregations

who wish to take steps toward forgiveness.

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People & Events

Akron, Pa.—Ronald J.R. Mathies, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) executive director, joined 56 other leaders of Christian organizations and denominations in calling on U.S. President George Bush to seize the opportunities of his second term to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A full-page ad in the January 21 national edition of the *New York Times* carried a signed statement from “Christians for Middle East Peace,” calling on Bush to work with other world leaders to facilitate peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

“This is the time for you and for the 109th Congress, and for friends of Israel and Palestine, to have the courage to be peacemakers, and to press both Israelis and Palestinians to seize the future; where each recognizes the other’s right to exist and is willing to work together for security and economic well-being,” the letter states.

Mathies says that the statement “reflects the deep concern of leaders within Evangelical, mainline Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic denominations and agencies, that government leaders address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, not least because global security, including that of the U.S., is directly linked to peace in the Middle East.”



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Transitions

Births/Adoptions

Bigelow—to Cheryl and Richard, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., a son, Aiden Timothy Garry, Jan. 22.

Brown—to Nola and Mike, Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta., a daughter, Alyssa Leigh, Jan. 31.

Sawatsky—to Joanne and Reg, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., a son, Liam Robert, Jan. 15.

Marriages

Fey-Kroeker—Brian and Mona, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., Jan. 21.

Deaths

Bowman—Abner, 71, Floradale Mennonite, Ont., Jan. 7.

Cornies—Heinrich, 86, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., Dec. 29.

Enns—Anita, 75, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., Jan. 26.

Friesen—Waldo, 86, Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask., Feb. 4.

Harder—Peter, 73, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., Dec. 28.

Kroeker—Abram, 78, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., Dec. 28.

Lutz—Alice, 78, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., Dec. 16.

Muehleisen—Erika, 70, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., Dec. 20.

Neufeld—Maria, 94, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., Jan. 8.

Reimer—Maria, 98, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Ont., Jan. 8.

Schroeder—Helena, 88, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Ont., Jan. 22.

Thiessen—Katie, 78, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., Dec. 24.

Unrau—Maria, 95, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Ont., Jan. 4.

Baptisms

Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.—Ron Bergen, Christine Derksen, Harold Schellenberg, Jan. 16.

White Rock Chinese Mennonite, B.C.—David Hsien-chun Yu, Mabel Li-chun Lin Pai, Dec. 26.

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

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Please e-mail **Transitions** announcements (identifying congregation name and location) to:
transitions@canadianmennonite.org

Mennonite Church Canada

Prayer requests during Lent

- The Mennonite Church in Vietnam has issued an urgent appeal for prayer and fasting for imprisoned Vietnamese church workers Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang, Pham Ngoc Thach and Ms Le Thi Hong Lien. Their February 2 re-trial has been postponed. Pray for protection and justice.
- Rad and Pat Houmphan, Thailand, presently on home/study leave in Langley, B.C., request prayers for the families of the tsunami victims. Pat visited local staff and church families in Thailand in January, to offer support and encouragement. Pray also for Pat as he studies at Fuller Seminary during February, and as they continue itinerating in churches through all of spring.
- Pray for the church in South Africa as it seeks to respond to the overwhelming needs resulting from the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which include the loss of church members, family incomes, and the many children without parents.
- Pray for the Zaporozhye Mennonite Church in Ukraine that is seeking new pastoral and council leadership; also for Arnie Neufeld from Winkler Berghaler Mennonite Church, who is providing encouragement and counsel during a one-month Witness assignment.
- Nancy Frey and Bruce Yoder, who teach at the Benin Bible Institute, invite prayers for God's strength and protection, for themselves and their colleagues; for the church leaders' seminar in Ghana during February, which Bruce will be leading; for wisdom as they discern partnership with a fledgling community development project; and for Janessa Otto, a midwifery student from

Ontario, who is beginning a one-year assignment as a Witness intern at the Bethesda Health Centre in Benin.

