

# CANADIAN INNOVATION

January 10, 2011

Volume 15 Number 1

## Soup in a jar for a good cause

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## EDITORIAL

# The past as prelude

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

**A**s a people of hope, what should we, as a Mennonite faith community, expect on the road ahead in 2011?

If the past is prelude, as the adage goes, there are road signs, some of them giving helpful direction, others giving us warnings. At the risk of oversimplifying, we will deal with only three: cultural shifts, ecumenism and a new mission/service focus.

Since many Mennonite families are only one or two generations away from the exodus from Russia and eastern Europe in the 1920s and beyond, we are very conscious of our Russian/German/Dutch immigrant roots, evidenced by the large number of letters to *Canadian Mennonite* in 2010 as a response to the “Mennonite DNA Project” story.

One writer put the issue rather succinctly: “The majority of North American Mennonite churches still have a core of descendants of those survivors of history. While most are making very real efforts to open up, welcome and integrate believers of different backgrounds, this need not mean the denial of who we are and, yes, of ‘where we came from.’”

Well said.

The growing edge of our denomination, however, is not occurring in this sector of our population, but rather a quite different “ethnicity” is emerging, made up of Asian, Latin American, African and Middle Eastern immigrants. While enthusiastically embracing our

Anabaptist theology and ethos, they bring a more charismatic energy to our worship and assemblies, and are rightfully asking for a place in our leadership circles.

Will we make room for them at the table?



And in a changing political/socio-economic Canadian culture, we are not as sure as we were, in our more isolated communities, of just who we are. Are we a part of the rapidly emerging Christian right so vividly described in Marci McDonald’s recent book, *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada*? In her wake-up call, she writes that the “emerging Christian right may look and sound different than its American counterpart, but in the five years since the prospect of same-sex marriage propelled evangelicals into political action, it has spawned a coalition of advocacy groups, think tanks and youth lobbies that have changed the national debate.”

Have we inadvertently taken up the cause of this increasingly loud and raucous movement—some 3.5 million strong, according to McDonald’s estimates—complete with their public square agenda opposing abortion, homosexuality and public education, and embracing Zionism—rather than holding to our Anabaptist position of viewing any “nationalism” with suspicion and advancing God’s kingdom values of invitation, peace and wholeness, rather than separation by engaging in the prevailing culture

wars?

And in a new era of ecumenism, should we not embrace the urge to reconcile past theological differences, such as has happened with us Mennonites accepting the Lutheran gesture of forgiveness for past persecutions, and extend our own words of repentance to Canadian aboriginals in the horrific era of residential schools that robbed a people of their culture?

This is tricky terrain and we must walk carefully, as some of our theologians have cautioned us. These “holy moments” should not tempt us to self-righteousness, nor have us make celebrities out of our martyrs, but should rather instruct us in shaping a blueprint for future sharing of the good news of Jesus in our communities.

The Lutherans, who not only have reconciled with Mennonites, but are seeking “eucharistic hospitality” where Catholics would be able to receive communion at a Lutheran celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and Lutherans would be able to do the same at a Catholic mass, are modelling for the larger Christian community a paradigm that makes the sharing of the gospel a far more effective act of grace.

Our former strident doctrinal stands and closed religious cultures have engendered wars, split families within communities and left the younger generation disillusioned with organized religion entirely. So why not try a new approach?

And finally, as a helping communion, Mennonites need to examine both the motives and effects of our noteworthy charity efforts here at home and around the globe. Are we giving and serving so generously because of our need to feel superior, or do we want to open ourselves to new paradigms of empowerment for these same recipients, so their needs can be met by their own ingenuity and resources?

## ABOUT THE COVER:

**Split peas . . . dried herbs and pasta: The classroom was a mess, but the Grade 4B students at Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary and Middle Schools had a great time preparing ‘soup in a jar’ to raise funds for a Mennonite Central Committee project in Kenya that supplies garden equipment to farming families. The students made more than 100 jars of soup that sold for \$10 apiece. Our Focus on Elementary and Secondary Education section begins on page 24.**

PHOTO: WINNIPEG MENNONITE ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

*Circulation: Please contact Lisa Jacky toll-free at 1-800-378-2524 ext. 221 or by e-mail at office@canadianmennonite.org for subscriptions and address changes. Subscriptions can also be ordered at our web site. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund towards our mailing costs. ISSN 1480-042X*

Canada



# CANADIAN MENNONITE

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Web site: [canadianmennonite.org](http://canadianmennonite.org)

**Please send all material to be considered for publication to:**

**General submission address:** [submit@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:submit@canadianmennonite.org)

**Readers Write:** [letters@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org)

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Material can also be sent "Attn: Submissions/Readers Write/Milestones/Obituaries/Calendar" by postal mail or fax to our head office.

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**Mission statement:** *Canadian Mennonite (CM)* is a bi-weekly Anabaptist/Mennonite-oriented periodical which seeks to promote covenantal relationships within the church (Hebrews 10:23-25). It provides channels for sharing accurate and fair information, faith profiles, inspirational/educational materials, and news and analyses of issues facing the church. In fulfilling its mission, the primary constituency of *CM* is the people and churches of Mennonite Church Canada and its five related area churches. *CM* also welcomes readers from the broader inter-Mennonite and inter-church scene. Editorial freedom is expressed through seeking and speaking the truth in love and by providing a balance of perspectives in news and commentary. *CM* will be a vehicle through which mutual accountability can be exercised within the community of believers; the paper also encourages its readers to have open hearts and minds in the process of discerning God's will.

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SERMON FEATURE

# Embarrassing gratitude

By Sue C. Steiner

*As we enter a new year, it is important to keep the feelings of Christmas gratitude in our hearts and minds. What better way to do that than focus on the 'embarrassing gratitude' shown by Mary to Jesus when she wipes his perfumed feet with her hair, the focus of a sermon preached at Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., on March 21, 2010, using Psalm 126 and John 12:1-8 as biblical references.*

*What if justice and care for the most vulnerable in our community and our world is not primarily a duty, or even a mandate, but rather an act of gratitude and devotion to God?*

A woman—a good family friend—pours perfume worth \$25,000 on Jesus' feet at a dinner party held at her house in his honour. She removes her head scarf, shakes her hair loose, bends over, and wipes Jesus' perfumed feet with her hair. The fragrance fills the whole house. Surely that fragrance remains on Jesus' feet—and in Mary's hair—for days.

The only place to start with this story is its sheer physicality. Jesus' feet, perhaps beautiful, are more likely hardened and calloused from much walking. Mary's hair, to be revealed only at home with family members, is now loosened, working its magic. The pure essence of nard, a healing oil, is reminiscent, it is said, of the lost Garden of Eden.

This is sensuous stuff, no doubt about it. I'm always astonished when biblical commentators ignore the obvious, moving immediately to theology or to symbolic meanings. What are they afraid of? I wonder.

Then, of course, there's the stunning extravagance of Mary's gesture: A vial of the most costly perfume available is worth a common labourer's annual wage.

Are Mary of Bethany and her siblings rich? They seem to be Jesus' regular hosts on his way to Jerusalem. Or is this rather the nest egg of a family of modest means? Is Mary pouring out the family nest egg on Jesus' feet? If so, her brother Lazarus and her sister Martha utter no cries of protest.

The protest comes from Judas, the treasurer. Imagine what \$25,000 could do for the House of Friendship, for Mary's Place, for the work of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) or Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) and their partners in Haiti, for folks in refugee camps!

It's almost as if this story deliberately offends, if not by its



*Six days before Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?' . . . Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.'*

John 12:1-5,7-8 (NRSV)

sensuous extravagance, then surely by Jesus' commendation of Mary's action. Most Mennonites would side with Judas on this one!

I suspect this story offends us from another angle also. It's Mary's piety. Her devotion to Jesus, expressed in such an unrestrained pouring out of herself. It's way over the top; embarrassing, to say the least.

And yet I love this story. I love the way it shimmers in so many directions, like a diamond catching the sun. It harkens back to the story of the raising of Lazarus in the 11th chapter of John's Gospel. It anticipates Jesus' own washing of his disciples' feet. It prepares us for Jesus' death and burial, now inevitable. Beyond all that, Mary's action attracts and challenges me, with my sober restraint about many things in life.

### **No bounds to gratitude**

First, let's look at how this text resonates in the Gospel of John. If asked the question, "What would you spend the family nest egg on?" many would likely say on healthcare for a loved one, perhaps on a promising cancer drug not covered by healthcare, or perhaps a new treatment for autism or Alzheimer's.

In this story, though, a beloved family member, presumed dead and gone forever, dines at table with Jesus. What does the family nest egg matter now? Mary's gratitude knows no bounds.

But Jesus reframes what's going on here, taking Mary's action beyond the realm of gratitude for past mercies. He makes of it also an act of love and care for himself, in anticipation of a future event coming all too soon. Mary's gesture points to the way Jesus will pour himself out completely through his death. "She's anointing me for my burial," he says. "I'm not going to be around much longer."

In the Gospel of John, it is the raising of Lazarus that seals Jesus' fate. It functions in the gospel as a sign of Jesus' own impending death and resurrection, and indeed the authorities are now plotting more seriously than ever to kill him.

People speculate, "Will Jesus even come to Jerusalem for the Passover feast this year? Surely it's too dangerous."

But here he is at his usual bed and breakfast five kilometres outside of Jerusalem, dining with his friends Lazarus, Martha and Mary before entering the city for the last time.

Of course, acts of love and care abound whenever a loved one is dying, and often

they literally involve the special care of feet or the use of fragrant oils, whether during a weekend at a spa, at home or in palliative care elsewhere.

It is in this setting that Mary honours Jesus by anointing him openly, elaborately, while he's still alive. We're meant to notice the contrast with the secret disciples Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea after Jesus' death. As discreetly as possible, they arrange for Jesus' burial, bringing generous quantities of myrrh and aloes, oils often used together for anointing a body before burial. In contrast to Mary, they stay in the shadows.

### **Based in love, not duty**

The story of Mary's outpouring of love also moves us towards Jesus washing his own disciples' feet at the Last Supper. Mary does for Jesus what Jesus will do for his disciples—and what he invites disciples to do for each other. Footwashing by Mary and by Jesus anticipates discipleship and service based not in duty, but in love.

