

CANADIAN MENNONITE

December 20, 2010

Volume 14 Number 24

Christmas mourning on a troubled planet



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EDITORIAL

Advent: Waiting for the surprises

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Two Advent themes should bring us to our feet this season: surprise and waiting. In our hurried, harassed lives, we are probably prepared for neither.

With WikiLeaks heaping a deluge of information on us, another round of surprises is not on our wish list. It's a little hard to take seriously the gospel writer of Matthew in chapter 24 when we are told to "keep awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." For some of the world's leaders, the Second Coming has already happened—what with all their diplomatic blunders held up for all to see. For them, judgement, with all of its surprises, has already come.

Rather, we might be rushing to tie down the hatches of our crazy world, resonating instead with the Psalmist (Psalm 46) when, looking to a God who can stabilize things, cries out that "the nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts" (as in volcanos, or floods in Pakistan, or earthquakes in Haiti)."

Despite all this, continues the writer, "the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Now that's the real surprise! With a world reeling from natural and political disasters, with the Internet spewing out more information than we can possibly digest, integrate or care about, is the God whom we claim is

in charge of all this really our refuge?

Yes.

That is exactly the point. And that's the surprise of this Advent season. The world has not really changed since the Psalmist's time. He, or she, too, seemed overwhelmed with catastrophic events over which there was little control—in the parlance of that ancient culture—kingdoms crashing, enemies winning, Jerusalem (their city of God) in ruins, shipwrecks, fools in charge, bloodshed and banishment. A smaller, less developed world, yes, but one just as much in disarray as ours in December 2010.

What we are called to do during Advent is to change our lenses, to view events not as they appear in a fatalistic, deterministic frame, but with a different perspective—a God-is-eternal timeline, rather than a 24-hour-cable news cycle. The writing in the Bible we hold so close to our hearts is often apocalyptic, or full of hidden meaning, often communicated in the language of poetry with deeper, sometimes mystic messages.

And it should, as Lynn Bergsma Friesen suggested in a recent sermon, bug us a little, or at the very least give us pause. This is not easy or instant. You can't just go online and Google an answer. It is a discipline, requiring moments of silence, contemplation, spiritual focus, audible and inaudible prayers, searching

for direction. This looking for the surprises, or what God is really doing, is not escape, not a default to resignation or collapse, but an active search, the unwrapping of God's gift from under the Christmas tree.

All of which requires waiting, another virtue fast disappearing in the age of the Internet, fast food and full work/church/business/school schedules. In a self-obsessed culture, waiting appears to be counter-productive and distracting, lessening our chances of success because opportunities are short-lived.

But wait a minute. Take some time to review the details of the story of Mary, Joseph and cousin Elizabeth as recorded in the Luke account. Bewildered by the angel's announcement, Mary, fearing reprisals that were sure to come from friends and neighbours in that ancient Palestinian culture, takes the time to travel to her cousin's house for reassurance, perhaps even safety.

In those moments of waiting, it was verified by an extended family member that God was in this event in a special way. Mary erupts with, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant." It was worth the wait, amid all of her misgivings, fears and anxiety.

This kind of waiting, too, is a discipline, a serious process Eugene Peterson describes as "growing communities that are patient, courageously committed to witness and work in the kingdom of God no matter how long it takes, or how much it costs."



ABOUT THE COVER:

That our planet is troubled and in need of the 'light of the world' to dawn on Christmas morning is evidenced by the first of our three seasonal feature articles, 'Israeli development thwarts peace on earth . . . at least in Bethlehem.'

ART: STAN VOGT

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Dick Benner, Editor/Publisher, editor@canadianmennonite.org

Ross W. Muir, Managing Editor, managinged@canadianmennonite.org

Barb Draper, Editorial Assistant, edassist@canadianmennonite.org

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Lisa Jacky, Circulation/Finance, office@canadianmennonite.org

Advertising: **Lisa Metzger,** advert@canadianmennonite.org, toll-free voice mail: 1-800-378-2524 ext. 224

Correspondents:

Rachel Bergen, National Correspondent, ca@canadianmennonite.org, 204-885-2565 ext. 259; **Amy Dueckman,** B.C. Correspondent, bc@canadianmennonite.org,

604-854-3735; **Donita Wiebe-Neufeld,** Alberta Correspondent, ab@canadianmennonite.org, 780-436-3431; **Karin Fehderau,** Saskatchewan Correspondent, sk@canadianmennonite.org, 306-933-4209;

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CHRISTMAS MOURNING ON A TROUBLED PLANET

Israeli development thwarts peace at least in

BY ALEX AWAD

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

[W]hile some factions within Israeli society are resisting peace, many Israelis in Israel and Jews around the world are the most powerful advocates for a just peace.

Embedded in the Christmas story is God's desire for peace on our planet. Luke announced that "peace on earth" was the theme that the angelic choirs sang over the skies of Bethlehem on the night that the Saviour was born. We can conclude from their celestial anthem that God yearns for peace on earth. Can we also agree that God longs for the peace of Bethlehem, of Jerusalem, of Palestine, of Israel, and of the Middle East?

Many Christians have given up on the possibility of peace in the land of the Bible. They reference the timeline of failed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations over the last 25 years as evidence that peace in the region is not possible.

Others point to verses in the Old Testament that reflect the frustrations of ancient Hebrew prophets with prevailing injustice. They quote these verses to prove that peace is impossible. Clinging to the words of Isaiah, they proclaim: "*There is no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked*" (Isaiah 48:22, all references from the New International Version).

Yet they ignore Isaiah's commitment to peace and the significance he places on the subject in many of his writings: "*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns'*" (Isaiah 52:7).

on earth . . . Bethlehem

Still others misunderstand Jesus' statements relating to peace. They interpret them out of context and use these passages to undermine God's deep longing for peace. They forget that the gospel is God's "good news of peace" (Acts 10:36) to all people and all nations, "to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace" (Luke 1:79).

Some claim that Palestinians and their leaders serve as the chief obstacle to peace in the Holy Land. If time is invested in learning the truth, people will discover that those most hurt due to a lack of peace in the region are Palestinians themselves. They will also discover that Palestinians are the ones most desperate to see a just settlement of the conflict, having lost more than 80 percent of their historic homeland in the last 60 years, and in danger of losing what little is left.

There are others who point fingers and place responsibility on Israelis and the greater Jewish community for the lack of peace. These accusers are not aware that,

while some factions within Israeli society are resisting peace, many Israelis in Israel and Jews around the world are the most powerful advocates for a just peace.

Some say Muslims and Arabs charged with Islamic fundamentalism and radical fanaticism are the chief hindrance to peace. Surely, there are Arabs and Islamist minorities who resist the current peace process. However, it must be noted that all Arab states and most Islamic countries endorsed the Arab Peace Initiative in 2002.

(This document calls on Israel to accept "a sovereign independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since June 4, 1967, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital"; in return, Arab countries would "consider the Arab-Israeli conflict ended . . ." Ed.)

If accepted by Israel, this initiative could create peace between Israel and her neighbours. For certain, Arabs and Muslims are not the obstacle.

So who or what is standing in the face of justice and a lasting peace between



CANADIAN MENNONITE FILE PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD



Military vehicles are a common site in the West Bank and Gaza strip.

Israelis and Palestinians? If you want to discover the main barrier to peace, you need to come to Palestine to see it: This Christmas season, when millions around the world are praying for peace and most countries of the world are exerting genuine effort to end the conflict, Israeli settlers continue to thwart all possibilities of reconciliation.

Come and see what is happening around Bethlehem. Come and see the land that Israeli settlers have confiscated from Palestinians, and how, in spite of international law, they continue to build Jewish settlements on Palestinian lands within the West Bank with the full backing of Israeli authorities. These settlements have become the mother of all

obstacles to Middle East peace.

How can Palestinians sign a peace agreement with those who continue to take their land by force and build segregated settlements on them? It is impossible. This is the reason for the current impasse.

Knowing the prime obstacle for peace is helpful, but addressing it is the greater challenge. As we consider this challenge, let us remember that the angels in the skies over the fields near Bethlehem did not proclaim the message of peace to kings, rulers and politicians, and their anthems did not address the religious hierarchy. They came to shepherds—average, humble, hard-working people. These are the people who became the bearers of the

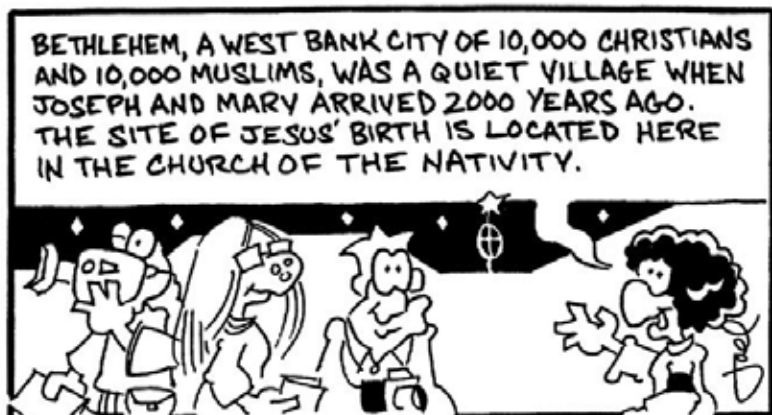
message of peace.

Perhaps we should not wait on kings, presidents, prime ministers or high-ranking religious authorities to serve the cause of peace. Rather, every one of us who receives the message, regardless of our status, must find ways to contribute to the cause of peace on earth without the exclusion of peace for Bethlehem. ✎



Alex Awad is the dean of students and director of the Good Shepherd Society at Bethlehem Bible College, Palestine/Israel.

Pontius' Pilgrimage



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Alternatives to a 'Consumer Christmas'

BY RACHEL BERGEN
National Correspondent

Many people spend their evenings and weekends leading up to Christmas scouring the local mall for the perfect gifts for their loved ones, planning their Christmas feast or decorating their house.

A portable Christmas tradition

Gabrielle Plenert of Winnipeg, Man., and her family spend their Christmas season rather differently.

The Plenert family has lived overseas in various locations for many years, so they have tried to create Christmas traditions that they could celebrate anywhere, whether it is in Canada, where they now reside, or South America.

Christmas for the Plenert family—father Steve, mother Janet (executive secretary of Mennonite Church Canada Witness and vice-president of Mennonite World Conference), and daughters Katrina, Gabrielle and Natasha—starts with Advent, which is a big focus for them. They throw a party on the first Sunday of Advent to which each member invites friends.

"We have an Advent wreath, we light the candles, we memorize either Luke 2 or John 1 and recite it. We also have a theme each year and do some activity that relates to the theme," Gabrielle says. The family also tries to have "Advent time" every night, when they pray, sing and reflect on the time of year.

When it comes to Christmas Day, the Plenerts practise simplicity. Gabrielle and her two sisters each receive a small stocking in the morning, and usually receive one or two gifts apart from that.

"We try to put more time into the gift-making," Gabrielle says. "It's lots of fun and there are secrets around the house about who is making a gift for whom."

Gabrielle and her sisters often make

MOURNING TURNS INTO ACTIVISM

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PLENERT FAMILY



Gabrielle, Katrina and Natasha Plenert decorate their Christmas tree with ornaments they have received over the years from overseas or from Ten Thousand Villages.

knitted or crocheted gifts for others. Scrapbooks are common gifts, as are bags of baked goods. They always receive practical or handcrafted things from ethical organizations such as Mountain Equipment Co-op or Ten Thousand Villages.

"I think it helps us maintain a focus on what I think Christmas is about and it keeps us from focusing on stuff," Gabrielle says. "We focus on family and values that the gospel is about: simplicity, the birth of Jesus, and taking time to think about others. It's really fun."

Buy Nothing Christmas

Five years ago, the Plenert family practised Buy Nothing Christmas, a web initiative started in 2001 and maintained by *Canadian Mennonite* columnist and *Geez* publisher Aiden Enns.

Buy Nothing Christmas is a national initiative that redesigns Christmas so that it is richer in meaning, smaller in impact upon the earth, and greater in giving to people less privileged. The website (BuyNothingChristmas.org) has ideas for things to make loved ones, including mixed CDs, coupons for childcare services, handmade recipe books and calendars.

"While it is Buy Nothing Christmas, it is a gift-giving Christmas," Enns says. "Giving is the gift that holds us all together. When we give, we acknowledge our dependence on others. This is undermined by our consumer system."

Enns has celebrated family Buy Nothing Christmases for 15 years, giving

handmade gifts to his wife and together to their 18 nieces and nephews. "In previous years we made a journal with a custom screen-printed cover with their name on it and a pencil box made out of wood with a slide lid and their name screen-printed on it," he says. "When they were little, we wrote and illustrated a children's story. . . . Every year it's a new thing."

"I find it's a positive way to convey alternative values," he adds. "The gifts don't compare to the flashy gifts, but over the years [my nieces and nephews] have come to appreciate the gesture."

Gifts that matter

Another way of celebrating Christmas differently is by "giving a gift that matters" through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Christmas Giving 2010.

This initiative allows givers to meet basic human needs and encourage peace and justice around the world.

"As an alternative to materialism and consumerism, one of the best ways to celebrate God's gift to us is to give a 'gift that matters' that will help others around the world," says Phil Schafran, director of resource development and communications at MCC B.C. "There are 10 different gifts to choose from that will make a difference in people's lives and they start at just \$10." They include the gifts of hope, peace, water and food, and can be given online at mcc.org/christmas. ❧

What a difference a year makes

MDS, Salvation Army rebuild woman's home destroyed just before last Christmas

STORY AND PHOTO
BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Christmas will be different this year for Winnipeg's Kathy Okolita.

She stands in her newly renovated home surrounded by 18 people who have come to offer a house blessing. She can't seem to say "thank you" enough as she offers fried chicken and potato salad to her guests.



Rob Neufeld, vice-chair of Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) Manitoba, and Kathy Okolita recall Christmas a year ago when Okolita feared she would be homeless following a fire. MDS and the Salvation Army teamed up to rebuild Okolita's home that she says is now 'nice and cozy.'

MOURNING TURNS INTO DANCING

There is standing room only in this scarcely 47-square-metre "war house," but Okolita, single and in her 40s, makes no apologies for the lack of space or chairs. "I love living here," she says. "It makes me feel I'm at the beach."

Last December, though, her greatest fear was that she wouldn't have a place to live. Just a few days before Christmas her house caught fire. Okolita, who is receiving disability benefits and lives with constant pain, was home making dinner when she says she heard "zapping and sizzling" sounds coming from the electrical box in her kitchen, quickly followed by smoke and flames.

"I called 911 and the fire trucks arrived within five minutes," she says. "I was devastated as I asked the firemen to please be careful and try not to cause too much damage while saving my house. I told them I had no insurance."

"After everything was done and the fire was out, that's when the load of this disaster really hit me," she says. "Everything was torn apart. Cabinets were torn off the walls, and my stuff was crushed and tossed everywhere. In the blink of an eye my life was turned upside down. I was in a panic."

With nowhere to turn and without any money, Okolita was fearful she would end up on the street. Paging through a resource book, she came across Mennonite

Disaster Service (MDS). "All these wonderful Christian men came out to help with the job," she says, adding, "I would have been out on the street if it wasn't for MDS and my friends offering their home for me to stay in."

"We had a terrific response" of volunteer support, says Dan Klassen, chair of MDS Manitoba. Vice-chair Rob Neufeld led the dozen or so volunteers who put in approximately 250 hours. "The trades people all volunteered and there were no labour costs," Klassen notes.

Built nearly a century ago, the little house was insulated with wood shavings.

"Conditions were such that the whole house should have burned down," Klassen says. "I guess God didn't want it to burn."

The Salvation Army partnered with MDS on the Okolita project, paying for all of the materials valued at \$4,600.

Don Timmerman, representing the Salvation Army at the house blessing, explains, "This is the first time we've had a Mennonite connection like this. We are really amazed at the work you do and the impact you have in the city."

As cold weather sets in this winter and Christmas again approaches, Okolita says she notices her house is warmer than before. "It's nice and cozy," she enthuses. "It makes me feel that it's from God. I've learned that there is a God who cares." ❧

❧ For discussion

1. The Christmas season is a time of giving. How does your congregation and/or community get involved in giving during this season? What are we saying when we give gifts? Do you agree with Aiden Enns's comment in the "Alternatives" article that, "when we give, we acknowledge our dependence on others"?
2. Does a handmade gift send a different message than a purchased one? If so, what is the difference? What factors determine the value of a gift? What are we saying when we give used items as gifts?
3. What situations or circumstances motivate us to give generously? Is it easier to give when we know something about the recipient? What motivates Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers?
4. At the end of the Bethlehem article, Alex Awad says that ordinary individuals "must find ways to contribute to the cause of peace . . ." What peace initiatives have you been part of this year? How can our Christmas celebrations contribute to peace on earth?

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters sent by subscribers intended for publication. Respecting our theology of the priesthood of all believers and of the importance of the faith community discernment process, this section is a largely open forum for the sharing of views. Letters are the opinion of the writer only—publication does not mean endorsement by the magazine or the church. Letters should be brief and address issues rather than individuals.

Please send letters to be considered for publication to letters@canadianmennonite.org or by postal mail or fax, marked "Attn: Readers Write" (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author's contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines.

✉ Laughter can be the best medicine

AS I READ *Canadian Mennonite*, I find it informative and inspirational. Sometimes we Mennonites take differences of conviction and opinion too seriously, so maybe some humour and laughter can act as a tonic in relationships. Sharing some humour in everyday struggles can be bonding and beneficial to our mental health. For example:

- At a morning service in her village in Ukraine, the minister read a text where Paul says, "I am writing this letter and send greetings to all churches." On impulse, a lady in the congregation responded, "Reverend Funk, would you also send Paul our greetings?"
- A young minister's first message fell short of expectation. His kind, loving wife tried to give comfort by saying, "But honey, you were waving your arms and pounding the pulpit. What more do they

FROM OUR LEADERS

From edge to centre

KATHY GIESBRECHT

Somewhere along our journey with youth ministry I believe many of us took a wrong turn. We headed in a direction that had us increasingly isolating our youths from the life of the congregation. Our youth groups and youth events rarely served to strengthen our relationships with other age groups and with the church's ongoing work and mission. Upon reflection I have come to see that the turn we took did not necessarily serve us well and might have even worked against some of our deepest hopes for our young people.

The good news is that over the last number of years youth ministry in our congregations has headed in some healthy new directions. Away from the models of isolation and occasional interaction, we have set our sights on integration and perhaps even imagining our youths as critical innovators in the church.

