

CAN Mentorite

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**Rethinking
Christmas**
page 6

**More than a ticket
to heaven**
page 26

**Prayers for Iraqi
captives**



Searching hard for truth on Ipperwash

British historian Lord Acton observed that, “Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” This axiom proved true as the two-year-old Ipperwash Inquiry continued late last month. The inquiry was established by the Government of Ontario to investigate the killing of the unarmed Dudley George by police in 1995; he was the first aboriginal person killed in a land dispute in Canada in over a century.

Over the past 10 years, the sordid way the government has dealt with this abuse of power has slowly been coming to light.

On June 4, 1996, Charles Harnick, then Ontario’s attorney general, was questioned in the Ontario Legislature about what was said at a meeting of top government leaders and police staff hours before armed officers moved in. For years, rumours have swirled about a strongly insulting command being made at that meeting about removing the protesters from the park.

Harnick was asked, “Will the minister report to the House on what he has done to investigate who made this offensive remark, if it was made and when it was made?”

“I can tell you I have no information as to the fact that remark was ever made. I have no knowledge that remark was ever made,” he replied. He repeated his statement again in the Legislature each of the next two days.

On Nov. 28, testifying under oath at the Ipperwash Inquiry, Harnick completely reversed himself. “When I got to the dining room...there were people there in their places around the table. And as I walked into the dining room, the

Premier [Mike Harris] in a loud voice said, ‘I want the f---ing Indians out of the park.’

Harris’s lawyer has already said that the former premier will testify he does not recall saying this when he takes the stand early next year.

It’s a terrible indictment by the former attorney general on the morally corrosive effects of power and the desire to keep it. We now have the first direct allegation that a grubby tapestry has been woven from all the lies spun about that evening, let alone of Ipperwash as a whole.

This is a lesson Jesus taught in Matthew 5:37: “*Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.*” This is the basis for the historic Mennonite refusal to make a special oath promising to tell the truth before testifying in court.

Under oath, Harnick had the courage to finally say the truth as he heard it that evening. Unlike him, however, Christians should need no special circumstances to speak with honesty and integrity.

As the Liberal government’s sponsorship scandal or the U.S. Grand Jury indictment of senior Bush administration official Lewis Libby for perjury demonstrate, the decision by government officials not to tell the truth and admit their mistakes sometimes turns out to be a great deal more trouble later on.

Canadians will be going to the polls in a federal election on Jan. 23. We need to make it clear we expect fundamental values like honesty from our leaders. Their examples stand as warnings on how seductive lies are—and on what their consequences can be.

—**Tim Miller Dyck**

Christians should need no special circumstances to speak with honesty and integrity.

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December 19, 2005
Volume 9, Number 24

4 **UpClose**
Christmas in Bethlehem **4**
New Year's resolution **5**

6 **Faith&Life**
Rethinking Christmas **6**
Mary's song **9**

10 **Arts&Culture**
David Bergen interview **10**
Little-known Mennonite author **11**

13 **InConversation**
Letters **13**
Buckets, blankets and the WTO **14**
IKEA Summit observations **15**

17 **WiderChurch**
Brazilian Mennonites celebrate **17**
CPT hostage deadline passes **20**
More than a ticket to heaven **26**

29 **LocalChurch**
Spiritual care coordinator hired **29**
Peacemaking lesson **32**
Transitions **33**

34 **TheChurches**
Inviting faith **35**

36 **ToMorrow**



Page 17

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 Jan. 9 issue by Jan. 5.



Page 5

Cover: Canadian Mennonite University student Jennifer Braun of Rosenfeld, Man., lights a candle for the four kidnapped members of Christian Peacemaker Teams at a Dec. 2 prayer service at the university. The service was organized by the student-led Peace and Social Awareness Committee. For stories on the still-unfolding situation in Iraq, see pages 20-21.

Photo by John Longhurst

Page 21



Through the eyes of Rachel: Christmas in Bethlehem

“Herod was furious when he learned that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, because the wise men had told him the star first appeared to them about two years earlier. Herod’s brutal action fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah: ‘A cry of anguish is heard in Ramah, weeping and mourning unrestrained; Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead.’” Matthew 2:16-18.

The Church of the Nativity, where it is agreed that the birth of Jesus took place, is right up the hill from our apartment here in Bethlehem. The church, which actually houses three churches—Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Roman Catholic—has one special spot marked by a silver 14-point star indicating his birthplace. People often kneel and pray there, touching and kissing this holy place.

I remember the first time I saw it: the presence of decorative linens, candles and the smell of incense. I tried to remember the miracle that took place there, picturing the baby wrapped in common linens with the smell of animals nearby.

Not so pronounced in my mind was when the guide pointed to the Tomb of the Innocents; the tomb holds many skeletons of babies that were found—most likely from the two-year-old and younger children who were killed at the hands of soldiers by the order of King Herod. But living in Bethlehem, surrounded by the pain and suffering that is the daily reality for people here, this part of the story has taken on new meaning for me.

When I read this passage in Matthew, I consider the feelings of three people: Herod, Rachel and the reader.

What caused Herod to give such

a horrendous order was his fury at being outsmarted, his fear of a new king, and his greed for power. He was feeling threatened, so threatened that it resulted in a disregard for lives of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of small babies.

Rachel has become a role model for me. My inspiration is largely found in the phrase, “refusing to be comforted.” In fact, I think that she held so strongly to her belief that God is the God of life, that when she found herself in the middle of the nightmare, she refused to take any comfort, even during the birth of the Prince of Peace, while she held in her arms the lifeless bodies of her children. She knew that these deaths were not from God, but a result of the fear, greed and the abusive power of one man.

Then there is the reader. I wonder if many of us who read this part of the story every Christmas, read it somewhat quickly, glossing over its impact. Do we tend to view the death of these babies as “collateral damage” in the midst of the miracle that came to save every human being? Does that justify it for us? The Scripture puts the anguish of Rachel in the context of the prophetic voice of Jeremiah being fulfilled. Perhaps we feel that it was “just meant to be,” or perhaps even “all part of God’s plan.”

Christmas in Bethlehem has quite a different meaning than past Christmases. I can’t escape the devastating realities around me. I cannot ignore the pain simply because I’m celebrating the birth of Jesus, especially because I’m celebrating the birth of Jesus. Like Rachel, I am refusing to take comfort when it comes to the devastation. But what I’m holding to more tightly than ever is my belief that God is a God of life, and that he wills life for all people.

—Christi Seidel

The author is a Mennonite Central Committee peace worker in Palestine.



Seidel



MCC file photo

For decades, supporters of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) have marked the Christmas season by donating to work abroad and in the United States or Canada. Once, that meant preparing Christmas bundles that were packed in North America, as in this 1961 photo from Steinbach, Man., and sent to locations as diverse as post-war Europe and U.S. cities. Now, MCC has begun highlighting a material resource project each Christmas, sending such packages to areas of Central America hit by Tropical Storm Stan or to tsunami victims in Nias, Indonesia.

Gindiri, Nigeria

A Christmas feast of liver and onions

Everyone should experience Christmas in a different culture. Being back in Nigeria once again after 12 years, we are looking forward to Christmas. Has it changed?

Our memories are vivid yet from our first Christmas here in the village. It started Dec. 24 as a cow was slaughtered on the cement “volleyball” court in view of our house. It was a festive time and portions were divvied up.

Pretty soon there was a knock on our front door and the provost was standing before us. In his hands was the huge cow’s liver, blood dripping from between his fingers. He indicated it was a gift to us. We tried to conceal our aghast looks and graciously accepted it.

At that moment we realized we were the recipients of one of the prized pieces of meat and very humbled that this iron-rich meat would be given to us. We were reminded of the best of gifts brought to Jesus by the Magi. These gifts were not just leftovers, or items that were not needed any more, but were the best of the best.

Now our dilemma was what to do with it. Not being really fond of liver, we remembered that there was a potluck the next day.

Christmas Day began at 6 a.m. for us with people bringing various Nigerian foods. Of course, this meant that they had been up for many hours cooking already. We were so unprepared and had not made anything to share.

Ah, but there was still the service and then the potluck. The service was especially lively and for the offering people danced up the aisle with yams, maize and other foodstuffs on their heads. It lasted at least three hours and people were hungry. We had decided to make “liver and onions,” and to share all this meat. It was such a “generous” gift, don’t you think?

Potlucks here in Gindiri are not like Canadian potlucks. Everyone in Canada files by in an orderly line.

Here, after the prayer, it was dive in wherever you could find an opening. Lids of all sorts were used as plates. Of course, no one could have guessed what we brought. It was cooked so differently than how Nigerians would have cooked liver, but it quickly disappeared. After everyone had their fill, people took their dish and filled them for home with leftovers. Then it was dancing time and we danced in joyful celebration of our Lord’s coming.

Yes, we are so looking forward to another Christmas in Nigeria this year, and will try to be more prepared. Maybe it has changed and another custom will take us by surprise once again. Nigerians have taught us what it really means to give the best of gifts.

—Bev From

The author is serving with Mennonite Central Committee as a Bible and theology instructor in Gindiri, Nigeria.

Vancouver

Make volunteering your New Year’s resolution

Still trying to decide what your New Year’s resolution will be? How about volunteering at a Thrift Shop?

Jake Braun has been volunteering at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Thrift Shop on Vancouver’s Fraser St. for about a year. He’s taken his skills and experiences as a lithographer and a life insurance salesman, and is using them to help display and sell furniture here. He’s been able to identify good furniture pieces and display them in attractive ways so that customers realize they are getting quality, even if the piece is “experienced,” as he likes to describe them.

“I have fun helping people,” Braun says. “I like negotiating with people who like to haggle. It’s a bit of a game, but you still get a good price and the customer still feels they are getting a good deal—and they are.”

But that’s not the only reason he volunteers at the MCC Thrift Shop. Braun knows that the proceeds from this shop benefit the relief and development work of MCC worldwide.

Braun’s wife, Lily, has been volunteering at the Thrift Shop for four years and is currently the vice-chair of the store committee. She worked at The Bay for 29 years and uses her retail skills setting up displays, working the cash or behind the scenes pricing.

“When you think that we can raise money for people all over the world by selling things that are recycled, that makes you feel good,” she says. “I look forward to going. I work hard and come home tired. I love it.”

The Brauns work together with vet-



MCC B.C. photo

MCC Thrift Shop volunteer Jo Kornelsen has been volunteering since the 1970. She specializes in jewelry, collectibles and antiques.

eran volunteer Jo Kornelsen, whose tenure goes back more than three decades. She has done a little bit of everything: sorting, pricing, cashiering, you name it. Over the years, her work has become more specialized, as she researches the value of collectibles, antiques and jewelry.

“I enjoy it and it keeps me busy,” she says of her experience. Not that there aren’t frustrations from time to time, but when those arise, Kornelsen says, “I remember that I’m doing this for the Lord and not for man.”

Make volunteering a New Year’s resolution that won’t be broken. For more information, or to volunteer, call your local Thrift Shop or e-mail Canadian coordinator Judy Dyck at judyd@mennonitecc.ca. —MCC B.C. release by **Angelika Dawson**

Rethinking Christmas: The ‘cute baby’ versus the ‘great exchange’

When we downplay Christmas in all its heavenly and earthly glory—and focus only and entirely on the baby Jesus—we misidentify Christ.

Yet that is what many churches today do. In the words of J. Ernest Rattenbury, they maintain that “the first Christmas day was a day of baby-worship. How fitting that it remains particularly the children’s day, celebrated by the gaiety and merriment of the little ones.”

The error in such an approach, according to Laurence Hull Stookey, is that it ignores so much of the biblical story. In his book *Calendar: Christ’s Time for the Church*, he states, “The coming of the Magi and the baptism of Jesus help us identify who it is that is born in Bethlehem and thus get past ‘the cute baby’ approach that so vitiates the deep meaning of the incarnation and prevents us from appreciating the great exchange of divinity and humanity.”

This is not to suggest, however, that the popular version of the Christmas story has no basis in Scripture; Isaiah speaks of a son being born (9:6a) and the manger scene (1:3a). However, to make the shepherds, the angels, Mary and Joseph, the animals surrounding the manger, and, yes, even the baby Jesus, the primary focus year after year is to leave both believers and the merely curious—who come to church only at Christmas and Easter—famished for more.

The true God of Christmas

Who then is the true God of Christmas if not the baby Jesus? A few clues can be found in Luke 2. The angels declare to the shepherds that “a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” In other words, the Jews’ awaited messiah has come, which is made clear by the designation “Lord,” an Old Testament title meticulously reserved for God. The shepherds make an astute connection between the God of heaven and the God in the manger, when they decide to go to Bethlehem and “see this event which the Lord has made known to us” (2:15).

Neil Alexander says of this account, “The message of Christmas is more than the historical birth of a baby; it is also the incarnation of the Saviour. It is more than cattle and kings kneeling in a stable, it is the entire world on its knees before the Lord of life and death. It is more than angels singing ‘glory,’ it is beholding the glory that is full of grace and truth for us. No one can argue about the fact that the story of our Lord’s birth is meaningful, even

stimulating, but the gospel that the world needs to hear now is the vigorous, earthy, dynamic, demanding, if at times offensive gospel of the Word made flesh.”

Something else is going on here, which only becomes clear when Luke’s account of Christ’s birth is juxtaposed with the first chapter of the Gospel of John. In John we learn that Jesus was God from the beginning, bringing all things into existence; that “the Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory” (1:14); and that he was the Word that was the light of the world (1:9).

This theme of light entering the world predates our celebration of the baby by many centuries. According to worship renewal authority Robert Webber, “From the beginnings of the Christmas celebration in the early fourth century, the theme of the Christmas season has always been the arrival of the light, the light that has come to dispel darkness.... What is at the heart of Christmas is the gospel—the overthrow of evil and the establishment of God’s reign in our lives and over a restored creation.”

That the light will ultimately be successful is prophesied by Isaiah, who states, “The nations will come to your light and kings to your dawning brightness.”

St. Augustine preached many Christmas sermons. In them he holds in tension the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, but speaks most plainly about the heavenly realm (Word and light) invading the earthly.

In Sermon 190, he states explicitly, “He lies in a manger, but he holds the world. He nurses at his mother’s breasts, but he feeds the angels. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes, but he gives us the garment of immortality. He is given milk, but at the same time is adored. He finds no room at the inn, but he builds a temple for himself

The nativity was not ‘just God’s Gnostic dip into babyhood, but God’s total immersion into the world’s grief, pain, hatred and madness.’

in the hearts of those who believe.... That infirmity might be made strong, strength has been made weak. Let us, therefore, admire the more...the abasement that he in all his majesty accepted for our sakes. And then let us be kindled with love, that we may come to his eternity.”

If all of this is true—that Christmas is more about the “great exchange” than the baby in a manger—one worship service can hardly contain it all.

Advent and Epiphany augment Christmas

Here the liturgical churches (both East and West) have the advantage over many of their Protestant Reformation counterparts; they extend the Christmas season backwards into Advent and forward into Epiphany.

Advent—celebrated in some Protestant churches—brings the hope of Christ’s second coming and remembrance of his first appearance on earth together over four Sundays.

Epiphany, which follows right after Christmas, celebrates Christ’s complete identification with humanity. According to historian James F. White, “Epiphany...is older than Christmas and has a deeper meaning. For instead of simply being an anniversary of the birth of Christ, it testifies to the whole purpose of the incarnation: the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ, beginning both with his birth and with the beginning of his ministry [the baptism when he is proclaimed ‘My Son, my beloved’].”

Besides Jesus’ baptism (traditionally celebrated on Jan. 13), also associated with Epiphany are the visitation of the Magi to the young child Jesus (traditionally celebrated on Jan. 6), and his first recorded miracle (traditionally celebrated on Jan. 20).

In the earliest accounts of Epiphany, it is the baptism of Jesus that was most celebrated. John Chrysostom, in a sermon preached on Jan. 6, 387, tells us why: “Because it was not when he was born that he became manifest to all, but when he was baptized; for up to this day [his baptism] he was unknown to the multitudes.” While the Magi—as representative gentiles—had been given special illumination, the Gospel accounts make it clear that such knowledge of Jesus’ divine-hu-

man connection did not become widespread until after his baptism in the Jordan.

Of the visit of the Magi, Stookey writes, “By the gifts they bring [gold fit for a king, frankincense for a deity, and myrrh that had many functions: as a painkiller, embalming substance, fragrance, body treatment, and, when mixed with oil, as a method of anointing priests], the Magi identified Jesus as the supreme ruler of the world; as God’s anointed...high priest; and as the suffering servant who dies as a fragrant and beautiful offering before God.”

The miracle at Cana is the last of the three identifiers of Christ celebrated during Epiphany. Not only does he turn water into wine, Jesus turns it into the best wine the guests have had. In doing so, he declares what kind of God he is an emissary of—a *lavish one*.

Continued on page 8



Illustration by Tim R. Dyck

'Epiphany...is older than Christmas and has a deeper meaning. For instead of simply being an anniversary of the birth of Christ, it testifies to the whole purpose of the incarnation....'

Epiphany *From page 7*

Just what do congregations have to gain by adding Epiphany to their calendar, especially given all of the effort they have just expended on church and family activities over the preceding month?

