

C A N A D I A N
Mennonite

November 14, 2005
Volume 9, Number 22



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An Advent welcome

By the time this issue of *Canadian Mennonite* arrives in your home, Advent (which starts Sunday, Nov. 27) will be upon us.

The term comes from the Latin word *adventus*, or “arrival.” During these four weeks before Christmas Day, we prepare for our celebration of Christ’s arrival on earth.

Vinh Huynh shares of his journey to a new home in our report on the Mennonite Hosts and Refugee Newcomers: 1979 to Present Conference (see page 18). “However, our misgivings quickly gave way to relief and joy when we arrived in Birtle [Man.], where we entered the house that was provided for us.... For Hakka like myself, this physical wandering represents a spiritual yearning that found fulfillment when we were introduced to the transforming faith in a loving and sovereign God by Christians such as our Mennonite friends,” he said.

Huynh moved into his new home in western Manitoba a few weeks before Advent began in 1979. Reading his story of all the uncertainty in their travels, of their fears for what was waiting for them, and the welcome of Mennonites who prepared a new home for them made me think again of Jesus’ own story.

Jesus’ birth was also full of fears and loneliness in its physical details. But looking at the bigger picture, the ones who were really alone before Jesus came were us, God’s loved but messed-up creations.

Jesus’ coming opened a window that let holiness shine into our broken-down earth. Welcoming Jesus into our lives and following his teachings means finding the path to homes that won’t ever rot or crumble. In fact, these homes were prepared for us long before we were born in the hope that we might some day choose to live in them. Jesus came to be with us to show us in a physical, tangible way how to find

the way to where those welcome mats are laid out for us.

A story about a four-year-old girl tells of how, after a hectic day, she was finally tucked in. Her parents fell into their own bed hoping to get some rest at last. But after a few minutes, their daughter called out, “Mommy, Daddy, can you come in here with me? I’m scared.” They called out to reassure her. “It’s okay, sweetie. We’re close by. God’s in there with you.” A few minutes passed. “Mommy, Daddy, I’m still scared. Can you come?” “But God’s there with you, honey. God’s always with you.” “I know that,” she replied, fed up. “But I need somebody with skin on them.”

My mother made sure Advent was a set-apart time for our family. A large wreath with four Advent candles and one Christ candle dominated the living room coffee table. Each Sunday evening during Advent, we had different guests over for supper, often work friends of my parents or those teaching my sister or me that year. The menu was only used during Advent: French Canadian *tortiere* (meat pie), rice pilaf with raisins and spices, sparkling white grape juice, Christmas baking and other special treats set the meal apart.

After supper, our guests would join us in the living room as our family held a short service around the wreath based on that week’s part of the Christmas story. In my younger years, all the children present would act out the story. In older years, we took turns reading the Bible story and then discussing what it meant. I didn’t realize until much later how my mother used this non-threatening setting as a way to share the Christian meaning of Christmas with others.

Christ’s arrival two thousand years ago welcomed us into a new relationship with him. There are many ways our own hospitality to the newly arrived stranger (as Vinh was) and to those already near us can put some skin on God’s love for our world this Advent. Blessings on you and your homes during this time!

—Tim Miller Dyck

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Web site preview

Get a preview of the next *Canadian Mennonite* before it comes in the mail. Selections are posted on our web site at www.canadianmennonite.org on the Thursday before the issue date. So you can check out the November 28 issue by November 24.

Cover: Matt Van Geest, right, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker from St. Catharines, Ont., works with Sevner Elisdort and Pepe Antwan at a distribution of tree seedlings near Desarmes, Haiti. Van Geest is serving in reforestation and environmental education projects. MCC has sponsored the distribution of about 8 million tree seedlings in Haiti's Artibonite Valley since 1982. Photo by Esther deGroot



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Surrey, B.C.

Can't keep quiet

The Moriyamas “can’t keep quiet” about what the Lord has done in their lives. Kenichi and Masako made their decision to follow Christ within the past year. It all began when Kenichi, who was already living in Canada with his wife and their son Stanley, had his mother come from Japan to live with them.

Grandma Moriyama didn’t know any English, so she was pleased when Hisako Takashima befriended her. Hisako, a member of the Surrey Mennonite Church (Japanese), invited her to a service. Masako agreed to bring her mother-in-law to church on Sunday and pick her up again after the worship service and fellowship hour. After attending church for a few months, Grandma Moriyama told her son, who made frequent business trips to Japan, “Now you can take my *ihai*” [a Buddhist tablet used for ancestor worship] back to Japan. I don’t need it any more.”

Caring for her mother-in-law was



Photo by Mary Derksen

Four-year-old Stanley is dedicated by Surrey (B.C.) Mennonite Church Pastor Peter Derksen following the baptism of his parents Kenichi and Masako Moriyama.

quite a challenge for Masako, who was struggling with her own health issues, so they decided to put Grandma Moriyama into a nursing home. This must have been quite a shock for her, as she spoke no English, and a few weeks later she died. The Moriyamas asked Surrey Mennonite Church to conduct the funeral service in a funeral home. For most of the extended family this was the first Christian

funeral they had ever attended, and they were touched by the caring of the church. The funeral songs and message brought hope and the joy of reunion in heaven.

After that, the Moriyamas began coming to church services regularly. Since Kenichi spent quite some time in Japan on his frequent business trips, he asked the Surrey congregation to introduce him to a church in Japan. That is where he made his decision of faith in Jesus Christ.

Masako wavered. She still had many questions and didn’t want to be a drop-out Christian. But a few months later she also received Christ. She experienced a deep peace and freedom from the guilt she had carried from feeling she had not done enough in caring for her mother-in-law until the very end.

Kenichi and Masako Moriyama now wanted all their family and friends to know about Jesus. After several months of Bible study sessions, the date of their baptism drew near and they decided to send out invitations to 50 people.

Surrey Mennonite Church meets in the basement of Living Hope Christian Fellowship, and the attendance in this Japanese language church is usually between 15 and 20. On Sept. 25, the congregation became a church without walls, as approximately 60 people gathered for this special service. The usual temporary walls were removed to make room for the Moriyamas’ relatives and friends. Masako’s parents and others were in church for the first time in their lives.

Having come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation, the Moriyamas had the desire to dedicate their child to the Lord and have the church pray for God’s blessing upon him, so a child dedication service for four-year-old Stanley also became a part of the special service.

After the service, guests joined the church family in a potluck dinner. What a glorious celebration, with rejoicing in heaven and on earth!

—Mary Derksen



Photo by Dan Dyck

Peter Rempel celebrated more than 30 years of ministry and service to the church, and received a blessing on his transition to a new role as executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba. Friends and colleagues presented him with a collection of “hats” he has worn over the years: Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Mennonite Central Committee, Commission on Overseas Mission, Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, Council of International Ministries, Mennonite World Conference, Global Mission Fellowship, and Camps with Meaning. At one point, Rempel wore as many as four of those hats simultaneously. Several speakers noted his credibility as a consensus builder and a willing traveller to mission outposts in remote parts of Africa and the former Soviet Union.

the message in the manger

The following sermon was given by Linda Michalowski, lay speaker at Pleasant Point Mennonite Church, Sask., in December 2003.

Jesus was born in the most humble of places—a barn. As a newborn he was placed in a manger, on a bed of hay. His parents, people of little or no consequence, had not even been able to find proper lodging for the night. It was a most undistinguished beginning.

And in that respect, very little changed during the course of Jesus' short life. He never achieved wealth or status. There was nothing, according to our secular ways of determining position, that set him apart from the common masses. He even spent considerable time eating and drinking with disreputable folk. God had come to earth as a commoner.

What matters, though, is whether we believe these humble beginnings to be an unintentional accident of circumstance, or that they were ordained to be so. Was this a deliberate act of God? Did the grand design require that Jesus be born in a barn?

We know that God came to earth for a purpose—it was so that humanity could have life and have it abundantly. As Jesus moved through his land healing, teaching, reprimanding and ultimately sacrificing we get a fairly clear picture of what God is about and what he wants, what his grand design might look like. We see the vision of harmony, peace and joy.

So why would he embark on this important undertaking by being born so poor? If we believe that God had a choice and made this a deliberate decision, the question is why?

Why not appear here on earth in a position that had some authority:

- Someone in the Roman hierarchy;
- Someone within the Hebrew theological circles; or
- Someone born into a family of wealth?

We know that before he started on

his mission as an adult, Jesus was tempted by this very idea. He knew he could have dominion over all the kingdoms of the world. But, to him, that temptation came from an evil source. He had to do what he was going to do from his position at the bottom of the ladder.

This small detail tells us so much about the grand design and how it will be brought about.

People have always seemed to believe that in order to create what they envision, the kind of society or world they want, that it has to be brought about by force. Some great source of power brings about what it wants with the use of its strength to overcome opposition. That is how you establish something. The message being given to us through Christ and his humble birth is that to establish the kingdom of his design, that is not how God intends it to be done.

In fact, the great wisdom here is that the use of power and force is not a good way to establish anything. If we look at the events and peoples of history this is demonstrated to us often. What we see most often is destruction. We have the extreme examples of Hitler and Stalin, who had a vision and wanted to create a certain kind of society and political system. They set about to establish these through force—executions, genocide, war and starvation. Millions died. Yet what is left of their vision? For that matter, what is left of the Roman Empire?

Compare that to what remains of the legacy of one humble and poor man who did not use any force at all.

We witness so much of the cycle of destruction that is set in motion whenever force is used as a building tool, and yet we cannot seem to let go of our belief in it. Deep down, we still feel we need to rely on power and strength to achieve great things. Even the Christian church has, throughout the centuries, leaned in that direction. All those new fledgling groups born during the Reformation—what horrible force was used to try to destroy them! And what good did it do?

The impetus for real change comes from the bottom. It comes about through people who understand needs, complexities and real issues, people who know what works and what does not. The Pharisees at the time of Christ had lost complete touch with the people of their nation. They neither knew, nor cared about, what was going on in their lives.

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Artwork by Lynette Wiebe

Message *From page 5*

They cared about keeping their positions.

I remember well, in my years as a teacher, our frustrations over trying to implement changes in education that had been recommended to us by those far up the educational ladder. We continually had to put into practice things we knew were not going to work, things that would run their course and then disappear. It was the teacher in the classroom, the one on the bottom rung of the educational ladder, who was not only in a position to recognize needs, but also to know how and why some things would work and some things would not.

How often I witnessed some really great innovative ideas born in classrooms next door to mine. And, slowly, without much fanfare, these innovations became part of established practice. That is how it is done. The grand design is created from the bottom up, and it comes through service.

Many of our own country's leaders seem to have left that concept behind. During elections and leadership races we witness jockeying for positions of power. At a time when real creative solutions to deep-rooted problems of poverty, violence, racism, health and regional disparity need to be found, all we hear about is who is stepping into power and who would like to.

But these are really positions of service, service to a people. We do not hear very much about that. When our own Tommy Douglas went to Ottawa, he never did attain a position of power. But he did have a cause [the creation of a national healthcare system]. He saw a need and worked to bring about change. It was not about power. It was about service.

"Whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve"
Matthew 20:27-28a.

And Jesus washed their feet. He gave them an example to follow.

If we were to envision a great accomplishment, something so great that its positive effects would be felt around the globe, it would likely not come about through a great show of force and power, likely not brought about by some great world leader. It would more likely come in the form of a nameless someone in a white lab coat, stuck in a lab most of his life, discovering a cure for cancer or AIDS. It will come through someone's lifetime of service. Service is what builds. It nurtures and improves. It plants and ministers to.

Take a tiny newborn baby, for example. It is completely helpless and has many needs. The only way to see that it grows healthy, strong and good is to serve it. Feed it, bathe it, keep it warm, hold it, teach it, nurse it. If you were to respond to its needs with harshness, violence and neglect, you would raise a psychopath. We are the children of God. It works that way with us.

God is wisdom. God is wholeness and truth. In coming to earth as one of us, not as someone mighty and powerful, God knew and needed to show that his kingdom could only be created from the bottom up. And from the inside out.

Jesus knew, and tried to show us, that authentic power lay in the spirit. And in this he was the greatest working example. Although he was lowly and common he possessed an air of authority that great and small alike could recognize. It was not the authority of those who bullied and controlled. He could be perfectly, confidently comfortable washing feet, knowing that his authority came from the ultimate source.

"The crowds were astonished at his teachings, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" *Matthew 7:28.*

This was something different for them. It is different for us as well. This is real authority, a confidence born of wisdom, genuine concern for others and faith. It is not born out of a need to control or the desire to have others do our bidding.

Had Jesus been born into wealth and power, this real kind of authority would have been difficult to recognize in him. Because he possessed no earthly stature, it was able to shine through.

All this is meant to empower us. When we become frustrated and impatient with the foolishness and misdirection of those in power, understanding that the real power lies within us is encouraging. Jesus spoke of mustard seed, bits of leaven, the solitary coin of the widow—such small, seemingly insignificant things. But he presented them as having greatness. In this lay real hope.

That is the message for us. In our hands lies the hope for the future, the possibility for real positive change—in our attitudes and sacrifices, in the way we live our lives, in our service. Long will the power brokers jockey and manipulate. It is what they do, hoping to leave legacies and be remembered as people who mattered.

We, instead, stop to celebrate every year the birth of one born in a barn. And when we see that nativity scene—the shepherds, the young mother, the animals in the stable and a newborn in a manger—remember it is more than just a sweet and sentimental picture. There is a message here. As we delight in it year after year, remember the message that is in the manger.

—Linda Michalowski

And when we see that nativity scene.... remember it is more than just a sweet and sentimental picture.

Edmonton

Edmonton 2006 to embrace quilting/fabric arts tradition

The historic Mennonite quilting and fabric arts tradition will be showcased in a special exhibit at the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Edmonton in 2006.

Organizers hope the process will engage creative fabric artists in a skill and art form that dates back centuries and is enjoying a comeback among younger generations while raising funds for ministry along the way. Finished quilts, banners and wall hangings will be sold at a public auction during the assembly week, with proceeds going to Mennonite Church Canada's Christian Formation ministries.

Quilting has a rich heritage among the Mennonite faithful, at first as a way to combine small but nonetheless valuable pieces of fabric into useful garments or blankets. Later, it evolved into beautifully crafted pieces of functional art.

Irmgard Enns of Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary, has been quilting for more than 50 years. She recalls a young women's quilting group called the Ladies Aid that would get together and sew quilts for Mennonite Central Committee. The quilts were shipped to different countries to offer warmth and comfort for people in need. She concedes the quilts were not always aesthetically pleasing, but they served a more important functional purpose and became a symbol of relief aid.

Enns recognizes the renewed interest in fabric arts by younger generations and the importance of sustaining the tradition. "It is an up and coming thing that young people are getting involved in," she says. "The quilts can be very artistic, but it's even more than that. It is an art form that expresses what we [Mennonites] are about and signifies where we came from."