In his book, *Practicing Discernment with Youth*, David F. White awakened me with these words: "Young people contribute beauty, energy, critical challenge, passion, compassion, curiosity,



camaraderie and many other gifts that invite us toward a reconciled world envisioned by the reign of God."

If this is true, and I believe it is, we do well to move our youths from our fringes to our centre.

I continue to be encouraged as I witness congregations exploring and experimenting with new ways of youth ministry by:

- Moving away from Youth Sunday services, to calling upon the gifts of youths throughout the year in the areas of worship, formation, fellowship and witness.
- Moving away from service projects that have no connection to the congregation's present commitments, to adding their energy and creativity to those relationships the congregation is already engaged in.
- Moving away from performing random good deeds, to nurturing and developing a lifestyle of servanthood and generosity.

I recently came across an article in *Leadership Journal* that confirmed my

suspicions that we were on the right track. In the article, "Is the Era of Age Segregation Over?" Kara Powell, executive director of the Fuller Youth Institute at Fuller Theological Seminary, Calif., reflected upon some recent research: "There is a strong link between kids staying in church after they graduate and their involvement in intergenerational relationships and worship." This finding would also head us in the direction of integration, challenging us to bring people together for the purpose of deepening intergenerational relationships.

Some of the most profound moments of youth ministry happen when together we wash dishes after potlucks, study the Bible, nurture our relationships with our mission partners, discuss current issues, experiment with new technologies, play baseball and pray for each other.

I am hopeful that together we are discovering new ways of youth ministry, ways that invite our youths to relationship and engagement. Creating spaces within our congregations where the gifts, energies and innovative imaginations of our young people are welcomed and valued is a challenge for us, but a challenge I believe we are ready to take on.

Kathy Giesbrecht is the associate director of leadership ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba.

want!"

- A family coming home from a church service passed a farmer with two combines. The little girl said, "Look Mommy, that man has two concubines!"
- My grandmother would say, "Of course God speaks German! Here in my Luther Bible it says, '*Und Gott sprach, "Adam, 'wo bist du?"*' ("And God said, 'Adam, where are you?'"")

There is a time to laugh and a time to cry. If you can't laugh, cry yourself to sleep and you will feel better in the morning.

JACOB J. UNGER, BOISSEVAIN, MAN.

✉ Better to move forward with new hymnal, than go back in the past

RE: "RETURN TO *Mennonite Hymnary* instead of publishing new hymnal" letter, Nov. 15, page 10.

If this letter is any valid clue, it would appear that many Mennonites in Canada need more information when it comes to new/old hymnals. If we go back to the days of the *Mennonite Hymnary*, many Mennonites in Eastern Canada will be totally lost.

In numerous Mennonite churches in Eastern Canada, the *Hymnary* was never used. While the

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Return home a different way

PHIL WAGLER

The most unsettling participants in the "Christmas story" are the most biblically literate. Asked by magi where the king of the Jews was to be born, King Herod turns to expert priests and scribes for help. Confidently the clerics reference the answer in the scroll of the prophet Micah: "*In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet . . .*" (Luke 2:5).

King Herod the Horrible devises a sinister plan. If the Word is true and the time is ripe, then his hold on power is tenuous. He will act, because of Scripture, and Bethlehem will mourn like never before.

After providing their scriptural answer, the priests and scribes recede to the silent margins, pulling them out some 30 years later to justify killing the child of promise, just like Herod.

The gentile magi of the east act because of Scripture and venture in faith towards Jewish Bethlehem convinced stars and Scripture have aligned undeniably. Often missed in our re-telling of the Christmas story is that these foreign astronomers alone responded rightly to the prophetic promise of Scripture. This is deeply troubling and laced with hope.

It is troubling for me because, as a

pastor, I am supposedly a biblical "expert." I would have been among those asked to find the answer. There is plenty of justifiable angst about the pathetic level of biblical illiteracy these days. At the same time, we must be careful. Biblical literacy does not automatically produce biblical living or even mean the acceptance of biblical authority.

Knowing chapter and verse can merely produce religious obesity, where we recline on our spiritual couches, instead of putting feet to the promise. In Luke's account of the epiphany visitation, the most biblical are the most irrelevant and, ultimately, irreverent. The magi—and even Herod—respond as if Scripture might



So let us search the Scripture diligently, but let us not stop there.

actually be living and active, whereas the students of Scripture miss the plot while knowing it best.

Some Christians—and even some Christian scholars—treat the Word as if it were intended for our pompous and expert deconstruction and revision, rather than a lamp for our feet and a light for our path. This should disturb us and

drive us not from careful study, but to the practical hermeneutics of wise men and women who blend the signs of the times, the truth of revelation, and a readiness to obey the authority of what God has breathed into a mosaic of living and active faith.

Despite all this, there is hope. Given the post-Christian culture we live in, the Scripture speaks with fresh power and profundity to those on a search. Those who grew up with the biblical story can forget how incredible its revelation is. People adrift in a decadent, rootless age are often primed and eager to hear from Scripture, and even receive it as living and active hope. To them it is like fresh bread in a world of day-olds. They are the new magi. Have the story-keepers become the complacent experts?

So let us search the Scripture diligently, but let us not stop there. Let us proclaim its truth relevantly and unashamedly, but let us not stop there. Let us receive what it declares and go all the way to "Bethlehem" and then return home a different way—because the Word has been

made flesh, and this world and all its kingdoms will never be the same.

Phil Wagler is the author of Kingdom Culture and seeks to walk the way of the wise as a student of the scriptures and loves seeing eyes opened and lives changed by their light (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca).

General Conference Mennonites were singing their praises from the *Mennonite Hymnary* (or some German hymnal), the rest of us were praising the Lord from either the *Church Hymnal* or the *Church and Sunday School Hymnal*. We graduated from those hymnals to the *Mennonite Hymnal* and then to *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. So if we were to use the *Mennonite Hymnary*, it would be a new hymnal for us.

We might as well move on to whatever is prepared for us in the next phase of music in the Mennonite church by an appointed committee of experts. We need to be aware that a new hymnal will not

be a Canadian hymnal only, but one that is North American in its usage. This was true of hymnals of the past as well.

I do share the concern about throwing out the older hymns and going completely for contemporary styles of music, which might only last a few decades before our culture is on some new musical bandwagon.

I appreciate many of the hymns we sang in the past. But I am not prepared to go back and completely resurrect the past. The good old days did have their flaws.

**KENNETH CRESSMAN,
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.**

NEW ORDER VOICE

Mourning for a lost Christmas

WILL BRAUN

I'm not good at faking my way through situations. That goes for Christmas, too. I can't pretend that the tender mystery of Emmanuel—God with us—somehow rises above the glittery kerfuffle and fills my holiday season with calm and awe. I can't pretend that the impossibly familiar story pierces my heart anew each year with the “true meaning” of Christmas. Rather, the reality of Christmas for me is a mix of sadness over a culture war lost, acceptance of the joyous anguish of the season, and gratitude for the one thing that does bring me calm and awe.



First, let's openly, flatly admit that Christianity has lost the struggle for Christmas. Advertisers have taken over Advent, retailers have more pull than preachers, and the anticipation of the season is for stuff, not the baby Jesus. This applies in society at large and in the church. Any talk of recapturing the “true meaning of the season” sounds like Jack Layton when he says he is applying for the job of prime minister: It's what you say, but we all know that reality has a different tone. We need to concede defeat. Any rebuilding of meaning must be founded on honest assessment, not

overused clichés.

I still enjoy Christmas, but mostly for the “wrong” reasons. I like time with family, good food and the general atmosphere of festivity. That's pretty much how it has always been. As a kid, Christmas meant two weeks off school and new toys with some Christmas oranges and candy thrown in. There was no way that the Sunday school pageant could outshine toys, sugar and freedom from school.

I feel I need to be honest about why I

First, let's openly, flatly admit that Christianity has lost the struggle for Christmas.

like Christmas. I hope my reasons change over time, but faking it now won't help.

I feel I also need to be honest about the fact that many people do not like Christmas. I'm thinking of people without family or friends, people separated from family or friends by death or other circumstances, and people who can't afford to make Christmas special for their children. For the sake of these people, the forced cheer of the season must be put aside.

Instead, we must recognize that joy and anguish are not opposites, but a

single, interconnected paradox. Tears and smiles can go together. To be joyful is not to ignore anguish, but to find grace and wonder right in the midst of the darkness of our lives and our world. This is not simple. I think churches have become better at it, but we're still victims of pop psychology that says we should do away with anguish as quickly as possible, rather than create space for it.

Finally, while I have trouble finding religious meaning in Christmas, there is one thing in recent years that has carried me past all the forced cheer, materialism and religious cliché: Handel's *Messiah*. It's the only piece of classical music I ever put on, and parts of it sound odd compared to my usual fare, but a few years back I realized that this inspired music could provide a refuge of spiritual meaning in my Christmas season. So I bought

the CD set. I do not critique the musical performances, for I am unequipped to do so, and I don't try to have deep theological thoughts. I just listen and let the music fill me. For me, it is pure gift. It contains the tenderness, holiness, anguish, drama and celebration befitting of the season.

So here's to a realistic Christmas—one of joy-filled anguish and a musical remnant of deep beauty and meaning.

Will Braun attends Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Man. He can be reached at wbraun@inbox.com.

✉ Mentorship with a difference

WHEN I HAVE the opportunity for conversation with pastors, I like to ask, “What is the biggest need in your congregation in the area of harnessing human capacity?” In a recent conversation, the answer given was quick and emphatic: “Mentorship.”

This creative pastor saw mentorship as a way to harness the human capacity of different generations. The mentorship plan he was working out focused on roles within the church. In the area of worship, for example, his experiment was to identify a young person with interest or potential aptitude. That youth would be partnered with an older person who had experience in worship-leading roles, who would coach and support the young person in trying out the role.

This is a simple plan, but what an effective way it is to harness gifts! I wonder if this is what farmers used to do when they would put a young work horse in a team with an older, experienced horse. Think of the advantages of a system like this over more usual ways

of inserting a new person into a new role:

- **IT IS PERSONAL.** Instead of only reading a job description to provide information, this process engages the feeling part of the brain by putting the learner in touch with a caring person.
- **IT IS EXPRESSIVE.** The older person has an opportunity to communicate the passion he has for the activity, which can lead to a deep response in the youth.
- **IT IS SUPPORTIVE.** The younger person has someone to ask about problems and challenges in the role. Obvious gaps can be filled in ways that prevent embarrassment.
- **IT MAKES USE OF SKILLS.** Often older people have developed the skills of listening and empathizing, which can be put to good use in a one-on-one working relationship.
- **IT SUPPORTS FRIENDSHIP.** A positive by-product of the mentoring relationship is that people become friends across generations, perhaps gaining greater insight into each other's culture.

Another way of looking at mentorship is that it recovers the role of the elder, which we may have lost in recent times. Older people are given a positive way to contribute at the same time as they begin the well-deserved process of stepping back.

What are some other roles where mentorship could be well used? Could one mentor young church board members, deacons, teachers or preachers?

BOB WIEBE, WINNIPEG, MAN.

Bob Wiebe is president of Enliven! Consulting, whose motto is “Helping harness human capacity.”

/// Corrections

- Delmer Epp attended the 100th anniversary celebration of Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim, Sask., as a former member. He was incorrectly identified in the “Zoar congregation, Waldheim, turns 100” article on page 21 of the Nov. 1 issue.
- Rod Andrews of the *Valley News* took the photograph of Jake Buhler that accompanied the “Peace activist strives for integrity in his life and work” article, Nov. 15, page 24. The photograph was incorrectly attributed. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the errors.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Chathi—Ivan Tien-Yan (b. Sept. 13, 2010), to Amanda and Hubert Chathi, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Cornies—Jaclyn Alicia Heide (b. Nov. 16, 2010), to Ken Cornies and Shauna Heide, Toronto United Mennonite, Ont.

Falk—Tenley Jae (b. Nov. 22, 2010), to Cody and Jaime (nee Fehr) Falk, Blumenort Mennonite, Gretna, Man.

Friesen—Ashton Jakob (b. Nov. 1, 2010), to Tom and Charity Friesen, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Kathler—Jack Peter (b. Nov. 15, 2010), to Jonathan and Kim Kathler, Arnaud Mennonite, Man.

Kroeker—Sophie Ida Anne (b. Nov. 17, 2010), to Andrea and Antony (Tofield Mennonite, Alta.) Kroeker, in Fort McMurray, Alta.

Kuepfer—Shane Jerry (b. Nov. 21, 2010), to Jerry and Elizabeth Kuepfer, Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Leepoy-Brown—David Cooper (adopted on Nov. 5,

2010), by Michael Lee Poy and Thomas Brown, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

McKinnell—Liam Douglas (b. Nov. 2, 2010), to Matthew and Teresa McKinnell, Ottawa Mennonite, Ont.

McMullen—Grace Marion (b. Sept. 11, 2010), to Darryl and Lory McMullen, St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Nakoneshny—Nolan Joseph (b. Nov. 14, 2010), to Daren and Caitlin Nakoneshny, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Snider—Joel Frederick (b. Oct. 3, 2010), to Grant Snider and Sharon Cohen, Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal, Que.

Voth—Ethan Michael Peter (b. Oct. 20, 2010), to Andrew Voth and Amanda West, Toronto United Mennonite, Ont.

Wills—Austin Lee (b. Nov. 17, 2010), to Kim Freeman and John Wills, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Baptisms

Kyle Froese—Carman Mennonite, Man., Nov. 14, 2010.

Jared Koch—Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont., Oct. 31, 2010.

Grace Kroeker—Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask., Oct. 31, 2010.

Marriages

Bergen/Manske—Tomas Bergen (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.) and Candace Manske, at North Star Mennonite, Nov. 13, 2010.

Daniels/Thiessen—Shannon Daniels and Brian Thiessen, at Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont., Nov. 20, 2010.

Derksen/Regier—Sheldon Derksen (Hague Mennonite, Sask.) and Sherilyn Regier, at Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., Nov. 27, 2010.

Friesen/Regier—Jacy Friesen (Blumenort Mennonite, Gretna, Man.) and Carmen Reiger, at Mclvor MB, Winnipeg, Man., Nov. 20, 2010.

Gibney/Monette—Amber Gibney (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.) and Russel Monette, at North Star Mennonite, Nov. 27, 2010.

Green/Horensma—Justin Green (East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.) and Gloria Horensma, in Woodstock, Ont., Nov. 6, 2010.

Harms/Kathler—Wendy Nicole Harms and Michael Andrew Kathler, at Arnaud Mennonite, Man., Sept. 18, 2010.

Leis/McNeish—Chantelle Leis and Bryan McNeish, at East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont., June 19, 2010.

Schumm/Tonelli—Twila Schumm and Paul Tonelli, at East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont., Nov. 6, 2010.

Deaths

Baergen—Peter, 100 (b. July 30, 1910; d. Nov. 14, 2010), Tofield Mennonite, Alta.

Brubacher—Curtis, 93 (b. July 6, 1917; d. Nov. 24, 2010), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Bueckert—Katharina (nee Klassen), 87 (b. Dec. 26, 2010; d. Nov. 10, 2010), First Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Buschert—Betty, 76 (b. Jan. 7, 1934; d. Oct. 5, 2010), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

Cressman—Raymond Harold, 61 (b. Oct. 12, 1948; d. July 12, 2010), Zion Mennonite, Elmira, Ont.

Esau—George, 83 (b. Dec. 6, 1926; d. Oct. 12, 2010), First Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Esau—Katie (nee Friesen), 79 (b. Oct. 21, 1930; d. Sept. 28, 2010), First Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Gossen—Anni (nee Friesen), 82 (b. June 18, 1928; d. July 7, 2010), First Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Hamm—Helene (nee Loewen), 84 (b. Feb. 27, 1926; d. Nov. 12, 2010), First Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Hein—Hartwig, 72 (b. April 3, 1938; d. July 27, 2010), First Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Klassen—Hilda (nee Penner), 83 (b. Jan. 21, 1927; d. Nov. 20, 2010), Tofield Mennonite, Alta.

Kroeger—Pete, 85 (Sept. 12, 1924; d. July 27, 2010), First Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Lubosch—Erich, 72 (b. Jan. 23, 1938; d. Sept. 25, 2010), First Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Metzger—John, 77 (b. Feb. 13, 1933; d. Nov. 22, 2010), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Rempel—Pearl, 88 (b. Feb. 9, 1922; d. Nov. 19, 2010), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Roth—Barbara, 96 (b. June 24, 1914; d. Nov. 27, 2010), Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Roth—Cephas, 60 (b. May 13, 1950; d. Nov. 11, 2010), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

Schiedel—P. Richard, 78 (b. June 10, 1932; d. July 3, 2010), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

Siemens—Louise (nee Klassen), 87 (b. Sept. 15, 1923; d. Nov. 21, 2010), First Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Wideman—Hannah, 87 (b. Feb. 13, 1923; d. Aug. 15, 2010), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

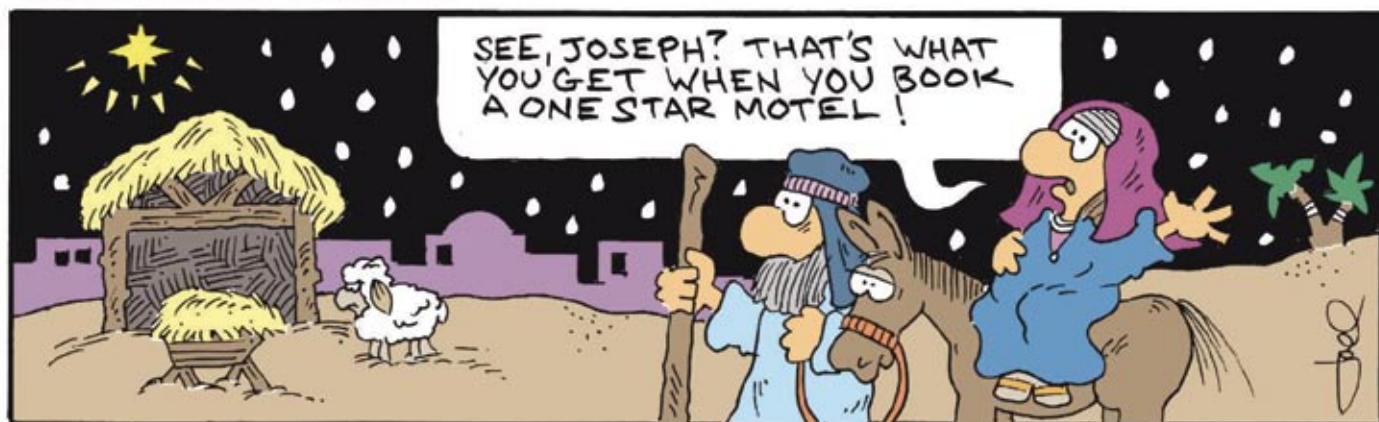
Witmer—W. Stewart, 91 (b. June 27, 1919; July 2, 2010), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

announcements within four months of the event.

