



# CANADIAN MENNONITE

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## Congo Celebration

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## EDITORIAL

## Rejoice with the Congolese

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

It is much too easy in these days of self-examination as Anabaptist Christians in the 21st century to punish ourselves for colossal blunders when “spreading the gospel” here and around the world in the last century.

Such could be the case as we celebrate, with what is the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and its predecessors, 100 years of our mission efforts on the African sub-continent and what that work has spawned—the Communauté Mennonite au Congo or CMCO (Mennonite Community in Congo), see our major feature, p. 4.

Like our enmeshment in the political and cultural ethos of the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a colonial power in North America when we considered the indigenous peoples “savages” who needed redemption from their satanic ways, we not only thought, but labelled the people of Africa “pagans” who were to be rescued from their witchcraft and magic rather than recognize this as their authentic spirituality.

Today, we know better, of course, and are rightfully repenting of our complicity in these very wrong approaches to persons different from us. We, along with the Catholic Church, have done a 360-degree turn and in some cases, are actually tapping into the “spirituality” of these indigenous peoples as a way of refurbishing what some of us see as a decadent Christianity in Western culture.

In his review of a book on African

spirituality, my college classmate and former Mennonite Central Committee worker who now calls himself a “retired Mennonite ecumenical worker in Nairobi, Kenya,” Harold Miller, quotes Pope Nicholas V “as authorizing Alfonso V of Portugal to ‘reduce any pagans and any other unbelievers’ to perpetual slavery and, later in another bull, to exercise dominion over discovered lands during the Age of Discovery.”



That was in 1452, but by October, 2009, six centuries later, Pope Benedict XVI declared: “The absolute Lordship of God is one of the salient and unifying features of the African culture. This sense of God makes Africa the repository of an inestimable treasure for the whole world, an enormous spiritual lung for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope.”

To be clear, this reversal is not to be considered universalism or pantheism, but rather a recognition, first, that as Christians we do not have an exclusive franchise on God’s dealings with humankind, and secondly, to partner with faith communities such as Islam and other eastern religions to find commonalities in our confessions and work together for peace and justice in overcoming the violence so debilitating to God’s creation. We do not have to give up our core beliefs to do that.

And so, in this context we should set aside our guilt and shame for the sins of the past, and celebrate with our

sisters and brothers in the Mennonite Community of Congo with equal enthusiasm. After all, they are not overlooking our messianic blunders but are graciously integrating them into their joy of this occasion.

In his opening address, writes Lynda Hollinger-Janzen, “the CMCO president, Adolphe Komuesa Kalunga, named weaknesses and failures in the missionary approach of those who came to Congo—paternalism, a heavy focus on the spiritual with less concern for conditions that oppressed the Congolese people, and a reluctance to trust the Congolese church with financial management.”

But in his concluding address Konuesa said: “I salute those missionaries who gave of their youth and their lives for our country. I also render homage to their descendants who are still laboring for the welfare of our church. Let all of them know how grateful we are.”

How gracious and forgiving!

We should rejoice that the Mennonite Community of Congo is now almost as large in numbers and congregations as are we in the US/Canada—110,000 members, 798 congregations, 95 schools and 7 hospitals, compared to 131,750 members and 1,130 congregations (Mennonite Church USA/Canada combined) and to know that the Congo did grasp the social component of the gospel by establishing schools and hospitals in addition to churches.

### Religion News Service added

Canadian Mennonite has added Religion News Service based in Westerville, Ohio, to its news sources for online articles. RNS, combined with Ecumenical News International, now gives more depth and breadth to religious happenings on both a global and US scale. Please tap into this new resource online; stories are updated daily.

### ABOUT THE COVER:

Members of *La Chorale Grand Tam-Tam* (Big Drum Choir) dance their way to the Kalonda Mennonite Church during graduation ceremonies of Kalonda Bible Institute. This choir walked nearly 100 miles to participate in the centennial celebrations of the *Communauté Mennonite au Congo* (Mennonite Community in Congo) July 16-22, 2012.

PHOTO BY JAMES KRABILL

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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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# Congolese Mennonites celebrate 100 years of God's faithfulness

BY LYNDA HOLLINGER-JANZEN

Meetinghouse

TSHIKAPA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

PHOTO BY JAMES KRABILL.



*Adolphe Komuesa Kalunga,  
CMCO President.*

*Today, although some of the mission station buildings have crumbled into disrepair, the church has thrived, growing to include 110,000 members, 798 congregations, 95 schools and 7 hospitals.*

**F**ifty-some young musicians walked nearly 100 miles carrying their drums, luggage and a few babies to attend the centennial celebration of *Communauté Mennonite au Congo*—CMCO (Mennonite Community in Congo), July 16-22. For a week, the choir members from Djoko Punda, one of the first Mennonite mission stations in this central African country, travelled along rugged paths through forests and savannas, crossing rivers on make-shift bridges and spending nights in school rooms.

*Chorale Grand Tam-Tam* (Big Drum Chorale) arrived in Tshikapa, the headquarters of this Mennonite denomination, to lead Mennonites from three continents in praise for “100 years of evangelization and cultural encounters,” the CMCO tagline for the occasion.

In his opening address, the CMCO president, Adolphe Komuesa Kalunga, named weaknesses and failures in the missionary approach of those who came to Congo through Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and its predecessor agencies in his historical overview of Mennonite history in Congo—paternalism, a heavy focus on the spiritual with less concern for conditions that oppressed the Congolese people, and a reluctance to trust the Congolese church with financial management.

However, Komuesa also acknowledged with gratitude these same missionaries, hundreds of them, who were faithful to God's call to share the good news Jesus—braving sickness, a harsh climate, difficult living conditions and political instability. Komuesa asked the gathered assembly to stand for a moment of silence to remember all the Mennonites who sacrificed their lives in obedience to Christ's call.

In his concluding address, Komuesa said, “I salute those missionaries who gave of their youth and their

## Congolese Soccer and Song

BY LYNDA HOLLINGER-JANZEN

Meetinghouse

NYANGA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

When a Belgian school inspector needed to recruit singers for the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels, he entrusted the task to two missionary women, one of whom was Lodema Short. Short served from 1947-1981 with Congo Inland Mission, now Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM). Her musical abilities, her organizational skills and her relationships with hundreds of students enabled her to choose, and then chaperone, the nine young men who performed as the Happy Singers in Belgium.

A nephew, Dwight Short of Idlewild Baptist Church in Lutz, Florida, joined the AIMM delegation that travelled to Congo July 12-29, 2012, primarily because he wanted to learn more about his famous aunt. He was able to videotape 27 interviews, four with Happy Singer members, in addition to having conversation with many of Lodema Short's students, many of whom are pastors.

"She would love to know that so many of her students have ended up in the ministry," Short said. He hopes to write a book to share his aunt's story beyond the family circle.



PHOTO BY TRISHA HANDRICH

*Robert Irundu Mutundu, National Youth President for Communauté Mennonite au Congo—CMCO (Mennonite Community in Congo), and Dwight Short shake hands as they plan for future evangelism and sports clinics.*

Short has another passion—evangelism through sports. Although the equipment he packed was bogged down by slow shipping throughout his entire stay in Congo, the four soccer balls brought by other delegation members attracted about 400 kids for a soccer clinic in Tshikapa. ☘

lives for our country. I also render homage to their descendants who are still laboring for the welfare of our church. Let all of them know how grateful we are."

Missionary accomplishments were only possible because Congolese people worked hand-in-hand with their brothers and sisters from the North America, Komuesa said, in congratulation to his

church for their solidarity. Today, CMCO is a member of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission that brings together eight partners, including Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

Approximately 400 participants gathered for the final worship service on Sunday, July 22. Many of them held candles lighted in celebration of CMCO's birthday.

"Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in the second century that begins today, take care of our church," was Komuesa's birthday wish, as the candles were extinguished as a symbol of the end of CMCO's first centennial anniversary.

During the week-long celebration, CMCO's story was communicated in many forms—through original songs in the tradition of *griots* (singer-historians), through a book of short biographies of early Congolese Mennonites, through a PowerPoint program presented by François Tshidimu Mukendi, a Mennonite pastor and historian, and through many examples in sermons and testimonies.

"CMCO has been doing God's work for 100 years starting in 1912," sang the *Chorale Evangélique Mennonite de Dibumba* (Evangelical Mennonite Choir of Dibumba). "Today, we are here to thank God. Now, we are many Mennonites. May we work in unity to spread the good news of Jesus." In succeeding verses, the choir went on to describe how eight mission stations were built.

Today, although some of the mission



PHOTO BY JAMES KRABILL

*The Chorale Grand Tam-Tam (Big Drum Choir) walked nearly 100 miles to participate in the centennial celebrations of the Communauté Mennonite au Congo (Mennonite Community in Congo) July 16-22.*

station buildings have crumbled into disrepair, the church has thrived, growing to include 110,000 members, 798 congregations, 95 schools and 7 hospitals, according to a conference given by Anastasie Tshimbila, a professor at the Mennonite Bible institute in Kalonda, about five miles from Tshikapa.

The most passionate debate at the celebration centered on the decision to ordain women. Of the three Mennonite denominations in Congo, CMCO was the only one still denying ordination to women. *La Communauté des*

*Frères Mennonites au Congo* (the Mennonite Brethren Church) ordained its first woman pastor in 2000. *Communauté Évangélique Mennonite* (the Evangelical Mennonite Church) was preparing to ordain its first woman pastor a few days after the end of CMCO's centennial celebration.

Komuesa was given the mandate for his second six-year term as CMCO president just hours before the centennial festivities began, as the annual general assembly concluded around 2 a.m. on July 15. Among Komuesa's accomplishments in his first tenure was the construction of a welcome centre, which includes a large conference room, a dining room and kitchen, and three dormitory blocks. The new facilities enabled CMCO to receive 30 delegates from three continents representing eight Mennonite agencies (see sidebar). Because the center is within walking distance from the airport, CMCO hopes that it can be used as a guest house to generate income for the church.

The welcome centre was a collaborative effort that included Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, CMCO, building teams from Mennonite Church USA congregations and Arnold Harder, who traveled to Congo four times for a total of six months of volunteer service to facilitate the construction process.

Executive coordinator of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, Rod Hollinger-Janzen, coordinated the international

## International agencies represented at the centennial celebration

- Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission
- Fellowship of Evangelical Churches
- Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Church USA
- Christian Witness, Mennonite Church Canada
- Mennonite World Conference
- Mennonite Central Committee
- Francophone Network (serving the global French-speaking Anabaptist community)

component of the Congolese anniversary event. He said that the experience communicated how profound relationships within the body of Christ can be. He was moved by the affirmation that choirs from different ethnic groups—Tshokwe, Lulua and Pende—gave each other. People, who had been feuding a few decades ago, were now singing about being brothers and sisters.

"This was one way the centennial celebration became an avenue for CMCO members to reaffirm their unity in Christ, and accept their ethnic diversity as a positive and creative reality," Hollinger-Janzen said. He said that CMCO leaders and members repeatedly expressed the desire to continue to nurture fraternal relationships and to partner with the church conferences and agencies which had worked together to plant Mennonite churches in Congo. ❧

*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen is a writer for Mennonite Mission Network of Mennonite Church USA.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF LYNDA HOLLINGER-JANZEN



**Ray Milhous, Sylvain Mudiandambu and Ruth Milhous stand outside the Kalonda Hospital, near Tshikapa, Democratic Republic of Congo, where they worked together 50 years ago. In 1962, newlyweds Ray and Ruth Milhous were among the first workers placed by MCC in Congo where they helped establish a Mennonite mission hospital in a zone of inter-ethnic conflict. Ray, as the first medical director, and Ruth, as the organizer of the maternity and pharmacy, helped set the tone of the hospital for the years to come. The Milhous couple celebrated their golden wedding anniversary with a three-week visit to Congo to celebrate 100 years of Mennonite presence there. Among those who greeted them warmly was Mudiandambu, a nurse who re-set Ray Milhous's shoulder after a bicycle accident nearly 50 years ago.**

## Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission begun 100 years ago

Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission

**T**he fact that the Africa inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM), formerly known as Congo Inland Mission,

is celebrating its centennial is an amazing tribute to the way God honoured the faith of a generation of pioneering

missionaries.

