

CAMMITE

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A greying church

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EDITORIAL

Letter to my children and grandchildren

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

To my family, Since our Saskatchewan correspondent wanted to write about caring for seniors in the church (p. 4), I wanted to share some personal thoughts triggered by her investigation. I hope you don't mind my getting a little more "philosophical" than usual.

I must confess to becoming a little weary of society nearly always framing this issue as some kind of social problem, as if older folks dying off sooner would make the world a happier, more productive and vibrant place. You might think, since your mother and I are in this category, we might be a little too sensitive on the matter, no?

Okay, I know the statistics. Canada is aging faster than ever before. Today, people aged 65 and over make up some 13 percent of the Canadian population. By 2031, there will be approximately 9 million seniors, and they will account for 25 percent of the total population.

In Parliament in the past two weeks, the opposition has taken the prime minister to task for using the bully pulpit in Davos, Switzerland to warn of future cuts to Old Age Security benefits. Admittedly, it was a bit cagey to sound this surprise warning thousands of miles from home and reversing something he said he wouldn't do when he started out as a career politician in Alberta.

But it goes beyond politics. It shows how sensitive this issue is and how, in a world of seesaw economics, the senior population can become the focal point of multiple frustrations and national anxieties. While this might sound a little paranoid, hear me out, please.



Count your blessings. Right now we are not a burden to you, or to society. You know me—too stubborn to retire. I'm not alone in this. Statistics also show that in 2001 more than 300,000 Canadians 65 or older were in the labour force. After a lifetime of journalism and publishing, we came to Canada where I am running a denominational magazine called *Canadian Mennonite*. It's an exhilarating experience, learning a new national and church culture.

That means we aren't meddling and hovering. We taught you both, dear daughters, to be self-sufficient and self-reliant. You have passed that on to your children. While we miss having regular Sunday dinners and playing croquet and volleyball in the backyard, you know that even though the miles separate us, our love is strong, our prayers frequent. Facebook and Skype are our handy daily tools of communication. And we share stories of long-distance relationships with our peers, many of whom carbon copy our situation.

And don't worry about our health,

even though we are cancer survivors. I know you get tired of us quoting Dr. Andrew Weil, who with his pioneering work in integrative medicine has been called by the *New York Times*, "America's best-known doctor." He has helped us to reframe our health as "a dynamic condition of wholeness and balance that allows us to move through life and not succumb to malfunctions of our own physiology or suffer harm from all the damaging influences we encounter."

Even though your mother and grandmother has been trained in good nutrition, she and I are seeing more and more how important diet, exercise and an "attitude of gratitude" are to our health and well-being. No, we aren't vegetarians, but we have cut out the sugar and fat, increased the intake of fresh vegetables and fruit and downsized the meat portions on our plates. Nuts and berries are our snacks, few and far between.

Thanks to a new "mindfulness" preached by Dr. Weil for good mental health, we have become more aware of our connection to nature, the inspiration of simple things like fresh flowers, listening to good music, creating moments and spaces for silence and contemplation, walks in the park, a new appreciation for art and beauty.

In our faith community, we see forgiveness (one of the gifts of the Spirit) as a way of letting go. We seek out people who like to laugh and spend more time with persons who are optimistic, positive and happy and less time with those who tend to be pessimistic, anxious, or depressed. As Dr. Weil says, "emotions are contagious."

Now, if all of this adds up to being a "social problem," let us know. We hope you can feel this good at our age!

—Love, Dad/Papa

ABOUT THE COVER:

Elsie Springer of Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church is a nimble quilter. As an older member she still contributes to the church, but perhaps not with the energy she did when she was younger.

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Guiding values:

Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom • Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will • Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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Caring for our seniors

Church leadership facing increasing number of grey heads

BY KARIN FEHDERAU

Saskatchewan Correspondent,
Saskatoon, Sask.



Martha Brubacher, Florence Frey and Vera Martin work on a relief sale quilt at Floradale Mennonite Church.

Across the country, many MC Canada churches are staring at the numbers and scratching their heads. As young people drift away from the church and the baby boomers retire, church leadership is faced with increasing numbers of grey heads.

Those faithful church founders, so consistent in attendance and giving, have reached the declining years. For decades, they were the backbone of the congregation as they taught Sunday School, served on committees and worked with the youth. They gave vision and energy to the church of their day.

Now, having given their best years to their church families, these precious souls spend quiet days quilting, or meeting friends for coffee. And they pray. They pray for their children, they pray for their grandchildren and they pray for the pastor.

They've traded board chair for rocking chair and, no longer able to contribute to the life of the church as before, this demographic now needs, in varying degrees, to be cared for by others. So besides building Mennonite Nursing Homes and seniors complexes to provide safe havens for their final years, what more can the church be doing?

John Neufeld, former president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College, recently spoke on the assembly floor of the Mennonite Church Canada sessions in Waterloo Ontario. He urged delegates to consider a bigger picture.

"For years, we've talked about what we can do for the youth," he said. What about our seniors? Neufeld, now

in his seventies, has done a lot of thinking about the needs of his generation. His presentations on the needs of seniors can be found on the MC Canada Resource Centre website. But he does not put his focus on practical needs such as adding elevators to church buildings and hearing aids in pews. His assessment considers the mental and emotional health of seniors as well as social and physical issues faced by his peers.

“The church needs to encourage seniors groups to think intentionally about living [out] their senior years,” he said, pointing out the numerous opportunities afforded to seniors simply due to having long hours to fill. One area we can work on, said Neufeld, is relationships. Whether it’s mending strained relationships from the past or working on our relationships with God, both are important.

“For most of our lives, those relationships were shaped by work,” he said adding, “How do we shape those relationships in older age?”

Work has also dominated our time so that people did not have time to deal with old memories. He stresses the importance of creating a safe place for seniors to talk about those past memories, without fear of judgement.

Several years ago, after giving a talk about these concerns, a woman shared her experience of abuse with him, admitting she had never told anyone else about it. “Imagine, keeping a secret for six decades,” said Neufeld. In scripture, Jacob even sets an example when he faces his fear of meeting Esau after tricking his brother out of the birthright.

Dealing with emotions that stem from “repeated grieving” is also a regular part of life for many seniors as they attend one funeral after another. Esther Patkau is the Spiritual Care Co-ordinator at Bethany Manor, a large senior’s complex in Saskatoon. She sees the elderly struggling to cope after a loved one dies.

“Grieving can bring a person down to where they don’t function at all,” she observed. People, she said, want to be “accepted in their grief.” But sometimes, well-meaning friends derail the process through insensitive comments.

“It doesn’t work to say, ‘He’s in a better

place,’ she stressed, adding “When a bond of love (between husband and wife) is cut by death, it hurts.”

Patkau, a former missionary, is often called upon to visit the dying in hospitals and then walk families through funeral preparations. In her job, she has dealt with 41 deaths in the past 10 months. Funerals are the biggest part of her role, but she knows that the simple act of being a caring listener can be very healing for people going through a loss and another vital aspect of her job.

“The ministry of presence is very important,” she said.

In addition to the mental and emotional challenges, many seniors struggle with reduced mobility, loss of driver’s license, isolation and declining health. They might need help with simple tasks like getting groceries or going to the doctor but find it difficult to ask for assistance. Pastoral staff, too, wonder how to balance the needs of their seniors with other age groups. They have limited time to visit and usually focus on crisis visits or palliative care visits of church members in the hospital. The worship needs of seniors also need to be considered. Seniors often find German or their mother tongue the most meaningful way to connect with God. And they prefer hymns over choruses.

When a death occurs, the demands on the pastor are almost immediate. All other duties are pushed to the side and meetings with family members are quickly arranged to decide on funeral programs and burial plans.

Solutions that Work

Artur Bergen, 52, is the pastor at Eben-Ezer Mennonite in Abbotsford, B.C. In a congregation of 350, almost 200, including shut-ins, are seniors.

“What I see in many churches across Canada, and this concerns me, is we have “old” churches with seniors and we have “young” churches with young people . . . in some churches, seniors are pushed away. In some churches, seniors have pushed young people away,” he said.

At Eben-Ezer, there has been a lot of work to avoid that. For about eight years, the Sunday morning worship involved a

German and English message.

“It wasn’t working well,” admits Bergen. A discernment process led to a new approach. “Now we have an integrated worship service,” he said. “We try to involve all ages.” The needs of different age groups are taken into consideration during the sermon time. Youth and children attend their own class. For the adults, there is a German class and an English class for spiritual input.

The needs of the seniors are also important to leadership. For four years, they put in place a seniors’ pastor, but that recently changed because of budget constraints. However, on a Sunday morning, much effort is put into working with specific challenges. During the service, there is help for those who are far-sighted (power-points) and those who are near-sighted (bulletins), explains Bergen. But that doesn’t always work for everyone.

“For some, they can’t follow the service, the program just goes by too quickly,” he said.

In response, the church has developed a CD ministry. Copies for members to take home are made after the service and some copies are also brought to seniors who can’t get out.

Another congregation in the Abbotsford area has hired a person specific to the needs of seniors. Laura Loewen, 66, works two days a week at Emmanuel Mennonite as the Seniors Ministry Coordinator. She knows the needs of seniors and sees the struggle for pastoral staff to balance those needs, especially with visiting.

“With the older generation, the expectation is that the senior pastor should come; a pastor should be on call 24/7,” she says but knows that is unrealistic. At Emmanuel, the deacon groups step in the fill that need.

First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon also values the contributions of its deacons. In a congregation where almost everyone is retirement age and older, the needs are great. They have developed the idea of visitation deacons. These are people, says Arnie Fehderau, pastor, whose role is simply to visit.

At Mount Royal Mennonite church, Elsie Siemens is the Minister of Health.

Her job description is based on the parish nurse idea. Siemens herself is a retired nurse and spends three days a week attending meetings at the church; visiting and trying to bring an educational component on preventative health to the seniors at Mount Royal Mennonite.

But not all Mennonite churches embrace the concept of using a parish nurse to provide extra care. The idea was considered at the pastoral level at Foothills Mennonite but nothing came of it, said Doug Klassen. First Mennonite in Saskatoon had a parish nurse for one year but then discontinued the program.

"People really didn't think there was a need for it. It was not well utilized" said Heidi Bartsch who served in the position until she needed to care for her own parent's ailing health. It's hard for people to grasp that the church can offer more than spiritual care, she said.

Loewen, herself, believes that the needs will continue to grow.

"Because of the baby boomers, [the issue of senior care] is going to be huge," she says. "MC Canada talks about using our gifts. In a traditional culture, that is where the wisdom is. How do we receive that, acknowledge it and use it? She asks.

Across the country, in southern Ontario, St. Catherines United Mennonite Church has also developed a new approach to senior care. Ken Gazley, pastor, led the congregation through a situation that was reaching crisis proportions.

"Six years ago, we had a hundred people in nursing homes," he notes. The deacons struggled to keep up with the care needs of this age group. Together, the church looked in Acts 2 and the early church model of caring for each other to find a solution. Out of that, says Gazley, came the Caring and Connect program. A call went out for volunteers to help so that seniors who had needs could be paired up with a caring church member. High-needs individuals could be better served by the deacons and pastors. Gazley held a training session for the volunteers. The only requirement was two visits a year.

"Most are exceeding that," says Gazley. In total, a group of 33 Care and Connect

visitors effectively cares for over a hundred seniors in a church of 450 members, he said.

If others churches approach St. Catherines United Mennonite to learn about their success, he is careful to tell them that one size does not fit all.

Another way volunteers can care for their elderly friends is to bring them a CD of the morning service. At some point in the future, the church hopes to make DVD's of the service as well.

But not all seniors need or even want care.

In one Prairie congregation, the group of recent retirees shuns the typical seniors label and has opted for something that defines them more clearly. At Foothills Mennonite in Calgary, they call themselves Unrestricted By Jobs (UBJ's). They are not hampered by health concerns. This is a different class of elders altogether. They are the New Seniors.

"Those in their 50s and 60s are very mobile," said Doug Klassen, pastor. A fact, which, he notes can be disruptive to the life of the church. Describing that age group as being more independent than the older generation at Foothills, Klassen wonders if their career success and status contributes to their independence.

"It's a tricky and sensitive thing," he said describing the relationship between recent retirees who are chafing to live out their retirement years in freedom versus practising

accountability to the church body.

Will Loewen, pastor of Trinity Mennonite, a church set picturesquely in a wheat field close to Calgary city limits, puzzles too over how to help the seniors in the congregation.

"We want to give the help we're experienced to give, but what happens if the seniors don't want it? he asked, noticing the reluctance of some seniors to ask for help.

The money issue

Perhaps no-one has put it more succinctly than Renata Klassen, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan moderator. In a recent consultation for MC Sask members, she made the direct correlation between this passing generation and reduced funding for programs. It is no secret that this has largely been the generation that has worked hard yet lived frugally. They have carefully saved and now, have been so generous with their wealth.

"It is clear to us in MC Sask that we have an aging population. This has implications for the future," she said.

Herman Wiebe, pastor of Zion Mennonite in Swift Current, agrees. "It's a big issue for the conference because that's the age [group] that supports the conference," he said simply.

"It will have a ripple effect to everything," he said, adding "The grey tsunami is just beginning." ❧

/// For discussion

1. What are the demographics of your congregation? What percentage is over 65? How many of those are frail elderly? What programs or ministries are designed specifically for seniors? Do the older members of your congregation feel involved and engaged?
2. What are the benefits of hiring a congregational parish nurse? Is this something your congregation would consider? How much are physical, emotional and spiritual health connected to each other?
3. How will the aging of baby boomers affect the church of the future? Is it accurate to call it a grey tsunami? What will happen to church institutions (such as schools, mission boards or publishing agencies) if the next generation does not give them strong support?
4. How does your congregation work at engaging young and old together? Do older members sometimes feel excluded? How could you work at involving those who are not able to come to worship?

“Your congregation knows how to care for seniors”

Waterloo-Kitchener Parish Nurse ministry a success

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

EASTERN CANADA CORRESPONDENT
WATERLOO, ONTARIO

When Gloria Dirks was retiring from the joint position of Administrator and Director of Care at Parkwood Mennonite Home in Waterloo, Ont. in 2003, she knew she wanted to use her skills in some way. The call of her congregation, the Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, to research the potential of a parish nurse seemed like a good fit. Her 23 years at Parkwood and her own registered nurse status gave her the skills to look into the McMaster Divinity School's program in Hamilton.

The eight-day course “felt like a retreat” as she learned about connecting the spiritual to the mental/emotional and physical aspects of nursing. What she learned there excited her and she brought back a positive report to the congregation. In the fall of 2005 the congregation asked her to show them how this might function by doing it. She's been paid for 10 hours/week but often works many more hours, and is retiring, again, in December 2012.