Dave Bergen, executive secretary of

Mennonite Church Canada Formation, is inspired by the possibilities of combining a heritage art form with an opportunity to serve the church. "Quilting in the Mennonite tradition is a community-building activity," he says. "Often working together, quilters and fabric artists combine their love for God and a commitment to serve others in ways that nurture faith and extend the work of God to others in the world."

Proceeds from the auction will help nurture the faith of new believers through projects like the translation of Anabaptist materials in the growing number of multi-cultural churches across the spectrum of Mennonite Church Canada.

The submitted pieces will be on display at Edmonton 2006 and serve as an inspiration to those attending. Submissions that interpret the theme "God's People Now!"—based on I Peter 2:9-10—are especially welcome. Quilters and fabric artists of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to submit their work.

Langley, B.C.

New book up for Governor General's award

More than 200 people packed the auditorium at Langley Community Music School (LCMS) for the launch of Barbara Nickel's latest book, *Hannah Waters and the Daughter of Johann Sebastian Bach*. It was the most appropriate place for the launch since Nickel has a long relationship with the school, where she has taught violin off and on since 1989, and her book draws on her considerable experience in playing and teaching music.

It was announced that evening that the just-launched book had been nominated for the Governor



File photo by Dan Dyck

Mary, together with hundreds of other youths, knotted quilts for Mennonite Central Committee at the 2003 Mennonite Church Canada assembly in St. Catharines, Ont.

For more information or to register an intention to participate, visit www.mennonitechurch.ca/events/edmonton/quilts.htm. Registrations can also be registered with Karen Peters by e-mail at office@mennonitechurch.ca.

— MC Canada release by **Jeff Enns**



Nickel

General's Award (in the children's text category.) Despite this prestigious nomination, Nickel tries to keep it all in perspective.

"On the morning the shortlist was announced, I was trying to get on the Canada Council website, [but] it was clogged and I couldn't get on. And so I sat there reading the

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Award *From page 7*

CBC website headlines—“Thousands dead in Pakistan”—that sort of put everything in perspective for me, even after I received the phone call from my publisher that I’d been nominated,” she said during an interview following the launch.

Nickel, a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C., is also aware of how subjective such awards are—that there are many excellent books that never make the short list, and this nomination has not changed who she is.

“While it’s wonderful and exciting for my book to have so much attention right now...I’m the same person [and] the book is the same as it was before the shortlist was announced,” she said. “And yet, having said that, being on the shortlist certainly is very validating, affirming and confidence-building.”

Hannah Waters and the Daughter

of Johann Sebastian Bach connects two girls—Hannah Waters, a present-day girl living in Saskatchewan, and Catherine, the oldest and only daughter of Johann Sebastian Bach. The two have many things in common: feelings of insecurity, the loss of their mothers, and a love for music. What connects them is Bach’s “Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor”—affectionately known as “The Bach Double.”

Nickel’s readings from the novel were interspersed with selections from “The Double” played by members of the Langley school’s senior orchestra.

For Nickel, the book launch was the culmination of many aspects of her life. “Some of my former students were playing in the orchestra, and I’d stood on that stage playing or leading ‘The Bach Double’; the seed of my first book was planted at LCMS, and I drew on my experience teaching there to write *Hannah*,” she said. “So to be surrounded by family and friends and

colleagues and music, in that setting, with a student orchestra playing the ‘soundtrack’ of my novel was incredibly fulfilling—a very significant convergence. A lot of things came together that night.”

The audience included young fans. Abigail Warkentin, a Grade 6 student, first encountered Nickel when the author came to do a poetry workshop at her school. She and her sister Alivia enjoyed the evening, saying the best part was when the two solo violins played offstage during one of Nickel’s readings. “It was cool when you could just hear the violins while Barb was reading,” Abigail said. “It made you feel like you were right there.”

The book launch ended with refreshments, including violin-shaped cookies, and an opportunity to have the book signed by the author. Winners of the Governor General’s Awards were to be announced Nov. 16.

—**Angelika Dawson**

London, England**Christian arts festival an Anabaptist conspiracy?**

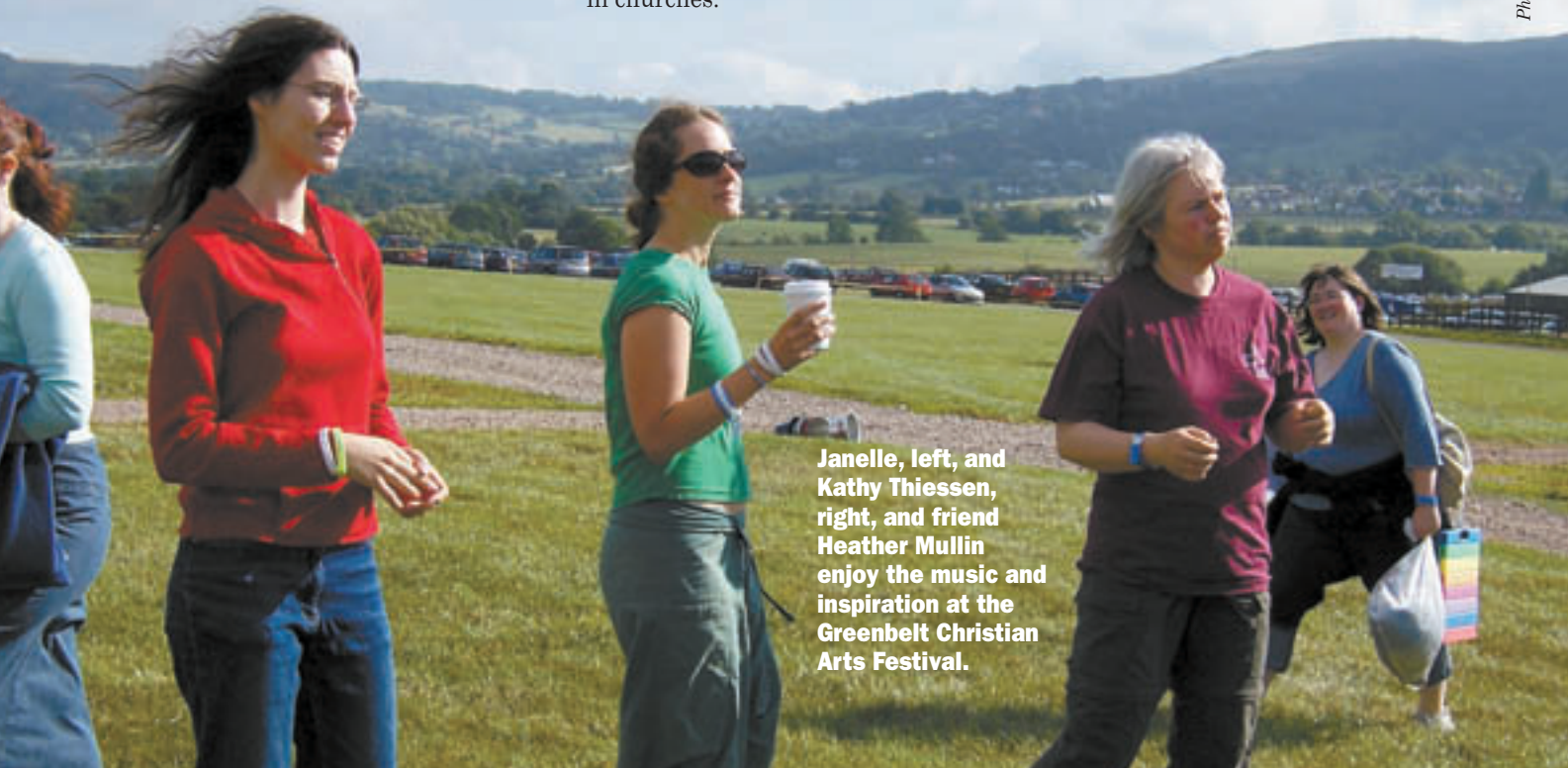
Each year about 20,000 people gather on a race course nestled in the hills of Cheltenham in western England—but not to place bets. They are here to open their

hearts and minds to four days of Christ-inspired music and speakers.

The Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival is attended by all ages, but teens and young adults are easily the most conspicuous presence, says Vic Thiessen, because they are rarely seen in churches.

Thiessen is director of the London Mennonite Centre (LMC), a ministry of Mennonite Church Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network. What attracts people to Greenbelt “is that Greenbelt is a place for people

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Janelle, left, and Kathy Thiessen, right, and friend Heather Mullin enjoy the music and inspiration at the Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival.

Congratulations, Jack, on your appointment as general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada. The members of the General Board saw in you the gifts of leadership that they felt our denomination needs at this time. As a result, you are in a position to lead us into the future that God has for us.

Four years ago in Abbotsford, B.C., you helped us take the first step into that future. You helped us become Mennonite Church Canada, a missional church entering into partnership with God in doing the things God is doing “across the street and around the world.” Thank you.

But that was only a first step. Being missional is not unique

to MC Canada. It is something we share with all congregations and denominations that are being faithful to the New Testament call to be the church. If we are only “missional,” there is no reason for us to exist as MC Canada; we could join any one of a number of evangelical or mainline denominations.

This appointment is now your opportunity to lead us through the second step, as crucial as the first, in defining who we are as MC Canada. That second step is to develop our identity and mission—using three more words or names. I suppose you might say that “Missional” is our surname, one shared with a large family of denominations. What we need to do is find and develop our given names, and I submit there are three of them.

The first, and the one by which we are best known, is “Anabaptist.” We need to fill this name with new energy and interpretation as we seek to be the church in the 21st century in a postmodern society.

To be Anabaptist is to bring an experience of community, and the ability to tell and be shaped by “story.” To be Anabaptist is to give expression to our faith in very practical, relationship-

The next step: An open letter to Jack Suderman

nurturing ways. To be Anabaptist is to live out, for all to see, the centrality of following Jesus in daily life. It is to return love, peace and nonviolence to the heart of the gospel, where Jesus put it originally, and from where it should never have been moved.

To do this in a way that is true to the gospel and the times we are living in will mean a significant loosening of our church’s ties to the Mennonite history of the last few hundred years. If we want to be missional and relevant to our 21st century, and move beyond what we were, we will have to free ourselves from that history as a burden and

a set of limits on us.

We are no longer a church of primarily Caucasian Europeans who have roots in Holland, Prussia and the Ukraine, or in Switzerland and Germany. Our friends at the London (England) Mennonite Centre and the Korea Anabaptist Centre, and our brothers and sisters in a variety of

congregations in Canada who have no European roots, are showing us clearly that to be Mennonite/Anabaptist need have nothing to do with the history of which we are so proud. So, Jack, help us loosen our ties to that history.

The other two names—“Evangelical” and “Ecumenical”—we need to own could come in any order. Some will squirm at either one.

“Evangelical” is not foreign to Anabaptists—not the Anabaptists of the 16th century, certainly not Menno. But it is a heritage and name that we need to reclaim, boldly and fervently. It is to reclaim our heritage as a people who, not only in deed but in word, energetically and lovingly tell the story of Jesus and invite people to find new life in a relationship with God made possible by Jesus’ death and resurrection.

It is also time that we forever leave behind us the days when we were a people and a church unto ourselves. In being “Ecumenical,” we need to join hands with people on the right and the left, the more conservative evangelicals and the more liberal mainline Christians. They have much to offer us, and we have things they need.

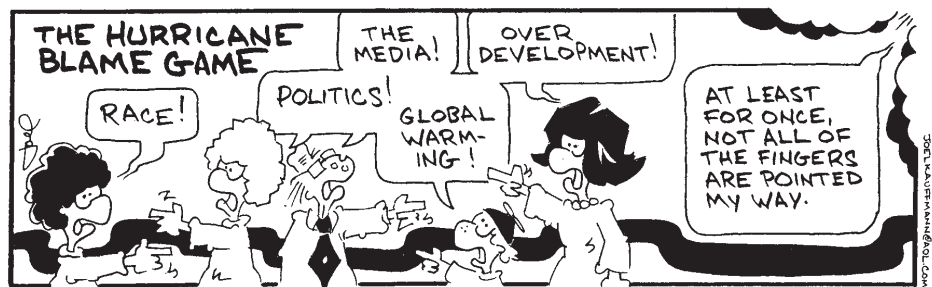
I hope, in sharing this open letter, it can generate some dialogue that will further help all of us grow in our vision for Mennonite Church Canada, and you and your colleagues in leadership in your vision as our leaders.

—**Ray Friesen, Swift Current, Sask.**

The author pastors Zion Mennonite Church in Swift Current and Emmaus Mennonite Church in Wymark, Sask.

To be Anabaptist is to...return love, peace and nonviolence to the heart of the gospel, where Jesus put it originally, and from where it should never have been moved.

Pontius' Puddle



Letters

Roundtable discussions allow for more input

For the last two assemblies roundtable discussions have been used for doing church business. In my younger years I was more conversant with the reporting and debating using Robert's Rules or some modification of them. That method of doing conference work had its difficulties when trying to do a lot of business in a short timeframe with a large body of delegates.

Using the roundtable method we always sat with the same people who had been assigned to the table randomly. I had not previously met any of my table partners, but during the sessions we became quite familiar and learned to appreciate each other's points of view. Each table was asked to make notes of their discussions and

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. 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.

hand those in for the staff to process. For each issue a number of tables were asked to report and time was allotted for some plenary discussion.

I have come to appreciate this way of doing business for the following reasons:

- More delegates get to express their views on the topics discussed;
- Staff who need to act on decisions have a larger sample of opinion;
- Delegates are more likely to interact with other delegates: and,
- There is less discussion on wording and more on concepts.

I believe the leaders of Mennonite Church Canada try very hard to listen to the people and use the information gathered to formulate policy for the church. Unfortunately, because we were meeting in the United States [this year], many churches were not represented. If churches do not send delegates, their voice will not be heard.

—**John Sawatzky, Richmond, B.C.**

The letter was originally published as an article in the MC B.C. newsletter.

Holy Lego!

The evolution of Lego opens a window into the evolution of culture. Today, there is Lego for every conceivable interest—kings and knights, animals, aliens, racing cars, the NHL and NBA, even Harry Potter.

Today's Lego is really cool, but the trend is troubling, for the new Lego comes with instructions on how to make each set look just like the box says it should, which is why it attracted a child's interest in the first place. In the greatest of ironies, this brilliant toy—whose success was literally built on the mind-boggling imagination of children—now rips creativity from young girls and boys (and the occasional adult) and forces them to join the imagination of someone else.

I love my children's rebellion—at least in this particular area. Although they have some of these pre-ordained, predestined, prepackaged sets, they've stopped following the plan and, instead, mix and match, creating their own compilations that no longer look like the picture on the box. In doing so, they reveal their unique mix of imagination, creativity and, at times, depravity.

How does this all become a picture of culture? First, we have been duped into thinking that we must always resemble what is pitched to us. Second, in looking

to others to create our reality, we have relegated our own creativity to the back burner and eventual extinction.