These uncelebrated aspects of the Christmas season show that the nativity was not, as James P. Wind says, "just God's Gnostic dip into babyhood, but God's total immersion into the world's grief, pain, hatred and madness. Many of us heard church choirs sing 'Christ was born for this' on Christmas Eve without stopping to ask, What's the 'this'? In Epiphany the answer becomes clear. Sin and death are the 'this' that makes Christ's birth so necessary and important.

Christmas and Epiphany in light of the resurrection

While Christmas and Epiphany, or "incarnation" and "identification," are all well and good in and of themselves, they are meaningless to us without the Easter season (the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ) and Pentecost (the sending of the Holy Spirit) to make them complete.

When Christmas and Epiphany are seen in the light of Easter and beyond, the romance of the baby in a manger should tend to disappear. And when it does, any misconception that we can be merely believers, and not disciples of Christ, must be corrected.

When tied to the Easter events, Christmas and Epiphany's eternal dimensions become apparent. "The gospel portrays the coming of Jesus, and particularly his death and resurrection, as the decisive, truly eschatological event in the world's history," George Hunsberger, of the Gospel and Our Culture Network, asserts.

In other words, the Christ who existed before the creation of this world as the Word (the second person of the Trinity), who took on humanity at the incarnation, and who began the overthrow of the powers of Satan at his resurrection, will bring everything to fruition—not merely to an end—at his second coming.

Since evangelical churches, by their very name, long to bring the gospel message to a hurting world lost in sin, here is the opportunity: Step into the world of the one who totally immersed himself with humanity so that we might be healed.

—**Ross W. Muir**

The author is managing editor of Canadian Mennonite. He holds a master of theological studies degree in worship and liturgical studies from Tyndale Seminary, Toronto.

Three ways to revitalize Christmas and introduce Epiphany

1. The idea of re-introducing the Twelve Days of Christmas is as fascinating as it is daunting. After a month or more of secular and traditional religious preparations for Christmas Day, many people—both non-Christians and Christians alike—just want to coast until after New Year's.

To shuffle the traditional pre-Christmas Day pageants and carol services until after Dec. 25 may be hard for people to get their heads and hearts around, at least initially. But doing so gets to the heart of the debate between the Christian and secular calendars as a whole, and the modern secular versus ancient Christian celebrations of Christmas, in particular.

Laurence Hull Stookey asks, "Why should the church stop singing carols simply because the department stores have shifted back to playing secular selections over their public address systems?"

And since nothing much happens

between Christmas Day and New Year's Day except football games, the days are relatively uncluttered so that church-related Christmas activities—that currently take place during Advent—could give people the opportunity to understand "what it is really all about," something they claim they are unable to do in the hectic days before Dec. 25.

2. As a way of melding the idea of Christ being the light of the world with the evangelical fervour of taking that 'light' out into the world, Stookey's suggestion that, on Christmas Eve, the lit candles be carried outside the church "as a reminder of our charge to let our light shine before others and to carry the good news of Christ into the world," is a good one.

In communities where various church traditions hold their own candlelight vigils on Christmas Eve, parishioners from the various denominations might want to parade their candles down their streets, mingling with each other and the non-church-going passersby on this joyous

evening.

3. Consider holding communion services on Christmas Eve or Christmas Sunday. The connection between Christmas and communion is often lacking or, at best, strained, since it is difficult (and distasteful for many) to think of an infant growing up to die on a cross.

Lyricist Bob Stark has written two additional verses to the traditional Christmas hymn "Angels From the Realms of Glory" that make the connections in a moving way:

All who come with hearts confessing
thus approach his table now.
Let us, with the Saviour's blessing,
in his presence humbly bow.
Come and worship....

May the bread of life enfold us,
may the wine instill the love
of the Christ Child, long foretold us,
now proclaimed from heaven above.
Come and worship....

—**Ross W. Muir**

Mary's song: Mixing Christmas and politics

Christmas is often seen as all about children, personal and intimate. But in the text of the Magnificat (Luke 1:47-55) something bigger is described, of social and global proportions. Paradoxically, both are true.

In Mary's song, she reflects on her pregnancy. It is on one level a very personal thing for her. It's about her and the child to be born, all in their own small world, in "o little town of Bethlehem," as we sing.

It is all about the joy of the coming birth that she shares with her cousin Elizabeth. When they meet, Elizabeth says to Mary, "Blessed woman, who believed what God said, believed every word would come true!" And Mary said, "I'm bursting with God-news; I'm dancing the song of my Saviour God. God took one good look at me, and look what happened—I'm the most fortunate woman on earth" (Message Bible).

Then it takes a sudden, drastic twist: from the personal to the social, from that one moment in time to history, from one tiny unborn baby to a sense of great expectations. Mary sees the big picture in this little child's coming birth.

Indeed, it almost seems as though her pregnancy itself is a social statement. Having children is indeed a protest against all that is life-denying because it is so life-affirming. It is a protest against all that is hopeless because it is so hope-filled. It has often been said that it is a sign of hope to bring children into this world. And it takes on greater meaning when we add a spiritual dimension, as seen in Mary's song.

This is, on one level, the story of a young virgin who suddenly finds herself pregnant before she is married. There is an element of personal tragedy in the story, as we see in Joseph's struggles in Matthew 1. But in Mary's song, personal tragedy turns to social triumph. Here, we see that it is not only about Mary and Joseph. It is about what God is doing in and through them for his people Israel and the world.

That's why Mary sings: "What God has done for me will never be forgotten!"



And then we see on the lips of this pregnant young woman some strong words, political words, if you will. She remembers what God has done in the past and hopes for what God will do in the future. It's all about the reign of God, which is an upside-down kingdom.

She sings, "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty."

That's pretty heady stuff for a pregnant woman to be thinking about; it's more than knitting booties, that's for sure.

The Message Bible says it this way: "He bared his arm and showed his strength, scattered the bluffing braggarts. He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled victims out of the mud. The starving poor sat down to a banquet; the callous rich were left out in the cold."

And that's what Christmas is all about.

We've seen it depicted in Christmas stories such as Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, which was very much a social protest against the injustices of his time in 19th century England.

You know the huge debate about whether it is good to have an election campaign over Christmas. "Don't mix Christmas with politics," people say. But it has already been done. Mary's song is very political. It's all about the politics of Jesus, who came to show us another way—the way of peace.

Jesus' politics makes sure that the hungry are filled with good things, the poor and homeless are fed and sheltered this winter, and the "starving poor" can find a place at the banquet table.

—**Maurice Martin**

Winnipeg

Author wrestles with 'Mennonite' upbringing

At 48, author David Bergen now resists the "Mennonite writer" label. Yet the winner of the 2005 Giller prize for his fifth book, *The Time in Between*, readily admits that his Mennonite background "shaped" him as a writer and continues to influence his current artistic vision, even when his work is not overtly religious.

Despite a hectic post-award interview schedule, the former English teacher who now writes full-time shared some of his thoughts with *Canadian Mennonite* at a coffee shop near his downtown Winnipeg office.

"When I'm put into a Mennonite box, I start to balk," Bergen said. "I don't claim to be a Mennonite anymore, in the religious sense, and haven't attended church for a couple of years. Being Mennonite is more about religion than ethnicity.

"That said, I admit I've been shaped by my Mennonite background and fall back on it all the time.... [I] call myself a Mennonite in a self-deprecating fashion and then laugh. And so I am about to contradict myself and say that I am probably more Mennonite than Christian, if that is possible.

"When you've had *Pilgrim's Progress* read to you during your childhood and, at age six, you're so moved by it that you decide to become a Christian, how can that not shape my vision?... By extension, I became the pilgrim. And as I read Joseph Conrad [author of *Heart of Darkness*] and others, the notion of the journey, setting out into the world to find something and perhaps not finding it, became part of me. But I'm not a religious writer as such, though I'm very interested in belief. I believe one has to have faith in order to write."

But he doesn't believe in organized religion. "That's been the bane, the downfall of the world," Bergen said. "One just has to look to wars fought, past and present. Much of man's excuse for killing comes out of a belief in God."

Bergen's own beliefs are not centred on loving "the tiniest flower," as the character Vu suggests in his latest novel; instead, they are focused more on the big questions of faith. "I believe in continuity [as exemplified] by people who came before us, those who pass on to us their values, their view

of how to live well in the world, and these are things that I, in turn, pass on to my children. That has to be a part of it.

"We have mentors. My early mentors came out of a faith-based, non-questioning Mennonite religion. My later mentors taught me scepticism

Bergen novel offers 'a subdued bouquet'

David Bergen. *The Time In Between*. McClelland & Stewart, 2005.

The title of David Bergen's novel situates his characters in the middle of an uncertain journey. Two Canadian siblings, Ada and Jon, find themselves in Vietnam searching for their missing father who has been on a quest to expiate his guilt over an act of war 28 years before.

The journey proves perilous for all of them, exposing old wounds and unfulfilled desires. It may also prove perilous for the reader, especially the one who expects an easy path to salvation. For Bergen, "the time in between" is the state we mortals find ourselves in as we search for explanations and long for grace.

Bergen already explored this territory in his first two novels, *A Year of Lesser* and *The Case of Lena S*. In this novel he evokes more delicately a sense of the deep sadness at the heart of things, a universal grief over the loss of innocence.

How does one live in this "in between" state here on earth? You must get used to receiving nothing, states Vu, a Vietnamese artist, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy life. "I love the tiniest flower, that rock, that tree, the indigo moon. I am not a communist. I can believe. But that's a big question."

Bergen's characters seem lost and often misguided, unable to move beyond their failures and disappointments. For Ada, the time in between in which she searches for her father is like a dream. Meanwhile, whatever happens, happens.

"This might be called fate or it might be called luck, or it might be fact. She preferred to think of it as fact."

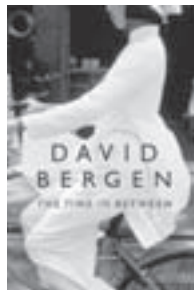
While life may not provide definitive answers for these characters, it does provide "facts" they can rely on: the presence of beauty, the warmth of human contact, cherished memories. And these offer glimpses of a larger meaning (as Ada's image in the mirror offers "fleeting proof of her own existence"). Bergen's style reflects both this earthbound reality and the many possibilities within it—his prose is spare and taut, but it teems with sensuous detail, reflecting the infinite variety of smells, sounds and textures that make life precious and beautiful.

The Vietnamese setting links a Canadian family's grief with a people who have responded to a horrific past. Many scenes evoke Vietnam's ongoing struggle, but one unforgettable image, captured so beautifully on the dust jacket, is the woman serenely riding a bicycle, "her back straight, one arm steady at her side."

Ada's Vietnamese lover notes that it is possible "to live without hate and bitterness and fear."

Outright redemption is hard to come by in Bergen's novels, but this work ends with a kind of reconciliation with the past and a quiet hope. "Dad loved us," concludes Ada. "I believe we are most alive when we are being thought about by others who love us." Jon concedes that "it could be true." They agree to celebrate life by buying a bouquet of flowers. "Not too many and not too colourful," says Ada. "A subdued bouquet."

—Margaret Loewen Reimer



and doubt. My recent mentors are most likely the writers I admire and read, writers who see the world in an objective, curious way, who mould and shape stories and take me to places that are, in some ways, deeply unfamiliar to my early mentors.”

One aspect of his own upbringing that he is passing on to his children is a Mennonite education. “One of my sons who attends Westgate



Bergen

[Mennonite Collegiate] sings in the choir,” he explained. “Recently, I attended a concert and was listening to a prayer [and] I wondered, ‘Why do we still lean towards clichés in our churches? Why aren’t we more

honest in how we express ourselves?’ As an author, if I tried that, my books simply wouldn’t sell! Where is that ‘digging deeper’ aspect of faith?”

When it was suggested that perhaps there have been so few Mennonite fiction writers up to now because of a kind of silencing of voices among *die Stille im Lande* (the quiet in the land) which went beyond not making waves to avoid harassment in revolutionary settings, Bergen responded, “Personally, I didn’t find it hard to break the silence.... You simply have to decide, I’m going to tell the story. An emotional break-through isn’t needed. I didn’t need to tell the story; I wanted to do it! There’s a real joy in it!...”

“Exposing what’s there.... You have to dig into the profane, ultimately the profane is where art/creation comes

from.... If we all have a dark and light side, that’s what artists do [delve into both]. At the best of times, art is able to do that—[it] touches things at a deeper level and brings catharsis.”

In the same vein as such writers as C.S. Lewis, Bergen never expects his readers to get any particular lesson or moral from his books, nor does he want them to. “This is not my reason

for writing. Pleasure, maybe, but this is tricky because one man’s pleasure is another man’s sin. Catharsis. An emotional resonance...if they’re lucky. To get something from a book: this sounds oddly mercantile.”

—Leona Dueck Penner

For a longer version of Canadian Mennonite’s interview with David Bergen, visit www.canadianmennonite.org.

Waterloo, Ont.

Lecture reflects on little-known Mennonite author

In 1902, Ephraim Weber wrote to *Anne of Green Gables* author Lucy Maud Montgomery that he found the Mennonite way of life uncondusive to his great longing to be a fiction writer. Apparently, the predominant Mennonite mindset at the beginning of the last century was that fiction was essentially “a pack of lies.”

Hildi Froese Tiessen, in the 18th annual Benjamin Eby Lecture at Conrad Grebel University College, began by reflecting on the uneasy relationship of Mennonite writers with their church community. “Who was this Ephraim Weber who wrote to Lucy Maud Montgomery for almost 40 years, this man who longed to write a novel which he feared would offend the Mennonites?”

Her investigation began in the Conrad Grebel archives, then extended to the Mennonite archives

in Elkhart, Ind., and finally to the national archives in Ottawa.

She discovered that Weber was a contributing writer for 12 years to *The Young People’s Paper*, a bi-weekly publication of Bishop Funk’s Mennonite Publishing Company in the U.S. He

wrote at least 175 pieces, including articles on prayer, moral courage, the supernatural, the art of letter writing, and Christian zeal. He also wrote some poetry.

He moved to Philadelphia to pursue a career in writing. But in his first of 11 letters to Montgomery in 1902 he conceded that this new endeavour was not very productive.

By 1909, Montgomery had become a famous author; Weber had not.

Disappointed, he left Philadelphia after 10 months to become a teacher in the small towns of Alberta, entering a career that “destroyed his soul.” According to Weber, “God made the country, men made the city, the devil made the small town!”

Froese Tiessen’s investigation attempted to describe Weber’s uneasy ties with the Mennonite Church and its leaders. His most positive link appears to have been with Bishop S.F. Coffman, who arrived in Alberta in 1901, having been seconded by the Ontario conference to form Mennonite congregations there. During that brief year together they had numerous late-night theological discussions, in which Weber showed his growing restlessness and spiritual hunger for “fare for

‘My parents knew nothing of Shakespeare, and now I suffer for it.’

Continued on page 12



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Weber *From page 11*

the soul,” which he apparently was not finding in the Mennonite Church of his day.

He criticized Mennonite preachers for uninspired thought. “They should bring more sanctified imagination to it, and less theology,” he said. “There is no poetry in which God is not,” he declared, as he found another world opening to him beyond the old world of creeds. He stepped away from the Mennonites, claiming, “My parents knew nothing of Shakespeare, and now I suffer for it.”

Yet it was to the Mennonite world he turned, when in 1935 he began to write what he at first thought would be a short story, a playful portrait of three young Mennonite sisters and

their struggle to enjoy the arts in a Mennonite context. But it would not stay short. He lamented that after 250 pages the three young women in his novel, *Aunt Rachel's Nieces*, were still not married.

By 1945, he still had not published his novel. “It would need an educated Mennonite, or ex-Mennonite, to understand it,” he stated, “and there aren't many such!”

The lecture also outlined Weber's encounters with Wilfrid Eggleston, a student Weber mentored who later wrote two novels. Froese Tiessen told of her visit to Eggleston's widow inquiring about the whereabouts of Weber's novel, little knowing that the document was within 20 feet of them—in her attic!

Its whereabouts came to light

after Eggleston's widow's death, and Froese Tiessen and her husband, Paul Tiessen, were able to arrange for *Aunt Rachel's Nieces* to be published. It remains to be seen whether its publication will “rescue Weber from extinction as a writer,” Froese Tiessen concluded.

—Maurice Martin

Winnipeg**Shadow Voices to air on ABC-TV**

Shadow Voices: *Finding Hope in Mental Illness*, a new documentary by Mennonite Media, is airing through Feb. 4 on ABC-TV stations (at their discretion). The program is an intimate, inside look at what it is like to live with a mental illness and how individuals and their families find their way through a tangle of medical, governmental, societal and spiritual issues.

Ten people from across the U.S. with mental illness tell their stories, plus many experts and advocates in the field add helpful perspectives. Experts include former U.S. First Lady Rosalynn Carter, former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher, and Dr. Joyce Burland, founder of the Family to Family program for National Alliance on Mental Illness. There are eight Mennonites in the program.

The program focuses on people's experiences with stigma, recovery and rehabilitation, parity in insurance programs, and how faith communities can do a better job responding to those with mental illness.

Shadow Voices is produced by Mennonite Media in cooperation with the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission and the Communications Commission of National Council of Churches.