Please send announcements by e-mail to milestones@canadianmennonite.org, including the congregation name and location.

Poncius' Puddle



STORIES OF FAITH IN LIFE

Confession is good for the soul

BY JACK DUECK

Six-year-old Tina runs into the house, the screen door slamming behind her. “Mama, Mama, there’s a car coming.”

A Ford Model T chugs up the dirt road, a pillar of dust trailing its approach. Turning into the yard, the automobile shudders into silence.

The driver steps out and asks, “Are you Jacob Thiessen*?”

“I am,” Jacob replies.

“I’m Stanley McCann. Are you the Jacob Thiessen who worked for my father on the Sunrise Ranch?”

“Yes, I am that Jacob Thiessen.”

From bitterness to grace

In 1926, Jacob and Elizabeth Thiessen had fled communist Russia, losing everything except their faith, each other and their two children. After working as hired hands on Canadian prairie farms,



outlying communities met locally for mid-week *Bibelbesprechungen* (Bible discussions). In a large refurbished granary the adults sat around a table, with the children on rough-sawn benches. Although the children were often bored in the large church, they always looked forward to those meetings.

Following a Bible reading, discussions ranged widely on how to practise the message in daily living. After a focus on the theme of grace and freedom in Christ one evening, Jacob related that, after

*‘Forgiving him was not enough, so I wrote him a letter telling him that I was giving him the money. With that giving, we were set free, finding peace and grace.’
(Jacob Thiessen)*

working for a rancher some 160 kilometres distant, the farmer had refused to pay him money owed when Thiessen decided to move to farming on his own.

“Times were tough” he said, “and with it resentment grew over his refusal to pay me. Wishing him ill festered into inner bitterness over the honest and good labour I had performed. Praying God to change Farmer McCann’s mind did not bring results. Our evening prayers turned hollow, peace and grace held captive by preoccupation with money owed. Finally Elizabeth and I decided that we had to deal with it from our hearts. Forgiving him was not enough, so I wrote him a letter telling him that I was giving him the money. With that giving, we were set free, finding peace and grace.”

The granary throbbed with the

concluding song: “A place I love and cherish, where the heart no longer is burdened; here the heart sings in sweet tones: O this is God’s throne of Grace! Here I found healing.”

Payback with interest

“I’m pleased I located you, Mr. Thiessen,” says McCann. “Shortly before he passed away, my father called our priest and, before receiving last rites, confessed before me and the priest that he had refused to pay you money you had earned. Then with the priest as witness he delegated me to bring you this cheque in person for the amount owed plus interest.”

After a stunned silence Elizabeth says, “We were about to eat our noon meal. Will you join us?”

At end of the meal Jacob says, “Thank you for coming. It is good to hear that your father found peace and grace. But we cannot accept the money.”

“Why? It was owed you.”

“I wrote your father a letter giving him the money a long time ago.”



they took advantage of a Canadian Pacific Railway offer for a 32-hectare farm.

Because the mother church was located a distance from some members, including the Thiessens, the

“Yes, I know about the letter. Well, I’ll leave it with you to give away to someone in need.”

“No, it’s not ours to give. For your father’s sake as well, choose a needy cause and give them the gift.”

As he leaves, the Thiessen children watch fascinated as McCann braces himself over the radiator while straining at the crank. With a muffled cough the engine thumps into rhythm. McCann shakes hands with Jacob and Elizabeth, then turning to Tina and her brother Peter, he says, “Since we’re into gift-giving, let me leave each of you with a chocolate bar. Christmas in July!” ❧

* All names are pseudonyms. Mennonite storyteller Jack Dueck can be reached by e-mail at eajdueck@gmail.com.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

'Reaching the unreached . . . should be the focus of the church'

Anabaptist participants inspired by Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization

BY BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER
Mennonite World Conference

At least 30 mission and church leaders represented Anabaptist-related communities at the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in South Africa this fall. The gathering, which attracted 4,000 mission leaders, pastors and academics from 198 countries, grew out of the Lausanne Movement that followed the first congress in Switzerland in 1974.

According to Richard Showalter, chair of Mennonite World Conference's Mission Commission, organizers billed the event as possibly the "most representative event in church history," and the "first event of its kind in the digital age."

"The congress has been a feast of networking and fellowship for the global church. I've been in a number of global church gatherings, but none as well-balanced as this," Showalter said, referring to both the content of the conference and the ethnic representation.

Delegates listened to international speakers, studied the epistle of Ephesians in plenary lectures and small groups, attended workshops, and compared notes on mission strategy and practices in an increasingly pluralistic and technologically sophisticated world.

Anabaptist participants, said Showalter, were gratified by the attention the congress gave to themes that Anabaptists often emphasize. "Much more than the first two Lausanne congresses, significant attention has been given to such topics as reconciliation, integrity, simplicity and justice," he said.

The "Cape Town Commitment," shaped by Lausanne leaders before and during the congress, declared: "God commands us to reflect his own character though

compassionate care for the needy, and to demonstrate the values and the power of the kingdom of God in striving for justice and peace, and in caring for God's creation."

Showalter also said that the focus on evangelization was embedded in theological and strategic reflection on the nature and unity of the church. "Lausanne appears to be getting more 'churchly' as the years pass," he quipped.

Two days before the end of the congress, 22 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ delegates attended an Anabaptist noontime huddle. Most had received a significant boost for their mission activities back home.

Tewodros Beyene, chair of Ethiopia's Meserete Kristos Church, was inspired by Lausanne's historic emphasis on evangelizing groups untouched by the gospel. "Reaching the unreached, whether rural or urban, should be the focus of the church," he said.

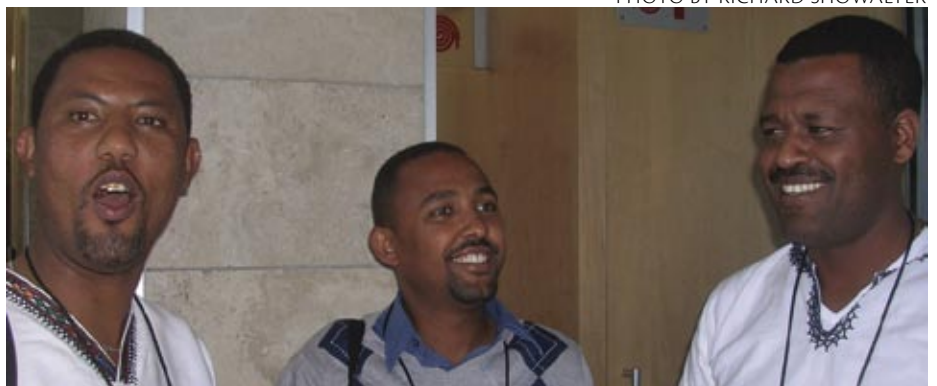
One theme that emerged during the congress was the suffering church. "It was awesome to hear first-hand testimonies of the plight of Christians striving to minister the gospel in the Middle East, India and China," said Barbara Nkala, an elder in the Brethren in Christ Church of Zimbabwe.

Stanley Green, a native South African and mission leader in Mennonite Church U.S.A., was impressed by the ethnic diversity evident at the congress. "More than any other global gathering I've participated in during the last few decades, the Third Lausanne Congress bore witness to the changed demographic where the South and the North, the East and the West, were present in numbers that reflect the church's presence in those parts of the world," he said.

As the congress ended, Showalter noted how the 16th-century European Believer's Church was foundational to the emergence of the missionary movement of the past 300 years. "The Lausanne Movement is deeply indebted to the suffering faith of the Anabaptist movement," he said.

The congress, like other gatherings of the global church in 2010, is particularly significant for the work of the new commissions of MWC, said Showalter. "One hundred years ago, mission was considered to be at the periphery of Christian theology and it was often marginalized in the churches. Today, it is front and centre. Cape Town 2010 both confirmed and illustrated this movement." ❧

PHOTO BY RICHARD SHOWALTER



Yemiru Tilahun, mission and evangelism director of Ethiopia's Meserete Kristos Church, right, poses with two leaders of an Ethiopian evangelical movement, the Emmanuel United Church of Ethiopia, which originated in the 1990s in the Coptic Orthodox Church. Emmanuel vice-president Samson Mariam, left, and president Bezalem Fisseha, centre, were mentored by Meserete Kristos leaders.

'Who do you say that I am?'

Metro Toronto congregations see their views of Jesus reflected in new play

STORY AND PHOTO

BY JOANNA REESOR-MCDOWELL

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

TORONTO, ONT.

Contemporary Mennonite disciples from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) were challenged this fall by a play entitled with the same question that Jesus posed two thousand years ago: "Who do you say that I am?"

The original one-act play was written by John Wideman, a recent student at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., who currently works as the peace program director at Willowgrove, an outdoor education/recreation centre and primary school in Stouffville, Ont.

"The idea was to create a play which represented the individual congregations while also demonstrating the larger connectivity of the GTA Mennonite Cluster," Wideman says.

He asked each church to ponder Jesus and his role in their faith by reflecting on the simple question he asked his disciples. As the stories came in, Wideman realized that the play would have to be a "celebration that acknowledged the diversity and beauty of community."

Testimonials shared through monologues spoke about past and present experiences within the churches that give hope. One spoke about help facing addictions, another about being able to forgive and receive healing from memories of war in El Salvador, while a third reflected on the beauty of being in an English service yet faintly hearing hymns sung in Cantonese in a different part of the church.

These stories were interspersed with dialogues with a Jesus figure played by Bhekimpilo Moyo, an International Voluntary Exchange Program volunteer from Zimbabwe serving at Willowgrove.



John Wideman, centre (in vest), wrote the play Who Do You Say That I Am? that was performed by members of various Greater Toronto Area Mennonite churches at Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church this fall.

Wideman says that hearing the stories and writing the play have been "truly rewarding" experiences for him.

The GTA Gathering, a bi-annual event involving congregations affiliated with

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, including two with emerging status, in the Toronto area, was hosted by Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church on Oct. 23. ❧

Rockway Mennonite celebrates golden anniversary

BY MARGARET LOEWEN REIMER

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

KITCHENER, ONT.

Rockway Mennonite Church was born Oct. 2, 1960, in a barn on the campus of Rockway Mennonite School, Kitchener. Fifty years to the day later, the congregation gathered in its current sanctuary to celebrate a half-century of life together.

Highlights of the celebration, which continued the next day, included memories from each decade, the unveiling of new fabric and metal works of art, and rousing challenges by two voices from the past: founding pastor Edgar J. Metzler (1960-61) and John W. Snyder (1967-91).

The weekend also featured some of the musical talent within the church, including a choir led by Lynda Mieske, soloists Daniel Lichti and Kimberly Barber, young pianist Keenan Reimer-Watts, and worship pianist Lorna Sawatsky. Harpist Patricia Johnston, daughter of the late Howard Good, Rockway pastor from 1961-66 and the only former

pastor not at the celebrations, was a guest musician. The Oct. 3 service included reflections by Allan Rudy-Froese (pastor from 1992-99) and a sermon by current pastor Scott Brubaker-Zehr.

Originally an offshoot of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Rockway is now a diverse congregation of 178 members, including many young families. The congregation has always met in rented space, from the school barn to the library (1961-80) and then to a multi-purpose area in the Rockway school building (1980-2005). In 2005, the congregation experienced a major change as it left the school and began leasing space in the historic Zion United Church building in downtown Kitchener.

Many former members returned to celebrate the anniversary with the congregation. While visiting, eating or trying out the birthday cake, participants could

ROCKWAY MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO BY LEWIS BRUBACHER



Betsy Petker opens the gate for the children's processional during Rockway Mennonite Church's 50th anniversary service on Oct. 3.

wander through the display of 750 labelled photographs illustrating the five decades of Rockway life.

Rockway has passed through many phases in its 50-year history, evolving from an informal group intent on wide-ranging discussion, to a mixed congregation with an appreciation for well-planned liturgy. Over the years, the church has become more involved in the wider church and in social programs, such as refugee

sponsorships, a carbon offset initiative and local organizations.

Unchanged are Rockway's commitment to being a welcoming community and nurturing children in the Mennonite-Christian faith. Rockway has an unusually high proportion of children and youths at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp and Rockway Mennonite Collegiate each year—one of many signs of hope for the future of Rockway Mennonite Church. ❧

No 'one size fits all'

MC Eastern Canada pastors challenge MC Canada Christian Formation Council over national church education products

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

Campbell Nisbet, a member of Mennonite Church Canada's Christian Formation Council and the director of Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, expressed pleasure at the animated participation of about 30 MC Eastern Canada

pastors at an Oct. 19 lunch at the camp.

Pastors challenged the council on the "semester" quality of children's Christian Formation materials.

Ellie Huebner of Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden, noted that some of the



Lisa Carr-Pries, left, chair of Mennonite Church Canada's Christian Formation Council, discusses the council's relationship with local congregations with Kevin Peters-Unrau, a pastor from Stirling Ave. Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.

material expects a lot from teachers and that there seems to be an imbalance between "head and heart" in the material, with a focus on knowledge.

With children coming to church once in three or four weeks, Herb Sawatzky of Avon Mennonite, Stratford, noted that materials that build on previous lessons don't work.

There was a general consensus that Bible knowledge is very low. Children need to have the basic story of Jesus' birth told in preparing for the Christmas play, reported Tanya Dyck Steinman of East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock.

Lynn Williams of Agape Fellowship House Churches, London, pleaded for "making [Bible] stories relevant to people" from many walks of life, including "those living on \$500 a month" or "coming from abusive relationships."

In response to these and many other comments about the Bible, Christian Formation Council chair Lisa Carr Pries said that the 2012 MC Canada assembly will include a focus on how Mennonites read, understand and use the Bible.

While the participation was generally positive, concerns were expressed that there is no longer a "one size fits all" in Christian Formation, in worship in congregations, in congregants, or in how congregations view area and national churches.

Charleen Jongejan Harder, one of the

pastors of Valleyview Mennonite Church, London, noted that young adults are more interested in worship and study than in committees or church structures.

Erb St. Mennonite Church, Waterloo, feels distant from the national church, said pastor Eleanor Epp-Stobbe, and finds its resources and support in the area church.

Huebner, on the other hand, noted that she accesses MC Canada's online resource centre more often than the one in Kitchener. ❧

What is the Spirit saying to the churches?

Budget deficit leads to soul-searching in MC Eastern Canada

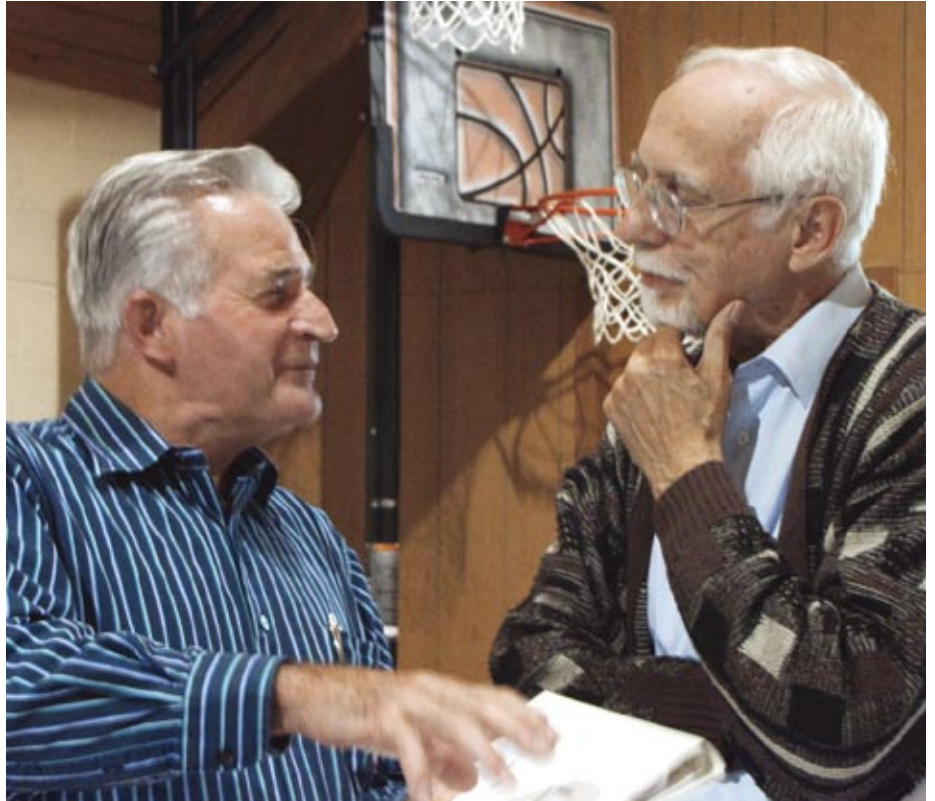
BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent

“The deficit was the precipitating issue. . . . We could either slash budget with choices made very quickly or take time for some better-quality discernment.”

This was how David Martin, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada executive minister, explained why he, other staff and the Executive Board engaged area church congregations and agencies in a consultation this fall.

“We could do this as just the Executive Board, but given the new challenges facing the church at this point in time, the sense was this was a good opportunity to look at where we want to move into the future as an area church,” Martin said, explaining, “This isn't just about readjusting budget, including looking for revenues, but how do we see the church positioning itself to engage God's call into a new future that is emerging and unfolding.”

Held in seven geographical areas, plus an extra meeting with such agencies as Mennonite Central Committee and *Canadian Mennonite*, representatives were presented with the opportunities



Ernie Martin of Bethel Mennonite Church, Elora, Ont., chats with MC Eastern Canada moderator Aldred Neufeldt at a recent consultation meeting between the area church and local congregations.

and challenges facing the area church now, and were asked to discern ministry priorities and to think about how to generously fund MC Eastern Canada ministry into the future.

With an eye on the area church's focus statement, “Extending the peace of Jesus Christ: Making disciples, growing congregations, forming leaders,” Martin sees this as a time to discern how God wants MC Eastern Canada to be missional, and to intentionally be a reconciling people, doing more than just caring for its member churches, but reaching out into those churches' communities.

While specific local issues arose at many meetings—the Stratford cluster had questions about the ending of funding for Agape Fellowship House Churches in London and Soulspace in Stratford—Martin felt that overall there was a strong interest and concern for integrating the life of congregations with the area and national churches.

There was a concern about the health of more than just the local church, though.

Martin admits that, while the Executive Board entered the process assuming that there would be a place for the area and national churches, it was prepared to hear from the churches that perhaps more should be done locally than as an area or national church.