As great as it is to be charged by what God is creating somewhere else, it is simply the death of the unique diversity of the Body of Christ to copy that work of the Spirit in our particular context. We can, of course, learn from—and be encouraged by—what God is birthing in



other places, and our own fallen imaginations need to be tested. But to get so enraptured with the picture on the box that we cease the pursuit of the Spirit's creativity in our own backyard is boring and the underestimation of God himself!

This is beginning to show up in numerous ways:

- **We rely on music that was born of the Spirit's stirring in some other place or time; we're always singing someone else's tune.** Is this why our worship bores us, disappoints us, and lacks joy and tears? Who are the poets

and psalmists in our congregations through whom God is birthing new outbursts of the redeemed community?

- **We rely on the great writer or teacher from the bookstore or TV, and look past the Spirit's work in the teachers and leaders among us.** Is it fame or Christ-centred transformational truth we respond to?

- **We rely on the prophetic voice from some other locale, or even country, and ignore the prophets among us.** How is God awakening a childlike creativity and obedience in your playground?

The unimaginative imagination—that's what we end up with. It is time we stop relying on the Spirit's work somewhere else and wait upon his fire in our own upper rooms. But what the Spirit breathes in Zurich may not fit Edmonton. And what the Spirit seeks to build in Petittcodiac, N.B., can simply not be followed block for block in Abbotsford, B.C.

Our imaginative, creative triune God has revealed himself in Scripture, and invites us to develop a holy imagination and creativity that will very often be outside—and even unlike—the box.

Phil Wagler, after having his dream of a professional hockey career ended by reality, has gone outside his box to serve Christ, now labouring as the leading servant (pastor) of Zurich Mennonite Church, Ont.

Marketing the church an 'arrogant' approach

Re: "How do we offer Christ to adults born after 1964?" article, Sept. 19, page 5.

I am reacting to the arrogant, analytical language in this article that represents the Christ-as-product-to-be-marketed approach to evangelism. Terms such as "market share" are unnecessary and inadequate when applied to church life. To compare the church with a corporate venture is to reduce it to an institution that finds it necessary to:

- Increase in number in order to prove its sustainability and validity;
- Answer to a membership that acts as a power-wielding body of shareholders;
- Market innovatively to remain seductive;
- Alter its product offerings regularly

so members don't lose interest; and,

- Offer value to attendees for time and money invested.

This is a common trap when we evaluate institutions outside of their unique context. Are people attracted to church life because they have Christ in common or because they saw the brochure?

—**Rudy Kehler, Hope, B.C.**

Christian Zionism articles clarify Israeli land issues

I enjoyed the detailed educational effort to clear up the misunderstandings regarding the goals of Christian Zionism in the Oct. 3 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*.

For years I heard the naïve opinion expressed by many fellow believers that God wanted Israel to have the

land of Palestine without knowing the biblical foundation of God's promise and the corresponding parameter for this promise. Your outlined biblical facts should help to counter the propaganda of the Christian Zionist ideology. Believers need more articles of such impact.

The following Scripture I happened to read just two days ago should underline my comments: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God" *Ezekiel 36:26-28*.

—**Horst Rath, Chilliwack, B.C.**

Six more blasphemies, and counting

Pat Robertson isn't the only one taking the Lord's name in vain. His nemesis, Hugo Chavez, is culpable as well. In some ways we all blaspheme the name of God.

We got into a little hot water with fellow Christians for giving our new magazine the name *Geez*. This has given us a chance to revisit our allegiance to the third commandment and explore contemporary transgressions of the spirit of this law.

We are not sure how to do this without sounding pompous or self-righteous. So, at the outset, we confess our complicity in a society that uses God's name for violent, greedy and self-serving purposes. Through open support or silent assent, we in the church conform to patterns of behaviour that are, simply put, blasphemous:

- When televangelist Pat Robertson condones the assassination of a world leader; when Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez says the people who elected him represent the voice of God; when George W. Bush walks out of church on Sunday and pulls the trigger on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, the name of God is em-

ployed in the cause of vengeance, power and death, not compassion and mercy.

- When Jesus says blessed are the peacemakers and we condone—overtly or silently—the war on Iraq, the pummeling of Afghanistan, the counterstrikes of Israel against suicide bombers, and when the church invokes God's name to give moral legitimacy to these missions, the name of God is misused on our behalf.

- When Jesus says "blessed are the poor," and we construct churches and parking lots—monuments to God's name—in the fashion of shopping malls, we're mimicking the rich and mocking the gospel.

New Order Voice

Will Braun/
Aiden Enns



- When we have golf tournaments to raise money for Christian ventures, we drop God's blessings on the leisure class. We sanction the poisoning of the earth to keep the greens lush and resilient to chip shots. For the sake of Christ we ride in golf carts that could never ascend the Mount of Olives.

- When the New Testament is presented in the style of a fashion magazine and marketed to teenagers, blasphemy's

stock goes up. When there are more varieties of the Bible than Cheerios on the shelves at Wal-Mart, God is boxed in by marketers and relegated to the balance sheets.

- When the Holy Bible itself is published by a massive media conglomerate headed by a multi-billionaire war-promoter, we pay indulgences to an industrial blasphemer (Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation controls Bible publisher Zondervan).

And it seems, at least to us, that the more people focus on personal piety—sexual prudence, clean cussing and conspicuous church attendance—the less likely they are to express concern over the broader misuses of God's name. The focus on individualized morality creates a loophole for broad-scale blasphemy.

Part of our aim, with our new magazine and especially in our own lives, is to explore ways of living that show greater respect for God's name. Ways of living that reduce our involvement in the war-dependent oil industry. Ways that bring us to the forlorn places (like those Jesus sought). Ways that create sacred space in frenetic schedules. Ways that reduce our complicity in the violation of the earth. Ways that redeem the name of God.

Aiden Enns and Will Braun are founders of Geez magazine (www.geezmagazine.org). They attend Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. Enns is also a member of the board that publishes Canadian Mennonite.

FOCUS

Music

Music calendar

Nov. 19, 20: Soli Deo Gloria Singers present their fall concert, "Joy, love, peace, God," at Oak Street Mennonite Church, Leamington at 8 p.m. (19), and at the United Mennonite Educational Institute auditorium, Leamington, at 3 p.m. (20). For tickets, call 519-326-7448.

Nov. 25: House of Doc Christmas concert (including songs from their new

Prairiegrass CD), with special guests Saffie, Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, 8 p.m. For tickets, call 519-741-8224 or e-mail re_harder@hotmail.com.

Nov. 26: Conrad Grebel University Choir, with members of the Waterloo Chamber Players, presents Bach's Magnificat and Vivaldi's Gloria, St. John's Lutheran Church, Waterloo, 8 p.m.

Nov. 27: Conrad Grebel University College Stage Band presents "Christmas Jazz," Great Hall, 2 p.m.

Nov. 28: Conrad Grebel University College Instrumental Chamber Ensemble, college chapel, 7 p.m.

Dec. 3: "Oratorio for AIDS" at Ebenezer Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, 7:30 p.m., in support of MCC HIV/AIDS projects. For tickets, call MCC B.C. office at 604-850-6639.

Dec. 3: Christmas at Canadian Mennonite University (annual "create your own concert"). 7 p.m.

Dec. 3: House of Doc CD release concert, West End Cultural Centre, Winnipeg, 8 p.m. For tickets and information, call 204-298-4359.

Dec. 3: "Sing a song of Christmas" with the Wayne Gilpin Singers, including jazz-based stylings of Handel's Messiah; 8 p.m., First United Church, Waterloo.

Dec. 3, 4: Pax Christi Chorale and musical guests present "A Frosty Christmas Eve When the Stars Were Shining," Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto. 8 p.m. (3), 3 p.m. (4). The concert features the premiere of Missa Pax Christi by Derek Holman, commissioned in honour of Pax Christi Chorale artistic director Stephanie Martin.

Dec. 3-4: Handel's Messiah, Bethany College, Hepburn.

Dec. 3,4: Advent vespers with Abendmusik Choir, 8 p.m. at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford (3), and Knox United Church, Vancouver (4). Donations to Menno Simons Centre.

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*Dustin Wiebe, Winnipeg, MB
a graduate student at the Eastman School of Music
University of Rochester*



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Dec. 9, 10: Fifth annual Christmas concerts by the R.J. Kruisselbrink Sisters, Woodside Bible Fellowship, Elmira, 7:30 p.m. both evenings. Their new CD, *His Eye is on the Sparrow*, will be available. For information, e-mail rjk@bmts.com.

Dec. 10, 11: Faith and Life Choirs' Advent concerts—Grace Mennonite, Steinbach (10, 7 p.m.), First Mennonite, Winnipeg (11, 3 p.m.).

Dec. 10, 17: Buncha' Guys concerts—Knox United Church, Saskatoon (10); Shekinah Retreat Centre (17); 7 p.m. both evenings. For tickets, call 306-249-3650.

Dec. 11: Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber Orchestra presents "The Great Choruses of Christmas," Wilfrid Laurier University, 7 p.m.

Dec. 18: Rosthern Junior College Christmas concert, 2:30 p.m.

Dec. 18: North Kildonan Mennonite Church Quartet annual Christmas concert, at the church, 7 p.m.

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'I still haven't found what I'm looking for' The spiritual life of U2

There has been much speculation on the Christian life of the members of U2. Christian friends and family members have shared with me the confusing message that the music of U2 has left with them. Some have chastised me for even giving U2 the time of day.

Several books have been written, including *Walk On: The Spiritual Journey of U2, New Edition*, by Steve Stockman, published this year.

Stockman, in speaking of the beginnings of the group in the 1970s, notes that the three teenage Christian members of U2—vocalist Bono (Paul Hewson), guitarist The Edge (Dave Evans), and drummer Larry Mullen Jr.—were immersing themselves in Bible studies while making efforts to create an impression in the local music scene in Dublin, Ireland. (The fourth member of the band, bassist Adam Clayton, has reportedly also become a Christian in recent years.)

According to Stockman, "For many years the band members said that their faith—not their rock 'n roll lifestyle—was the real rebellion.

"In 1983, Bono told Rolling Stone magazine: 'I think that, ultimately, the group is totally rebellious because of our stance against what people accept as rebellion. The whole thing about rock stars driving cars into swimming pools—that's not rebellion.... Rebellion starts at home, in your heart, in your refusal to compromise your beliefs and your values. I'm not interested in politics like people fighting back with sticks and stones, but in the politics of love.'

"For this band, it was more rebellious to be reading Bibles in the back of the tour bus than it was to be doing drugs. But being from a place where those with intense spiritual faith were the minority helped the band members grab hold of the radical edge of following Jesus."

The song "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" has really struck me.

I love the music, and the words are intriguing. It is very similar to the Book of Ecclesiastes, in that it is a song that sees a broken world and identifies many pursuits that have not brought healing to it. Bono knows Jesus, but is still looking for righteousness and justice to be fulfilled in his world.

It is interesting that Daniel Lanois, one of the producers of the *Joshua Tree* al-



U2 website photo

bum (1987), suggested that Bono write a gospel song. I quote from Stockman's



Notes for the journey...



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GOSHEN
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book: "Up to that point, the band had been writing songs with Christian content. A gospel song was another category entirely, and Lanois seemed to have seen it as a natural place of inspiration for a band that was so wrapped up in all things Christian. Bono listened to his producer's advice and wrote 'I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For,' calling it 'a gospel song for a restless spirit.'"

This very song drove the nail in the coffin for U2 in the minds of fundamentalist evangelical America, who claimed the group was still looking for Jesus. What Bono was really saying in the song, though, is that since he has found Jesus he is looking for more evidence of God's Kingdom here on earth. By this understanding, I too have not yet found what I am looking for. I am on a journey of discovery.

—Garry Janzen

The author is pastor of Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver. He can be reached at gjanzen@sherbrooke.mennonitechurch.ca.




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How Alphie lost his twinkle

Using the story of Alphie, a little star brought to life with music and drawings, Willem Moolenbeek has taught more than 15,000 elementary school students the relationship between beat, rhythm, melody and music-making since 2001.

With his presentation, the Waterloo, Ont.-based musician and music educator—who teaches saxophone on the faculties of McMaster University, the University of Waterloo and the National Music Camp of Canada—“engages and challenges the listener [to] find out how feelings are expressed through music.”

Older students are taught how saxophones work and their place in the history of music, from the Baroque period to jazz and blues.

Corinne Enriquez of St. Paul’s School, Guelph, Ont., calls his presentation “a wonderful experience for the children!”

Adds Brenda Sherry of Jean Little School, Guelph, “It was great to have a real musician in the classroom to give students an experience with musical instruments.”

Moolenbeek has enjoyed a varied musical career that spans most genres and styles. He has performed throughout Canada and in Europe with pop groups, as an orchestral soloist, chamber musician and in recital.

His focus in recent years has been to exploit the vocal qualities of the tenor saxophone in particular. As a proponent of new works for the instrument, Moolenbeek has premiered and recorded pieces by Leonard Enns, Barry Cabena, Clare Stewart, Andrew Ager and Boyd McDonald. He has been featured on the cover of the international *Saxophone Journal* for his pioneering work on the tenor saxophone.

Moolenbeek has recorded two albums with concert pianist Boyd McDonald: *Songs Without Words* and *Heartsongs*. As well, he recently released *The Christmas Songs* with keyboardist Carl Horton.

—**Ross W. Muir**



Photo submitted by Willem Moolenbeek

Willem Moolenbeek uses the story of Alphie, a little star brought to life with music and drawings, to teach elementary school students the relationship between beat, rhythm, melody and music-making.

Greenbelt *From page 8*

who are questioning their traditions and who are looking for new ways of being church, especially for being a church that sees peace and justice as central to the gospel of Jesus,” he says.

Enter Mennonites and Anabaptists. Some of the founders and current organizers of the event were involved in Anabaptist study groups hosted by Alan and Eleanor Kreider, directors of the London centre from 1974 to 1991. Kreider himself was a regular speaker during the early years of Greenbelt, and Mennonites and Anabaptists continue to make regular appearances. This year, they accounted for at least four presentations, including one by Tim Nafziger, a Mennonite Mission Network volunteer who works at the London centre.

From its inception in 1974, Greenbelt has focused on peace and justice issues, both in its music and speakers. Today, singer-songwriters like Garth Hewitt and Martyn Joseph, and speakers such as Walter Wink and Ched Myers challenge the worldviews and values of teens and twenty-somethings.

“The entire festival has a distinct Anabaptist feel to it. If it had been organized by Mennonites, it

wouldn’t look much different,” quips Thiessen, who has often pondered the Anabaptist flavour of the event.

In a global economy, events like the Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival begin to spread their impact in unexpected ways. This summer, at the MC Canada/USA joint assembly in Charlotte, N.C., Thiessen met Paul Wright, a former Brit who became a Mennonite after moving to Florida.

Wright first encountered Anabaptist ideas at Greenbelt and was convinced the festival was part of an “Anabaptist conspiracy” that also included Workshop (a Christian studies program), the London Mennonite Centre and *Third Way* magazine.

“When I attend events like Greenbelt, where you rarely hear the word Anabaptist or Mennonite, and detect the unmistakable flavour of Mennonite theology throughout, I can understand what [Wright] means,” says Thiessen.