For more information on airing dates in your community, or to purchase a VHS of the program or DVD with many more stories and supplemental material, visit www.shadowvoices.com.

—MC Canada release by Melodie Davis

Winnipeg**New book provides ‘echoes’ of the Word**

Harry Huebner believes in the power of the Word—the Bible—to change and shape the lives of believers. The Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) theology professor also believes in the power of words to communicate God's truth.

But how can Christians keep the Word fresh and alive today, long after those original words were first spoken?

That's the subject of Huebner's new book, *Echoes of the Word: Theological Ethics and Rhetorical Practice* (Pandora Press).

“I wrote the book in faith that the Word can still be heard, albeit as an echo,” says Huebner. “Perhaps it is not exactly as it was heard by the first listeners, but it still speaks. The challenge is to revive it in a manner that uncovers its truthful voice.”

In the collection of 18 essays and sermons, Huebner covers topics such as “The church made strange for the nations,” “On being fools for Christ and wise in Christ,” “On not being seduced by the rhetoric of war,” and, “Can the Word be made flesh...again?”

Manitoba author and broadcaster Tim Wiebe uses a musical image when commenting on Huebner's book. “In choral music one hears overtones, or echoes, when the group in which one is singing achieves a perfectly tuned cadence,” he



Canadian Mennonite University theology professor Harry Huebner is pictured with a copy of his new book, *Echoes of the Word*.

CMU photo by John Longhurst

says. “A similar effect applies, I believe, when we tune our spiritual insights with our moral language and ethical acts—we echo the Word of God in ways which others can hear. When we thus ‘echo,’ we provide others ‘a reason for the hope that is in us.’”

Wiebe goes on to say that Huebner's concept of “peacemaking as the creation of an ‘alternative world’ in which to do ethics and engage conflict is an exacting and imaginative description of what we should be trying to teach. His description of the theologian's task, in terms of moving the church from where it is to where it one day ought to be, is a crystal clear description of how we can apply the coherent gospel of Christ to the contingencies of each situation.”

For Huebner, the book is his way of “helping make it possible for us to behold God present and dwelling among us. In coming to view the world this way, we are able to orient our own lives in Christ.”

—CMU release

Letters

Zionism articles derogatory and biased

I was deeply grieved by the totally biased articles in the Oct. 3 *Canadian Mennonite*, which characterized anyone with a different perspective concerning Israel as a “Christian Zionist.” Is this the way to promote understanding?

First, let’s give those with a different view a derogatory title and label their theology as a nightmare. Second, let’s use our lead paragraph to caricature them as fanatical, irrational and radical. By now we have prepared the minds of our innocent readers so that we can proceed by avoiding any clear presentation of these “Zionist” views.

It all makes me wonder if the objective of *Canadian Mennonite*, particularly these articles, is to promote dialogue and mutual understanding, or simply to indoctrinate. The overall Mennonite philosophy of peace and justice should somehow affect the presentation of divergent views.

Simply considering the natural and geographic facts: Would not a small isolated people, surrounded by mortal enemies, many of whom wish to annihilate them, tend to be radically defensive?

Do we blindly ignore and find ways to negate God’s promises made to Israel simply because they do not fit into our theological framework?

I have personal friends, both Jewish and Palestinian, in Israel who live and worship together in love and harmony. The love of Christ drew them out of the prejudices and divisive tactics so prevalent in Middle East dialogue. Perhaps their testimonies and reports on some of the wonderful things that God is doing in that country would be more conducive to peace than harangues by those who hold a different view than we do.

—**Albert Zehr, Surrey, B.C.**

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.

Mennonites are who we think we are

Re: “Who is a Mennonite?” Oct. 31, page 6.

I thoroughly enjoyed Gerald Gerbrandt’s essay and the other articles attempting to define this \$64 question. I’m not in agreement with the conclusions, though.

Gerbrandt’s attempt to define “Mennonite” primarily in terms of religion is not correct from a sociological perspective; neither does it serve Mennonites well in their understanding of their culture or religion.

I think that it is possible to be a cultural Mennonite (my Baptist sister, agnostic friend) and it is possible to be a Christian Mennonite only (Robb Davis). Many of us are blessed in both ways.

Corralling ourselves religiously only serves to negate our rich heritage. Being a Christian Mennonite is the ultimate, but not the only, definition of who we are. Who we think we are is likely who we are.

—**Peter A Dueck, Vancouver**

Being Mennonite goes beyond mere food

I was pleased to read Gerald Gerbrandt’s thoughtful exploration of Mennonite identity (“Who is a Mennonite?” Oct. 31, page 6). It is good to get beyond being “Die Cookbook im die Land”; but I don’t want to worship the Christ of no content either. This piece gave me some very helpful ways of thinking about this issue. Thank you.

—**Paul Cook, Edmonton**

Jesus’ own words are biblically correct

Re: “Bible calls Christians to warn all sinners,” Oct. 31, page 21.

Isn’t Scripture wonderful! If we pick our passages carefully, we can make it say whatever we choose. In his letter George J. Baerg quotes at length from Romans 1, describing the evils of the Roman society. The rest of the chapter adds to the list of sins “*all sorts of depravity, rottenness, greed and malice, ... envy, murder, wrangling, treachery and spite. Libelers, slanderers, enemies to God, rude, arrogant and boastful, enterprising in sin, rebellious to parents.*”

In Romans 2 Paul continues his scold, but with a different target. *No matter who you are, if you pass judgment you have no excuse. In judging others you condemn yourself, since you behave no differently from those you judge. We know that God condemns that sort of behaviour impartially, and when you judge those who behave like this while you are doing exactly the same, do you think you will escape God’s judgment?*

We cannot pick out one thing to condemn without condemning ourselves in other areas. What did Jesus have to say about homosexuality? Nothing. He said a lot more about the use of money.

We all know John 3:16. How many of us can quote John 3:17-18 as easily? *For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be condemned.*

What Jesus said is good enough for me, and biblically correct.

—**Anna Schroeder, Brandon, Man.**

Golf doesn't deserve 'blasphemous' label

Re: "Six more blasphemies, and counting," Nov. 14, page 11.

I assume it was Will Braun and Aidan Enns' intention to lament the "way of living" of *Canadian Mennonite* readers in their column. I'm not going to comment on some of their laments, which are totally legitimate. However, to lump charity golf tournaments together with the Bush administration's war and occupation of Iraq is a

stretch.

I'm assuming that they're not golfers. If they were, they would reflect a positive attitude resulting from their enjoyment experiencing God's nature, meditating on their skills and abilities, and participating in friendly fellowship with the others in the group, all the while supporting a very worthwhile charity. To lament that the participants are the "leisure class," that it's a blasphemy they're enjoying the blessing of God's creation of lush greens and adjacent beautiful woods,

is also a stretch. They have never been on a golf course if they think it's poisoned.

If they intend to influence their readers in ways of "living that show greater respect for God's name," they should concentrate on things that matter and look more positively on the holistic lifestyles of most who golf. They should understand that golf is one of the "ways that create sacred space in frenetic schedules," to use their own phrase.

—Ed Epp, Seven Sisters Falls, Man.

WILL BRAUN



New Order Voice

While globalization dominates the geopolitics of poverty, it hardly shows up in Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) mailings or websites. Buckets and blankets still get more play than the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the structural adjusters.

The dynamics of disparity in the world have shifted dramatically, and MCC has an opportunity to move us—the constituents—beyond the role of noble helper.

I remember Peter "Mr. MCC" Dyck and his late wife, Elfrieda, speaking about the progression of the MCC ethos: from straight-up relief work, to an added dimension of development, and then to a phase emphasizing justice. Or at least that's my recollection from MCC orientation 15 years ago. The progression seemed logical and critical.

My concern is that MCC has slipped into neutral, even though a justice approach is more necessary than ever. We seem bogged down in an us-helping-them framework that over-simplifies our relationship to poverty.

Practically everyone on earth is caught in a global web of consumption. We purchase things that connect us to unknown people in unknown corners of the globe. Monstrously large companies mediate and nurture these relationships. The process is efficient and exploitative. We benefit from it daily and, in turn, fuel it with our consumption.

While MCC runs relief and community development projects, our North American-based companies and the economic policies of our governments wreak widespread havoc. This economic globalization is, by many accounts, the most significant factor affecting global disparity. Yet within MCC it is overshadowed by the relief and development emphasis. I have to look beyond MCC to learn about these key issues of global disparity. And I don't think thrift store workers in my hometown have been told much about globalization.

Globalization is not foreign to MCC. The organization held consultations on globalization, the Washington

Buckets, blankets and the WTO

My MCC experiences with people directly affected by my consumption (of oil and electricity) have changed me.

Office has resources on the topic, and I know MCCers who address the issues. But the overall MCC message to constituents is more about us and the good we do than the intertwined issues of global poverty.

While in MCC, the anonymous words on a bookmark helped shift my approach. "Are you choosing, out of the resources of Christ's life in you, to recover from the need to make a difference?"

A shift from the us-helping-them framework helped me see the dynamics of globalization and its spiritual implications. Exploitative relationships, even if we are unaware of them, have a corrosive effect on our spirits. If our actions harm others, our spirits will be affected. And so redeeming these relationships brings not only material betterment in the global south, but spiritual liberation to us in the north.

Globalization is more complex and controversial than buckets and blankets. It implicates us in the problem. And therein lies the redemptive potential.

MCC decision-makers need to trust that constituents care enough about humanity to understand globalization, if that's what service in the name of Christ requires.

My MCC experiences with people directly affected by my consumption (of oil and electricity) have changed me. The stories from these places—stories inviting me not to "help," but to redeem broken economic relationships—changed my consumer habits and liberated my heart. Such change could happen on a much broader scale.

And MCC, with its global connections, is in an unequalled position to facilitate such change. So please, MCC, help us interpret our world. Help us make the connections, engage our governments, address big companies and redeem the exploitative relationships in which we have become entangled.

Will Braun is editor of Geez magazine. He worked as energy justice coordinator for MCC Canada and MCC Manitoba from 1998 to 2001.

Scripture justifies clergy/laity distinction

Re: Phil Wagler's "The Curse of the Cloth," Oct. 17, page 13.

How can I interpret Phil Wagler's statement, "The professionalization of church leadership is a curse?" If I take it as hyperbole and as an attempt to get our attention, I must admit that it has some shock value.

The real issue, it seems, is "the ungodly distinction" between clergy and laity. But didn't the Lord himself call and set apart certain persons for leadership roles in the community

of faith, both in Israel and in the Christian church? In Ephesians 4, Paul goes so far as to say that leadership persons in the church are gifts of God to the church. Then he names the "apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers," the ones mentioned in his final sentence. So why is this distinction between clergy (our term for those in Paul's list) and laity labelled "ungodly"? The Lord called persons into leadership roles and Paul said they were gifts of God to the church, for the good of the church, "equipping the believers for ministry and building up the body."

In spite of this, the distinction between clergy and laity seems to be his point. He quotes Neil Cole, who wrote about "a whole generation of dependent consumers waiting for their leaders to spoon feed them a Bible verse of the week." I wonder what kind of a church world Neil Cole is living in and why he is quoted here.

I have encountered many laity who do not qualify under the "dependent consumer" category. They are biblically and historically aware, engaged in their culture, their work and family responsibilities, and they do not

Continued on page 16

PHIL WAGLER



Outside the box

As summits go, it was relatively unnoticed. No media coverage or expensive security network, no protesters subjected to tear gas. But perhaps this summit will mean more in the eternal scheme of things than all the Yaltas, Oslos, Reykjaviks and Washingtons combined.

On Nov. 17, 14 Mennonite Church Canada pastors and leaders—participants in Mosaic, the National Church Planting Congress, organized by Outreach Canada and Church Planting Canada—gathered around two finely assembled tables in the IKEA restaurant on the Queensway in Toronto. Like their counterparts from other denominations at the conference, all were inspired, and troubled, by the clarion call for new churches of every shape and size to multiply across the country.

While this is no official declaration, here are some summary observations from the IKEA Summit to consider:

There is a colonial, rather than kingdom, culture among us. Too often we see ourselves as an ethnic entity, rather than a movement of the Spirit of God released to unpack the kingdom of heaven on earth. We have, for too long, been mired in a rut where multiplying churches occurs primarily in two ways: schism and colonialism. Schism is obvious: we have a fight and divorce, rather than love each other and make babies. Colonialism is not so obvious: we start churches when Mennonites move to greener pastures. We transport the colony, but with us-centred, rather than a kingdom, vision.

There is a disconnect between service and evangelization among us. We understand footwashing, but do we understand the Great Commission? We were struck by the fact that many new church plants in non-Anabaptist denominations are speaking the language of service, justice and peacemaking that we have been uttering for years, but are doing a better job of marrying it

Observations from the IKEA Summit

Do we exist to maintain our Mennonite identity or to invite people into the adventure of following Jesus with us, despite their last name?

church planting is deleted from budget lines because of understandably difficult monetary and strategic decisions, what does this say about what we are about? Do we exist to maintain our Mennonite identity or to invite people into the adventure of following Jesus with us, despite their last name?

There is a scarcity mindset among our leaders and our people. Multiplication means sacrifice and sending. It means sacrificing our comfort and church family feel to see the kingdom come. We must repent of our scarcity mindset when God has given our church tradition an abundance of all we need to join in a new movement of the Spirit of God in this country. God has brought us to this land for such a time as this. So rather than fear what or who we'll lose, dare we pray for the Lord of the harvest to call workers and then stand behind them when our prayers are answered? Dare we be leaders who dream, risk, and even fail? Dare we stand firm upon the one sure reality—that Jesus alone changes lives, that Jesus alone is Lord of heaven and earth, and that to follow Jesus alone is the reconciling call of the church to the world?

There is no scarcity in Jesus—only abundant life, and that abundance flowed more freely than Swedish Glögg at the IKEA Summit of 2005.

Phil Wagler, who happily left an IKEA for the first time in his life without buying anything, is the leading servant (pastor) of Zurich Mennonite Church, Ont.

Scripture *From page 15*

come to church to be spoon fed. They come to church to be nourished, to be inspired, and to be equipped for the challenges of being followers of Christ in today's world.

If professional church leaders spoon feed their congregations, then they are not doing their God-given, congregationally rooted task. Then the leaders are not "professional" enough to fulfill their calling.

—**John H. Neufeld, Winnipeg**

Article obfuscates 'missional' meaning

I have read Phil Wagler's column, "Our future is politically incorrect" (July 11, page 11) several times, fully intending to write a letter saying how very much I agree with him. However, it was not until the Oct. 31 *Canadian Mennonite* arrived that I was spurred into action. Wagler made a strong case for bringing clarity, not obfuscation, to whatever is written, and one of the articles in that issue does just the opposite.

The article in question even has a cloudy heading: "Event seeks to reunite divorce of church and mission." Events cannot seek anything; only the attendees can do so. After having puzzled over the title, I found the article equally confusing. I reread it three times and I'm still puzzled as to what the writer was trying to say. "Congregations have difficulty clearly articulating their purpose for being," is one example. Why not just say, "They can't explain what they're trying to do"?

It troubles me that our church papers are becoming filled with such obfuscation in the hope of sounding erudite, but one can still hope. The article, "Who is a Mennonite?" by Gerald Gerbandt, is a case in point. He has expressed my feelings so clearly that I now understand why I still insist I am a Mennonite even though I attend a church outside the Mennonite community.

A final comment: How would a dictionary explain the word "missional"? I have yet to read anything where that word is used that explains its meaning. Are church leaders trying to say they believe in missions, or does it mean something entirely different?

—**Ruth Reesor, Schomberg, Ont.**

Is being 'at variance' reason enough for banning?

There appears to be a basic misunderstanding about the obligations of Christians to correct and discipline one another.

We Mennonites have been prone to this and for a while the entire church in the Netherlands was subject to one ban or another. Menno Simons was banned by a substantial group of Mennonite churches. It is hard to understand how the church was so quickly sidetracked by rigid legalism, condemnation and abuse of authority.

I suppose we are making progress, though. Formal banning doesn't occur as often and it doesn't matter now whether your bumper is black or chrome or the colour of the car. But this language of "at variance" has potential, doesn't it? What if a cadre of churches or individuals felt that another group of churches are "at variance"? I suppose we could fracture the church quite quickly.

I wonder whether gracious disagreement has a place? It is important to acknowledge that many will go to their grave holding fast to their convictions that the church must exclude those who are homosexual, or those who invite the participation of homosexual persons in their churches. Similarly, people who are willing to risk the wrath of God will invite homosexual persons into their midst to worship and fellowship. These folks will cite the greatest commandment uttered by Jesus, that you love one another.

Ultimately, God will decide. It is not necessary to do much more than express one's opinion about this and maintain relationships as best as one can.

—**Lawrence Braul, Calgary**

Church needs to listen to our young adults

I would like to affirm George Epp's letter published in the Oct. 31 *Canadian Mennonite* (page 23) regarding young adults. He expresses deep concern that it might be unfaithfulness of the church that is driving young adults away from the church. I do not feel qualified to judge whether we are being unfaithful, but we would be wise to listen carefully to our young adults.