Footwashing is an odd gesture in our world today, disconnected as it is from first-century practice, where a good host did provide water for travellers' dusty feet, and where washing a guest's feet was

considered slave work.

I grew up with the ritual of footwashing, and as a teenager found it downright embarrassing. When I joined Rockway as a youngish adult, I was secretly glad to be rid of that antiquated ritual forever, or so I thought.

But then in the 1980s I spent a year at Conrad Grebel College as interim chaplain, while John Rempel was on a sabbatical. Rempel practised footwashing at Grebel, so I felt I needed to do so also. And to my surprise, footwashing took on life for me again. Students unfamiliar with this practice were overwhelmed by how it symbolized mutual caring between friends in a close community. I'm convinced that the very oddness of the gesture—and its sheer physicality—was part of the attraction for these young adults.

In the *Mennonite Ministers' Manual*, Rempel writes, "Rituals condense vast realities into simple gestures. . . . In a setting of warmth and serenity, footwashing can be a gesture of love which words stammer to express."

### **Gestures of devotion**

We at Rockway still do not practise footwashing. But I wonder, what vast realities of love and care do we condense into simple gestures here? I'm thinking not of gestures that are elaborate or over the top. We generally don't do those here. I think of people who share with us gifts grounded in the senses, moving us into beauty as we worship God. I think of gestures that give expression to church community, gifts usually of time rather than money.

What if we saw such gestures as creating the aroma of a caring, worshipping community? What if we saw them as ways of showing devotion, as ways of loving God and neighbour?

Or what if focused, intense creation care is an act of gratitude to God? What if love of theology is an act of devotion to God? What if justice and care for the most vulnerable in our community and our world is not primarily a duty, or even a mandate, but rather an act of gratitude and devotion to God?

What if those of us with a spirituality not quite the norm at Rockway swallowed our fear of being written off and

offered to preach a sermon or lead a Sunday school class as part of our devotion to God? What if the rest of us received such offerings as a gift? What if more of us succumbed more regularly to spontaneous financial generosity in gratitude and devotion to God?

### **A spontaneous act**

Occasionally I still ponder an incident from 20 years ago.

One evening I went with a girlfriend to a John Michael Talbot concert in St. Catharines, Ont. I sat there enjoying his contemplative Scripture songs while looking forward to stopping at a coffee shop on the way home to continue catching up with Mary (a pseudonym) at a time when her young children were not competing for my attention. I enjoyed Mary precisely because she was spontaneous and creative, balancing me in good ways. Her family scraped along financially, which didn't seem to concern her all that much.

Partway through the concert, I was surprised to find that the event was actually a fundraiser for a charity I had never heard of, apparently doing good things for the poor somewhere in the world. When the offering plate was passed, I put in a few coins. To my surprise, Mary slowed up the offering plate as she emptied out her wallet

completely—putting in all the cash she had with her—\$50 or so, I guessed.

Oh my, I thought. I wonder if that was grocery money! I actually asked her why she gave money to a charity she knew nothing about. If you're going to do such a thing, I wondered why she didn't give it to MCC.

Mary described it as a spontaneous act of love for God—and an act of trust that God would provide for her family. Suddenly the aroma of the other Mary's perfume filled the air. But I continued to disapprove. My disapproval increased when Mary refused to let me pay for a cup of tea for her at the coffee shop, and we drove straight home.

I still don't know what to make of my friend Mary's action, or of my reaction, for that matter. I do know that I like the aroma whenever she's in the room. And on the rare occasions when I succumb to spontaneous generosity—when I make a bit of a fool of myself in naming or expressing my devotion to God—I quietly thank my friend Mary and Mary of Bethany as well. ❧



*Sue Steiner is the past chair of Mennonite Church Canada's Christian Formation Council.*

### ❧ For discussion

1. Sue Steiner tells the story of her friend who emptied her wallet in the offering plate at a concert as a spontaneous act of love for God. How would you have responded in that situation? Do you admire this person for her gesture, which she described as an act of trust in God?
2. Have you ever performed a spontaneous act of love for someone else? Do you agree that Mennonites are more apt to respond with "sober restraint" than spontaneous generosity? Why might that be? What are the advantages or disadvantages of being restrained?
3. What feelings do the symbol of foot-washing evoke in you? Do you agree that it can symbolize "mutual caring between friends in a close community"? What other actions can express "love which words stammer to express"?
4. How do you respond to Steiner's suggestion that doing the work of the church is a gesture of gratitude and devotion to God? When is financial generosity an act of devotion to God? Are generous people spontaneously generous or have they cultivated the habit of generosity?



## 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](mailto: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.*

## ✉ How to help make an inmate's Christmas brighter

WHAT DID YOU do for the inmate in your life this Christmas?

Our church, Pinawa Christian Fellowship, landed on the idea—perhaps others are doing it as well—of sending stamped Christmas cards to the Milner Ridge Correctional Centre and they distributed them to the guys inside.

I received the following note from the chaplain at the correctional centre:

"I want to thank you on behalf of the inmates . . . for the gift of stamped cards and envelopes this Christmas. I took them to each of our seven units and dorms . . . and fellows lined up quickly, and many said thanks.

"One man said, 'This will make my mother very happy' . . .

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Gifts of the church for a New Year

WILLARD METZGER

How do we understand the "new" in this New Year?

That which is new isn't always new, at least in the sense of having never existed before. Anyone who has worn a sibling's hand-me-down knows how "new" can be a relative term. What is new for one person is old for another.

As we begin 2011, another new year, there are three definitions of "new" that might be helpful. These definitions are also relevant as we look at the work of the church, especially as we continue to strengthen our missional identity and prepare for the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Waterloo, Ont., this summer.

• **THAT WHICH IS DIFFERENT CAN BE NEW.** Something routine for one person, if never experienced before by another, can be new. A different approach can be new. A different point of view can be new. A different understanding can be new.



This is a gift of the church.

The gathered community of faith in Jesus Christ is where the Holy Spirit functions to bring new and fresh understandings. Biblical truths, although timeless and foundational, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the gathered community of faith can produce discernment that can feel different. Jesus used the form of a parable to produce different understandings.

• **A REDISCOVERY CAN BE NEW.** If something forgotten has been rediscovered, it can feel like something new, even though it has already existed before. This, too, is a gift of the church. As the gathered community of faith joins in worship, the Spirit of Christ can prompt a rediscovery of truth. Such a rediscovery can feel like a fresh expression of faith. Ezra ushered in a fresh expression of faith when he led the people of God to rediscover the Law. Although the Law had

existed before, its rediscovery prompted a fresh and new response.

• **A RE-EMBRACE OF SOMETHING ALREADY KNOWN CAN BE NEW.** I know that selfishness leaves me feeling empty, yet I can slip into this behaviour. But it is not until I re-embrace the joy of living more fully for God and others that I experience a new sense of fulfillment.

This is also a gift of the church. The people of God gathered in loving community, mutual accountability and commitment can encourage a re-embrace of deeper discipleship. Such a re-embrace can feel new and exciting as greater peace with God and others is realized.

This New Year—2011—has never existed before, yet the prospects of the year may feel rather familiar. As the people of God, the beginning of another year can be welcomed by anticipating a fuller experience of that which is new. The faithfulness of God's grace and mercy can give us confidence to welcome that which is different, receive that which is rediscovered, and accept with joy that which God will prompt us to re-embrace. With such eagerness realized it will be a New Year.

*Willard Metzger is general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada.*

"It seems so basic: a chance to send a card at Christmas. But it is often 'out of reach' for many inmates!"

I trust more people will remember that men and women inside these institutions often cannot do the simple things we take for granted, like sending someone they love a Christmas card.

KEN REDDIG, PINAWA, MAN.

## ✉ JoinHands affiliated with Mennonite Men only

I JUST WANT to point out a factual error in the "Lao church dedicates new worship space" article (Nov. 29,

page 21): JoinHands is correctly named as committing \$40,000 to the cost of the new worship centre, but our affiliation remains with Mennonite Men, not with Mennonite Women.

Mennonite Men is a binational program of Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. following the re-organization of the General Conference and Mennonite churches of North America in 2001. It had previously been a binational program of the General Conference Church.

In about 2003, we changed the name of our service program from Tenth Man to JoinHands Church Building Program, to reflect a more gender-neutral identity, as a growing percentage of our donors are women. We consider ourselves colleagues of Mennonite Women and are looking for ways of

### GOD, MONEY AND ME

# Things I know

BY SHERRI GROSZ

I was chatting with friends about the good old days. We recalled becoming independent adults and making our own decisions. We laughed as we reminisced about the wise decisions as well as the mistakes we'd made, consequences we'd survived and advice from parents that was usually right and sometimes ignored.

That experience, combined with reaching one of those significant birthdays, makes me feel as though I've shifted to the mid-stage of life where it might be appropriate to share some of this knowledge with younger folks. Here are some things we wish we'd known and things my friends and I have learned the hard way:

- **MENTORS ARE NOT JUST FOR WORK.** Finding a mentor to walk alongside as you purchase a home or car, raise children, change jobs, deal with aging family members, or hit a bump in marriage or parenting, is a brilliant idea. Find someone a little older or a little further along in life and seek his or her wisdom and advice. Learning from another's experience is a smart thing to do.
- **BUILD GOOD MONEY HABITS.** Know

how much you earn and how much you spend, and track where it goes. Build some automatic savings into your plan. Understand the real cost of debt and the effects of compound interest. Ask lots of questions and learn about investments, loans, mortgages and retirement plans now. You may not need this information immediately, but it's easier to make good decisions if you have all the information and understand your options.

- **GOOD ENOUGH FOR NOW IS A SMART DECISION.** If the budget is tight or your life is in transition, try to borrow, barter, buy used or rent. This is especial-



*Know how much you earn and how much you spend, and track where it goes.*

ly true if it might be a short-term need.

- **TRY LIVING BELOW YOUR MEANS.** You may have heard the old adage, "We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't know." Rather than automatically jumping on the consumption treadmill—and living at, or beyond, the edge of your wage—consider learning to be content

with less. You will likely find you have more time, less stress, better work-life balance and less debt.