“And then I wonder just how much influence the LMC has had on the church scene in the UK during the past 30 years. It’s quite thrilling to be part of a conspiracy, especially one that is helping to bring young people back to Christianity.”

—MC Canada release by **Dan Dyck**, with files from **Vic Thiessen**

Waterloo, Ont.

“Is the homosexual my neighbour?”

Although Tony Campolo and his wife Peggy are on “opposite sides” of the debate on homosexuality, both would answer a resounding yes to the question, “Is the homosexual my neighbour?” They spoke on this topic at meetings in mid-October sponsored by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

“We’ve got this thing way out of proportion,” said Tony. “Jesus did not talk about it...[yet] it is an issue for many denominations. It remains to be seen whether a peace denomination can resolve the issue in peace!”

In his public address on Oct. 21, Tony concluded that, when addressing homosexual issues today, most Old Testament passages are not pertinent. Nor are many of the New Testament verses helpful. He suggested that I Timothy 1:9-10 may refer to the practice of pederasty—the castration of young boys to keep them “soft” for the sexual use of men, while the term in I Corinthians 6:9, often translated as “homosexuality,” may actually refer to masturbation.

According to Tony, that only leaves Romans 1 to speak out clearly against homosexual behaviour. He hastened to add that, while the behaviour is condemned, the Bible does not address the matter of orientation. To be tempted to do something is itself not sin, he said, adding that it is not evil to have homosexual feelings. But the acts are contrary to the will of God.

Tony said, “I am waiting for the day a gay man can stand up in church and say, ‘I am gay, but I haven’t acted on it for 10 years....’ Thanks to those who pray, I overcome.”

What would it mean, he asked, for the church to take seriously Galatians 6, in which Christians are enjoined to “bear one another’s burdens”?

Peggy Campolo also takes the Bible seriously. She noted that when Paul wrote Romans he was in Corinth, where the dominant religion was the

worship of Aphrodite, who had both male and female sexual organs. In worshipping her, men would have to reverse their natural desires, doing that which is “unnatural” for them, she said, suggesting that this act of idolatry is what Paul was condemning, not the commitment of loving gay and lesbian couples. She believes that people in committed homosexual relationships help make each other more complete, and such relationships should be celebrated.

While disagreeing with his wife on this, Tony did challenge several of the myths and public misconceptions about homosexuality and the “gay lifestyle” or “gay agenda.” A sociologist by trade, he concluded that nobody knows the cause of homosexuality. Evidence leans toward suggesting that homosexual orientation is formed early in life, he said, adding that the upshot of this is to declare that people, by and large, do not choose to be homosexual; they discover it, often with much pain. Because of this, the church must determine how to love gays and lesbians while expecting those within the church to remain celibate.

During MC Eastern Canada roundtable discussions on the final day, table groups talked about homosexuality within the context of the conference’s “season of discernment.” Options ranged from bringing the “season” to an end by making a final statement upholding the present conference position, or extending the “season” for another five years, to making a final statement that is more supportive of homosexuals in the church than the current MC Eastern Canada position. Input from the groups will be taken under advisement by the Executive Board.

Comments from a variety of view-

points were heard:

- “What’s the underlying issue behind the ‘up front’ issue? Is it about how we understand and use Scripture?”
- “Churches where gays or lesbians asked for membership tended most often to discuss the topic.”
- “Studies are often done in response to one or two people in the congregation. It would be better if it were not focused on those people alone.”
- “People look to conference, but do they really want conference guidance?”

The Campolos offered a brief response to what they heard reported.

Tony reminded the group that when it came to the person or the principle, Jesus almost always spoke to the needs of the person, citing the example of Christ’s healing of the man on the Sabbath.

“Why is it such a virtue to be hard on people?” he asked in response to some who claimed the church is being “soft” on gays.

Pastors have a tough role to play, he conceded, since they are called to be both priest and prophet. “I am looking for a prophetic laity to speak to the issue, leaving the pastor in a position to nurture both sides,” he said.

When asked why the church today is so caught up in the homosexual debate, Peggy quietly responded: “It’s wonderful to have a ‘sin’ to preach against that most people in the congregation are not tempted to commit!”

“Maybe the Holy Spirit is leading the church to deal with this stuff at this particular time,” Tony countered. “Jesus said, ‘There are other things I would like to tell you, but you are not yet ready. I will send the Holy Spirit to teach you.’ The Holy Spirit never leads us contrary to the teachings of Jesus.”

—**Maurice Martin**

‘What’s the underlying issue behind the “up front” issue? Is it about how we understand and use Scripture?’

Winnipeg

'Boat people' conference marked by joy and challenge

Its not often that a history conference featuring scholarly presentations and analytical reviews is marked by a strong undercurrent of joyful celebration. But that is what happened at the Mennonite Hosts and Refugee Newcomers: 1979 to Present Conference held at the University of Winnipeg recently, when about 75

academics, refugee newcomers and hosts from across Canada gathered to "evaluate, reflect on and celebrate" the Mennonite response to the arrival in Canada of more than 50,000 "boat people" from war-torn southeast Asia 25 years ago. Of that number, a tenth were hosted by Mennonite churches (see "Ottawa Mennonite—A haven for

refugees," page 19).

Conference host Royden Loewen noted, "For Mennonites, this meant coming out of their [Russian/Swiss/German] ethnicity and embracing the people whom they sponsored." Of the newcomers and their hosts, he said, "There were lasting friendships formed as they encountered each other and were changed...[by a] cross-cultural experience..."

Among conference presenters who spoke passionately about those life-

Winnipeg

Vietnam to Manitoba: A sojourner's reflections

Our story began when my family arrived in Canada on Nov. 5, 1979, from a refugee camp in Malaysia. We were told repeatedly by many of our fellow refugees that Canada was a country that was very "Nhan Dao," which in Vietnamese means "compassionate."

I remember with clarity landing in Winnipeg, staying a night at the Balmoral Hotel, and subsequently being transported by Greyhound to Brandon, where we were greeted by our sponsor and driven in a van across the prairie to Birtle, Man. I have to tell you that we stared in a daze at the surrounding grey, white and very desolate countryside.

My uncle succinctly expressed our collective misgivings when he said that we were being sent to "Trai Cai Tao," which means re-education camp—a communist euphemism for the concentration camps where my father and uncles and others had been imprisoned after the Vietnam War. However, our misgivings quickly gave way to relief and joy when we arrived in Birtle, where we entered the house that was provided for us. To our delight, my siblings and I discovered the toys and household goods that were neatly arranged for our use.

As a cultural group, my family belongs to what is known as the Hakka Chinese. My grandparents journeyed south from Guangdong province in the late 1930s and '40s in search of a better life for their children. In fact, this wandering was programmed into our DNA as members of the Hakka minority that has been migrating steadily south from northern China

for 2,000 years. This tendency to migrate is reflected in the very name of "Hakka," which literally means "guest people" or "sojourners."

For Hakka like myself, this physical wandering represents a spiritual yearning that found fulfillment when we were introduced to the transforming faith in a loving and sovereign God by Christians such as our Mennonite friends.

St Francis of Assisi once said, "Preach the gospel and when necessary use words." I believe that the Mennonites lived out this gospel 25 years ago in front of a ragtag group of refugees from Southeast Asia. They demonstrated to us a gospel of love, peace and grace. In this process, they invited many sojourners like myself to find a home in a faith family that provided us with a contentment of peace that is otherworldly.

It is this very faith that has enabled me to grow and mature through the past 13 years as an educator in Winnipeg's inner city. I count it a privilege that each day I

have the opportunity to serve and teach our diverse student population, which ranges from students from war-affected nations to First Nations students from across the province, to students from the more numerous established cultural groups.

It is often said at Gordon Bell High School [where Huynh is vice-principal] that we can predict the next wave of students to arrive at our campus by watching the news. With each new wave, I am reminded of the deep gratitude that I owe to the men and women of the Mennonite community who model for me what it truly means to be compassionate and to stand firm in our mutual commitment to serve the poor, the dispossessed and the newly arrived strangers in our midst.

—Vinh Huynh

The author is married to Rebecca Braun of Niverville, Man. The couple has a daughter, five-month-old Lien. The reflections above are part of a much longer speech he delivered at the conference.



Vinh Huynh is pictured shortly after arriving in Canada in the fall of 1979.

Vietnamese refugee Vinh Huynh, left, is pictured with his wife, Rebecca Braun of Niverville, Man., and their five-month-old daughter, Lien.

Photos submitted by Vinh Huynh

changing experiences were refugee newcomers like Vinh Huynh (see “From Vietnam to Manitoba,” page 18), and hosts Stephen Lee and Mabel Petkau.

Keynote speakers Bill Janzen of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ottawa Office, retired MCC Canada refugee program director John Wieler, and Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian immigration minister responsible for refugees during the crisis a quarter-century ago and now president of the University of Winnipeg, provided intriguing glimpses into the history behind the unique sponsorship agreement between MCC Canada and the Canadian government that brought so many “boat people” to Canada.

As for “why MCC jumped in... first...and alone,” Janzen suggested that the significant refugee history of Mennonites, our discipleship theology, and MCC’s southeast Asia work all contributed to the response.

Wieler readily acknowledged that “it was the media that alerted us [to the situation initially].” But it soon became evident that MCC needed to respond, urged on by its constituency, board and staff, he said. “If we’d waited until we were ready, nothing would have happened.”

Axworthy said that the “boat people” sponsorship was the first example of government and non-governmental organizations ever working together so cooperatively. “What was pioneered was that this need not be adversarial, but a common purpose/cause....”

“We need to provide equal opportunity for refugees,” Axworthy said of the current refugee situation. “And I don’t mean by this that we let them all in without rules, or wholesale immigration. But we need to...offer direct support to a much more global community.”

When asked about “porous borders,” he said, “Government strategies are all wrong. They spent six times more on securing borders than on foreign aid in recent years. It’s not a money problem; it’s a political problem.”

Other speakers presented background papers that explored or critiqued factors contributing to the mass exodus of asylum seekers, including the colonial history of the region and the presence of superpowers vying for

Ottawa

Ottawa Mennonite —a haven for refugees

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me” Matthew 25:35.

The Lam-Tran family had a comfortable life in South Vietnam until 1975, when the communist government took their businesses and forced this extended urban family to become farm labourers. Although leaving Vietnam was dangerous and expensive, they decided it was their best option. So they boarded an overcrowded boat for the difficult three-day trip to Malaysia.

The Malaysian refugee camp was overcrowded, the diet barely adequate, illnesses were rampant, and the family experienced a birth in the camp. After trying to emigrate for more than a year, this family was finally accepted by Canada. They were the first refugees Ottawa Mennonite Church (OMC) sponsored.

The church joined others across Canada in refugee sponsorship after the 1979 agreement between Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada and the Canadian government facilitated the bringing of refugees to Canada.

The church’s involvement in refugee sponsorship was not a foregone conclusion. But when minister Don Friesen explored membership interest, he discovered wide support. His proposal, which had a budget of \$9,000—or almost half of the church budget that year—was readily accepted and the first Ottawa Mennonite Church Refugee Assistance Program Committee was formed. The surprise of the evening

came when financial pledges totalled more than \$11,000!

With no previous experience to guide them, the first committee navigated the tricky shoals of helping immigrants begin life in a new country. Getting cold weather clothing was an important detail. Communication was difficult, especially in medical situations. The one local doctor from Vietnam was in Quebec and not covered by Ontario’s health insurance.

Over the years, the assistance program has classified three types of aid—from a one-year partnership agreement with relatives of the refugees, to a full sponsorship with the church covering all financial costs and providing settlement and emotional assistance. In 2001, with the enthusiastic support of four other churches, the program expanded into the world of affordable housing.

Church members cite different reasons for involvement in the refugee program. Willy Dyck says that many early committee members “were immigrants or children of immigrants” who “felt sympathy for people in a similar situation.”

In 26 years, the refugee program has aided more than 250 refugees.

Working with refugees has provided both great joy and great frustration. But all of the challenges pale in comparison to the benefits realized—for both the refugees and the church itself.

Friesen wrote in the 1999 church newsletter that the refugee program “has been an important part of our congregational life, not only as a significant service program that has helped relocate an impressive number of families, but also because this program marked a turning point for OMC. Congregational morale was low at the time, and the success of this collective effort helped us grow in confidence to do other things.”

—Ellen Shenk

ideological dominance during local independence struggles, and MCC’s response to the crisis.

Historian Stephanie Phetsamay Stobbe (a Laotian refugee herself) and anthropologist Daphne Winland referred to studies involving experiences of Laotian and Hmong refugees with their Mennonite hosts in Winnipeg and Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont. Stobbe noted that, inevitably, mistakes had been made in relation to such areas as

culturally differing responses to child-raising and conflict resolution.

The conference, sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society and MCC Canada, ended with a reading of the hymn, “For We Are Strangers No More.”

—Leona Dueck Penner

Selected papers from the “boat people” conference will be published in the 2006 issue of the Journal of Mennonite Studies. To subscribe, e-mail r.loewen@u.winnipeg.ca.

Vancouver

Give one day for AIDS

John Andru is on a mission. The 22-year-old fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society has decided that he is going to give up one day's pay and contribute that money for AIDS relief work around the world. And he is challenging everyone to do the same.

One Day for AIDS, Andru's brain-child, is a campaign to raise awareness and funds for AIDS relief around the world, particularly in Africa.

"In light of the fact that millions of children will be orphaned by AIDS this year, would you consider giving one day's pay if you could make a difference in just one child's life?" he asks.

Andru first became interested in HIV/AIDS through a development class at the University of British Columbia (UBC). For a term paper Andru decided to write about the impact of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

"It really opened my eyes to begin to understand what the problems were," he says. "It also discouraged me to see how all the elements of poverty, ignorance, lack of clean water, HIV/AIDS, were all tied together and reinforced



John Andru is excited about the launch of his website: www.onedayforaids.com. It is his vision to encourage others to get involved in helping those infected and affected by AIDS both here and around the world.

one another."

Late in 2004, two events spurred him to action: a documentary on Stephen Lewis, the UN Secretary General's special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, and a conference put on by Churches Together, a consortium of churches and para-church organizations trying to work together to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS.

"I wished that people could really 'know' what was going on in Africa," Andru says. "And over the course of the next month, the idea for One Day for AIDS came together."

One Day for AIDS is a campaign initiative spearheaded by Andru and other volunteers who want to make a tangible difference. One hundred percent of funds raised through the campaign will go to the organization of your choice: Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Doctors Without Borders, and Serving In Mission (SIM.) Andru chose these three organizations in part because he was familiar with them, had met workers from them or because they came recommended to him. He wanted to work with organizations that had integrity and that offered a variety of options for people visiting the One Day for AIDS website.

The vehicle for the campaign is the www.onedayforaids.com website. Visitors to the website will be able to learn more about each organization and their work with HIV/AIDS, and then link directly to the organization of their choice to make a donation. Visitors to the site will also learn how they can get involved in other ways, such as volunteering.