Along the way an extra 5 hours/week were added by Waterloo Mennonite Homes. Established by the congregation in the early 1980s on a property adjacent to the church, the apartment building has 46 apartments for seniors, with a focus on low income. Dirks has a significant ministry to both congregational members and others who live in the building, as well as those who attend the weekly “Silver Spoons” seniors' luncheon at the church. A number of groups—grief, cancer survivors, a wellness circle, weight and exercise—meet after the luncheon on alternating Tuesdays. Other education events take in children, youth and the larger congregation, including work

on support for dementia, family violence, blood pressure clinics after church and many others. In this work Dirks depends on the Health and Wellness Committee.

Asked “why her?” she points to her training as a nurse, as well as her own philosophy of wellness that includes the whole gamut which parish nursing supports. Growing up in an era that did not support women in ministry, she chose a professional field that gave her many opportunities to minister to the whole person. Being a nurse, and now a parish nurse, has given her places to exercise “compassion, to listen, to walk with people who are suffering, not only physically but relationally, mentally/emotionally, spiritually, and especially to focus on end of life issues.”

Edmund Pries, chair of the Health and Wellness Committee, and one of those who instigated the beginning of this ministry at WKUM, agrees that both her professional standing as a nurse and administrator, as well as her spiritual

focus, have made her and this ministry a success.

Supported by the Health and Wellness Committee in the congregation, she has a ministry that includes counselling, education and advocacy. Working together with Pastor Nancy Mann they assess the needs of parishioners and decide who should make the first visit and who will do follow-up. Dirks finds that many seniors, having grown up during a time when doctors were held on a pedestal, need help in advocating for their needs, in the office or in the hospital. Families at a distance have emailed to thank her for the work she has done with elderly parents. And a person from the larger community, hearing about the many aspects of WKUM's ministry, told her, “Your congregation knows how to care for seniors.” From all reports, Gloria Dirks is a central part of that care.

As Dirks retires Pries notes that continuing the ministry is an accepted fact. Both the pastor's and the parish nurse's job descriptions describe the parish nurse as part of the pastoral team. According to Pries, WKUM's aging demographic presents “both a need and an opportunity” to minister. But he sees the benefits for youth, children and families around sexuality, nutrition, and especially mental health for all congregations. Though not finalized he expects the number of hours for paid ministry to increase. “Parish nursing has revitalized our congregation,” he says. ❧



Gloria Dirks, parish nurse at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, holds a plush “microbe” that she uses in children's education in the congregation.

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters sent by subscribers intended for publication. This section is largely an 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. Keep letters to 400 words or less and address issues rather than individuals. We do not countenance rancour or animosity. Personal attacks are inappropriate and will not see the light of print. Please send letters to be considered for publication to letters@canadianmennonite.org or by postal mail or fax, marked "Attn: Readers Write" (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author's contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Preference will be given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

/// Correction

In the article "Four generations . . . feed the world" (Nov. 14, 2011), Roy Rempel (grandson of Peter S. Rempel) notes that the land was purchased by Peter S. Rempel, not Peter F. Rempel and the acreage was 64 hectares, not 32. And the land borders North Dakota, not Minnesota. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

✉ Climate change is happening

CLIMATE CHANGE IS one of the most serious problems to face humanity right now, a long slow process that will hit the most vulnerable human populations more than those that contributed to the problem. Where once only God Almighty could create and destroy on a global scale, humanity has made itself like God in that destructive capacity. Therefore, it was with great disappointment to read how a recent article began ("Metzger's address on climate justice warmly received," Dec. 19, 2011). The opening gave license to doubt our best scientific knowledge. While science isn't perfect, the uncontested bulk of research shows that global climate change is happening and that humans are contributing to it. And the social science shows how a tiny and generally well-funded special interest group that seeks to raise doubts about climate change (references available upon request!). Those special interests have had an effect far in excess of the accuracy of their claims.

The follow-up article, ("People of Faith must call

for climate justice," Jan. 9, 2012) on Willard Metzger's visit to the international climate negotiations was also much appreciated. It is exciting to hear that Mennonite Church Canada asserts we must do something to address climate change. Yet that article also illustrates a need for careful journalism.

Smack in the centre of the article, reference was made to Canada's Environment Minister. That he suggested the public wasn't concerned about climate change flies in the face of all the survey data. This minister also withdrew Canada from the Kyoto Protocol during that very same international climate meeting Metzger attended. He has effectively dissembled about such environmental travesties as climate change, and the "ethical oil" of the oilsands, and has overseen gutting Environment Canada's capacity to research and monitor climate-related changes.

If such charges seem "political" it is because caretaking God's creation forces such action. The article should have pointed out that governments have responsibilities. Addressing serious international issues simply cannot be the role of faith groups, even if we also transcend national boundaries. Climate justice requires action beyond the churches.

Most importantly, we simply **MUST** wean ourselves from the fossil-fuelishness [sic] of our profligate energy use and the types of carbon-intensive energy that we use. With peaking oil production, the energy return on investment is declining. Carbon emissions provoke atmospheric changes. We are avoiding climate policies, creating new pipelines, exploiting oil sands and fracking for natural gas. The main consequence of such projects is to keep us going down the same profligate path. Better would be to use our God-given creativity to innovate new energy and social systems that can also maintain high quality of life without such devastating impacts on the rest of creation.

RANDOLPH HALUZA-DELAY, PHD,

Associate Professor, Sociology and Environmental Studies, The King's University College, Edmonton, Alta.

✉ New finance minister for MC Manitoba suggested

RE: "HARD NUMBERS to consider" article, Dec. 19, page 18.

I find it very odd and very hard to believe what I see in this article. I grew up to be a thrifty Mennonite, but I see that Mennonite Church Manitoba has been budgeting way over the actual giving it receives from 2005 till 2011. Maybe it should get a new finance minister.

IRVIN JANTZI, WELLESLEY, ONT.

✉ Bible only one sacred text among many

RE: “LEARN FROM the Bible, not cults or other religions,” Jan. 9, page, 8.

Fran Klassen rightly points out the positive values that are communicated in Christian scripture. However, I disagree with her dismissal of the ethical teachings that are found in the sacred scriptures of other religions: “All cults/religions contain teaching that mirrors the Christian faith, but this does not make them examples that Christians should be following.”

I think that the holy texts of Islam, Judaism and other faiths often provide ethical guidance in areas where the Christian Bible says little or nothing. In the Islamic Qur’an and Hadith, there are many passages

in which Mohammed exhorts people to treat animals with dignity: “Whoever kills a sparrow or anything bigger than that without a just cause, God will hold him accountable on the Day of Judgment” (Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 1108); “Fear God in your treatment of animals” (Abu Dawud, Kitab-ul Jihad); “There is not a moving creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you” (Quran 6:38). I don’t think there is anything comparable in the Christian Bible that so explicitly and passionately counsels humans to treat animals with respect.

To my mind, the sacred texts of Christianity, Islam and Judaism are different lenses for apprehending the same creator. If so, then we can learn something from all of them.

MARK MORTON, KITCHENER, ONT.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Are we asking the right questions?

RENATA KLASSEN

Last fall, the leadership in Mennonite Church Saskatchewan organized regional consultations with congregational leaders. We were very pleased at the thoughtful participation from almost all the churches. We heard that the membership in many congregations is getting older. Some congregations are getting smaller. Commitment to church is changing as other things compete for time and loyalty. We also heard that God is at work in our communities. Congregations are engaged and committed to nurture and spreading the gospel.

In all parts of Mennonite Church Canada, we are worried about declines in membership and contributions to budgets. Where will we be in ten years? Can we survive? At our consultation, some small congregations said, “Ten years ago, if you had asked us, we would have said that we would be gone in ten years. We are still here. God has a plan.



We need to be faithful every day, and not worry too much about the future.” We also heard concern about ways to get more people into our churches. Members challenged leadership to think about planting churches to replace those which have closed or left in the past.

“We need to be faithful every day, and not worry too much about the future”

Are we asking the right questions? Is our goal to get more people into our churches, or are we focused on being the church? Jack Suderman tells about a meeting that he had with Fidel Castro. Castro grew up nurtured by the church in Cuba and told Jack that if the church had done what it should have been doing, the revolution would not have been necessary!

What are the marks of the church? Worship of God, love and care for those with whom we worship, and care and

compassion for God’s world and all who inhabit it. Those three things need to form a coherent whole. If we are faithful in doing what God is calling us to be and do, we are the church.

We assume that God is active in the world; we need to recognize God’s action and partner with God. Two years ago, Alan Kreider, writer, theologian and retired AMBS professor, spoke to our Area Church delegates about how to be the church. He reminded us of three things. First we must talk to God, daily, weekly, individually and corporately. Secondly, we must talk to each other in our churches (locally to nationally) and tell one another the stories of where God

is acting in our lives and in our world. And thirdly, we must open our individual and corporate eyes to what God is doing around us, and learn to engage with God in those activities.

In order to do that effectively in our confusing, ever-changing world, we will require an active imagination, the ability to ask new open-ended questions, and a trust that God has not changed and is with us on our journey. *Ubi Caritas!* (Where charity and love are found, God is there.) ✞

✉ Info sought on 'ashes to ashes' phrase

IN THE LAST three months I have attended the funeral of two of my wife's brothers, Menno H. and Rudi Epp.

I noted that during the committal services the traditional phrase, "dust to dust and ashes to ashes," was quoted. The "dust to dust" I can understand, as it is quite biblical. However, I am at a loss to understand the "ashes to ashes." Although through cremation some bodies are reduced to ashes, they certainly were not created Phoenix-like from ashes.

When my parents died a few decades back, I requested the officiating ministers at both funerals to omit that confusing phrase, and would be far from surprised if others have had that same objection.

I would appreciate some explanation or other responses to this conundrum via e-mail at lydles@telus.net.

LES FRIESEN, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Four Points of Eerie Silence

PHIL WAGLER

I am beginning to wonder why there is an increasingly eerie silence on four points:

First, violence against the unborn.

Persevering to end violence in all forms is a work of the Kingdom. Yet, though many protest paying taxes or donning Jets jerseys because of militarism, I have yet to see any as passionately decrying state-sanctioned violence against the unborn or questioning the ethics of political parties that unreservedly endorse it. This is a sensitive topic to be sure, but it seems we, who cherish life and seek even the good of our enemies, seem hesitant to declare that a society that will not protect its most vulnerable is a society adrift. We are called to steward all of creation, but we are shamefully silent on the cries of the unborn, the arguments that have made the topic taboo, the renewed social debate that is stirring, and the wounds of women and men who carry the pain of having made that choice.

Second, the topic of hell. Jesus never scared anyone into the Kingdom and hell is not hammer. At the same time Jesus

said a lot about life beyond apart from God that we almost completely avoid. Jesus said there are sheep and goats. Jesus said there would be those who opt out and those who are cast out. Have we begun clinging to universalism and on what grounds? Why do we not wrestle over these Scriptures in the same way we wrestle over other things?



We have become those hiding a lamp under a bushel; happy to talk about "God" but almost ashamed to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord

Third, the war for the human

heart. Humanity has an unwavering love affair with religion. A war for the spiritual centre is raging in our culture between monotheism and deistic or atheistic secularism. That's why you find Christians, Muslims, and other theists chatting as never before. The desperate look for allies. Every theist position is being challenged by a religious secularism that is working like leaven through dough. Its humanistic tenets, often met with blank shrugs, are thoughtlessly embraced by many and winning the allegiance of a new generation. This raises huge questions about the future of society and

ethics. Henry Van Til said, "Culture is religion externalized." If he's right then the culture we see developing—for good and ill—is the product of who has won the heart. This battle for the heart and mind must be engaged with Christian compassion and conviction; not silently ignored while we sing our songs of sixpence.

Fourth, the uniqueness of Christ. This is perhaps where our silence screams most hauntingly. We have become those hiding a lamp under a bushel; happy to talk about "God" but almost ashamed to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. Our faith rises and falls on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, God with us, who has risen from the dead. Have we become more concerned about championing our uniqueness than his? While we joy-ride with the

next social fad are we downplaying the uniqueness of Jesus whose truth cannot be buried, stands every test thrown his way, loves lavishly and offers forgiveness to every humble sinner, has something to say about our political quandaries, and has sent us to break the chains the bind in his name?

What fears have caused these eerie silences? ☼

Phil Wagler is pondering his own eerie silences. He lives in Surrey, B.C. where he is a pastor, father, husband, and friend (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca).

✉ Church members should be queried on sexuality statement

SINCE, IN 1984-85, the congregations of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada empowered its delegates to request the General Board to develop a Bible-based resolution on human sexuality, I suggest querying these same congregations to determine whether they want or need to change the resolution.

This should be an integral part of the "Being a Faithful Church 3," representing proper protocol.

A comprehensive survey, referendum or plebiscite could be used to query every individual member of Mennonite Church Canada with an answer to the simple question: "Does the Saskatoon Resolution accurately represent your position on a biblical statement regarding human sexuality?"

Then, and only then, can we begin to deal with this issue with a reasonable degree of honesty and openness.

ARMIN ENS, REINLAND, MAN.

DEFINING OUR BELIEFS

By what authority?

DAVID DRIEDGER

This past year I prepared for ordination with Mennonite Church Canada. Part of the process of ordination is to read and comment on aspects of our *Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective*.

While I was generally familiar with the *Confession*, a new question formed in my mind as I read over it again. How does the Mennonite church articulate and express authority? I did not find a clear answer to this question and I think at the very least we need to be clear about this ambiguity.

Within the *Confession* we have authoritative statements on Scripture, Jesus, Holy Spirit, and the church that create confusing lines of authority. There is not space here it outline all the relevant passages so I will try and summarize what I see happening.

1. The confession teaches us how to read the Bible.
2. The confession is in submission to the Bible.
3. The Bible is the Word of God written and is authoritative for establishing truth and error.
4. Jesus is the Word made flesh and so the Bible finds its fulfillment in him.
5. Jesus is known in the words of the Bible.

6. The Holy Spirit continues to speak.
7. The Holy Spirit will not contradict the Bible's witness of Jesus.
8. The Bible is authoritative for the church.
9. It is in the church that the Bible must be interpreted.

I can't help but see these statements as creating a recipe for confusion, frustration, and abuses. As I read our *Confession*



The Bible as we have it is not self-evidently authoritative

and as I read the *Being a Faithful Church* documents that are coming from our national church leadership, I see the commendable desire to engage the ongoing task of discernment, but I remain concerned over the context this task is placed within. The common thread in these intersecting lines is the Bible. We ultimately claim the Bible as the final authority.

What I want to suggest, though, is that this practice is unbiblical. If we want to look for criteria in how to understand and interpret the Bible then we need to recover the multitude of voices within the Bible that point away from the Bible. These voices stretch from "empty space" between the cherubs' wings in the Holy of Holies that allowed God to speak

presently into situations. Prophets called for renewed visions of engagement with the world. Paul called the church to responsibility with having "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). John is called away from worship to see Jesus in the churches (Rev. 1:10). Jesus declares that to begin and end with scripture will lead away from life (John 5:39-40).