At each meeting the fact that financial giving to congregations is up significantly was noted, but that this is not resulting in more money going to the area church. MC Eastern Canada automatically sends just under 40 percent of its received donations to MC Canada and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, a figure that has been in place for a number of years and was based on historical giving in the conferences that joined to form MC Eastern Canada.

A person not connected to the area church will be correlating the responses and material from all seven meetings, with a report going to the Executive Board by early 2011. The results will then be shared with participants and the congregations later in the year. ❧

Eighth Letter challenges North American church

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

TORONTO, ONT.

Jesus sent seven letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor in the Revelation of John.

Following in his footsteps, the Epiphaneia Network—“four friends who envision Jesus’ followers being equipped and inspired to subvert and redeem powers, plant mustard seeds and point flashlights towards lost coins”—invited a diverse group of Christians to St. Paul’s Anglican Church, Toronto, in early October, to write an Eighth Letter, this one to the church of North America.

One of the four friends is Stephen Cox, minister of youth and Christian education at Niagara United Mennonite Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont. The purpose of the event, he said, was “about sharing our most pressing message for the church we love.”

The group of writers/readers included theologian Walter Brueggeman, who read his letter on a video; Samantha Goodyear, a 12-year-old pastor’s daughter who spoke eloquently about the church as community;

author Shane Claiborne, a founding member of a “new monastic” community in Philadelphia, Pa., and a prominent activist for nonviolence and service to the poor; Ron Sider and many others.

There were a few fireworks the first evening (Oct. 1) when Wendy Gritter, a recognized contributor in the conversation around faith and sexuality, and Tim Challies, who preached on substitutionary atonement as the core of the gospel, were invited into discussion. While Gritter extended a hope of Christians agreeing to love each other as God loves within the Trinity, Challies held to his tough-love message based on what he called “the historical consensus of the church” around the theology of substitutionary atonement.

The next day, American artist Makoto Fujimura made a plea for the inclusion of art in the postmodern church, instead of just theology: “You began to believe in the late 18th century that we needed rational categories to try to protect ‘faith’ from ‘reason.’ Reason began to win the battle in this

false dichotomy. As a consequence, you began to suspect the mystery of our being and the miraculous presence of God behind the visible.”

In a teleconference discussion of the event, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada participants brainstormed ways to bring either the content or the idea of the Eighth Letter to area church congregations in 2011.

During the teleconference, Claiborne re-iterated his “seven piles of poop” for the church to avoid and “12 flags” for the church to salute (see sidebar below). Claiborne’s participation was sponsored by MC Eastern Canada as a representative of postmodern Anabaptist thinking and practice. ❧



MC Eastern Canada participants Ray Martin, Glyn Jones (former MC Canada Witness worker), and Jim Loepp Thiessen of The Gathering Church, Kitchener, Ont., discuss the presentations at the Eighth Letter event in Toronto, Ont., in early October.

Shane Claiborne’s ‘seven piles of poop’

- Counterfeit gospels, such as the prosperity gospel or the political gospel.
- Sins of Sodom: arrogance and inhospitality.
- Sloppy liberalism.
- Obsession with cultural relevancy.
- Emptiness of the mega-church.
- The lure of virtual community.
- Polarization of positions.

Shane Claiborne’s ‘12 flags to salute’

- Rediscover spiritual formation.
- Remember our Christian roots.
- Embrace suffering.
- Let Jesus and justice kiss.
- Develop a consistent ethic of life.
- Make room for creativity and imagination.
- Build communities of love.
- Be pro-church, not para-church.
- Pray and act.
- Rethink what sin is. Sin is falling short of love, hurting self and others.
- Practise confession.
- Fall in love with Jesus again.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

A truly inspiring visit

STORY AND PHOTO BY RAY AND MARGARET BRUBACHER

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

How does one rise above the language of “everyone here is on the take” in a country where a former president was called a “kleptomaniac”? In a country in which more lives have been lost in violent conflict during the past decade than in any other conflict since World War II? In a country notorious for its violence against women, where rape has been fine-tuned as a weapon of war, and where many people first hear of fistula operations?

How does one rise above all this?

First, by taking a closer look at the people, the vast majority of whom are delightful, energetic, inventive and musical to the core.

Second, by taking a closer look at the church. Throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo’s rocky journey since independence in 1960, the church has been widely acknowledged as the one stable institution that has provided some degree of cohesion and purpose. A close look at the Congolese church would reveal that women numerically dominate attendance, but not at the leadership level—something not unique to the Congo.

In 2001, several women in ministry formed the Association de Theologienne Mennonite au Congo. Its goals include promoting unity among Mennonite women, finding ways to enhance their theological training, and addressing issues of family life, especially gender-based violence. Sidonie Swana of the Mennonite Community in Congo serves as vice-president and also president of the nationwide Association of Theologienne Protestante au Congo.

Five years ago, Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., expressed interest in developing a relationship with an international church. Given the imminent historic vote planned for the Congo in 2006, and given that several Waterloo North members had roots in the Congo, six members agreed to serve as international election monitors.

The relationship has deepened over the

years since then. In October, we continued the personal exchanges by visiting the women theologians on behalf of Waterloo North. We met with them under a large tree during the afternoon, shading us from the hot sun. Discussion went “overtime,” with the result that our meal was shared by the light of the moon.

Last year, Waterloo North provided funds so that the Mennonite women theologians could conduct seminars on family violence in Kinshasa, the capital. Subsequent funding was provided this year to conduct the seminars in the country’s interior, but they were cancelled by one of the church conferences at the last minute. As we talked, some of the women theologians wondered if it was because of their gender.

Conversation drifted to the extreme gender-based violence in eastern Congo, particularly in the area of Goma, sometimes referred to as “the rape capital of the world.” Because of the high profile given this region, many people around the world

generalize that Congo is rampant with horrific cases of rape and pillage. This is not the case. However, the women theologians emphasized that the impact of the sexual violence in the east is felt throughout the country.

Some of the violated women literally walk across the country to escape the pillage and seek help, taking months to eventually arrive in Kinshasa. Not only do the violated walk their streets, said the women, but so do the violators who also cross the country.

The impact is also felt in the food supply. Eastern Congo has long been a major supplier of fresh vegetables and fruits. Women are the primary farmers. They often get attacked while working in the fields. As they flee the carnage, this food supply to the rest of the country declines.

We asked the women theologians, “If the sexual violence is primarily in the east, what kind of violence do you address in your seminars?” Their answer: “We have violence in our own churches. That is where we start. Men abuse their wives and children verbally, emotionally and physically. At home, why should the girls work while the boys play? Why should the mother work all day while her husband sits doing nothing? That is violence.” ❧

PHOTO BY RAY BRUBACHER



Margaret Brubacher, right, of Waterloo North Mennonite Church, exchanges gifts with Beatrice Kadi and Sidonie Swana of the Association de Theologienne Mennonite au Congo during a recent visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo. She and her husband Ray visited on behalf of their congregation.

Youths, parents get 'wired' at communication workshop

FROM A REPORT BY JANE AND ANNA KUEPFER

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
KITCHENER, ONT.

“When I saw ‘Wired: Building relationships in 140 characters or less’ advertised, I recognized an opportunity to have a conversation with others and with our 13-year-old daughter about communicating well, connecting across generations, understanding and loving one another in the midst of this fast-paced, technology-focused world,” says mother Jane Kuepfer. “So I signed us up.”

“I went hoping it would convince Mom to let me get Facebook,” says daughter Anna.

On Oct. 29 and 30, youths and parents gathered at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate for a fun time of interacting as families. As they played communication games, ate Grebel cookies, laughed and talked together, both generations learned that families hurt—their worst hurts come from their families—but God intends families for good, and although the media shows lots of dysfunction, it is possible for families to be healthy.

Marv Penner, the national director of Youth Specialties Canada and an associate staff member of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding, explained that “families that ‘work’” have teens who understand that from the time they are 10 or so they need to take equal responsibility, along with parents, for the emotional climate of their homes.

“When Marv asked us to list the things that exasperate us about our parents—‘Parents, do not exasperate your children’ (Ephesians 6:4)—we found lots of similarities,” says Anna. “Criticism, nagging, judging friends, trying to be ‘cool,’ not wanting us to be independent, unique or different.”

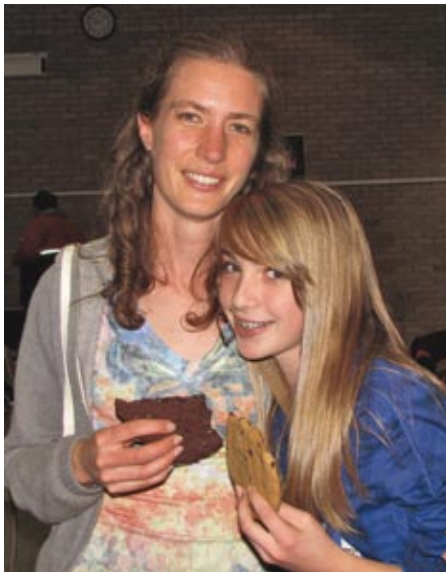
“And we parents enjoyed listing the ways our children could honour us—‘Honour your father and mother’ (Exodus 20:12)—adds Jane, “including saying thank you, helping, getting to know us as people, and

respecting the possibility that we might occasionally know what we’re talking about!”

Participants from both generations learned about levels of conversation and communication killers. Then as families they talked about what they experience in their homes. Penner left participants with the challenge to decide what each person is prepared to do to make his or her family a better place for everybody.

On the second day, both generations again came together for “Connecting well with a wired, wild, worldly-wise, wonderful generation.” Conversation centred around the world today’s youths are growing up in, the “bright side” and “dark side” of social networking, cell phones, texting and gaming, in an effort to help shape more informed, faithful interaction between teens and their parents.

MC EASTERN CANADA PHOTO



Jane and Anna Kuepfer enjoy some ‘face-to-face’ time at the recent ‘Wired: Building relationships in 140 characters or less’ event at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont.

“It’s a weird situation we’re in, being the first generation where parents need to learn some basic survival skills—technology usage—from their children,” says Anna.

“We need to keep in mind, and take responsibility for, all the other important things about life that youths still need to learn through their parents,” says Jane.

In their home the Kuepfers will continue to value their time together, making decisions about the use of technology so that, rather than dividing and isolating the generations, it can be a communication tool that connects them in good ways with each other and with the world.

The event was co-sponsored by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, the Canadian Conference of the Brethren in Christ and Mennonite Central Committee Ontario. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

CMU establishes pastor-in-residence program

WINNIPEG, MAN. — Canadian Mennonite University is benefiting from a new student life program that brings a pastor-in-residence to the campus for a week during each of the fall and winter academic terms. Dan Unrau, lead pastor at Fraserview Mennonite Brethren Church, Richmond, B.C., served as CMU’s first pastor-in-residence in October, while Carol Penner, pastor at The First Mennonite Church, Vineland, Ont., will assume the role in February. “The pastor-in-residence is invited to participate in the life of the CMU community by being available for pastoral care through one-on-one time with students, faculty and staff, and by sharing his or her faith story through our CMU chapel sessions,” says Marilyn Peters Kliewer, CMU’s dean of student life. She notes that the aim of the program is both to encourage spiritual growth among members of the CMU community, while also helping to build and maintain close connections with the university’s supporting churches.

—Canadian Mennonite University

Thus far has the Lord helped us!

Three years after flooding, Eigenheim Mennonite moves into new church building

BY ALLAN FRIESEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
EIGENHEIM, SASK.

How does one recognize the end of an era but still take joy in something new? This was only one of the many questions and thoughts that accompanied Eigenheim Mennonite Church's decommissioning and dedication services on Nov. 7.

The Eigenheim congregation was formally organized in 1894. When a log church was built in 1896, it was the first Mennonite church building in what was then the North-West Territories. Six years later, the log church was replaced by a white frame building, and in 1954 that structure was completely rebuilt.

For 108 years, generations of the Eigenheim congregation worshiped on the same spot. Unfortunately, flooding of the basement and structural damage to the old building in 2007 led to much soul-searching and the decision to build a new church on the same site. A year after ground-breaking, the congregation was able to formalize the move to its new house of worship.

The morning decommissioning service included reminiscing by Eigenheim's three deacons and the oldest and youngest congregational members about the worship life in the old church and the changes that had taken place through the years. Barb Froese, co-pastor of Rosthern Mennonite Church, who was raised and baptized in the Eigenheim church, reminded the congregation that God had been with it until now, and she encouraged everyone to take a small piece of foundation stone home with them as their "Ebenezer."

After morning worship, the pulpit was carried from the old church to the new building while the congregation processed into the foyer, where a short litany of dedication inaugurated the new church to the service of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Following the fellowship meal, it was



PHOTO BY MARYVEL FRIESEN

After morning worship, the pulpit is carried from the old Eigenheim Mennonite Church to the new building as the congregation processes behind it. A short litany of dedication inaugurates the new church to the service of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

time for a formal dedication and communion service. The Eigenheim adult and children's choirs sang to God's glory and the congregation soaked in the moment of finally being in a new church home!

Greetings were delivered either in person or by letter from various congregations, including Eigenheim's sister church, Horse Lake Mennonite, and its international

sister church, Ibague Mennonite Church of Colombia, that had dedicated its own church building a year earlier, thanks to help from Eigenheim members.

Congregational members pray that their new place of worship might be a sign of hope for the future of God's kingdom in rural Saskatchewan. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

CMU celebrates its 10th anniversary with fall fundraiser

WINNIPEG, MAN.—On Oct. 29, Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) celebrated its 10th anniversary with its annual fall fundraiser, "CMU in Season." "In many ways we can celebrate success," president Gerald Gerbrandt told the crowd, explaining that CMU has expanding student populations; a committed faculty that work as a team; holds membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada, which gives it more credibility; and that programs at Menno Simons College and the Shaftesbury campus are increasing to include more subject areas beyond the initial offering of biblical and theological studies and music courses. Looking into the future, CMU plans to begin construction on a new library and a bridge that connects the north and south campuses. Although there are many dreams for the future, according to Art DeFehr, who serves on CMU's board of directors and was instrumental in many of the processes leading to CMU's creation, this anniversary marks "one more arch to an unknown future of possibilities."

—BY RACHEL BERGEN

'Following the model of Jesus'

Central Americans gather for 35th Anabaptist consultation

BY BYRON REMPEL BURKHOLDER

Mennonite World Conference

Ethics and commitment were the focus of this year's annual meeting of the Consulta Anabautista Menonita Centroamericana (CAMCA), held in early September in San Marcos, Carazo, Nicaragua. The 35th meeting of the long-standing theological consultation was also marked by a strong showing of women theologians, who had held their own gathering immediately prior.

In all, 18 men and 36 women participated, most of whom serve in Bible teaching or leadership capacities in Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize

and Panama.

Keynote speaker Silvia Regina de Lima Silva of Costa Rica led the group in reflecting on the theme of "Conversion and discipleship: An urgent call to the faith community to live the ethics of the kingdom."

"We will overcome only by following the model of Jesus, who rose above temptation by abiding in God's Word . . . in daily practice," a report of the gathering said. The conference also stressed the kingdom of God as a present reality, not only an event in the future: "We believers should create conditions for it to be perceived, seen and felt in our communities," the report said.

Participants also drafted a declaration of commitment:

- As a church we are challenged to rethink our conversion as a continuous process in life.
- We must revitalize our faith community by means of the study and the practice of the gospel of Jesus.
- We must use the spaces God is opening to us in our society to become leaven and mustard seed.
- As a church and as individuals we must be vigilant against the temptation of seeking power and recognition. ✎

Central American women release study resource

BY BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER

Mennonite World Conference

A sense of solidarity and fellowship took a leap forward at the third meeting of Encuentro de Mujeres Teólogas Anabautistas de Centro América, Belice y Panamá (Anabaptist Women Theologians of Central America, Belize and Panama).

The gathering included the launch of a study book published by the Guatemalan-based Anabaptist publisher, Ediciones Semilla. Entitled *El mensaje liberador de Jesús para las mujeres hoy* (The liberating message of Jesus for women today), the book contains reflections, presentations and a declaration prepared during the 2009 gathering in Paraguay of the Anabaptist Women Theologians of Latin America, which commissioned the book. It also includes eight guides for Bible studies that can be used in meetings of women and men who are committed to the building of God's reign.

The gathering also featured addresses by Costa Rican speaker Silvia Regina de Lima Silva on the theme of "Considering the role of women in church: New biblical paradigms from the daily routine," along with Bible studies, sharing of experiences and discussion of further directions for women doing theology in the region.

"Biblical and theological reflection from a woman's

perspective is a story that builds from the periphery," reported Sandra Campos and Olga Piedrasanta. "At church, a reflection has grown from the presence of women in the different ministries. It's been a long process, even slow—but steady, diverse and very rich."

Participants identified challenges they face in their churches, including the use and misuse of power. Campos and Piedrasanta noted that participants asked, "As Anabaptist women, do we use service as power? Why serve others? Is that a way to dominate?"

The group drafted a declaration that included six commitments to enhance the church's mission, particularly in the lives of women:

- Strengthen Bible study.
- Promote dialogue on gender equality.
- Promote models of leadership that reconcile the biblical with the contextual.
- Promote further theological exchanges among women in various countries and organizations.
- "Awaken and nourish" a spirit of sisterhood among women in leadership.
- Acknowledge the value of a woman's body as "sacred space." ✎

'The big family of God'

Sister Church relationships strengthen ties between believers

BY CHAD UMBLE
Mennonite Central Committee

Each Sunday during worship, members of Hyde Park Mennonite Church in Boise, Idaho, light a prayer lamp and think of their brothers and sisters at Iglesia de Dios, a church in the Colombian city of Puerto Asis. The weekly ritual, which is mirrored at Iglesia de Dios, includes the sharing of any communication that the Colombian congregation sent to Hyde Park, its long-time "sister" church.

The link is one of 12 active relationships between Colombian churches and congregations in Canada and the United States. Justapaz, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partner and a ministry of the Colombian Mennonite Church, facilitates the Sister Church Program.

"Sister Church relationships help churches feel part of the global body of Christ. Many churches, especially in Colombia, feel alone in their work and struggle to make visible the kingdom of God here on earth," says Amanda Guldemon, an MCC worker from Waterloo, Ont., who lives in Bogotá and serves as the Sister Church

coordinator.

Alissa Bender, associate pastor of First Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta., says its sister church, Iglesia Menonita de Berna, is included in monthly prayers and e-mails. Bender says that, while the relationship continues simply, it drives home the reality of the global church.

Children in the Pioneer Girls Club at Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil, Ont., have sent Valentine's Day gifts to their counterparts at Comunidad Menonita de Pereira, and the two churches also exchange regular e-mails and prayer requests, says Siegelinde De Jong, who leads the Sister Church team at Bethany.