It was in January 1912 that a small inter-Mennonite mission board was created in the hamlet of Meadows, Illinois, and named the Congo Inland Mission. Before year's end the first trio of Mennonite missionaries (Lawrence/Rose B. Haigh and Alvin Stevenson) stood on the banks of the Kasai River in the south central region of the Belgian Congo, daring to believe that with God's help they would be able to plant a Mennonite Church in that forbidding setting.

Living in tents they began to clear brush, fell trees and create their first simple shelters while struggling to become conversant in Tshiluba, the language of the local people. It is a sobering footnote of history that before that year's end, Alvin Stevenson already lay in an African grave, leaving a widow and three small children behind in central Illinois.

In a couple of years the remaining duo was joined by half a dozen new recruits. By this time the inter-Protestant mission community of the Congo had allotted to them an area between the Kasai and Kwilu Rivers about the size of the State of Illinois which was home to six major tribes with four or five more overlapping around the edges. They would be the only evangelical witnesses in that entire region.

Exhibiting incredible vision and faith, together they dared to dream about what could be and set some clear goals and guidelines for their work. They decided that, as the Lord provided personnel, they would establish a resident missionary presence within each of the tribal groups in their area. Once established, the missionaries would learn the local tribal language so as to tell them about Jesus in their mother tongue. Everywhere they would offer children the opportunity to cross the threshold of literacy by providing schools and educational materials in their own tongue.

They set the goal of ministering both to the spiritual and physical needs of the people around them. Whenever possible they provided Scriptures for each tribal group in their own language.

In spite of bitter histories of bloody conflict between some of the tribal groups of the area, they agreed that

they could settle for nothing other than one inter-tribal Mennonite church. In the broad sweep of things, it would be Africans who would be the primary evangelists and planters of churches. They also agreed to work with other Protestant Missions working in the Congo in whatever ways were feasible and mutually beneficial.

As word of this fledgling inter-Mennonite venture in mission and service in Africa spread, gradually other Mennonite Churches of North America became partners. By the 1960s there were six different groups represented around the table at board meetings planning and praying for what had become their joint venture in mission in Africa. (They were the Evangelical Mennonite Church/US, The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, the General Conference Mennonite Church, the Mennonite Brethren, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference/Can and the Evangelical Mennonite Missions Church/Can.)

There are today three autonomous Mennonite Conferences in the Congo. Two have stemmed directly from the work of AIMM; a third has indirect ties. This centennial year the three conferences together count in excess of 220,000 members.

The oldest Congo Church, *Communauté Mennonite au Congo*—CMCO (Mennonite Community in Congo), chose the week of July 16-22 as their official week of centennial celebration. Nearly 30 people travelled from the U.S., Canada and Europe to be present for the festivities. A week later a smaller group journeyed further to Mbuji Mayi, the headquarters of the second church (CEM), for additional commemoration.

A highlight of the Congo festivities was the official release of a collection of 100 stories researched and written by Africans about Africans of former days when first witnesses to the gospel were frequently rebuffed and menaced by hostile village populations. The stories comprise not only a tribute to earlier generations who shoulder today's church leadership, but also pose a standard of devotion and commitment by which to gauge ongoing ministry in today's Congo. They further serve as a reminder of that ancient wisdom: "It is not by might nor by power but by my Spirit . . . saith the Lord."

AIMM has set the month of September as a time for centennial celebrations in North America. Of the eight dates and venues, one is in Canada in Landmark, Man. on Sept. 28. ❧

### /// For discussion

1. What anniversary celebrations has your congregation participated in? How are these celebrations similar to or different from the one held in the Democratic Republic of Congo this summer? What is the value of these celebrations?
2. Why do you think missionaries 100 years ago had such a strong motivation to share the good news of Jesus in difficult places? Do our churches still have that same missionary spirit? Do you think enthusiasm for missions comes from within, or is it more of a gift from the Holy Spirit? What can we learn from the churches in the Congo?
3. The Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission article describes the goals and guidelines of the early mission work in the Congo. How does this approach compare to the work of the apostle Paul in the first century? If you were planning a mission project, which of these guidelines would you adopt?
4. What connections does your congregation have with the Mennonite churches in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo? How might such connections be strengthened? How important is it to build relationships with Christians on the other side of the world? What do you think will happen to the Mennonite churches in the Congo in the next 100 years?

## 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.*

## ✉ Can church conflict find reconciliation?

**THIS LETTER HAS** been in my mind and heart for awhile, waiting for some response to the article, "The Ministry of War: When office conflict comes to an impasse" by Rachel Bergen (May 2, 2011, page 4).

I want to hope that it did spark a dialogue somewhere and that it proved to be a blessing. The article lifted out three scenarios of conflict, one about a church pastor. What hurts is that the conflict was not resolved at the time of the article. The author touches on the value of mediation but reports that it is not "particularly helpful." She adds that the offices of MC Canada can help but only in a limited way. It reminds me of a process I have experienced in the workplace—keep me informed but don't get me involved.

For those affected by conflict, the option to resort to the public courts is frowned upon, so in the end we have a stalemate. As noted in the article, the person continues to suffer. There appears to be no willing and responsible community that can be called on to advocate unless we consider the scriptures offering the solution, but who is going to blink first.

Friends, I am convinced that our failure to consider a way through these scenarios truly speaks ill of us as a people of faith. I pray that the concept of "Being a Faithful Church" will seek to not only address the questions raised at the end of the article, but to also open up a conversation to seek reconciliation with those individuals and communities who are still hurting from the conflicts named.

**KEN KEHLER, RICHMOND, B.C.**

## ✉ Caution on marriage teaching

**IN HER "SHOULD I live with my boyfriend?"** column (June 25), Melissa Miller says she preaches "the ancient wisdom that sex is reserved for marriage, as ordained by God." I think we need to be cautious before claiming God has ordained what we believe and teach.

When the Bible was written, virginity before marriage was for females only. Men wanted virgin brides to ensure that any child in her womb was his. To this end, sequestration of women was widespread and legal even in modern England. Authorities averted their eyes from male behavior.

As late as the seventeenth century, the betrothal was the key step in marriage formation. At this event the parents of the bride and groom established the size of the property to be exchanged, and avowed the bride's virginity. In some aspects they were now married and could begin to live together. According to Matthew, this is how Mary and Joseph married. The book of Ruth details her marriage with Boaz and it tells us that they slept together before she became his wife. The wealthy followed the betrothal with wedding celebrations, which served to broadcast the marriage publicly. The humble folk marked the beginning of marriage with an exchange of promises and gifts at home without a priest. The community considered a couple married because they lived together as husband and wife.

Paul's words on marriage range from outright rejecting it to his inspiring vision of marriage modeled on Jesus' love for the church. By the fourth century the church asserted that virgins were the most moral and the only ones fit to conduct the sacraments. It emphasized that sex before the wedding was sin but that the priest's blessing at the wedding ceremony sanctified the sexual activity of the married couple. Both Protestant and Catholic authorities stressed the need for a church wedding and censured woman seen to be pregnant too soon after the wedding. The church's campaign to make its priests central to a wedding was partially successful, although at the cost of continuing the double standard requiring a single pregnant woman to apologize before the congregation, but a nameless father went free.

The twentieth century saw the collapse of the universal ideal of lifelong marriage. At the same time, those who do wed desire love, affection, and mutual fidelity in marriage. Meeting these goals is not easy which suggests there is still plenty the church can do today to understand and model the ideals of intimate companionship.

**JOHN KLASSEN, LANGLEY, B.C.**

*John Klassen is Professor emeritus, Dept. of History, Trinity Western University, Langley, B.C.*



## ✉ Reading Canadian Mennonite is provocative

**YESTERDAY I READ** *The Mennonite*. Today I read the July 30 *Canadian Mennonite*. Quite a feast. I won't elaborate on any comparisons. As Walter Klaassen puts it in his letter, you do excel in "the shaping of a specifically Christian conscience" with a Mennonite voice.

I am one for whom it has taken a long time to appreciate the values in separating the conferences between Canada and the U.S., but your excellent reporting on the Vancouver convention finally suggests to me that separation is a plus. As the writer of Hebrews (10:24) says, we ought to "provoke one another to love and good deeds."

Reading each issue of the *Canadian Mennonite* has

been provocative. The intense Bible study on "Being a Faithful Church" surely deepened the common faith and life. The joint project with First Nation representatives inspired me as has Jonathan Seiling's series of articles on the Mennonite response to the War of 1812. Will Braun's commentary on the chill between Ottawa and church agencies also caught this former MCCer's attention.

Thanks for this and many other issues of *Canadian Mennonite*. I hope many others south of the border are also "provoked to love and good deeds" by the life and witness of the church in Canada.

**JOHN A. LAPP, GOSHEN, IND.**

*John A. Lapp is executive secretary emeritus of MCC Binational.*

### FROM OUR LEADERS

# Calling and praying for our church leaders

ANDREW REESOR-MCDOWELL

**W**hen Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2012 drew to a close, so did my four-year term as Moderator of Mennonite Church Canada.

I accepted the call to serve as Moderator when I understood that the nominations committee had the support of the area church leaders, and were able to outline why my gifts matched the needs at that time. After consultation with family, church friends, and church leaders, I felt that this was a calling of the church and of God to serve in this role. My observations of Mennonite church history are that church leaders (pastors, scholars and volunteers) usually accept the request to serve, not because they seek the role or feel confident in their abilities, but because the calling of God through the church is a compelling and sacred calling.

In my daily prayers I paraphrased young King Solomon's response to God's call as recorded in 2 Chronicles 1:7: "Lord

you have called me to a leadership role in Mennonite Church Canada. Give me, and the General Board, the wisdom and knowledge needed to lead this people."

Periodically, people would say that they were praying for me, prompting emotions of gratitude to surface. I believe that the prayers of the church are needed, and they guide our leaders. When David Martin accepted the calling to serve as the Executive Minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada he asked that each person pray for him and MCEC daily. I made a commitment to honour his request, and I kept it.

My daily time of Bible reading, prayer and reflection includes prayer for our pastor(s) and congregational leadership team, the area church staff and Executive Board, Mennonite Church Canada staff, Councils and General Board, and Mennonite World Conference leaders. In addition I pray for the leaders of our church related organizations. It is amazing to me the number of people who give generously and vulnerably of their gifts to

support the work of the church as it does Kingdom work.

At Mennonite Church Assembly 2012 in Vancouver, we called Hilda Hildebrand to serve as our Moderator and Aldred Neufeld to serve as Assistant Moderator. Along with Willard Metzger, Executive Director, this team will give leadership on the General Board to the many important parts of our church body—including Witness, Formation and Church Engagement and the more than 25 church relationships we have with related organizations—and guide the work of our national church. I have great confidence in their gifts and abilities to lead us at this time.