Perhaps it could be argued that I am simply trying to use the Bible to create another authoritative reading. I want to be clear on this. The Bible as we have it is not self-evidently authoritative. I am simply interested in reading the Bible well and gaining from what it has to offer. To continue down our current path is to continue the risk of allowing the Bible to

be an authoritative object, or idol as we would call it in another vocabulary. I take the Bible very seriously. It is this seriousness that has led me to question how the Mennonite church continues to use the Bible.

I think it is human nature to seek the affirming presence of some object of authority. This can be science, politics, status, and wealth as easily as the Bible. It is perhaps time to take the fearful and necessary steps of acknowledging that we live by no authority that we did not create. Having received the Spirit and endowed with the mind of Christ and with Scripture as an accepted witness to these things, let's get about the business of being a faithful church. ☸

✉ Thankful for Rudy Wiebe's "truth"

I was too young when the stirring happened in response to Rudy Wiebe's book, *Peace Shall Destroy Many*. When I read this book as an adult it blessed my heart because it articulated so well my experiences and questions as a boy growing up in the northern Alberta community of La Crete. I felt understood.

As a young boy I could not understand how we could live side by side with the native people and view them as less than us, and why we spoke about them as "half breeds." I recall witnessing many good interactions between my people and the native people.

Children don't make the same distinctions as adults do, and while going to school, friendships with native people developed and a few even learned to speak Low German. I will never forget one Friday night while the women were doing the shopping and the men were standing around smoking and in discussion. When my friends and I entered the store some of the men (who would be in church on Sunday) started to speak in disrespect about my native friend in their mother tongue. Our native friend spoke back to them in Low German and the silence was deafening.

Experiences shape us and can challenge us. I'm often asking myself, what kind of advocate am I? Do I have the courage to speak up when needed and to be silent when appropriate? Sadly I have to confess that many times I have abdicated my responsibility and the circle of hurt has been enlarged.

I concluded at the young age of 12-14 that if this is the kind of people God wanted his people to be, then I didn't want any part of that kind of God.

Thank God for the revelation in Jesus Christ as to what kind of people He wants us to be! I'm thankful for people like Rudy Wiebe.

GEORGE GOERTZEN, NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

Obituary

CLARENCE BLAKE FRIESEN

May 26, 1918 – January 9, 2012

Blake Friesen passed away peacefully with his family by his side at the Newport Harbour Care Centre in Calgary on Monday, January 9, 2012.

Blake was born in Langham, SK in 1918 to Cornelius and Elizabeth Friesen. He graduated from Rosthern Junior College and subsequently studied to be an accountant and auditor. In 1944, he married the love of his life, Louise Toews, daughter of the late Rev. David Toews. Blake had a distinguished career with the Canada Revenue Agency spanning over three decades.

Blake was an inspired, dedicated leader who worked tirelessly for the Mennonite community. He was instrumental in forming the Regina Grace Mennonite Church in 1955. Between 1963 and 1972 Blake served on the Rosthern Junior College Board of Directors in various capacities including chairman. From 1973 to 1984, he was a prominent Charter Member of the Mennonite Foundation of Canada, and also served as a Stewardship Consultant and the National Manager.

Blake enjoyed current events, photography, bowling and golf. He and Louise loved travel, spending winters in Arizona and Palm Springs, as well as trips to Europe and Mexico.

Blake was a true gentleman whose gracious optimism will be missed by all who knew him. He is survived by his loving children, Gary (Anne) Friesen, Alan (Sharon) Friesen, and Howard (Julie) Friesen. He was an inspiration to his grandchildren, Kristina (Josh) Tiessen, Scott Friesen, Shaun Friesen, Erin (Garver) Friesen Wong, Kim Friesen and Mark Friesen. Also left to mourn are his siblings Ed (Lillian), Eleanor (Menno) Mantler, John (Leola), and many other relatives and friends. He was predeceased by his cherished wife of sixty-six years, Louise, in 2010 and his sister Lillian (Albert) Peters. As a husband, father, and grandfather, Blake's warmth and good nature shone through. His many accomplishments have provided a role model for his loving family.

A service of thanksgiving for Blake took place at Trinity Mennonite Church (DeWinton, Alberta) on January 17, 2012. Interment followed at Eden Brook Memorial Gardens. In lieu of flowers, donations were made to MCC. The family would like to acknowledge the compassionate care provided by the staff of Newport Harbour Care Centre.



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LENT MEDITATION

Where do I sign?

In the course of daily life we are routinely asked to sign in, sign on, and sign up. We do so without giving it a thought—at the computer, as a wedding guest, at the bank, or when attending a funeral. We sign when we agree to pay for goods received. We sign forms when we start a job.

“Signing” carries a variety of meanings. Signing in can mean something as simple as “I’m here” or something as meaningful as “I’m legitimate.” Signing on can indicate we’re willing to try something new or that we’ve committed to follow through in a project or idea. Signing up can mean we’d like to know more or that we can be counted on. And signing all by itself usually means “I promise”—that these statements are true, that there’s money in this account, that I’m attending this college. Signing in, signing on, and signing up not only have implications for right now, but they also say something about tomorrow and next year.

We chose the theme, “Where do I sign?” for our Lent-Easter theme this year because in our relationship with God and the people of God we have opportunities again and again to sign in, sign on, and sign up. Do we understand the implications of “signing on” with God, our part in maintaining and growing that relationship? Are we hearing God’s invitations to journey in the way of Jesus? How can we encourage worshippers to “sign on” as they consider taking new steps as disciples of

Jesus? And what does that look like in our communities?

The Old Testament lessons in Lectionary Year B tell us about God’s covenant with Noah, Abraham and Sarah, and Moses, people who signed up with God. At Sinai, God offered the people of Israel the fullness of relationship with God and with each other through the Ten Commandments. Faced with challenges in the wilderness, the people spoke against Moses and God and fractured their relationship with God, resulting in sickness and death—covenant broken. When they owned and confessed their sin, God heard them and saved them. They were invited to sign on . . . again—covenant renewed. The prophet Jeremiah, reflecting on this pattern of covenant making and breaking that seems so typically human, anticipates a new kind of covenant, one written on the heart rather than imposed from the outside.

The Gospel readings focus our attention on the life of Jesus, God’s obedient son. We begin with his baptism followed by his forty days of testing in the wilderness as he sorts out what this “signing on” means. In his ministry, Jesus invites people to sign up with him, to take up their cross and follow him. When Jesus cleanses the temple it becomes clear that signing up with God can be tough—doing the right thing is sometimes costly. In the Palm Sunday and Easter lections, Jesus, the initiator of the new covenant, first suffers even

to the point of death, then is raised to life and exalted as Lord of all. Everyone who signs with him receives forgiveness of sins: God’s love is lavish for those who sign up and stick with their promise. This healing liberation is worth proclaiming, living out, and inviting others to consider: “Where do I sign?”

Confession and Assurance

We are fully convinced by the testimony of Scripture that God is able to keep each promise made to all who choose to “sign in” to join God’s covenant people. God wants to redeem us and restore our relationships with God, our neighbors at home and around the world, and with all creation. As we gather to worship each week, we enter into this work of redemption and restoration by confessing our sins—admitting our lack of faith, our destructive actions and apathetic inactions, and our need for forgiveness, renewal and grace—and by receiving both the assurance of God’s pardon and the opportunity to try again.

For Sunday, Feb. 26 (Lent 1):

Texts: Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

Focus statement: Covenants are a two-way street: both God and we sign on together. God’s covenant with Noah is a commitment to give up violence as a way of “solving” the problem of sin. But covenant making also requires something from us—usually more than once. How can we continue to sign on for this relationship of new life?

For Sunday, March 4 (Lent 2)

Texts: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

Focus statement: We give up everything to follow Jesus and in turn gain everything—as Abraham and Sarah did when they accepted God’s generous covenant and committed themselves to a walk of faith. How can we too sign on to the journey, following in the footsteps of our ancestors in faith and responding to God’s initiating call to let go of our lives for the sake of the gospel? ¶

—Taken from *Leader magazine*, Winter edition

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Clark—Ava Grace (b. Oct. 22, 2011), to Andrew and Chrissy Clark, Laird Mennonite, Sask.

Derksen—Lucille Elizabeth Loewen (b. Jan. 20, 2012), to Kevin and Pam Derksen, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Dueck—Nevaeh Jade (b. Oct. 27, 2011), to Josh and Michelle Dueck, Laird Mennonite, Sask.

Heinrichs—Jack Edwin (b. Oct. 13, 2011), to Robert and Lisa Heinrichs, Langley Mennonite, B.C.

Hill Lepp—Victoria Annie (b. Jan. 18, 2012), to Jamie Lepp and Christina Hill Lepp, Ottawa Mennonite, Ont.

Krahn—Isaac Mitchell Penner (b. Jan. 21, 2012) to Trishia Penner and Dennis Krahn, Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Kropf—Georgia Marie (b. Nov. 12, 2011), to Chad and Rachel Kropf, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Mugosa—Gael (b. Jan. 2, 2012), to Giscard Mugosa and Sylvie Mukabaha, Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Namwira—Jehali Nsima (b. Jan. 10, 2012), to Deo Namwira and Esperance Mugosa, Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg

Rogalsky—Tabitha Ruth (b. Jan. 25, 2012), to Allan and Christine Rogalsky, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Siemens—Isaiah Alfred Sinnaeve (b. Dec. 25, 2011), to Ryan Siemens and Sandra Sinnaeve, Grace Mennonite, Prince Albert, Sask.

Stobbe—Benjamin Paula Wates (b. Aug. 19, 2011), to Joel and Tracy Stobbe, Langley Mennonite, B.C.

Baptisms

Caitlin Draper, Irene Heyder, Rachel Krause, Dayna Morrison, Celia Rossi, Estela Unger, Gabriela Unger, Candace Wright, Vanessa Wright—St. Catharines United Mennonite, Nov. 27, 2011.

Nickolas Peter Wiens—Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask., Feb. 5, 2012.

Marriages

Fouk/Hamilton—Kristen Fouk (Faith Mennonite,

Leamington, Ont.) and John Hamilton at Colosanti's Tropical Garden, Leamington, Dec. 29, 2011.

Guigon/Reddekopp—Rachel Guigon (Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.) and Randy Reddekopp, in Mexico, Jan. 24, 2012.

Deaths

Bender—Robert, 45 (b. April 20, 1966; d. Jan. 11, 2012), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Ens—Barbara, 61 (b. May 30, 1950; d. Jan. 18, 2012), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Epp—Don, 81 (b. Aug. 23, 1941; d. Jan. 1, 2012), Laird Mennonite, Sask.

Fransen—Jacob, 81 (b. March 1, 1930; d. Jan. 18, 2012), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Friesen—Blake Clarence, 93 (b. May 26, 1918; d. Jan. 9, 2012), Trinity Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

Friesen—Henry, 90 (b. Dec. 11, 1921; d. Jan. 20, 2012), Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Gingrich—Lois, 68 (b. June 16, 1943; d. Jan. 2, 2012), Wanner Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

Gingrich—Ron, 69 (b. Sept. 20, 1942; d. Jan. 2, 2012), Wanner Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

Heinrichs—Edwin Ronald, 71 (b. Sept. 4, 1940; d. Oct. 31, 2011), Langley Mennonite, B.C.

Kinzie—Alma Irene, 87 (b. June 14, 1924; d. Dec. 9, 2011), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

Rempel—Helen (nee Unrau), 76 (b. June 17, 1935; d. Jan. 28, 2012), Carman Mennonite, Man.

Rock—Stella (nee Kråck), 81 (b. Dec. 11, 1929; d. Dec. 2, 2011), Laird Mennonite, Sask.

Ropp—Edna (nee Poole), 77 (b. June 8, 1934; d. Jan. 10, 2012), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

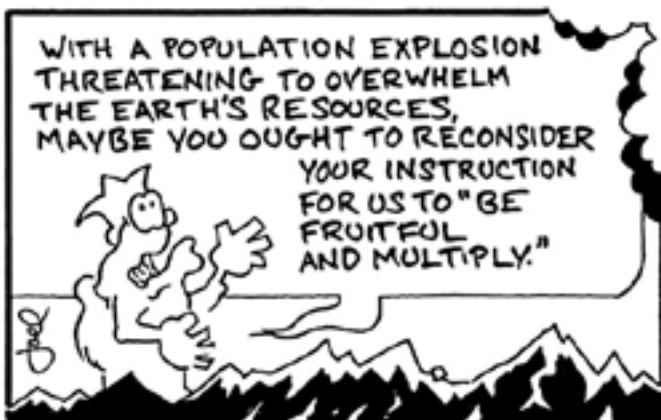
Sauder—Dorothy Schwartzentruber, 87 (b. June 23, 1924; d. Jan. 23, 2012), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Thiessen—Victor Jacob, 80 (b. July 26, 1931; d. Dec. 4, 2011), Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Unger—Arthur, 72 (b. June 16, 1939; d. Jan. 9, 2012), North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Wiebe—Robert Richard (Robbie), 50 (b. June 9, 1961; d. Jan. 23, 2012), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Poncius' Puddle



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

CMU names new president from within

BY RACHEL BERGEN

National Correspondent

WINNIPEG, MAN.

When Cheryl Pauls takes over the reins from Gerald Gerbrandt, Nov. 1, as president of Canadian Mennonite University, she will guide the institution from a different academic discipline and from a different historical narrative.

Pauls, a CMU professor of piano and music theory, was named by the board of governors early this month after more than a year-long search for a successor to Gerbrandt, 65, who retires on June 30 after nearly 12 years as the university's founding president. His field is biblical studies, something to which he will return after a year in retirement, he says.

Pauls, growing up in eastern Ontario but making her adult home in Manitoba for the past 29 years, comes out of the Mennonite Brethren historical stream while Gerbrandt, son of the late well-known Mennonite Church leader Henry Gerbrandt, grew up in a Russian Mennonite church setting in southern Manitoba. The younger Gerbrandt, familiar with the tensions of the Mennonite merger that brought together the three predecessor schools forming CMU, was well equipped to guide the new university through the thickets of its early development.

Pauls, the beneficiary of this success, says her primary imperative "is to support and sustain the impulse of the university's mission so that it resonates both within and beyond the institution, and to work collaboratively to sustain the will and the capacities of our CMU community to achieve the university's strategic goals and mission."

Gerbrandt, always careful to nurture the church-university relationship, said in a

2004 paper on *Scholars as Servants of the Church*, that "the Anabaptist tradition would suggest that Christian scholars should do their research in continual dialogue with the larger community in the church."

He prided himself with the high percentage of Mennonite students in the early years, telling a *Winnipeg Free Press* reporter that "in 2000, two-thirds of the students were Mennonite. Today, that's more like 40 percent, though the Mennonite numbers have not decreased."

Pauls, wanting to now extend both the reach of the university and conversations across the disciplines, claims that CMU "has found a way of interfacing with them. Whether it's about the Occupy movement or Bill C-10, the Omnibus crime bill, CMU is the place where people can grapple with these issues together."