Bethany Mennonite also sponsored its Sister Church's senior pastor, Martha Lucia Gomez, to attend the 2009 Mennonite World Conference global assembly in Asunción, Paraguay. De Jong says that Gomez was "bubbling over with joy and thankfulness" at the opportunity, adding, "Yes, we feel very blessed in this relationship with each other, and so does

the Pereira church, as we grow ever closer together as one in Christ."

Josie Winterfeld, the missions, peace and justice outreach worker at Stirling Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., says, "I think for our North American congregation, it is really important for us to have a sense of being a part of the global church."

German Barragan, a member of Villas de Granada in Bogotá, says that, with the partnership with Stirling, "it is great to know we are all part of the big family of God," adding, "By keeping in touch and exchanging experiences more often, and maintaining communication to exchange ideas, needs and concerns, we can support each other and strengthen the relationship between our communities."

Several Colombian churches are on a waiting list for Canadian or American Sister Church partners, Guldemon says. Churches considering becoming a Sister Church can contact her at iglesiashermanas@justapaz.org or visit justapaz.org, and follow the "Sister Church" link. ☸

What does North American Mennonite worship look like?

Binational Worship Council to create a study guide, survey congregations on a new hymnal in 2011

BY JOHN LONGHURST
Mennonite Publishing Network

What does worship look like in Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. congregations? What makes it different from worship in non-denominational, Baptist or Lutheran churches? Those are the kinds of questions that Binational Worship Council members wrestled with at their three-day meeting in Elkhart, Ind., in early October.

In preparation for the meeting, council

MCC PHOTO BY AMANDA GULDEMOND



Members of sister churches Stirling Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., and Villas de Granada, Bogotá, Colombia, introduce themselves to each other at the 2009 Mennonite World Conference general assembly in Paraguay. They met every day to share and discuss what they were learning.

members did extensive reading about the nature of worship, and each came with a list of statements about who God is and what God is doing in worship in their own churches.

“Council members come from a variety of different kinds of congregations. Yet our statements about our core beliefs for worship—about who God is and what God is doing in worship—had such uniformity, even when we used slightly different words,” says Amy Gingerich, editorial director at Mennonite Publishing Network and co-chair of the council. “For example, we all affirmed the central role of Scripture in worship, but we all phrased that affirmation in our own way.”

Some of the other core beliefs about worship that emerged include:

- Jesus is the centre of worship.
- Worship is a central act in congregations on both sides of the border.
- Worship is about the gathered community and relationships.
- Worship happens when the body of Christ gathers.

“In naming our core beliefs about worship, we named our ideals,” says Gingerich. “Yet we also recognized that we aren’t always living up to those ideals in our churches Sunday after Sunday.”

The list of core beliefs and key theological themes will be further refined in December, when the council gathers again to write a four-part study guide about worship in MC Canada and MC U.S.A. congregations.

“The guide will be a way for churches of all worship styles to think about their worship, and how it reflects key Anabaptist/Mennonite ways of worshipping,” says Gingerich.

In addition to the study guide, the council is preparing a survey that asks basic demographic questions about MC Canada and MC U.S.A. congregations, as well as what songs they sing. Information collected through the survey will be used by the council to determine whether a new hymnal is needed and, if so, what songs it should include.

Canada is represented on the Binational Worship Council by co-chair Dave Bergen, executive secretary of MC Canada Christian Formation; Irma Fast

Dueck, professor of worship at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Man.;

and Mark Diller Harder, pastor of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, Ont. ✺

What does it mean to be successful?

MC B.C. youths urged to consider their identity as ‘beloved children of God’

STORY AND PHOTO BY KRISTINA TOEWS

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
HOPE, B.C.

For the Mennonite youth groups of British Columbia’s Fraser Valley, this year’s annual Senior Youth Impact Retreat at Camp Squeah was especially exciting because there was snow on the ground! Twelve congregations from Chilliwack to Vancouver sent youths, and everyone was thrilled to welcome the group from Western Hmong Mennonite Church of Maple Ridge for the first time.

While the weekend was colder than normal, a great time was still had by all, with retro games, jousting competitions and

“finding a balloon master.”

The sessions were also a huge highlight. Throughout the weekend, speaker Michele Herschberger, a youth ministry professor at Hesston College, Kan., delved into the topic of identity. The first night she challenged youths with the questions, “Who am I?” and, “What does it mean to be successful?” She explained that God’s success is different than the world’s success, and urged the youths to consider their identity as beloved children of God. The next morning, the youths were encouraged to



Mennonite Church B.C. youths try to untangle themselves from a human knot at the Senior Youth Impact Retreat at Camp Squeah.

consider how Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman both needed Jesus (Luke 7:36-50).

In response to the first two sessions, the youths were invited to be anointed and prayed for by several youth leaders, which was a new and powerful experience for many.

In the final sessions Herschberger led the group to imagine Paul in prison, and

that for him it was enough to have kept the faith. She also highlighted the fact that all things are possible with Jesus. In the same way that Jesus expressed his belief in Peter to lead the church and gave him a new name, everyone at the retreat also received a new name and were called to live out the reality that Jesus is the Messiah and to follow wherever he leads.

Of Herschberger's presentation, Victoria

Moua of Western Hmong Mennonite said, "I realized that there isn't only one way to be successful, but that you can also be successful through Christ."

Solomon Thiessen from Level Ground Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, said, "For me, the best part is that you realize there are people who believe in the same faith and will support you." ❧

Encountering God in every sense

Story and Photo by Saskatchewan Women in Mission
WALDHEIM, SASK.

Tasting honey, listening to the recorded sounds of lapping waves, wiping their faces and hands with a warm, moist cloth: these were just some of the ways that the 45 women who attended the Saskatchewan Women in Mission's annual fall retreat used their five senses to experience and worship God. The event was held in mid-

October at the Shekinah Retreat Centre.

The words of Judith Kirk, "To sense is to encounter the majesty of God, the wonder, the joy, the inspiration, . . . learning how to comprehend how blessed we are, and so loved, to be given such a sense of the glory of God," set the stage for the retreat.

Quoting from Jan Richardson, Naomi

Unger, a member of the program committee, told the women that all of their senses are God's gifts and can serve as doorways to a relationship with God. In their presentations, Unger and Marian Hooge Jones shared personal experiences, involved the women in reading Scripture and provided guided opportunities for everyone to focus on the particular sense being discussed.

These activities helped the participants to consider:

- Can we taste that the Lord is good?
- Is our life a sweet-smelling aroma that attracts others to Christ, and are our praises and prayers a fragrant offering to God?
- Do our eyes see the creativeness and mystery of God in God's created world, and the image of God in all people?
- What sounds convey God's presence for us? Will we recognize God in all his guises, and God's voice in silence as well as through Scripture and God's Spirit?
- Have we been touched by Christ's Spirit and will we dare to reach out and touch others and God in the same way?

Participants had the opportunity to peruse the display tables with items from Ten Thousand Villages and the Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre, as well as from wood carver Irene Harms of Hague, painter Nadine Enns of Laird, and fabric crafter and candle maker Gwen Fehr, also of Hague. ❧



Women at the Saskatchewan Women in Mission fall retreat encountered God with all of their senses, including the sense of taste during the service of communion. Pictured, Ruby Harder, left, holds the cup for Gladys Block to dip her wafer in.

From Paraguay to Uzbekistan

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON, ALTA.

Asked why history is important, Dave Toews answered, “It’s so important for us to know where we’re coming from, to know where we are going.” He also believes history helps people live in the present.

Toews was one of four presenters at the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta’s fall conference, held Nov. 20 at Edmonton’s First Mennonite Church, who travelled to far-off places in search of present understandings of the past.

Toews described his father as a man who “did not make small talk,” and told “raw, objective stories” about the Bible and Russian Mennonite history. His mother, he said, told emotional stories, including “running from bandits to hide in the cornfields at night.”

A Mennonite Heritage Cruise in Ukraine gave Toews the chance to reflect on those stories in context. In the remains of his mother’s village he saw a home the family had purchased in 1911. After talking with the current occupant, Toews donated towards window repairs, a gesture of connection between his past and present.

Vince Friesen became interested in Mennonites after attending the Mennonite

World Conference in Ascunción, Paraguay, in 2009. Friesen summarized the history, and marvelled at survival in what the settlers referred to as Paraguay’s “green hell.” The emergence of strong communities, thriving agriculture and growing prosperity is a continuing testament to the tenacity and faith of Paraguayan Mennonites, he said.

Menno Klaassen retraced his great-grandfather’s footsteps in Uzbekistan with TourMagination. Klaassen’s relatives were among the Mennonites who followed Claas Epp on the Great Trek out of Ukraine in the 1880s.

“The highlight of trip for me was a visit to the Kyk-Ota Mosque,” Klaassen said, noting that the local Muslim community provided crucial aid to the original trekkers, even permitting the use of the mosque for worship. “This story needs to be told,” said Klaassen.

During his visit, Klaassen presented the imam with a wooden bowl he had made and engraved with the words; “With gratitude for your uncommon hospitality and friendship, 1881-82. The Mennonite Trekkers.”

PHOTO BY MENNO KLAASSEN



Menno Klaassen made this wooden bowl as an expression of gratitude for the Muslim community at the Kyk-Ota Mosque, Uzbekistan. The community provided crucial aid to the Mennonite Trekkers of 1881-82. Klaassen said the imam told him, “Given the same circumstance, we would react the same way.”

Colin Neufeldt, assistant professor of history at Concordia University College of Alberta, told story snippets from his paper about the experience of Mennonite Kulaks in Siberian settlements from 1928-32.

Asked who should attend the historical society gatherings, Neufeldt replied, “Everyone, actually. The point is, if we don’t know what our history is about, I think we lose something that ties us all together. . . . Those accounts of what people went through are often a source of strength when you have to deal with future difficulties.”

PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD



From left to right, the presenters at the Nov. 20 meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta: Colin Neufeldt, Menno Klaassen, Dave Toews and Vince Friesen.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Remembering peace

IVEPers give international greeting on Remembrance Day

Mennonite Central Committee
WARMAN, SASK.

Wearing both the traditional red poppy and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) alternative peace button, Ying Ying Wang from China and Santiago Gomez from Colombia—participants in MCC’s International Volunteer Exchange Program—stood before a crowd of 600 people gathered in Warman for a Remembrance Day service, and talked about peace.

Wang, who works at a Ten Thousand Villages store in Saskatoon, called the people of Warman her friends, then talked about China wanting to find peace, just like Canada. She went on to say that the peace of God is the biggest solution to war and conflict.

Gomez, who works at AODBT

PHOTO COURTESY OF TERRY PUGH,
CLARK’S CROSSING GAZETTE



Ying Ying Wang of China and Santiago Gomez of Colombia sport both poppies and MCC peace buttons at the Remembrance Day service in Warman.

Architecture and Interior Design Ltd., with offices across Saskatchewan, is from a coffee-growing province in Colombia, where his mother is a Mennonite pastor. He recognized the sacrificial efforts of all soldiers, but added that they were attempting to make peace with weapons of destruction. “Peace is love,” he said, “and

New religion/peace centre opens on Remembrance Day

BY SUSAN FISH

Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

Conrad Grebel University College officially opened its Centre for the Study of Religion and Peace on Nov. 11.

The centre, which will focus on research, dialogue and public education activities, aspires to advance knowledge and awareness of religious contributions to peace, and to enhance the capacity of religious communities to engage contemporary conflict issues and practise the peaceful values they profess.

While the work of the centre is rooted in Grebel’s Anabaptist-Mennonite and Christian heritage, it will explore the peace potential inherent in all religious traditions, and will explore ways to more fully bring about this potential and apply it to build trust, foster understanding and revitalize public policy discussions.

Nathan Funk, associate professor in peace and conflict studies at Grebel, will be the centre’s lead researcher. Funk, who has authored or co-authored a number of works on international conflict resolution, is excited about the establishment of this

true love comes from our God.”

Both speakers received a warm round of applause.

The event took place at the Brian King Centre in Warman, which is named after an RCMP corporal who was shot near the town about 35 years ago. Ten RCMP officers were present at the ceremonies, as were military officers, former peacekeepers in Bosnia and Corporal Clint Neufeldt, a member of Osler Mennonite Church. Twenty groups presented wreaths to honour those killed in war.

Last year, two representatives from Mennonite World Conference spoke at the service: Bert Lobe, who grew up in the neighbouring community of Osler, and Cynthia Peacock of India. ❧

centre. “While religion can be a factor that gets manipulated to sharpen differences between people who are in conflict, religion can also manifest a positive side in conflict situations,” he says. “Religions offer resources for peacemaking and value systems that call for changes in human relationships. This will be the focus of the centre.”

The centre’s first official event—the “Fear and hope: Religion’s role in conflict and peace” colloquium—featured Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life, with five diverse respondents. Funk moderated the Remembrance Day discussion.

“We did not plan to hold our first event on Nov. 11,” says Funk. “But we were happy when the opportunity arose. We believe an event like this serves the larger purposes of Remembrance Day, by calling us to reflect on issues that are a source of current concern and inviting conversation about how we can work together to make the peace we enjoy more real and lasting.” ❧

Remembering Peace snapshots

PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Candles were lit for participants to hold during prayers for peace at the Interfaith Peace Vigil held the evening of Nov. 11 in the Waterloo, Ont., Town Square. About 100 people gathered to hear Christian as well as Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Unitarian prayers for peace. Many of those who prayed were part of Interfaith Grand River, which sponsored the event with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario. MCC made a YouTube video of the event.

PHOTO BY TIM WIEBE-NEUFELD



PHOTO BY KARIN FEHDERAU



On Nov. 11, Mennonites and friends—including Ardythe Harder, Patrick Smith and Sarah Buddingh—gathered in Edmonton's city centre for the second annual peace walk. The event involved a short indoor service, a candlelight walk to the cenotaph, and fellowship over coffee and hot chocolate. One-hundred-and-thirty candles were distributed for the walk. The event was organized jointly by Holyrood and First Mennonite churches, along with Mennonite Brethren, Quaker and United Church congregations. Mennonite Central Committee Alberta and the Ecumenical Peace Network sponsored the walk.

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan moderator Renata Klassen reads during a memorial service sponsored by the area church's Peace and Justice Committee at Saskatoon's Rotary Peace Park on Remembrance Day. Instead of the emphasis on war and its glorification, participants met to recall the victims of war and the horrors of conflict.

Shortage of volunteers ends MCC relief sale in Winnipeg

Brandon and Morris sale committees are also seeking new leadership volunteers

BY GLADYS TERICHOW
Mennonite Central Committee
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Faced with a shortage of volunteers willing to fill leadership positions, the committee that organized the popular and successful Winnipeg Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Festival and Relief Sale has dissolved.

"We are extremely grateful to the many volunteers who helped make this sale happen," says Peter Rempel, executive director of MCC Manitoba. "The sale not only generated funds for MCC, but it was a wonderful community-building event. We have been blessed."

Now that the sale committee has dissolved, it is hoped that smaller committees will be formed to organize smaller, more cost-effective events, explains Sheila Giesbrecht, who was the sale committee chair from 2008-10. "Our communities are changing," she says. "People are busy with their grandkids and kids, and doing other things. People are overextended and choosing carefully where they want to put their time and energy."

Started in 1994, the sale's organizing committee has been successful in planning events that attracted large crowds and in finding volunteers to work the day of the sale. Activities that helped make the sale a success included food booths; serving meals; a silent auction; children's events; music concerts; Penny Power (a spare change collection); a quilt show and sale; and sales of used books, plants and second-hand items.

Giesbrecht, who moved to Winnipeg just a few years ago, notes that many of these activities have been organized by the same group of people since the sale started. Without the support and energy of new volunteers willing to take over leadership positions, the sale could not continue.

This spring, the sale committee made a decision to cancel the 2010 sale, test the success of replacing the sale with smaller events and evaluate this decision in the fall. Only nine people showed up to a widely publicized meeting to discuss the future of the sale. This poorly attended meeting

was a clear sign that it was time to dissolve the committee and end the sale, says Giesbrecht. Although the decision was accompanied by sadness, Giesbrecht says there was also "a collective sigh of relief"

Meanwhile, the success of smaller events held in 2010 show potential for growth, says Paul Friesen, resource development coordinator for MCC Manitoba.

About 100 people participated in the multi-generational Families Walking for Families walk-a-thon, a three-kilometre walk that replaced the Penny Power project associated with the sale. More than \$24,000 was raised, along with awareness of Global Family, MCC's education sponsorship program.

A quilt show and sale, formerly one of the activities at the Winnipeg sale, took place in MCC's building in Winnipeg. More than 600

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE PHOTO



A group of Silver Lake Mennonite Camp campers and their parents visited the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario resource warehouse in Kitchener, Ont., on Nov. 5 with a special delivery of donated comforters. The comforters were knotted by campers and staff this summer as part of Silver Lake's new missions program, which serves as a way to connect, in a practical way, what happens at camp to the life and work of Ontario congregations and agencies.

PHOTO BY DICK BENNER

visitors participated in this two-day event that generated sales and donations of more than \$13,000, the highest amount ever raised at this type of sale in Winnipeg.

The annual March banquet will continue to raise funds for MCC programs, with a renewed emphasis on increasing both attendance and donations to MCC. In 2010, the banquet raised more than \$18,000.

The Winnipeg sale was one of three relief sales in Manitoba. Relief sales also take place in Brandon and Morris, with each sale attracting large crowds and contributing about \$100,000 each to MCC.

Friesen says that the committees responsible for the Morris and Brandon sales are also having a hard time finding new volunteers to fill leadership positions. The Morris and Brandon sales are among 13 sales in Canada. The Canadian sales, along with 30 relief sales in the U.S., contribute more than \$5 million annually for MCC programs. ❧



Peter Rempel, born in Mexico as an Old Colony Mennonite, addresses a tour group during this year's Mennonite Central Committee Ontario annual general meeting in October, explaining how he got started in the machine parts business 10 years ago when he "got laid off of work and feared I wouldn't be able to care for my family." Today, Rem-Tech Industries of Aylmer, Ont., which he runs with his brother Ben, employs 23 and provides super alloy machined components for businesses as far away as Edmonton, Alta., and the Netherlands.

Celebrating restraint

BY KARIN FEHDERAU
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON, SASK.

For years, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has been urging people to give to those in need. Every relief sale, banquet and motorcycle ride was turned into an appeal to feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

While many of the world's poor have no choice in how they live, Mennonites in North America do, and MCC Saskatchewan is challenging Mennonites to consider simplicity by stepping back from the rat race.

During a gathering of church leaders at the organization's annual general meeting this fall, participants from three different Mennonite groups joined together to hear about celebrating restraint.