In my work with young adults on behalf of Mennonite Church Manitoba I have heard a number of stories which suggest that we are in an a "new wineskins" period of time. Young adults and others are questioning whether to pour a fermenting brew into the old wineskins, which will burst, or into new wineskins, which will stretch to contain the as-yet unripened juice.

This is how one could interpret the reports from the Charlotte assembly, as reported in the Aug. 1 and 22 issues of *Canadian Mennonite*, where a significant word was heard from the young adult community.

How can we listen to our young adults? I recently heard of a rural congregation that invited its young adults back from the "big city" for a series of summer Sundays to provide the message on the theme of "What is the future we see for the church." This act gives the young adults a valued voice and a chance to express their passions.

Will all the young adults who are given an ear respond by contributing to the present work of the church? I don't know. But I believe it is the due diligence of the church to give them an ear, to align ourselves with what God is doing in the world, to help individuals (young adults and others) discover their gifts and vocation, and to call them to joyful commitment.

—**Bob Wiebe, Winnipeg**

Pontius' Puddle

Brasília, Brazil

Mennonites in Brazil celebrate transition from a receiving to a sending church

In Brazil, birthdays are big events, celebrated with parties, music and, of course, a suitable cake. So it was natural for the Associação Evangélica Menonita (Evangelical Mennonite Association—AEM) to celebrate its 50th birthday with a party, lots of music and a 50-kilogram cake.

The party was held in conjunction with the annual conference of the AEM (now re-named Aliança Evangélica Menonita) at a retreat centre near Brasília, the capital. The anniversary celebration marked a transition of AEM from a church receiving missionaries and financial support from North America, to a financially self-supporting and international partner in ministry. It now has its own mission board and has sent mission workers to serve in Albania and Mozambique.

Hans Gerhard Peters, the newly elected AEM president, said, “Most certainly the memories of living and working together with Mennonite workers from Canada and of the organization they brought to us will always remain close in my heart.”

Dan Nighswander, former general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, and Stanley and Ursula Green from Mennonite Mission Network (MMN USA) represented the historical relationship with the North American Church and the future of partnership in the gospel. Margarit and Michel Ummel and their children represented the Swiss Mennonite Church.

In bringing greetings from MC Canada, Nighswander recognized the history of sending Canadian missionaries and expressed hopes for future church-to-church relationships. Noting that the two national churches are peers before God, each discerning what God’s purpose is for the world and what its particular calling is, Nighswander pledged to continue

walking together with AEM. That pledge was symbolized by presenting the AEM president with an MC Canada plaque.

Steve Plenert, a former missionary in Brazil, was honoured for his family’s contribution to Brazilian missions. Long-time Canadian missionaries Ken and the late Grace Schwartzentruber were remembered for their 32 years of service. Several other Canadians (most of them from B.C.) were remembered for their service in Brazil under the former mission agencies of Mennonite Board of Missions and Commission on Overseas Mission—now MC Canada Witness and MMN USA, respectively.

In addition to Plenert, Glenn and Lois Musselman, David and Rose Hostetler, Fran and Bob Gerber, and Betty and Otis Hochstetler received words of blessing from their Brazilian hosts.

Like MC Canada, AEM faces challenges in being a national church. A new constitution, unanimously approved after vigorous discussion, gives greater autonomy to the five regions of the church. Delegates recognized the great distances between churches, the limited resources for travel, and the tendency to localize ministries like education and church planting.

Peters lamented the virtual disappearance of Mennonite publishing and leadership development in Brazil, noting that the Brazilian church has, of necessity, focused on local mission and outreach. He added, though, that the church would not be where it is today were it not for the resources brought by North American mission efforts.

“Many of the projects that were



Steve Plenert, left, and Dan Nighswander, centre, of Mennonite Church Canada, present a plaque to Hans Gerhard Peters, president of Aliança Evangélica Menonita as a pledge of continuing relationship.

Photo by Antonio Carlo de Faria

initiated here in Brazil, like the bookstores and the leadership training program, would have been impossible without the support of North American mission workers,” he said.

Sirlani Coimbra Pereira, a conference attendee and long-time dedicated church worker, credits Mennonite missions in her country for her conversion to faith. “I don’t feel that the church in Canada is far away...we feel more like an extension of the Canadian church and so we are all part of the same church,” she said.

The churches in Brazil also recognize the importance of remaining in relationship with one another. Although the distance between some congregations is great, they seek to draw on the strengths that each brings. In the past, differences over worship styles and theology threatened to divide them. But at this year’s conference there were expressions of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

“Fifteen hours of worship in a three-day conference featured rousing singing, passionate preaching, animated corporate prayer, vibrant testimonies and sincere gratitude for God’s presence and blessing,” Nighswander said of the July event. “It was a wonderful birthday party. With God’s grace, may there be many more.”

—MC Canada Witness release

Steinbach, Man.

Jehovah's Witnesses target Old Colony Mennonites

Old Colony Mennonites in Bolivia and Mexico are under attack for their Christian beliefs by Jehovah's Witnesses. In September, their magazine *The Watchtower* published a story about the Mennonites in Bolivia, decrying their lack of "progressive Bible study and public preaching," and beliefs in "unbiblical teachings, such as the Trinity, immortality of the human soul and hellfire."

The story also suggested that restrictions on automobiles, radio and television are signs of a lack of spiritual vitality. But Donald Kraybill, an Elizabethtown (Pa.) College professor who has researched and written extensively about Old Order churches, says such measures, deeply rooted in community and history, help church members maintain faithfulness.

Nevertheless, there is no denying that Old Colony Mennonites have problems. In recent years they have experienced increased public scrutiny of issues such as sexual abuse and drug use and trafficking. But that doesn't mean the entire church is entirely spiritually bereft.

"I've encountered enough people who beat me easily [in biblical understanding]," says Kennert Giesbrecht, editor of *Die Mennonitische Post*, a Steinbach-based German-language newspaper serving colony groups in North and Latin America. "But I've also found people with a very limited biblical knowledge."

That is also the case with any other religious body. Nevertheless, Mennonite troubles seem to particularly draw the attention of churches with a heavy evangelism emphasis.

"Some of these groups really prey," Kraybill says. "If they smell dysfunctionality, they go in and exploit the weakness of the moment."

That has been the case in Bolivia,

Koksa Aath, Laos

Grant provides tricycles and wheelchairs in Laos

Seriously injured in a fall some three decades ago, Thao Som never fully recovered from a broken back. For the last decade, the 65-year-old has been unable to visit friends or participate in other aspects of village life because he could not walk.

Now, a hand-powered tricycle, a common alternative to a wheelchair, has expanded his world. A Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) grant to a Lao association for people with disabilities has provided funds for tricycles or wheelchairs for some 40 people, including Som, over the past eight years.

"I think chairs and trikes make a huge difference in the mobility and dignity of each person who receives one," said MCC Laos representative Phyllis Mann. "It may mean the difference between



Photo by Phyllis Mann

Thao Som of Koksa Aath, Laos, received a hand-powered tricycle, a common alternative to a wheelchair, through a grant that Mennonite Central Committee provided to a Lao association for people with disabilities.

being able to go out to visit your friends, instead of waiting for them to come to you."

—MCC release

Giesbrecht says, where shortcomings in the colony educational system have produced members not adept at articulating their beliefs and countering the arguments of other beliefs. That has provided an opening for the Jehovah's Witnesses. "I think they know these people aren't terribly capable of defending themselves," he says.

Stories of proselytizing Old Colony Mennonites seem to abound among Jehovah's Witnesses. According to a 2004 story in *The Watchtower*, a call was issued in 2000 for German-speaking Witnesses in Europe to go to Bolivia. About 140 responded and made "repeated efforts" to win over colony members, the story reported.

September's *The Watchtower* reported that 11 Bolivian Mennonites were rebaptized as Witnesses in 2001 and "more have taken this step" since then. But Giesbrecht says he knows of only one family of converts, adding that Mennonite Central Committee workers in Bolivia have developed a brochure for Old Colony Mennonites to shore up defences against proselytization.

Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals and Mormons have also tried to at-

tract members of Mennonite colonies in Mexico. "But people didn't react," says Abram Siemens, who has a Low German-language radio program among the colonies near Cuauhtemoc.

In fact, he says a Pentecostal who tried to start a church is now part of Blumenau Mennonite Church, a German-speaking congregation formally affiliated with the General Conference Mennonite Church. "I don't think he knew there were churches here," Siemens says.

—Rich Preheim

A longer version of this article originally appeared in Mennonite Weekly Review.

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Crystal City, Man.

Rural churches long to remain 'vibrant'

What happens to rural churches when their congregants' harvests are discouraging, when grain and cattle markets are depressed, when grain elevators are torn down, when schools close and people move away?

Depopulation, while having a critical impact on rural congregations, is not debilitating them. At a recent gathering of six rural Mennonite Church Manitoba churches, it became apparent that a spirit of creativity and enterprise is alive and well in these congregations.

On Nov. 5, Naomi Unger and Eric Olfert, who spearheaded the Vibrant Rural Churches Project in Saskatchewan in 2003, led a workshop for the Manitoba congregations at Crystal City Mennonite Church. MC Manitoba has now adopted the Saskatchewan project.

Representatives from Crystal City Mennonite, Trinity Mennonite in Mather, Arnaud Mennonite, Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite, Whitewater Mennonite in Boissevain, and Nordheim Mennonite in Winnipegosis, attended the workshop. Lowe Farm Bergthaler Mennonite and Graysville Mennonite, although unable to attend, are also participating in the project.

Prior to the workshop, each congregation made a thorough inventory of its strengths, challenges and image in the community.

"Like darning socks, we need to pull together the strong threads; we need to listen to our strengths," said Olfert.

In almost every one of the churches there was a growing commitment to working together with other denominations in the community. Despite some fears about compromising their faith, these churches are veering sharply from the historical position of "being separate," and are recognizing other churches in their communities who are facing the same issues. In some situations it involves sharing a youth pastor or programs and services.

In the Arnaud area, the churches have come together to form an inter-church neighbourhood coalition, which

is hosting a "Will to Survive" evening and other multi-denominational events.

In Mather, a town of about 50, the United and Mennonite churches sit across the road from each other. Each congregation has about 50 participants, which has prompted Trinity Mennonite to consider the possibility of doing things together.

All the churches expressed the need "to have a solid core, to know who we are, but be adaptable at the edges," Olfert said, adding that the Manitoba churches were not unlike their Saskatchewan counterparts in many ways. "In those communities where population loss is felt the strongest, [they] are finding new life in working closely together with churches of other denominations."

The participating congregations learned some encouraging things about themselves. "We were surprised at the extent of community involvement of individuals in our church," said one participant. "Our church really knows how to have fun."

Care groups play a significant role in many of the congregations.

Smallness necessitates everyone's involvement, which is a source of vitality. Intergenerational relationships develop naturally. At Nordheim Mennonite Church, a lot of mentoring happens with youths and adults through involvement at their summer camp program.

Challenges were identified. Because young people know they are not staying in the community, they often decide they don't want to be a member and are not choosing baptism. In some rural communities, the church is about the only institution left to respond to the emotional and psychological needs of the people left, raising questions about the role and responsiveness of the church.

To address the challenges and spur them on, the churches said they would like to see more urban and rural church partnerships and exchanges. The touring Missionfest, that brings Saskatchewan urban churches out to rural Saskatchewan to see firsthand their involvements, was something they would like to see in Manitoba.

—Evelyn Rempel Petkau



Lode King Industries photo

Lode King Industries of Winkler, Man., recently donated this 13-metre chassis to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). The chassis, valued at about \$12,000, will be used to transport material resources around the world. "It was a cooperative effort," said Wilf Unrau, manager of the MCC warehouse in Plum Coulee. "The employees donated their time and labour, while Lode King provided the materials. It's just tremendous!" Unrau said the chassis is an extremely valuable asset for the warehouse, which makes door-to-door deliveries of material aid and other resources from Manitoba to places such as Ukraine, Bosnia and Sudan. The donation from Lode King allows "more flexibility in packing our containers, and we can load them directly into the chassis." Vice-president and general manager of Lode King Industries, Lloyd Elias, said he became aware of the need for a chassis when he was volunteering at the MCC warehouse. Employees at Lode King were eager to help. "MCC is an organization that helps people all over the world," said Elias. "We saw [building the chassis] as one way to help locally."

—MCC release by Elmer Heinrichs

Baghdad, Iraq

Hostage deadline passes: Fate of CPT workers unknown

The Christian Peacemakers Teams' website opens with Jesus' injunction in Matthew 5 to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." That call was brought closer to home for the Toronto- and Chicago-based human rights organization following the kidnapping of four of its members—including two Canadians—at gunpoint in Baghdad on Nov. 26.

The four CPTers—James Loney of Toronto, former Montrealer Harmmeet Singh Sooden (now living in New Zealand), Briton Norman Kember and American Tom Fox—were taken by the formerly unknown Swords of Righteousness Brigade after the peacemakers left a meeting with Sunni Muslim clerics. The kidnapers took the four, claiming they were spies and not peacemakers. They demanded the release of all Iraqi prisoners being held by American and British forces by Dec. 8 or they threatened to execute the four; the deadline was extended to Dec. 10. As of *Canadian Mennonite's* press deadline on Dec. 13, no further word on the fate of the CPT hostages was available.

Since news of their capture was made public, prayer vigils and pleas for the safe release of the four CPTers—as well as all Iraqi prisoners—have been held around the world, including dozens across Canada.

Canadian Mennonite University

Costly peacemaking

Mr. (Norman) Kember was aware of the danger of travelling in Iraq without armed protection.

When asked before he went if he was brave, Mr Kember said: "I don't know. I've done a lot of writing and talking about peacemaking.

"I've demonstrated, you name it I've been on it, but I feel that's what I'd call cheap peacemaking."

And when asked if going to Iraq could be more costly, he replied: "It could be."

—news.bbc.co.uk reports

students and faculty joined together for a prayer service on Dec. 2.

"We have a strong connection to CPT here at CMU," said John Dyck, who directs the student-led Peace and Social Awareness Committee. "We have supported CPT in the past and...we support what they are trying to do in Iraq."

CMU faculty also issued a statement on behalf of the four. "[T]hese men...are not enemies of the people of Iraq; but rather, friends of men, women and children in Iraq concerned to further the cause of peace and justice through non-violent means.... CPT is certainly not a spy organization; nor does it engage in proselytizing. Its core mandate is to work non-violently on behalf of those who have been harmed by violence."

Mennonite Church Canada stands in solidarity with CPT and its missing team members. In a prepared statement, MC Canada leaders stated, "CPT has worked in Iraq since 2002, seeking to put a human face on a great human tragedy. We have no reason to believe that the missing individuals are anything other than committed peacemakers, who chose to risk their



CPT photo

This unidentified vigil calls for the release of all captives of the Iraqi war.

lives by working for peaceful solutions to conflict as a counterpoint to the way soldiers choose to risk their lives for violent solutions to conflict."

Muslim leaders from Canada and Palestine, among others, have called on the CPTers' captors to release them, maintaining they are there on a peaceful mission.

Greg Rollins, a member of Langley (B.C.) Mennonite Fellowship, is a colleague of the hostages in Iraq. The CPT Iraq Team issued their first direct appeal to the kidnapers on Dec. 6, expressing their concern for their friends, while upholding the dignity of those who took them and condemning the U.S. and British occupying forces in Iraq.

Someone to take care of you

The following comments by Christian Peacemaker Teams member Jim Loney are excerpted from his chapter in Getting in the Way: Stories from Christian Peacemaker Teams, Herald Press, Waterloo, Ont., 2005. They speak of his fear in the face of uncertainty, his faith in God, and his care and concern for the Iraqi people.

Dec. 16, 2002.

The Farm, Durham, Ont.—Interview

The reporter begins with a predictable question. "Why do you want to go to Iraq?"

Putting my CPT training to good use, I have a sound-bite ready. "Just as soldiers are asked to sacrifice their lives for the state, as a Christian who believes in nonviolence, I believe that I must be prepared to make the same sacrifice."

"We are living in dark moral times," I add. "A time of lies and war, and lies to justify war." As the reporter scribbles I think, damn that sounded good.

Dec. 23, 2002.

Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.—Doubts

When I decided to join CPT, I generally accepted the idea of laying down my life for peace. But am I ready to do that now? What if I am asked to pay some terrible cost? Am I prepared to embrace whatever happens, regardless of what that may be? I force myself to admit it: I am afraid.

The next morning, I attend Mass with my father. He goes every day. The words of consecration are like a blow to the stomach. *This is my body, broken for you. Do this in memory of me.*

“While we believe the action of kidnapping is wrong, we do not condemn you as people,” the statement reads. “We recognize the humanity in each person, and respect it very much.”

The statement continues: “We believe there needs to be a force that counters all the resentment, the fear, the intimidation felt by the Iraqi people. We are trying to be that force: to speak for justice, to advocate for the human rights of Iraqis, to look at an Iraqi face and say, ‘My brother, my sister.’”

Acknowledging the difficult circumstances they now find themselves in, Toronto CPT spokesman William Payne said they are “called to see the people holding [the four] as hosts,” and not as kidnappers. “Hospitality is a deep belief of the Muslim faith,” he said. “We are called to see their humanity, to see them as brothers and not to demonize them.”