All parts of the church need our prayers. Our prayers support our leaders and they change us. Thank you for praying for church leaders locally, and in Area Churches, Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite World Conference. I am very grateful for your prayers for me over the past four years for the "wisdom and knowledge to lead the church." I needed it in the role of Moderator. I encourage you to let Hilda, Aldred and Willard and other church leaders know you are praying for them too.

*Andrew Reesor-McDowell was on the General Board for 12 years, first as Moderator of MCEC then as the General Board representative to the MWC General Council, and the last four years as Moderator of Mennonite Church Canada.*



## ✉ Dismayed with church's LGBT statement

I WAS HEARTENED to read about the participation of a group of MC Manitoba congregants in the Winnipeg pride parade ("We're Sorry," July 9). This is surely an important step forward, not only because it demonstrates a growing openness in many parts of the church towards LGBT people, but also because it acknowledges the historical role the Mennonite church has played in promoting discrimination on the basis of

sexual orientation and gender identity.

I was dismayed, however, to read statements from church leaders that, while no doubt made in good faith, perpetuate problematic assumptions about the church's relationship with LGBT members. The first is the fallacy that the church can be "welcoming" of LGBT members without being "affirming." Presumably this means LGBT people may join the church and participate in worship, but may not do a variety of things straight people can do, such as become a pastor, get married, or volunteer abroad

## FAMILY TIES

# September sanity

MELISSA MILLER

**O**n a deliciously warm summer afternoon in the middle of August, I greeted my neighbour who is a teacher. We exchanged a few pleasantries and then I began to ask him about the coming school year. "Don't even start down that direction," he warned, holding up his hand palm-out, like a nonverbal stop sign. We returned to the more pleasant topics of bike rides, barbecues and beaches, pushing the taboo subject of September to the horizon, where it pulsed slightly like a small yet portentous thunder cloud.

September bounces us back into the routine, a yearly start-up that can be a stimulating return to routine or a jarring jolt. Whether we plan ahead with a mixture of foresight and anxiety, or cling to denial as long as we can, September will come, with its demands and opportunities as surely as harvest follows seeding. This is especially true for those connected to schools, colleges and universities—teachers and professors, support staff and of course, students and their family members.

Church workers also find themselves swinging into higher gear as the lighter services of summer give way to more complex structure and program. (A few years ago, I met a colleague for lunch in September, a man with some 20 years of pastoral experience. He opened our

conversation by wailing about his crazy work load. "I'm an organized person!" he exclaimed. "And every September I hit this same wall, with church stuff being way out of control." Given my own September craziness, I found his remarks to be comforting.)

Some of us approach September eagerly, brimming in hopeful anticipation of what lies ahead. Others of us settle



*Let's carry slivers of summer with us into autumn, sliding it into the pockets of our days and nights like a sun-warmed stone ...*

into the traces wearily, like a seasoned work horse shouldering its yoke knowing well the weight of its burden. Some of us love routine and welcome its stabilizing structure. Others function better in open-ended time frames and chafe under the regime of a daily schedule that stretches months into the future.

Still, the wisdom of the Bible tells us that there are times and seasons, and that every time, including September, has its purpose under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1) As we enter September, let's first of all offer up prayers for those most affected by fall routines. Let's remember to encourage and affirm teachers and students, pastors and Christian Education directors. If we're in a supportive role,

let's take steps to walk alongside of our student, teacher or church worker. One woman sends her teacher husband out the door each morning for two weeks with a lovingly packed lunch, to ease him into the intensity of school start-up.

When my son was young, he struggled each September with the change in routine and demands. After a few years, I learned to keep my schedule and our home life relaxed and calm for those first weeks, offering him an oasis of peace to balance the school pressures.

Finally, in whatever role we find ourselves this September, let's also carry slivers of summer space with us into autumn, sliding it into the pockets of our

days and nights like a sun-warmed stone picked up on a favourite beach. Slivers like an afternoon bike ride on a nature path; revelling in the last juicy vine-ripened tomato; a supper that becomes a picnic; gazing in wonder at starry skies. Again, the Bible wisely advises, "I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil." (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13)

*Melissa Miller (familyties@mts.net) lives in Winnipeg where she works as a pastor and counsellor. Her family ties include that of daughter, sister, wife, mother and friend.*

with MCC (at least, should they choose to enter into relationships, as do most straight parishioners).

I spent my teenage years in a congregation with a large Hispanic minority. Hispanic members participated fully in all aspects of church life, both in the congregation and the broader church. Had Hispanic members been “welcomed” into the church but forbidden from becoming pastors, getting married in the church, or volunteering abroad with MCC, I somehow doubt they would have felt very welcome at all. And yet this is exactly the scenario in which LGBT members find themselves in congregations that are “welcoming” but not “affirming.”

The second problematic argument expressed was

that both those fighting for full LGBT rights in the church and those opposed to such rights ought to admit that they might be wrong. Interestingly, I have not recently heard calls for us to admit doubts about our opposition to slavery, reconsider the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in our society, or grant that we are unsure if maybe Apartheid was a good thing after all, and I suspect this is not a coincidence.

We all recognize that on questions of fundamental human rights, there is little room for compromise. It is high time the Mennonite church acknowledged that the rights of its LGBT members are not a matter for negotiation.

ALEX HUNSBERGER, WATERLOO, ONT.

## GOD, MONEY, ME

# Impulsive generosity

BY KEVIN DAVIDSON

In his book *Money, Sex and Power*, Richard Foster tells this story: “A doctor once asked a very wealthy patient, ‘What on earth are you going to do with all of that money?’ The patient replied, a bit reluctantly, ‘Just worry about it, I suppose.’ The doctor went on, ‘Do you get that much pleasure out of worrying about it?’ ‘No,’ replied the patient, ‘but I get such terror when I think of giving some of it to somebody else.’”

Times haven’t changed. Being generous, especially with money, isn’t easy. Would you believe that I, too, struggle with giving money to others? Just ask my wife. We stopped at Starbucks one warm, beautiful afternoon and were in line waiting to place our order. Knowing what I wanted, I ordered and paid for it out of my weekly spending money and then moved along to wait for my drink. Looking back, there was my lovely wife placing her order and the first thought in my mind was, “She has her own weekly spending money, she can pay for it herself!” Yes, she’s still married to me.

As I think back over the years, I realize how often my family and I have been the recipients of someone else’s generosity. Or should I say, impulsive generosity. I attended Capernwray Bible School in

New Zealand. My friends and I would often travel on weekends and semester breaks to tour the country. Many times we crashed overnight at people’s homes and woke up to a delicious breakfast. We didn’t know these people personally, but they had generously offered hospitality on the basis of a last-minute phone call from one of our professors.

I was in the Tim Horton’s drive-through and when I got to the window to pay for my order, the attendant told me there was no charge. The previous customer had paid for it.

My family and I attended an auction and my 4-year-old son was introducing himself to everyone as Peter Parker (aka Spiderman). There was a Spiderman sheet set up for auction and another couple noticed my son’s interest in it. The following week when I arrived at my office, there was the sheet set. This same couple had bought it with the highest bid. My son has been sleeping with it ever since.

Jesus tells a similar story in Luke 10:33-35: “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took

care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’”

About.com defines impulsive behaviour as “behaviours that occur quickly without control, planning or consideration of the consequences of that behavior.”

However, we can truly experience the joy of impulsive generosity when we plan for it. First of all by acting our wage. Living within our means and learning to be content with what we’ve been given in today’s world is a tricky business. Second, building capacity within our means. Reducing and/or eliminating expenditures we can learn to live without, affords us greater capacity for generosity. And third, listening and watching for the Lord’s leading. God opens many doors for impulsive generosity. Are we ready, willing and able to walk through it?

Through my work at Mennonite Foundation of Canada, I have been witness to, and a participant in, these acts of impulsive generosity and I can tell you firsthand that the model works, time after time. Experience joy. Plan to be generous. Then act impulsively. Experience joy...

*Kevin Davidson is a stewardship consultant at the Calgary office of Mennonite Foundation of Canada. For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit [www.mennofoundation.ca](http://www.mennofoundation.ca).*



## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

## Shedding Sola Scriptura

BY TROY WATSON

I grew up in a church where everything was painted “Sola Scriptura.” I’m not referring to some chic Greco-Roman inspired hue from Benjamin Moore, but a Latin phrase meaning “Scripture Alone” which coloured the way we saw everything under the sun. “Sola Scriptura” was the primary pillar and doctrinal gatekeeper of Protestant faith. Scripture alone, accepted by faith alone, was the ultimate authority in all matters for us Baptist fundamentalists, whether at church, work, home, or school, with occasional exemptions for church hockey leagues and annual business meetings. Although I believe the world would probably be a better place if we adhered to a Biblical authority commanding us to love our enemies, serve the poor, and be slow to anger, I have many problems with the “Sola Scriptura” philosophy.

First of all, it isn’t realistic. No individual, congregation or denomination uses Scripture alone to understand God and spiritual truth, let alone good parenting skills and financial investments. And when we interact with the Bible, we engage many additional resources besides Scripture, including our experiences, beliefs, biases, expectations, education, reason, and normalization. We see through the lens of our personal worldviews causing us to perceive things as we are, rather than as they are.

No matter how educated, enlightened or earnest, no one approaches Biblical texts purely and objectively. We are always a factor that influences the outcome of the interpretative process. This explains why there are so many divergent interpretations by equally committed and intelligent



Christian communities on passages about signs and wonders, pacifism, sexuality, and money—to name a few.

My second major problem with “Sola Scriptura” is that it contradicts the way of Jesus. Firstly, Jesus did not use Scripture exclusively or even primarily when he taught. He

used contemporary and historical events, stories, riddles, questions, nature, object lessons and what I can only describe as zen-like sayings as much as he used the Bible. In fact, sometimes Jesus used Scripture to differentiate his message

from it, like in Matthew 5:38-39, “*You have heard that it was said [in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy], ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.*”

Secondly, Jesus rebuked the Bible experts more than anyone, and they him. Even though these religious leaders were more Biblically literate than everyone else, it gave them no advantage in knowing God or truth. In fact, it appears to have been a hindrance. Jesus rebuked them saying, “*You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving*” (Matthew 13:14). He called these Scriptural authorities sons of Satan, the blind leading the blind, white-washed tombs, snakes, fools, hypocrites, children of hell, murderers and a generation of vipers. This is uncharacteristic as

Jesus treats virtually everyone else with kindness and compassion. One has to wonder if over-emphasis on the written Word can harden our hearts and hinder our spiritual growth today as well.

Jesus says to these religious leaders in John 5:38-40, “*You do not have God’s message in your hearts...You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!*” Jesus is saying the Bible is not an end in itself but a means to an end. It is pointing to something beyond itself. When we start viewing the Bible as the truth, we miss the truth because the Bible does not contain the truth, it points to it. The Bible is like a finger pointing to the moon and we are lost when we mistake the finger pointing to the moon, for the moon itself!

Finally, Jesus did not promise to send a Bible to guide his followers into truth or to be the measuring stick of all truth once he departed. Jesus promised his followers the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that guides them and us into truth. (John 16:13) Nowhere does Jesus mention or even hint at the promise of a future book

*When we start viewing the Bible as the truth, we miss the truth because the Bible does not contain the truth, it points to it.*

of collected writings from the apostles (or anyone else) that would be essential for us to get to know God or discern spiritual truth. Jesus promises his followers only one thing—the anointing of the Holy Spirit. If anything, Jesus preaches “Sola Spiritus” not “Sola Scriptura”!