- Pray for Anne Garber Kompaoré in Burkina Faso, who began a new assignment as translator consultant for the Bible Society. Pray that she might have wisdom, peace of mind and an ability to prioritize the many urgent details for this work. Remember, too, her co-workers Zanga, and Phil and Carol Bergen.
- Pray for Mennonite Church Canada boards, councils, committee members and staff as they meet to discern God's leading at the Leadership Assembly, March 3-5, at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

Micah Fund discontinued

On January 19, the MC Eastern Canada executive board approved a motion by the Peace, Justice and Social Concerns Commission and the Mission and Service Commission recommending the closure of the Micah Fund on January 31, 2005, and the distribution of funds held at that time according to the current disbursement policy. The motion also commits MCEC to build economic justice through other concrete conference ministries and projects.

The Micah Fund began in 1996 as a response to cuts to social service agencies and welfare by the Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris that were designed to decrease personal and corporate income tax. The fund was set up as a way for people to redirect their income tax savings—to “do something concrete” about the perceived injustices of that system. The fund's title was derived from Micah's encouragement to “do justice, love kindness, walk

humbly with [our] God” (Micah 6:8).

The essential purpose guiding the use of the fund was “the redistribution of resources from those who have more to those who have less.” This was seen as a way to “live Jubilee,” to let people of faith with greater financial resources give away at least some, if not all, of the ongoing and growing tax savings by which it seemed the rich got richer as the poor got poorer.

Initially, four MCEC-supported ministries received the funds. Later, the guidelines of the fund were changed so that ministries involved in helping marginalized people, supported by the Mission and Service Commission, could apply for funds. Funds were used by the ministries in a variety of ways:

- A need was identified by senior residents of 15 Tobermory in Toronto, Ont., that they had little access to other programs outside the building. Thus, Jane-Finch Ministries developed a seniors program within the building.
- Maison de l'amitie, Montreal, Que., used the additional funds in their refugee program to buy towels to place in the kits that new refugees are given when they are in a welcome house.
- Welcome Inn in Hamilton, Ont., used \$2,000 as a revolving loan for emergency use by low income people (for example, when they were not working due to illness).
- Limberlost in London, Ont., used funds to purchase dictionaries for immigrant families, so that parents could help their children learn English and help them with their schoolwork. For the first four years of the

program, there was a strong response from constituents. In one of those early years, \$20,000 was raised by people who diverted their tax savings to the Micah Fund. For several years, the fund generated an average of \$4,000.

Mission secretary Bev Raimbault says, “It seems like when ‘the Harris cuts’ were in the news, there was more response. Now, there is less. Has it not been advertised enough?”

Recently, the annual receipts have dwindled to between \$400 and \$800—therefore the decision to terminate the fund.

Raimbault adds, “You don't need to go overseas to find economic conditions that are poor. We are still in conversation about how to raise awareness of what is going on in our own country right now. We are working on developing church partnerships which may hopefully also address the concern of social injustice in our society in more direct ways—through prayer, volunteerism and financial aid.”

The Peace, Justice and Social Concerns Commission and the Mission and Service Commission have met to discuss the second part of the motion. Many ideas were brought forward on how to accomplish the goals of building economic justice through various ministries and projects within MCEC. They will work further on this question.

Mennonite Church Manitoba

New video series in the works

In attempting to serve the three main ministry areas of Mennonite Church Manitoba—Evangelism and Service, Education, and Leadership, Church Community Building Ministries (Media Ministries) is producing a new video series. Darryl Neustaedter

Barg, associate director of Media Ministries, is overseeing the production of a new video series, one of many projects that comes with his portfolio.

So What!, the first video in a new series, is nearly complete. Aaron Epp, a young adult from Douglas Mennonite Church, hosts the four-minute video that interviews mature youth and young adults, ultimately asking them, "So what?" "So you believe in Jesus—what difference does that really make in your life?"

"The hope is that this little series will empower our young people to tell the truth about their faith, encouraging others to explore following Jesus," said Neustaedter Barg.

The videos will be available on the Mennonite Church Manitoba website: www.mennochurch.mb.ca.