- **GIVE GENEROUSLY OF TIME, TALENTS AND MONEY.** Being generous reminds me that I have more than I need, even if I sometimes feel as though the budget is tight. Research charities, find your area of interest, then get involved and give both your money and yourself.

As a church community, we support one another through the good times and the bad. Sharing our knowledge and experience is one way we can express our love and care for each other. John 13:34 reminds us to "[l]ove one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

Each of us has something to give and something to share with our brothers and sisters. What have you learned that might help someone else as we journey

this path of life together? What pieces of wisdom could you share?

*Sherri Grosz is a stewardship consultant at the Kitchener, Ont., office of Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC). For stewardship education and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit [Mennofoundation.ca](http://Mennofoundation.ca).*



working even more closely in the future, but our organizations are quite separate.

Mennonite Men has three primary foci:

- Encouraging the formation and strengthening of men's groups in local congregations.
- Publishing and promoting books and study materials on men's issues.
- Operating the JoinHands Church Building Program.

MARV BAERGEN, CALGARY, ALTA.

*Marv Baergen, Samson Lo of Vancouver, B.C., and Murray Logan of Regina, Sask., represent Canada on the binational Mennonite Men board.*

## Correction

Despite the headline of the Nov. 15, page 25 article, the late Henry Dueck of Leamington, Ont., was not the "last ordained aeltester." Since the article appeared, *Canadian Mennonite* has been made aware of five other living ordained aeltesters: Jake Tilitzky, Erwin Cornelsen and Jurgen Schonwetter of British Columbia; and Jake F. Pauls and Jake Harms of Manitoba. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

## FAMILY TIES

# Treasure in clay jars

MELISSA MILLER

This fall, a controversial exhibition in Winnipeg, Man., grabbed my attention. After weeks of plodding mindlessly past graphic advertisements with bold letters announcing "Bodies: The exhibition," I belatedly clued in to the fact that the bodies in the exhibition were in fact very real, formerly live bodies. The cadavers in the show had been sliced open to reveal muscles and bones and organs, and then coated with a varnish to preserve the body.

Among my friends I soon learned that some were eager to attend the show, out of a desire to deepen awareness and knowledge of the workings of physical bodies or out of simple curiosity. Others had a strong negative reaction to such an exhibit, feeling repulsed or even horrified: To cut open a physical body and put it on display for entertainment purposes seemed to be a violation of the sacredness of the human body. Might it be one more sign of how callous and profane our society has become?

Part of the controversy involves the origin of the bodies on display in Winnipeg and in other locations around the world. The company which put on the show in

Winnipeg buys the bodies or "specimens" from the Chinese government, which describes them as unclaimed. It seems that the people who inhabited these bodies were not in a position to give or refuse consent for them to be used in this manner. At the very least, the bodies in the Winnipeg exhibit belonged to poor and vulnerable people, people who were not in a position, at the time of their deaths, for their bodies to receive the respect that most of us think should be extended to



*Our bodies are good, and all bodies should be given honour and care when death has come . . . .*

the dead.

I was particularly conscious of our treatment of the dead, at the time, because I was preparing for our congregation's Eternal Life service. As we do each year, we respectfully remember those who have died with a time of prayer and candle-lighting, reading out the names of the deceased, with music and tears helping to ease our heavy task. This year, our small congregation had buried four long-term members; many of us had also experienced the death of a mother or father beyond our congregation. The

memory of particular people and the tender care with which we had laid to rest their bodies contrasted sharply with the thought of the cut-open and shiny-sealed bodies on display.

The Scripture text for our service of remembrance included the Apostle Paul's beautiful reflection that "*we have this treasure in clay jars*" (II Corinthians 4:7a), a reminder of the preciousness of our "clay jars." Our bodies hold the treasure of life inside of them, life that we have from God. The breath of God glows within our clay jars. Our bodies are good, and all bodies should be given honour and care when death has come, and the body no longer glows with life.

Whatever our response to an exhibit such as Bodies, we are called to an at-

titude of respect in the presence of a lifeless body. We may attend a show and see for ourselves the muscles, bones and organs that form our clay jars. Or we may, for many reasons, decline the opportunity. Whatever our choice, we do well to pay sacred respect to bodies, the clay jars that God entrusts with the treasure of life.

*Melissa Miller (familyties@mts.net) lives in Winnipeg, where she ponders family relationships as a pastor, counsellor and author.*

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Bergen**—Charlie Mark (b. July 14, 2010), to Mark and Janice Bergen, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Cao**—Irene (b. Nov. 18, 2010), to Cao Shao Wu and Liang Xiao Hong, Markham Chinese Mennonite, Ont.

**Forrest**—Cohen Earl (b. Dec. 14, 2010), to Kelli and Earl Forrest, Tofield Mennonite, Alta.

**Friesen**—Graham Isaiah (b. June 29, 2010), to Garry and Steph Friesen, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Hildebrand**—Regan Charis (b. June 8, 2010), to Cameron and Annie Hildebrand, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Jarrett**—Tomass Vilde (b. Nov. 22, 2010), to Matthew Jarrett and Agnese Vilde, Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

**Legault**—Kain Armond (b. Sept. 16, 2010), to Kyle and Amanda Legault, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Matthews**—twins Isabella Joyce and Alyssa Gwenith (both Nov. 22, 2010), to Kris and Krista Matthews, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

**McMahon**—Caden Patrick (b. June 21, 2010), to Pat and Julie McMahon, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Neufeld**—Elise Josephine (b. Nov. 24, 2010), to Robert and Maria Neufeld, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Thiessen**—Mya Rae (b. Nov. 19, 2010), to Phil and Wenona Thiessen, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Thiessen**—Raya Bree (b. May 22, 2010), to Chad and Rachel Thiessen, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Turick**—Joshua Finley (b. Nov. 2, 2010), to Rob and Sandra Turick, Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Weaver**—Claudia Joanne (b. Nov. 12, 2010), to Andrew and Trisha Weaver, Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Wong**—Enoch (b. Nov. 20, 2010), to William Wong and Zeny Feng, Markham Chinese Mennonite, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Sarah Unrau**—Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask., Dec. 19, 2010.

### Marriages

**Bueckert/Guenter**—Eva Bueckert and Peter Guenter, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., July 3, 2010.

**Krahn/Rempel**—Jordana Krahn and Ryan Rempel, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., Sept. 4, 2010.

**Siemens/Wiebe**—Larry Siemens and Eva Wiebe, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., Sept. 18, 2010.

**Towarnicki/Wieler**—Ernie Towarnicki and Verna Wieler, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., May 29, 2010.

### Deaths

**Bauman**—Audrey, 78 (b. Sept. 15, 1932; d. Nov. 6, 2010), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

**Belau**—Anneliese (nee Gau), 74 (b. Sept. 9, 1936; d. Nov. 26, 2010), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Born**—Mary (nee Unrau), 95 (b. Feb. 13, 1915; d. Dec. 8, 2010), Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

**Buller**—Henry, 92 (b. April 7, 1918; d. Nov. 10, 2010), First Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

**Dick**—Mary C., 97 (b. Dec. 27, 1912; d. Dec. 9, 2010), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Driedger**—Mary (nee Braun), 82 (b. Dec. 31, 1927; d. Dec. 17, 2010), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Driedger**—Rudy, 65 (b. Dec. 26, 1944; d. Nov. 30, 2010), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Dyck**—Gerhard, 91 (b. Aug. 29, 1919; d. Nov. 24, 2010), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

**Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to [milestones@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:milestones@canadianmennonite.org), including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please include birth date and last name at birth if available.**

## Pontius' Puddle



## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

## The art of believing

BY TROY WATSON

“What do you believe?” This is an important question, but one that is often loaded from someone trying to label me, to determine whether I need fixing or converting. I am apprehensive to answer this question until I can decipher the real motive for the question.

Another reason for my hesitation is my beliefs are not static things like rocks. They are fluid, dynamic and evolving, like my relationships. My beliefs are not the same today as they were five years ago, and I assume they will be different again five years from now. I certainly hope so. If my beliefs never change, then I’m not learning, growing or experiencing anything new.

I am not advocating constantly shifting beliefs and convictions, however. It is dangerous to be tossed to and fro with every cultural shift and philosophical trend that blows our way. But it is just as dangerous to ignore things—contemporary science, for instance—simply because they do not affirm my worldview.

The art of believing is hard work if done meaningfully. It is not blindly holding onto things we were taught when we were eight years old. It is actively

the healthiest and most rewarding context to examine and test one’s beliefs.

Those skilled in the art of believing do not just focus on what they believe. Understanding why, when and how we believe is even more important because these shape what we believe.

Being aware of when I first believed something—during my formative years—and exploring how this impacts why I still believe it is absolutely essential to my constructing an authentic worldview, as opposed to adopting a set of beliefs I was “brainwashed” into. This does not mean I reject something simply because it was handed to me at a vulnerable age. It means being aware of this fact and taking it into consideration as I discern why I believe what I believe.

Awareness that we don’t see reality as it is—but as we really are—is central to a healthy spirituality. In the words of Soren



process brings humility and a greater desire to seek truth, as opposed to convincing ourselves and everybody else that we have already found it.

We should consider this proverb from Manly P. Hall, the late Canadian mystic

and author: “Always trust a person looking for the truth; don’t ever trust the one who’s found it.”

If we are genuine seekers of truth, we will not be afraid to question things we have held sacred most our lives. In fact, I believe we will begin to see that our questioning is just as sacred as our believing.

Regularly wrestling with putting words to our faith is an important habit to cultivate. (I would recommend every one to three years.) Just because it’s a difficult and never-ending task doesn’t mean there isn’t value in it. One could say the same about household chores! We need to constantly clean house with our belief systems. They get dusty and cluttered, and some of us packrats need to learn how to throw things out!

Some questions to wrestle with in re-articulating one’s beliefs:

- Why do I believe this?
- Has my experience of reality this year affirmed this belief or challenged it?
- When did I first believe this?
- Have any of my beliefs evolved since I last did this exercise?
- Have I read any books or talked with anyone with a different perspective on this?
- Are sentimentality, fear, loyalty or laziness preventing me from thinking critically about my beliefs?
- Am I aware of how I have been conditioned to believe these things? ☸

*Troy Watson is a Mennonite minister, resident theologian, spiritual director and a founding leader of The Quest, “a different kind of church” for life in the postmodern shift in St. Catharines, Ont.*

*My beliefs are not the same today as they were five years ago, and I assume they will be different again five years from now.*

engaging life, knowledge, experience and other people’s perspectives, repeatedly returning to the task of rewriting the best description of reality we can muster while simultaneously acknowledging how limited our view of the big picture really is. This is not for the lazy or faint of heart.