*Troy Watson is Pastor of Quest Community in St. Catharines, Ontario. This is part three of an ongoing series of articles on “The Role of Scripture For Postmodern Life.”*

### Correction

In an obituary tribute to Jacob Fransen (Aug. 20, 2012), Larry Kehler was incorrectly located in Steinbach, Man. He resides in Winnipeg. The *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

## VIEWPOINT

# Community as counsellor

BY SHERRY SAWATZKY-DYCK

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

**L**ife takes us to places we never thought we would go and, for some people, places we don't think it is possible to come out of. Yet we do survive and we do recover from the trauma and pain. When the pain is emotional and the trauma is psychological, what helps the most?

As I do my work as a personal counsellor at Brandon (Man.) University, I often wonder how people without access to professional help have worked through their issues, and what those suffering from these issues related to mental health, grief, trauma and abuse did to recover. Who did they talk to? How were they helped?

As I meditate on these questions, I look at my own family and culture as a Russian Mennonite and the trauma and suffering in my history and the history of my husband's family, who came to

I wonder what it is in the lived experience of the Russian Mennonites in the wake of the trauma in Russia that has been beneficial in their personal and communal recovery. Unlike the atrocities experienced by Canada's first nation people, Russian Mennonites have received no compensation, acknowledgement or apologies from the Russian government. Some would argue that such apologies do nothing to aid in the healing, but rather exacerbate the trauma.

What the traumatized migrants from Russia did receive was support and resources from their brethren in North America and South America. Hopefully, from a psychological and emotional perspective, this support let them know they were not alone.

Those who came to North America as widows and orphans were linked with

*The role of the Mennonite community at large was very active and personal in caring for those refugees of the 1920s to '40s, but I wonder if we would we be willing to make those same sacrifices now.*

Canada in the 1920s and 1940s, respectively. Both families suffered death and loss, starvation, violence and abuse. The counsellor in me always wonders if our families have recovered from that trauma and, if so, to what degree have they recovered and what was helpful to them.

My cousin Justina Neufeld writes in her book, *A Family Torn Apart*, about her incredibly painful and traumatic ordeal of escaping Russia during World War II and her process of healing. Many of those who survived these dark days went on to teach, preach, nurse, parent and love again.

biological relatives and surrogate families as soon as was reasonably possible. Their hierarchy of needs—food, shelter, safety—were provided for. But was this enough?

History tells us the emotional scars from war, trauma and killing are significant, and that the effects of those scars can last generations. They may never fully recover, but, as a counsellor, I am curious to know if this massive community effort of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and related Mennonite churches from the 1920's onward was a helpful step in their recovery,

and, if so, can 21st-century Mennonites learn from that communal effort?

Hundreds and thousands lost their lives during these 20-plus years of strife in Russia. Many people were lost, only to be reconnected with loved ones decades later. Many more were never heard from again.

The pain lingers, but there appeared to be a will to survive, as, over the years, Mennonites have written books, taught classes and led worship services, all with a focus on the events and feelings of those days. People continue to make treks back to the land of their parents and grandparents, trying to make sense of what happened.

The modern North American Mennonite church has little interaction with large-scale tragedy or death. In Canada, we have free medical services, mental health services and government organizations to provide food and housing to those in need. We are well organized so that the needs of the community—local or global—can be taken care of without us ever leaving our pew.

The role of the Mennonite community at large was very active and personal in caring for those refugees of the 1920s to '40s, but I wonder if we would we be willing to make those same sacrifices now. What function does community play in overall health and healing today?

Many survivors of the Russian atrocities have attested to the benefit of MCC and the larger Mennonite community as they settled into their new homes. As one woman donated to MCC, she wrote, "This donation is given in thanks for help we received many years ago. . . . When I was a child in Russia, I was fed by MCC. When my husband was a prisoner of war after World War II, he received help from MCC. We never forgot."

I wonder if the Mennonite community continues to see itself as counsellors to those who have been wounded emotionally and psychologically. I wonder if, to the contrary, we see mental health and medical professionals as solely having that role in this day and age. What role does the Mennonite community of the 21st century have in being the counsellor to those in need in a time of relative peace and prosperity, and are we doing enough? ❧

## VIEWPOINT

# Toddlers, tiaras, texts

BY DAVID DRIEDGER

I am not prone to dramatic responses when it comes to television shows.

However, I had an uncommonly visceral response to seeing commercials for the television show *Toddlers and Tiaras*. If you have not heard about the show, the basic premise outlined in the commercial is of families who enter girls into beauty pageants. Now “beauty pageant” makes these events sound quaint, but the impression we are given is that they are high stakes and cutthroat. The first time I saw this commercial it almost made me sick. If I were to name what I associated with that feeling it would fall somewhere in the realm of child abuse, child pornography, and child prostitution.

If I would try to isolate this sub-culture and accept it on the surface, I would find families and individuals who are attempting to “prize” their young girls and elevating the value of children. So if I were to enter into that context and protest these events, it is conceivable that I would be viewed as being against children, as somehow wanting to de-value their worth. After all a beauty pageant celebrates and parades the beauty of children, right?

I am guessing that most readers are already not very sympathetic to the sort of values embedded in *Toddlers and Tiaras*. I wanted to start with this image because I am still wrestling with how to articulate my view of how Mennonite



Church Canada (and much of the broader church in general) views and engages the Bible.

The above image, admittedly melodramatic, is helpful, as it reminds me that I am not against the Bible. I am, in no way, trying to devalue the Bible. While I continue to have public and personal conversations about this topic, I find myself wondering if I am being perceived as simply being a part of the general trend of our culture’s growing ignorance and ignoring of the Bible.

There is no need to go into detail, but the reality is that the Bible reflects both the primary aim of my past studies, my current vocational engagement, as well as a major pursuit within my hobbies. I enjoy the Bible. I get excited about reading it. But I still need to remind myself (and perhaps others) that I am reacting against a context of engaging the Bible and not against the Bible. This however leads me to the inevitable question that I draw from the opening image.

Are we trying to re-capture a context for the Bible similar to *Toddlers and Tiaras*? The basic perversion of a beauty pageant (or one of the perversions anyway) is the illusion of praising our children. The reality of course is that children function as manipulated objects, working out parental and societal pathologies. Rather than accentuating the particular and unique features of a child, a

contestant is re-molded into a prescribed and arbitrary form of beauty. The process is one of reduction and deception. The notion of beauty is severely reduced in these contexts and the establishing of value is deceptively distracted away from those working behind the scenes. These are bold claims, especially if I want to consider whether they are at work in the church’s understanding of the Bible.

I want to commend the board of Mennonite Church Canada for drawing attention to some of these issues in the *Being a Faithful Church* documents. Within BFC, attention is given to the fact that there are “many voices” within the Bible and that unnecessarily reducing the voices is to diminish its potential beauty. The BFC documents also draw our attention to the danger of “ideological” uses of the Bible. This happens when someone simply props up the Bible to authorize a particular view that remains “behind the scenes.”

So, it would seem that we have used the Bible in a context similar to *Toddlers and Tiaras* and that thankfully we are trying to address and dismantle such a context. The question I have then is simple. Do we still cling to elements of this context? If so, what are they? This is not a question of accepting or rejecting the Bible; you are not against children because you criticize beauty pageants (in fact we would likely argue that the opposite is the case). I would ask that we not forget that question as we explore what it might mean to inhabit new contexts that allow the beauty and power of the Bible to be encountered.

*David Driedger is associate pastor of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg and a Canadian Mennonite blogger.*

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Andres**—Ethan Henry (b. July 30, 2012), to Jason and Leanne Andres, Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Bauman**—Spencer James (b. July 30, 2012), to Kate and Phil Bauman, Waterloo North Mennonite, Ont.

**Coombs**—Jameson David (b. June 22, 2012), to Johanna and Lucas Coombs, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Ont.

**Hiebert**—Aubree Paityn (b. July 26, 2012), to Rachel and Stan Hiebert, Bergthaler Mennonite, Plum Coulee, Man.

**Janzen**—Archer William (b. July 30, 2012), to Darcie and Derek Janzen, Trinity Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

**Kauenhofen**—Azeb Rhianna (b. Oct. 25, 2009 in Ethiopia; adopted June 24, 2012) by Connie and Wayne Kauenhofen,

Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Unger**—Renee Gail (b. July 30, 2012), to Ryan and Kristen Unger, Glenlea Mennonite, Man.

**Wiebe**—Kade Matthew (b. July 27, 2012), to Erin and Kent Wiebe, Hague Mennonite, Sask.

### Baptisms

**Kristen Culliton**—Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont. at Hidden Acres Camp, New Hamburg, Ont., June 10, 2012.

**Jason Roth, Kim Roth**—Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., June 17, 2012.

**Cornie Krahn**—Bergthaler Mennonite, Plum Coulee, Man., July 22, 2012.

### Marriages

**Daniels/Peters**—Julie Daniels and Zach Peters, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg, July 21, 2012.

**Esposito/Rempel**—Rob Esposito and Stefanie Rempel, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg, July 21, 2012.

**Falk/Heaman**—Jordan Falk and Marci Heaman, Blumenort Mennonite, Gretna, Man., July 21, 2012.

**Falk/Mangin**—Brett Falk and Dana Mangin, Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man., July 21, 2012.

**Froese/Goethals**—Stefan Froese (Jubilee Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Lisa Goethals, in Elm Creek, Man., July 28, 2012.

**Greene/Paul**—Adam Greene and Shannon Paul, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask. July 28, 2012.

**Harms/Schellenberg**—Michael Harms (First Mennonite, Calgary) and Heather Schellenberg (Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg), at Glenlea Mennonite, Man., Aug. 5, 2012.

**Lee/Ogasawara**—Cheryl Lee and Ken Ogasawara, Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont., at the Waterloo Region Museum, Kitchener, Ont., July 21, 2012.

**Loewen/Thiessen**—Matthew Loewen and Theresa Thiessen, Crossroads Community Church, Chilliwack, B.C., Aug. 4, 2012.

**MacDonald/Rolleman**—Celeste MacDonald (Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.) and Daryl Rolleman at Bethel

Pentecostal Church, June 9, 2012.

**McBride/Thiessen**—Lisa McBride and Daniel Thiessen (First Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.) at St. Anne's Parish, Saskatoon, Sask., July 21, 2012.

**Overton/Todon**—Chris Overton and Sarah Todon, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., Aug. 4, 2012.

### Deaths

**Baer**—Nettie (nee Redekopp), 89 (b. Aug. 4, 1922; d. July 27, 2012), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Biehn**—Maynard, 80 (b. May 24, 1932; d. Aug. 4, 2012), Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

**Froese**—Raymond, 53 (b. Nov. 13, 1958; d. July 2, 2012), Trinity Mennonite, Mather, Man.

**Gerber**—Eva (nee Erb), 95 (b. Feb. 14, 1917; d. Aug. 11, 2012), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

**Gingerich**—Cleve, 82 (b. Nov. 13, 1929; d. July 30, 2012), Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite, Zurich, Ont.

**Redpath**—Arlene (nee Vincent), 62 (b. Aug. 12, 1949; d. July 30, 2012), Trinity Mennonite, Mather, Man.

**Roth**—Ethel, 88 (b. June 20, 1924; d. Aug. 6, 2012), Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

**Schellenberg**—John A., 71 (b. Aug. 15, 1940; d. Aug. 3, 2012), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Tiessen**—Werner, 89 (b. Dec. 22, 1922; d. Aug. 2, 2012), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Webb**—Marilyn (nee Redekop), 63 (b. April 30, 1949; d. Aug. 6, 2012), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Wichert**—Lydia, 95 (b. May 25, 1917; d. July 25, 2012), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

### Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

*announcements within four months of the event.*

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

## Pontius' Puddle



## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# Chiara House

## Practicing radical hospitality

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG, MAN.