Neustaedter Barg also reports that with the end of the recording engineer position, the recording studio has undergone a structural transition. "We are currently working with three audio engineers on a contract basis," he explained. "The *Frohe Botschaft* radio program and the Canadian Mennonite University program are

produced weekly," out of the studio, he added.

The studio is available to clients at an hourly rate. An established portion of the rate goes for the facility and the balance goes to the engineer. Neustaedter Barg hopes to raise awareness of this wonderful resource over the next year.

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

Important decisions looming for delegates

Under the banner of Celebrating Who We Are, delegates attending the MC Saskatchewan provincial sessions this year in Rosthern will be making important decisions that may affect the future of Mennonites in Saskatchewan. Each church is allowed to send one delegate for every 25 members and each one is also being strongly encouraged to send youth delegates as well. No parallel sessions will be planned for teen delegates, although an inter-generational coffee house will be held on Friday night after the main session.

Executive members may need more time to discuss

several issues being brought to the delegates. According to the moderator's report, the most important issues involve the re-covenanting service, the vision statement and the issue of credentialling pastors.

Both the vision statement and the re-covenanting will be the focus of delegates during Friday afternoon roundtable discussions, while the credentialling topic will be presented Saturday morning. The 38 churches that make up the Saskatchewan conference are expected to sign an agreement that will unify the province under one set of jointly articulated ideals. The document was prepared by the Envisioning Team during a two-year project which involved taking time to hear from leadership and people at the grassroots level.

The actual re-covenanting service will take place Saturday afternoon.

More detailed reports will be provided in upcoming issues.

Mennonite Church Alberta

Pastors council shares joys and concerns

The Alberta pastors council met at Camp Valaqua from January 25-27 for a time of retreat, fellowship, and sharing of congregational and conference joys and concerns. The meetings are meant to foster supportive relationships between leaders, provide support, encouragement and resources, and to act as a guide for the Mennonite Church Alberta executive as it seeks to deal faithfully with conference agenda.

The 16 participants enjoyed unseasonably warm temperatures, which allowed for rejuvenating walks and the enjoyment of Camp Valaqua's new meditation trail between sessions. A highlight of each pastors council is a time of resource sharing, in which participants briefly outline what they are currently reading; this session the list included books about prayer and spiritual disciplines, practical and biblical theology, looking to the future of the

Continued on page 28

Christ taught in many ways

Sunday school, clubs, youth groups, Vacation Bible School, Bible study groups, and summer camps: These are just a few of the programs that rely on Christian curriculum to function. Many congregations, especially in rural and small urban areas, find that although the need for these types of leadership is still there, they may no longer have the human resources available to make them all happen. At times this seems scary and the challenges overwhelming. Change is never easy, but change can bring revitalization.

Multi-level or multi-age groupings are solutions that many smaller churches have been using for some time. Smaller enrolments in Sunday school and other programs have meant that increasingly our groups have a wider range of ages in them. At first glance this may seem daunting to a teacher, but it also has its benefits.

Those of us who have taught know that

we learn more as we teach others. What more wonderful way is there for older students to become more confident and secure in their faith than to help to teach/model it for a younger student? Multi-age grouping reminds us that we are learners and that the relationships nurtured in learning situations are an important part of our faith journey.

Research into multiple intelligences indicates that we all learn and worship in a variety of ways. (Multiple intelligences refer to the eight ways in which people respond to, or learn, new information. For example, some people are naturally able to link music to new concepts, others need time to spend in personal reflection, and some need to discuss information in order to process it.) Biblically, this makes great sense—Christ used different methods of teaching depending on the situation.

It is amazing to experience Bible stories

in new and creative ways, and to be constantly amazed by the awesomeness of God's creation. Exploring different methods of teaching allows those who have different talents to share their uniqueness with others. The strengths evident in one individual are often complemented by those of others. As we encourage those around us to experience God in new ways, we all grow in our faith.

It is important for us to remember that Christian education does not just happen in the classroom or youth group, but in all aspects of life. Our journey of faith is a lifelong one and it truly does take an entire village to raise a child.