Nor should it be attempted alone. Sifting through the wheat and chaff of assumed “truths” is best accomplished in conversation with people we trust and with whom we feel safe. Community is

Kierkegaard, “The jaundiced see everything yellow.” We see the world through our particular lens and that lens distorts reality. None of us are completely objective with anything: from calling balls and strikes in baseball, to biblical interpretation and politics.

We see what we want to see or have been conditioned to see. For example, how many wise men came to visit baby Jesus? Recognizing our conditioning as a constant factor in our discernment



## YOUNG PROPHETS

# The changing look of 'peace'

BY MARIA KRAUSE

SPECIAL TO *CANADIAN MENNONITE*

**A**s a Mennonite, peace is a part of my everyday vocabulary. I know it is a good thing—Jesus is the Prince of Peace after all—and I know that peace is found in right relationships, justice and grace. But what does peace look like, exactly?

I grew up in a home where we understood that peace is foundational to the Christian faith and to living rightly. I've advocated for it from elementary school to university, but my understanding of what it means to work for peace and what peace looks like have changed over the years. In elementary school, peace was a picture of a white dove and a song about how Jesus loves me. In high school, I contrasted peace with the history of colonization, slavery and the two World Wars.

When I moved to Winnipeg, Man., to attend Canadian Mennonite University, my understanding of peace became more complex. I began to realize that it was not just about wars and doves, but about day-to-day interactions and decisions. Peace became more personal and yet more

distant as I learned how encompassing and challenging it was.

When I transferred to the University of British Columbia and began to study international relations, advocating for peace became even more complicated. I was no longer surrounded by students who shared my view that nonviolent action was the obvious and only way to work for peace. Instead, "peacebuilding" became a polarizing and militant concept.

I now find myself an ocean away from those classes, in a place called Lusaka, Zambia. I'm volunteering with an organization called Peace Clubs through the Serving and Learning Together (SALT) Program of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

Peace Clubs was started in 2006 by Zambians and Congolese refugees, to help refugees integrate peacefully into Zambian schools. Since then, the clubs have expanded into 16 schools within Lusaka, working to empower young people to nonviolently transform conflicts in their schools, homes and communities, by teaching them skills in

nonviolent peacebuilding, conflict transformation and reconciliation.

I am beginning to understand that working for peace is about asking the questions that no one wants to ask. It is about addressing the issues that no one wants to acknowledge. Peace is about moving forward into that "third way" that Jesus calls us to. It is about seeking creative solutions as a community.

Issa Sadi Ebombolo, one of the founders of Peace Clubs, says, "Peace is the transformation of destructive interactions into cooperative and constructive relationships."

For him, peace looks like a single mother living in poverty who asks her young daughter to draw the water, sweep the house and wash the dishes every morning so that she can leave to sell vegetables in the market. The daughter is late for school every day, and is punished by her teachers. She has no time to study and is failing three subjects.

Then this daughter joins her school's Peace Club. She learns about nonviolent peacebuilding, and about creatively and constructively resolving conflict.

Armed with these new understandings and skills, the daughter returns home and sits with her mother, telling her of her concerns and her hopes. Her mother begins to also understand; her perspective is transformed. They search for solutions together, seeking that "third option."

Now the mother gets up a bit earlier to draw the water and sweep the house before leaving for the market, and the daughter is able to finish washing the dishes and still make it to class on time. "This," says Ebombolo, "is peace."

And it is. It is a transformation of a dissonant relationship into a harmonious one—destruction into construction. ❧

*Maria Krause is a graduate of the University of British Columbia with a bachelor of arts degree in international relations, and a member at Langley Mennonite Fellowship, B.C. After her term in Lusaka, Zambia, ends, she hopes to return to Canada to work on a master's degree.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIA KRAUSE



*Maria Krause, back row right, is spending a year working for MCC in Lusaka, Zambia, with the Millennium School Peace Club. Issa Sadi Ebombolo, front row right, is a Peace Clubs founder.*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# The Prince of Peace is Jesus Christ

*Grace Mennonite congregants study to make their peace stance clear in their church and community*

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent  
BRANDON, MAN.

Grace Mennonite Church is engaged in an ongoing and earnest conversation about the Anabaptist peace position.

Arnold Hildebrand, a church member and facilitator of a recent book study on the issue, says, “We need to make sure our position is clear. We have a shadow presence here in Brandon and I’d like to even almost change our church name to Peace Church and then make it public that we are the Peace Church in Brandon.”

Grace Mennonite is the only Mennonite Church Canada congregation in the wider Brandon area.

Pastor Ken Quiring agrees that members are looking for a way to explore the issue of peace and get a better understanding of their identity as a Peace Church. This fall the adult Sunday school class embarked on a study of Arden Thiessen’s book, *Keeping in Step With the God of Peace*. Several times

they invited Thiessen, a former pastor and teacher at Steinbach (Man.) Bible College, to join them to inform their discussion.

“It is a well-researched book that follows right through from the Old Testament to New Testament, demonstrating a very well-reasoned position that the Anabaptists have on peace,” says Quiring.

Della Lee attended the class regularly. The study awakened in her a need to become a more active peacemaker.

“I had been going with the cultural assumption that if people were in conflict with each other and I was not involved, I should stay out of it,” she says, “but from studying the book I decided that mediation is helpful.”

Since then, Lee has been stirred to enter into some situations of conflict in the role of peacemaker.

“One thing I learned is to be more of a friend to those currently in conflict with another church member and see the conflict in terms of growth,” she says. “A lot of people feel hopeless in their conflicts, stuck forever. If you can help them to see a vision of the future where that relationship can be healed, good things can come out of that conflict. I am motivated to do that.”

The class grew from its usual dozen or so participants, to 15 to 20.

“We had to add another layer to our circle at times,” says Hildebrand.

The class reflected the varied backgrounds and viewpoints of church members.

Elsa Dick, who came to Canada after the Second World War, brought a different perspective. Her memories of that war

PHOTO BY ARNOLD HILDEBRAND



*The Fractor.*

as a 12-year-old—when her mother died and her father was sent back to Russia from Germany—shaped her thoughts on peace. Experiences of hunger, loss and fear confirm for her that, “I don’t believe in war. I taught my children we don’t believe in war. It is wrong, but sometimes we talk too much about the peace situation and not enough about peace in the heart.” That, after all, is what has sustained her all these years.

“Not all were in agreement, but it has been a great platform for our church to work from,” says Hildebrand. “People are saying we are not done yet; we want to talk some more.”

The congregation is considering studying the “The Second Mile: A Peace Journey for Congregations” series, a resource from MC Canada and Mennonite Central Committee.

“One of my hopes is to also get at justice issues, which are a part of being a Peace Church,” says Hildebrand.

“The Fractor,” a piece of art created for the 500th anniversary of Menno Simons that gives historical background in a variety of languages, has been given a place of prominence at Grace Mennonite, and the regular lighting of the peace candle reminds the congregation that it is a Peace Church. Congregants are hoping their journey will lead them to a better understanding of that identity and how they can carry it out into the world. ❧

PHOTO BY ANGELA PAPPAS



*Arden Thiessen, author of Keeping in Step With the God of Peace, preaches at Grace Mennonite Church, Brandon, Man.*

## MENNONITE/LUTHERAN RECONCILIATION

# 'Rattling everyone's paradigms'

*Professors switch theological sides in Mennonite/Lutheran conversations*

BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher  
WATERLOO, ONT.

**W**alking in each other's theological shoes for a day, professors from their respective seminaries in Waterloo, Ont.—Conrad Grebel University College and Waterloo Lutheran Seminary—engaged in a bit of humour by having a Mennonite talk about “grace” and a Lutheran expound on “discipleship.”

“We wanted to rattle everyone's paradigms,” said Robert A. Kelly, Lutheran professor of systematic theology, in a day of “conversations” between Lutherans and Mennonites on Nov. 26 at Wilfrid Laurier University, as part of the ongoing reconciliation and healing process between the denominations. Presentations by an equal number of professors from the two institutions followed an evening of healing ceremonies, testimonies, confessions, shared hymns and choral selections.

Kelly, who grew up and was educated in “liberal” California, admitted first off that “this Lutheran has been tainted by Anabaptist ideas about public discipleship by the likes of John Howard Yoder, Clarence Jordan, Ron Sider and Jim Wallis, not to mention Dietrich Bonhoeffer.”

He confessed that out of the Reformation and Martin Luther's influence Lutherans “became so worried about their own salvation that they thought about little else. They never worried about the good of their neighbour or the welfare of their communities.”

Over time, however, he said they got over that preoccupation. Today, that mantra has been transformed into something that says “by grace, the God who has saved us in Christ has called us to be responsible for the welfare of our community and for the future health of creation.” The caveat, though, is that, even with the best of intentions, “we did horrendous damage to the very people we were trying to help,” citing the scandal of Canada's residential schools

as the classic case of trying, “in their own view,” to be redemptive with aboriginal

children while “destroying a culture.”

In like manner, Tom Yoder Neufeld,

PHOTO BY RICHARD ALBRECHT



**David Martin, left, executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, receives the sign of the cross on his open hand from Michael Pryse, bishop of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, at a service of repentance and healing between Lutherans and Mennonites at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary on Nov. 25. After confessing to mutual wrongdoing over the past five centuries, all left with a blessing: “The God of healing and reconciliation grant you to live in peace with one another in accordance with Jesus Christ. The God of abundance meet your hunger and thirst for righteousness so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The God of grace bless you now and forever. Amen.”**



## MENNONITE/LUTHERAN RECONCILIATION

professor of religious studies at Conrad Grebel, quipped that it was a “sign of God’s grace that, unlike in the 16th century, today we do not have a disputation, but a dialogue between sisters and brothers who know themselves to be members of the same body,” confessing that there is much for “us Mennonites to grapple with when it comes to grace.”