When Andrew, a new Christian in Little Flowers Community Church, tragically took his life, it shook the church to its core. Pastor Jamie Arpin-Ricci said it was the death of Andrew, who had untreated mental health issues and was bouncing between various housing options when he took his life, “that opened our eyes to the very real need for tangible community supports for people with mental health concerns. We began to realize how critically important it is for people living with mental illness to have stability and community.”

Little Flowers Community, a church planting partnership of Mennonite Church Manitoba (MCM) and Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Urban Ministries, began shaping a dream for a place where they could provide supportive and affordable Christian community in their neighbourhood, Winnipeg’s beleaguered West End. “We put it out as a dream. We didn’t even have a bank account,” said Arpin-Ricci. Norm Voth, director of Evangelism and Service Ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba, helped to put legs to the dream by contacting some businessmen in the

wider MCM community.

For almost a year they looked for suitable property in the neighbourhood. “We visited some of the most tragic buildings in the city,” said Arpin-Ricci. “It only served to bolster our desire to provide affordable and dignified housing. This vacated apartment building that was being used for drug running and prostitution came along. It was having a very negative impact on the neighbourhood.” In October 2010 they were able to purchase the building.

The three-story apartment block still has many boarded up windows. Bullet holes punctuate the walls. A fire that was started under the fire escape this past June burned its way into the basement and caused considerable damage. The intricate and slow turning of city council’s wheels has meant delays with permits and zoning regulations. All these challenges have been discouraging but have not dimmed the vision.

Groups of volunteers from various MCM congregations have come to help clean, repair and rebuild. Youth groups, retired people, trades people have been part of a steady flow of volunteers. “We’ve been blown away by the level of involvement,” said Arpin-Ricci. Penn-Lite Electric in Steinbach volunteered their staff of 40 employees. “Twenty came one day and 20 came another day. The electrical work is almost finished.”

Alvin Thiessen, one of the business partners in the project, is a member of Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church which has donated the materials needed for one suite. Their youth group has also volunteered. “This is an opportunity for us as MCM churches to do something together. If each of us does a little piece we as the larger church can do many things,” said Thiessen.

The apartment building at 490 Maryland St. was built in 1911. The boarded-up, scarred brick building stands tall and erect as it undergoes transformation. The basement will have a lunchroom, office and gathering space. The floors above will have one and two-bedroom apartments. Each floor will also have a shared community space. “While each floor will be self-contained the entire building will function as a singular community, sharing life and mission together,” said Voth.



Norm Voth, director of Evangelism and Service for Mennonite Church Manitoba, and Jamie Arpin-Ricci, pastor of Little Flowers Community Church, stand outside Chiara House.



Even the placement of doors is carefully considered so as to support the vision for community. “A critical part of this is the relationships and providing supportive and dignified living space.”

Thirty percent of the space is to be designated for people with mental health challenges. Eden Health Care Services is a fourth partner in this mission. “More and more we recognize the importance and value of a well-informed community,” said James Friesen, CEO of EHCS. “Although we provide clinical counselling and resources, really 99 percent of recovery has to do with the family they belong to, the church they are a part of, the neighbourhood they live in, and their employer.” EHCS will not have a clinical presence in Chiara but will “come alongside, sharing what we have learned, helping to make connections,

giving support,” said Friesen.

Volunteers, financial support, and prayers are needed for this ministry. “Right now we are looking for at least two people from 10 different MCM congregations to make a financial support base for this project,” said Thiessen. “I think the hardest piece is the piece that Little Flowers will provide, and that is living there. They don’t have any capital or resources to pull together but they are going to live there and are prepared to move in and walk with the people in the neighbourhood. If they are prepared to do that, we should do our part to put up the facility.”

“We want to be good neighbours who choose to share life and mission together for the purpose of God’s Kingdom in the West End,” said Arpin-Ricci. ❧

## ‘Love of God’ most-sung in song survey

BY MICHAEL SPORY

MennoMedia and Mennonite Church Canada

“The Love of God” is the song most sung in Canada and the United States from *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and its two supplements, *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story*, reports Amy Gingerich, director of print media for MennoMedia and co-chair of the Bi-National Worship Council, from a nine-month survey of songs-most-sung.

In order to discover what songs Mennonites were already singing, congregations were asked to submit the songs they sang each week over the survey period, including music from special services and weekly events. There were 191 congregations who sent in 32,000 entries from 118 different collections. Almost 75 percent came from the current 20-year-old Mennonite hymnal and its supplemental song books. The results of the survey will help Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA to determine the kinds of worship resources that will be needed over the next ten to fifteen years.

In Canada, the other top nine songs are:

- Lord, You Sometimes Speak
- Joy to the World

- Will you let me be Your Servant
- Praise God from whom All Blessings Flow
- O Come, all Ye Faithful
- Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
- Great is Thy Faithfulness
- O come, O come Immanuel
- Je louerai l’Eternel (Praise, I will Praise you, Lord)

Other collections frequently cited included Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI), *Mennonite Hymnal* (1969), and *Sing and Rejoice!*, as well as a significant number of congregations that compile their own collections. Both Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA had about 26 percent participation from their respective congregations, as well as five Mennonite education institutions from across the country.

Once organized, the complete data set will be given to the Bi-national Worship Council as committee members discern next steps toward a new song collection. ❧

## Final Schlegel Fund recipient announced

Mennonite Foundation of Canada

Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) has awarded a \$10,500 grant from the Wilfred Schlegel Memorial Fund to Student Open Circles, Hamilton, Ontario. The grant will be used to fund the Exploring Personal Values project with young adults. This is the final year for this annual award which supports visionary, risky initiatives within organizations affiliated with the Mennonite Church. The grants are intended to encourage recipients to explore new program and ministry potentials.

Student Open Circles works with university students in Hamilton, Ontario, to engage them in local service, to mentor them as leaders, and to encourage their personal development and holistic growth.

The fund was established in memory of the late Wilfred Schlegel, who was a visionary and initiator in the Western Ontario Mennonite Church from the 1940s to the 1970s. His family and the Nairn Mennonite Church established the fund jointly in 1979. Wilfred Schlegel was founding pastor of Nairn Mennonite Church near Alisa Craig, where he served for more than 25 years. He also helped start a rescue mission in London, centres for troubled children, a church-owned nursing home, a halfway house for chronic psychiatric patients, a church-owned farm to assist young people to develop equity to own their own farm, along with several other projects. He was a creative risk taker and an initiator who implemented practical projects.

“My father meant a lot to me, and I credit him for much of my own creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. He was a real community builder as well. He was so inspirational to me,” said Ron Schlegel, Wilfred’s son.

MFC has administered the Wilfred Schlegel Memorial Fund since 2003 and has distributed over \$160,000 in grants from the fund since that time. ❧

## B.C. cycle riders unite for annual trek

By AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

For many, the words “church fellowship” may mean primarily what goes on inside a building, but for eleven people who took to the roads on motorcycles the weekend of Aug. 18-19, fellowship was what took place on the highways and in the wide open spaces of coastal British Columbia.

The fifth annual Mennonite Church B.C. motorcycle trip brought together riders from four different congregations: Sherbrooke Mennonite of Vancouver, Peace Mennonite of Richmond, Cedar Valley Mennonite of Mission, and Black Creek Mennonite. Organizer for the fifth year was Garry Janzen, MC B.C. executive minister and an avid biker.

Ten riders from the Lower Mainland took the ferry across to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island Saturday morning and

met up with one from Black Creek on the island for the remainder of the trip. Their travels took them to Ocean View, Comox and Mt. Washington. On Saturday night they took the ferry back to Powell River and spent the night nearby, sleeping in motels or camping as individuals chose.

Sunday morning the group gathered near the water for morning prayers and a short devotional led by Janzen, then continued on their way down the Sunshine Coast to Gibsons. They arrived home Sunday night.

Janzen thinks it's important for members of the wider church body to get together and do something they love that's more informal, not in the usual church setting. “It's for fellowship, about meeting people that are part of our larger church family,” he says. “Where else could people from

these different congregations meet?”

Of course, enjoying the scenery along the way is a bonus. “We live in such a park land. You just sort of look and think about everything around you,” Janzen says of riding in the spectacular scenic surroundings of western B.C.

Cheryl Dyck of Mission, who rides as a passenger on her husband Leonard's bike, has gone on the ride several times and enjoys it every year. The Dycks go to enjoy God's creation and for the simple reason that “We like to ride. The [organized event by the] conference gives us something to unite in that we enjoy together.”

Janzen says the annual August event is open to anyone interested, and he is already making tentative plans for next year's trip. ☘

### /// Briefly noted

#### EMC celebrates bicentennial

Steinbach, Man.—The Evangelical Mennonite Conference, a Canadian conference, is celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2012. The conference began in Russia (now southern Ukraine) in 1812, and was called the *Kleine Gemeinde* (Small Church) when it broke away from a larger body because of its concerns about preserving holiness and non-resistance. The group moved to North America in 1874-75, with most members residing in western Canada. It changed its name to Evangelical Mennonite Church in 1952 and Evangelical Mennonite Conference in 1959. Currently it has a weekly attendance of about 7,800, 7,200 members, and 62 churches in nine regions across five provinces in Canada. It has an active missions program in about two dozen countries. A year-long celebration is underway, with local and national events. The national convention, July 6 to 8, was held on the campus of Providence University College in Otterburne, Man. The national office in Steinbach hosted a community celebration on August 21.

—TIM DYCK, GENERAL  
SECRETARY, EMC



The B.C. bikers stop at the Black Creek Mennonite Church to say farewell to Peter Tyne.

# Altona Mennonite Celebrates 50 Years

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent  
ALTONA, MAN.

At the close of worship on Sunday, Aug. 12, the congregation of more than 150 stood shoulder to shoulder to ring the inside walls of the sanctuary and sing 606, "Praise God From Whom All Praises Flow." Rich harmonies filled the

sanctuary as Altona Mennonite Church offered praise and thanksgiving for God's guidance over its 50 years. AMC, with its strong tradition of music-making, pulled out all the stops and filled their weekend celebration with music, art, story-telling and warm hospitality.

In April 1962, when 22 people signed a document to form the Altona Mennonite Church, it was out of a desire to fill a need in Altona, recalled Dan Kehler, present pastor. They saw a need for an English language mission in the rapidly growing community of Altona. "The need for a more comprehensive outreach in the language and culture of our citizenship is very, very obvious," wrote Frank H. Epp in 1962 as he provided leadership in the early years. Five of those 22 founding members were present at the recent anniversary celebrations: Helen L. Epp (Waterloo), Kay Friesen, Ted and Linie Friesen, and Selma Loewen (Winnipeg).

"It was a bold vision, controversial for some. The theology at that time was that the church would stay separate and language helped to keep it that way," said Kehler in the morning worship. "But from these times of controversy the Spirit finds ways to bring new life."

The vision included a commitment to be a church where newcomers to Altona would feel welcome. There would be openness to new ways of doing things while remaining strongly committed to the Anabaptist theology and vision, Kehler noted. Fifty years later, AMC continues to practice this tradition of being a welcoming place.