In a letter to friends just before he left for Iraq on Nov. 17, Loney asked for their prayers, concluding with a sentiment expressed in one form or another by the other three: “It’s a real joy and privilege to be part of this work, this gospel experiment in applied nonviolence, of imagining and making possible a world without war.”

The world—and their friends—are still waiting to see if they are allowed to continue with the experiment.

—**Ross W. Muir**, with files from CPT and Mennonite World Conference

Not to fight or flee: A statement by Tom Fox

If I am not to fight or flee in the face of armed aggression, be it the overt aggression of the army or the subversive aggression of the terrorist, then what am I to do?

“*Stand firm against evil*” (Matthew 5:39, translated by Walter Wink) seems to be the guidance of Jesus and Gandhi in order to stay connected with God. Here in Iraq I struggle with that second form of aggression. [H]ow do you stand firm against a car-bomber or a kidnapper? Clearly the soldier disconnected from God needs to have me fight. Just as clearly the terrorist disconnected from God needs to have me flee. Both are willing to kill me using different means to achieve the same end—that end being to increase the parasitic power of Satan within God’s good creation....

I am to stand firm against the kidnapper as I am to stand firm against the soldier. Does that mean I walk into a raging battle to confront the soldiers? Does that mean I walk the streets of Baghdad with a sign saying, “American for the taking”? No to both counts. But if Jesus and Gandhi are right, then I am asked to risk my life, and if I lose it to be as forgiving as they were when murdered by the forces of Satan.

—CPTnet release, Nov. 30

Strengthened by my father: A statement by Tom Fox’s daughter

My father made a choice to travel to Iraq and listen to those who are not heard. His belief that peaceful resolutions can be found to every conflict has been tested time and again, but he remains committed to that ideal, heart and soul.

This is very difficult for my brother and me. We want to be with our dad again. I didn’t want him to go to a country where his American citizenship could potentially overshadow his peaceful reasons for being there. But this is who my father is and I am strengthened by it. I write this with the utmost respect and agreement with what he stands for.

I love my father. I am so thankful to have been raised by such a loving, honest, gentle man who continues to teach me the importance of living by my principles.

—CPTnet release, Dec. 1

After Communion, kneeling next to my father, I cover my face and pray. “God, I’m going to do this, even though I’m unsure. You’re going to have to help me.”

Dec. 30, 2002. Baghdad—Meeting

The government could decide at any time to remove us from the country. Or, at any time there could be a coup. This is probably the most dangerous scenario for us. We could be arrested, held hostage, the whole society thrown into the chaos of civil war.

Jan. 1, 2003. Baghdad—Rosary

When I get back to my hotel room, I collapse onto my bed and pull out my rosary. The first prayer is the Apostle’s Creed. “I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth....” As I go around the rosary, bead by bead, I think how audacious, how futile to profess faith in God in the face of this suffering—this

evil, needless, unnecessary, *caused* suffering.

Then I think, perhaps this is the only thing that I can do, hold onto this circle of beads and profess it: *I believe in God*. And because I believe, everything within me must cry out: No to death. Yes to life. Again and again, around and around.

Jan. 5, 2003. Basrah—Night

It has been a frustrating day. Our initial plan was to visit Safwan, a town near the Kuwaiti border that is polluted with depleted uranium. Zayde has been there one too many times. “Do you know, there was an Italian journalist who bent down to the ground to pick up something. Then he scratched his face. He got cancer in his cheek which spread to his bones.” We would have to wear disposable overalls, masks so as not to breathe in any dust. Our Iraqi drivers would be at risk. We decided not to go.



CPT photo

Jim Loney passes off a peace dove to a friend for release at a multi-faith walk for the release of captives.

Tajikistan

Ex-Soviet farmers get help with fruit

In Tajikistan's Ferghana valley, thousands of acres of apricot trees were heavy with fruit, ready to be picked. Fruit farmers John Janzen of Ontario and Eugene Enns of California were impressed with the potential harvest.

But at a nearby processing plant, last year's canned apricots told a different story. The end product was blemished and mushy. The old Soviet-style canning line was rusting and decrepit.

"Nothing edible can come from this equipment," Enns concluded.

It sounded harsh, but this candid assessment would help determine what had happened in the short distance between the luscious tree fruit, only an hour down the road, and the dismal product emerging from the other end. It would help Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) decide how best to help Tajik growers compete on a global scale.

Tajikistan is a small mountainous country bordering China, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Until 1991, it was part of the former Soviet Union, but even then it was the poorest of the republics. Civil war and economic collapse reduced 84 percent of the population of 6.4 million people to poverty.

With the demise of the Soviet system—where markets were "secure" and there was no need to be competitive—and the rise of Asian and Eastern European markets, Tajik farmers now need to compete with better quality imports of fresh, dried and processed fruits that are produced more efficiently in Turkey and China. Only if they can get up to international standards, can they compete with imports as well as participate in a huge market in Eastern and Western Europe.

Last year, MEDA undertook a four-year \$4.5 million US contract with the Canadian International Development

Agency (CIDA) to alleviate poverty by boosting fruit and vegetable production in northern Tajikistan. The first task was to help thousands of small farmers adapt to a market economy.

The primary purpose of this year's visit by MEDA members with expertise in fruit production and manufacturing was to examine the situation and offer counsel on setting priorities. The group followed fruit and vegetables from the farm to the market, to see why good produce does not translate into a good product.

The experts found problems at all levels. Most obvious was old, hulking and rusting fruit processing equipment left over from the Soviet regime. All had a part to play in a dramatic "land to jar" drop in quality.

There was a great deal of advice given to Tajik farmers and processors on new varieties, how to avoid consistently early frost damage, pruning techniques, harvesting methods and storage. MEDA members shared their stories and explained what it takes to do business in a free market economy.

"It is important that the business pay taxes and be transparent in its management to all," said tour member Marty Friesen, manager of a machining company in Manitoba. "It is also important that government play its role in a predictable and fair manner. This type of partnership between private business and government is key to our success."

These were unusual words in the Tajik setting, where there is huge mistrust between business and government.

The tour underlined the importance of direct contact. One local cannery owner said, "Three years ago, I would not have believed that we would be sitting at a table with businesspeople from Canada and the U.S., learning and seeing what we need to do to be more successful."

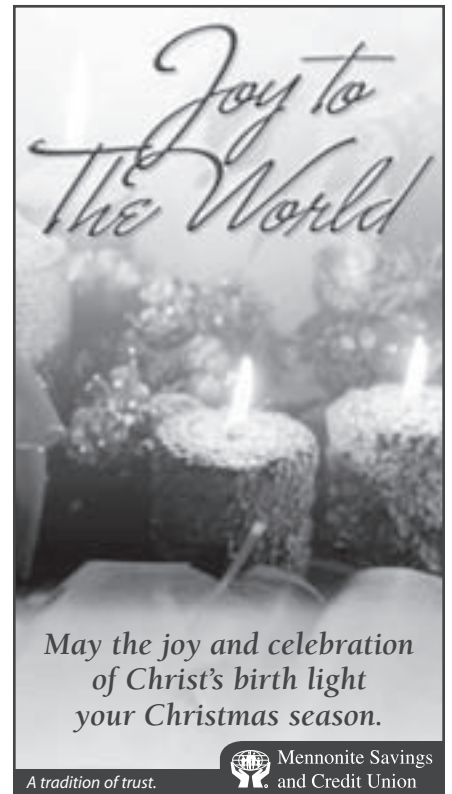
—MEDA release by **Ed Epp**

Tajik farmers now need to compete with better quality imports of fresh, dried and processed fruits....



MEDA photo

Ontario fruit farmer John Janzen, left, and Eugene Enns from California inspect fruit in Tajikistan that, while lush and plentiful, is often ruined during processing with aging, rusted canning equipment.



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Winnipeg

MCC addresses foreign policy parliamentary committee

In late October, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, which was holding hearings in Winnipeg as part of a cross-country tour. Don Peters, MCC Canada's executive director, and Bill Janzen of the MCC Ottawa Office urged particular attention to two areas: international relief and development, and preventing war and building peace.

Canada has taken a number of positive actions over the years, according to Peters and Janzen, but they asked for additional steps to increase aid, focus all aid on poverty reduction, make trade fair and equitable, provide more debt relief, and integrate international development priorities into all areas of policy.

They expressed appreciation that Canada's security policies went beyond the concept of "state security" and embraced that of "human security," meaning the security of people in relation to needs such as food, health and education. They also stressed the need for more action—at the UN and in other multilateral forums—for disarmament in relation to both nuclear weapons and small arms, since the former continue to pose an ominous

threat and the latter claim a half-million lives per year, most of them in Africa.

Peters and Janzen took the opportunity to stress the importance of strong "corporate social responsibility" regulations for Canadian companies operating abroad. They urged action on global environmental and climate change issues, a response to refugee needs, promotion of religious freedom, and investment in diplomatic work. The two spokespersons also asked for greater flexibility regarding visas in order to allow church leaders from developing countries to visit Canada and speak in churches here.

MCC appeared before the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs on behalf of supporting churches in Canada.

The Parliamentary Committee has indicated interest in hearing from individual citizens directly via its website: www.parl.gc.ca/faae-e.
—MCC Canada release

Winnipeg

Thiessen lectures encourage theological curiosity

The need for a profoundly Christian intellectualism was the topic of the 28th annual J.J. Thiessen lectures, held Oct. 18 to 19 at Canadian Mennonite University.

Speaker Paul J. Griffiths, professor of Catholic studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, presented four

lectures on the theme of "Curiosity: Towards a theology of intellectual appetite."

According to Griffiths, a curious person inhabits a world of objects that can be owned and controlled. A studious person, on the other hand, inhabits a world of gifts. And since Christians believe that all of creation is a freely given gift, our intellectual pursuits must begin with studiousness, with gratitude and delight—something that will change both the way we know, and what we seek to know. A studious person, Griffiths said, seeks to know those things that better reveal God to us.

Griffiths ended his last lecture with a list of four important features that would be found in a Christian institution that is more interested in studiousness than curiosity:

- All study would be a form of love-making, an approach made possible only if all study is framed by prayer.
- The institution would have the courage to define its own questions and even its own programs of study.
- All programs of study should be accounted for, and directed by, theology, since theology is the area of study most explicitly responsive to God, and gives us an account of what the other arts are.
- Every student and every teacher at a Christian institution must be encouraged to find primary and direct loyalty to the community of the baptized.

"Some Christian post-secondary institutions make real efforts to do these things," Griffiths concluded. "If more did, then of course...there could be real transformations in the intellectual life of the church, and thereby, also of the world, though exactly what these transformations would be like, only God knows."

—CMU release by **Julia Thiessen**

'[T]heology is the area of study most explicitly responsive to God, and gives us an account of what the other arts are.'

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Kitchener, Ont.

Rockway struggles with lower-than-expected enrolment

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate is facing a serious budget deficit this year, mainly as a result of lower-than-expected student numbers, said administrators at the school association's annual meeting on Oct. 4.

Going into the summer, Rockway expected a student population of about 440, but by September, 17 registered students had chosen to attend other high schools. Some of the students who chose not to come to Rockway made that decision for financial reasons or because they wanted more program options at a larger school, but the reason given most often was that the students wanted to be with their old friends.

In an effort to deal with the grim budget realities, the school hopes to attract more students for the second semester. Because income from tuition

provides 82 percent of all budgeted income, the loss of several students will result in a proposed deficit of more than \$180,000 on a budget of \$3.8 million.

If Rockway is not able to overcome this trend of lower student numbers, changes will need to be made to program and staffing.

This decline in enrolment is a general trend across the province, according to the Ontario Federation of Independent Schools.

Another area of concern is that the number of Mennonite students at Rockway is down slightly from last year. When the local public high school is free, it can be hard for parents or congregations to commit themselves to pay for a faith-based education.

In spite of the need for belt-tightening, Rockway is having a very positive year. Once again, students are offered a full slate of athletic, music and drama opportunities on top of their academic program.

At the annual meeting, three board members were recognized for their service. Margaret Janzen, David

Seyler and Peter Paetkau all served the maximum six years. Carol Weber will also be leaving the board after serving one term. New board members are Patti Hobler, Carolyn Musselman, Victor Krahn and Andrew Rourke.

—**Barb Draper**

Winnipeg

MEDA joins team to help Gulf States

Business development skills will soon be added to the mix of ways Mennonites are helping the Gulf States recover from recent disasters.

A new initiative teams Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to aid long-term economic recovery in areas hit by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

MEDA's role, expected to get underway early in the new year, will be coordinated with the efforts of existing economic development authorities, chambers of commerce and community development corporations.

MEDA expects to:

- Strengthen businesses to restart the economy and re-establish jobs, including brokering business information, consulting and helping access capital;
- Establish microbusiness programs to start new businesses. MEDA will work with suitable local partners to offer training, lending and support programs using the ASSETS Plus+ model; and,
- Rebuild community organizations through training and consulting, to strengthen governance, planning, management and program delivery.

"We anticipate establishing a regional office, most likely in the New Orleans area," says Rachel Hess, MEDA's director of community economic development. "I hope we can also provide services to a number of communities along the Mississippi Gulf Coast and into southwestern Alabama."

—MEDA release by **Wally Kroeker**

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The Program

The Master of Theological Studies (MTS) is a two-year interdisciplinary degree program designed for students preparing for further graduate work or pastoral ministry, or for personal enrichment. Grebel's MTS program draws on the College's larger academic strengths, employing the disciplines of theology, the social sciences and the humanities. The Ministry Option of the MTS program also draws on the wealth of experience and training of persons primarily engaged in the ministry of the church.

The Need

The need for trained church leadership is critical. Mennonite Church Eastern Canada Leadership Commission chair, Leroy Shantz, observes that "nurturing gifts for leadership in our congregations and church institutions is a key investment. The partnership between MCEC and Grebel in the MTS program is a wonderful way of working together in the task of pastoral training for our churches."

Grebel is committed to responding to this need with graduate programs designed to train pastors and church leaders. Since the MTS program was initiated in 1988, it has graduated 47 students who now serve the church and its institutions in many ways.

In 1997 MCEC asked Conrad Grebel to add a ministry component to its MTS program to help prepare people for pastoral ministry. To assist the College with the expanded program, MCEC offered to work with the College to establish a \$1 million endowment in honour of Ralph and Eileen Lebold. Over \$500,000 has been collected in gifts and pledges to date. The Lebold Endowment for Leadership Training supports the Ministry Option of the MTS program - e.g., Coordinator of Leadership Formation, courses in pastoral education, supervised experience in ministry, internships, etc. The Ministry program is being developed in cooperation with Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, IN.



"The uniqueness and flexibility of Grebel's MTS program accounts for its ongoing growth and vitality. The Ministry Option of the MTS program offers a rich academic program for students already in pastoral ministry as well as for those considering pastoral ministry. Students are challenged to reflect on their own experience and become better equipped to minister in settings that also reflect diverse perspectives."

- Marianne Mellinger
Coordinator of Leadership Formation
Supervisor of MTS Ministry Option

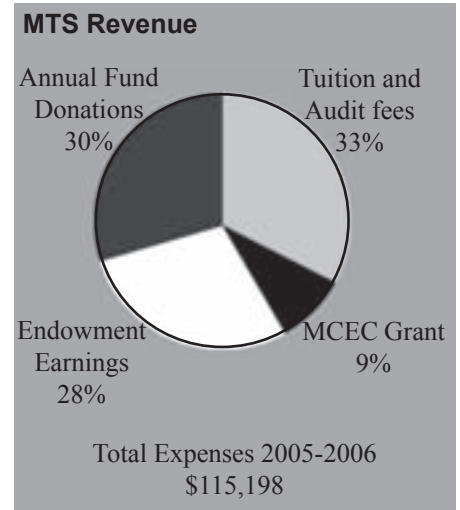
Enrolment

Grebel's Master of Theological Studies (MTS) program has 69 students enrolled. The program has grown rapidly in recent years. Fall term enrolment stands at the equivalent of 25 full-time students. Approximately three quarters of MTS students are in the Ministry Option.



Above: Tom Yoder Neufeld, MTS Director, leads the Pastor's Theology Seminar on Larry Hurtado's *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*.

Left: Ellie Huebner, an MTS student, was recently awarded the Women of MCEC Theological Studies Award. Ellie is enjoying her studies, and says, "I love the studies, the readings, the classes and mostly the dialogue with my colleagues both within and outside the classroom setting. Connecting with one another, gaining in knowledge and resources and continued self discipline will assist me in my future goals," says Ellie. In May 2006, Ellie will begin serving as Pastor at Shantz Mennonite Church near Baden, Ontario.



Kherson, Ukraine

More than a ticket to heaven

“So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying his voice, and by holding fast to him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

On a recent morning, in a small village in this predominantly Orthodox nation, a Mennonite pastor stood to offer simple words of comfort at the funeral service of an alcoholic suicide victim who had rejected God.

Despite the tragedy of the occasion, the pastor's presence there represented a small sign of hope in a culture where hope all too often proves elusive. And although change comes slowly in the lives of a people wearied by a host of hardships, one man's

loving response to another man's act of hate has planted seeds of hope that may, in time, flourish and produce fruit.

The two men were neighbours. No one, not even Vadim (a pseudonym), knew exactly why he smashed the window of mission worker Cliff Dueck's car, tore off the side mirror, and released the parking brake to send the car careening into the gate.