Carolyn Vis, chair of the Christian Education Commission, MC Saskatchewan



From our leaders

MC Alberta *From page 27*

church, faith story biographies, books on politics, and a variety of novels.

The majority of meeting time was spent in personal sharing and discussion of issues various leaders are dealing with in their areas of responsibility. A sampling of issues included marriage, divorce, and family struggles; leadership issues; communication, mental illness in the congregation, helping people deal with grief, leadership reviews; camp ministry in Alberta; youth and young adult ministries; spiritual direction; time management; dealing with physical and mental health issues in congregations; sermon preparation; mission and outreach; baptism; inviting new people to church; and leadership transitions.

Jim Shantz, Mennonite Church Alberta conference minister, shared briefly about his recent experience in Dallas, Texas, at the regional conference ministers meetings. "Spiritual oversight" was a major topic of discussion—central questions on this topic included: "Who does our Mennonite theology?" and, "How do we mind the faith?"

The pastors council retreat concluded with a small group prayer time in which Alberta leaders prayed for each other and their congregations.

**Mennonite Church
British Columbia**

**Inspirational Day
date changed**

B.C. Mennonite Women in Mission have moved the date of their Inspirational Day. Usually held at the end of April, the event has been moved to May 1, to accommodate those women who want to participate in Camp Squeah's Paddleathon (to be held April 23 to 24.) The Inspirational Day will be at Eben Ezer Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, and includes special speakers and music groups, as well as a short service to commemorate those women who have passed away within the last year. For more information, contact Veronica Thiessen at 1-604-823-6101.

Mission Possible is the first retreat for middle school youth to be held at Camp Squeah this spring. This event will be a weekend of exploring how God has made us each unique and has a purpose for each of our lives. Mission Possible runs April 29 to May 1, and registration forms are available from all youth pastors or by contacting the MCBC conference office at 1-604-850-6658.

Unless otherwise credited, the articles in The Churches 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.

Employment opportunities

TECHNOLOGY TEACHER

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate invites applications for a full time Technology teaching position for September, 2005. This teacher, responsible for teaching Design and Technology to students from grades 7-12, must bring diverse skills in woodworking and transportation (small engines, auto) technology. Qualified applicants will have strong relational skills and a commitment to Christian education from a Mennonite Anabaptist perspective.

Forward resumes:

c/o Principal
E-mail: principal@rockway.on.ca
FAX: (519) 743-5935
110 Doon Road, Kitchener, ON N2G 3C8

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 Church Eastern Canada
4489 King St. E
Kitchener, ON N2P 2G2
Attn: Muriel Bechtel
E-mail: Muriel@mcecc.on.ca

SHERBROOKE MENNONITE CHURCH of Vancouver, B.C. invites applications for the full-time position of

YOUTH PASTOR

Desired qualifications would include:

- Enthusiastic, mission focused, person with a long-term vision for reaching out to young people inside and outside the realm of the church.
- Ability to provide Christ centered, biblically based and Anabaptist oriented discipleship training/teaching.
- Vision for integrated youth ministry in a Multicultural setting.

Duties would include:

- Taking responsibility to integrate youth ministry into the overall life, worship and service of the congregation.
- Be accountable to the congregation through the senior Pastor and Church Council.

Preferred Starting Date: August 1st, 2005

Application Deadline: April 1st, 2005

Please send resume to:

Alfred Ens, Search Committee
E-mail: alfandkelly@dccnet.com
Sherbrooke Mennonite Church
7155 Sherbrooke St., Vancouver, BC V5X 4E3
Phone: (604) 327-3913; Fax: (604) 321-3933
E-mail: smcvan@telus.net

The Vineland United Mennonite Church is accepting applications for the full time position of

ASSISTANT MINISTER

to begin June of 2005. We are a congregation of 350 members situated in a growing rural community.