Ted Friesen recalls that at the time of its formation, AMC "was constitutionally set up to be a local autonomous church but with strong ties to conferences, MCC and the private schools." AMC's move in this direction came at a time when the churches still operated under the central authority



*Children assisted in assembling a banner designed by Lorraine Heinrichs and Sandra Klassen in recognition of Altona Mennonite Church's 50 years. The roots of the tree have the names of the 22 founding members. "The lines of fabric from the roots to the branches are continuous demonstrating the nurture from the roots. The apples and leaves represent the individuals, adults and children in our current congregations as well as those who have returned to celebrate this weekend with us," said Peggy Martens, a member of AMC.*

## Staff change

### Huebner appointed to new CMU business faculty

WINNIPEG—Jeff Huebner has been named to the faculty of the Redekop School of Business at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). His position began in July. He will serve as an associate professor, teaching courses on a range of topics, including entrepreneurship and microfinance, and he will lead a travel study course on economic development and microfinance in Latin America during the 2012-13 school year. Huebner comes to CMU from his role as assistant professor of international business at Ambrose University College, Calgary, where he served for the past five years.

—Canadian Mennonite University



Huebner

of an elder or bishop. AMC influenced the acceleration of churches moving in the direction of greater local autonomy, observed Friesen, in AMC's 25th anniversary book.

The gathering brought many visitors whose lives had intersected with AMC at some point during the past 50 years. The stories they shared throughout the weekend reflected the warm hospitality of AMC and the deep sense of belonging to the fellowship even after being away so many years. It also attested to the transient nature of the congregation.

Kehler said, "Just as the Book of Mark doesn't have a real ending but begs the question, 'what happens next?' so does our story. The story of the church is always a story with a past, but it is incomplete, constantly being written by its people in their time, in their place. As we move in new directions we must always examine our theology and the way we do church while remaining faithful to the work of the Spirit in our midst." ❧

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

God at work in the World

# Snapshots

LEAMINGTON MENNONITE HOME PHOTO



Nearly 150 golfers took part in the 10th annual golf tournament in support of Leamington (Ont.) Mennonite Home, raising \$43,000 for the construction of a place to store the home's resident care equipment, including wheelchairs and walkers. Pictured, the winning men's team, from left to right: Kevin Epp, Spencer Neufeld, Chris Warkentin and Brendan Cornies.

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PHOTO



The second annual Conrad Grebel Peace Camp was a fantastic week, where youth played to change and made peace happen all across Waterloo Region. Young people from all over the tri-cities were involved in such things as making recyclable monsters, fashioning a trash bag slip 'n slide, and cultivating a community garden and mural at the Working Centre and Sunnydale Community Centre. Camp speakers included a University of Waterloo student who has brain cancer, skydives and participates in runs to raise money for the Stephen Lewis Foundation, and an individual living with HIV/AIDS who is working to help others with this medical condition.

# Spreading the Word in South Korea

STORY AND PHOTO BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

WINNIPEG

North American churches forget how special Anabaptism is, say Erwin and Marian Wiens, recently returned from Korea. The Wienses are no strangers to South Korea. Ten years ago, they served with Mennonite Church Canada as church development leaders in the Jesus Village Church (JVC) in Chuncheon. In 2010, they returned as Resource Workers to serve at the Korea Anabaptist Center and discovered that those seeds have borne fruit.

Anabaptist theology and its grass-roots, biblically based approach to life has generated plenty of interest in the early church model. “There are so many mega churches [in South Korea] where there isn’t community or networking, where people feel like spectators,” Erwin says. “The broader church emphasizes salvation in terms of sacrificial atonement of Christ for sin, but there is no instruction about Jesus’ life or teachings.” The early church model is different. “The appeal of that kind of community-based church is strong,” Erwin says.

In 2002, about 50 people regularly attended worship services at JVC. By the time the Wienses returned in 2010, attendance had doubled and more women were involved in leadership—a direct result of Marian’s example, the congregation says.

JVC is thinking strategically about the years ahead. Rather than risk growing into a larger, less personal entity, the entire congregation is being trained as servant leaders so that they can divide and multiply. To ensure they maintain a “priesthood of all believers,” (1 Peter 2:9) JVC has avoided the one-person-in-charge scenario through the leadership of four couples rather than hiring pastors.

The Wienses report that Anabaptism is also influencing the way other church communities serve. Daejeon, located in the heart of South Korea, has a population of one million, with 500 Baptist churches in the region. Dream Community Church

may seem small by comparison, with about 75 members, but the congregation specializes in ministry for severely handicapped children and young adults. In Busan, the Hanwoori Church, related to the Church of the Brethren, operates on a model of simplicity. They meet frequently in smaller groups, but also meet once a month as a larger congregation.

Korean Anabaptists have a strong relationship to scripture. “At JVC, weekly bulletins list the readings for each day. They take it very seriously,” Erwin says.

The Wienses have many stories to share about their encounters with people curious about Anabaptism—from a growing relationship with a woman they encountered during daily subway travel to Yong Ha Bae, a Korean publisher who was so interested in Anabaptist materials that he published a Korean translation of *The Naked Anabaptist*. It was released in 2011 and has been inspiring people across the

country since. He also made arrangements with Herald Press to publish future Korean translations of their Anabaptist materials.

And then there is the story of Jimmy Kim. Before the Wienses returned to South Korea, Erwin pastored at Trinity Mennonite Church in Calgary. Jimmy came from South Korea to visit his aunt and uncle who worshipped there. He had left his wife and young daughter to seek a divorce. Through conversation with Erwin, Jimmy learned more about New Testament teachings of grace and love, which contrasted sharply with what he had learned about Old Testament law. “It really grabbed his heart and he decided to give his marriage another chance,” Erwin says.

When the Wienses met up with Jimmy upon their return to South Korea, they discovered that he had recommitted to his wife and daughter, and the couple now have an infant son. “Jimmy said ‘I will stay committed to this marriage because of God’s grace,’” Erwin recalls.

The interest in Anabaptism is spreading. “We were surprised and amazed that there was so much interest,” Marian says. “Anabaptism is a jewel. I think Canadian and American churches forget the specialness of it, but Koreans are seeing that. They may be idealistic about it but they are attracted to what it represents.” ❧



Erwin and Marian Wiens

# Rain brings hope of good harvest in Mexico colony

BY GLADYS TERICHOW

Mennonite Central Committee Canada

**G**reen fields of corn, oats and beans once again dot the landscape in Durango Colony, a community of Low German Mennonites in Mexico. Still reeling from the effects of a severe drought, the promise of a good harvest is welcome news in this region, said Peter Hiebert, a member of a committee coordinating Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) drought assistance projects in the colony.

"We are very thankful that God sent us rain and that we have seeds that we could put into the ground," he said.



*Maria, 10, (left) along with her mother Justina Braun and sister Anna, 11, pose for a photograph with Betty Kasdorf of MCC Canada. Braun, a widow with 11 children, received food assistance through MCC's drought assistance projects.*

Hiebert, a farmer, said livestock and milk production are the primary sources of income in the colony. Crops are grown mainly to feed the animals, but due to the

severe drought many farmers were forced to sell some of their cattle. To help families maintain their livelihoods, MCC provided vouchers for the purchase of feed for animals and seed for planting new crops.

"This support has been very helpful," said Hiebert. "The smallest farmers were hit the hardest. Some could not continue with their milk production and lost their source of income. If there is a good harvest, they will buy calves and soon after that they will be able to start milk production again."

Food packages are also being distributed to vulnerable families in the colony. "Some people in our colony don't have money to buy sugar, oatmeal and flour," said Hiebert. "Between now and October, when the crops are harvested, food will be scarce."

In addition to assisting people in the colony, MCC's drought assistance projects provide assistance to families living in the villages and hills in the Nuevo Ideal area. Support outside the colony includes the distribution of food packets containing beans, rice, oil, corn, lentils, noodles and sugar, MCC canned meat and MCC blankets. MCC has committed \$105,000 to the drought assistance projects in Mexico. To date, about \$28,000 has been received. ☸

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# Ethiopians fight against child exploitation

*Ethiopian child labourers can look forward to a better life thanks to EFACE, a new four-year MEDA project*

BY LINDA WHITMORE

Mennonite Economic Development Associates

An estimated 18 million Ethiopian children aged 5 to 17—almost a third of the population—work, although the country's policies and legislation protect children from exploitive labour and support their education. More than half of rural children work, many about 33 hours a week. Most work in the informal sector, where it is difficult to enforce safe and reasonable labour practices.

As part of a larger initiative with World Vision, Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) is offering opportunities similar to an earlier youth project in Egypt. Ethiopians Fighting Against Child Exploitation (EFACE) targets child labourers in two critical economic sectors—the textile industry and agriculture—both where MEDA has already developed relationships through the Ethiopians Driving Growth, Entrepreneurship and Trade organization.

Children working with weavers, spinners and dyers often labour in poor conditions.

Many depend on their employer for their basic needs, earning less than \$1 a week for 14-hour days that prevent them from going to school. They risk physical deformities from bending over the loom, eyesight problems due to poor lighting, poor nutrition and skin diseases from unsanitary conditions.

Working through local partners, MEDA is offering child weavers a program of hazard awareness sessions called Keep Safe, and a referral system to get children into other areas of employment or back to school. EFACE also offers business owners incentives to improve workplace conditions and update antiquated equipment, such as looms, through access to loans. MEDA will also link rural textile families to high-end market buyers so they can improve the quality of their products, increase their incomes and send their children to school, instead of to work.

In agriculture, MEDA has a two-pronged approach in targeting youths in subsistence

farming families. EFACE will encourage farmers to supplement their income with the addition of low-intensity crops, such as apples and bamboo. Since they require less labour to produce higher incomes, there is less reliance on children to work. MEDA is also training 250 youths aged 14 to 17 as agricultural sales agents. Equipped with seeds, fruit tree saplings, supplies and information, they can work in safer jobs and ensure that farmers in their region have access to needed agricultural inputs.

In total, MEDA expects EFACE will have a direct impact on 7,000 families and more than 2,200 youths, improving their livelihoods, bringing innovation to workplaces and creating new hope for the next generation. ❧

MEDA PHOTO



*Working through local partners, MEDA is offering child weavers a program of hazard awareness sessions called Keep Safe, and a referral system to get children into other areas of employment or back to school.*

## ❧ Briefly noted

### MCC archives to move

AKRON, PA.—Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) planned to relocate a major portion of its historic records—all U.S. and international files dating before 1984—from the Mennonite Church USA Archives in Goshen Ind. to the MCC U.S. offices in Akron, Penn., in late August. While some Anabaptist historians and archivists are concerned that this move may compromise access to the collection, MCC staff members believe the move will have long-term benefits. “Working with the materials more directly will give MCC Records staff deeper familiarity with the materials,” says Ron Byler, executive director of MCC U.S. “And working more directly with researchers will give staff a better sense of who beyond MCC is studying our history.” MCC never turned over ownership of its records to the Mennonite Church USA Archives but housed them there for an annual fee of \$37,000. According to Byler, the long-term savings will offset costs of relocation and remodeling needed for the new site.

—Mennonite Church USA

# MCC thrift shops spark interest in China

STORY AND PHOTO BY GLADYS TERICHOW

Mennonite Central Committee  
WINNIPEG

The idea of developing social enterprises like thrift shops to generate revenue for non-government organizations and their activities is taking root in China, says a visitor from Beijing. “This is a very hot topic in China right now,” says Li Tao, founder and director of Beijing Social Work Development Center for Facilitators, a group of social workers who provide services to migrant workers.

During a recent trip to Winnipeg, he learned more about the success Mennonite Central Committee’s has had with social enterprises and thrift shops. He visited the city’s Kildonan Community MCC Thrift Shop and Sam’s Place, a used book store, cafe and venue for music bands and other activities.