One Day for AIDS was launched on Sept. 30, and Andru hopes many people will visit it as World AIDS Day approaches on Dec. 1.

"It's a great opportunity for anyone to get involved in a tangible way, to make a difference in someone's life," he says. "Really, what's one day's pay when you can make real impact?"

—MCC B.C. release
by **Angelika Dawson**



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Olempirrish, Kenya

Reservoir will help Masai cattle herders

Kelei Kishau makes a living in a typical way for a man of his community, herding cattle, goats and sheep on the wide, unspoiled grasslands of the Rift Valley in southwestern Kenya.

Kishau is a member of the Masai ethnic group, whose traditional way of life revolves around the needs of their livestock for water and pasture. During rainy months, Kishau remains at home with his three wives and 16 children. But twice a year, when the land becomes dry, Kishau leaves home with his older children and two of his wives. Setting up temporary camps, they walk with their livestock for up to 40 miles in search of greener pastures.

“When it is very dry, death just lingers,” Kishau says. “Thirty cattle died in the last drought.”

This traditional, semi-nomadic lifestyle is changing in the face of several modern challenges. Population

growth has increased the competition for water and pasture, sometimes sparking violent conflicts between herders in the Rift Valley. Children are beginning to stay behind on long herding trips in order to go to school, and women are eager to ease the tiresome chore of fetching water wherever they go.

For these reasons, Kishau and about 100 other Masai men and women have decided to construct a reservoir in Olempirrish so they can establish permanent homes near water. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is supporting this project by providing \$33,000 for materials, equipment and skilled labour. Kishau and other beneficiaries will contribute most of the necessary labour and a small portion of the funding.

They will build a concrete dam at the point where a seasonal stream flows between two hills, creating a reservoir for more than 10,000 cubic metres of water. The surrounding land will be fenced off to prevent contamination by livestock, and water will be piped to cattle troughs below the dam.

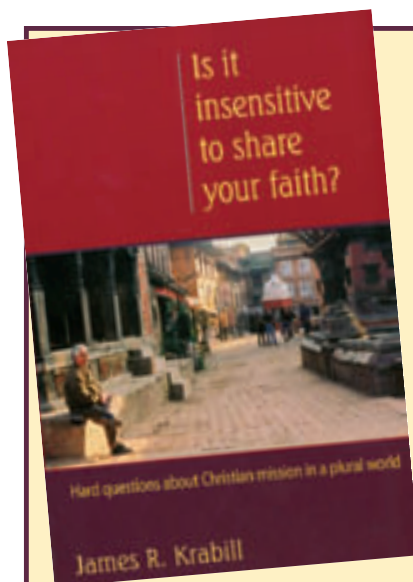


Photo by Matthew Lester

Kelei Kishau and other Masai people in southwestern Kenya are constructing a dam with funding from Mennonite Central Committee.

Organizers estimate that the reservoir will provide water throughout the whole year for 500 families and their livestock. They also plan to start a community garden next to the reservoir to help Masai families learn to grow their own crops.

—MCC release by **Tim Shenk**



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Good Books

Winnipeg

CMU opens new energy-efficient residence

What do you do if your university preaches the value of preserving the environment and conserving energy, and you need a new student residence? Build the most energy-efficient building in Manitoba—that's what.

On Sept. 23, Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) officially opened its new \$5 million, three-storey, 2,700-square-metre student residence. The building, dedicated as Concord Hall (in honour of Concord College), will house 101 students and has earned top marks from Manitoba Hydro's Power Smart program for energy efficiency.

"CMU teaches students about the importance of caring for the environment, about not wasting resources and being mindful of the needs of poor people around the world," said David Leis, vice-president for advancement. "The new residence is a practical way for us to put our words into action."

The residence is heated and cooled by a geothermal heat pump, the most energy efficient and environmentally friendly heating and cooling system available. A heat recovery ventilator warms incoming outdoor air, using stale exhaust air from the building, giving residents a fresh-air feeling year-round. The rooms feature energy efficient T8 fluorescent lighting.

CMU's new residence is expected to use a record 56 percent less energy, according to a Power Smart representative, making it the most energy-efficient building in the province. As a result, the residence is expected to save the university more than \$23,000 a year in operating costs.

Besides the opening of the new residence, CMU dedicated 54 rooms and buildings in honour of people who have made a significant contribution to the university or its predecessor colleges to mark the beginning of the new academic year.

The former Manitoba School for the Deaf, called the North Campus, was renamed Founders Hall, in recog-

nition of "the many faithful servants God has used to build the Body of Christ," including the founders of the Christian church, the Anabaptist-Mennonite church family and those who founded CMU's predecessor colleges—Mennonite Brethren Bible College/Concord College, Canadian Mennonite Bible College and Menno Simons College.

Other significant dedications included:

- A.H. Unruh Heritage Lounge, named after a pioneer of Mennonite Brethren higher education;
- Poettcker Hall, dedicated to the life and ministry of the former president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College; and,
- Laudamus auditorium, named in honour of William and Irmgard Baerg and George and Esther Wiebe, who led music programs at Mennonite Brethren Bible College/Concord College and Canadian Mennonite



CMU photo

Rudy Friesen of Friesen-Tokar Architects, left, Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) president Gerald Gerbrandt and Ted Petkau of Concord Projects cut the ribbon to officially open CMU's new student residence.

Bible College.

"Of all the tremendous events of the weekend, the highlight for me was the service that recognized the graduates of 1955," CMU president Gerald Gerbrandt said. "I was amazed again and again to hear the stories of what they have done in the past 50 years—the contributions they made to the church and the world."

—CMU release

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Winnipeg

Davis embraces new MCC constituency

Not only is Robb Davis a new Mennonite, having joined a Mennonite congregation in Lancaster, Pa., three years ago (see his personal faith story in the Oct. 31 issue, page 11), but this summer he became the new executive director of the most visible of all Mennonite organizations—Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). In Winnipeg recently, Davis reflected on the state of MCC, its increasingly diversified base of support, and his vision for the future.

For Davis, the work of MCC is essentially theological in nature. “As an agency of the church, MCC must participate in announcing the reign of Christ,” he said.

Davis believes the Kingdom of God is to be lived now, so he is concerned that, in the United States anyway, a form of dispensational theology—typically associated with a fixation on the end times—has hijacked the church and its mission. “More perniciously, dispensationalism excludes the teaching of Jesus concerning peace and love of enemy as not ‘normative’ for our lives today,” he said. “Announcing the reign of Christ challenges power structures in a very fundamental way because it is an alternative kingdom that demands our allegiance.”

Davis is critical of the American church’s changing notions of security. “For example, [many Christians feel] the war on terrorism is necessary. We’re hearing this even in some Mennonite churches. Trust in God is replaced by trust in government power. This is theological error.... Theological error needs to be addressed...just as we must address issues like narcissism and immorality.”

Surprisingly, perhaps, Davis sees the U.S. itself in need of MCC help. “I would not want to offend those who see the ‘need’ as greater overseas than in the U.S., but we often think about the ‘poor folks over there’ and forget our own blindness, lameness, our own need. Our poverty is social and spiritual.”

He also sees North American Mennonites as being capable of do-

ing more to help those in need, both at home and abroad. “Studies of Mennonites in the U.S. show we are only giving about 8 to 9 percent of our income to the church,” Davis said. “I believe middle class two-income families like my own could give 40 percent....”

Davis wonders if MCC can help its constituents make such lifestyle changes as are needed to overcome the accepted consumerist mentality, as an invigorating step of faith. “For example, getting rid of one’s car, though challenging at times, is also a most liberating thing,” he suggested. “We’d be talking about enlarging our vision.”

Traditionally a Mennonite service agency, non-Anabaptist churches and other people of faith are increasingly donating money to, or are serving with, MCC, a situation that Davis embraces. “We need to have certain screens—peace, Christian discipleship—in place [for volunteers],” he said, “but we can’t be afraid [of new

donors]. We need to embrace the new constituency.” Conversely, though, he said that MCC’s advocacy positions on behalf of the poor cannot be compromised just because new donors are uncomfortable with traditional Mennonite faith tenets.

During his visit, Davis was impressed with the MCC model he saw in Canada. He said there were “great strengths and innovative programs at the provincial level,” citing support for Canada’s aboriginal communities as just one example.

He acknowledged how hard it must be for MCC in Canada to exist next door to the U.S. “You have to define yourselves as ‘not American,’” he said, admitting his own failure in this area. “During the recent hurricane, I neglected to communicate with Canada; sort of saw Katrina as a U.S. thing [until] I woke up one night and thought, ‘I haven’t talked to anyone in Canada yet.’ So I phoned Don Peters.... But we need to be intentional about respecting each other.”

—**Leona Dueck Penner**
with **Ross W. Muir**

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Winnipeg

War on hunger wins Canadian battle

With more than 850 million hungry people in the world—and with 16,000 children dying each day of hunger—it's pretty hard to believe we will ever win the war against hunger. Yet a significant battle in the war to prevent starvation was recently won.

It was a war waged in Canada during countless meetings in church basements, hotel meeting rooms and offices. It took eight long years. And a Mennonite-supported organization was at the head of it.

In September, the Canadian government announced that aid groups could now use money from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to buy up to 50 percent of food aid in the developing world. Prior to this change, groups could only use 10 percent of government funds to purchase food aid outside of Canada.

"This is a welcome change," says Jim Cornelius, executive director of Canadian Foodgrains Bank (that counts Mennonite Central Committee as a member), the agency that led the charge to change the policy. "In many of our projects we can serve our beneficiaries better if we purchase food in the region where they live. This allows us to support local markets, deliver the food more quickly, and save money on expensive freight charges."

A recent shipment of food to Malawi and Zambia only cost the Foodgrains Bank half as much, and enabled it to feed more people, since it could use government money to buy food in nearby South Africa.

Feed more people for less money, and do it faster—sounds like an easy change to make. But it wasn't. Stuart Clark, a Foodgrains Bank senior policy advisor who spearheaded the effort to change the regulation, explains that farmer groups and politicians had to be convinced that buying food aid in Canada is not a good way to support Canadian agriculture, and that buying food in the developing world won't hurt Canadian farmers.

While discussions about changing the rules were positive, what seemed

to tip the balance in favour of a new ceiling was last December's tsunami in southeast Asia.

"That disaster so clearly underlined the total idiocy of the previous policy," says Clark. "Here, you had people along the coast who had everything washed away, and two kilometres inland you had farmers who were untouched by the disaster, but who had lost all their customers and couldn't sell their food to aid groups—even though it would have meant getting more appropriate food to hungry people faster and cheaper."

By June, the government had recommended the change be made; it was made official in September.

The change puts Canada ahead

It was a war waged in Canada during countless meetings in church basements, hotel meeting rooms and offices. It took eight long years.

of the U.S., which still burdens aid groups with various restrictions. Fifty percent of food shipped by U.S. aid groups must be processed in the U.S., and all of it must be transported on U.S. ships—both of which add to the cost and slow down delivery.

"What they call an aid program is really a support program for U.S. producers, processors and shippers," Clark says, noting, though, that it is still preferable to have the large amounts of U.S. food at "huge cost versus [having] nothing at all."

It also brings Canada into line with Europe, which already allows aid groups to use government funds to buy food locally. However, European government red tape often means that it takes too long for the purchase to be completed in a timely way.

—**John Longhurst**

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**Norm Voth with children
from Pauingassi on the
shores of Fishing Lake.**

Building relationships and learning in multicultural ministries

Mennonite Church Manitoba is finding new excitement in building relationships and learning from many cultures within the conference.

Ask Norm Voth, MC Manitoba director of Evangelism and Service Ministries, what inspires him most about the multicultural work he's involved in and the words tumble out: "All of it! I'd like to do a story on each project, each congregation, but especially the Partnership/Ministry Circles, which were initiated in 2004 by Mennonite Church Manitoba and Mennonite Church Canada."

What's exciting about these circles, he says, is that because of the interactions and relationship-building involved in twice-yearly meetings, "native congregations are beginning to distinguish themselves as unique identities, with their own sense of purpose, mission and vision."

Two aboriginal congregations—Riverton Fellowship Circle and Living Word Church, Cross Lake—have recently requested membership in MC Manitoba. "This indicates a [significant] shift in identity," says Voth. "They no longer see themselves as a 'mission church,' but as a local congregation with its own identity."

"At the same time, southern, northern, native and non-native congregations are working together to develop resources which they can share with each other," he says. "It's a way of multiplying our resources together and strengthening relationships."

An example of this was last summer's inter-generational Vacation Bible School (VBS) experience between Pine Dock

and Matheson Island congregations and several southern Manitoba churches that are part of the Ministry Circles. Not only did these groups have a great time together, but Fred and Helen Peters of Grace Mennonite Church in Winkler, and John and Margaret Klassen of Grunthal Berghthaler Mennonite, who were part of the VBS teams, didn't "just parachute in" for a summer experience, but each continue to visit the communities on a monthly basis, helping to lead Sunday worship services.

"The time at Pine Dock was quite fantastic," says Peters, a Winkler school teacher who, together with his wife, administered the 10-member VBS team of seniors and high school students, singles and marrieds.

As for their monthly visits (which began in February 2005), the Peters feel "very well accepted" as they assist in leading worship services and basically "do everything that a pastor does," including officiating at a recent wedding. They've become friends with local people and believe strongly that "things will only get better because of these personal relationships and connections."

Another area of cross-cultural learning happens in the MC Manitoba leadership training initiatives with Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese and Lao congregations. This leadership training, offered jointly by Leadership Ministries and Evangelism and Service Ministries, seeks to empower and provide resources for congregational leaders, Voth says.

Leaders from all four congregations, some of whom come from non-Christian backgrounds, study about the ministry and practice of the church, Mennonite history, worship and congregational leadership. The issues raised are often very practical. One leader recently asked, "Should a person be rebaptized if they feel they did not sufficiently understand their baptism at the time?"

Also, leadership styles vary from culture to culture. This was brought home to Voth during a recent conversation with an aboriginal elder who tried to explain their somewhat low-key approach to leadership with the comment, "When I go moose-hunting, I don't go straight to the moose. I circle around and gradually approach him."

"[These days], I'm simply learning about the incredible gifts/perspectives that we have and which we can give to each other in our congregations.... That feels very good," says Voth smiling.

—**Leona Dueck Penner**



Lamphone Sihapanyaxay from the Lao Mennonite Church receives his certificate for completing a unit of study in the Multi-cultural Leadership Training course while his pastor, Onong Prasong, looks on.

Summer camps a 'meaningful' experience

Camps with Meaning welcomed 1,267 campers at Assiniboia, Koinonia and Moose Lake this summer. Campers and staff learned how Scripture, prayer, the person and example of Jesus, and the church community can help them to navigate life's many choices and to follow the path that Jesus sets before them.

Memorable relationships were built between the campers themselves and with the staff through Bible studies, prayer times and a variety of regular activities, including canoeing, horseback riding and other sports, and new programs such as Extreme Adventure Week, a Service Encounter in the inner city, and a multi-sport camp.