Our church seeks an enthusiastic individual with a strong desire to nurture youth spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. Primary responsibilities include leadership of the Youth Program with an emphasis on relationship building. This individual will also support the Young Adult and Children's programs. Candidates should have formal training in Theology/Religious Studies and possess a commitment to the values and visions of the Anabaptist Mennonite Church.

Applications will be accepted until March 14/05. Please direct inquiries and resumes to:

Vineland United Mennonite Church
c/o Dave Gossen
4563 Cedarbrook Lane
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B5
Phone: (905) 563-6482
E-mail: dgossen@sympatico.ca

Employment opportunities

Emmanuel Mennonite Church invites applications for a

FULL TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR (Youth and Young Adults)

Emmanuel is a multicultural, intergenerational congregation with a membership of approximately 225 people. We are looking for a dynamic individual to work predominantly with our youth, young adults and their families. This individual would be committed to and educated in Anabaptist theology and polity. Experience would definitely be an asset.

If you have questions or wish to apply contact:

Emmanuel Mennonite Church
3471 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5C1
Phone: (604) 854-3654
Email: office@emmanuelmennonite.com



PRINCIPAL

Mennonite Collegiate Institute, a Mennonite Christian Residential High School in Gretna, MB is accepting applications for the position of Principal for the 2005 – 2006 school year.

The school supports a strong program of academic excellence, is clearly Christian and affordable to all.

The successful applicant will be in agreement with and fully supportive of the Statement of Faith, Mission, and Vision of the school; and support and treasure the Anabaptist Christian Faith and Cultural Heritage.

MCI seeks applicants who are gifted and innovative, demonstrating successful experience in administration, management, leadership, team building, communication and public relations.

Closing deadline for applications is March 25, 2005.
Please send resume to:

Judith Siemens, Personnel / Search Committee
Mennonite Collegiate Institute
Box 250 Gretna, MB R0G 0V0
Fax: 204-327-5872; E-mail: mci@mciblues.net




VOLUNTEERS

Is God calling you to use your leadership abilities, management skills and two or more years of cross-cultural experience to serve others through MCC? This year MCC needs people to lead MCC work in Congo, Bangladesh and a director for its Visitor Exchange Program (based in Akron, Pa.). In 2006, MCC will need leaders for MCC work in Jamaica, Bolivia, Haiti, Tanzania, Nigeria, Mexico and a West Coast MCC director (based in Reedley, Calif.). Plan ahead. Application review begins immediately for 2005 positions. Application review for 2006 positions begins August 2005.

Contact:

Charmayne Brubaker, Human Resources,
Phone: (717) 859-1151; E-mail: cdb@mcc.org

or your nearest MCC office for job descriptions and more information about these upcoming MCC leadership openings.



Advertising

Copy due dates.....for Issue

Tuesday Mar. 8	Mar. 21
Tuesday Mar. 22	April 4
Tuesday April 5	April 18

**To place an advertisement,
contact Barbara Burkholder**
1-800-316-4052 Fax: 1-519-884-3331
advert@canadianmennonite.org

For sale

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

Housing

Immediate, 1 bdr, basement walkout. Country living at its finest! 8 minutes from West Waterloo. \$575.00 inclusive. Smoke free, no pets. 741-4929 pager.

Mennonite Voluntary Service Intentional Community in Toronto. Call (416) 422-2406 for details.

Mennonite Encyclopedia 1-5;
B. H. Unruh (1955) *Die Niederländisch-mennonitischen Ostwanderung;* Daniel Cassel (1890) *Geschichte der Mennoniten;* *Mennonite Quarterly Review '58-'90* (not complete). jjjanzen@gto.net

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.