This visit was organized by Lawrence Deane, an associate professor at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. Deane works with Tao’s community development group as part of his studies and research with non-profit organizations in China. Deane says that in China these organizations do not receive government funding and are interested in developing social enterprises that are well managed, train volunteers and show respect for the people they serve. “MCC has 40 years of experience in thrift shops. What a great opportunity to learn,” Deane says.

In China, migrant workers are from rural households and are technically not allowed to live or work in the cities. This results in them often living and working in appalling conditions. Tao sees great potential for his organization to develop a thrift shop and a

social enterprise such as Sam’s Place. “This is not only a store, but it is a store that is playing an important part in connecting and integrating the community,” he says.

Tao was amazed at the commitment of volunteers, a commitment that he sensed was based on volunteers finding meaning and value in what they do. He will share with his staff and volunteers his conversation with Helen Redekopp, 86, who told him she is a volunteer because it is good for her health and she wants to contribute to the worldwide work of MCC. “I was really impressed when I talked with Helen,” Tao says. “She is a mature lady, but here she is talking about being able to help people in the world.”

This is a new way of thinking about volunteerism for Tao. “In China, when you talk about volunteering, you don’t expect any rewards,” he says. “In China, volunteering is understood as a basic responsibility of individuals.”

“This is a challenge: how to connect small and insignificant contributions with a great humanitarian goal,” he says. “In volunteerism, although it looks ordinary and insignificant on the surface, it reflects deep values and beliefs.” ❧

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*Li Tao, a director of a community development group in Beijing, China, gives Helen Redekopp, a volunteer at a Mennonite Central Committee thrift shop in Winnipeg, a hug.*



## MCC's best kept secret

*Passion for education leads retired teacher to be an ambassador for education sponsorship in the Middle East*

Mennonite Central Committee Ontario

**W**hat is the best kept secret of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)?

No, not the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale. No, not the outstanding relief and disaster service in times of need. Not even that it has the best quilters in the world!

The best kept secret is Global Family, a community-based education sponsorship program that is cost-effective and empowers schools around the world to decide what is best for students and families in their area.

Leigh and Lois Steckley of New Hamburg, Ont., recently returned from a Middle East learning tour with MCC, visiting Jordan and Palestine. Their primary purpose was to get a first-hand glimpse of MCC's education sponsorship in action, so they can share the stories with people back in Ontario.

While visiting the Al-Malath Society in Bethlehem, Leigh remarked, "Seeing the smiles on their faces was enough to convince me of the need for sponsoring this school."

The centre serves youths with mental and intellectual disabilities who are not looked after by other schools. The program contributes towards a long-term increase in clients' independence and dignity in living their lives. The centre hopes to open a workshop in which graduates of the program can be employed.

Another highlight of the trip was seeing how education can bring together many different groups and create the foundations for peace.

At the Latin Patriarchate School in Zababdeh, a village in the northern West Bank, quality education is delivered to Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox and Muslim students. Here, Christians and Muslims can come together on equal footing and become friends. Global Family funds provide scholarships for students who would

otherwise not have access to quality education. It also assists with school supplies, including books and classroom furnishings.

As new ambassadors for the Global Family program, the Steckleys are eager to share about these projects and give presentations to individuals, schools, community and church groups. They were on hand to share pictures and stories at the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale in May.

Global Family currently partners with more than 100 community-based organizations in more than 40 different countries. ❧

*To learn more about Global Family and how to sponsor a project for only \$25 a month or \$300 a year, visit [www.globalfamily.mcc.org](http://www.globalfamily.mcc.org).*

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE PHOTO



*Lois Steckley, left, and her husband Leigh, right are pictured with Rev. and Mrs. Samir Esaid, the two main administrators of the Arab Episcopal School in Irbid, Jordan. The school integrates visually impaired Christian and Muslim students into regular classrooms where all are treated equally and fairly.*

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## 'Just do it'

*B.C. native takes on regional role for Central America and the Caribbean*

By ANGELIKA DAWSON  
Mennonite Central Committee B.C.

**T**egucigalpa, Honduras, is a long way from Victoria, B.C., but Elizabeth Scambler doesn't mind that she'll be calling this Latin American city her home for the next couple of years.

The Vancouver Island native got her first taste of Latin America when she went on a three-week missions trip to Bolivia when she was 16. While doing post-graduate studies at Humber College, Toronto, a staff person from the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) spoke in one of her classes. Impressed with what she heard, she decided to check out the organization and ended up accepting a one-year service assignment in El Salvador.

"My first assignment was as the emergency and disaster response assistant, responding to families affected by Hurricane Ida in 2009," she says. Her work included helping families who had lost their homes in mudslides relocate to safer areas



*Elizabeth Scambler, right, pictured with Bernarda Mendez, president of Disciples of Christ Baptist Church, is serving with Mennonite Central Committee in Central America. She describes Mendez, her supervisor, as an 'inspirational community leader.'*

through a land-purchasing project, a long-term solution that enabled people to own safe land where they could rebuild their homes.

That work has now evolved as Scambler takes on the role of MCC regional disaster response coordinator for Central America and the Caribbean.

Her expanded role will include working

with communities throughout Central America and the Caribbean to analyze risk and see what steps they can take to mitigate that risk and be prepared to respond to a natural phenomenon or other event. This could include reforestation to prevent flooding or pre-positioning material resources like canned meat, blankets and relief kits, so that they will be readily available in the event of a disaster.

When she thinks back on her experiences so far, she is grateful that MCC felt she was ready to take on this added responsibility. "I wasn't sure if I was qualified for the new role, but what I appreciate about MCC is that they're willing to work with people where they see potential," she says.

When asked what her experience has taught her about herself, she is thoughtful about her response. "Our North American lifestyle is unsustainable on a global scale and is really dependent on the exploitation of the poor," she says. "One thing I'm learning is that if I were to come home now, I don't know what my lifestyle would look like, how I would live more intentionally. Living simply is a lot easier overseas."

For someone who might be considering a service assignment overseas her response is, "Just do it. . . . It's a great way to learn about yourself, to get out of your comfort zone and do things you normally wouldn't ☼

### /// Staff change

#### **Wagler assumes North American leadership of MAX**

BADEN, ONT.—Tim Wagler has accepted the call to become the executive director of MAX Mutual Aid Ministries, North America. In this role, he will lead and manage the ongoing development of this program throughout Canada and the U.S., and serve as president and chief executive officer of the two charitable organizations—MAX Canada Share Fund, Inc. and MAX Share Fund, Inc.—formed to support the ministries. Dale Bauman, vice-president of sales, has accepted the call to become the new president and chief executive officer of MAX Canada Insurance Company and Mutual Aid Insurance Brokers Company.  
—MutualAid eXchange



*Bauman (left), and Wagler*

### /// Briefly noted

#### **Willowgrove hires new executive director**

STOUFFVILLE, ONT.—Miriam Reesor has been appointed the new executive director of Willowgrove Inc. effective August 1, 2012. She will be responsible to manage, oversee and develop the numerous Willowgrove programs, including a year-round outdoor education program near Stouffville, a summer day camp (Glenbrook) and a summer residential camp near Bancroft (Fraser Lake). The Willowgrove board of directors thanks their constituency and the broader Mennonite community for their prayers and support during this transitional phase.

## GOD AT WORK IN US

## The best coach I ever had

BY RYAN ROTH

BADEN, ONT.

The spring after I turned 15, Sam cornered me in the hallway of Steinmann Mennonite Church and said, “You’re playing church league ball this summer.” It was more of an instruction than an invitation, and thus began my relationship with Sam Gingerich, my ball coach.

Sam was a bit of a legend in the church league fast pitch circles. He was known for his legendary rise ball and many knew about the hundreds of pitches he threw every day as he milked his cows. By this time in his life, his pitching was winding down. Although he still threw the majority of our games, he also served as our coach, setting line-ups organizing our team, and inviting some young guys to join the team.

I wasn’t much of a help to the team that first year. Although I was a competent fielder, I struggled to hit. Despite my challenges, Sam continued to encourage me and slowly my confidence grew.

Over the next few years Sam invited more young players to join our team and pretty soon this group of young players decided to strike off on our own, starting up a new team. Even though Sam was now my competitor, his willingness to mentor me didn’t stop. Needing another pitcher on our team, I decided to give this task a try. In our first game against Sam’s team, he saw me warming up and wandered over to our side of the diamond. There he proceeded to show me how to throw his famous rise ball. Now Sam didn’t go soft on us—he had a no-hitter that night—but he continued to encourage and teach, regularly showing me techniques or talking about strategy related to pitching.

Soon after this, Sam’s days as a player were over and he began umpiring for our league. Despite his new role as a neutral official, Sam was still willing to provide support to me. One year, during a playoff game, I slammed my glove down having



*Sam Gingerich and Ryan Roth*

just given up a grand slam that essentially ensured the end of our season. Sam broke from tradition, coming out from behind the plate to offer encouragement when I was definitely discouraged.

My relationship with Sam began to change after this when Sam invited my friend Dave and me to join him as coaches for his son’s minor ball team and suddenly I was working with him, mentoring a group of twelve-year-old boys. Once again I had the opportunity to witness Sam’s biggest strength as a coach as he seemed to know how to motivate and inspire each individual player. Sam allowed Dave and me to grow as coaches, regularly discussing how we were running the team and why, and giving us free rein in our offensive strategy, never getting upset when we chose a bad time to try to bunt or being too aggressive in trying to steal bases.

The way Sam worked with Timmy, a small, shy kid on that team, sticks in my mind. Timmy lacked confidence and made a joke one game about being a catcher, putting on some of the equipment. Sam

quickly told Tim that he was going into the game to catch. Tim had a look of terror in his eyes, but Sam had Tim put on the equipment and practice catching as our other pitchers warmed up. By the final inning, Tim trotted out in full gear behind home plate and did a competent job as a catcher. He came back to the bench at the end of the inning with a smile from ear to ear, having accomplished something that had terrified him only an hour earlier.

The following year Sam returned to coach in our church league. A new group of teenaged guys from Steinmann were interested in starting their own team, but needed someone to lead them. Sam coached this team, which finished dead last its first year, to becoming champions, continuing to invite and encourage more and more players.

In the last few years, my relationship with Sam came full circle. As interest in fast-ball at our church waned, our two church teams amalgamated and twenty years after he first invited me to play ball, I once again found Sam as my coach. By this time I found that our relationship had changed. Sam still offered encouragement and the occasional piece of advice. However, as he dealt with issues on the team, he would ask me for my thoughts on what he had said or how he had handled the situation, wanting my feedback on his leadership.

Last spring Sam announced to our team that he was retiring. After 40 years as a player and coach, Sam didn’t want to be tied to a baseball schedule that forced him to run off to a ball diamond a few times each week. While disappointed, the players understood that Sam had definitely earned the right to walk away from the game. While he still regularly makes his way to the diamond to watch our games, his presence on our bench is missed.

Over 20 years I was mentored by and got to work with Sam as he coached fast pitch in our community and our church. He was a true example of how to be inclusive, encouraging, motivating, and tough when necessary, in order to build the confidence and get the most out of his players. Little did I know the impact Sam would have on me when he found me in our church hallway almost 25 years ago and informed me that I was going to play church ball. ❧



*Henry and Tina Dirks (seated) look at photos of their years working in overseas missions. Grandson Nathan and Taryn Dirks will soon be leaving for Botswana where his parents Sharon and Rudy Dirks served in the 1990s.*

## Following a dream: Three generations of mission workers to Africa

STORY AND PHOTO BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

Special to Canadian Mennonite  
VIRGIL, ONT.