Maybe it was the alcohol. Vadim was often drunk. Maybe it was the rage he carried inside him, a rage that seethed at everything in his world: God, life, other people. Himself, perhaps, most of all. More than likely, it was some combination of the two.

Whatever it was, the last thing he expected from Dueck in response was love and forgiveness. But that's exactly what he got.

Dueck, who since 2002 has served in Ukraine under Mennonite Church

Canada Witness/Mennonite Mission Network, set his own feelings aside when he thought of Vadim's wife and two teenage children.

“I thought, ‘It's just a car. His family is suffering from his violence a lot more than I am. Why wouldn't I want to stand with them in their suffering?’” Dueck said. “So I prayed for him. I had peace, and they did not. I think they noticed that.”

Dueck didn't file a police report. Instead, he made time for Vadim whenever he needed to talk, sometimes calming him down in the middle of a drunken rampage.

But in a part of the world that still struggles after decades of Soviet occupation, changes in individual lives happen slowly. With a little more than 29 suicides per 100,000 people every year, Ukraine has the eighth highest suicide rate in the world, according to British Broadcasting Corp. figures,

From pride to humble service:

A Ukrainian Mennonite pastor's story

As a journalist in Ukraine, Victor Kuleshov took great pride in seeing his byline in the paper. He lived in a world separated from God, in an exclusive circle revolving around money and self-centredness. By Ukrainian standards, Kuleshov was doing quite well: he had disposable income and could purchase what he needed or wanted.

Yet he felt a great emptiness. Restless, Kuleshov left journalism and worked at a series of unfulfilling jobs, falling deeper into despair. Finally, he was struck with an inexplicable urge to call an aunt and invite himself to join her in church. It was here that Kuleshov began his exploration of faith.

After graduating from Zaporozhye Bible College, he served as a pastor at Central Baptist Church in Zaporozhye and later returned to the Bible college to work full-time. Most recently, Kuleshov was commissioned as interim pastor of the Mennonite church in Zaporozhye.

“I have found the way, the truth and the life,” Kuleshov said during his installation testimony. “I have come forward to the pulpit, repented and given my life to the Lord. Now I am happy in my family and in my life serving on his field.”

It's people like Victor Kuleshov that make Arnie Neufeld optimistic about the future of the Ukrainian church. Neufeld, a volunteer at the Zaporozhye Bible College with support from his home congregation of Winkler (Man.) Berghthaler Mennonite Church and moral support from Mennonite Church Canada Witness, installed Kuleshov as pastor for a six-month interim position. “Victor is committed to the church, open to new ideas; he is reliable and very gifted,” Neufeld said.

Neufeld has witnessed the challenges of Ukrainian society firsthand during several stints of volunteer ministry in recent years. The transition from the former communist regime has been troublesome. Political instability and extensive social problems are among the many barriers present. One major concern is a lack of trust, embedded in Ukrainian society during the Soviet era, that has spilled over into the church.

Kuleshov's quest for faith is an example of the transformation possible when trust



Arnie Neufeld of Winkler, Man., right, installed Victor Kuleshov as pastor of the Mennonite church in Zaporozhye, Ukraine, earlier this year.

is placed in God and fellow believers. With people like Victor Kuleshov leading the faithful in Zaporozhye, Neufeld is confident the Ukrainian church will continue to grow stronger.

“The Mennonite Church has a real important role to play in the Ukraine,” Neufeld added. “Part of our story took place there, and to go back and share the faith with these people is a privilege and, I think, a responsibility that we have.”

—Jeff Enns

The author is a Canadian Mennonite University English major doing a practicum study experience with MC Canada's communications department.

Photo submitted by Trudi and Arnie Neufeld



Mennonite mission worker Cliff Dueck has served in Ukraine since 2002, working as the pastor of a small congregation. In addition, he administers a revolving-loan fund for Anabaptist entrepreneurs.

behind such other Eastern-bloc nations as Russia and Belarus. Ukraine's problems with alcoholism are equally well documented. The World Health Organization has called alcoholism "the single greatest public health crisis in modern Ukrainian history—unprecedented in this century."

Outwardly Vadim's behaviour changed little. But one day he suddenly announced that Dueck was going to conduct his funeral service. "I am going to go away for a very long time," he told Dueck. "Take care of my wife and children for me." A few days later, Vadim hanged himself in the family garage.

For Dueck, Vadim's funeral service presented another opportunity to demonstrate love and peace. "I selected Scripture texts that would be especially meaningful in that culture," he said. "I wanted to show them that there is something different about the Christian life. They think everybody goes to heaven, and it matters not at all what they do. It makes absolutely no difference what this person's life

Zaporozhye, Ukraine

Respite centre expands to 12 beds

Oct. 13 was a special day for the Mennonite Family Centre in Zaporozhye. A special dedication service—with Pastor Victor from the local Mennonite church giving the blessing—was held for the opening of a third apartment for the respite centre, expanding it from eight beds to 12.

Sponsored by the Mennonite Benevolent Society (Manitoba), the Mennonite Family Centre is dedicated to address the many needs of the elderly in Zaporozhye, a city of about a million people, located on the Dnepr River. The centre has matured over the past four years since Ann Goertzen of Winnipeg travelled to Zaporozhye to begin a visitation and home care program, working with the local Mennonite church from her apartment.

The centre now provides five types of service:

- A home care program, which provides care in the homes of people whose needs cannot be met by their own care providers;
- A 12-bed respite centre, where the most needy can come for a period of renewal and care for up to three months before returning to their own caregivers;
- A day program, which brings people who are able to the centre one day per week to socialize, have a bath or receive skin care;
- A training program for care providers; and,
- The shipment of medical equipment and supplies from Canada. Four shipments of used hospital beds and equipment, and unused supplies from Manitoba hospitals have now been sent to Zaporozhye.

was. Belief in God means merely that he exists."

In Ukraine, when people have funerals, they buy a piece of paper that is affixed to the deceased person's forehead.

"It's like their ticket into heaven," Dueck said.

Dueck wanted to show them that the Christian life means more. He selected a passage from Deuteronomy 30 because of its emphasis on the importance of making the right



Photo submitted by Louie Sawatzky

One of the day program clients has just had her bath, and is getting her hair combed and cared for by one of the care workers at the Centre. She is so proud to show off her long clean braid.

Currently, the Mennonite Family Centre provides service to more than a hundred people. While most are seniors, young people with disabilities are also served by the more than 20 trained local caregivers under Goertzen's direction.

Those receiving care see the Mennonite Family Centre—and those who support it—as an answer to their prayers.

This success of the centre is due to the participation and cooperation of Mennonite Central Committee; the Mennonite Centre of Moloshansk, Ukraine; the Friends of the Mennonite Centre in the Ukraine, who have raised the funds and paid for the supply shipments; International HOPE of Winnipeg, which began recycling medical equipment and supplies in Winnipeg; and the Christian Medical Association of Ukraine, part of the Baptist Church in Ukraine, which coordinates the distribution of the medical supplies.

—**Louie Sawatzky**

For more information, or to participate in this work in Ukraine, contact the author at louiesawatzky@aol.com.

choices in life. Passages from the New Testament (II Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:11-12) supported the idea that everyone will give an accounting of their life in the hereafter.

"Your life has to show that you believe in God," he said. "Several people said, 'I need to do something different. I need to think about that.' People took note.... It was one more act of love that I could show them."

—MC Canada release
by **Ann Graham Price**

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University of Waterloo photo by Chris Hughes

Mennonite author Rudy Wiebe, right, was granted an honorary doctor of letters degree by the University of Waterloo in October; conferring the degree was chancellor Mike Lazaridis, left. Wiebe is the author of nine novels, three collections of stories and other prose works, including (with Yvonne Johnson) the award-winning *Stolen Life: The Story of a Cree Woman*. Also receiving an honorary degree was 1975 graduate Peter Harder, deputy minister of foreign affairs, who was recognized for his many achievements as a public servant and for his help in shaping Canada's role on the international scene; 1993 grad Curwin Friesen, now president of the Manitoba-based Friesen's Corp, who was recently recognized by the *Globe and Mail* as one of Canada's "Top 40 under 40," received an arts achievement award.

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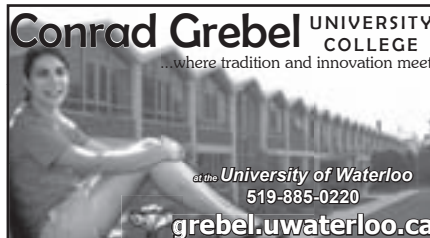
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Saskatoon

Bethany Manor hires spiritual care coordinator

It has been two years in the making, but on Nov. 20, Bethany Manor Seniors Housing officially welcomed Esther Patkau as its first spiritual care coordinator during an installation service in the fellowship centre.

Patkau, who was ordained in 1951, comes to the role with many years experience in ministry and is well known by the residents. For the past three years, she has led weekly German Bible studies and monthly worship services at Bethany Manor. She has also volunteered as a hospital chaplain at two of the three civic hospitals and helped as a spiritual caregiver at the Saskatoon Cancer Centre.

During the installation Patkau spoke of the process that led her to accept the role. “Before submitting my application, I prayed long and hard,” she said. In turn, she acknowledged God gave her a deep peace and assurance to move ahead.

Patkau was also honest about human limitations. “The responsibilities [of the job] are greater than I can presume to fulfill,” she admitted while reaffirming her sincere belief that God would walk with her.

The spiritual care coordinator position addresses several concerns brought forward by tenants and noticed by staff. Initially, it began with a need for clear communication between tenants and the administration, and eventually grew to include a need for visitation and a worship leadership for Sunday morning services for those who cannot get out to attend churches in the community anymore.

“About two years ago, we found out that various people [from Bethany Manor] had been hospitalized, and one, in fact, had passed away, and we didn’t know about it,” said David Ratzlaff, executive director of Bethany Manor. “Bethany was just getting too big,” he said of the Mennonite complex that is now home to more than 300 residents in the Tower, the Villa,



Photo by Karin Fehderau

A circle of prayer during the installation of Esther Patkau, centre, as spiritual care coordinator at Saskatoon’s Bethany Manor included, from left to right, Bob Sawatzky, Arnie Fehderau, Peter Funk, Justina Peters (hidden), David Ratzlaff, Mary Dyck and Helen Janzen.

Bethany Court and Bethany Manor.

“As we got further into the process [of defining the new position], we realized there was a lot of time involved,” said Ratzlaff. Getting a volunteer to fill all the needs expressed seemed out of the question.

But a survey of the Bethany Manor community indicated that, while 68 percent of the residents agreed that having a spiritual care coordinator was important, almost all reported a reticence to hire someone if it meant an increase to the monthly condo or rental fees. It was better to get the money for the position through Sunday morning offerings or through a foundation, the survey

Continued on page 30



Photo courtesy of Mavis Dyck

The Pembina Threshermen’s reunion west of Winkler, Man.—with its parades, demonstrations, food and activities—provided the setting for local history displays of village, family and church. The event was organized and coordinated by Mavis Dyck, vice-chair of the local history committee, a sub-committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. “The atmosphere of the reunion at the general store set off our story—the celebration of the 130 years of West Reserve history,” Dyck said, adding, “The building buzzed with excitement...with many visitors who never attend our spring or fall workshops.” The Pembina Threshermen’s Museum, where the reunion was held, also has a school, church, CPR station, barn, home, and several buildings housing aging machinery, like the steam tractor pictured.

Bethany *From page 29*

suggested.

In the end, the manor's worship committee suggested the hiring could be done in the context of a one-year pilot project and that it would fund the position.

The job description for the half-time spiritual care coordinator changed considerably, to make it more manageable. Rather than do all of the ministry herself, Patkau is expected to train volunteers to do the visitation and counselling of lonely seniors.

"That's where the 'coordinator' part comes in," explained Ratzlaff, adding that Patkau can also help strengthen ties between administration and tenants and between tenants and the manor's supporting churches.

The position will be reviewed after one year.

—**Karin Fehderau**

Leamington, Ont.

80 years of church history celebrated

Led by the Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association, Mennonites in southwestern Ontario gathered at United Mennonite Educational Institute last month to honour God for his work among them. What started with several churches in the 1920s has now grown to 22, stretching from Windsor to Dresden, and from Blenheim to Croton.

On Oct. 15, association chair Paul Warkentin presented a slide show of the way life used to be in the counties. A pantomime skit depicting the arrival of Russian immigrants evoked a chorus of giggles. A demonstration of the old cream separa-

tor and a "blood-letting" operation showed that life in the past was not always as pleasant as people are wont to describe it. Appropriately, lunch consisted of *Plumi Moos* and *Schinkji Fleesch*.

In the afternoon, viewers watched videos of the emigration of Mennonites from Manitoba to Mexico. A joyous re-enactment of a 1930s Mennonite wedding had the spectators nodding periodically in affirmation that this really was the way it had been.

Ernie Neufeld told of the challenges Mennonites faced in the post-World War II immigration, and Aggie Neufeld, widow of the late Rev. J.C. Neufeld, spoke of her deep devotion to the huge church directory that contained every man, woman and child's name in the church; helping to keep the directory current has been a sacred trust for her.

The next day had a more worshipful tone, punctuated by Paul Dueck's *Soli Deo Gloria* Singers, and Mary Klassen and singers from the New Reinland church. Sally Epp, Vic Winters and Bill Wiebe shared about the experiences of immigrants who arrived in the area during various periods of Mennonite history.

In conjunction with the weekend celebration, Astrid Koop, chair of the association's publications committee, compiled a 230-page book, *80 Years: Our Country Canada*. Each of the 22 Mennonite churches in Essex and Kent counties is represented in the many photos and stories, written by church members from every walk of life. The book is available from the Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association, 31 Pickwick Drive, Leamington, ON N8H 4T5.

—**Jake N. Driedger**

Louise Mulcaster, right, purchases her copy of 80 Years: Our Country Canada from Harold Thiessen during the Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association's event in Leamington.

Photo by Walter Koop

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St. Catharines, Ont.

Congregation remembers 60 years of growth

St. Catharines United Mennonite Church celebrated its 60th anniversary on Nov. 20, six decades after a small beginning in 1945. The first service was actually held three years before the church's official founding by Rev. Wilhelm Schellenberg in a hall on St. Paul St. on July 4, 1942, with 15 people in attendance.

After the morning service and a fellowship lunch, an afternoon of nostalgia brought back memories to many past and present congregants who attended. Continuing in the long musical heritage, the new praise and worship choir—under the direction of David Chubb—presented a variety of songs with lyrics shown on a recently acquired screen, which also projected pictures of church activities over the years.

Betty Penner, one of the congregation's historians, treated everyone to a collection of sometimes forgotten traditions and procedures.

It was a few years before women were allowed to vote, and even longer until they could preach from the pulpit; women also seldom spoke at membership meetings during those early years. For a long time, women and men sat in pews on opposite sides of the sanctuary. In those days, only a bishop, or *altester*, could conduct baptisms or communion.

Abraham Reimer, who attended the anniversary service, was introduced as the last of the deacons who were ordained for life. The custom of life-long ordination of deacons gave way to three-year terms, and later, two-year terms. Currently, women deacons are in the majority.

St. Catharines United Mennonite has three remaining charter members, all of whom are women.

The dress code has changed over the years to a more casual style, especially during the warmer months. Women's hats, which were once a "must," have nearly disappeared. Men's white shirts have given way to various colours.

During the church's early years,

pastors were not financially compensated; many of them earned their living as teachers.

Nobody can accuse Mennonites of lacking a sense of humour, as a church parking attendant some years ago proved. He made the owners of older cars park on the east side of the building and the newer ones on the west side, in full view of the road. This parking system has since been abandoned.

Only once in 60 years has the weather—a snowstorm—cancelled a service. However, the hardy minister

walked to the church and five stalwart members also showed up.

Several building changes took place over time, including enlarging the front entrance and installing an elevator. Alterations were also made to some Sunday school rooms, which were once filled with more than 300 English and German students.

Separate services were later introduced for English and German members. Currently, the English service is undergoing a transformation; the new "blended" service introduces the younger members to a praise and worship-oriented service.

In conclusion, Penner noted that on more than one occasion tempers flared at church membership meetings, although apologies were later made. Church board chair and moderator Peter Huebert encouraged members

to be open to new suggestions and to settle differences through compromise and peaceful discussions. Noted one church member, it is possible to work together in love, as the last bazaar proved.

Other anniversary speakers included deacon chair Peter Thiessen and interim lead minister Grant Gordon.
—Henry Hildebrandt

**Only once in 60 years
has the weather...
cancelled a service.**

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**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

Columbus, Ga.

Ontario youths learn about peacemaking

What does it mean to be a Christian peacemaker in today's world and how can we proclaim Christ's teachings in both word and action? This was the challenge put to participants to reflect upon during a five-day learning trip and peace witness to Georgia last month.

The trip was organized by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and involved 10 participants, including four students from Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, five young adults from MC Eastern Canada congregations, and a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) Ontario.

The purpose of the trip was to participate in the 16th annual gathering at Fort Benning, a U.S. military

base in Columbus, home to the former School of the Americas (SOA, now renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation). The institute brings military personnel from Latin America to the United States to be trained in combat and counter-insurgency.