She also hopes to strengthen the disciplines by pushing for students to be required to take courses in certain areas. "Communication and Business, for instance: I'd like to see that every student is required to take a public speaking course. To then be working with students in learning good stewardship and good money management."

A well-established solo and collaborative pianist, known particularly for performances of new music and for multi-media worship events, Pauls has also undertaken research projects focused on the interface of studies in music theory and performance with those in memory, physiology, liturgy, and cultural expression.

Pauls' administrative and leadership gifts have been recognized and utilized throughout her time at CMU. From 2000 to 2007 she



Cheryl Pauls takes over as CMU president on Nov. 1.

served as coordinator of the music department, and played a key role in program development. Since 2008 she has been chair of the Shaftesbury Campus and member of the President's Council. Her keen sense of performance resulted in her regularly playing a lead role in planning major public events.

The search committee for the new president, led by Chair Ron Loeppky, began its work in the fall of 2010, saying it cast a wide net, advertised extensively, and received interest from across North America. "We're absolutely delighted with Cheryl Pauls' qualities, enthusiasm, energy, and vision," says Loeppky, who noted her nomination came from multiple sources.

"She was recognized both internally and externally for her special gifts and abilities in leadership. Given her commitment to the institution, her passion for what CMU is and can become, her vast talents, and the personal leadership gifts she brings, our committee feels she is well positioned to serve this institution."

Gerbrandt plans to take a year off after he retires to write a commentary on Deuteronomy and also to do some travelling in Jerusalem. After his year off, he plans to return to CMU to teach, because CMU has a policy that retired professors can return for five years to teach at one-third time. ❧

—with files from Dick Benner and Nadine Kampen.

Ask open questions toward the Bible

Church leaders explore Bible study

BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent
VINELAND, ONTARIO

“Catching the spark . . . Carrying the light: Facilitating Dynamic Bible Study” was the title of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s annual pastors, chaplains and congregational leaders event. Over 110 gathered at the Vineland United Mennonite Church on Jan. 21 to hear brothers Brian Moyer Suderman and Derek Suderman, together with Derek’s spouse Rebecca Seiling encourage more engaging methods of Bible study.

Suderman, the main teacher, encouraged leaders to ask questions in Bible study more than offering input. While background and theology are important he challenged leaders to lead in discovery rather than providing answers. Questions can be either closed—eliciting yes or no,

true or false answers—or open—eliciting answers that explore the story’s and characters’ thoughts, motives, and feelings.

Besides that questions can be either toward or away from the text. Questions that explore the story and characters themselves are toward the text, while questions of theology or application are away from the text. While all the kinds of questions—closed away, closed toward, open toward and open away—are valid in study, Suderman maintained that much Bible study has focused on closed toward—facts—and open away—application/moralizing.

Providing questions to study the stories of Jacob at the Jabok from Genesis 32:22-32 and the book of Jonah, Suderman had

table groups do Bible study. The excited conversations around the room showed something of what he suggested could happen in congregations when they would use his methodology and, like Jacob at the Jabok, struggle with God.

In short additional sessions, Seiling and Moyer Suderman explored Bible study for children, or for creating music for the church (see accompanying CD review). Seiling focused on similar questions for children, suggesting that teachers and parents not “dumb down” teaching to children. If the teachers are excited about the stories and how they apply in life, children will pick this up and begin to study and learn on their own. As has been so often emphasized she encouraged the ‘telling’ of stories, rather than reading the text to children. Or have the children help create a play or drama from the story, asking open toward questions and building the presentation based on the children’s answers. ❧

Detectives of Divinity

Bryan Moyer Suderman looks for God in Bible stories and everyday life

BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent

As part of the team at MC Eastern Canada’s recent pastors, leaders and congregational leaders event, Bryan Moyer Suderman described how a Bible story often spawns a song for him as he asks “open toward” questions of the text. These questions get at the feelings, thoughts and motives of the characters in the story. As an example he sang the twin songs from *Detectives of Divinity*, “Take Heart” and “Jesus, Son of David,” both about the blind man from the Mark 10 story of the blind man in Jericho. The songs explore the blind man’s thoughts and feelings and then effectively turn these over to the singers who in their own ways are blind and calling out to Jesus. Most of the songs on *Detectives*



Derek Suderman (left) and Gerald Good engage in dynamic conversation about Bible study at the MC Eastern Canada pastors, chaplains and congregational leaders seminar.

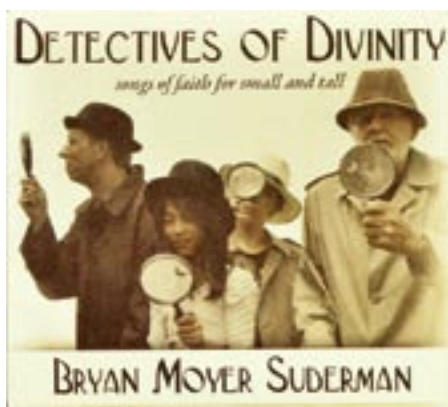
of *Divinity* are accompanied by a scripture reference which inspired Moyer Suderman to write.

While the musical styles are not as diverse as on some of his previous albums, album by album and song by song Moyer Suderman is creating a sound track for the church. The title song is a kind of Psalm 8, finding God in the works of nature, tied to Luke 7 where John the Baptist wonders about Jesus, inviting the singers to “ask questions, follow leads, check for DNA, dusting for God’s fingerprints each and every day.”

Drinking deeply at an Anabaptist Mennonite Christian well, Moyer Suderman is offering the church and families sound Bible stories and theology to live and grow by, using a variety of musical styles. Especially fine are the cuts already mentioned and Peace Meal, connecting us from David and Abigail from the Old Testament, Psalm 23’s “a table set before me in the presence of my enemies,” to a soup kitchen where God’s peace is offered in a cup of coffee and bowl of soup, to the

singers’ personal enemies, and communion, moving us from the text to action, asking an “open away” question of the Bible.

Suderman’s music is available on line in either CD form, or by download from www.smalltallmusic.com. Individuals or congregations can sign up for regular “deliveries” of music by being a member of his “community shared music” (CSM) becoming a member of smalltall music, much like people sign up for vegetables from community shared agriculture plans. ☘



Scripture first, then sexuality conversation, Board tells Harmony

BY RACHEL BERGEN

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

“We hope to come up with a statement of how we will move forward with regards to scripture by the time Mennonite Church Canada meets in Vancouver for Assembly 2012,” Rudy Baergen told a meeting Feb. 4 of representatives of the General Board and the Harmony Group. “We then hope to deal with specific questions around sexuality.”

Baerg, chair of the Faith and Life Committee, was one of four General Board members following through on a promised update to the Harmony group where a motion at Assembly 2011 entrusted the Board to treat the sexuality issue as part of a much broader Being a Faith Church 3 scriptural discernment process.

Others from the General Board included Willard Metzger, executive director,

Hilda Hildebrand, assistant moderator, and Lynell Bergen, representative from the Witness Council. Harmony considers itself a grassroots initiative started within Mennonite Church Canada that believes in full inclusion and affirmation of people within the church and the larger Mennonite and Anabaptist community who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ*).

Part of the motion approved at Assembly 2011 held in Waterloo was a call on area churches to work at healthy and loving dialogue with members of this community.

Kirsten Freed, a member and one of the coordinators of Harmony, shared her concern that the scholars discerning this issue are mainly male and heterosexual. Because the issue is about a group of people, she

feels that they should be a part of the process.

“For me, this is personal. I encourage you to seek out marginalized voices,” she said.

Several members of the group, including Freed, Jodi Read and Ben Borne, also asked Board members to seek out other ways to discern this issue including psychology, sciences, social sciences and theology.

Metzger affirmed this by saying that MC Canada would move forward on this issue by discussing other methods of discerning, the possibility of broadening the on-line feedback tool to include these methods, and to intentionally seek out various voices. He added that this will help members of the area churches to stretch their hermeneutical muscles.

“We don’t know how to disagree well. Our hermeneutical muscles are flabby. We need to develop a regimen that’s lightweight at first and then move to a more heavy discussion,” he said.

Val Warkentin, a member of Harmony said that she hopes for people who disagree to still love one another. “That is an overwhelming experience,” she said, “That kind of relationship is what I long for.”

Though this kind of relationship sometimes seems far off or nearly impossible, Metzger affirmed the fact that the process of discerning BFC 3 with regards to same-sex relationships is very slow for those whom it directly affects. He demonstrated a deep commitment to the issue.

“This seems to some to be terribly slow, unjustly slow. To others it’s brave. We are committed to see it through.”

Others demonstrated hope for the future of the relationship between members of the LGBTQ* community and the Mennonite church.

For Bergen, who pastors Hope Mennonite Church, the only church in Mennonite Church Canada to fully endorse Harmony’s motion, she hopes that one day her colleagues that don’t agree with her church will still embrace them as brothers and sisters in Christ. “The rest will take a long time,” she said.

Camp Assiniboia manager, David Hogue, said that he hopes that the church can “get the ball rolling” in his lifetime. “I hope there is enough going on to keep them hopeful and to stick with it.” ☘

PHOTOS BY TOM BILESKI (ROCKWAY MENNONITE COLLEGIATE)



Youth play 'capture the flag' in the snow.

Terrific, hilarious weekend!

Youth retreat offers lots of laughter and worship

BY ANNELI LOEPP-THIESSEN

Special to Canadian Mennonite
SILVER LAKE MENNONITE CAMP

The sound of 180 youth laughing was a familiar sound for us at the Mennonite Church Eastern Canada winter retreat this past January at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. From the amazing speakers to the movie-in-2-minutes show on Saturday night, laughter was shared by all.

Our guest speakers for the weekend were Ted Swartz and Company, who brought biblical stories to life in their incredibly funny dramas! They were definitely a highlight of the weekend for many.

On Saturday afternoon, the weather was crisp, the sun was shining, and everything was perfect for a game of Capture the Flag! We also got to know each other on a whole new level when our hands were tied together for lunch on Saturday!

Youth groups had time to reflect and

share with each other as part of each service and individuals had the opportunity to explore the prayer room, a beautiful area for quiet reflection.

The Saturday night service held an opportunity for youth to write down their burdens and bring them up to the front where they could nail them to a cross. On Sunday morning youth were invited to come forward and be anointed by a leader at the front. Both of these services were opportunities for growth for everyone. All in all, it was a terrific and hilarious weekend!!

The retreat is co-sponsored by Conrad Grebel University College, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate and Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. %



During a worship service, youth brought their burdens to the cross.



Anneli Loewp-Thiessen (left) thanks Ted Swartz and Jeff Raught (far right) for their contributions to the MC Eastern Canada Winter Youth Retreat, held at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp on January 13-15.

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate pursues redevelopment plans

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

After examining several alternative sites for relocation, Westgate Mennonite Collegiate (WMC) is pursuing redevelopment plans for its central Winnipeg campus in 2012. The grade 7-12 school has been at its 86 West Gate location since 1964.

A Facility Search Committee was formed in 2008 for the purpose of identifying possible courses of action for redevelopment after the neighbourhood contentiously opposed the earlier proposed redevelopment plans. Several sites suitable for relocation were extensively analyzed by the committee but it became apparent that development of any of those sites was well beyond the school community's funding capacity. As a result it was concluded that the best alternative was to pursue redevelopment of its present location by refining earlier plans. Bob Hummelt, principal, believes the new redevelopment plans reflect "a concept that is sustainable, achievable and acceptable to the broader community."

The new building proposal is significantly scaled down from the project presented

in 2008. Newly constructed space will be set within the old construction's footprint. Selective interior renovation and reconfiguration will take place in the remaining structure for improved efficiency and accessibility.

"The changes to the present structure are very subtle and curbside changes will be indistinguishable," said Hummelt. The plan does not include increasing the capacity for more students. "We anticipated some of the neighbourhood might be concerned about the square footage we are proposing if it means more students and more traffic. The increase in square footage is designed to live more comfortably and improve accessibility, not accommodate more students. We are trying to stay with the enrolment we currently have, 340-350. In the face of declining enrolment that is happening virtually everywhere, we think our current enrolment might be difficult to retain in the next little while. It's going to be a challenge but we are counting on the school having a solid and earned reputation of providing a good Christian

education and being a nurturing place that prepares the students for other things."

The committee anticipates the new development plan will take until May or June 2012 to pass through city hall. "This will give us a full year to raise a significant amount of money so we don't have to mortgage as much. We will then need to look for a temporary place to relocate for the 2013/2014 school year, reopening in the fall of 2014."

WMC continues to actively work at building positive relationships with its neighbours in the Armstrong Point residential community that is nestled in a bend of the Assiniboine River. While some residents are in full support of the school others continue to lament the school's presence. "We are confident this proposal will allow us to meet our needs and to live within our means, and at the same time mollify some of the neighbours' concerns about the expansion getting too big. We feel we have listened to what their concerns are and have addressed them." ❧

/// Briefly noted

Mennonite pastor in Honduras killed

Rafael Erasmo Arevalo, a Mennonite pastor in Honduras, was attacked and killed after leading an evening worship service on Jan. 22. Arevalo, from Santa Rosa de Copán, drove about 20 kilometres north to Veracruz, where he had led worship services for the past 10 years. According to a report in a Honduran newspaper, *La Prensa*, Arevalo parked his car at the home of a Veracruz city councillor and then walked to the church. When he returned to his car after the worship service, he was attacked by "unknown persons." His body was not discovered until the next morning, about five kilometres from the scene of the attack. Arevalo's funeral was held on Jan. 24 in his home community of Santa Rosa de Copan. "We ask your prayers for his wife, children and church," wrote Erlinda Robelo of the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Honduras). "The church laments his premature death." In a Jan. 24 email, Robelo reported that the police still had no details of who was responsible for the murder. She indicated that Arevalo, affectionately called Mito, will be remembered for "his great spirit of service to the church and its neighbours."

—Mennonite World Conference

/// Briefly noted

BC pastor to edit 'Rejoice!'

Jonathan Janzen of Abbotsford, B.C., has been appointed editor of *Rejoice!*, a daily devotional magazine co-published by MennoMedia and Kindred Productions.



Janzen

Janzen, a part-time pastor of Highland Community Church in Abbotsford, is also an instructor for Canadian Mennonite University's Outtown program in British Columbia and has taught part-time at Columbia Bible College. He recently filled in as editor of *Mennonite Brethren Herald* while the editor was on maternity leave. Janzen succeeds Byron Rempel-Burkholder of Winnipeg, who edited *Rejoice!* for 10 years. MennoMedia is an agency of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. Kindred serves Mennonite Brethren churches in Canada and the U.S.

—MennoMedia

MWC Asia Caucus strengthens identity, looks to future

BY RON REMPEL

Mennonite World Conference

Strengthening Anabaptist identity, learning more about Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and proposing priorities for the future were the main issues that engaged Asian members of the MWC General Council at a training session for the Asia Caucus last November during meetings in Kolkata, India.