Taking their cues on grace from the Sermon on the Mount, rather than from the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (God loving us even in our sinfulness), Mennonites, Yoder Neufeld said, always knew “Paul was Lutheran!” Seriously, though, the professor confessed, “As much as there is sometimes a sense that ‘grace’ is someone else’s agenda, there are some among us who feel strongly both the lack of full appreciation in our tradition about grace and its centrality in the Christian life.”

Citing several Anabaptist thinkers, such as Stephen Dintaman who decried Harold Bender’s “Anabaptist Vision” as so confined to ethics as to miss the “brokenness and sinfulness many of us Mennonites struggle with in our broken lives,” Yoder Neufeld claimed a certain “fatigue” has evolved in “trying too hard.” He noted the work of a colleague, Arnold Snyder, who, for decades from his work in Nicaragua and his study of 16th century Anabaptism, has insisted that to love one’s enemies requires the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

And in highlighting the ongoing debate about grace in Mennonite circles, he cited the polarities of the late J. Lawrence Burkholder, who argued in his dissertation for a kind of “social responsibility” that is not squeamish about getting one’s hands dirty in engaging justice in the world, and the late John Howard Yoder, who, according to Yoder Neufeld, worried that an over-emphasis on grace “cuts the prophetic nerve of the church’s witness when it becomes the back door to not following Jesus.”

Jeremy Bergen, professor of religious studies and theology at Conrad Grebel, cautioned against giving Anabaptist martyrs celebrity status in the reconciliation process, saying that if these martyrs “truly point to Christ with their entire lives and with their deaths, then they are witnesses

for the entire church, not just Mennonites.” He asked Mennonites to “cease to regard them as martyrs until we discover with our Lutheran partners whether and in what way they might be witnesses for the whole church.”

Offering the human touch to an otherwise heavily theological conversation, Kristine Lund, director of pastoral care and counselling at the Lutheran seminary, said that the road to forgiveness is a process, taking different forms with different

individuals or institutions. While it has therapeutic value, forgiveness also carries implicit vulnerability, leading to a “terrifying, but unbelievably exciting” experience.

Some limitations are that forgiveness doesn’t always require repentance and it doesn’t always result in reconciliation, she said. But the popular notion that says “forgive and forget” is to throw away a valuable experience, she suggested, adding that to genuinely forgive is a way to freedom. ☸

## Healing memories, reconciling in Christ

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Historical records are shaped by the perspectives of those who write them, but perspectives that clash can cause centuries of pain.

On July 22, an apology from Lutherans for their historical persecution of Mennonites initiated a

new relationship between these parts of the church and opened a door to revisiting their shared but distinctive histories.

“We have to change the way we teach our history,” says Janet Plenert, who, as executive secretary of Mennonite Church Canada Witness and vice-president of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), has been actively involved in the reconciliation process.

To provide a solid foundation for nurturing this new relationship, reconciled through a common faith and commitment to Christ, MC Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada jointly prepared a new study guide, “Healing Memories, Reconciling in Christ,” for distribution to their respective congregations.

The guide reflects the historical relationship between Lutherans and Mennonites in a portrayal accepted by both churches. It illustrates how differences between them arose, helping to bridge the gap between



misunderstandings.

The guide was created by Allen Jorgenson, Lutheran pastor and seminary professor, and Margaret Loewen Reimer, Mennonite editor and writer. It is based on a report by the Lutheran-Mennonite International

Study Commission, a three-year dialogue begun by MWC and the Lutheran World Federation.

Lutherans and Mennonites are encouraged to work through the study guide together wherever possible. Four one-hour sessions include material from the study commission report, questions, relevant Bible studies and prayers. Links to video clips are included.

In addition to print copies of the study guide, each MC Canada congregation will receive a copy of the Lutheran World Federation’s magazine, *Lutheran World Information*, that focuses entirely on the apology and reconciliation.

“We’re providing a lot of resources, but we need people to implement them,” Plenert says, encouraging congregations and area churches to implement this study however they feel is most effective within their own communities. ☸

# Heartfelt apology

*Faith Mennonite welcomes Lutherans on Reformation Sunday*

BY DAVE ROGALSKY  
Eastern Canada Correspondent

On Reformation Sunday, Oct. 31, Faith Mennonite Church in Leamington, Ont., was visited by neighbours and friends from the local St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

Reformation Sunday marks the anniversary in 1517 when Martin Luther began public theological dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church that is considered the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

The Reformation Sunday event was planned this spring after word of the Lutheran World Federation's call for Lutherans to repent of their persecution of Anabaptists over the centuries was announced.

As Rev. Thomas Mertz, co-pastor of St. Paul's, spoke, many in the Faith congregation were moved to tears. While it had been decided that there would not be an apology during the sermon, Mertz, moved by the Spirit, offered a heartfelt apology on behalf of the Lutherans. He spoke of the beginnings of the Reformation, the need for dialogue forgotten, and the hurt that resulted. Mertz then presented a copy of the *Evangelical Lutheran Book of Worship* to Faith's church council chair Jake Fehr, and led in a prayer for the two congregations and their respective denominations.

In response, Ruth Boehm, Faith's pastor, presented a breadbasket cloth to Mertz for his congregation. She had cross-stitched it for an Anabaptist history project at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. The design was from a pattern book dated 1545 that was printed in Augsburg, Germany. Fehr also presented Yutta Wilson, a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church Council, a peace candle on behalf



*Ruth Boehm, right, pastor of Faith Mennonite Church, Leamington, Ont., presents Rev. Thomas Mertz, co-pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, with a breadbasket cloth she stitched from a 1545 German pattern book on Reformation Sunday, Oct. 31.*

of Faith Mennonite.

After the service, a junior youth member asked if "that stuff between the Lutherans and the Anabaptists really happened." Another congregant said that he didn't see

a need for an apology at all, while another was so moved that he volunteered to sing at the Lutheran church when the breadbasket cloth was to be used. ☼

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# Ottawa Mennonite keeps up Christmas tradition

STORY AND PHOTO BY ELLEN SHENK

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
OTTAWA, ONT.

If it's November, Ottawa Mennonite Church must have Ten Thousand Villages (TTV) sales on Friday and Saturday.

Soon after the church's founding the ladies group began selling linens from SelfHelp Crafts (the precursor to TTV). Over the years, these sales were held at schools and government offices and in private homes. Sales were first held in the church in 1992 and the proceeds of that sale exceeded those of any previous year.

In 2010, sales were held on three weekends in November, giving dedicated volunteers a break the first weekend. Volunteers, drawn largely from the church, include youths and older children; a few community members also volunteer and some high school students even amass volunteer hours during the sale.

The total sales for 2010 were \$86,976, sufficient to support approximately 25 families for a year. The Living Gift donations of \$5,644 provide contributions to health, education, care and empowerment to families around the world.

These annual November TTV sales at Ottawa Mennonite have become a staple



*Elsa Koop of Ottawa Mennonite Church is an active volunteer during the congregation's annual Ten Thousand Villages sale, which raised nearly \$87,000 last November.*

of church life, and they have seen a steady growth and consistent volunteer and customer support. Church members also contribute food such as borscht and a variety

of sweets for the tea room, the proceeds of which go to support the Ottawa Food Bank.

The church sale has continued to do well even after two TTV stores were established in Ottawa and during the recent economic downturn. The 2010 sale was the largest festival sale in Ontario.

Ottawa Mennonite's commitment to TTV sales remains strong and, if Christmas did not come soon after the sale ends, volunteers would wonder what to do with their free weekends! ☸

## Peace starts now

*Religion contributes to sustainable peacemaking: Nathan Funk*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

Writers like Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins are fond of pointing out all the wars, massacres and other horrible things that religions have done in the world. They suggest that the best thing for humanity would be to give up on any idea of any god and simply live.

But at this year's Eby Lecture at Conrad Grebel University College, Nathan Funk suggested that religion is actually "one of the more significant sources of motivation

for those who persistently work for peace." Funk, an associate professor of peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel, went on to note that "taking religion's peace potential seriously is vitally important for peace researchers, and for all who hope to build bridges of understanding in a polarized world."

To this end, Funk has been appointed as lead researcher at Grebel's newly founded Centre for the Study of Religion and Peace.



*Nathan Funk, left, an associate professor of peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel University College, discusses his Eby Lecture with Noé Gonzalía, a pastor at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.*



He spent much of his Nov. 19 lecture making the case that religion has many resources for working for peace, and that an understanding of religion and its role in culture is essential for peace to be made anywhere in the world.

He gave many examples of religiously motivated peacemakers, including Martin Luther King Jr.; Mahatma Gandhi; Aung San Suu Kyi, the recently released opposition leader in Burma/Myanmar; Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye, who work on peaceful solutions together in Nigeria; and John Paul Lederach, professor of international peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Ind.

Funk also moderated the new centre's inaugural event on Nov. 11 that featured Luis Lugo of the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, based in Washington, D.C.

Lugo's presentation focused on the tolerance and tension in Sub-Saharan Africa

between Islam and Christianity through statistics from comprehensive surveys taken by the Pew Forum. Survey respondents illustrated a high degree of religious commitment, Lugo said, but also exhibited a great degree of tolerance for people of other faiths. While Lugo allowed for the fact that there are incidents of intolerance, the data suggest that the vast majority of Africans are very accepting of people from other faiths.

"Religion can be a factor that gets manipulated to sharpen differences between people who are in conflict," commented Funk. "Religion can also manifest a positive side in conflict situations. Religions offer resources for peacemaking and value systems that call for changes in human relationships. This will be the focus of the centre," he said. ❧

*With files from Conrad Grebel University College.*

morning speaker, arrived in Haiti shortly before the earthquake struck. Thankfully, the Baptist Haiti Mission is high on a hill and was able to maintain some contact with the outside world. Throughout her week there Thiessen said she felt God's presence as she assisted with supplying food and medical care to as many as possible.

Heidi Wagler, a musician from Tavistock, shared her story of hope in spite of pain and hurt in her life. She referred to Psalm 27 and how she felt led to produce a CD, *Healing and Hope for the Nations*, the proceeds of which are directed to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to rebuild lives in Haiti.