News brief

Church stewardship workshop planned

The 2005 Conciliation Services Canada (CSC) Summer Training Institute offered at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario, is designed to help congregations realize and utilize their particular gifts. The five-day institute—"How your congregation can act on its gifts: Utilizing the power of asset mapping"—will run from June 14 to 17. The week will feature Luther K. Snow, the director of the Congregational Asset Mapping Project for the Evangelical Church in America as well as a congregational consultant and author of the Alban Institute's book *The Power of Asset Mapping*. Over the course of the seminar, participants will acquire practical tools and lessons that clergy and lay leaders can use to support and encourage a long-term, sustainable culture of abundance in their congregations. This seminar is meant to "encourage and equip us to turn the stewardship of our assets into inspiring, relationship-building, life-giving ministry." For further information, contact Nan Cressman, director of Conciliation Services Canada by email at cressman@soonet.ca. —From CSC release

Women sing for women in need

Vancouver/Abbotsford, B.C.—

On March 8—International Women's Day—14 women, supported by a women's choir from various churches, will perform Suor Angelica, Puccini's one-act opera, at the First United Mennonite Church in Vancouver; the curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. All proceeds raised that night will go to the Magdalene Recovery Society, which works with sex trade workers on the Vancouver East Side.

On Sunday, March 13, at 8 p.m., the opera will be performed again at the Bakerview Mennonite Brethren Church in Abbotsford, to raise funds for MCC's work in domestic violence prevention and response.

Five of the cast members—Heidi Peters, Katy Garden, Stephanie Manchulenko, Eugenia Fernandez and Riad Klassen—attend Mennonite churches, but come from diverse backgrounds, as do the other women in the cast. Four other cast members sang in the Oratorio for AIDS last December at First Mennonite.

Riad and Frank Klassen are doing the stage and music direction; both have extensive backgrounds in theatre and opera throughout Germany and other parts of Europe.

This fully-staged production was made possible with the help of many volunteers, including Fred Kaarsemaker at MCC B.C., who donated cloth for the costumes; Selma Sawatzky, who offered to design and sew them; and Rita Dhahan and soloists, who are promoting the show at various church services.

The story of Sister Angelica, an Italian nun in the 17th century, is filled with both comedy and tragedy, and leaves the audience with some serious questions for today.

—Frank Klassen

Churches sought to offer sanctuary

Kitchener, Ont.—A coalition of Waterloo Region churches, with representation from Mennonite, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Ethiopian Orthodox congregations, is looking for local churches willing to provide sanctuary as a last resort for refugee families facing deportation.

At present, 10 local refugee families—encompassing 20 adults and 30 or more children and teens from Central and South America—are facing deportation, according to the group that includes Eunice Valenzuela, the executive director of the Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support.

Group members hope local churches will band together to provide financial and other types of support to any congregation willing to provide sanctuary, which they consider a justified form of civil disobedience. Refugees chosen for sanctuary in local churches would be selected based on the risk of death or persecution if deported to their country of origin.

Currently, a dozen churches across Canada provide sanctuary for refugees facing deportation.

To promote its cause, the coalition has organized a forum at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, on March 10 at 7 p.m. Mary Jo Leddy, a theologian, social justice advocate, author and refugee advocate, is the keynote speaker. Leddy is the executive director of Romero House in Toronto, where transitional shelter and support is provided for newly arrived refugees. She will speak on the ways refugee advocates and those involved in the sanctuary movement are attempting to reform this country's refugee laws.

—From a February 5, 2005, K-W Record news article.

Calendar

British Columbia

March 5: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. lecture by Dr. Bruce Guenther—"Wrenching our youth from frivolous pursuits." Emmanuel Mennonite Church, 7 p.m.

March 11, 12: Columbia Bible College Kingdom Players presents The Importance of Being Earnest. Call 1-604-853-3358 for tickets.

March 18-19: Youth workers conference at Columbia Bible College with Tony Campolo on: "Youth ministry as sanctuary in a world of violence." For details, call Gareth Brandt at 1-604-853-3567 ext. 323.

March 18: Prospective Student Day 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 p.m.

April 1: Columbia Bible College athletic awards evening.

April 15: Columbia Bible College spring concert at Central Heights Mennonite Brethren Church, Abbotsford.

April 16: Columbia Bible College graduation.

May 3: Columbia Open 2005 at Chilliwack Golf & Country Club. Banquet and auction at Columbia Bible College.

Alberta

March 4: MCC Alberta Peace Program's second annual Fine Arts Festival for youth. Rocky Mountain College, Calgary. Call 1-403-275-6935 for more information.