Bruce Campbell-Jantz, pastor of Forest Grove Community Church, spoke about the spiritual side of simplicity: How does a pastor simplify? In considering the example

of Jesus' life, Campbell-Jantz pointed out that sometimes Jesus only healed one person. As a pastor, he said he knows that sometimes he must walk away from too many commitments so that it doesn't dilute his focus at the church.

MCC Saskatchewan staffer Eileen Klassen Hamm spoke convincingly about people living simply through what they eat. Drawing from several authors, she brought Doris Longacre Janzen's book, *Living More With Less*, to the fore of the discussion.

"As of 2009, 865,000 copies of [*Living More With Less*] have been sold," she said, and the author's influence has been felt around many Mennonite tables. "We simplify through the way we eat, and by non-

conforming," Hamm observed. But, she added, just as the cookbook was written by a community, people can't live the simple life by themselves.

Louann Wiens, a stay-at-home mom, shared her experience of moving from two incomes to one when her children were born and the sacrifices she had to make as a result. Giving up her identity as a teacher and making a conscious choice to shop within limits were areas she has struggled through, noting that her value as God's child is more important than her worth as a wage earner. "Life on one income was a sacrifice worth making," she told meeting's participants. ❧

Suggestions for living simply

- Shop at Kijiji, an online site for second-hand items.
- Use coupons.
- Make the choice to live on less: less money, less recognition (say "no" to over-commitment); less consumption of rich foods (replace meat-rich meals with more grains and vegetables).

— BY KARIN FEHDERAU

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Support for sand dams grows

BY TIM SHENK
Mennonite Central Committee

In Mozambique, the use of sand dam technology, introduced by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), is spreading across the country, increasing people's access to water and catching the interest of government officials.

Sand dams help maintain a local water source in hot, dry regions, even during the dry season, which can last from March to November. Without local water, many people have to walk long distances and dig into streambeds to fetch water for their families and livestock.

Since 2007, MCC has been working with a national church organization, the Christian Council of Mozambique, to help villages build the dams. Although the dams were initially met with scepticism by some people, these innovative projects are beginning to receive widespread attention.

"Since I've been here, our projects have been on national television and radio," says Jon Vidulich, an MCC water engineer who has worked with sand dams in Mozambique for about a year. "There's a lot of openness to this now, and a lot of excitement."

At first, sand dams can seem like a strange concept. They are concrete dams built partly underground across seasonal streams. During the rainy season, the river deposits tons of sand at the dam, and the sand acts like a giant sponge, holding water underground throughout the year and preventing it from evaporating, allowing local people to irrigate nearby vegetable gardens and collect the water from shallow wells.

In the past year, MCC and the Christian council hosted a variety of local and provincial government officials on visits to sand dam sites. Support from government officials and potential donors, as well as requests from other provincial governments,

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MCC PHOTO BY ALAIN EPP WEAVER



MCC engineer Jon Viducich kneels in front of a vegetable garden watered by a sand dam constructed by the Christian Council of Mozambique in Phiri-meque, Tete Province. The garden was cultivated using conservation agriculture principles known as Farming God's Way. The final stages of the sand dam were completed earlier this year.

has led the council to begin a national expansion of sand dam construction and related agricultural development work.

The council recently formed a team to coordinate water and food security projects throughout the country. Part of its new water and food security focus is an approach called Farming God's Way, which was developed in neighbouring Zimbabwe. Farming God's Way involves agricultural techniques that conserve water and soil, such as laying down mulch to retain moisture and improve water absorption, and planting in the same holes year after year, rather than tilling the whole field, which destroys beneficial soil structure and greatly increases soil erosion. These new techniques are particularly needed to improve production of staple crops such as corn, millet and sorghum in the drought-prone areas where the council is building sand dams.

MCC has helped to build 30 sand dams in the Tete and Manica provinces of western Mozambique, with funding for some of these projects coming from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. ❧

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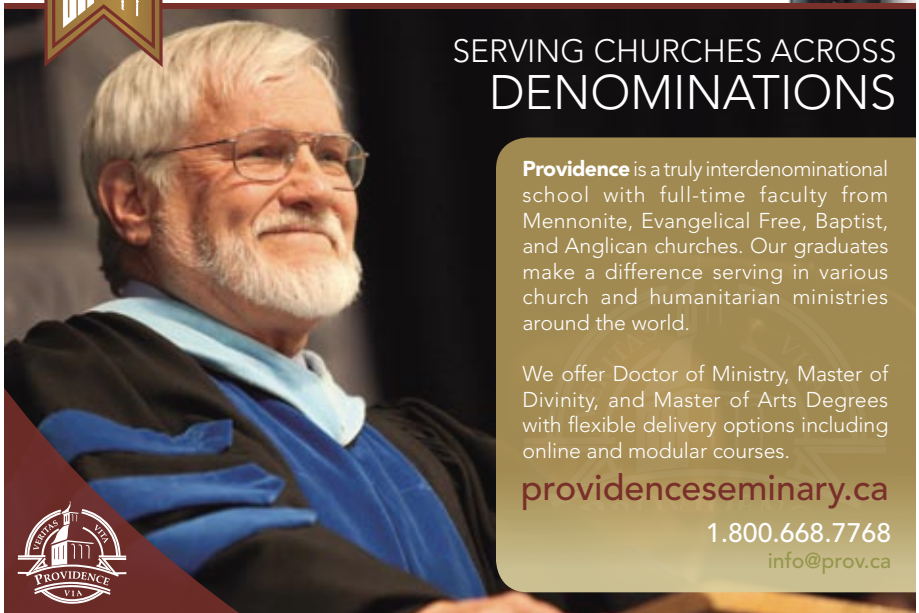
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MEDA gets crash course on safety

BY WALLY KROEKER

Mennonite Economic Development Associates

Buckle up. Stay healthy. Keep a low profile.

Those are the safest things you can do when working in a conflict zone, according to a security consultant for Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA).

MEDA has not suffered external threats in its 57 years of development work, but decided to review security protocols in light of its projects in high-tension areas like Afghanistan and Pakistan. It recently brought international staff together to hear from Charlie Watt, a New Zealand-based security expert who has worked with development organizations and understands their cultural and spiritual outlook.

Watt emphasized that danger was not confined to regions of conflict and that staff safety reached into seemingly mundane issues like personal health and accidents. "It's not just bombs and bullets," he said.

The most dangerous thing most development workers do is drive a vehicle, said Watt. Far more expatriates fall victim to routine traffic accidents than to security incidents, especially in regions where roads are in poor shape and traffic laws are non-existent or unenforced.

Simple fatigue is another danger zone, so proper sleep, nutrition and a realistic work schedule are crucial. "Staff who are over-tired become over-stressed," Watt said.

While MEDA has never experienced a terrorist threat, other development agencies have not been so fortunate, Watt cautioned. Any agency working in "failed states" needs guidelines in place, including the unlikely contingency of requiring staff extraction from danger zones, he said.

Much of his advice was basic, like keeping head office aware of travel. Each staff member is issued a laminated card with a 24-hour hotline number in case

of emergency, and an updated version of MEDA's Staff Safety Procedures Manual.

Other tips from Watt included:

- Never take sides or express solidarity with any faction or political view.
- Keep a low profile. While some agencies use armoured vehicles and armed guards, my advice is, don't go there. Barbed wire, big walls and armed guards make people in the neighbourhood wonder what is going on there that they need this extra security.
- Life is more important than material possessions. Is someone breaking in? Let them. Your life is worth more than a photocopier or a laptop.
- Don't bribe officials. One bribe leads

to another and advertises that money is available.

- Treat police and military with respect. Their orders may seem stupid, but that doesn't mean they are.
- Reduce the likelihood of theft by being aware of the substantially increased value of money and materials in impoverished societies or communities impacted by war and drought.
- Observe what's known as the Bosnia Rule: If any person in the vehicle is unhappy about a journey on security grounds, then abort the trip. If you are going from Kabul to Parwan, and really feel it's not safe, tell the driver to turn around. In MEDA, you have that right.

Watt also offered counsel on detecting surveillance and how to behave if abducted.

The scenarios he presented were highly unlikely and were not intended to fuel paranoia or prompt fear, he said, adding, though, that "most development workers, even in conflict zones, are most vulnerable to the same safety threats they'd face at home." ❧

MEDA PHOTO



MEDA's village work in Afghanistan and Pakistan requires extensive rural travel and can create safety issues for staff. One project in Pakistan is helping 5,000 small-scale dairy producers improve the quality and safety of their milk, so they can access better markets. In this photo, a milk collection agent tests a sample brought in by a village producer.

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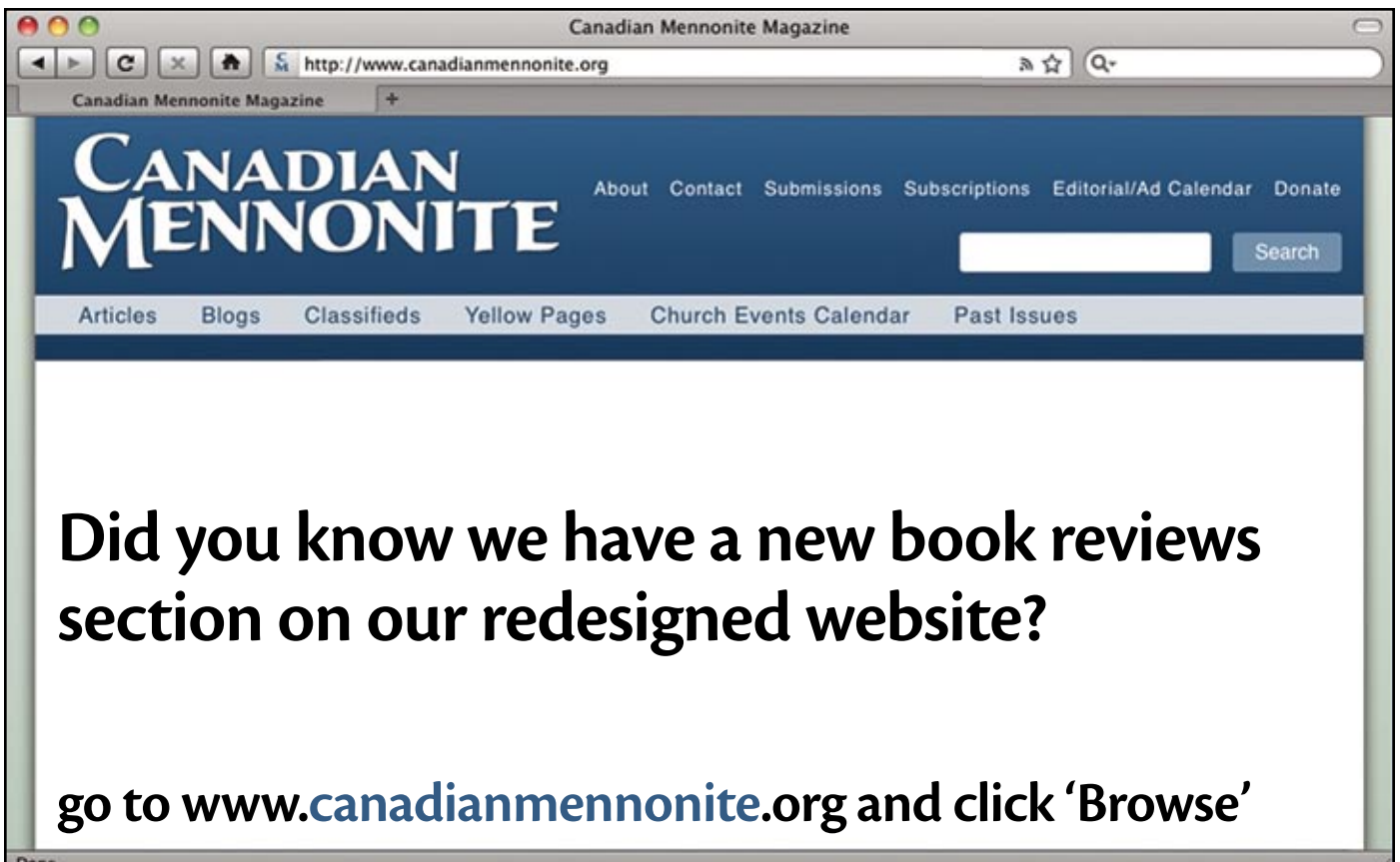


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GOD AT WORK IN US

Wenger Shenk inaugurated as seminary president

BY MARY E. KLASSEN

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary
GOSHEN, IND.

“**S**alvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb,” the congregation called out, led by Sara Wenger Shenk in her inaugural address as the new president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), on Oct. 24, at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church near Goshen, Ind.

“We have good news to share—the good news of Jesus Christ—with love and forgiveness and justice for all,” Wenger Shenk said.

In her address, she briefly outlined the history of AMBS, emphasizing the integration of the seminaries of two Mennonite denominations. Noting the work of strong church leaders of the past, she said, “We are now urgently called to imagine the shape of the future. The people we serve are pulled hither and yon into increasingly fragmented loyalties. It is the church and its leaders who, when they are well

equipped, call us back to the one thing that is all important—our allegiance to God revealed in Jesus Christ, made known to us by the Spirit.”

Wenger Shenk’s address followed a message from Karen Martens Zimmerly, denominational minister and director of leadership for Mennonite Church Canada. Framing her message with the opening verses of the Gospel of John, Martens Zimmerly noted that Jesus, “as a dual citizen of God’s kingdom and God’s creation . . . pitched his tent and planted himself in a diverse variety of neighbourhoods.”

She invited AMBS to bring its “tent of wisdom and come to some of our neighbourhoods.” She described church planting work among Spanish-speaking newcomers in French-speaking Quebec and noted a Hmong congregation on the West Coast that is the latest congregation to join MC Canada. These and other communities, Martens Zimmerly said, are imagining and experimenting with new ways of being the presence of God’s grace and truth in their streets and neighbourhoods.

She concluded by saying, “The Word became flesh and lived among us, and the Word continues to become flesh and continues to live among us.” As school and church, she said, “Let’s enter that neighbourhood as friends and as partners, and together let’s enter God’s neighbourhood to see what God will do with us.”

The commissioning of Wenger Shenk was led by Randall Jacobs, chair of the AMBS board, and Jane Thorley

Roeschly, board member.

Wenger Shenk received several gifts as symbols of her leadership. A ceramic communion service set, still to be commissioned, was announced, honouring her commitment to make the celebration of communion a central part of worship. She also was wrapped in a prayer shawl created for the AMBS president at the time the previous president, Nelson Kraybill, was inaugurated in 1997. The shawl was woven of strips of linen on which prayers from people across the church were written. In addition, Kathy Koop, an AMBS board member from Winnipeg, Man., gave Wenger Shenk a hockey stick as a reminder that AMBS serves both MC Canada and MC U.S.A.

Greetings to Wenger Shenk in the service came from many people, including David Bergen, executive secretary of MC Canada’s Formation Council.

Wenger Shenk assumed the role of president on Oct. 1, following three months of preparation. Previously, she had served as interim dean and associate dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., where she had taught for 15 years.

Wenger Shenk’s scholarship includes *Thank You for Asking: Conversing with Young Adults about the Future Church* (Herald Press, 2005), and *Anabaptist Ways of Knowing: A Conversation about Tradition-Based Critical Education* (Cascadia, 2003). She has been a frequent contributor to *The Mennonite* and other publications, and she serves as an MC U.S.A. member of the Binational Worship Council.

Having earned a bachelor of arts degree from Eastern Mennonite University, Wenger Shenk pursued study at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., and completed a master’s degree in 1986 at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill. She received her doctor of education degree in 1999 from Union Theological Seminary, New York, N.Y.

From 1977-83, and again from 1986-89, Wenger Shenk and her husband, Gerald Shenk, served on a study-service appointment with Eastern Mennonite Missions and Mennonite Central Committee in the former Yugoslavia. ❧

PHOTO BY J. TYLER KLASSEN



Sara Wenger Shenk, new president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, invites the gathered congregation to declare with her, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb,” during her inaugural address on Oct. 24, at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, near Goshen, Ind.

Reconciliation of the spirit

Mennonites must take responsibility for their part in Canada's residential school legacy

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

Joanne Klassen knows the power of words. The longtime member of Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, Man., knows how they can both empower and limit human thinking. That's why she is so concerned about the words Mennonites bring to the discussion about their relationship with First Nations people, suggesting that words are the tools with which relationships are shaped.

Klassen, together with her husband Ted, attended a "Returning to Spirit" workshop this summer. Along with 18 other church leaders from a variety of denominations, Klassen says they engaged in a week of intensive personal reflection to "assist with reconciliation between churches and First Nations people surrounding the legacy of residential schools." Next spring, they will participate in the second phase of the workshop.

The Klassens were invited to participate because of their background in designing and delivering training programs to help managers and employees deal with organizational change. "Ted and I have had lots of exposure to personal change models and this [Returning to Spirit] model is start-

Michigan in the 1970s. They soon realized that they shared a uniquely holistic vision for a training model that brought together body, mind and spirit. "We had never met anyone before

who would acknowledge the role of the spirit in the training model," says Klassen. In addition to forming a marriage union, they formed a training organization and, in 1975, moved to Canada. Their first contract was with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.

"I grew up with a strong civil rights background," Klassen notes. "Living in a largely black neighbourhood during the civil rights movement, there were enormous opportunities for the church and for my own passion to build bridges between the races. So much change happened in the U.S. through the civil rights movement."

"When I came to Canada I encountered such profound racism, a dark cloud behind the sunny face of this cultural mosaic that



Klassen

awareness that has come with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission events that began in Winnipeg this summer, but says she is still "baffled, confused and frustrated" by the Mennonite community. "I don't understand the Mennonite psyche, especially coming from a Peace Church that has such a commitment to helping people around the world and yet it is not extended into our own community"

"You cannot sell solutions to unperceived problems," is a lesson Klassen has learned in her work as a trainer and consultant. She regrets that Mennonites—so successful around the world in many areas of endeavour—do not perceive any ownership of the problem of the residential school legacy. "When we ask, 'Who is responsible?' what is really meant is, 'Who is left to deal with the residue of this legacy?'"

Klassen suggests that one place to start building relationships of understanding is through volunteer opportunities. ❧

CALVARY CHURCH PHOTO



Pastor Lloyd Oakey was feeling confident when he offered to get a Mohawk haircut if Calvary (Mennonite) Church, Ayr, Ont., could reach the lofty goal of preparing 200 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child this year. The community came through, exceeding the goal and filling a total of 211 shoeboxes for poor children around the world, nearly doubling last year's total of 112. While he was expecting a haircut, Oakey took a cream pie in the face instead.