Most of the crowd carried white crosses, inscribed with the names of Latin American SOA victims, which were then left at the gate of the military base.

After listening to speakers and survivors, and singing songs of peace and justice, the first day of the protest concluded for the MC Eastern Canada participants at a CPT reunion. This provided a chance for the group to learn more about CPT and to reflect on how participation in the vigil was rooted in Christ's call to be peacemakers.

The following day, the crowd began by singing and reciting a commitment to non-violence. This was then



Photo submitted by Matthew Bailey-Dick

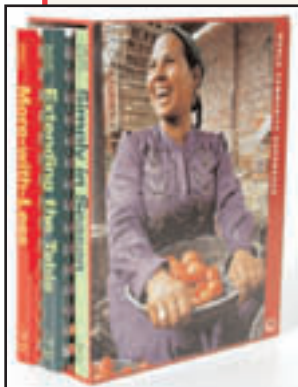
Ten Mennonite Church Eastern Canada young adults joined 19,000 of their counterparts in Georgia for a peace rally. Pictured from left to right: Dora-Marie Goulet, Rachel Collins, Eli Winterfeld, Amanda Poste and Sarah Libertini.

followed by a funeral march, led by a costumed group dressed in black and carrying coffins. Most of the crowd carried white crosses, inscribed with the names of Latin American SOA victims, which were then left at the gate of the military base. Each victim's name was read followed by the crowd responding, *Presente*, a Spanish word used to invoke remembrance.

Following the vigil, the MC Eastern Canada group reflected on this act of non-violence and proclamation of peace. Some members said they were inspired by the diversity of the crowd, with participants representing many different faiths, beliefs and backgrounds. Others drew inspiration from the sheer numbers—some 19,000 protesters—and the strength of their collective voice. Another highlight was the diversity of ways peace was expressed, including chanting, dancing, puppets, prayer and even a Mennonite hymn-sing.

Participants returned home from the trip with the challenge to continue the fight against injustice and the resolve to wage peace in everything that we do.

—Garrett Zehr



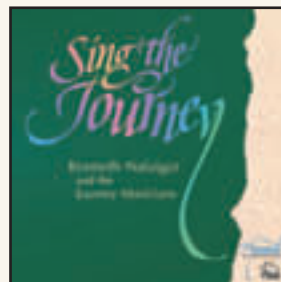
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People&Events

Winnipeg—As the newest member on Mennonite Church Canada's Finance Policy and Audit Committee (FPAC), Helen Kasdorf has been re-gifting her time and talent for a long time, as a response to the gifts she has received. Kasdorf, assistant vice-president of treasury and capital planning at Great West



Kasdorf

Life, has many years of experience as a finance committee member at the congregational level, making her very familiar with the struggles that congregations go through when discerning how to disperse their generosity to all levels of church ministry. A major role of FPAC, according to Kasdorf, is to offer sober second thought and close attention to the financial aspects of the work of MC Canada. "We kind of sit in the back pews to monitor and provide oversight," she says. Kasdorf sees the denominational church as central to the strength of the body of believers—whether expressed through Mennonite Central Committee or other institutions of the church. "Our conferences can feel very foreign to us until we get involved with them, whether it be through a committee, a camp, a program or a service. I believe that more of our Mennonite church members should get involved in our conferences. I think we would find that the conferences benefit from it as much as the individuals benefit." —MC Canada release

Goshen, Ind.—Educator, biblical theologian and church leader James Brenneman was introduced to the Goshen College campus at a special chapel event last month as the 111-year-old

institution's 16th president. A Goshen College alumnus, Brenneman has served since 1992 on the faculty at Episcopal Theological School at Claremont, Calif., in Old Testament scholarship and as an adjunct faculty member at Claremont School of Theology and, since 1995, as an adjunct professor of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif. "Goshen College was revolutionary in my life, especially in encouraging my passion for learning and my spiritual transformation, so I am particularly prepared to promote the college's Christ-centred mission," said Brenneman, who graduated in 1977 from Goshen College, where he pursued an interdisciplinary degree, combining Bible, biology and natural science. Brenneman is the author of *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Lessons from the Book of Deuteronomy*, published by Herald Press in 2004, and *Canons in Conflict: Negotiating Texts in True and False Prophecy*, published by Oxford University Press in 1997, and he has written numerous book chapters and articles on theological and church-related themes. —Goshen College release

Transitions

Births/Adoptions

Connery—to Rhonda and Glen, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., a son, Elijah Sage, Nov. 21.
Elias—to Chris and Frank, Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man., a daughter, Tessa Bryn, Oct. 1.
Gustafson—to Megan and Wayne, Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon, a son, Nohl Allen, Nov. 18.
Harder—to Karen and Quentin, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., a daughter, Alex Leanne, Oct. 28.
Hildebrandt—to RaeLynn and Mark, Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon, a son, Tyreese Rae, Nov. 28.
Mintenko—to Dayle (Friesen)

and John, Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., a daughter, Olivia Brianne, Oct. 23.
Neufeld—to Heather and Tim, Schoenfelder Mennonite, St. Francois Xavier, Man., a son, Sylas, Oct. 17.

Reimer—to Erin Braun (Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.) and Micah (Rockway Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.), a daughter, Evelyn Grace Braun, Oct. 27.

Reimer—to Krista and James, Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man., a daughter, Jamie Lynne, Aug. 25.

Schlosser—to Jeanette and Wayne Funk, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., a daughter, Odessa Rose, Sept. 7.

Schroeder Kipfer—to Anita and Bryan, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., a daughter, Julia Ruth Grace, Nov. 22.

Verwey—to Heather and Christopher, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., a daughter, Haley Natasha, Sept. 29.

Wahl—to Rachel (Klippenstein) and Ryan, Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., a daughter, Dayna Grace, Oct. 8.

Wright—to Amanda and Aaron, Coaldale Mennonite, Alta., a daughter, Karley Brenda, Nov. 2.

Marriages

Arts-Reimer—Bradley and Andrea (Emmanuel Mennonite, Winkler, Man.), at Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Oct. 8.

Boulange-Redekop—Anders and Robbyn, Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man., Nov. 5.

Friesen-Friesen—Peter and Rita (Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.), in B.C., Nov. 12.

Gerbrandt-Oliver—Hartley (Altona Mennonite, Man.) and Michelle, in Brandon, Man., Oct. 15.

Giesbrecht-Waddell—Richard and Jennifer, Coaldale Mennonite, Alta., Oct. 29.

Neufeld-Todd—Helmut and Lois, Whitewater Mennonite, Boissevain, Man., Nov. 19.

Sawatzky-Forsshaw—Gord and Tara, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg, Nov. 26.

Sawatzky-Houle—Kevin and Gabrielle, Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., Oct. 8.

Deaths

Burkholder—Paul, 80 (b. April 17, 1925), Bluesky Mennonite, Alta., Oct. 2.

Crystal—Rose, 77, Breslau Mennonite, Ont., Nov. 17.

Epp—Anna, 96, Zoar Mennonite, Waldheim, Sask., Oct. 29.

Friesen—Nellie, 78 (b. April 5, 1927), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., Oct. 22.

Friesen—Peter J., 92, Schoenfelder Mennonite, St. Francois Xavier, Man., Nov. 10.

Friesen—Ruth, 71, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., Oct. 13.

Neumann—Mary, 91, Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon, Nov. 18.

Penner—Margaret, 90 (b. Jan. 7, 1915), Steinbach Mennonite, Man., Dec. 3.

Teichgraf—Peter, 87 (b. Feb. 10, 1918), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Nov. 26.

Thiessen—Frank J., 79 (b. Oct. 9, 1925), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, Sept. 22.

Walde—Susie (nee Friesen), 99, Rosemary Mennonite, Alta., Sept. 8.

Baptisms

St. Agatha Mennonite, Ont.—Katie Gingerich, Beth Gingerich, Rachael Jantzi, Heather Russel, Terry Holst, Christa Holst, Judy Holst, Nov. 6.

Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg—Susie Fisher, Ken Kehler, Allison Peters, Nov. 27.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Transitions announcements within four months of the event. Please send all Transitions announcements by e-mail to transitions@canadianmennonite.org.

Mennonite Church Canada

Praying in the new year

Looking for a helpful guide to prayer in 2006? Check out "Reveling in God's Love: Praying with Psalm 36," Mennonite Church Canada's Season of Prayer guide available online at the www.mennonitechurch.ca website.

As the New Year begins, please pray for workers at home and abroad:

- The Colombia Mennonite Church, especially the Teusaquillo congregation in Bogotá. A year ago, Pastor Javier Segura was killed by a bomb. Now, another dedicated church worker, Gloria Lizzano, died accidentally enroute to pick up the church bulletins.
- Glenn Witmer, Witness worker in Israel, who likens the separation wall to the quiet spread of cancer. Pray for a wake-up call and for radical change.
- Bob and Fran Gerber, Witness workers in Chun Chon, South Korea, as they assist the ministry of the Jesus Village Church by teaching English to children.
- Newcomers/immigrants across Canada that we, as members of Christ's church who already feel at home here, might welcome them as neighbours, into our homes, churches and workplaces.

January Equipping highlights old and new

The January *Equipping* packet, now available in church offices, features many new resources that will help churches to shape and plan activities in the new year. Included are:

- 2006 MC Canada yearly wall calendar;
- New KidsPak—"In My Own Words"—that highlights literacy work in Burkina Faso and offers suggestions for

special offerings, Burkinabé snacks, games and songs;

- 2006 At home Lenten resource—"Write on our Hearts"; and,
- A celebration story from Cuba—"Assaulted with Exuberance"—by Janet Plenert.

In addition, there is a:

- Multicultural Ministry newsletter that highlights happenings in Hmong, Lao, Chinese, Vietnamese, Mandarin and Spanish churches and groups across Canada.

All items are available online at the www.mennonitechurch.ca website.

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

Prayer vigil held for CPT hostages

As Matthew Bailey-Dick opened a Dec. 1 prayer vigil in Waterloo on behalf of four Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) members taken hostage in Iraq, he lit a candle made by a university student in Baghdad, saying: "This Advent time of waiting takes on new meaning tonight.... This is our light of hope, our light of peace and of anticipation, even as we have these days of stress and anxiety."

The purpose of the vigil was simply stated: "We gather to pray for an end to the occupation of Iraq and the speedy release of these four CPTers."

A statement from the Christian Peacemaker organization was read, as well as several statements from family members of the hostages, expressing personal concern for their release, but also the hope that they have been able to explain their work in the cause of peace.

As an act of prayer, while music played, the hundred congregants were invited to light a vigil candle and place it on the altar. When the prayer time ended, Bailey-Dick said,

"Our vigil ends, but more work lies ahead of us." He concluded with a benediction: "Go in safety, for we cannot go where God is not. Go in love, for love alone endures. Go in peace, for peace is the gift of God. Go in hope, for the time of waiting will end."

Of the four hostages seized on Nov. 26, James Loney, a community worker in Toronto, is the best known in southwestern Ontario, having spoken to students at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener last year. Terry Schellenberg, the school's principal, said in an interview with the local newspaper, "Rockway hosts members of Christian Peacemaker Teams at least twice a year, to help engage students in the notion of non-violence. The premise of non-violence isn't necessarily uniformly swallowed by kids. It clearly sparks conversation and debate."

Mennonite Church Manitoba

Partnership circle holds 2005 review

Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations from the north and south met together on Nov. 9 at Grace Mennonite Church in Winkler. This "partnership circle" has met twice a year for the past two years, forging links between the churches.

Congregations in the northern communities of Pauingassi, Matheson Island, Pine Dock, Riverton, Cross Lake, Manigotagan and Little Grand Rapids are finding partners with congregations in the south. The meeting gave opportunity for these partnerships to solidify and to plan how they can continue working together.

Participants shared from the past year. A quilting event in May brought women from Sargent Avenue Mennonite

Church, Bethel Mennonite and Riverton together. Puppeteers from Home Street Mennonite Church are planning a visit to Riverton. Cross Lake, which is constructing a new church building, has appreciated the generosity of businesses, congregations and individuals, but is still in need of more help to complete the project.

The need for leadership development was highlighted. The idea of an adult learning tour to a northern community was considered. Discussion has begun with Mennonite Disaster Service about how communities can work with youth groups on housing issues. Discussion with Mennonite Central Committee about its volunteer program is also ongoing.

Counselling courses and education courses on biblical studies and theological issues are being considered for the coming year.

The annual Native Assembly will take place July 24 to 27 in Alabama. Neill von Gunten will coordinate a bus tour from Manitoba, which will include some members of the partnership circle.

The partnership circle is still looking to expand. Churches interested in exploring this kind of involvement are encouraged to contact Norm Voth, director of Evangelism and Service Ministries, MC Manitoba.

The next partnership circle meeting is scheduled for next March.

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

New youth pastor at Grace Mennonite

Grace Mennonite Church in Regina, with a membership of about 200, recently hired a half-time youth pastor. Andrew Waithe, who comes from an Alliance Church background, will work with

the approximately 23 teens who make up the youth group. Attempts to find a suitable candidate through the Mennonite community yielded few results, so the search committee was forced to look elsewhere, explained Karen Martens Zimmerly, co-pastor of Grace Mennonite. Waithe was installed on Nov. 27.

In the spring of this year, the church also hired Somvang Chantharyvong as pastor of Laotian ministries. A group of Laotian Christians had been worshipping with the congregation on a weekly basis, but the small community wanted to reach out to more of their cultural counterparts in the city. Now, the Laotian congregation meets once a

month to hold a Sunday school class in their mother tongue. They also plan regular family nights in an effort to connect with the wider Laotian community. "English-speaking members are welcome to go to those meetings," said Martens Zimmerly. "And the Laotians are happy to translate for us."

Mennonite Church Alberta

Word of Life licenses minister

Elias Miranda was licenced for ministry at Word of Life Mennonite Church in Calgary on Dec 11. The Word of Life is a Spanish congregation currently meeting in the First

Mennonite facility. They were accepted as a member of Mennonite Church Alberta at the annual delegate sessions held in Edmonton in February. Conference pastor Jim Shantz noted that this service is a "significant day of encouragement both for Elias and his congregation."

Accident injures five Hillcrest members

A horrific motor vehicle accident involving a tanker truck and a passenger van on Highway 43 just south of Fox Creek on Nov. 10 has injured five people from Grande Prairie's Hillcrest congregation.

Tara Isaac, daughter of

Pastor Cyril Isaac and his wife Judy, was the most seriously hurt, and is in Royal Alex Hospital in Edmonton. As of the first week of December, Tara was in good spirits and continues to recover at the hospital. She has lost the vision in her left eye and has some paralysis on the right side that makes speaking and walking difficult.

The other four injured people have been released from hospital to recover at home.

Please pray for healing for the Isaac family and the Hillcrest congregation as they face this difficult time and long recovery.

Continued on page 37

NORM VOTH



From our leaders

When we invite people to faith, we need to recognize several, sometimes competing, trends in our current context. While individualism is evident everywhere, many people are looking for significant community. Consumerism drives our economy at the same time as people express a deep desire for spiritual purpose and meaning. While claims to ultimate truth are suspect, there is a desire for the mythical stories that gave shape to the distant past. Christianity is no longer the only choice for most people, but simply one choice among many equally valid options.

Acts 17:16-34 offers some principles for effective witness. First, Paul's deeply troubled spirit as he tours Athens reflects God's passion for the world declared in John 3:16. God is "for" the world, and yet we so often define ourselves "over against" the world. Do we care as passionately about our world as Paul did about his? If so, what is the evidence? How does that love and passion shape our witness?

Second, Paul creates opportunities by engaging in discourse in the synagogue and marketplace. It is not surprising that Paul goes to the synagogue, the centre of Judaism. It is instructive that he also goes to the marketplace, the heart of Athenian society. It is a central gathering place. What are the significant gathering places in our culture? Do we go to those places, creating opportunities for evangelism by engaging in public discourse? Or do we keep to ourselves?

Third, Paul begins his presentation in the Areopagus with a compliment. He acknowledges the significant

Inviting faith in our cultural context

Advent is a time pregnant with possibility, born out of brokenness.

spirituality of the Athenians. Do we begin with a compliment or a criticism when we engage our culture with the gospel? Paul quotes Athenian poets in his witness and connects it with spiritual searching. What compliments can we offer our culture? Who are the influential poets of our time and what are they saying that gives voice to the search for faith?

Fourth, Paul tells the story of a creator who desires a relationship with creation. This is a story robust enough to confront life and death and resurrection. It is a story with enough detail and mystery for God to create and shape a people. It calls for a response of alignment, for a turn toward God. Are we aware of the power of this story, or has it become so common in our lives that we've lost our sense of wonder and humility? In what ways does this story affect me as an individual and us as a people? How are we inviting people into this forming and transforming story?

Advent is a time pregnant with possibility, born out of brokenness. It is our own experience and participation in sin that leads us to cry out in confession of failure and hope for what will be. The effectiveness of the witness does not depend on my faithfulness or failure but is rooted in the improbable love of the creator for creation. This love is so deep that God pitches his tent among us for a while that we might touch and see and smell the reconciliation he desires, and invite everyone we meet to join us in looking for the kingdom coming among us.