Erna Neufeldt, president of Mennonite Women Canada, highlighted changes to the national organization's constitution that focus on reaching out to all women. Liz Koop was recognized for her five years of work on the program committee and affirmed in her new role as president-elect of MW Canada. Diana Gallego from Toronto has also agreed to serve on that committee.

To conclude the day, Leah Reesor and Luke Keller, recent participants in a Work and Learn Team in Haiti, shared their experiences. After giving a brief history of Haiti's economic development, they showed a video highlighting MCC's current involvement there. They encouraged the women to pray and contact the Canadian government about how money promised for Haiti is being spent. ❧

## Building hope in Haiti focus for women's day

Story and Photo by the Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada  
VIRGIL, ONT.

Haiti was the theme at the Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Fall Enrichment Day on Oct. 23, when 125

women gathered at Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil.

Donna Thiessen from Vineland, Ont., the



*Donna Thiessen tells those in attendance at the Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Fall Enrichment Day of her experiences in Haiti before and after last January's devastating earthquake struck the Caribbean island nation.*

# Eastern Canada snapshots

*Paramedic Jim Neufeld, right, trains ushers Al Warkentine and Paul Thiessen in the technique of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation as part of the emergency response plan developed by Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil, Ont. The training was made possible by a bequest to the church to be creative in ministry both within the congregation and the community.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF RANDY KLAASSEN



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOANNA REESOR-MCDOWELL

*Rouge River Connection, a musical group from the Community Mennonite (Stouffville, Ont.) and Hagerman Mennonite (Markham, Ont.) congregations, volunteered their time to put on a benefit concert on Nov. 25 called the Stouffville 'Harambee' (a Swahili word for 'pulling together') in support of Give a Day to World AIDS. The movement was founded in 2004 by Dr. Jane Philpott, chief of the Department of Family Medicine at Markham Stouffville Hospital and a member of Community Mennonite, when she challenged her medical colleagues to give one day of their pay on Dec. 1, World AIDS Day, to fight the epidemic in Africa. The concept has spread to numerous law firms and other professionals across Canada, and more than \$2.5 million has been raised so far.*



## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

## Gift bags go to women in need

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B. C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Christmas was a little merrier for women of Peardonville House treatment centre, thanks to some generous members of Level Ground Mennonite Church, Abbotsford.

The week before Christmas five women from Level Ground packed 30 gift bags for residents of Peardonville House, a home for women recovering from chemical dependence. Each bag contained toiletries, socks, a scarf, a journal, candy and chocolates. All items were donated by church

members.

Shirley Martin, whose mother knitted most of the scarves, says the reason for preparing the gift bags is simple: "These are women in need, and this is one way to show we care."

Many of the residents of Peardonville House are mothers, and Martin, a single mother herself, says she could identify with them. In addition to gifts for the women, eight young children of mothers living at Peardonville House also received

Christmas gifts of toys and a book.

"It is special for us to be able to put these together," says Rita Ewert, who personally delivered the bags. "[The women] are touched that they get something from people who don't even know them. They come with nothing, they have nothing."

Level Ground has an intentional ministry of reaching out to people in the community struggling with substance addiction. The congregants particularly relate to residents of Kinghaven, a facility for men located next door to the church, and Peardonville House for women. ❧

### ❧ Briefly noted

#### Rosthern pastors come up with 'egg-stravagant' ministry

Several years ago, the ministerial association of Rosthern, Sask., which represents a number of different area congregations, was approached by a local egg producer. He had eggs rated below the accepted industry standard and wondered if the pastors had any ideas on how to use them. Together, the pastors made a list of needy families in the town and began dropping by each week with a friendly greeting and a dozen eggs. The first pastor to help out with it was from the local Alliance church. After he left, Wilmer Froese, co-pastor of Rosthern Mennonite Church, agreed to take it on. "I did it for two months on my own, then I realized I was going to need some help," he says. He assembled a team of six volunteers, some from his own church, and began to organize. About 15 dozen eggs are brought to his house each week for delivery. "It's a way to meet these people and say we care," he explains. Now preparing for his own exit from the area, Froese is meeting with the deacons at Rosthern Mennonite to see who will take leadership of the program after he resigns. "I told them that this is not just about eggs," he says, believing it is opening more than just doors into the community. "It opens one's eyes to another side of town," he says.

—BY KARIN FEHDERAU



*Chris Buhler, Ashley Martin and Shirley Martin pack Christmas bags, a gift of Level Ground Mennonite Church, for residents of Peardonville House.*



# MCC commissions new workers for worldwide assignments

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE RELEASE

Akron, Pa.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) commissioned 60 new young adult workers, including 11 from Mennonite Church Canada congregations, for one-year assignments through its Serving and Learning Together (SALT) Program. They are:

- Jada Dyck of Whitewater Mennonite Church, Boissevain, Man., who is serving in Bolivia as a childcare worker.
- Christopher Frey of Hawkesville Mennonite Church, Ont., who is serving in Kenya in a communication and training centre.
- Kristin Friesen of Carrot River Mennonite Church, Sask., who is serving in El Salvador as a childcare educational assistant.
- Daryl Good of Breslau Mennonite Church, Ont., who is serving in Zambia as a teacher.
- Maria Krause of Langley Mennonite Fellowship, B.C., who is serving in Zambia as an assistant coordinator of a peace program.
- Tyler Loewen of Blumenort Mennonite Church, Gretna, Man., who is serving in Indonesia as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and community worker.
- Doris Luna-Trujillo of Toronto United Mennonite Church, Ont., who is serving in Brazil as an early childhood education worker.
- Matthew Madigan of Breslau Mennonite Church, Ont., who is serving in South Africa as a conservation agriculture promoter.
- Bryn Olfert of Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask., who is serving in Vietnam as a manuscript editor.
- Alison Regehr of Breslau Mennonite Church, Ont., who is serving in Honduras as an environmental educator.
- Leanne Ropp of Crosshill Mennonite Church, Ont., who is serving in Indonesia as an ESL teacher and community

worker.

MCC also commissioned 35 new adult workers, including three with MC Canada affiliations, for service overseas and in the U.S. They are:

- Rachelle Friesen of Winnipeg, Man., who attended Home Street Mennonite Church there, and who is serving a three-year term in Palestine as a peace development

worker.

- Mary Martens of Steinbach, Man., who attended Steinbach Mennonite Church, and who is serving a one-year term in Akron as a dining/hosting assistant.
- Daniella Penner of Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man., who completed a three-month term in Haiti as an accountant last October. ☸

## Good news for MCC Alberta

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent

For the second year in a row, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta spread its annual meetings out across the province, holding events in Tofield, Grande Prairie, Vauxhall and Carstairs.

Approximately 270 people attended the meetings to hear that donations were approximately \$1 million above budget across Canada. In Alberta alone, \$750,000 was received in response to the Haitian earthquake and other donations were still slightly more than \$200,000 above budget.

Another positive financial piece of news was that the Calgary office complex shared by MCC and related organizations is now mortgage-free.

Keynote speaker Waihenya Njoroge, the 29-year-old curator of the Lari Memorial Peace Museum near Nairobi, Kenya, thanked MCC for its support in building understanding between tribes. The museum records and shares local history, educates and connects

young people, and teaches conflict resolution skills. While in Alberta, Njoroge spoke more than 25 times, spreading a message of the importance of peace work to heal wounds and prevent atrocities. ☸



*International Volunteer Exchange program participants man a Mennonite Central Committee display table in Tofield, Alta. Pictured from left to right: Dian Sha'er of Jordan volunteers at Calgary's newcomers centre; Marcello Bueno of Brazil volunteers at Calgary's Trinity Mennonite Church and Menno Simons Christian School; and Simion Sitonik of Kenya volunteers at the Edmonton thrift store.*

GOD AT WORK IN US

# From program partners to friends

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent  
EDMONTON, ALTA.

It is not normally an unusual sight, good friends finishing each other's sentences and laughing, except that Maggie Martens and Gillian Mayers have something special, perhaps even rare. They have a true friendship that transcends age barriers.

The relationship began in 2002 as part of a mentorship program at Edmonton's First Mennonite Church. In Grade 7, young people who wish to participate, suggest names of adults they want to get to know. A mentorship committee matches youths with adults who are willing to be part of the program.

Mayers knew she wanted to partner with Martens, her long-time Sunday school



*Gillian Mayers, left, was mentored by Maggie Martens for six years beginning in 2002 as part of an intentional intergenerational program at Edmonton First Mennonite, Alta. Although the mentorship relationship is now officially ended, the two remain close.*

teacher and a senior. "Quite a few wanted Mrs. Martens, but I got her first," Mayers says with a smile.

Being selected was meaningful for Martens. "I actually was so touched and so honoured that someone that young would want to have some kind of affiliation with me," Martens recalls.

While Martens and Mayers had a teacher-student relationship, getting to know each other personally made them each a bit nervous at first. Martens remembers that "Gillian was very, very shy, but we managed. On our first meeting I still remember we went to Boston Pizza on the 18th of October. I was as nervous as you were," she says to Mayers, "but we got to know each other."

Mayers concurs: "I was excited and nervous and shy. Talking one-on-one is different than in a big classroom."

During six years in the program, the pair shared interests through a wide range of activities. Martens went to the stables to watch Mayers' riding lessons. They also visited a teddy bear museum, went to games nights at their church, sewed, cooked for an inner-city meal program, volunteered at the annual church craft sale, visited and regularly noticed each other in the church foyer.

In their final formal year of the mentorship, they decided on a special project: a patchwork quilt to make and donate to someone who needed it. The sewing part finished, they took it to a quilting group made up mostly of seniors to fill and tie.

"I really enjoyed the quilting group," Mayers says. "It's a fun group."

The quilt was given to the daughter of a Palestinian family the church helped bring to Canada through Mennonite Central Committee.

## Across Generations

Martens and Mayers have supported each other during celebrations, including graduation and baptism, and in difficult times like the illness and death of Martens' husband Peter last year.

"When he had the stroke in May, then Gillian and her mom and dad came up," Martens says. "I was so touched; that just meant so much to me. When I saw [Gillian] at the funeral . . . that was very comforting for me. I guess you feel a closeness that you don't often think that you have to someone."

Mayers felt she wasn't only supporting someone in the church, but that she needed to be there for her friend. In spite of a busy university exam schedule, she said at the time, "I have to be able to make it. I have to be able to make it."