Staff members are a very important component in making the camping programs meaningful. There were a total of

301 staff people and 42 counsellors-in-training at the three camps. More than 80 percent of the staff members came from Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations.

Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg had 47 campers this year. Ruth Bruinooge, the youth pastor at Douglas, said this of their experience: "We are grateful that so many of our children and youth have had the opportunity to encounter God in powerful ways this summer through the ministry of Camps with Meaning. For many of these children, a week at a Camps with Meaning camp is something they look forward to all year. Not only do they look forward to canoeing and campouts, but also the opportunity to be immersed in a loving and caring Christian community for a week of their summer."

—Larry Kehler



Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is re-enacted during a performance of the passion play at Camp Assiniboia. Camper Selenna Hildebrand, 10, from Steinbach Mennonite Church, said of the experience, "It was cool because I could really feel a part of watching the story surrounded by God's beautiful creation."

MC Manitoba photo

Discerning pastoral leadership: Moving beyond filling positions

I'm no longer interested in simply filling pastoral vacancies," John P. Klassen, director of Leadership Ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba, stated recently. "I believe it's much more important to consider if the potential pastor-congregation relationship will lead to health and fruitfulness for both the pastor and the

congregation."

"Pastoral ministry cannot work on a 'one size fits all' formula," he stressed. "Based on their vision, goals and needs, congregations need to discern what sort of pastoral gifts and personality will fit best in their setting... Compatibility of goals, strengths and visions must...be taken into consideration."

Our health and our future

Spiritual vitality is emerging in new and exciting ways in our congregations. At the same time, certain trends and theological issues give rise to concerns. Lack of growth as a conference over the past 25 years, dying denominational loyalty, loss of youth and rural demographic changes all give cause for reflection and examination.

For the next two years, Mennonite Church Manitoba is inviting its member congregations to participate in a conference-wide study called "MC Manitoba: Our health and our future," in order to help clarify direction and focus as we deal with these concerns. At the recent fall delegate session, this process was initiated by delegates entering a season of prayer. Reflection, dialogue and prayer around the tables gave expression to gratitude for the past and an earnest seeking of guidance and faithfulness for the future.

This survey of congregational life will provide data on demographics, worship practices and other patterns and trends. It will give opportunity to tell stories of meaningful worship and ministry, and to relate the difficult issues that may require corporate discernment. A preliminary report on the results of this survey will be shared at the annual delegate session in February 2006.

A "State of the Church" report, which will offer beginning reflections on the issues and stories of



Prayer circles at the MC Manitoba fall delegate session initiated a season of prayer as an introduction to the conference-wide "MC Manitoba: Our health and our future" study.

congregational life, will be presented at the 2006 fall delegate session. At the 2007 annual delegate session, a final report interpreting the collected data, identifying issues and making suggestions of steps needed to enhance and revitalize the life of MC Manitoba and its congregations will be presented. Churches will discern what initiatives and responses are required for future faithfulness.

—**Evelyn Rempel Petkau**

There have been eight new pastor-congregation covenants in MC Manitoba churches this year, including Elim Mennonite Church, Grunthal, and Morden Mennonite Church, that have gone through the discernment/search process recently. Both churches blended goal-setting into their pastoral searches, along with periods of prayer and times of congregational feedback.

Of the process at Morden, which took two years, search committee member Ruth Derksen was highly appreciative of the way the congregation accepted the search committee's recommendation to have a couple come in as a team; she lauded the wonderful affirmation they received from the congregation.

Robert Warkentin, a lay minister at Elim, said, "Everyone took more ownership of the work of the church. Prayer and patience were very important in the process.... But we were delighted at how quickly God answered our prayers."

Klassen said that at both the Morden

and Elim installation services he sensed "an incredible feeling of the Spirit's presence as they celebrated God's answer to their prayers."

However, discernment during the search process is only the first chapter. "Discerning who congregations will call to serve as their pastor is vital, but so is nurturing the relationship in the years that follow. Developing accountability and support structures and insuring healthy growth and review processes is also extremely important," Klassen concluded.

—**Larry Kehler**



A prayer of blessing is said for the ordination of Lisa Enns Bogoya at Bethel Mennonite Church, Man.

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Hawkesville, Ont.

Volunteers respond to tornado's destruction

When a tornado ripped through Wellington County, just north of the Kitchener-Waterloo area on Aug. 19, it touched down in a rural community that includes many Mennonites. Although Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) organized as quickly as it could, the volunteers got there first.

Before Orlan Martin, the Ontario MDS board chair, could call for volunteers, "they just poured forth," he said. By that evening, 200 people had covered most of the damaged buildings with tarps.

The tornado ripped up trees and flattened cornstalks on the farm of Gerald and Shirley Shoemaker, but miraculously it jumped over the farm buildings. The tornado then changed direction and completely demolished the neighbouring Nichol Township



Photo by Orlan Martin

A tornado destroyed many barns in Wellington County, Ont., this past summer, but with Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers all were repaired or rebuilt by mid-October.

implement-storage building. The municipality of Centre Wellington was declared a state of emergency due to the extent of the damage there. Downed trees and power lines closed many local roads.

Martin, who has been chair of the Ontario MDS board for less than two

years, apologizes to all the churches that didn't get the usual call asking for volunteers, and he thanks everyone who offered to help. For the five days after the tornado, MDS had 400 volunteers every day.

"It's just a blessed state to be in," Martin said about the flood of volunteers.

Within a week-and-a-half, fields and yards were cleaned up over the 40-km stretch. Various barns and sheds were fixed or rebuilt by mid-October. Only one house still needs to be rebuilt.

Martin found his experience as a builder was invaluable when it came to assessing the damage and deciding how to carry out repairs. He had been very reluctant to take on the position as board chair, but he found that when the storm hit he was able to find the time needed. He believes very strongly that MDS is an important organization.

The Ontario board of MDS has been working on a prepared early response project that includes a large trailer in which they plan to have six to eight pumps, 10 chainsaws, ladders, safety ropes and other safety equipment, as well as many tarpaulins, lathes and nails. Early response can prevent secondary damage from flooded basements and damaged roofs. MDS is receiving help from Home Hardware for some of the equipment and expects to receive a donation of chainsaws from Stihl Canada. This early response equipment should be ready the next time the Ontario MDS constituency is called to an emergency.

—**Barb Draper**



Thomas Jutzi has recently become a member of the law firm of **Dueck, Sauer, Jutzi & Noll** and practices in the business and estates practice groups. Tom brings to the firm his valuable business law experience, a broad entrepreneurial perspective on client legal and business concerns and training in Alternate Dispute Resolution. He also focuses on non-profit and charitable law and real estate law.

Tom has served on numerous local boards such as Mennonite Savings and Credit Union, Leadership Waterloo Region, Meritas Financial Inc., Community Justice Initiatives, Independent Living Centre and Mennonite Economic Development Associates.

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Kitchener, Ont.

Enlace 'weaves together' a world of experience

Enlace—a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)-supported trip to Latin America—gave 10 young Canadians a chance to experience life in another country while participating in a community service project this summer.

Steven Rempel and Andres Fuentes came up with the idea for Enlace, which is Spanish for “weaving together.” In the summer of 2004, they contacted MCC in search of an “opportunity that youth could enjoy without losing an academic year.” But no such program existed at the time.

Over the next year, they worked with MCC Ontario staff to develop the goals and itinerary for the trip, designed to foster relations with other churches, strengthen each participant’s relationship with God, and learn another language and culture. They chose Fuentes’ parents’ home country of Guatemala as their destination.

By spring 2005, a group of 10 young people from nine churches in Ontario had been selected to participate in Enlace. Five of the participants had never been outside Canada or the United States and most did not speak Spanish, but all of them were excited about the opportunity.

In order to raise the \$2,000 needed for the trip, the students organized fundraisers, including a coffee house and a Latin American dance, held on the 25th anniversary of Oscar Romero’s death. Some also offered to host a traditional Guatemalan meal.

Enlace’s tour began with six days in Guatemala City. Many remnants of a 36-year civil war remain, the students soon discovered. They met with a forensic anthropologist who is conducting autopsies on the mass graves still being unearthed across the country.

One of the group’s chaperones, Victoria Cordoba, fled to Canada from El Salvador nearly 20 years ago. “I thought I would be okay with going to Guatemala because it was not El Salvador,” she said. “I thought, ‘It’s a different history, a different story’. But I was wrong. It was the same. They experienced the same civil conflict



Photo by Melissa Engle

At a debriefing session in September, some of the Enlace participants gathered to exchange stories and photos from their experience in Guatemala.

[and] the massacres.”

After a week in Guatemala City, the group arrived in Santa Maria Tzeja, the town that would become their home for the next three weeks. Seventeen people in this town were murdered during Guatemala’s civil war.

Against this backdrop, the Canadian youth worked hard to make the most of a life-changing opportunity. They ate their meals in groups of four in one of three local homes. While there, they initiated cooking classes with the women of these households.

One of the primary goals of the trip was to make a contribution to the local community. Each student contributed \$225 from their participation fee to build a community centre in Santa Maria Tzeja and assisted local carpenters in the construction.

Chaperone Cath Woolner, an MCC Ontario employee, said that the experience expanded the worldview of all the students, “as well as that of their chaperones. I’m still amazed at how incredibly adaptable they were.”

When asked for their advice for future Enlace participants, Arielle said, “You have no idea how much the people you meet will affect you.... You might not be ready for the change you experience, but be open to it.”

If there is continued interest, MCC Ontario would welcome proposals for similar youth-led initiatives that fit its ideals and objectives. To check for updates on next year’s Enlace program, visit www.mcc.org/ontario/.

—MCC release by **Tara Tharayil**

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Hope, B.C.

Women in Mission ‘choose joy’

Life may offer many unexpected turns, but choosing joy in the midst of difficulties is the key to surviving. Heidi Cave, Sheryl Hagkull and Helga Rempel each spoke on different aspects of “Choosing joy,” the theme at the annual B.C. Women in Mission fall retreat at Camp Squeah last month.

Cave related the experience of a life-changing auto accident seven years ago that caused severe burns on her body and the loss of both legs below the knee, an accident that also took the life of her best friend. When she woke up in the hospital she was in severe pain, both spiritually and emotionally, and wondered why she didn’t die. Only when her boyfriend—now her husband—asked her, “Do you want to live?” did she realize that her recovery was up to her.

“Choosing joy for me was in the fight,” Cave said. She learned to find joy in such accomplishments as learning to use a wheelchair, to walk with prostheses and to drive again. “God doesn’t promise an easy life, but promises us a way to get through. To choose joy is to choose God.”

In her talk, Hagkull relayed how she and her husband had their faith tested when dealing with their two young boys’ health problems. Their second son was born with spina bifida, hydrocephalus and clubfeet, and they later they discovered their older son has scoliosis. Through faith in God, their family has learned to live with their sons’ challenges, and the boys have both thrived in school and participated in sports. “Everyone goes through something in life that they didn’t plan,” said Hagkull. “It’s just that ours [difficulties] are more visible than most.”

In the final session, Helga Rempel told of her experience as a cancer survivor. Her way of choosing joy was to draw on her faith-filled life, to rely on prayer and to choose the support of

others when she felt like avoiding people. “So often we try to hide our true feelings from others and say we’re fine,” she said. “Let crisis be a catalyst that leads you close to others. Weep with those who weep.”

Throughout the weekend participants had the chance to shop at booths set up by the Blessings Christian bookstore of Chilliwack and Ten Thousand Villages of Langley. Beautiful fall weather called many to outdoor walks and nature hikes, while others enjoyed fellowship over table games and scrapbooking indoors.

The weekend concluded with a Sunday morning communion and worship service led by Anneliese Neudorf, whose husband pastors the United Mennonite Church of Black

Creek. An intense and emotional sharing time in the service proved a spiritual highlight for many.

—Amy Dueckman



Photo by Amy Dueckman

Participants at the B.C. Women in Mission retreat in October look over the crafts for sale at the Ten Thousand Villages display.



Photo submitted by Grace Funk

On Sept. 18, Zion Mennonite Church in Swift Current, Sask., welcomed Joel Kroeker from Steinbach, Man., as their new youth pastor. Pictured giving words of challenge and support to Kroeker, centre, were church members and pastoral staff George Richert, Jen Dyck, Joy Jarrett, Peter Dueck, JoAnn Richert and Sylvia Friesen, parents Mike and Leona Kroeker, wife Heather Peters, and Anna Rehan, the MC Saskatchewan Conference youth minister. Kroeker will be working half-time with a senior youth group of 15 and a junior youth group, as well as preaching and leading worship.

Calgary

Foothills Mennonite has room at the 'inn'

Since March, the gymnasium of Foothills Mennonite Church has been taking on a new appearance one night each month. Half of the space is set up with 15 beds and accompanying chairs; the other half of the gym is set with tables, all with cheery flowers in the centre. These are small efforts to make the space feel like a home—because for one night each month it is “home” to 15 homeless people.

The Inn from the Cold program was established in the city in 1997—after a bitterly cold winter. Downtown churches met together to decide what they could do to help the city’s homeless. Now, eight years later, more than 65 churches and synagogues across the city participate in this program, allowing up to four “inns” to be run each night, all year long.

Foothills Mennonite Church had spent some time seeking a meaningful service opportunity, including looking into partnering with some existing University of Calgary groups and Mennonite Voluntary Service. When nothing worked out, the church eventually felt led to become part of the Inn from the Cold program.

In 2004, nearly 20,000 visits were made by Inn from the Cold guests, a number that has more than doubled since 1999. Inn from the Cold is the only shelter option available to families, so there are many children that are part of the guest lists. Families and single women receive top priority, as there are other shelter options available to men. All guests are screened to ensure that they are suitable for the situation.

What amazes Bob Janzen about Inn from the Cold is “the variety of people that come on any given evening: young people, single older people and families with babies.”

At Foothills, it takes about 25 volunteers to run the program each night. Beds are set up earlier in the day. Snacks are delivered and supper is prepared for the guests. The bus brings guests to the church between

6:30 and 7:15 p.m. During the evening, guests and volunteers eat together, play games and visit.

Foothills provides the extra service of haircutting. Two church volunteers spend a few hours each night cheerfully giving haircuts to guests, a service that is greatly appreciated. Youths have even had hockey team logos shaved on their heads!

Two volunteers—always a man and a woman—stay overnight with the guests. In the morning, breakfast is prepared. When the bus arrives to pick up the guests around 7 a.m., they leave with a bag lunch.

Later that morning, another crew of volunteers comes to clean up. Loads of laundry are sent home with volunteers and returned clean to the church, ready for the next month.

Kate Janzen says that “visiting and relating to these people leaves memories that stay with us for days.” After spending the evening at the Inn, she always thinks, “We have a home. We’ve always had a home. These folks have no home. We can’t take what we have for granted.”

—Rose Klassen



Photo submitted by Albert Wilms

Storyteller Dorothy Bowman presented the story of the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus at the well to the Hamilton Mennonite Church congregation last month. She creatively altered biblical stories with stories from everyday life. The presentation was followed in the adult education hour by a discussion of the role of stories in congregants' personal lives and in the life of the church.