The event was attended by 32 participants from 18 national churches in Asia and the Pacific. Only Vietnam and

Australia were missing. Serving as conveners were Canadian Bert Lobe and Cynthia Peacock from India.

A desire to learn more about their Anabaptist identity ranked high on the list of interests named by participants. In discussions on the meaning of the MWC vision of being “a communion of Anabaptist-related churches,” many expressed a desire to strengthen their identity as peacemakers in order to contribute to the wider Christian church and society. They said they want to be a community of faith through loving and serving those inside and outside of the church, and equipping each other through the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

“Our vision should be expanded Mennonite churches,” said one participant, adding, “We want to see churches involved in abolishing the caste system, dowry and corruption.”

Anti-conversion legislation pending in four Indian states poses challenges for the vision of expanding the church.

Another highlight named by participants was the opportunity to gain a better understanding of their role as members of the MWC General Council. “The challenge,” commented Peacock, “will be to see whether what was learned will be communicated back to the local congregations, and how that will better bring about an understanding of the connectivity we have as a global church through MWC.”

In anticipation of the next gathering of the MWC General Council in May 2012 in Switzerland, the Asian Caucus members proposed a number of priorities for the three years leading up to the 2015 global assembly in Harrisburg, Pa.:

- Strong encouragement to include interfaith dialogue as an MWC priority, since interfaith relations are a reality for many of the congregations;
- Work camps for youths, focusing on Anabaptist identity;
- Workshops on peace as foundational to the gospel, and leadership training;
- Focus on women and their role in the church and its ministries, including the possible formation of a network of Asia women theologians; and
- An increased regional exchanges of pastors. ❧

From reports by Bert Lobe.

/// Briefly Noted

Churches nurture indigenous relations

Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church Manitoba are hosting the annual Building Bridges event at Circle of Life Thunderbird House in Winnipeg on Friday March 16. A dinner by invitation at 6:00 p.m. will be followed by an open public meeting at 7:30 featuring Eva Solomon and Francois Paradis, “two wonderful teachers who will be sharing through art, ceremony and story, God’s call to ‘indigenize’ the gospel,” said Norm Voth, director of Evangelism and Service for Mennonite Church Manitoba. Brander “Standing Bear” McDonald, presently working as MC BC’s Indigenous Relations Coordinator, will share his gifts as a singer and songwriter. Partnership Circles, a partnership ministry between MC Manitoba congregations in southern Manitoba and northern aboriginal communities, will draw upon these resource people the next day as they meet at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church to learn from the past year and plan for the next.

—BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

PHOTO BY BERT LOBE



Irene Suderman of Canada, left, and Agus Setianto of Indonesia lead the singing at the Asia Caucus training sessions in Kolkata, India, last fall.

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GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Hard truth about hunger:

Report says thousands died needlessly in East Africa

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

In a January report, two major humanitarian agencies confessed that they, along with the rest of the world, responded too slowly to the food crisis in East Africa last year, and that thousands of people died unnecessarily. “How come, more than a generation after man walked on the moon, we would let fellow human beings die needlessly?” asks Jan Egeland, former UN Relief Coordinator, in the forward to the report.

The report, entitled “A Dangerous Delay,” was commissioned by Oxfam and Save the Children. It challenges us as Canadian Mennonites to examine the performance of agencies we support and to understand that responding to hunger is more complex than securing donations, loading maize on trucks in Africa and driving off to an arid village.

The report’s discussion of complexity and blunt admission of failure mark a deviation from the usual public storyline about food crises, which tends to go something like: hungry people urgently need our help, aid agencies responsibly and promptly distribute food bought with our donations, lives are saved and our backs get patted. There is often a twist—a corrupt government or war in the way—but the plot is relatively standard. And misleading.

Addressing food disasters is often a logistical and political puzzle. Many things can go wrong, as happened in East Africa.

In May, 2011 Dan Leonard predicted that the food crisis in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia would hit the news in three months and at that point aid agencies, including Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), would look back and wish they had acted sooner. Leonard is MCC country



Bokayo Kanchoro collects water in Berena, Ethiopia, from an underground system filled with Oxfam tankered water. There are 3.2 million Ethiopians affected by the current drought and food crisis.

representative for Ethiopia, along with his wife Karin Kliewer.

The media came in July—led by the BBC—and only then was the international response jolted into high gear.

A full year prior, early warning systems began indicating trouble. Jim Cornelius, head of Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGFB)—of which MCC is a member—said his organization received these warnings and discussed them with partners. Speaking from Ethiopia, where he was on a media tour, Cornelius said that by the end of 2010, the rains had clearly failed and concern was growing. The wheels of response were in motion, he said, but “before you know it, a few months drift by.” It was not until March 3, 2011 that the first CFGFB (and MCC) funds were committed to the crisis. And it was not until mid-July, 2011—in the wake of the media blitz—that CFGFB and MCC issued appeals for donations.

Famine is a slow-onset disaster, unlike an earthquake, which is sudden, dramatic and telegenic. This adds complexity. Cornelius says it is hard to muster a sense of urgency in the early stages because “things on the ground are not noticeably problematic at that point.” Unfortunately, “by the time they do become problematic, then you’re late.” All players, including head office

staff in North America, need to be more responsive he says.

Urgency is critical, but Leonard, and Bruce Guenther, MCC’s disaster response director, emphasize that addressing hunger is about more than emergency response. Equally important are ongoing efforts to reduce people’s vulnerability to disaster. This is called “disaster risk reduction” and the “Dangerous Delay” report stresses it too. Manage risks in advance, it advises, instead of just managing the crisis when it hits. “Early action is more cost effective.” And it saves more lives.

Assisting people in their homes is cheaper and more effective than assisting them in camps, after they’ve sold or lost the animals and other assets that could provide a livelihood later.

And even before any signs of drought, efforts are needed to reduce risk. MCC’s long-standing work in Ethiopia on sand dams, forestation and soil and water conservation are a preventative element of its drought response. Drought will happen; rains will fail. But famine and starvation can be prevented if systems are in place to prepare people for lean times and assist them through those periods.

Despite the complexities of humanitarian assistance and the failures in East Africa, the death toll there—an estimated

OXFAM INTERNATIONAL PHOTO

50,000 to 100,000—was far lower than in the 1984 Ethiopian famine, in which nearly a million starved. Still, thousands of people died needlessly, largely people from Somalia where conflict and governance issues hindered the response.

With their report, Oxfam and Save

the Children have emphasized the need to learn from the mistakes of 2011. They have also set an example by discarding the

simplicistic food aid narrative, and entrusting their supporters with a frank discussion of the complexities of their work. ❧

Sustainable urban agriculture flourishing in Cuba

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada

❧ Emergency food assistance:

15 typical steps in an MCC response*

Note: In cases such as Ethiopia and Kenya, MCC's emergency response must be seen in the context of its long term work to reduce people's vulnerability to food insecurity, which is an essential element of the overall response.

1. Request for assistance from local partner organizations
2. Situation assessment by MCC and partner staff
3. Project design (selection criteria for beneficiaries, determination of appropriate food ration, length of response, etc.)
4. Approval of project by government authorities in local country
5. Submission of plan for review and funding by MCC or other donors
6. Revision and approval of project plan
7. Transfer of funds
8. Selection of beneficiaries
9. Local procurement of food (call to tender, selection, contract)
10. Independent inspection of commodity for quality (such as moisture level) etc.
11. Delivery of commodity to partner warehouse
12. Distribution of food assistance
13. Collection of baseline household food security data for monitoring and evaluation
14. Monitoring by partner and local MCC office
15. Submission and review of project narrative and financial reports

*Not included are steps such as sending donkeys to haul grain after the truck gets stuck.

Source: MCC

Krystofer Penner's studies in international development piqued his interest in food supply issues and drew his attention to Cuba's system of sustainable urban agriculture. That sparked a conversation with Mennonite Church Canada to explore internship possibilities with some of its church partners in Cuba.

"Cuba is the largest centre of this sort in the world," says Penner.

"Krystofer is the first intern that Mennonite Church Canada has been able to successfully place in Cuba and it would not have been possible without the assistance of our partners at the Martin Luther King Memorial Center [MLKMC]," says Tim Froese, Executive Minister, Witness. From April 26 through July 23 of 2011, the fourth-year Canadian Mennonite University student, whose double major also includes Peace and Conflict Studies, engaged in a practicum at MLKMC in Havana. Raul Suárez, Director of the Center, and his wife, Eva Deulofeu, hosted Penner during his stay.

In 1989, Cuba plunged into economic crisis. The withdrawal of Soviet support and a tightening US embargo hit the food industry particularly hard. With massive reductions in imported fertilizers and seed from the Soviet Union, and declining food imports from the US, the country was forced to make sustainable agriculture—food—a top priority.

"[Sustainable urban agriculture] is in every town in the country," Penner says, describing the system as "top down from the government," but says that the idea was to build the capacity of farmers to grow sustainably without creating dependency on government. "They are trying to build a system of independent farmers with

interconnectedness and support." To this end, specialized stores selling feed and seed, and booklets on a wide variety of crops are found in many places.

During his practicum, Penner studied urban farming practices under the tutelage of Benedicto Castañeda, who introduced Penner to local urban farmers. What Penner observed has increased his optimism for our ability to feed the planet.

"Often it feels to me like we're heading for a crisis in our food system and that we can't do anything about it," Penner says. "This has shown me that there is hope, we can change things around if we want to. [The Cubans] did and we can too. We just have to *want* to."

Penner says that he was impressed by more than agriculture during his time in Cuba. "I think what resonates with me the most is the community I saw there. The people that I interacted with were so open and welcoming. They made me feel at home and took care of me like I was one of them. And they treated everyone this way." ❧



During his Mennonite Church Canada internship in Cuba, Krystofer Penner had the opportunity to meet with several local farmers to discuss sustainable urban agriculture and to study their operations.

Refugee sponsorship rules change

GLADYS TERICHOW

Mennonite Central Committee Canada
WINNIPEG, MAN.

In an effort to clear a backlog of refugee applications, the Canadian government is limiting the number of new applications for private sponsorships that name specific refugees. This change will affect the kind of refugees that congregations and community groups sponsor, said Ed Wiebe, national coordinator of MCC's refugee programs.

For example, in the past a congregation might begin by sponsoring a refugee. As people got to know the refugee they might also learn about the desperate situation of the refugee's family members and be moved to sponsor them as well. These would be considered "named" refugees because the congregation specifically identified the refugees it wished to sponsor.

Under the new limits, MCC can submit applications for only 29 named refugees in 2012, said Wiebe. There is no limit, however, on the number of private sponsorships of refugees identified and named by Canadian embassies.

"Clearing the backlog is expected to take at least four years," said Wiebe. "During this time, MCC will encourage congregations and sponsoring groups to adjust to the new realities and invest their time, energy and resources to help embassy-referred refugees build new lives in Canada."

For more than three decades, MCC Canada's refugee assistance program has enabled congregations and other sponsoring groups to fund one-year

sponsorships for more than 70,000 people resettling in Canada. MCC is among 70 organizations in Canada that has an agreement with the government to sponsor refugees under the private sponsorship program. Three years ago, the government asked these organizations to voluntarily limit the number of named sponsorships, but Wiebe said the number of named sponsorships continued to increase.

A review of MCC's refugee assistance program undertaken in 2009 recommended that MCC reduce the number of people sponsored through named sponsorships to 40 per cent of their total sponsorship—a significant reduction from 90 per cent.

"When the program started in 1979, all refugees were unnamed," said Wiebe. "We want to continue listening compassionately to the requests of the families we have sponsored but we also want to respond to the compelling stories of refugees who cannot contact us directly."

Currently, about 80 to 90 congregations and other sponsorship groups welcome about 150 to 180 new refugees to Canada each year through MCC's refugee assistance program. ☞



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Mennonite Church Canada supports flood relief in Bangkok

On Nov. 16, Mennonite Church Canada executive staff approved a proposal to send \$3,500 for flood relief in Thailand. MC Canada Witness workers Pat and Rad Houmphan, with the congregation of Living Water Church in Borabu, assembled care packages for those displaced by flooding. While Borabu is located in the unaffected northeastern part of the country, the Living Water congregation felt compelled to help those impacted by flooding, including family and friends.

—Mennonite Church Canada

MCC PHOTO BY CHAI BOUPHAPHANH



Through MCC's IVEP program, architects Rany Putri (left) and Charles Olfert work together on projects at aodbt, an architecture and interior design firm in Saskatoon.

MCC exchange program connects Saskatoon firm and young architect from Indonesia

BY GLADYS TERICHOW

Mennonite Central Committee Canada
SASKATOON, SASK.

Learning about trees and shrubs suitable for the Canadian prairies was a new experience for Rany Putri, an architect from Indonesia trained in landscape design. But she was up for the challenge as she assisted staff at aodbt, an architecture and interior design firm developing drawings for the green space around Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan's office. The plan is to beautify the grounds and reduce the building's heating and cooling costs.

"It was like a puzzle," said Putri, when describing the task of sketching trees and shrubs she had never heard about. Putri, 25, is one of 53 young adults from 26 countries participating in MCC's International Volunteer Exchange Program. IVEP is a one-year vocational and cultural exchange program that connects international young

adults with host families and volunteer placements in Canada and U.S.

This is the second year that Charles Olfert, a founding partner of aodbt, has invited an IVEP participant to join the firm's bustling workforce of about 50 people. He said aodbt strives to provide services and resources that assist charitable organizations and being an IVEP partner agency enables his firm to increase this involvement.

"The biggest thing is it allows us to do work we couldn't do otherwise," he said. "Ideally, we would like to have three or four IVEPers working here and put them together to work as a group. That would be an interesting challenge for an employer who would have the time to be a mentor."

Putri's experience with industry-standard computer programs and her interest

in landscape design enables her to make valuable contributions to aodbt's involvement with MCC Saskatchewan's green space and building improvement project, said Olfert. As a member of MCC Saskatchewan's creation care work team, he is enthusiastic about the project because it will help MCC Saskatchewan contribute to MCC's overall goal of reducing carbon emissions by 20 per cent over the next years. In addition to planting trees on the south side of the building, the project includes improving the insulation in the walls and building a slightly slanted roof and adding insulation under the slope.

Putri said she is learning a lot about sustainable development through this and other projects, as well as the work that has been done by aodbt on its own facility.

Several years ago, aodbt converted an old warehouse into a professional and efficient office complex that meets international standards and recognition for its energy and environmental designs.

"This is very good training and experience for me," said Putri. "The most important thing is that I can bring back my experiences and integrate them into my work in Indonesia." ❧

One plot at a time

MCC, partner agencies are rethinking agriculture for small-scale farmers worldwide

By **EMILY WILL**

Mennonite Central Committee

As world population recently leapt over the seven billion mark, global concern about how to feed that many people is growing, especially as cropland is diminishing in quantity and soil is degraded, even depleted, in many places.