'I don't understand the Mennonite psyche, especially coming from a Peace Church that has such a commitment to helping people around the world and yet it is not extended into our own community.'

(Joanne Klassen)

lingly effective at a personal level for us."

As the only Mennonites in the inter-faith group who participated in the summer workshop, they have decided to offer their skills to train facilitators in what Klassen calls a "powerfully positive way" of working at reconciliation.

The couple met at a training event in

was my new country," she says. "Quite frankly, I have not seen that cloud move in the mainstream of my interactions, and I'm including the Mennonite church. I have not seen that cloud move since 1975. It's 2010! I've become a grandmother 11 times over!"

Klassen is grateful for the raised level of

ARTBEAT

Art exhibit explores the unjust food systems of society

STORY BY RACHEL BERGEN / EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

National Correspondent / Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG, MAN.

The right to food is a non-issue for many Canadians. In fact, many people in the western world take food for granted.

From a faith perspective, many feel that, although they may not be hungry themselves, food systems are unjust when there is abundant food available to some while others go without.

Nineteen artists from 13 countries have come together to contribute to the Just Food: The Right to Food from a Faith Perspective art exhibit, and engage in a widely connected conversation about food justice. The exhibit is a project of the Mennonite Committee on Human Rights and is featured at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery until Jan. 15. Previously, it was held in Steinbach, Man., at the Mennonite Heritage Village.

The exhibit is divided into six sections focusing on different areas of food justice, including a Bible passage and a human rights quote from the UN Declaration on Human Rights. Each section has contributions from local and international artists, some literal interpretations and others with more abstract interpretations.

The artists represent different cultural, economic and faith backgrounds.

Ovid Charlette explores literal interpretations through his paintings that he creates in his prison cell in the maximum-

security unit of the Milner Ridge Correctional Centre, northeast of Winnipeg. He said that "To Them Who Are Without" and "Charity of the Sons," both done in a traditional aboriginal style, reflect "people sharing with people who don't have. Some tribes have abundance; some tribes are low in wildlife and are barren." The paintings reflect on the human rights quote that states that everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living and on Amos 5:11-12, 14. Charlette is a Canadian, but food was an issue for him. He lived on the streets in Winnipeg since age 11, much of the time going hungry. Through his art, he hopes to build awareness of food justice.

For Bob Haverluck, a full-time artist in Winnipeg, art is his silent prayer. "The exhibit, to me, is an invitation to join in prayer," he said.

Annelies Soomers, an issue-driven artist and a self-proclaimed "new Mennonite" visiting from the Netherlands, attended the opening on Nov. 20 and expressed her excitement to be a part of an exhibit that emphasizes the connection between faith, words and action. Her contributions, including "Daily Bread: From Plague to Blessing" and "Pour Down Righteousness," evoke themes of western people who



A visitor views Annelies Soomers' piece, 'Daily Bread: From Plague to Blessing,' at the Just Food exhibit opening on at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery on Nov. 20.

deflower the earth like locusts.

Soomers reflected on the global hope of formulating trade policies that serve the rights of people groups to food and to safe food production, as well as Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-21. "The poor pay the price for our wealth," she said. "We can take action by changing our way of life."

The exhibit also featured displays of differences in global eating patterns and a participatory display where viewers could respond to the exhibit by sharing what their response to the art would be: to do more about food justice, to learn more or to do nothing differently.

According to Paul Hagerman, a manager of public policy at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and a speaker at the opening, "Just Food reaches a whole new audience. It is a whole new way to express food injustice."

Art reaches a wider audience than a lecture or a conference, gallery curator Ray Dirks said. "What we're trying to do here is provoke discussion. Obviously, we're not going to provoke some people, but hopefully it's in their heads and it does one day."

Just Food sponsors include Mennonite Central Committee Canada, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. ❧



The Just Food exhibit included a display of typical food consumed in a poor community in a developing country, left, a middle-class community in a developing country, centre, and many households in North America, right. The sign reads, 'Where do you fit in?'



Pax Christi Chorale's Christmas Splendour II with soloists, from left to right: Agnes Zsigovics, soprano; Iasmina Pataca, mezzo-soprano; Matthew Zadow, baritone; and Cory Knight, tenor; and conductor Howard Dyck.

Pax Christi creates Christmas splendour

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
TORONTO, ONT

With its artistic director, Stephanie Martin, on sabbatical, the Pax Christi Chorale, Toronto's unofficial "Mennonite choir," brought in Howard Dyck as guest conductor for the choir's Christmas Splendour II performances on Dec. 4 and 5.

Dyck's knowledge and love of Bach made him a natural to conduct Bach's Christmas Oratorio I, VI, and Cantata 140 ("Wachet Auf"), carols and motets.

"If there is one reality that has seared itself into my consciousness during my musical career, it is the primacy of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach," Dyck wrote in the program notes.

Conducted without score, the choir, 30-piece orchestra and soloists transported the sold-out crowds into the heights of Christmas. The soloists—Agnes Zsigovics, soprano; Iasmina Pataca, mezzo-soprano; Cory Knight, tenor; and Matthew Zadow, baritone—showed themselves able.

The soprano and baritone duets in Cantata 140, accompanied by violin and cello, had the audience on the edge of their seats as words from the Song of Solomon took on new meaning when the lovers became the Soul of a Christian and its Saviour Jesus, in the call and response: "When are you coming, my Saviour?" / "I am coming,

your portion."

The concert also featured the youth choir under Lynn James, singing a series

of Christmas carols with grace and skill, pointing to a sound future for choral music in Toronto.

Pax Christi's founding in 1987 came on the heels of the success of an ad hoc choir assembled for the Toronto celebration of the 1986 bicentennial of Mennonites in Canada. The choir has grown from about 35 to 80 voices, including both Mennonites and singers from various faith traditions and cultures. Martin has been artistic director since the choir's 10th season. ❧



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FILM REVIEW

Did the baby doll scare you too?

Toy Story 3.

Directed by Lee Unkrich. Starring the voices of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen. A Pixar Animation Studios/Walt Disney Pictures Release. Available on DVD and Blu-ray. Rated G.

REVIEWED BY VIC THIESSEN

“Sunnyside is a place of ruin and despair, ruled by an evil bear who smells of strawberries!” So says one toy to another early in one of the most critically acclaimed and popular films of the year: *Toy Story 3*.

It turns out to be an understatement, for Sunnyside is, ironically, a very dark place indeed. It’s a daycare full of toys that are subjected to various forms of abuse, including torture. The evil bear in question is a purple teddy named Lotso (short for Lots o’ Huggin’), who believes himself to have

been abandoned by his owner years before. His associate is a baby doll which looks like something you’d find in a horror film.

Dropped unknowingly into this sinister “place of ruin and despair” are Woody, Buzz and the rest of the light-hearted gang from *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2*. They spend much of *Toy Story 3* trying to get out of Sunnyside. Of course they succeed, and, in a genuine redemptive ending, Sunnyside becomes a sunny place once again.

Toy Story 3 deserves its acclaim: it is a very well-crafted film. The actors supplying



the voices are well cast and perform flawlessly, the dialogue is as witty and intelligent as one could possibly expect from such a film, the technical wizardry is worthy of Pixar’s brilliant history, the film is very funny (Buzz is the highlight), and *Toy Story 3* is filled with moments of heartfelt emotion.

Nevertheless, I left the theatre with a deep sense of unease, haunted by the disturbing images I had just seen. I knew that if I had watched it before the age of 10, I would have been traumatized for years, experiencing sleepless nights and nightmares like those brought on by the German fairy tale recordings I heard when I was six or seven.

The failure of critics to draw attention to this danger is, I assume, a sign of how desensitized our society has become to what is considered acceptable children’s entertainment. With so many violent films getting a PG rating these days, this should come as no surprise, but do we really believe children can handle such scenes in a G-rated film, or do we just think it’s okay to traumatize children? Perhaps it is a rite of passage kids need to go through to become wise and compassionate human beings. After all, I survived the trauma, didn’t I?

But my gut tells me that something is wrong here. Fear has become an epidemic in the 21st century and the role of violence in our society is closely related to that fear. Surely we don’t need to exacerbate that fear by making little kids afraid of their teddy bears and baby dolls. Or maybe I was the only one terrified by the baby doll. ❧

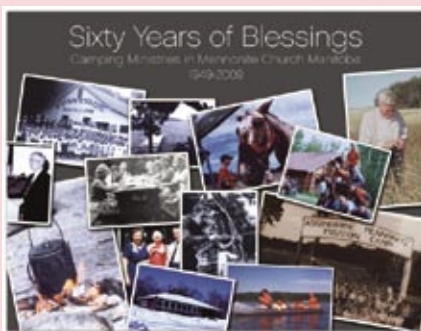
Vic Thiessen is executive secretary of support services for Mennonite Church Canada. He regularly reviews films for Canadian Mennonite.

/// Briefly Noted

Blessings of Manitoba camping ministries recounted

WINNIPEG, MAN.—*Sixty Years of Blessings* by John J. Dyck was launched on Oct. 26 at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery. This 182-page book chronicles the camping ministries of Mennonite Church Manitoba from 1949 to 2009. In 1949, members of the Springstein community formed a society to raise funds for purchasing a tract of land along the Assiniboine River. They were eager to reform the Sunnyside Pavilion, a dance hall on this property that society members considered a blight on their community. Dyck spent two years on research and interviews to compile this interesting history that includes the three camps that make up Camps with Meaning: Assiniboia, Koinonia and Moose Lake. Among the many stories that Dyck includes is one of the kitchen fire at Camp Koinonia in 1969: “The children were gathered for their evening campfire about 200 metres away from the kitchen when someone shouted, ‘Fire!’ They watched as the kitchen burned to the ground. Cans of pork and beans exploded, but the propane stove stayed intact. The turkey that was roasting in the oven continued to roast and was served the next day.” Such are the blessings recounted and celebrated in this anniversary book. Books are available from MC Manitoba by calling 204-896-1616.

—BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU



FILM REVIEW

Like a prophecy fulfilled . . .

The White Ribbon (Das Weisse Band).

Director/writer: Michael Haneke. Sony Pictures Classics, 2009; DVD release, 2010.

German, with English subtitles. Rating: 14A.

REVIEWED BY KARL KESSLER

“I don’t know if the story I want to tell you is entirely true,” confesses the narrator of *The White Ribbon*, as the top prizewinner at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival opens on the fictional German village of Eichwald in 1913. But if the former village schoolteacher, now elderly, doubts the truth of his memory, filmmaker Michael Haneke has no misgivings about using the teacher’s recollections to propose some hard truths.

Because of its themes and setting, the story has been interpreted as foreshadowing Nazi Germany, and for its mysteries reviewers have described it as a “whodunit”. But if it is a mystery, its trail of clues is a red herring, because it does something more important than keep us wondering who did what to whom. *The White Ribbon* is a “why-dunit.”

In spite of a series of disturbing misdeeds and suspicious mishaps in Eichwald, life there continues its steady, seasonal rhythm. The Lutheran church regularly fills to overflowing. Most of the villagers eke out a living as tenant farmers or labourers on the local baron’s estate.

But Eichwald’s men preside over the village like a looming threat. The pastor is an austere disciplinarian who inspects his straight-laced household constantly, combing for sins that he imagines everywhere. The baron’s steward is a short-tempered brute. The doctor is secretly abusive.

The girls of the village seem shrewd and strong-spirited, while most of the women are intimidated and ill-treated. The boys are mostly downcast, skittish, always braced for a physical or emotional slap.

However, both the young schoolteacher and a nanny in the baron’s house—who engage in a tender courtship—are decent and

kindhearted, and when the teacher suspects the children of knowing about, or possibly committing, the crimes, he seeks to uncover the facts. But if the children are guilty, their sin is imitation, wielding what

little power they have in manipulative, destructive ways they learned from their elders and their upbringing.

The White Ribbon stirs questions, offers few answers and has inspired much debate, but it seems to say we create our own monsters, often in incongruous places. Implicit in Haneke’s man-made hell on earth is the suggestion that we should know better, but what may be missing is any hope that we will do better. As the story closes, World War I is breaking out like a prophecy fulfilled, while the villagers file into church as the children’s choir sings “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” ❧

Karl Kessler is a member of Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont.



A scene from *The White Ribbon*.

/// Briefly noted

Geez, has it been five years already?

It was 2005 when Aiden Enns launched *Geez*, a self-described “cheeky” magazine for the “over-churched, out-churched, un-churched and maybe even the un-churchable.” The magazine turned five with its fall issue. Enns’s goals were to counter the rise of the religious right by creating alternative Christian messages, to protest the “unholy alliance between church, state, market and military,” and to celebrate the “spiritual dimensions of biking, energy efficiency and canning pickles.” The magazine has published provocative and thought-provoking articles like “The Pastor’s wife: Swimsuit competition” and “Who would Jesus shoot?” Another goal was to “create a magazine of exceptional quality.” That goal has also been achieved. *Geez* won the Utne Independent Press Award for “best spiritual coverage” in 2009, and Canadian Church Press awards for general excellence, layout and design, and for socially conscious religious journalism. In 2007, it was named “best new publication” and “magazine of the year” at the Western Magazine Awards. It has also received lots of praise from the mainstream media. *Geez* pushes “the edges of respectability in a subversive, ecological, visionary way,” says Douglas Todd of the *Vancouver Sun*. (Visit canadianmennonite.org for the complete story.)

—BY JOHN LONGHURST

BOOK REVIEW

An under-appreciated church leader

War, Peace and Social Conscience: Guy F. Hershberger and Mennonite Ethics.

By Theron F. Schlabach. Herald Press, 2009, 725 pages.

REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER

Late in his life, Guy F. Hershberger reflected that 1944 had been a watershed year for the Mennonite church. That year, Hershberger's book, *War, Peace and Nonresistance*, was published, as was Harold Bender's essay, "The Anabaptist Vision." Also that year, Paul Erb took over as editor of *Gospel Herald* and the Mennonite church



began Mennonite Mutual Aid.

During the 1940s the church began to move in a new direction, away from Mennonite fundamentalism and strict separation from the world, towards a new understanding of Anabaptism and social responsibility. According to Schlabach, Hershberger played a significant role in

/// Briefly noted

Herald Press adds new e-books

Three new titles have been added to the list of e-books offered by Herald Press:

- *Forgiveness: A Legacy Of The West Nickel Mines Amish School;*
- *Simply in Season;* and
- *The Upside-Down Kingdom.*

The addition of the three titles brings to 42 the number of books offered by Herald Press in the Kindle format, Amazon's electronic reader. The complete list can be found online at www.heraldpress.com/e-books/.

—Herald Press

Stories of Service DVD now available from MWC

How do Christians around the world serve their communities in the name of Christ? A new DVD from Mennonite World Conference (MWC) provides seven inspiring mini-documentaries about compassionate ministries of local churches belonging to MWC member bodies. *Stories of Service*, funded by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and available in English, French and Spanish, is intended for a wide range of educational and worship settings in congregations and small groups. The video includes seven five- to seven-minute segments showing:

- A child care ministry established after a 1993 flood in Paraguay;
- Ministry to people displaced by the violence in Colombia;
- Well-digging in drought-stricken Zimbabwe;
- Sharing of agricultural information in Paraguay;
- Ministry to homeless people in the U.S.;
- Ministry to the elderly in France; and
- Christian-Muslim relationships in the clean-up after Indonesia's 2005 tsunami.

The DVD, which comes with a study guide, can be ordered from the MWC office in Kitchener, Ont. Please indicate language preference when ordering.

—Mennonite World Conference

changing how the Mennonite church related to society as a whole.

In many ways this is a book about Mennonites in the first half of the 20th century and Hershberger's role within the church. Schlabach presents him as an earnest yet humble man who was always accountable to his church.

Hershberger strove to live out the biblical pacifism that he taught, while he pushed the entire church to consider new ways of engaging the world. He was a key player in helping to organize alternative service and his book articulated the Mennonite position on pacifism. Hershberger was concerned about community and mutual aid, and worked tirelessly to organize Mennonite Mutual Aid, an alternative to insurance. Like the Mennonites of his day, Hershberger was anti-union, but he tried to find ways that businesses could deal with labour concerns fairly. He also supported the American civil rights movement in its early years.

Not everyone admired Hershberger, though, and Schlabach refers in detail to his conflicts with Rod Sawatsky and J. Lawrence Burkholder. Schlabach questions the accepted interpretation that Hershberger silenced these critics. He says that, although Hershberger's actions were not always above criticism, his premises were misunderstood by Burkholder and Sawatsky. He laments the fact that there was not more open discussion between Hershberger and Burkholder about Mennonite ethics.

This book presents Hershberger as an under-appreciated Mennonite leader who needs to be seen in the context of his time. The Mennonite church of the early 20th century was very different from the church of the post-war years, and Schlabach makes a compelling case that Hershberger cannot be understood except within that context. At the same time, Schlabach critiques some of Hershberger's ideas from a modern perspective.

This is a large volume with lots of detail. The narrative is easy to read, but readers unfamiliar with the writing of Reinhold Niebuhr may find some sections tedious. Anyone interested in the history of the Mennonite church of the 20th century will want to read this book. ///

BOOK REVIEW

Exposing 'this hidden thing'

This Hidden Thing

By Dora Dueck. CMU Press, 2010. 327 pages.

REVIEWED BY BETTY L. DYCK

More than about the life of Maria Klassen, a young Mennonite woman, *This Hidden Thing* tells a story of the hardships and perseverance of immigrants who came to Canada in 1927 and how they came to terms with life in their new country. It is really an eloquent saga, spanning 50 years in the life of the fictional Klassen family.



She shows how the girls are generally given a small, sparsely furnished room and hand-me-down clothes (although the black maid's uniforms with white aprons are of good quality), and are at the mercy of household members.

The young domestics are not forgotten by the Mennonite community, however. The

Mennonite conference of churches establishes a Mary-Martha Home in the north end of Winnipeg, where the girls can gather

every Thursday afternoon on their day off for fun, games and devotionals. Matron Sister Anna listens to their complaints and also "warn[s] them of potential improprieties by the men of the house." Even when Mrs. Lowry says she doesn't like their university-age son spending so much time in the kitchen, the significance is lost on Maria.

The son's concentrated, deliberate seduction results in an indiscretion that colours the rest of Maria's life. Maria moves to Saskatchewan to live on the farm of Mrs. Lowry's brother, during which time her mother dies. She returns home to North Kildonan, where the family has moved, becoming the "mother" of the household, looking after her father and bringing up her younger siblings, forever reminded of "the hidden thing." Throughout, Maria finds solace in familiar biblical references to try to make sense of her world.