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Oberwesel, Germany

Wiehler quilt raises funds for *Umsiedler* centre

This picturesque village on the Rhine River was the site of the Wiehler family reunion this summer. Many of the clan—which originated in West Prussia in the 1800s—escaped to western Germany during World War II and many later emigrated to Vancouver, Abbotsford, B.C., Calgary, New York and Fiji.

This fifth reunion since 1921 was attended by 250 family members, including some 30 from Canada, and featured updates on mission and family history by members Marc Wiehler of Calgary and Marianne Ullrich of Munster, Germany.

At the previous reunion, family members were asked to bring a quilt square to memorialize the origins of their family's branch. These were sown into an 8'x6' quilt by Hannelore Schowalter of Vancouver and auctioned at this summer's reunion for \$850. The proceeds went to benefit an *Umsiedler* centre where Marc Wiehler is serving German immigrants from

the former Soviet Union.

After the reunion, a week-long bus tour by 50 members of the family to the Elbing/Ellerwald region of Poland—to visit family roots and Mennonite cemeteries under restoration—culminated in a worship service and message by Erwin Cornelsen, former pastor at Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, at the former Mennonite church at Preussische Rosengart (now a Catholic church). The family was honoured by the mayor of Elbing at a ceremony remembering the many contributions of Mennonites to the city over nearly 400 years.

An invitation has been extended to the family to visit British Columbia in 2010. —Andre Pekovich



Andre Pekovich photo

This quilt—fashioned from squares telling the story of the Wiehler clan from West Prussia—was auctioned at a family reunion this past summer, with the funds going to an *Umsiedler* centre where Marc Wiehler of Calgary is working.

“

could run a business, go to seminary, and pastor a church— all at the same time.”

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People&Events

Winnipeg—Jane Woelk of Winnipeg has been hired as the new coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba's Voices for Non-Violence program. She began Oct. 3. Voices for Non-Violence

seeks to raise awareness and understanding of violence and abuse, as well as to provide support



Woelk

for those suffering from abuse by receiving calls and maintaining a website that offers information and resources to those in need. "Understanding the need in our congregations to decrease the incidents of abuse is what brought me to Voices," says Woelk. She previously worked as a self-employed mediator and conflict management consultant. She has experience counselling individuals and groups, and has provided mediation services to couples, families, schools, churches and businesses. Woelk is a member of the board for Canadian Mennonite University.

—MCC Manitoba release

Gulf Coast, U.S.—Ten Canadians are now serving with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) in long-term projects in the U.S. Gulf Coast region, helping clean up after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Canadian Gerald Klassen, the MDS Gulf Coast coordinator, reports MDS activity in Bayou La Batre, Mobile, Houma and Metairie, La.; Pass Christian and Gulfport, Miss.; and Newton, Tex. Groups are gutting houses, cleaning yards, tarping roofs and shingling, among other duties. Four Canadian groups have volunteered from Canada: Waterloo, Ont.; southern Manitoba; Regina; and Columbia Bible

College, Abbotsford, B.C. To date, Canadians have donated \$610,000 to MDS Gulf Coast relief efforts, with 83 percent of the funds coming from new donors. Spiritual results to this material assistance are being seen. After cleaning out a client's home and yard of debris, the homeowner told a volunteer she had left the church many years ago, but after experiencing the love shown to her she was "going to give God another try."

—MDS release

Transitions

Births/Adoptions

Bergen—to Lisa Friesen and Glenn Bergen, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg, a daughter, Ida Jeane, Sept. 12. (Correction to Oct. 17 Transitions announcement.)

Buhler—to Ashley and Sean, Osler Mennonite, Sask., a daughter, Morgan Joelle, Sept. 27.

Burns—to Karis Wiebe and Blair Burns, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg, a son, Simon Addison, Oct. 17.

Chiao—to Heather and Wie, Poole Mennonite, Milverton, Ont., a son, Maxwell Lee, Oct. 17.

Davis—to Olivia Enns and Doug Davis of Smith's Falls, Ottawa Mennonite, a son, Harland Ethan, Oct. 19.

Dyck Steinmann—to Tanya and Don, a daughter, Johanna Christine, Oct. 29.

Enns—to Allison (Dyck) and Robert, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, a daughter, Adrienne Catherine Marie, Oct. 14.

Hansen—to Elinor (Kool) and Peter Hansen, Toronto United Mennonite, a daughter, Lynda Marie, Oct. 19.

Krahn—to Christine and Peter, Fiske Mennonite, Sask., a son, Levi James, Oct. 3.

Krahn—to Stacey and John, Ottawa Mennonite, a daughter, Abigail Margaret, Oct. 10.

King—to Holly and Ryan, Ottawa Mennonite, a son, Silas Avery, Aug. 17.

Lee—to Jinhee Paik and Hyun

kyu Lee, First Mennonite, Calgary, a daughter, Eugena Trudy Sujie, Oct. 8.

Martens—to Charmaine and Kevin, Warman Mennonite, Sask., a son, Easton Josiah, Oct. 11.

Norton—to Michelle and Richard, First Mennonite, Calgary, a son, Rhett Hunter, Aug. 11.

Ratzlaff—to Jenn and Rob, First Mennonite, Calgary, a daughter, Margaret Joyce (Margo), Sept. 28.

Schiedel—to Cathy and Brent, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., a daughter, Maya Kate, Oct. 4.

Warkentin—to Heather and Jeff, Glenlea Mennonite, Man., a daughter, Ava Janice, Oct. 6.

Wiebe—to Janice Schroeder and Chris Wiebe, Ottawa Mennonite, a daughter, Anna Helen, Sept. 30.

Marriages

Bigham-Berg—Daniel and Meredith, Ottawa Mennonite, Oct. 15.

Holthof-Brubacher—Ben and Rachel, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., Sept. 24.

Ledohowski-Kliwer—Lane and Kara (Springfield Heights Mennonite), in Winnipeg, Oct. 9.

Loewen-Fretz—Will (Tavistock Mennonite) and Ana (Waterloo North Mennonite), Tavistock Mennonite, Oct. 22.

Neufeld-Brooke—Ryan and Sara, in Vancouver, Aug. 21.

Reimer-Collins—Markus

and Anna, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg, Oct. 28.

Deaths

Braun—John David, 77, First Mennonite, Calgary, Oct. 21.

Goertzen—Frank, 86 (b. June 10, 1919), Coaldale Mennonite, Alta., Oct. 9.

Hildebrand—Jacob, 85, Morden Mennonite, Man., Oct. 26.

Kwiatkowski—Paul, of Dugald, Man., Sept. 15.

Neufeld—Mary, 84, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg, Oct. 22.

Penner—Susan, 88 (b. Jan. 10, 1917), Coaldale Mennonite, Alta., Oct. 18.

Rempel—Katharine, 89 (b. Jan. 8, 1916), Steinbach Mennonite, Man., Oct. 16.

Wagler—Elizabeth (Beth), 79, Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont., Oct. 13.

Baptisms

Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.—Emily Kennel, Laura Kennel, Amanda Swartzentruber, Oct. 9.

Toronto United Mennonite—Andrew Appell, Sept. 25.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Transitions announcements within four months of the event. Please send all Transitions announcements by e-mail to transitions@canadianmennonite.org, including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please include birth date and last name at birth if available.

News brief

MCC seeks funds for tropical storm relief

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is appealing for \$290,000 to help people affected by Tropical Storm Stan, which made landfall on Oct. 4 and caused flooding, mudslides and at least 1,153 deaths in Guatemala, El Salvador and southern Mexico. As an initial response, MCC is providing \$5,800 in grants to three partner organizations in El Salvador. These funds are for purchasing food, blankets, plastic sheeting and other supplies for 525 families who have been displaced to temporary shelters. MCC has created a Central America Emergency Assistance Fund to support the responses of partner organizations in Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico. Donations may be made online at www.mcc.org/donate or through any MCC office.

—MCC release

Employment opportunities

First Mennonite Church, Burns Lake, BC, seeks a

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EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Tri-County Mennonite Homes is a not-for-profit service agency located in New Hamburg that has provided leadership in service to seniors and developmentally disabled individuals for over 30 years. Our growing and changing organization is looking for a dynamic, high-energy Executive Assistant to provide administrative services in its corporate office. The successful candidate must:

- Be resourceful, organized, and detail-oriented.
- Possess excellent oral and written communication skills.
- Have advanced skills in MS Office Suite.
- Have a secondary school education.
- Have 3 years of experience as an administrative or executive assistant.

Send your resume to:

E-mail: employment@tcmhomes.com
TCMH Employment
200 Boullee St., New Hamburg, ON N3A 2K4

Applications will be received until Nov. 25, 2005. TCMH thanks you for your application, but will only contact those selected for an interview. For more information on TCMH, visit our web site: **www.tcmhomes.com**.

FULL-TIME LEAD PASTOR

Coaldale Mennonite Church invites applications for a full-time Lead Pastor. This individual would be expected to be the Spiritual leader to a multi-generational congregation of about 300 members.

The successful candidate will be part of a Pastoral Team comprised of a Youth Pastor and Lay Ministers, and should be gifted in preaching, discipling, visitation and administration. An emphasis on evangelism and in caring for and relating to people, in both the congregation and the community, is an asset. Previous pastoral experience and education in our Evangelical Mennonite Anabaptist tradition is important.

Please forward your note of inquiry and/or resume to:

Search Committee
c/o Coaldale Mennonite Church
2316-17 Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G3
E-mail: cmchurch@telusplanet.net



ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND HEAD COOK

Silver Lake Mennonite Camp

Silver Lake Mennonite Camp invites applications for the positions of Assistant Director and Head Cook.

As part of a leadership team of three Directors, the Assistant Director will participate in hiring, leading and supporting a staff of approximately 40, giving overall direction to the children's summer camp program, and fulfilling administration duties. The position is part-time from December 2005 to April 2006 and becomes full-time from May to August.

The Head Cook is to oversee the preparation of all food and management of the kitchen at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp from the middle of June until the end of August.

For more information on either job, visit:
www.slmc.on.ca/jobs.php

Please send a letter of application, a resume and the names of two references to:

Ben Janzen, Director, c/o Silver Lake Mennonite Camp
50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1
E-mail: silverlake@sympatico.ca
Deadline: Nov. 25, 2005

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

Four-bedroom house for rent in Wolseley area of Winnipeg. Available January 1, 2006. Phone 204-779-6559.

For sale

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY IN PRACTICE. Buy beautiful handmade and recycled Christmas (and other) cards made by Mennonite Church of Colombia women. Order now from Jacqui Schmucker: jacqui.schmucker@sympatico.ca or call 416-461-3997. Prices are: 5 for \$7.50; 10 for \$15; etc. (including postage). Make cheques out to CARDS. Thanks and God bless you.

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Correction
 The "Christian labour association gains foothold in Manitoba" article on page 24 of the Oct. 3 issue was written by Marcus Rempel. It was incorrectly attributed to Evelyn Rempel Petkau. *Canadian Mennonite* apologizes for the error.

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News brief

Textbooks, uniforms for Indonesian schools

Many schools in the coastal area of Aceh, Indonesia, were either destroyed or heavily damaged by the tsunami on Dec. 26, 2004. However, surviving teachers and students came together to reopen schools in tents, damaged buildings and shared classrooms. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), through a partner organization—Center for Education and Development, is providing funds for uniforms and supplies for some 750 school teachers from 22 schools. In addition, 20,500 textbooks will be distributed to the schools, as well as 22 computers and printers. For more on MCC's response to the tsunami, visit www.mcc.org/asiaearthquake.
 —MCC release

Mennonite Church Canada

Prayer requests

Please remember to pray or give thanks for:

- Our brothers and sisters in the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe, as they live in the midst of worsening fuel and food shortages, and as they seek to respond to the increasing needs that surround them.
- Neill and Edith von Gunten, newly-appointed co-directors of the MC Canada Native Ministry, who will travel across Canada to network with other Christian organizations that work with aboriginal people.
- Rebecca Bartel, Witness intern in Colombia, working with youth, who has helped three youth groups from different denominations come together in the name of peace, publicly denouncing the violence that has taken friends and family. The youth understand themselves as prophetic voices in a society where they are often violently silenced. Praise God for the courage shown by Bartel and the Colombian Mennonite Church, as they work at training, political analysis, social and economic context, holding leadership workshops and providing biblical interpretation.
- The growing church in Macau, as they worship, pray, engage the community around them, and celebrate the first anniversary of their new church facility. In the past year, there have been calls for help with the renovation needs, visa issues, flooding in the church and ministry issues. Tim and Cindy Buhler write that they now have a vibrant church facility and ministry centre dedicated to the Lord's work, and give thanks to all who contributed.

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

'Asset mapping' in church and community

As Wellesley Mennonite Church is going through a visioning process, they realized the town of Wellesley is growing at the same time as their church membership.

"We felt it was time to look ahead to the future and consider where God may be leading us as a church in our ministries and our programs," said Kelly Reimer.

The church sent invitations to various local service organizations; 45 people representing 23 groups attended the meeting.

Anna Mae Steinmann, representing the Wellesley Seniors, noted various needs, including the need for more churches. "We are a caring community and need to make new residents and new church members feel welcome and informed of what is available in our community," she said.

What excites Chris Gatten of Morningstar Family Ministries about the "asset mapping" approach he put into one short phrase: "one-stop shopping." Gatten called the meeting "a great way to share resources and not have to tie up hours of time. I was excited about the contacts I was able to make and for the opportunity to share our community vision."

Said Reimer, "We will be taking the summaries of the discussions back to our congregation to discern how we can create partnerships and fulfill some of these future needs and opportunities."

Of the "asset mapping" approach, she said, "It's really neat to concentrate on the assets and gifts we already possess, to see what new things can be done with them, rather than struggle with the many needs there are and not

knowing how to fill them."

The congregation has been guided in this process by Jeff Steckley, MC Eastern Canada staff person.

Mennonite Church Manitoba

Volleyball tournament attracts 21 churches

More than 300 youths and their sponsors from 21 churches came to Winkler on Oct. 22 for the 23rd annual MMYO Volleyball Tournament.

"Attendance was up from last year, but less than the 400 mark of about 8 or 10 years ago," said Elisa Joy Barkman, director of Summer Camp/Youth Ministries. "There are definitely more high school students working now."

Sheldon Dyck of Boissevain, a Bible instructor this past summer at Camp Koinonia, spoke about "the passion of discipleship" at the opening worship service.

This was followed by a rotation of teams, which kept six volleyball courts occupied all day with a quick succession of 15-minute games.

"They were phenomenal," said Barkman. "There was a lot of intermingling and visiting with each other. From my perspective [as organizer], it was an unstressful event."

Three MMYO winter retreats for junior youth are planned:

- Jan. 20 to 22 at Camp Koinonia; and,
- Feb. 10 to 12 and March 10 to 12 at Camp Moose Lake.

Kathy Giesbrecht will be the resource person.