Being there for each other is something that continues for the two. When the formal program finished with Mayers' graduation from high school, Martens asked her, "Is this going to be over?" Mayers replied, "It will never be over!"

The friends agree the mentorship program is of great importance in helping to get relationships started. For Mayers, whose grandparents do not live in the city, being with Martens provided a connection with seniors that she wouldn't have otherwise had. "I think it is really important to keep the mentorship program up," Mayers says. "It forces the different generations to interact."

Asked what advice they have for other seniors and youths interested in getting to know each other, Martens and Mayers answer enthusiastically.

"Don't ever think that you're too old," says Martens. "Embrace the situation and approach it thinking that this will be a good thing and that you're going to make the most of it. Consider it a gift if somebody asks you for something like that. That is a gift."

Mayers remembers what it felt like to be in Grade 7 and just beginning the relationship. "Don't be afraid," she says. "[Seniors] are willing to help out and they want to make this work, too." ❧

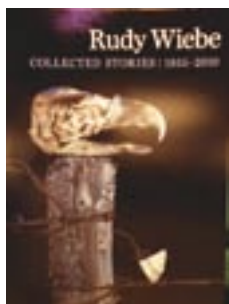
## ARTBEAT

# Book launch aids newcomers centre

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent  
EDMONTON, ALTA.

On Nov. 10, Greenwood's Bookshoppe hosted a book launch for Canadian literary legend Rudy Wiebe's newest book, *Collected Stories/1955-2010*, at Edmonton's Oldtimer's Cabin, a log building maintained by the Northern Alberta Pioneers and Descendants Association.



It was Wiebe's idea to use the event to fundraise for the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, a cause he and his wife Tena have supported since its inception in the 1980s. In planning the event with Gail Greenwood, Wiebe said, "Why not charge some admission and make it a benefit for what I think is a most worthy cause in Edmonton. Refugees have always been of particular concern to me, because in 1930, before I was born, Canada accepted my parents and their five children as refugees from the Soviet Union."

Asked why readers of *Canadian Mennonite* might pick up *Collected Stories*, Wiebe replied, "There's a lifetime of writing here; 55 years of my story interests in my place, my people. The opening story is about the historical Cree chief Maskepetoon, who was an amazing promoter of peace between the Cree and the Blackfoot people of 19th century western Canada. Grant MacEwan called him 'The Gandhi of the Plains.' In particular, readers of *The Blue Mountains of China* might be interested in the last three stories, which pick up the lives of major characters in the novel and bring them forward from 1967 to 2002."

The Global Voices Choir, composed of newcomers centre staff, current and former program participants, volunteers and community members, performed

a Chinese folk song and a piece entitled "Running," which tells a Sudanese refugee story. Global Voices closed the program,

leading the crowd of more than 100 in singing an iconic freedom song, "We Shall Overcome." ❧



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## FOCUS ON ELEMENTARY &amp; SECONDARY EDUCATION

## VIEWPOINT

# A well-rounded education

BY JAMES FRIESEN

*'Westgate . . . is a school grounded in the Anabaptist tradition. It is the mission of the school to provide a well-rounded education, which will inspire and empower students to live as people of God.'*

When we unpack this mission statement, it is worth noting that it holds two areas to be important: the grounding of the school in the Anabaptist tradition and providing a well-rounded education within this tradition.

When we begin with this dichotomy, it seems that our challenge at Westgate

the Christian aspects of the school. We fall into this trap when we assume that our "Christian focus" is taken care of in our Christian studies classes, in devotions or in chapel. Conversely, we fall into the same trap when we spend time and energy trying to insert our Christianity into our subject areas, thinking that if we do so, the

*Science classes are not made Christian when we offer creationism as one of the possibilities for the creation of the world. Language arts classes are not made Christian when we note biblical allusions in literature.*

is to somehow hold these two areas in a healthy tension, that we make sure we do Christian-type activities as we teach non-Christian subjects. But is this a healthy way to look at a Christian education? Why do we think Christianity is something that must be integrated into non-Christian things?

Although the mission statement sets us up with the two aspects of the school—the Christian and the academic—it ends by showing that we cannot think of them as two aspects. The well-rounded education is intended to inspire students to live as people of God; the well-rounded education is a Christian education, not simply an education in a Christian school.

When we do so, we make the well-rounded education into a secular education which simply combines itself with

"Christian part" of our job is done.

Math classes are not made Christian when we use a formula to find out how many magi visited Jesus. Science classes are not made Christian when we offer creationism as one of the possibilities for the creation of the world. Language arts classes are not made Christian when we note biblical allusions in literature. It is much more difficult than this. Our mission is somehow to teach within a framework that makes the radical claim that our subject areas are what they are because we are teaching them from within the Christian tradition.

There are, of course, many times when we fall short of this mission:

- When we put provincial curriculum ahead of Christian education.
- When we put post-secondary education goals ahead of Christian education.

- When we put our secular textbooks ahead of Christian education.

But despite these shortcomings, we continue to be challenged by the fact that all of our courses, knowledge and wisdom comes from God.

Let me give you a specific example. A few years ago we changed the name of one of the courses I teach from "world religions" to "A Christian response to religious plurality." The new title makes the claim that even a study of other religions in a Christian school is a study in Christianity. In other words, our Christian response to those who believe differently than we do is an important aspect of our theology. More importantly, such a title makes it clear that even when we study something that is seemingly non-Christian, it is actually a study of our Christianity, since there is no academic study apart from Christ.

Because the course is offered within the scope of Christian education, it is much different than the same course offered in a secular school. We don't simply study the history and practices of other religions from a so-called objective framework; we study them subjectively as Christians, embracing the fact that teachers are teaching courses as Christians within a Christian worldview.

It may be tougher to see this Christian foundation in other courses, but it is my hope that the foundation is there. We need to keep working at Christian education, finding ways to see the foundation of our academics as being of God, taking to hear the words of Deuteronomy 32:2-3: "May my teaching drop like rain, my speech condense like the dew; like gentle rain on grass, like showers on new growth. For I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God." ❧



James Friesen teaches Christian studies, language arts and mathematics at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg, Man..

## FOCUS ON ELEMENTARY &amp; SECONDARY EDUCATION

# MEI students 'got talent and heart'

BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

Mennonite Central Committee B.C.  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

It's not every day that a science class inspires a fundraiser, but that's exactly what happened in Ron Peters' Grade 8 science class at MEI Middle School in Abbotsford. As part of their studies on water cycles, Peters discussed the flooding in Pakistan and the devastation left behind.

Peters challenged his students to consider how they might respond to those in need in Pakistan and student Becca Carsience had an idea. "When teachers give students an opportunity to explore issues that people are dealing with right at that moment, even half a world away, then the classroom learning becomes much more meaningful," he says.

"I volunteered my idea for a talent show," says Becca, who arranged for an "MEI's Got Talent" type of show.

Becca began by researching organizations responding to the flooding. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) had information about its response on its home page. The information caught Becca's attention and she decided that MCC would

be the organization for which they would fundraise. Students paid \$10 to participate, but performance was not the only way to be involved.

"We had a bake sale to show cooking talents, an art auction to show artistic talents, and a jelly bean count that people had to pay \$1 to guess—just because it's fun," she says.

Halfway through the performances an offering was also taken. In total, the event

raised more than \$1,560, which will be used to provide relief kits, shelter, food and medical care for those who have been affected by the flooding.

"It was inspiring to see the amount of work and the commitment that students put into the event," says MCC B.C. executive director Wayne Bremner. "It's always moving to see young people work so hard to make a difference for people in need." ❧

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MEI PHOTO



Becca Carsience, Hannah Kornelson and Kimberly Reddicopp, students at MEI Middle School in Abbotsford, B.C., present a cheque to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C. executive director Wayne Bremner for MCC's response to flooding in Pakistan.

## Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary & Middle Schools



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## New teaching resources for Old Colony teachers

BY GLADYS TERICHOW

Mennonite Central Committee  
RIVA PALACIOS COLONY, BOLIVIA

Students attending one-room village schools in the Riva Palacios Mennonite Colony use slates instead of notebooks. Instruction is in German and the main study materials are a Bible written in Gothic script, *Gesangbuch* (hymnal), the *Fibel* (a primer or reader), and a catechism (basic church doctrines). Girls usually receive six years of formal education and boys go to school for seven years.

Jacob Friesen, a teacher in one of the colony's 39 schools, is one of the first teachers to use a new resource published by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Bolivia. The 63-page booklet provides teachers with lesson plans and a teacher's manual for 13 mathematical concepts—including addition, subtraction, percentages, land and wood measurements, and time.

Teachers are required to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, Bible lessons and singing, but Friesen, 27, says that without formal training teachers can only teach what they themselves learned in school.

"If you had a good teacher, then you can explain it very clearly to your students," he says. "But if you don't understand it or didn't learn it, then you can't teach it. Now we have a book and everyone can teach it clearly."

MCC worker Elma Schroeder says the lesson plans and teacher's manual were developed in response to requests from teachers in Old Colony schools and were reviewed by teachers in Bolivia and Paraguay before they were published. The package also has a map of Bolivia that includes the 63 Mennonite colonies and settlements there.

Another new resource that is now available to students and their families is the Plautdietsch (Low German) Bible, published in 2003. Friesen says students are

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MCC PHOTO BY SILAS CREWS



*Jacob Friesen is one of the first teachers to use a new teaching resource published by Mennonite Central Committee Bolivia.*

encouraged to read this Bible in their homes, but it is not used in schools or churches.

“It is important that children learn to read and that they learn to read with comprehension,” he explains. “Children use the Plautdietsch Bible to understand what the German Bible is saying.”

Friesen is enthused about another new initiative undertaken by teachers in the Riva Palacios Colony. Beginning in 2009 teachers started to meet regularly in small groups to discuss different methods of teaching, learn songs for singing lessons, share information and learn from each other through visiting each other’s schools.

He says the meetings are sanctioned by church leaders because teachers in Canada had similar meetings before the Old Colony Church, officially known as the Reinlaender Mennoniten Gemeinde, moved to Mexico in the 1920s.