Dueck's story will be familiar to many Mennonite families, but an interesting and rewarding read for them and for others as well. ❧

Dueck expertly weaves in the various eras of the Great Depression, World War II and the 1950 Winnipeg flood, showing their impact on the immigrants. Despite setbacks, the Klassen family eventually becomes prosperous through their "Mennonite work ethic" and innate talents of mechanical knowledge, carpentry and sewing. Readers will be impressed with Dueck's attention given to detail right from the first page, as she describes Maria and Peter "bending a little, like winter-ragged stalks of grass in a ditch."

The protagonist, Maria, is at first thrust into a strange environment as a domestic in Winnipeg without knowing a word of English. Fortunately, she is accepted in a home where the mistress, Mrs. Lowry, takes time to teach her—at first, words necessary to do her maid's chores, then expanding on her vocabulary. Maria learns quickly.

Her earnings, of course, are sent home to the family in southern Manitoba, where they are struggling on a poor farmstead. The older brothers sometimes get odd jobs there and the younger children add to the income by catching gophers and getting three cents for a tail.

Dueck's story gives an intimate look into the life of domestics in the 1930s and '40s.

Bonus features for *And When They Shall Ask* released

STORY AND PHOTO BY RACHEL BERGEN

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG, MAN.

More than a quarter-century after the Mennonite Media Society released *And When They Shall Ask*, a docu-drama telling the story of the Russian Mennonite experience from 1788 to the present, a new DVD version of the film, complete with bonus features, had its release at the Winnipeg Convention Centre on Oct. 24.

Bonus features include interviews with the film's producer, writer and composer, and others discussing the importance of the title and reflecting on certain important scenes in the film; explanations of the music; an interview with Jake Sawatzky telling his story about finding bread during the famine; and general behind-the-scenes information.

The film and the new bonus features were created in response to a lack of a

tangible way to reflect on Mennonite history. According to co-producer Toni Dueck, a co-director of the media society, "Now there is a document that relates to their history in a medium that relates to today. It asks, 'Are we learning from our history?' It is a story that belongs to everyone, not just Mennonites," she said.

And When They Shall Ask has been aired several times by the CBC in Canada, and by PBS and the Discovery Channel in the U.S. It has won awards at film festivals in Toronto and Chicago, and the Angel Awards in Hollywood.

David Dueck, co-producer and co-director of the media society, said he hopes the new version will stir the interest of younger audiences to learn from their ancestors and their history, a history they may not know

a lot about.

The DVD release event also included the release of the new CD by the Canzona Choir, *Lasst die Herzen Immer Fröhlich*, featuring German hymns that are well known in the Mennonite tradition. Canzona, conducted by Henry Engebrecht, performed many of these hymns at the media release, and was joined by the audience in song several times. ☼



The Canzona Choir released its newest album, *Lasst die Herzen Immer Fröhlich*, at the DVD media release, where it performed many of the songs on the album.

☼ Briefly noted

The Naked Anabaptist a best-seller

With more than 4,700 copies sold, *The Naked Anabaptist* is a runaway best-seller for Herald Press, the book imprint of Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN). "We knew the book would resonate with many people, but we didn't expect it to sell out so quickly," says Ron Rempel, MPN's executive director. Especially satisfying for Rempel is seeing the book going out in bunches of 10 to 20 copies or more to churches for use by Christian education classes and study groups. "We hoped it would be used by congregations as a way to discuss what it means to be an Anabaptist today," he says. "It's great to see so many churches using it." Five thousand copies of *The Naked Anabaptist*, by Stuart Murray, were published in April. A second-run of 5,000 copies has been ordered. —Mennonite Publishing Network

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Calendar

British Columbia

Jan. 24-28: Missions Emphasis Week, Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford.
Jan. 28-30: Missions Fest, Vancouver.
Feb. 4-6: Young adult "Impact" retreat, Camp Squeah.
Feb. 25: LEAD conference, Living Hope Christian Fellowship, Surrey.
Feb. 26: MC B.C. annual general meeting, Living Hope Christian Fellowship, Surrey.
Feb. 11, 12, 18, 19: MCC fundraising banquets: (11) Bakerview MB Church, Abbotsford; (12) Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond; (18) South Langley MB Church, Langley; (19) Sardis Community Church.
April 8-10: Junior youth "Impact" retreat, Camp Squeah.
April 16-17: Camp Squeah paddle-athon fundraiser.
April 23: Columbia Bible College commencement.

April 30: MC B.C. women's inspirational day, Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver.

Alberta

Jan. 21-23: Junior high snow camp at Camp Valaqua. For more information, call 403-637-2510.
Feb. 25-27: Senior high snow camp at Camp Valaqua. For more information, call 403-637-2510.
March 11-12: MC Alberta annual meeting, at Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton.

Saskatchewan

Jan. 7-8: RJC alumni Tournament of Memories.
Jan. 20: Women in Ministry gathering, at Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.
Jan. 21: RJC open house for prospective students.
Jan. 28-30: Senior youth retreat, at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

Feb. 25-26: Songfest at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.
March 18-19: MC Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions, in North Battleford.

Manitoba

Jan. 14-16: Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization junior youth retreat at Camp Koinonia.
Jan. 21-23: Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization junior youth retreat at Camp Moose Lake.
Jan. 23: "A Thousand Hallelujahs" 25th anniversary concert by the Faith and Life Male Choir, at Centennial Hall, Winnipeg.
Jan. 25-26: Winter Lectures at CMU; keynote speaker Romand Coles, Ph.D., McAllister Chair in Community, Culture and Environment at Northern Arizona University
Feb. 3-5: Refreshing Winds conference, "Here in this place," at CMU.
Feb. 4: CMU choirs and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra perform Seven Gates of Jerusalem, Penderecki's Symphony No. 7, at the Centennial Concert Hall.
Feb. 10-11: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate junior high students perform three one-act plays, at Franco-Manitoban Centre, Winnipeg.
Feb. 11-13: Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization senior youth retreat at Camp Moose Lake.
Feb. 21-23: Manitoba Mennonite Young Adults winter retreat at Camp Koinonia.
Feb. 25-26: MC Manitoba annual delegates gathering, at MCI, Gretna.
March 11-13: Peace It Together Conference returns to CMU after a yearlong sabbatical, featuring drama by Ted Swartz and keynote speakers Jarem Sawatsky, Dan Epp-Tiessen and Adelia Neufeld Wiens. For more information, e-mail info@cmu.ca.
March 17: Verna Mae Janzen Music Scholarship performances, at CMU's Laudamus Auditorium, at 7:30 p.m.
March 20: Mennonite Community Orchestra performs at the CMU chapel, at 3 p.m.
March 21: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate fundraising banquet at the Marlborough Hotel, Winnipeg, at 6 p.m.
March 26, 27: CMU 10th anniversary choral concerts: (26) at Westminster

United Church, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m.; (27) at Buhler Hall, Gretna, at 3 p.m.
April 4: Jazz at CMU, in the Great Hall, at 7:30 p.m.
April 16: CMU spring concert, at the Loewen Athletic Centre.

Ontario

Dec. 31: Milverton Mennonite presents a New Year's Eve celebration; dinner at 7 p.m., followed by a gospel/bluegrass concert with The Chapelaires and Rescue Junction at 9 p.m. For dinner reservations, call 519-595-8762. Wheelchair accessible.
Jan. 11: Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Grade 9 student/parent night for prospective students, at 7 p.m.
Jan. 14: Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, "Shadow Day" for prospective students.
Jan. 14-16: MC Eastern Canada winter youth retreat, at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. Theme: "From the mountaintop to the streets."
Jan. 15: MC Eastern Canada pastors, chaplains and lay leaders event, at Crosshill Mennonite Church. Speaker: Arnold Neufeldt-Fast. Topic: "Spiritual formation as apprenticeship." Open to the public.
Jan. 29, Jan. 30: Camper registration for Silver Lake Mennonite Camp: (29) Waterloo Region—Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, Waterloo, 6:30 to 8 p.m.; (30) Niagara Region—Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil, noon to 2 p.m.
Feb. 12, 25: February Potato Blitz events for House of Friendship. (12) Drop your spuds off at local participating supermarkets, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (25) Community potato lunch at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kitchener, noon to 1 p.m.
Feb. 12: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents the premiere of John Burge's "Declaration" with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, at Centre in the Square, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m. For more information, or to purchase tickets, call toll-free 1-800-265-8977.
Feb. 22-24: MC Eastern Canada School for Ministers, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. Speaker: Irma Fast Dueck. Topic: "Why worship?" Open to the public.

UpComing

Canadian School of Peacebuilding announces summer courses

WINNIPEG, MAN.—Now heading into its third year of operation, the Canadian School of Peacebuilding summer program at Canadian Mennonite University will be held from June 6 to 24, 2011, offering international and local students the unique opportunity to study under renowned and revered members of the world's peacekeeping community. The school attracts peacebuilders from all faiths, countries and identity groups to its three-week program of intensive five-day courses for professional development and academic credit. The 2011 course offerings include: models of grassroots peacebuilding in international contexts; a Cree Christian perspective on living in covenant; voluntary simplicity; peace and justice in Islam; using the arts to transform conflicts; interpersonal mediation; understanding the issues of violence; reflections on faith-based reconciliation; strategies for social change; and peacemaking and restorative justice. "We aim to create a space where people from different backgrounds and perspectives can connect in positive and respectful ways," says Jarem Sawatsky, the school's co-director. "The . . . community last year included pastors, teachers, peace practitioners, farmers, students, retirees, and a variety of faith and cultural groups. We hope this diversity will keep growing." For more information, visit cmu.ca/cso or e-mail csop@cmu.ca.
 —Canadian Mennonite University

UpComing

CMU Peace It Together Conference returns after sabbatical year

WINNIPEG, MAN.—Youths and their leaders from across Canada are invited to gather at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) from March 11 to 13, 2011, to discuss how they can each bring their own “pieces of peace” to a world in need of healing, peace and justice. Peace It Together (PIT) was held for 31 consecutive years until last year. “It was time to step back and assess its future,” says Abe Bergen, director of enrolment services at CMU who was centrally involved in the planning of PIT for the past 10 years. “After talking to stakeholders across Canada, the message was clear: CMU needs to continue to nurture a vision for peacemaking among the youth in Canada. This conference will invite high school students into a faith commitment to Jesus Christ and challenge them to grow a faith that embodies understanding, reconciliation and service.” The program will feature drama from Ted Swartz (tedand-company.com) and presentations by CMU speakers Adelia Neufeld Wiens, Dan Epp-Tiessen and Jarem Sawatsky. For more information, e-mail info@cmu.ca.
—Canadian Mennonite University

UpComing

Leadership training school focusing on the Holy Spirit

HARRISONBURG, VA.—The 2011 School for Leadership Training, to be held at Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS) from Jan. 17 to 19, will explore the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, under the theme, “The work of the Spirit: Pentecost remixed.” Plenary sessions led by Cheryl Bridges Johns, a professor and pastor from the Church of God tradition, will explore the working of the Spirit in the church today. She has been part of a Church of God/Mennonite interfaith dialogue. Workshop leaders will help participants discover the work of the Spirit in various aspects of church leadership, from biblical interpretation and theology to creative arts and Christian education. Others will focus on cooperation with the Spirit in healing and on movements of the Spirit on the margins of traditional church life. A special training session by Nathan D. Yoder, an EMS associate professor of church history, will highlight Spirit movements within the church during the last two centuries, describing how Anabaptist groups have interacted with Pentecostals and other movements of the Spirit. Pastors and church leaders wishing to learn more about this year’s event, should visit emu.edu/seminary/slt.
—Eastern Mennonite Seminary

March 5,6: DaCapo Chamber Choir presents “Chiaroscuro: Music for choir and two harps,” at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, Kitchener; 8 p.m. (5), 3 p.m. (6). For more information, or for tickets, call 519-725-7549 or visit www.dacapochoamberchoir.ca.

March 26: Menno Singers present “Choral Mystics,” at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 8 p.m.

April 9: Pax Christi Chorale presents Verdi’s “Requiem” at P.C. Ho Theatre, Scarborough, with guest conductor Norman Reintamm, the Cathedral Bluffs Symphony and the Peterborough Singers.

April 10: Menno Singers joins with five other choirs to perform Ernest Bloch’s “Sacred Service” in its original Hebrew, at Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto.

April 17: Pax Christi Chorale presents Prayer for Peace and CD release of Great Canadian Hymns with guest conductor Ints Teterovskis, 3 p.m. Also featuring Pax Christi Youth Choir.

April 22: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents J.S. Bach’s St. John Passion, at Centre in the Square, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m. For more information, or to purchase tickets, call toll-free 1-800-265-8977.

April 29-30: MC Eastern Canada annual church gathering, at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden.

May 7: DaCapo Chamber Choir presents “A World of Colour: Exploring and exploding the colour palette: tradition meets the present,” at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, Kitchener; 8 p.m. Includes the premiere of a new commissioned piece by Gerard Yun. For more information, or for tickets, call 519-725-7549 or visit www.dacapochoamberchoir.ca.

To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by e-mail to calendar@canadianmennonite.org.



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Classifieds

Announcement

WESTGATE HISTORY PROJECT
I’m collecting stories about people’s experiences and memories of Westgate Mennonite Collegiate (Winnipeg, Man.) in order to write a history of the school. I hope to interview alumni, former staff members, former board members and former pastors of supporting churches. Interested individuals are requested to contact me directly: Janis Thiessen, Teacher, Westgate Mennonite Collegiate; Phone: 204-282-0785; e-mail: jthiessen@westgatemenonite.ca.

Travel

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way! See website for the 2011 Hotel and Youth hostel Heritage Tours, including Holland, Germany, Poland, France and Switzerland. www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu.

For Rent

Whispering Maples Guesthouse - Enjoy the peacefulness of our guesthouse nestled among rolling acres of farmland near Arthur, Ont. Great for small group retreats and get-aways. Sleeps 10-12 people. Call Bonnie Martin for brochure and details: 519-669-1967.

Employment Opportunities

FULL-TIME, TENURE-TRACK FACULTY POSITION

Bluffton University announces a full-time, tenure-track faculty position in Biblical Studies beginning fall 2011. Application reviews begin Jan. 17, 2011, and continue until the position is filled. Please visit our website at www.bluffton.edu/about/employment for position details. Members of under-represented groups are encouraged to apply. EOE.

DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES, RELIGION AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Open Faculty Position: **Fresno Pacific University**, Fresno, Calif.; Dean of the School of Humanities, Religion and Social Science; Full-time faculty member. Starting Date: July 1, 2011. Job description and application may be obtained from the university website: www.fresno.edu/hr.

PASTOR

Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite Church is inviting a new Pastor to begin in fall 2011. We're a rural congregation of 77 members drawing from the Glenbush, Mayfair and Rabbit Lake areas.

We offer a unique rural living experience in a picturesque part of West Central Saskatchewan. The pastor should: be committed to Anabaptist/Mennonite theology and practice within Mennonite Church Canada; be open to working with lay leadership; and be comfortable preaching, providing pastoral care and relating to all generations. Seminary education is preferred. Pastoral experience is desirable. The position will be approximately ¾ time.

Please reply to: Marlene Martens, Search Committee, Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite Church, dmfarms@littleloon.ca; or Jerry Buhler, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, jerry@mcsask.ca.



**Conrad Grebel
University College**

Campus Hosts

Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo

Conrad Grebel University College, a residence and teaching facility affiliated with the University of Waterloo, seeks a married couple for the position of Campus Hosts (formerly known as Senior Residents), beginning approx. **June 1, 2011**. The role involves living in an apartment in the College's residence building and supervising the College during non-business hours. Rent and utilities are free in exchange for performance of duties. Applicants should be mature, responsible and able to relate to a broad range of people, especially students in residence. Application deadline is **February 1, 2011**. If interested contact:

E. Paul Penner

CGUC Director of Operations
(519) 885-0220 x24231
epenner@uwaterloo.ca



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes (MCC GL) in Goshen, Ind., seeks candidates for Executive Director (ED). The ED is responsible for all programs, staff and activities in the GL region, and is responsible to the MCC GL board. The ED will play a key role in guiding the transition as GL works with all of MCC to implement new vision and structures.

The position requires: familiarity with MCC constituency, strong relational administrative skills, cultural competency, strong Christian faith and practice, ability to relate and build relationships with theologically diverse constituents and partners, ability to articulate Anabaptist theological perspectives as the foundation of MCC's work, and passion for and commitment to MCC's mission and vision. Experience with budgeting and administration also required; fundraising experience preferred. Position includes significant travel time within the region.

A job description is available at <http://mcc.org/serve/positions/executive-director-great-lakes>. Submit resume and letter of interest by Dec. 31, 2010, to: Prem Dick at: psd@mcc.org.



DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Mennonite World Conference connects more than 1.6 million Anabaptists in 80 countries worldwide for fellowship, worship, service and witness. MWC is currently seeking applications for the position of **Director of Finance and Administration**. The successful applicant will be responsible to oversee all financial aspects of the organization (developing financial strategies, long-term projections, budgeting, fund accounting, multiple currencies, accounts payable, donation receipting and payroll) and to provide administrative oversight of information technology and human resources. Qualifications for this position include preferably a degree in accounting or business, a minimum of 1-2 years accounting experience, excellent computer skills, excellent communication skills, and an appreciation for the various Anabaptist communities around the world. This position is based out of Kitchener, Ont., with a possibility of working remotely. Consideration will be given to candidates interested in only the financial part of the position and/or an interim appointment.

Please direct applications and inquiries to: Mennonite World Conference, 50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1; 519-571-0060; jobs@mwc-cmm.org.

www.mwc-cmm.org

Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date Ads Due

Jan. 24 Jan. 11

Focus on Finances

Feb. 7 Jan. 25

Focus on Post-Secondary Education

Feb. 21 Feb. 8

March 7 Feb. 22

Focus on Camps and Summer Christian Education

March 21 March 8

PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE NEUFELD



Willard Metzger, front row, second from left, was commissioned for his new role as general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada by family members, and representatives of MC Canada's General Board and staff, on Nov. 13 at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask., during MC Canada's annual fall leadership assembly.

Commissioned

Recommissioned

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



With a circle of prayer Willard Metzger, third from left, was commissioned a second time as general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada on Nov. 21 at the Metzger family's home congregation, Community Mennonite Fellowship, Drayton, Ont. Pictured from left to right: Dave Tiessen, pastor of Community Mennonite; David Martin, MC Eastern Canada executive minister; Metzger; Paul Wideman, Community Mennonite congregational chair; wife Lois Metzger; Andrew Reesor-McDowell, MC Canada moderator; son Matthew Metzger; and Ervin Stutzman, MC U.S.A. executive director. The circle also included Hilda Hildebrand, assistant moderator of MC Canada, and son Chris Metzger, not pictured.