A senior youth retreat will take place at Camp Koinonia from Feb. 3 to 5. Although a resource person is not confirmed yet, the theme will be "Building peace through the arts." It will include storytelling, fine arts, drama and music.

These retreats fill up very

quickly, so early registration is encouraged. To register, call Elisa Joy Barkman at 204-896-1616.

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

Conference gets churches 'equipped'

The first annual Equipping Conference was held at Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon on Oct. 29. Sponsored by the Christian Education Commission of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, the day-long learning experience attracted more than 100 participants from around the province.

In an invitation to MC Saskatchewan leaders about the event, conference chair Carolyn Vis noted that the "goal...is to outfit church leaders and congregants with useful information, fresh understanding and new capabilities that are relevant to their situation in their church and community."

Presenters at the 18 workshops came mostly from Saskatchewan. A wide variety of aspects of congregational life were discussed. Workshop titles covered everything from "Life cycles of the congregation" to "Congregational nursing" and "Making your church safe."

"I found it very inspiring," said Verna Olfert, who took in two worship-themed workshops taught by Marilyn Houser Hamm.

Plans are being considered to repeat the opportunity.

Mennonite Church Alberta

Churches combine for Thanksgiving potluck

Pastor Ken Tse of Edmonton Chinese Mennonite Church began his Thanksgiving sermon by communicating a

gracious spirit of welcome and thankfulness to those from First Mennonite who had joined them for the joint worship service. "Many of you are here this morning because you haven't travelled elsewhere to celebrate with your families today," he said. "I'd like to say that your other family has travelled here to be with you." He went on to emphasize the goodness of our Lord and the many blessings we experience as believers.

After the annual service, which included Chinese Mennonite's children's worship dance group and First Mennonite's choir, Pastor Tim Wiebe-Neufeld invited all to stay for a Thanksgiving potluck meal in which Chinese, Russian Mennonite and typical western dishes were intermingled on the tables.

Tse made a special request that all the worshippers mingle over dinner and get

acquainted, in spite of any language difficulties. "I've instructed my people who speak only Chinese to smile and nod a lot," he said. "You can do that too!"

The sounds of laughter and visiting over dinner continued the morning theme of thankfulness and praise to God.

Mennonite Church British Columbia

Women in Mission visits the Okanagan

"How can we work together better and be of assistance to our women's groups?" This was one of the questions asked when members of B.C. Mennonite Women in Mission travelled to the Okanagan area Oct. 11 to 12 for a time of connecting and sharing.

President Veronica Thiessen, secretary Linda Matties, and treasurer Ann

Wiebe met with the women of First Mennonite Church of Kelowna and the Mennonite Church of Vernon, with the goal of getting to know one another better. Their time together included answering questions, sharing and informing the women's groups about the organization's projects, such as bursaries to Columbia Bible College students, Camp Squeah, the Family Centre in the Ukraine, and bursaries to help those with financial difficulties attend the annual women's retreat.

With most of the MC B.C. churches located in the Fraser Valley, the Women in Mission executive especially appreciates connecting with women's groups in the outlying areas, and hopes to have more interaction with these groups as time allows.

International crafts on sale for Christmas

Ten Thousand Villages world crafts are once again coming to Abbotsford in time for the Christmas shopping season. Those who like to support international crafters with their gift purchases will have an opportunity to shop at a special Ten Thousand Villages craft mini-store set up at Emmanuel Mennonite Church from Dec. 2 to 10. Sale times TBA.

Unless otherwise credited, the articles in TheChurches pages were written by: Leona Dueck Penner (MC Canada), Maurice Martin (Eastern Canada), Evelyn Rempel Petkau (Manitoba), Karin Fehderau (Saskatchewan), Donita Wiebe-Neufeld (Alberta) and Amy Dueckman (British Columbia). See page 2 for contact information.

Prayer needed to bring about revival

Is the church ready for revival? I believe that it is and I am convinced that God is calling us to renew our commitments to Christ, to each other and to the gospel of peace. As I begin my new leadership role with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, I am excited about the potential of the church and its ability to have a profound impact on our world.

The church has for too long been turned inward on itself and has been enticed into putting its own needs and demands ahead of Christ's call to mission, outreach and service. As pastors, we struggle to go beyond the crush of the urgent as we rush to the next meeting, rise to the challenge of that unexpected funeral, or churn out yet one more sermon to meet the spiritual needs of our people. Meanwhile, those of us who sit in the pew have at times been too readily seduced into thinking that the pastor and the church are there to serve my consumer demands, to be attentive to my pastoral care needs, and to intuit my deepest spiritual desires, while conveniently forgetting that the call of Christ is for each of

us to be active agents of the gospel.

My vision for the renewal of our life together is based on the conviction that we need a revival across our churches. If we are to heed God's call to move outward in ministry, then we need:

- Revival of our core commitment to be in relationship with Jesus Christ;
- Revival of the role of Scripture in our lives;
- Revival of our commitment to our relationships with each other and to the conferences that bind us together;
- Revival of claiming the gifts we have been given and sharing them boldly and freely in the ministry of the gospel;
- Revival of generosity and a conviction that God's abundance is more than enough;
- Revival of our peace and justice theology;
- Revival of our commitment to prayer;
- Revival of our willingness to be engaged in our world in mission and service; and,
- Revival of our commitment to caring for creation and living gently on this earth.

Revival begins with small but persis-

From our leaders

tent commitments, and is always undergirded by prayer. If you share my conviction that God is calling for the renewal of the church, I invite you to join me in a three-minute prayer challenge. On Sunday morning, when you sip your coffee or sit down before church for breakfast or a quiet time, I invite you to spend one minute each:

- Praying for your pastor(s) and the congregation to which you belong;
- Praying for the congregations in your conference; and,
- Praying for the leaders and staff in your conferences.

It's not much—only three minutes each week. It's just a small meagre thing, but maybe like the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in the feeding of the 5,000, when the little that we have is offered into the hands of the risen Christ, it can become more than enough to fuel the renewal of the church.

David T. Martin is executive minister, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.



Churches called to 'write for rights'

Toronto—Church members can voice their compassion when they join thousands of Canadians in Amnesty International's annual "Write for Rights" write-a-thon on Human Rights Day, Dec. 10.

Through the write-a-thon, individuals, families and groups come together to write letters of concern to address human rights issues.

Many churches participate in the write-a-thon at their places of worship. Members write letters on behalf of prisoners of conscience, they send letters of support to human rights activists around the world, or they call on world leaders to end human rights violations.

Human Rights Day falls on a Saturday this year, but congregations can plan their write-a-thon after a service in November or December.

Everything a church needs to participate in "Write for Rights" can be found at www.amnesty.ca/writeathon, or a free write-a-thon activity kit is available by calling 1-800-AMNESTY.

—Amnesty International release

Learn first-hand about nonviolent activism

Bethlehem, Palestine—Nonviolence International, in conjunction with Holy Land Trust, is organizing an International Nonviolence Conference to be held in Bethlehem, Dec. 27 to 30.

The purpose of the conference is to bring together members of the global non-violent community to discuss the past, present and future

of nonviolence. This will also be a unique opportunity for the global community to learn first-hand about nonviolent activism in Palestine.

Attendees will have the ability to add tour options both before and after the conference, to allow them to travel and see Palestine.

For more information or to register for the conference, visit www.celebratingnv.org. —Nonviolence International release




'God's people now!' theme for assembly

Winnipeg—"God's people now! (I Peter 2: 9-10)" will be the theme for the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Edmonton next July 5 to 9.

The group charged with developing a theme wrestled with the task of discerning, praying and listening for God's leading.

"We wanted a theme that was both celebratory and prophetic, something that would draw us into our new statement of identity and purpose, and help us understand our call and be energized for our purpose as a church," says Pam Peters-Pries, executive secretary, Support Services.

Although a strong and celebratory theme text emerged, summing it up in three or so quotable and memorable words, as well as developing a mind's eye picture, did not come so easily. It wasn't until staff graphic designer Lynette Wiebe spent some time with the text that she was able to distill it into the simple proclamation: "God's people now!"

"The words embody a clear message of both celebration and summons," says Wiebe. "We are called with a sense of urgency and purpose because where once we were not, we are now the people of God."

—MC Canada release
by **Dan Dyck**

For upcoming musical events, see Focus on Music section, page 12.

Calendar

British Columbia

Jan. 13-15: Emmanuel Mennonite Church 25th anniversary.

Jan. 27-29: Missions Fest, Vancouver.

Feb. 3,4,10,11: MCC fundraising banquets—Bakerview MC Church, Abbotsford (3); Bethel Mennonite Church, Aldergrove (4); Yarrow MB Church (10); Fraserview MB Church, Richmond (11).

Feb. 24-25: MC B.C. annual general meeting, Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church, Abbotsford.

April 8,9: Lenten Vespers with Abendmusik Choir, 8 p.m. at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford (8), and Knox United Church, Vancouver (9).

April 21: Columbia Bible College spring concert.

April 28-30: Jr. Youth IMPACT retreat at Camp Squeah.

May 7: B.C. Mennonite Women in Mission Inspirational Day, First Mennonite Church, Vancouver.

May 26-27: "Come to the table: A conference on the arts in worship" explores the theme of collaborative worship (dance, drama, visual arts, writing for worship, storytelling and more). Keynote speakers from

AMBS: June Alliman Yoder, Marlene Kropf and Rebecca Slough. For more information, e-mail Angelika Dawson at music@emmanuelmennonite.com.

Alberta

Nov. 25-26: Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta fall workshop at Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury. Theme: "Rise and decline of Bible schools in Alberta." Speaker: Bruce Gunter. For more information, call Henry Goerzen at 403-335-8414.

Dec. 1: World AIDS Day "Generations at Risk" fundraiser with special guest speaker and entertainment in Calgary.

May 6-7: Songfest in Edmonton. A choir from Canadian Mennonite University will be the featured guests.

May 26-28: Women in Mission annual retreat at Camp Valaqua. Theme: "Women in conversation: Celebrating women's lives."

June 2-4: Foothills Mennonite Church 50th anniversary celebrations.

Saskatchewan

Nov. 29: Ten Thousand Villages Festival Sale at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon.

Dec. 9, 10: RJC Christmas dinner theatre.

Jan. 6-7: RJC Tournament of Memories.

Jan. 13-15: "Refreshing Winds" retreat at Shekinah. Theme: "Worshipping through music," with a focus on the new *Hymnal* supplement.

Manitoba

Jan. 13-15: Young adult retreat at Camp Koinonia: "Get engaged...with the church!"

Jan. 19-22: Canadian Mennonite University presents "Bachfest" (lectures, sing-along and concerts on the theme

of “Bach as saint?”).

Jan 20: “Infusion,” an evening of worship for youth and young adults, Canadian Mennonite University.

Jan. 20-22: MMYO junior youth retreat at Camp Koinonia.

Feb. 3-5: MMYO senior youth retreat at Camp Koinonia.

Feb. 10-12: MMYO junior youth retreat at Camp Moose Lake.

Feb. 24: Leadership seminar at Gretna Berghaler Mennonite Church.

Feb. 24: Opera workshop, Canadian Mennonite University.

Feb. 24-25: Annual delegate session at Mennonite Collegiate Institute, hosted by Gretna Berghaler Mennonite Church.

March 3-5: Families, friends and persons with a disability retreat at Camp Assiniboia.

March 5: Canadian Mennonite University presents “Choral Connections,” 7:30 p.m.

March 10-12: MMYO junior youth retreat at Camp Moose Lake.

April 6: Canadian Mennonite University presents “Jazz at CMU,” 7:30 p.m.

April 22: Annual spring concert, Canadian Mennonite University, 7:30 p.m.

May 29-31: Plus 55 retreat at Camp Moose Lake.

June 5-7: Plus 55 retreat at Camp Koinonia.

Ontario

Nov. 22: Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp and Retreat Centre annual meeting; dinner at 6:15 p.m., meeting to follow. Call 519-625-8602 if you are interested in attending.

Nov. 25, 26: UMEI Grade 11 drama: *Heidi*.

Nov. 25-27: Ten Thousand Villages’ Mennonite Christmas Festival, Harbourfront Centre, Toronto—6 to 10 p.m. (25); 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (26); noon to 5 p.m. (27).

Nov. 26: 10th annual urban Mennonite bazaar, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Welcome Inn Community Centre, Hamilton. For more information, call



Photo by Don Tutlock

Participants in a trauma-healing seminar do a relaxation exercise on a beach in Costa del Sol, El Salvador. Mennonite Central Committee sponsored the Sept. 25 to 30 seminar for 26 leaders of non-profit organizations and churches, most of them from Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. Participants spoke about their experiences during civil wars in their countries and learned trauma-healing techniques that can be incorporated in their work. The seminar was conducted by the Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) program of Eastern Mennonite University and Church World Service.

905-525-5824.

Nov. 28, 29, 30, Dec. 1, 6: RESP seminars hosted by Mennonite Savings and Credit Union branches—Elmira (28, 7:30 p.m.), Milverton (29, 7:30 p.m.), Waterloo (30, 7:30 p.m.), New Hamburg (1, 7:15 p.m.), Leamington (6, 7:30 p.m.). Call 1-888-672-6728 to register.

Dec. 7: Sawatsky Visiting Scholar Lecture at Conrad Grebel Great Hall, by former MCC executive director Ron Mathies: “Responding to the tsunami and Darfur crises.” 7 p.m.

U.S.A.

Jan. 23-27: AMBS pastors week, Elkhart, Ind.

June 1-3: “Holding fast to our faith: Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective 10 years later” conference, AMBS, Elkhart, Ind.

Oct. 26: Mennonite/s Writing: Beyond Borders conference, Bluffton University, Ohio. Keynote speaker: Kathleen Norris. Submissions of Mennonite writing sought. For details, visit: www.bluffton.edu/eng/conference/.

Please send **Calendar** events by e-mail to: calendar@canadianmennonite.org. To ensure publication, send **Calendar** announcements *two months or more* in advance.

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ADVENT

Advent is a time of waiting.
And when the time of waiting is over
We welcome the Christ-child—
“Emmanuel, God with us.”
Advent is a time of anticipation.
And when the time of anticipation is done,
We sense the Christ-child—
“Emmanuel, God with us.”

Advent is a time of longing.
And when the time of longing is past,
We feel the Christ-child—
“Emmanuel, God with us.”

Advent is a time of hoping.
And when the time of hoping is complete,
We embrace the Christ-child—
“Emmanuel, God with us.”

“Emmanuel, God with us.”

In our waiting, God comes into our pain,
Bringing hope for healing and relief.

In our waiting, God comes into our confusion,
Bringing hope for clarity and understanding.

In our waiting, God comes into our loss,
Bringing hope for comfort and compassion.

In our waiting, God comes into our aloneness,
Bringing hope for love and friendship.

And in our waiting, God comes into our wholeness,
Bringing faith, hope and love.

“Emmanuel, God with us!”

—**John Konrad**

The poet served with Mennonite Central Committee in British Columbia in 2004.



Artwork by Lynette Wiebe