"Farmers everywhere are seeing the need to rethink how we do agriculture," says Dan Wiens, water and food production coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Fortunately, Wiens says, conservation agriculture shows great promise to revitalize soil and increase crop yields. In some African countries farmers are achieving yield increases of more than 300 percent within two years of implementing conservation agriculture techniques.

Conservation agriculture relies on minimal soil disturbance, rotating crops, and keeping the soil covered with mulch. This is in contrast to conventional agriculture's emphasis on fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides.

"To build food security, we have to start with the soil," Wiens says. Soil health depends on as little tillage or digging as possible, Wiens explains. Turning over the soil, whether by tractor, animal-drawn plow or even vigorous hoeing, injures soil. It compacts it, disturbs or kills its beneficial organisms, and allows erosion to occur. Farmers who practise conservation agriculture sow seeds directly into untilled soil that retains residue from the previous crop.

CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK PHOTO BY CAROL THIESSEN



The health and productivity of Sukuluhle Moyo's cornfields in Zimbabwe has made her an "evangelist" for conservation agriculture. She learned about the farming method through United Church of Canada, a partner Mennonite Central Committee supports with equity from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

"Healthy, nutrient-rich soil equals healthy, strong plants, which equals more resistance to disease and injurious forms of insects," says James Alty of Howden, Man., a proponent of conservation agriculture in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, where he is an MCC representative.

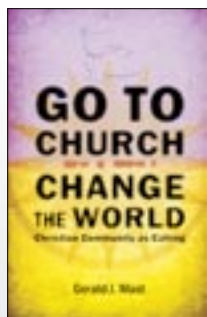
Alty is enthusiastic about the results of MCC partner, Growing Nations Trust, a small, faith-based non-profit organization in Lesotho dedicated to conservation agriculture. Lesotho farmers using Growing Nations' techniques produced a surplus of seven tonnes of corn in 2007 and about 30 metric tons in 2008.

MCC efforts, through partners like Growing Nations, are dedicated to small scale, often impoverished, farmers. Due to Growing Nations' success in Lesotho, as well as similar achievements by partner agencies in other African countries, MCC is encouraging food-security partners elsewhere to consider this approach.

MCC worker Miriam Harder of Clavet, Sask., recently assumed the role of MCC's conservation agriculture consultant in Latin America. From her base in Chiapas, Mexico, Harder will work with partners to start trial plots in five countries.

"Wherever MCC implements conservation agriculture," Wiens says, "it brings hope for feeding the world's growing number of inhabitants, one small plot at a time." ❧

New from Herald Press



Go to Church, Change the World

Christian Community as Calling

by Gerald J. Mast

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Herald Press

GOD AT WORK IN US

Nazareth service experience awesome!

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada

Kayla Thiessen bubbles with enthusiasm when she talks about her short-term service experience through Mennonite Church Canada in Nazareth. The University of Manitoba graphic design student, who attends Steinbach (Man.) Mennonite Church, experienced life far away from her Prairie home, learning about life in biblical times and sharing her faith with children and youths in the area.

It was Thiessen's first time overseas and the experience was facilitated through an MC Canada partnership with Serve Nazareth.

"I had been talking to a friend about the places I wanted to go," Thiessen says. "Israel was one of them. A week later I saw the 'Adventurers Wanted' ad [about opportunities for service] in my church bulletin. I applied and it took off after that."

With four other young adults from the U.S., Thiessen took part in a three-month internship, an MC Canada program designed to help grow the kingdom of God in Nazareth through the service of volunteers and to grow the kingdom of God within the participants themselves.

After spending a week in England to prepare for service, Thiessen's assignment took her to Nazareth in the Galilee region of Israel last summer. She spent two days a week at Nazareth Village, where a farm and Galilean village have been recreated to represent life in Nazareth as it was during the time of Jesus. Dressed in clothing of that era, Thiessen led a donkey around the threshing floor, trampling grain from the recent wheat harvest. After wheat kernels were loosened from the chaff, she picked out individual grains by hand.

Using her graphic-design skills, Thiessen also designed stationery and posters. "I confirmed my direction," she says of the experience. Although she has had similar work experience before, she says that in Nazareth, "I had to do it more on my own, learning how I work and how to deal with new challenges and how to adapt."

Thiessen related to the church in Galilee through Children's Evangelical Fellowship camps in the area and youth groups, including those from Arab and messianic churches.

"They are passionate about what they are

teaching, hungry to learn what God wants to say to them," Thiessen says about the youth groups. "The only difference was of their background, so they would do some things differently. In the Arab church, they have singing at the beginning, a sermon, more singing—the same as here, but louder. They are more outgoing in the Arab church."

She also became aware of the segregation of communities in Israel. While she was there, she says that "one Arab Christian went to a [Messianic] Jewish church on his own volition and was welcomed. They are not opposed to interaction, but I don't think it happens a lot because of history," she speculates.

Thiessen says the experience gave her the opportunity to "build relationships with people in Nazareth [and] it also allows you to travel and get a better understanding of the Bible." ❧

/// Briefly noted

Ten Thousand Villages appoints general manager

NEW HAMBURG, ON—The Ten Thousand Villages Canada board of directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Ryan Jacobs as general manager. In this role



Jacobs will oversee the overall operations and direction of Canada's leading fair trade retailer. Jacobs joined the non-profit organization in March, 2011 as director of finance and operations. "The board was impressed with Jacobs' passion, fit with the organizational culture, strong interpersonal skills, and his overall leadership ability," says Bruce Burgetz, board chair. Prior to joining Ten Thousand Villages Canada, Jacobs held managing roles with a variety of organizations. Jacobs has a diverse academic background including a B.A. in religious studies and philosophy from the University of Waterloo and a Master of Theology degree from the University of Edinburgh.

—Ten Thousand Villages

PHOTO COURTESY OF KAYLA THIESSEN



Kayla Thiessen, right, with a fellow Serve Nazareth intern wear period clothing for their work at Nazareth Village. Thiessen's service experience resulted from a Mennonite Church Canada advertisement in her church bulletin.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Culture-shock experience in Africa

BY CHRISTINE STRONG
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

I remember when I first found out I would be travelling on a MeToWe trip to Kenya last summer.

Only about a month earlier, I had heard about the opportunity Research In Motion, makers of the Blackberry smart phone, was providing to a lucky group of 50 students

It helped me realize that all we need in life is what we believe in and the values we hold.

from the Waterloo Region District School Board, to travel on a sponsored trip to either Kenya or India. I immediately was interested, but I was only 14. What were the chances I'd actually win?

But not even in high school yet, I found

myself on my way to Kenya.

I knew about MeToWe trips, and had always been really passionate about global and social issues. Ever since seeing Free The Children's founder, Craig Keilburger, speak in Grade 6, I was inspired and always did what I could to help.

While in Kenya, I got to experience the differences in our cultures, participate in building a school in a rural community, play and build relationships with the children of the village and other people on my trip, and also partake in activities with community

members, such as the water walk.

I experienced culture shock from being immersed in something so different than what I was used to, and seeing the challenges people faced compared to our "challenges" at home. Coming back to Canada was almost worse, as I saw the extremity of the differences in culture and beliefs.

As I look back, Kenya really did change me. It touched my heart, and I fell in love with not only the people and their open generosity, but also the beautiful country.

I grew up with Mennonite traditions in my household, and was taught to be happy with what I had. I saw this reflected in the village we worked in, because, although they had very little, they were happy. It helped me realize that all we need in life is what we believe in and the values we hold.

This trip has only inspired me to help change the issues I witnessed first-hand and bring awareness to those at home and anywhere I can. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTINE STRONG



Christine Strong, a 14-year-old from Wellesley Mennonite Church, Ont., tries to carry water in the same way that women her age do in Kenya during a MeToWe volunteer service trip last summer.

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ARTBEAT

Mennonites can dance

Ontario-based Peter Quanz takes his choreography skills around the world

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
BADEN, ONT.

At the age of 17, dancer Peter Quanz of Wilmot Mennonite Church was already living in Winnipeg on his own. Before heading to Winnipeg, he commuted to an arts high school in nearby Kitchener, instead of attending his local high school. His parents had always supported his interest in dance, although they all kept it quiet in the congregation and community.

Although he felt that he was doing nothing wrong by being involved with modern dance, somehow there was a conflict with his faith community. He says that when he eventually “did a little dance piece for the congregation, and gave a speech” explaining what he had done and why, not everyone accepted it. Some elders expressed concern that this wasn’t appropriate for a Mennonite Christian. Growing up, he admits he was unaware of the “seedy” elements to the body, wondering, “It’s about our bodies, what’s wrong with them?”

In Winnipeg he connected with Portage Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church and

felt strong support from Ed Buller, the associate pastor. That was 1996.

Fast forward 15 years, and Quanz, 30, was busy preparing a new full-length ballet for Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal. Based on the story of Camille Claudel, the late 19th-century sculptor Auguste Rodin’s mistress and fellow artist, this was a coup for Quanz.

With the whole organization behind him and 38 dancers in the piece, it gave him a chance to show his skill at home after working in Hong Kong, Cuba and Siberia. At the same time, a full evening of his work was being presented by the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow, a first for any Canadian choreographer.

The Claudel/Rodin Ballet speaks to his Mennonite roots, as it attempts to give voice to the oppressed and voiceless. Claudel was only known as a sculptor in her day because she was associated with an already known male artist. When she attempted to strike out on her own, she was accused of copying Rodin. After what appeared to be a mental breakdown, she was committed to asylums, where she spent the rest of her life at her family’s insistence, although doctors and other caregivers thought she could be released.

Quanz appreciates how he was taught to deal with people in the Mennonite church. Each part of the team that puts together a ballet is important to him. While in Siberia, he treated the costumers to cappuccino from a take-out coffee shop. They told him that no choreographer had ever done this before and they fêted him the day after with local delicacies and

LES GRANDS BALLETS CANADIEN PHOTO BY DAMIAN SIQUEIROS



Émilie Durville (Claudel) and Marcin Kaczorowski (Rodin) dance in Peter Quanz’s ballet Claudel/Rodin at Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in the fall of 2011.

champagne, served in the carefully preserved cups from the cappuccinos.

He had similar experiences in Montreal, where he consulted with the wardrobe department and others, who told him he was the first choreographer to have ever come down to their rooms.

Praying before practices “to not be alone, to be fed images and ideas, have doubts kept away, to be open and wise enough to accept others ideas,” Quanz says that his vagabond lifestyle keeps him from being rooted in a congregation, an apartment or a long-term relationship of any kind. But he feels that he is doing what God wants him to be doing, and he feels God’s presence at significant points along his travels.

His parents’ home in Baden is as close to a base as he has. After a few days to rest to “fatten up” in Baden, Quanz was on the road again, looking for funding for a troupe to perform in a number of American venues. Then it was back to Winnipeg, where his troupe, Q-Dance, made up Royal Winnipeg Ballet dancers, would be practising for that tour. ☞

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Choreographer Peter Quanz, centre, sits in the kitchen of the home of his parents, Ken and Lil, in Baden, Ont. His parents have posted the clippings of his latest dance on the fridge.

Exploring War with Goya

Nature of art and peace at symposium

By AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Spanish artist Francisco Goya's graphic war illustrations were the centrepiece of a symposium Feb. 4 exploring peace, war and art.

"Goya: Conversations on War and Peace," designed to explore the relationship between art and peacemaking, was held in conjunction with the current exhibition at The Reach Gallery Museum, "Goya: the Disasters of War and Los Caprichos." The 200-year-old etchings are on loan from the National Gallery of Canada.

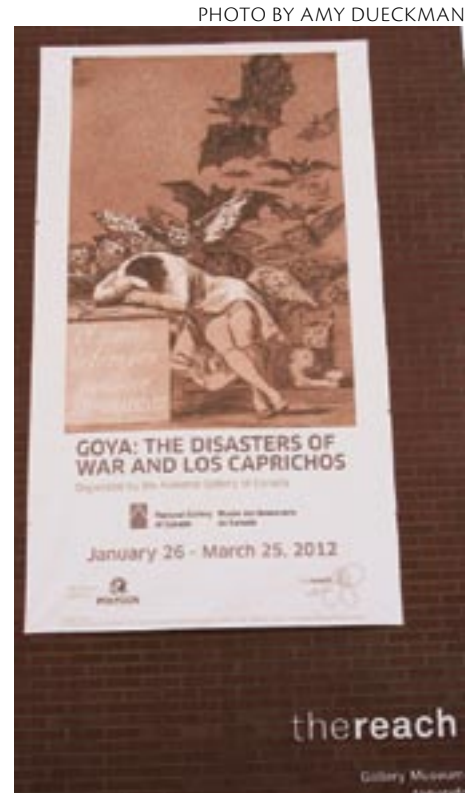
Goya had done his etchings during the Peninsular War (1808-1814) when Spain was at war with France. Previous to that time, explained curator Scott Marsden, war deaths had been depicted in art as glorious and heroic. Goya changed all that with drawings of shootings, dismemberment, and attacks on non-combatant women and children.

So controversial and graphic were Goya's prints that he dared not display them

during his lifetime. They were not shown publicly until 1862, after his death.

The drawings made from copper plate etchings were not large and by necessity were displayed in low light, forcing the viewer to look closely. "They demand you engage on a close, personal level," said curator Scott Marsden. "If you feel sick, disturbed and sad, that's exactly what Goya wants you to feel." He ended the tour by reminding viewers, "This [war] is happening today, all over the world."

Following the art gallery tour, participants continued with a discussion on war and peace. Keynote speaker Ernie Regehr of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Waterloo [Ont.] and co-founder of Project Ploughshares, spoke on the topic of "The Nature of War Today." He noted that in contrast to the first half of the twentieth century with its two world wars, no two countries today are at war with each other. "One could argue



Goya: The Disasters of War and Los Caprichos is on display at Abbotsford's The Reach Gallery Museum until March 25

that we're in the most peaceful period in history," he said.

However, continued Regehr, the bad news is that currently there are 26 wars in the world, mainly civil wars. There are fewer direct combatant deaths, but the devastating effects of war remain, and 40 million people are now displaced due to war.

"Wars are in fact preventable," he said. "The more one investigates, the more one discovers how they could have been avoided."

Rounding out the afternoon were a panel discussion on the "Nature of Peace" with Regehr, Dr. Saul Arbess and Dr. Victoria Marie, and a talk by Calgary artist Dick Avern on how cultural practitioners explore the issue of war and conflict.

Co-sponsors for the event were Mennonite Central Committee B.C., Mennonite Church B.C., Ploughshares Fraser Valley, Langley Mennonite Fellowship and Emmanuel Mennonite Church. ❧

/// Briefly noted

'Naked Anabaptist' author on tour

Stuart Murray, British author of the popular book *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith*, will speak in Canada and the U.S. this spring. Published by Herald Press in the spring of 2010, the book has sold nearly 12,000 copies. It has also been released in Spanish. Murray lives in Bristol, England, where he is a trainer and consultant with the Anabaptist Network. His particular interests include urban mission, church planting, and emerging forms of church. For 12 years he was a church planter in London and for nine years he was director of church planting and evangelism at Spurgeon's College there. The author's tour will start in Waterloo, Ont., at the School for Ministers of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. Then he will travel under the auspices of Forge Canada to Vancouver on Feb. 25, Portland on Feb. 28, Calgary on Feb. 29, and Edmonton on March 1. Murray will go to Abbotsford, B.C., March 2-3 to speak at meetings of the Mennonite Faith and Learning Society and Mennonite Church British Columbia.