Norm Voth is MC Manitoba's director of Evangelism and Service.

'Exclusion' the theme of grad conference

Elkhart, Ind.—The third Mennonite Graduate Student Conference, sponsored by Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC), is seeking proposals from Mennonite grad students for individual presentations, panel discussions or entire sessions on the theme of "exclusion."

The primary purpose of the conference—to be held at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, from June 10 to 12—is to provide Mennonite grad students with an opportunity to present their academic research in a collegial interdisciplinary context. Participation of students from a wide variety of disciplines is encouraged, from philosophy and psychology to peace studies and religion, as well as many others.

Possible topics include exclusion of texts or voices, exclusion and community, or exclusion and ideas.

Proposals should be no longer than 350 words and should include degree and area of study information for each presenter. Send proposals to mennonite.centre@utoronto.ca before Feb. 15.

Travel bursaries for presenters and other participants is anticipated but not confirmed. —TMTC release

Tour traces Bonhoeffer's life

Waterloo, Ont.—The second Bonhoeffer: Life and Legacy Tour will take place May 11 to 22, 2006, the centennial year of his birth. The tour includes places central to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life and work, including sites in Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Born in Breslau, Germany, Bonhoeffer led an underground seminary in Poland during the Nazi era. He was executed

in a concentration camp near Munich for his participation in a plot to assassinate Adolph Hitler.

Tour leaders are A. James Reimer of Conrad Grebel University College and Peter Frick of St. Paul's United College, both at the University of Waterloo.

The tour is open to all, available as a credit or non-credit course (some preparatory reading is required). The cost of the tour is \$3,495.

For more information, call A. James Reimer at 519-885-0220 ext. 234 or e-mail ajreimer@uwaterloo.ca.

—Margaret Loewen Reimer

Calendar

British Columbia

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

Jan. 20-21: Being Anabaptist seminar, Peace Church, Richmond. For more information, call 604-278-9848.

Jan. 27-29: Visit the CBC booth at Missions Fest, Vancouver.

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

Feb. 6-13: International Visitor Exchange Program (IVEP) mid-year conference, Abbotsford.

Feb. 12: International Celebration—an evening of worship at Bakerview MB Church, sponsored by MCC. For more information, e-mail stiessen@mccbc.com.

Feb. 18: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. presents "The David Toews Story" lecture by Helmut Harder, Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, 7 p.m.

Feb. 20: Bethel Mennonite Church 70th anniversary.

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

March 17-18: Youth workers conference "Stumbling into church" with Renee Altson, at Columbia Bible College.

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

Jan. 20-22: Jr. high snow camp at Camp Valaqua.

Feb. 24-26: Sr. high snow camp at Camp Valaqua.

May 6-7: Songfest hosted by Edmonton First Mennonite Church. Theme: "God's people now." 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."

May 29-June 1: Theological studies week at Camp Valaqua. Guest speaker: Dan Epp-Thiessen.

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

July 5-9: MC Canada annual assembly in Edmonton.

Saskatchewan

Jan. 6-7: RJC Alumni Tournament of Memories—hockey, basketball and curling. For more information, call Denelda Fast at 306-242-1757.

Jan. 13-15: "Sing the Journey: A worship and music retreat" at Shekinah Retreat Centre, for worship planners and leaders, musicians and artists, with a focus on the new *Hymnal* supplement, *Sing the Journey*. For more information, or to register, call CMU at 204-487-3300 or MC Saskatchewan at 306-249-4844.

March 5: MCC Evening of Quartets, Forest Grove Community Church, Saskatoon.

June 3: Prairie Falcon motorcycle rally fundraiser for MCC, Saskatoon.

Manitoba

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

Jan 20: "Infusion," an evening of worship for youth and young adults, Canadian Mennonite University, 7:30 p.m.

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

Jan. 30-Feb. 1: "Bridging the gap: Ministry in context" conference at CMU with Ray Bystrom of MB Biblical Seminary, Fresno, Calif.

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

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

Feb. 24: Opera workshop, Canadian Mennonite University.

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

Feb. 24-25: Annual delegate session at Mennonite Collegiate Institute, hosted by Gretna Bergthaler 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: "Peace it together: Somebody better say something" youth and young adult conference at

CMU, explores issues connected to peacemaking, with actress/playwright/social activist Brenda Matthews from Chicago.

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

Feb. 11: Menno Singers present "Line by Line: The Art of Polyphony" at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Kitchener.

May 13: Menno Singers present "Psalms and Hymns" with Marilyn Houser Hamm, Zion United Church, Kitchener, 8 p.m.

U.S.A.

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

March 9-15: MWC mini-assembly, U.S. Center for World Missions, Pasadena, Calif.

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.

TheChurches From page 35

Pastors council met at Camp Valaqua

MC Alberta's pastors council got together at Camp Valaqua for a one-day meeting on Nov. 23. Conference Pastor Jim Shantz led the group in a significant time of sharing, as well as discussions relating to the upcoming 2006 annual assembly.

Mennonite Church British Columbia

'Being Anabaptist' seminar planned

What does it mean to be an Anabaptist in the 21st century? Mennonite churches of the Vancouver area plan to help answer that question with a weekend seminar on Jan. 20 and 21 at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond.

Discussion topics include: "The church in worship and song," with Irma Fast Dueck and Marilyn Houser Hamm of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Winnipeg; "Love (all) your neighbours," with Delmar Epp of CMU; "Philippians and the challenges of Christian citizenship," with Gordon Zerbe of CMU; and, "Anabaptist history and theology," with Maurice Martin of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

For more information, contact Peace Mennonite Church at 604-278-9848.

Langley congregant part of hostage drama

While the world watches and waits to learn the fate of four Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) members taken hostage in Iraq on Nov. 26, members of Langley Mennonite Fellowship have reason to feel a special connection with the news.

Church member Greg Rollins, 33, has been working with CPT in Iraq for the past year documenting human rights abuses. He and other peace workers there were reported keeping a low profile, fearful for their safety following the abduction of their colleagues.

Langley pastor Henry Krause sent a letter on behalf of the church to Doug Pritchard, co-director of CPT, assuring him of the congregation's support and of their prayers for the abductees and all CPT workers. The church also held a special prayer time for the four hostages during its Dec. 4 worship service.

An interfaith vigil was held Dec. 3 at the Listening Place, a prayer space in the downtown eastside of Vancouver, to pray for the safe release of the hostages and for an end to violence in Iraq.

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.

Subscriber services



How to subscribe:

- Individuals who are part of Mennonite Church Canada or one of its five area conferences can ask to be placed on their congregation's group subscription list. The subscription is paid by the conferences.
- Others who wish to order a subscription can use this form. See contact information below.
Rates: \$32.50 for one year (includes \$2.13 GST); \$52.50 (Can.) to U.S.; \$73.00 (Can.) for overseas.

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- Changes will be made immediately but may take 4-6 weeks to take effect because of printing schedules.**

Contact information:

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

Employment opportunities

Connexus (Korea Anabaptist Center ministry) seeks
ENGLISH CONVERSATION TEACHERS

Opportunity for Christians with university degrees to learn, serve, teach, travel, earn and make friends! For more information, see www.connexus.co.kr/english.



MCC Manitoba has the following positions open:

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT - EXECUTIVE OFFICE

The Administrative Assistant is responsible to the MCCM Management Team (Executive Director, Program Team Leader and Constituency Relations Team Leader), and provides administrative and logistical support to this team and other administration staff, assisting with special events coordination and office management. Previous clerical experience is required, with preference given to candidates with skills in word processing, minute taking, database management and knowledge of office procedures. Good public relations skills are essential, as are flexibility and organizational abilities. This is a full-time position, available March 15/06. Applicant screening will begin in mid-January.

WINKLER FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Based in Winkler, the Program Coordinator takes direction from the MCCM Program Team Leader and a local advisory committee. Their main function is to provide settlement assistance to newcomers, primarily Low German speaking immigrants from Central and South America living in Canada and seeking Canadian citizenship, and to work with community volunteers in meeting newcomer settlement needs. Oral fluency in Low German and English and good written English skills are essential, with preference given to candidates who have experience in program coordination and/or knowledge of immigration documentation work. This is a half-time position. Applicant screening will begin immediately and continue until a suitable candidate is found.

For more information, please contact:

**Janelle Siemens at jms@mennonitecc.ca
Sol Janzen at sjj@mennonitecc.ca
Phone: 204-261-6381**

Written applications may be submitted to the above names at 134 Plaza Dr., Winnipeg, MB R3T 5K9

Qualifications for all MCC positions include a Christian faith, active membership in a Christian church and a commitment to nonviolent peacemaking.

For sale

50th Anniversary Book "Celebrate The Journey." For sale by: Grace Mennonite Church of Regina. Cost: \$32.50 postage paid. Phone: 306-584-2555; Fax: 306-585-0115; E-mail: grace.mennonite@sasktel.net.

For rent

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

Rosthern Junior College Board of Directors invites applications for:

PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Rosthern Junior College is a Mennonite residential high school located in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Since 1905, it has served the Mennonites of Alberta and Saskatchewan with quality academic instruction, strong extra-curricular music, drama and sports programs, and a firm grounding in the Christian faith, as well as an introduction to discipleship and community living. Currently, RJC serves an annual student population of around 120 Grade 10 to 12 students, including about a dozen international students. Approximately one-half of the student body is of non-Mennonite background. Duties for the principal would commence on or before August 1, 2006.

The principal is the spiritual and academic leader of the school. A firm background in Anabaptist Mennonite theology and practice and a commitment of service to Christ and his church are therefore fundamental, along with appropriate education and training in school administration. The successful candidate will also be able to manage the school's financial affairs effectively and will be innovative in matters of development and student recruitment. The principal works with an academic and administrative team. Academic staff at RJC are members of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and receive the benefits negotiated by them.

The review of applications will commence on Feb. 1, 2006.

Requests for more information, a job description and letters of application with resumes may be directed to:

**George Epp, RJC Search Committee
Box 148
Rosthern, SK S0K 3R0
Phone : 306-232-4275
Fax: 306-232-5250
E-mail: g.epp@sasktel.net**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto**

Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT) invites applicants for the position of Executive Director starting in spring 2006.

The MNLCT provides settlement services, support and language instruction to 7,000 clients of all races, nationalities and religions from over 70 countries annually. Our holistic approach and ongoing innovative new services have differentiated this non-profit centre during its 22- year history. Working with a staff of 12 and over 100 volunteers, the new director will provide visionary and fundraising leadership to settlement, adaptation and integration services.

The successful candidate, a committed Anabaptist, will have a passion for innovative settlement, adaptation and integration services; a good command of English and Spanish (Mandarin is an asset), a commitment to community chaplaincy; a good understanding of immigration issues; and the ability to work in a multicultural environment with a flexible schedule.

Please forward your resume by February 17, 2006, to:

**Search Committee
Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto
1774 Queen St. East, Toronto, ON M4L 1G7
E-mail: apuricelli@mnlct.org**

Bluffton University invites applications for the following full-time, tenure-track faculty positions beginning fall semester 2006:

EARLY CHILDHOOD (GENERALIST)

Doctorate preferred; ABD considered. Certification in early childhood education (Pre K-3). Academic preparation in Educational Foundations preferred. Academic preparation in literacy desirable. Experience: minimum of three years teaching in an early childhood classroom, higher education teaching experience preferred. Responsibilities: teach undergraduate education courses in curriculum and instruction in early childhood education and possibly literacy. Teach undergraduate and graduate courses in education foundations. Advise early childhood candidates. Supervise clinical practitioners in early education classrooms. Review of applications begins immediately and continues until an appointment is made.

ECONOMICS

Academic preparation in economics or a closely related field, such as political economy, economic systems, economic history, or international development. An understanding of both mainstream and alternative economic paradigms is highly desirable. A terminal (Ph.D. or functional equivalent) will be required for tenure. Completing this degree after employment is acceptable. Demonstrated competence in teaching is essential. Responsibilities include teaching undergraduate economics and economics-related courses, as well as courses in the graduate program in business. The economics major is lodged within the Department of Economics, Business Administration and Accounting and is one component of a values-based liberal arts curriculum. Review of applications begins January 15 and continues until an appointment is made.

For these positions compensation is commensurate with education and experience within the university pay scale. Send letter of interest, vita, three letters of reference (submitted directly from referee or, if necessary, from placement office), and official transcripts to:

Elaine Suderman, Academic Affairs
Bluffton University, 1 University Dr.
Bluffton, Ohio 45817-2104
See <http://www.bluffton.edu>

Bluffton University welcomes applications from all academically qualified persons who respect the Anabaptist/Mennonite peace church tradition and endorse Christian higher education in a liberal arts environment. Members of underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. EOE.

CMU is looking to fill positions in the **Outatown Program**

Assistant to the Director of Outatown (permanent full time)

Outatown Site Leaders (August 2006 - April 2007)

The Outatown discipleship school is an adventure in unconventional learning. Students learn by experience, instruction and example.

The Mission of the Outatown Program:

To inspire and nurture students in their life of discipleship with Jesus Christ ... in a journey towards:

- Knowing God; in truth and relationship
- Knowing yourself; in personality and character, in abilities and gifts
- Knowing the world; in its beauty, diversity and pain

Please check our website at www.cmu.ca for information on the jobs available and how to apply, or contact Susan Warkentin at (204) 487-3300 or at swarkentin@cmu.ca.

If this sounds like you, please send a resume to:



CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

Attn: Susan Warkentin, Director of Human Resources
500 Shaftesbury Blvd. Winnipeg, Canada, R3P 2N2
E-mail: swarkentin@cmu.ca



Mennonite Central Committee Ontario
invites applications for the position of

RETAIL MANAGER, NEW HAMBURG THRIFT CENTRE New Hamburg, Ontario

The position requires a person with a commitment to Christian faith, active church membership and non-violent peacemaking. New Hamburg is in the process of building a new Thrift Centre which would combine the work of its two current thrift shops.

MCC is seeking a person with experience/ interest in retail merchandising; strong interpersonal and management/leadership skills; good organizational skills, and a willingness to work in a team environment with board, staff and volunteers.

This full-time salaried position is available beginning late February 2006. Application deadline: January 18, 2006. A complete job description is available on MCC's website at www.mcc.org.

For more information or to apply, send cover letter and resume to:

Cath Woolner
50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1
Phone: 519-745-8458
E-mail: cathw@mennonitecc.on.ca



Stewardship Consultant

Mennonite Foundation of Canada
(MFC) is a charitable foundation

serving seven Anabaptist church conferences across Canada. MFC is seeking a full-time stewardship consultant to work out of its Kitchener, Ontario office. This person will provide charitable gift and estate planning services and promote biblical stewardship of financial resources in Ontario and Eastern Canada.

The successful candidate will:

- Communicate effectively with individuals and have an aptitude for presenting in a variety of group settings
- Have a good understanding of charitable gift and estate planning
- Be creative, organized, and self-motivated
- Support and incorporate MFC's stewardship mission in personal life
- Be willing and able to contribute as part of an interdependent staff team.

The successful candidate must be a member of one of MFC's seven participating conferences.

Submit applications by January 15, 2006 to:
Erwin Warkentin, General Manager
12-1325 Markham Rd, Winnipeg, MB R3T 4J6
1-800-772-3257 fax: 204-488-1986
e-mail: ewarkentin@mennofoundation.ca
www.mennofoundation.ca

At \$10 a brick, the popular Lego building toy was a bit expensive. But that little detail didn't get in the way of the enthusiastic children at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond, B.C., who, together with the rest of the congregation, reached their goal of raising \$25,000 to help build the Living Water Church in Thailand. To top it off, they did it in just three months!

The project was integrated into the congregation's 25th anniversary celebration in November. Children used the purchased bricks as an indicator of sales by carefully constructing a model of the Thai church in their own church's foyer.

A church building in the Borabur district of Thailand has been a long-time dream of Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers Pat and Rad Houmphan, who minister to the Isaan people of Northeast Thailand. Temples in Thailand represent the centre of people's lives, with many non-believers often seeking the Christian "temple," say the Houmphans. Currently, they host a ministry centre in a rented two-storey row house.

Constructing a building is a monumental project in Thailand, where people struggle daily to overcome pervasive poverty. In addition to worship space, the Houmphans will use the multi-purpose building as a community centre, and for teaching English, providing outreach, offering children's program, and as space for overnight guests. The contributions from Peace Mennonite Church will form part of a \$100,000, three-year ministry plan for the Houmphans in Thailand. Construction of the building is expected to begin in 2006, once the land purchase transaction is complete.

"The Houmphans are extremely grateful for this response," says Resource Development director Al Rempel. "This is a great gift that will enable this congregation to move forward with its dream to be the church among the Isaan people."

As the fundraising goal was reached, the Lego model acquired a roof that capped off a great 25th anniversary weekend at Peace Mennonite. The weekend activities also included the ordination of Tim Kuepfer, who has pastored at Peace Mennonite for the last two years.

—Gerry Sportack with Dan Dyck

Children at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond, B.C., show off a model in progress of the Living Waters Church to be built together with Pat and Rad Houmphan, Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers in Thailand. Members of the congregation bought Lego bricks for \$10 apiece, reaching their \$25,000 goal in three months.

Building blocks to a new Thai church



Photo by Gerry Sportack