March 17: Discussion on youth ministry for youth pastors and sponsors, in Calgary. Contact Mary Ann Van Oevern, phone 1-403-335-8264, e-mail: gmaster2@telus.net.

April 1-3: Men's retreat, "Closer than a brother," at

Camp Valaqua. Speaker: Sven Eriksson. Contact Marvin Bergen at 1-403-256-2894.

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

May 7: Camp Valaqua work day. Contact Jeff Schellenberg at 1-403-637-2510.

May 28, 29: Songfest in Rosemary. Theme: "Can't keep quiet."

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

Saskatchewan

March 4-6: Poet/hymn writer Jean Janzen at Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

March 15: Youth Farm Bible Camp fundraising supper at Rosthern Mennonite Church.

March 18-20: Portable CMU with Dan Epp-Tiessen at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

March 19: Shekinah fundraising banquet and silent auction at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

March 20-21: Portable CMU with Gordon Zerbe at Rosthern Mennonite Church.

April 2: Women in Mission Enrichment Day.

April 8: Evening of Quartets at Cornerstone Church Mennonite, 7:30 p.m. MCC fundraiser.

April 8-9: Deeper Life meetings with Nelson Kraybill at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

April 9-10: Deeper Life meetings with Nelson Kraybill at North Star Mennonite, Drake.

April 16: "Touring Mission Fest" by MC Saskatchewan Ministries Commission.

April 16: MCC fundraiser coffee house at Wildwood Mennonite Church with cowboy poet Doris Daley, 7:30 p.m.

April 22: MC Saskatchewan youth Hungerfest.

May 1: CAMS concert of Mennonite school choirs at

Bethany College, Hepburn.
May 2-6: AMBS seminary course in Saskatoon with Karl Koop.
May 14-15: 40th anniversary celebration at Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon. RSVP by April 15 to 1-306-374-1364, e-mail: h.b.neufeldt@sasktel.net.
May 15: Spring concert at Rosthern Junior College.

Manitoba

February 25, 27: Mennofolk 2005: A Label for Artists opening, with musical accompaniment, 510 Portage Ave., Winnipeg (25, 7:30 p.m.). Folk/Faspa/Rock Show with musical acts, films and poetry at West End Cultural Centre (27, 4-10 p.m.). For more info, visit: www.mennofolk.bestmusicpages.com.
February 27: Open house at Mennonite Collegiate Institute, 2 to 5 p.m. Call Jennifer at 1-204-327-5891.
March 4-6: Retreat for families with mentally handicapped persons, at Camp Assiniboia.
March 6: Choral Connections concert at CMU, 7:30 p.m.
March 10-12: Mennonite Collegiate Institute student musical, State Fair.
March 11-13: Peace-It-Together youth conference at Canadian Mennonite University.
March 11-13: Junior Youth Retreat at Camp Moose Lake.
March 12: MCC fundraising banquet at Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, 6:30 p.m. James and Leann Friesen, speakers." Call Neil Heinrichs at 1-204-837-5385 for seats.
March 20: Vespers at Canadian Mennonite University, led by Rudy Schellenberg, 7:30 p.m.
April 14, 15, 16: Westgate Senior High musical—Oliver—at Tech Voc Collegiate, Winnipeg.
April 16: Graduation for CMU's Outtatown programs.
April 23: Benefit concert for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder branch of MCC Manitoba at Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, 7:30 p.m. Featured artists:

House of Doc.
April 23-24: Graduation weekend at Canadian Mennonite University: spring concert (23), convocation (24).
May 20-22: Camp Moose Lake workathon.