—MennoMedia

MennoMedia's financial health improving

Director reports on finances before and after July 1, 2011, merger

BY STEVE SHENK

MennoMedia

Despite the costs of merging last summer and losses on inventory and a building, MennoMedia finished 2011 with improving financial health, according to executive director Russ Eanes. His assessment was confirmed by a financial audit released in December.

The merger of Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN) and Third Way Media into MennoMedia cost about \$350,000, Eanes reported. That included severance pay for nine former MPN staff, disposal of excess books and other obsolete materials, moving expenses and legal fees. MPN closed its 7,000-square-metre building in Scottsdale, Pa., and moved to the Third Way Media building in Harrisonburg, Va., where MennoMedia came into being on July 1.

Eanes, who was previously MPN's director of finance and operations, sold the

Scottsdale property shortly after the merger, despite a depressed real-estate market in the area. Due to the sale price of \$125,000 being less than book value, MPN incurred a non-cash loss of \$472,000 on the sale of the property.

Since the July merger, overall financial results have continued to improve with savings realized through a variety of efficiencies, including consolidation into one building and a slight reduction in total staff. Sales of products—especially Herald Press books—also have increased.

Third Way Media was previously part of Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) and the new agency continues to receive financial support from MMN during the transition to assist with the merger.

In addition to repaying its \$5.1 million debt, MPN has paid approximately \$1 million to former employees in the form

of severance pay and unfunded pensions since 2001.

MPN also had other challenges to face. "These included tectonic shifts in the publishing industry, changes in the size and structure of our parent denominations—Mennonite Church U.S.A. and Mennonite Church Canada—and the worst financial recession since the Great Depression," said Eanes.

"We have emerged as a stronger and more responsive business and church agency," said Phil Bontrager, an Ohio business executive who chaired the board during the merger process. "We are optimistic about the future." ❧

❧ Briefly noted

MennoMedia releases first catalogue

The first catalogue representing the newly branded MennoMedia arrived in homes and churches in January. The annual catalogue lists products for three imprints:

- Herald Press—Books, e-books, and CDs.
- Faith & Life Resources—Curriculum, periodicals, hymnals, and church supplies
- Third Way Media—Videos, CDs, web downloads, and other materials

Each imprint offers a variety of new titles this year. For example, Faith & Life Resources has a new Bible study and devotional series for adults called *With the Word*, and a 2012 vacation Bible school curriculum, *Take Me to the Water: God's Love Flows*. Third Way Media recently produced a documentary, *Waging Peace: Muslim and Christian Alternatives*. New Herald Press books include *Go to Church, Change the World* and *Dive: Devotions for Deeper Living*. People are also encouraged to use the website, www.MennoMedia.org for updates.

—Mennonite Church Canada and MennoMedia

❧ Briefly noted

MennoMedia releases Bible school materials

Mennonite Vacation Bible School materials have been available earlier this year. "Typically, our customers use Bible school materials during the summer months," says Mary Ann Weber, MennoMedia's managing editor for curriculum. "But they begin exploring options far in advance." This year's curriculum, "Take Me to the Water: God's Love Flows," includes flexible materials for children from age 4 through Grade 8. The content may be organized for a traditional weekly VBS plan or as a 12-week Sunday school program. "Take Me to the Water" includes several new items including the ability to offer individual mp3 files of songs in addition to a song CD. Also a PowerPoint slide show with the Bible memory verses and a calendar for children to use at home after VBS is over will be available free online. Weber worked with a team from the Virginia Conference of Mennonite Church U.S.A. to develop the materials for VBS 2012. The writers for VBS 2013 are from Manitoba.



Staff change

New PACS professor coming to Grebel this summer

WATERLOO, ONT. — An expert in civil society peacebuilding, Reina Neufeldt will be joining the Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) Department at the University of Waterloo, based at Conrad Grebel University College, beginning July 1. Neufeldt comes to Grebel from American University in Washington, D.C., where her research has focused on the intersection of identity, social change, ethics and peace processes. Her dissertation examined Mennonite identity maintenance and change during three periods of conflict in the 20th century. She received her Ph.D. in international relations in 2005, and holds a master's degree in social psychology. "Neufeldt's service and work in North America and overseas with Mennonite Central Committee, Catholic Relief Services and the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at Notre Dame provide valuable experience in applying the scholarship and teaching of peace," according to Grebel president Susan Schultz Huxman. Neufeldt says she is "delighted to join the PACS team and to help launch the [Master of Peace and Conflict Studies, MPACS] program. The Peace and Conflict Studies undergraduate program at Conrad Grebel was an early pioneer in the field, and I believe MPACS builds on this superb foundation and breaks new, exciting ground."

—Conrad Grebel University College



Neufeldt

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Indigenous youth report to the United Nations

Canada's Aboriginal youth call on the government to meet its commitments in the Convention on the Rights of the Child

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EMILY LOEWEN

Young Voices Editor
TORONTO, ONT.

Six indigenous youth from across Canada travelled to Geneva, Switzerland this month telling the United Nations that Canada needs to end inequalities experienced by aboriginal children. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child will review Canada's compliance with the convention later this year—these youth hope to influence the process and outcome of the evaluation.

The trip was a joint effort between the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and the ecumenical organization KAIROS. Organizers selected six youth as ambassadors: John-Paul Chalykoff, Chelsea Edwards, Helen Knott, Madelynn Slade, Collin Starblanket, and Kendall White. The key points in the am-

pression and marginalization in Canada than young, indigenous people," he said.

Though their concerns include a number of issues, each touches on the level of funding aboriginal programming receives. In education, for example, First Nations' schools receive \$2,000-3,000 less per student than their provincial equivalents, states the report "Honouring our Children." The family caring society and KAIROS submitted "Honouring our Children" to the UN committee in 2011.

The report also suggests that disagreements between provincial and federal agencies have left many indigenous children without proper health care. And an auditor general's report from 2008 stated that the funding models used for child

"There is probably no group that suffers more from oppression and marginalization in Canada than young, indigenous people," Ed Bianchi

bassadors' presentation to the committee relate to unequal opportunities in education, the welfare system and health care.

Inequality between provincial and Aboriginal services creates a justice issue that all Christians should care about, said Ed Bianchi, indigenous rights program coordinator for KAIROS. "This is a classic situation where as people of faith we need to stand up for those who are disadvantaged and marginalized and there is probably no group that suffers more from

welfare were outdated and lead to serious shortfalls for many agencies on reserves.

The ambassadors all come from different backgrounds and have different expectations of what constitutes a successful trip. Kendal White, 17, hopes the presentation will encourage other indigenous youth, including those who have had to leave their communities to attend school.

"I'll consider it a success if there is at least one youth who hears what we're talking about and understands that what they're



The youth and their accompanying family members at the pre-trip press conference in Toronto. Back Row: John-Paul Chalykoff, Leonard Edwards, Wendell Starr, Collin Starblanket, Kendall White, Madelynn Slade, Helen Knott, Front row: Chelsea Edwards and Melinda White.



John-Paul Chalykoff expresses the hope that the UN meeting will encourage action on education for First Nations youth in Canada as Helen Knott and Madelynn Slade listen.



Kendall White, Helen Knott and Madelynn Slade get to know each other before the trip. Most of the youth have never met before.

going through, it isn't right," she said at a press conference in Toronto.

For 24-year-old Jean-Paul Chalykoff voicing their concerns isn't enough, he wants concrete action. "There's been talk for years and years and years and if it's just going to be more talk then I don't see that as a success," he said.

Madelynn Slade hopes that their presence at the UN will direct the committee's questioning of Canada in the fall review. "We will be making a difference in a massive way by just helping the United Nations recognize that Canada has not lived up to its agreements when they ratified the UN [Charter on the Rights of Children]," said 22-year-old Slade.

As a child and youth care student, Slade has studied the UN charter, and her classes

combined with her personal family experience in the child welfare system prompted her to apply for the trip to Geneva. As a teen she was removed from her home and until recently she wasn't willing to talk about that experience. "I was ashamed to state that I'd been taken from my home because there's such a stigma carried with that," she said. But Slade believes that story will have an impact on committee members. "It gives what I say power," she said, "I'm able to speak to this from the pain I've suffered."

The young ambassadors were accompanied to Geneva by Bianchi as well as Cindy Blackstock, executive director of the Caring Society and Irwin Elman, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth in Ontario. ❧

Facebook can help church stay connected

AARON EPP

Special to Young Voices
WINNIPEG, MAN.



Dan Loewen

When a church member suffered a medical emergency in Winnipeg, Man. where his heart stopped for a full 45 minutes, many members of Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., relied on Facebook for updates regarding the young man's condition.

"Through the crisis, our [lead] pastor was able to update her Facebook account, and then we would copy that message and put it on our church [Facebook] wall, which then got sent out to people and they would put it on their Facebook walls," says Dan Loewen, the worship pastor at Level Ground. "You could just see it spreading to thousands of people who would pray for the situation."

Social media are more pervasive than ever. According to a June 2011 article from The Canadian Press, 16.6 million Canadians use Facebook. It is not uncommon to find church leaders using Facebook and Twitter to update congregation members on what is happening in the life of the church.

In 2010, a group of Christians in the United States started The Table Project, a social networking platform designed specifically for churches. Any church can access the resources provided by The Table Project to create an online social network that is customized to fit the needs of the individual church. All of the information that is posted on the site also stays private within the church.

The Table Project aims to promote group interaction, sharing and openness within individual church communities. It is not a Christian alternative to Facebook, but rather, churches can incorporate things like Facebook and Twitter into their Table site if they choose to. Also, a congregation member does not need to be a member of Facebook to be a part of their church's Table page.

Loewen, whose work at Level Ground includes web design, communications and creating videos for the church, has heard of The Table Project but has not implemented it at Level Ground.

“I think it can be helpful, I think it can be a good tool,” the 29-year-old says.

However, Loewen points out that in today’s social media landscape, it is difficult to complete with Facebook. He points to Google+ as an example. When Google’s foray into social media launched last fall, many people created accounts to check it out. Six months later, the buzz has fizzled out and the majority of people have stuck with Facebook for their social networking needs.

For Chris Lenshyn, the associate pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., Facebook is an effective tool to communicate with the church’s youth group.

“The majority of the youth are on Facebook often,” the 31-year-old says. “It’s the primary way that I get in touch with them about stuff. Some things warrant a phone call, some things warrant a Facebook message, and it’s pretty much a guarantee that my [youth] will receive the Facebook message and will respond to it.”

Lenshyn also posts on Mennonite Church Canada’s Facebook page. A question he posted at the end of January about Mennonite theology and masculinity started a 98-comment discussion on the topic.

Lenshyn says he found the discussion helpful, but ultimately, he hopes that any connections made—and discussions

started—on Facebook can continue on in face-to-face conversation.

“I think it’s easier to hear people and get their perspective” in person, he says. “It’s one thing to have a conversation digitally via text or Facebook comments, but it’s a completely other thing to sit with that person in the same room . . . People communicate with more than just words, and it’s hard to communicate that when you’re leaving comments on Facebook pages or even on blogs.”

Loewen agrees that Facebook has its drawbacks, but he has also seen how the site has been a boon to the work that pastors at Level Ground do.

“[Facebook is] kind of like if there was a coffee shop in town that was the place to be and everyone was there, and whenever people were there, they shared things about how their day was going and how their life was,” Loewen muses. “You as a pastor would want to be at that coffee shop. You would want to be at the place where it’s all going down, where it’s all happening.”

“There are pros and cons [to Facebook], but this is a place where so much is happening,” he adds. “How can we as a church not engage that and use that as a tool, and connect with people in the space where they are, rather than expecting them to come to us?” ❧



Lenshyn

Going all the way

Youth discuss commitments through the lens of love, sex and baptism

BY BEN BORNE

Special to Young Voices
WALDHEIM, SASK.

Love, sex, and baptism are seemingly unrelated topics, but according to Irma Fast Dueck, they each involve a deep commitment.

Roughly sixty youth, youth pastors, and youth sponsors gathered on the last weekend of January at Shekinah Retreat Centre near Waldheim, Sask., to hear Fast Dueck, share her insight into what seems like a strange union of topics on the surface. To relate these ideas and shape the weekend’s

conversation, Fast Dueck asked the question during the opening session, “What does it take for us to go the whole distance? To go all the way?”

It is important for the church to talk to youth about commitment because they don’t see it modeled elsewhere, said Anna Rehan, youth minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan. “Everything is about instant gratification, one-night stands, if it feels good do it,” she said in



Borne



Youth gather in the Timber Lodge main worship space at the senior high retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

an email, “adults are leaving relationships for something better . . . or different, they don’t want to have to work at things and it’s easier to start again.”

Fast Dueck had the youth discuss the social issue of co-habitation, and what the implications of co-habitation were for youth and young adults who were considering living together before marriage.

Fast Dueck, associate professor of Practical Theology at Canadian Mennonite University, presented research from the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia that suggested, “the quality of relationships for those who cohabit pre-marriage report poor relationships.”

Two youth from Wildwood Mennonite Church, Emily Hamm and Ian Epp, said Fast Dueck’s message made an impression, “Ads, TV shows, and movies show that you don’t need to be committed for things to work in relationship,” Epp said.

Hamm agrees with Epp, adding that, “There are so many misconceptions, especially on the topic of living together before marriage, that hearing the facts and statistics first is extremely important,” she said. For Silas Friesen discussing commitment is important because of our consumer society that encourages youth to keep looking for something new and better. “We are not of this world, we are of God’s world,” he said in an email, “Let us embrace the everlasting love and commitment of God by committing ourselves, in life or death, sickness or health, to another.”

Another facet of relationships explored this weekend, is the one formed with the church through baptism. One of the key problems that link the issue of co-habitation and baptism together is the issue of low personal commitment. Epp feels that there is a very real problem with youth not committing to things like relationships. He feels that this is an area that youth can work on.

“The reality is, youth need to learn to follow through with things, whether it would be school work, jobs, relationships, and all things that need a certain level of commitment,” Epp said.

Fast Dueck emphasized that while interest is high in Church and Christianity among youth and young adults, the actual

act of committing to the church and becoming a member through the waters of baptism is low.

For Hamm, one of the possible reasons for low commitment in relationships and to the church is that, “commitment is one of the scariest things for teenagers, and they only show their commitment when they are forced to, not when they feel ready to commit.”

Fast Dueck remedied the fear by presenting the idea that what we believe about water, the church believes about baptism. We believe that water cleans and nourishes us. Also we believe water is a force to be reckoned with, it kills us.