The church, founded in Manitoba in the 1870s by Mennonite settlers from Russia, moved to Mexico in an effort to maintain school systems, civic structures and traditions that were adopted by founding members of the church.

“It is very hard to keep the old ways. Many things threaten the old ways,” says Friesen. “But I want to keep the old ways. When we get baptized, we commit to be faithful to God and to the church.”

New teaching resources are helpful, he says, but “the most important thing I can do is to help students get to heaven. My wish is that they could grow up in an Old Colony community, keep things the way it has always been and go to heaven.” ❧



## There's a place for you!

### Westgate's Open House

Wednesday, February 2, 7–9 pm

Parents & students welcome – No RSVP needed

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[www.westgatemennonite.ca](http://www.westgatemennonite.ca)



Rockway Mennonite Collegiate presents:

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# New realities for Mennonite schools

BY GAIL SCHELLENBERG  
For the Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools

The 10 members of the Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools (CAMS)—located in every province between Ontario and British Columbia—can all trace their lineage to a Mennonite conference or group. We have seven schools directly connected to Mennonite Church Canada through their supporting churches,

two schools that connect to the Mennonite Brethren Conference and one school connected to the Evangelical Mennonite Conference of Manitoba. While each school is distinctive, there are many commonalities as well.

The percentage of students from our Mennonite churches fluctuates from year

to year, but demographic surveys in many churches across Canada indicate that in the next five to 10 years there will be a steady decline of students and young people within our churches.

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg, Man., currently has 49 percent of its student population coming from one of 13 supporting Mennonite congregations. Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont., presently has 37 percent of its students from MC Eastern Canada congregations. Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI), Gretna, Man., continues to have upwards of 80 percent of its students from a Mennonite background. Rosthern Junior College, Sask., has 46 percent of its students coming from MC Saskatchewan and MC Alberta congregations.

We recognize that with declining numbers of young people within our churches, we must have a multi-pronged approach to sustainable development. We need to be creative in attracting constituency students; some of the strategies that schools are undertaking is to designate non-teaching time to staff in order to focus on promotions and networking with our pastors, youth leaders and Sunday school teachers.

We continue in our efforts to re-engage with our constituent churches in different ways, including the possibility of providing educational, dramatic and musical contributions to the life of the church, as well as partnering with area church youth organizations and Mennonite camp organizations to provide youth programs.

Financial support from our conferences and local congregations is significant to each of our schools. Contributions have stayed at the same rate over the past couple of decades, and in conversations with pastors and area church executives it seems likely that this will continue as they struggle to meet their own budgets.

At the same time, capital investment for campus improvement and building projects at MCI and Rosthern, among others, has seen consistent support, with those

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dollars overwhelmingly coming from individuals and businesses affiliated with the local churches. However, a number of schools are hearing from supporters that student fees should cover the cost of education so that donations can account for capital growth or renewal.

While CAMS schools in the Prairie provinces receive some funding from their provincial governments, Ontario schools face an entirely different financial picture. With no provincial funding for any students, Rockway and UMEI Christian High School are completely reliant on donations and fundraising to supplement their student fees. Families have to make a significant tuition commitment for students to attend and, with students coming from all over Waterloo Region and beyond, transportation becomes a real issue for many families.

As we look to the future, we continue

to struggle with sustainability. While we want to continue to attract as many of our church young people as possible, we will also look at other quality students from our neighbourhoods and surrounding areas who are looking for something new, something that has been missing from their school experience. Reaching and growing this latter group is key to sustaining the business of our schools. Many are also accepting a slightly larger international student population, which also relieves some of the decline in Mennonite students.

Parental and student support from both Mennonite and non-Mennonite constituencies for both our educational and extra-curricular choices has been, and continues to be, very strong. We strive to be sensitive to the interests of our students and constituency as we plan and implement programs in both of these areas.

Equally as important is the focus on

having each student find a place to thrive, to risk, to achieve and to contribute their gifts. It is the challenge of integrating and connecting the knowledge gained with the capacity to love and serve creatively in our world. It is the challenge of nurturing relationships within community and within our vision as a people of faith.

As our current and past students engage in their world, they are often our best advertisements. When they speak of their experiences in our schools, they tell of our commitment to academic opportunity and excellence; our extra-curricular programs that provide “enriched” program extensions; and the rich experiences we provide that build faith, purpose and service to others as integral to all areas of school and life. ✎

*Gail Schellenberg is the principal of Rosthern Junior College, Sask.*

UMEI CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL PHOTO



**Students at UMEI Christian High School, Leamington, Ont., held a can drive that was organized by the Faith in Action Club. By the end of the drive on Dec. 10, the school of 53 students had collected 3,738 cans of food for local food banks, averaging out to 70.5 cans per student. The Faith in Action Club focuses its efforts on raising awareness of homelessness and poverty in Essex County, and on finding ways to serve those who are less fortunate.**



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## Calendar

### British Columbia

**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.  
**Feb. 19:** The Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. presents a public lecture by Brian Froese of CMU: "A sin-hardened paradise: Mennonites missions and spiritual conflict in postwar B.C."; at the Garden Park Tower, Abbotsford, at 7 p.m.

### Alberta

**Jan. 21-23:** Junior high snow camp at Camp Valaqua. For more information, call 780-637-2510.

**Feb. 25-27:** Senior high snow camp at Camp Valaqua. For more information, call 780-637-2510.

### Saskatchewan

**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.

### Manitoba

**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. 25-26:** MC Manitoba annual delegates gathering, at MCI, Gretna.

### Ontario

**Jan. 29, Jan. 30:** Camper registration for Silver Lake Mennonite Camp:

## Classifieds

### Announcement

**Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary** seeks a **volunteer to assist the maintenance department** in managing and maintaining buildings, equipment and grounds; and in coordinating custodial tasks. Ideally this person can volunteer for several months or even for a year or more. Housing and a living stipend are available. To indicate interest, contact the AMBS volunteer coordinator, volunteercoordinator@ambss.edu, or 574-296-6234.

### Work Wanted

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## Employment Opportunities



Mennonite Central Committee Ontario invites applications for the position of

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- Business plan development experience an asset

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Complete job description available on MCC's website at [www.mcc.org/serve/positions](http://www.mcc.org/serve/positions). To apply, send cover letter and resume to Cath Woolner at [cathw@mennonitecc.on.ca](mailto:cathw@mennonitecc.on.ca).

(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.

**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](mailto:calendar@canadianmennonite.org).**

### 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](http://www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu).

### For Rent

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## UpComing

### MCC accepting applications for young adult service opportunities

AKRON, PA.—Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) calls the young, curious, ready and restless to Serving and Learning Together (SALT), a cross-cultural service experience for Christian young adults from Canada and the U.S. SALT takes participants beyond Facebook to another country, where they meet people face to face, build fascinating lives and add new friends. SALT volunteers live more-with-less, simply and "green" as they do practical service and watch God at work. Assignments range from computer work and child care to church work and medical care. Young adults teach, work in agriculture and advocate for the less fortunate. A complete listing of openings can be found at [salt.mcc.org](http://salt.mcc.org), along with an application and more information about the program. Applications should be submitted by Feb. 15 to ensure consideration for placement in one-year assignments that begin this coming August. Participants need to be single, 18 to 27 years old, and Canadian or U.S. citizens who are actively participating in the life of a Christian church and who are committed to nonviolent peacemaking.  
 —Mennonite Central Committee

# A Naked Anabaptist goes to school

*Helps staff and board 'peel away layers of who we are as believers'*

BY JOHN LONGHURST  
Herald Press

There's a "Naked Anabaptist" at Menno Simons Christian School!

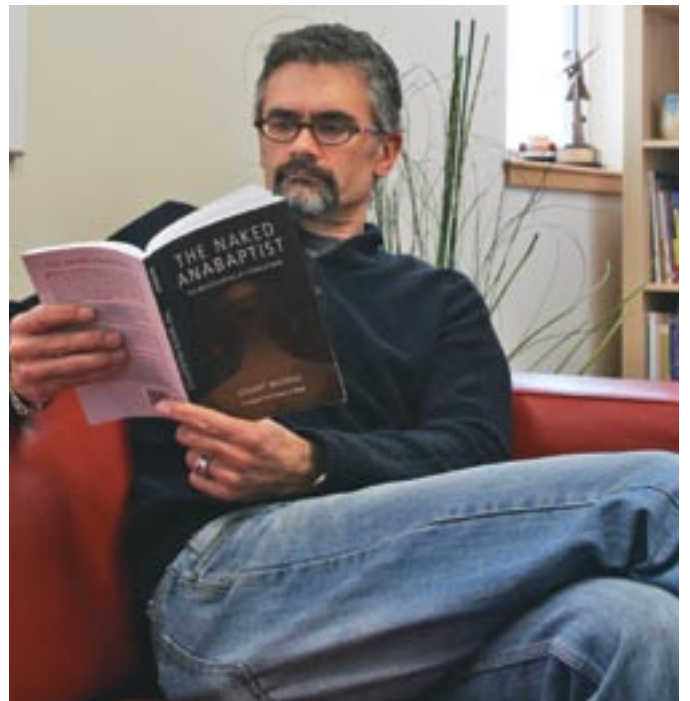
Since last fall, the staff and board members at the Calgary, Alta. school have been studying the Herald Press bestseller, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith*, says principal Byron Thiessen.

Since only 18 percent of students at the school, which offers classes from Kindergarten to Grade 9, identify themselves as Mennonite, Thiessen says he thought the book would be a good way to "peel away the layers of who we are as believers and ask, 'What is Anabaptism and what should it look like at Menno Simons Christian School?'"

Thiessen says he hopes that by studying the book the school will find ways to retain its "distinctiveness or uniqueness. As one of five Christian schools in our school division, it is really important to us to have our own niche."

The book, written by Stuart Murray, a British Anabaptist, is also being used to help the school develop "a frame of reference for making decisions for what we should teach or support as a school," the principal says. Studying the book has been "such a positive thing," he adds. "It's a good experience for our community." ☞

PHOTO COURTESY OF BYRON THIESSEN



*Byron Thiessen, principal of Menno Simons Christian School, Calgary, Alta., says he has been studying *The Naked Anabaptist* with his staff and board in an effort to "truly understand what it means to be an Anabaptist Mennonite school."*