Ontario

February 25-27: MCEC Young Adult retreat, "At the foot of the mountain," at Welcome Inn, Hamilton. Contact Mark Diller Harder, phone 1-519-650-3806, e-mail: markdh@mcec.on.ca.
February 26: Annual Dinner and Auction Extravaganza at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener.
March 5, 6: Drama "The Adventures of Beatrix Potter and Her Friends," at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, 7 p.m.
March 5: Concert for Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support, at Calvary Mennonite Church, Ayr, 7 p.m. Evening includes art displays, dance, drama and poetry. For tickets, call 1-519-632-7833.
March 5: DaCapo Chamber Choir concert at the Centre for International Governance Innovation, Waterloo, 8 p.m. Jointly sponsored by Project Ploughshares.
March 8, 9: Grade 6-8 drama, "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, 7 p.m.
March 12: Fundraiser breakfast for MCC meat canning (Guelph) at Calvary United Church, St. Jacobs, 8 a.m. Speaker Dave Worth. Call 1-519-745-8458.
March 16, 17: Bechtel Lecture with Fernando Enns of Germany at Conrad Grebel University College, 7:30 p.m.
March 18-19: Engaged Workshop at Milverton Mennonite Fellowship. Call Delmar and Mary Bender at 1-519-656-2256.
March 19: Mennonite Aid Union annual meeting, St. Jacobs Country Inn, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. To register, call 1-519-634-5267 ext. 210.
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. Guest speaker—Dr. Ronald J.R. Mathies, MCC executive director.
April 1, 2: Menno Singers and Guelph Chamber Choir perform at Benton St. Baptist Church, Kitchener (1) and River Run Centre, Guelph (2), 8 p.m.
April 1-3: Marriage Encounter weekend at Festival Inn, Stratford. For details, call Marjorie Roth at 1-519-669-8667.
April 17: Convocation at Conrad Grebel University

College.
April 23: MEDA banquet at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, with speakers Robert and Lisa Shuh.
April 25-29: MCC meat canning in Guelph. To volunteer call Earl J. Martin 1-519-664-2528.
April 29-30: Engaged Workshop at Living Water Fellowship, New Hamburg. Call Delmar and Mary Bender at 1-519-656-2256.

NEW!
 Please send all **Calendar** events by e-mail to: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

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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

God's spirit can keep the passion alive

Lisa Klassen built houses for Habitat for Humanity in Uganda last summer, and had a chance to share her experiences with her congregation at First Mennonite Church in Edmonton during last month's "World Fellowship Sunday."

Working in the remote Ugandan community of Bughaya—"found at the end of a long, red, dirt road beyond the supplies of electricity and running water"—Klassen discovered that the people in Bughaya were "warm and friendly, greeting us with a lavish welcome ceremony complete with local songs and dances." We were treated to delicious African cuisine, and the children were always eager to play, sing, and dance with us.

Despite the remoteness of the community and the ingrained cultural traditions, Klassen "sensed a drive and progressiveness in the village." Not only did she learn that Habitat had built 25 houses in Bughaya in the past two years, but she discovered that the community has been moving slowly forward in terms of women's rights.

"Traditionally, women have been oppressed as they depended on their husbands for support in a polygamous society," she said. "The insecurity which comes with being one of many wives has been a prohibitive force in women's rights. However, now girl education has been made mandatory—at least through the primary years—and many churches are speaking out against polygamous practices, which gains special importance in the face of the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa."

Klassen later spent time in South Africa with her relatives who work as SIM (Serving in Mission) missionaries. "The pandemic of HIV and AIDS in Africa became a reality for me," she said. "One day walking through a graveyard, I found myself surrounded in fresh graves. The majority of

the people lying there had died of AIDS.... I knelt down to look at the simple crosses scattered across the cemetery.



Lisa Klassen made some good friends while building homes for Habitat for Humanity in Uganda last summer.

One of them caught my eye; it was the grave of a girl who had been born the same year as I.... The injustice of the situation overwhelmed me."

Back in Canada for half-a-year, Klassen admitted "the passion...has begun to dwindle." Wondering if she made a difference in Bughaya or how she can now "follow Jesus' teachings of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, and caring for the sick," she concluded on a positive note, saying, "The cries of pain from our sisters and brothers resonate in our hearts, and, in turn, our caring and concern transforms their lives.... The spirit of God flows through this network and drives us on."

See also page 22 for more youth reports.