“In baptism, you lose your identity. In Christ you are not the definitions you define yourself by. In baptism, we drown those definitions. In baptism, we are all brothers and sisters, that is the miracle of baptism,” she said.

After leaving the retreat, Hamm left with a certainty that baptism was not about having all the answers, “getting baptized doesn’t necessarily mean you know everything, It means you simply want to learn more,” she said.

For Epp, going into the retreat he felt unsure about committing to the church through the sacrament of baptism. After, however, he may be in a different place.

“I am on fence about it. But after I do think about it more, and if I’m at that stage with God, I could be ready to commit,” He said.

By the end of an exhausting, fun-filled, and thoughtful weekend, Fast Dueck presented a strong, unabashed message about baptism, love and sex, and challenged the youth’s future commitment to each other and to the church.

For Hamm, she felt strongly that Fast Dueck put fears to rest regarding the idea of baptism and what it implied. “Irma was great at putting baptism into perspective, and taking the confusion and fear out of it for us,” she said. ☿

Ben Borne is a fourth year student at Canadian Mennonite University studying Biblical and Theological Studies with a minor in Music. He currently attends Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Assembly 2012 keynote speakers announced

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Three biblical scholars and a humorist will be the keynote presenters at this year's Mennonite Church Canada Assembly to be held in Vancouver July 12-15 on the theme, "Dusting off the Bible for the 21st Century." They include Tom Yoder Neufeld, professor of religious studies and peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel University College; Gerald Gerbrandt, president of Canadian Mennonite University; Sheila Klassen-Wiebe, associate professor of New Testament, CMU; and video presentations of actor, director and humorist, Ted Swartz.

Participants will gather at the Sheraton Vancouver Airport where they will have access to an onsite prayer room, a display of Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre materials, and the opportunity to tour an art exhibit of pieces based on Scripture. For the past 18 months, Mennonite Church Canada's Faith and Life Committee (FLC) has been developing a platform to renew focus on biblical interpretation, equipping churches to respond

biblically to the influences and challenges of the 21st century. Study sessions will be enhanced by daily worship.

On Friday, July 13, Mennonite Church British Columbia is hosting a special supper event open to all, including those who are not registered for Assembly. Worship services on Saturday evening (14th) and Sunday morning (15th) are also open to all. In addition, local Assembly planners are developing special activities for youth and young adults.

Registration for Assembly 2012 has begun. All those who plan to attend are encouraged to register by May 15 to save a late registration fee, streamline their arrival, and receive confirmation and other helpful information prior to the Assembly. Registration closes on June 15th. Further details will be posted on www.mennonitechurch.ca/vancouver2012 as they become available. ☘



☘ Upcoming

Call for biblical artwork

Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery is looking for artwork that will "dust off the Bible for the 21st century," at the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Richmond, B.C. July 12-15, 2012. Artists are invited to submit scripture-based artworks for possible inclusion in an assembly exhibition. Each accepted artwork will be placed with a Bible opened to the specific text referenced by the art. Send digital images of submitted artworks, along with an explanation, name of artist, size and medium/media to Ray Dirks at rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca. Artists can submit up to three artworks for consideration.

—Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery

☘ Calendar

British Columbia

March 2: MC B.C. LEADership Conference at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford.

March 3: MC B.C. annual meeting and 75th anniversary celebration and banquet.

March 31, April 1: Lenten Vespers with Abendmusik Choir (31) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford, 8 p.m.; (1) Knox United Church, Vancouver, 8 p.m. Offering to Menno Simons Centre.

April 27-29: Junior youth Impact retreat at Camp Squeah.

May 5: MC B.C. Women's Inspirational Day at Bethel Mennonite Church, Langley.

Saskatchewan

March 11: RJC Guys and Pies fundraising event.

March 23-24: Songfest at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon with Clayton Braybrook conducting; (23) Registration at 6:30 p.m. and session at 7 p.m.; (24) sessions at 9 a.m. and 1 p.m., with a program at 7:30 p.m.

April 24: RJC/CMU choir concert at Osler Mennonite, at 7 p.m.

May 16: RJC choir spring concert, at 7:30 p.m.

May 26: RJC fundraising golf tournament, at Valley Regional Park.

June 22,23: RJC year-end musical performances.

Canadian School of Peacebuilding
AN INSTITUTE OF CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

**JUNE 18-22
and 25-29, 2012**

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csop.cmu.ca | csop@cmu.ca
Phone: 204.487.3300 | Fax: 204.837.7415

Manitoba

March 2: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate gala concert.

March 4: Mennonite Community Orchestra and CMU Choir in concert.

March 8: MCI, Gretna, Open House, supper and musical at 5:30 p.m. Call 204-327-5891 to register.

March 8-10: MCI, Gretna, presents its spring musical, *The Pirates of Penzance*, at Buhler Hall. For tickets, call 204-327-5891.

March 9-11: CMU Peace-it-Together. For more information, visit cmu.ca/pit.

March 10: MCC Manitoba spring banquet with John Janzen, Kennert Giesbrecht and Tina Fehr Kehler speaking about Low German programs. Call Paul at 1-888-622-6337.

March 12-13: CMU presents the Proclaiming the Claims of Christ Lectures.

March 16: CMU campus visit day.

March 17: CMU Friesens Arts Café, featuring Dustin Wiebe playing Balinese Gamelan music.

March 19: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate fundraising banquet, at the Marlborough Hotel, Winnipeg, at 6 p.m.

April 4: Jazz at CMU.

April 12: Winnipeg and area celebration banquet for CMU.

April 21: MCI, Gretna, fundraising supper, "God's Kingdom: Here and Abroad," 6 p.m.

May 30: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Grade 7 to 9 spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church,

Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

May 31: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Grade 10-12 spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Ontario

March 3: Menno Singers performs "Choral Romantics," the centrepiece of which is Dvorak's Mass in D Major, at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, at 8 p.m.

March 7: Grand opening, Mount Forest branch of Mennonite Savings and Credit Union, 116 Main St. N., Mount Forest. For more information call 888-509-6728 or visit www.msuc.com.

March 12,13: Grandparent/Grandchild Days at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. This retreat is for grandparents and their grandchildren in grades 1 to 6. For more information, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

March 15,16: Bechtel Lectures at Conrad Grebel Chapel, at 7:30 p.m. Speaker: John D. Roth. Topics: "The challenge of church unity in Anabaptist tradition" (15); "What has Zurich to do with Addis Ababa? Ecclesial identity in the global Anabaptist church" (16). For more information, visit grebel.uwaterloo.ca/bechtel.

March 16-17: Engaged workshop (affiliated with the Mennonite and Brethren Marriage Encounter), at Living Water Fellowship, New Hamburg.

For more information, or to register, contact Denise Bender at 519-656-2005. Advance registration is required.

March 24: Elmira meat canning fundraising breakfast, at Calvary United Church, St. Jacobs, at 8 a.m. Speaker: John Hillegass, MCC meat canning coordinator. For tickets, call 519-745-8458. Proceeds to MCC Elmira meat canning project.

March 30-April 1: Marriage Encounter weekend at Jericho House, Port Colborne. Contact Marjorie Roth at 519-669-8667 or wmroth@rogers.com.

April 14: MC Eastern Canada youth Bible quizzing; at East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock.

April 16: New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale promotion dinner at Bingeman's, Kitchener, 6:30 p.m. Guest speaker: Phil Enns, returned MCC worker, Indonesia. For tickets call 519-

745-8458

April 27-28: Engaged workshop (affiliated with the Mennonite and Brethren Marriage Encounter), at Milverton Mennonite Fellowship. For more information, or to register, contact Denise Bender at 519-656-2005. Advance registration is required.

April 27-28: MC Eastern Canada annual church gathering; Leamington.

May 6: Pax Christi Chorale's 25th anniversary gala concert featuring Elgar's *The Kingdom*, at Koerner Hall, Toronto, at 3 p.m. With the Youth Choir, orchestra and soloists.

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.

Classifieds**Travel**

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way! Mennonite Heritage Tours 2012: 10-18 day Hotel Tours focussing on Mennonite heritage in Holland, Germany, Poland, Belgium and Switzerland. www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu

Employment Opportunities

CMU CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

CAREER OPPORTUNITY**Administrative Assistant**

CMU Registrar's Office

Full Time | Sixteen month term commencing April 2012

Administrative Coordinator

Menno Simons College

Full Time | Commencing April 2012

More information:

<http://www.cmu.ca/employment.html>

Call 204.487.3300 or Email hrdirector@cmu.ca

Notice

41st Annual General Meeting
Saturday, March 24, 2011
6:00 pm

Toronto United Mennonite Church
1774 Queen Street East, Toronto ON M4L 1G7

Banquet to follow

Tickets to the banquet are free of charge but must be ordered in advance from Toronto United Mennonite Church. Email: secretary@tumc.ca Tel: 416-622-7850

A call for donations will be made at the end of the night.

Open to members of
Mennonite Church Canada congregations.

**CANADIAN
MENNONITE**



ASSOCIATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR, CAMPS WITH MEANING

Mennonite Church Manitoba invites applications for the full-time position of Associate Program Director for Camps with Meaning. This person will give leadership to the summer camping and winter retreat ministry of Camps with Meaning, including camp and retreat promotion; program design; budget preparation and management; and summer staff and volunteer recruitment, training and support.

Qualifications include experience in camping ministry; excellent communication and management skills; and the ability to work well with staff and volunteers of all ages. The successful candidate must demonstrate a personal faith commitment to Jesus Christ, affirm the Camps with Meaning Statement of Faith, and uphold the vision and mission of Mennonite Church Manitoba. A complete job description is available at www.campswithmeaning.org.

Application deadline is Tuesday, March 13th. Send resume in confidence to: Justin Zacharias, Interim Director of Camping Ministries, Camps with Meaning, 200-600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 2J1; e-mail: justin_zacharias@hotmail.com; or phone: 204-362-6386.



Mennonite Central Committee Ontario invites applications for the position of
HUMAN RESOURCES COORDINATOR
Kitchener, Ontario

This position coordinates and manages all Human Resources needs for MCC Ontario.

Qualifications include:

- excellent interpersonal and relational skills
- proficiency in administration
- ability to work collegially in a team environment
- previous MCC service experience preferred
- education and/or experience in human resources work strongly preferred

This position requires a person with a commitment to Christian faith, active church membership and non-violent peace-making.

Please send cover letter and resume to Cath Woolner at cathw@mennonitecc.on.ca by March 13, 2012. Starting date May 6, 2012. Complete job description available at mcc.org/serve/positions/employment.

PROJECT MANAGER

PROJECT MANAGER needed to develop new Sunday school curriculum for children and youth to be published by **MennoMedia and Brethren Press**. Responsibilities also include project oversight, staff recruitment and supervision. Must have experience or education in theology, Christian education, or publishing. Full-time, salaried position for the length of the project, projected to be three to five years. Preference given to candidates who can work out of a MennoMedia or Mennonite Church office. MennoMedia is receiving applications at searchcommittee@mennomedia.org.



NURSING DEPARTMENT CHAIR VACANCY

Eastern Mennonite University announces a full-time Department Chair position in Nursing beginning Fall 2013. Ph.D. in nursing or other terminal degree required. Experience in nursing education. Demonstrated leadership qualities with excellent interpersonal skills. We are seeking a dynamic mission-driven faith-based nursing leader for the department of nursing, which includes the traditional Baccalaureate Program, RN-BSN Adult Degree Program (Virginia & Lancaster, PA), and the MSN in Leadership and Management. Additional responsibilities include facilitating compliance with and reporting to accreditation agencies. Represents nursing on Undergraduate Council and reports to the Undergraduate Dean.

Twelve-month contract, salary determined by education and experience. Eastern Mennonite University uses an extended contract system. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial acceptable), and three reference letters to Nancy R. Heisey, Vice President & Undergraduate Academic Dean, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA 22802 or ugdean@emu.edu. Applicants will be acknowledged by letter or email. Review begins immediately. Applicants will be asked to respond to questions specific to EMU's mission after the initial inquiry. EMU reserves the right to fill the position at any time or keep the position open. AAEO employer. We seek applicants who bring gender, ethnic, and cultural diversity.

www.emu.edu

ASSOCIATE PASTOR PEACE MENNONITE CHURCH RICHMOND, BC

Peace Mennonite Church invites applications for the full-time position of **Associate Pastor**.

This position places major focus on youth ministry and family ministries, along with a minor focus on general congregational ministry.

Applicants should have a relevant degree in Christian ministry, an understanding of contemporary Anabaptist theology, and an interest and ability to relate to young people.

Please send resumes either by mail to: The Search Committee, Peace Mennonite Church, 11571 Daniels Rd., Richmond, BC V6X 1M7, or by e-mail to office@peacemennonite.ca.



**Urgent senior line management
service opportunity:**
Area Director for
Europe and Middle East

mcc.org/serve/positions/volunteer



(MCC PHOTO/DAN LEONARD)

Halima (last name unknown) uses water from one of the MCC-supported water projects in Ethiopia. She and her family fled from Mogadishu, Somalia, to avoid conflict and violence.

Not going home any time soon

Somalis fleeing famine and political instability could remain refugees for years

BY LINDA ESPENSHADE
Mennonite Central Committee

When MCC representative Dan Leonard visited Dollo Ado refugee camp in late December, he was struck by the reality that the 150,000 Somali refugees who found safety and food in Ethiopia were not going home any time soon. Somali refugees have been streaming out of their country since last summer to escape famine and political instability.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has committed \$5.5 million in response to the drought and food crisis that has been gradually growing in East Africa since 2010 as two poor rainy seasons left subsistence farmers and pastoralists with little food, livestock or money.

In Dollo Ado, located in the southeastern tip of Ethiopia, Leonard said, the refugees “can’t go back to Somalia, not just because

they have no livestock or land, but because of the violence and instability. At this point, they can’t leave the camps for other cities in Ethiopia, either.”

“I fear for them,” said Leonard, who with his spouse Karin Kliewer, also an MCC representative, live in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. “Donor money will dry up when this is off the headlines, but the need is not going away.” Kliewer and Leonard are from Winnipeg, Man.

With \$1.1 million, MCC is working to respond to needs for water, sanitation and skills training. MCC funding purchases supplies needed to pump, hold and deliver well water for about 70,000 people. In addition, MCC is supporting creation of latrines and education about sanitation.

Leonard saw signs of hope, even in

Dollo Ado, where many people have arrived traumatized and vulnerable.

“When you travel through the camp you don’t just see pain. You see children playing soccer and families laughing. Many people traveled with neighbours from Somalia and so you see genuine community and old friends.

“And when you see the smile on the face of a young girl getting water at water points that you are supporting and she tells you that one of the hardest things she is facing is the adjustment to new food, you can’t help but smile in return.

“I do truly hope that the hardest thing she faces in this camp is tasteless food,” Leonard said. “These young women have a hard life, but they can also be saints among us.” ❧