**I**t all began with a young girl's dream of working in overseas missions. But Tina Weier married Henry Dirks before she was able to live that dream. Nine years later, at the Canadian Conference in Calgary in 1961, Henry met Levi Keidel (from Africa) and Kenneth Bauman (from India), who influenced him in deciding to work overseas. Levi spoke of the importance of Christian literature in Africa, and with Henry's radio ministry and graphic design background it seemed a good match.

Tina and Henry left for Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) in 1963 with five children under the age of 10 (the sixth child was born in Congo). They were in the Congo till 1976, in Canada till 1982, and back in the Congo

till 1993. Henry worked with publishing and printing African literature, Bibles and hymnals, in 25 different languages for 22 different denominations. Tina enjoyed hosting the many families that passed through their literature centre. As the children got older she became involved with proof reading and type-setting.

Their son Rudy spent his elementary and high school years in the Congo, but when he left for Canada to attend university, he knew he would be back. He married Sharon Andres, and they settled in Toronto where Rudy taught at Tyndale University College and they started a marriage and counselling business. With the college in a transition period, the time came for Rudy to revisit his dream.

Sharon thought their mission call was to work in Toronto but soon she was ready to answer God's call to Africa. They worked in Gaborone, Botswana, from 1996 till 2003, working in leadership development, Bible teaching and HIV/AIDS counselling with the African Independent Churches (AIC). They developed a manual for ministers to use in teaching, counselling and marriage preparation.

Nathan, son of Rudy and Sharon, grandson of Henry and Tina, moved to Botswana with his parents and two younger sisters when he was 12. Although he had grown up in Toronto, he felt connected to Africa through his grandparents' and father's stories. Even so, it was a difficult move, particularly giving up his dream of a hockey career. It didn't take long to connect with the community, and to see God at work, as he made friends in the school environment. His faith began to make sense to him.

Nathan came back to Canada to go to university and eventually married Taryn Lepp. She had been going through a time of self-evaluation at university, struggling with the influence of materialism and knew she was ready for a change. When she met Nathan and the Dirks family, she saw a joy in them she had never seen before.

So the dream continues. Taryn and Nathan have signed up for a three-year term to work in the same city Nathan lived in many years ago. They will teach at the Christian College in Gaborone, Botswana, working with AIC churches in leadership development, creating teaching resources and working with HIV/AIDS programs.

When Henry and Tina first left for Africa in 1963, they took all they would need for one year in 24 barrels. Times have changed and Nathan and Taryn do not have to do this. Communications have changed—letters that Henry and Tina sent took months, and did not always get to their destination. Telephone calls were a luxury. With e-mail, cell phones and Skype, keeping in touch is easy today.

What were some hardships? Learning to live in a new culture was difficult at first. Being watched by everyone felt like living in a fishbowl and took getting used to. Coming back to Canada was hard—people and things had changed. The first year in university without parents nearby was a

challenge. The calling to mission work was confirmed so often overseas, but not so much in Canada. Leaving jobs and career advancements as well as finding jobs upon returning made some decision-making difficult.

What have been the benefits? Living in another culture was a great experience and

meeting so many Christian workers from other denominations was very enriching. Even though family celebrations in Canada were missed, the family unit spent much time together and there special closeness. There is also great satisfaction in knowing one is doing God's will while developing a deeper faith. The printed literature for the

indigenous people will always be there, in spite of the country's hurdles.

The common thread for all the generations was the importance of responding to God's call wherever it takes you—to be a missionary across the street or around the world. ✎

## Colombian community resists illegal palm planting

Christian Peacemaker Teams  
LAS PAVAS, COLOMBIA

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) has been supporting the community of Las Pavas, as an oil palm corporation has tried to extend its plantation on land designated for use by displaced farmers. On July 11, a CPTer was slapped by a corporate representative of Aportes San Isidro (ASI), as the CPTer was documenting the situation.

In late June, over 250 of the farmers' young banana trees were destroyed and 40 cows went missing. On July 9, workers for ASI gathered at the company's ranch adjacent to the community's cluster of small houses, preparing to plant palm on land the farmers had cultivated. Heavily armed police arrived soon afterward. When the community explained that Colombia's Constitutional Court had upheld the community's right to be on the land, the police stated that the community could not plant palm.

The moment the police were gone, however, the palm workers proceeded to plant. The Las Pavas community sprang into action, standing in front of tractors to block their entrance and forcing the workers to carry the plants to a field a few kilometres away.

The next day, as ASI workers planted more illegal palm, the community called the police who arrived by helicopter and promised to mediate the situation. The Colombian Institute for Rural Development (INCODER) issued a statement calling ASI's planting illegal, but the planting continued.

By the following day, tensions ran high

and the community reactivated its blockade. In one tense moment, broadcast by national news, the palm company's lawyer slapped a CPTer who was documenting events.

CPT Colombia invites prayer support for the farmers as they defend the land and their right to work it. As of July 16, ASI's illegal palm planting and the community's



*Las Pavas farmers block palm plantation workers from entering their land.*

nonviolent resistance continued. A Spanish video has been posted on Youtube documenting the aggression against the farmers in Las Pavas. ✎

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## ARTBEAT

## Rempel launches her new book, *Please Pass the Faith*

BY ARDELL STAUFFER

Mennonite Church Canada  
WINNIPEG

**E**lsie Rempel, Mennonite Church Canada Formation Consultant, launched her new book, *Please Pass the Faith*, at Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2012 in Vancouver. The book explores “spiritual grandparenting” as an intentional way to share faith with the next generation in a world full of distractions and busy schedules.

Spiritual grandparenting is more than taking an interest in biological grandchildren. In fact, it is a role that requires neither grandchildren nor marriage. “Spiritual grandparenting is relating to those in the first third of life, with the willingness to be spiritual companions or co-pilgrims,” says Rempel.

Spiritual grandparenting is a mentoring practice with biblical precedents, Rempel says. “The whole culture of the Bible was one where elders were respected and integrated into the lives of children.”

Her book examines the challenges of these relationships, tending one’s own spirituality, and the process of how faith grows and matures. With this background in place, she gives practical advice for connecting across generations, interweaving and building the faith of old and young in the church.

“Some [elders] have learned to be a blessing for younger folk,” she says, “and others need to learn to bless and mentor others into leadership, rather than shape the church into a senior’s club,” says Rempel. The most critical thing is unconditional love for the young, she believes, and genuine interest in their lives. Through these interactions young and old can share “the time-honoured tradition of telling stories about our lives, and finding our place in God’s big story.”

Faith formation is not a one-way street

from old to young. “I’ve learned so much and been so blessed by my ministry with young people,” says Rempel. “That’s one reason I had to write this book, to share these blessings with others.”

Rempel, a member at Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, has an master of arts degree in theology and brings experience from 40 years of children’s ministry as a lay leader, camp pastor, and staff trainer, as well as 13 years as a teacher in a Mennonite elementary school.



PHOTO BY DEBORAH FROESE

*Elsie Rempel was available to sign her new book at MC Canada Assembly in Vancouver.*

Most recently, Rempel wrote curriculum for vacation Bible school, edited a Bible study series on Revelation, and served as a mentor to elementary school teachers in Zambia through a Mennonite Central Committee program. ☿

### BOOK REVIEW

## The messy practice of community and theology

*Building the Resilient Community: Lessons from the Lost Boys of Sudan.* M. Jan Holton. Cascade Books, Eugene, OR, 2010, 176 pages

REVIEWED BY DAVID DRIEDGER

**A**s a seminary student my experience in the field of pastoral theology could have been marked, perhaps eulogized, by words like *stale*, *boring*, and *irrelevant*. Books claimed to reflect on the grandest truths of Christian faith and the most important elements of Christian practice. Reading these books, however, I found that I just couldn’t *care* about what they were saying. The examples seemed



pat. The theology seemed elementary and uninspiring. There was a sort of strained reverse mathematics that attempted to fit our messy reality into abstracted ideas.

It has been some time since I have read anything contemporary in the field of pastoral theology, so if *Building the Resilient Community* is any reflection of the current state of the discipline, I welcome

the change. Working through the book I became increasingly impressed with its “earthy” rather than sanitized theology. The book attempts to understand the influences that allowed a small refugee group from Sudan to display great resilience despite the traumatic experiences they encountered in their journey.

This refugee group came to be known as the Lost Boys and captured significant media attention in the United States. Holton spends the majority of the book helping us to understand both the context and experience of this group in order to provide the framework for interpreting their unique resilience. This part of the book could be called an ethnographical study, a form of qualitative research that takes into account both personal testimonies and social and political influences.

The strength of Holton’s approach is her ability to remain descriptive without succumbing to the twin temptations of imposing undue meaning on her account on one hand or assuming an air of objective neutrality on the other. Holton does not begin with “proper theology” to see how their experience will fit, rather she explores their experience to see what theology might learn from them. One significant source of resiliency came from this group’s ability to form relatively safe spaces. This was both literal and symbolic. At times in the midst of harsh travels the group formed a circle of bodies to protect one another from natural predators such as lions. At other times this expression took the form of moral obligation to the group such that certain decisions could simply not be made without considering the implications of the community.

There is also no attempt to idealize the various components of their culture and beliefs as Holton addresses potential weaknesses in their expressions such as the role of women and how they interpret politics theologically.

Holton offers an admittedly messy account, but how could pastoral theology be otherwise? This book is worth a read if only to learn about the experience of one particular refugee community. The gift of also having someone help us reflect on this account theologically should not be overlooked by denomination like ours that

### /// Briefly noted

#### Third edition of *Seven Things Children Need* published

After selling more than 125,000 copies and being translated into over 20 languages, a third edition of a popular Herald Press title has been refreshed for new generations. *Seven Things Children Need*, by pastor and prolific author John M. Drescher, was re-released on June 26, after previously being published in 1976 and re-released in 1988. Like renowned childhood experts Dr. Benjamin Spock and Dr. Terry Brazelton of earlier eras, the Mennonite church’s own “Dr.” Drescher has helped thousands of parents, teachers and churches consider the basic needs of children beyond food and shelter. In *Seven Things Children Need*, Drescher emphasizes how parents can meet their children’s seven most basic needs: significance, security, acceptance, love, praise, discipline and God. The thoughts are conveyed in simple, down-to-earth language, with many examples gleaned from a parent group that participated in the original research for the book. In “refreshing” the book, attention was given to updating the examples and language, as well as giving consideration to other Bible translations and paraphrases in the Scriptures quoted. Helpful study questions and quizzes are included with each chapter for use by groups.

—MennoMedia



clings to the word “community” despite not always knowing just what we mean by it. // *David Driedger is associate pastor at First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, and a Canadian Mennonite blogger.*

## New from Herald Press

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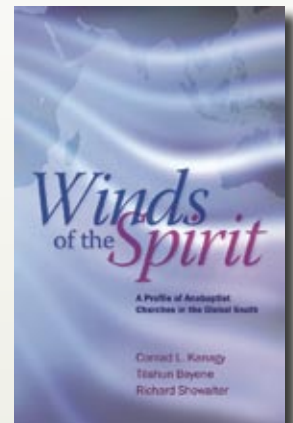
by Conrad L. Kanagy, Tilahun Beyene, Richard Showalter

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# Students help shape new devotional book

BY STEVE SHENK

MennoMedia

High school students had a direct hand in shaping the development of a devotional book for their age group. Their input came through a Sunday school class led by the author and at a national youth convention.

The result was *Dive: Devotions for Deeper Living*, authored by Cindy Massanari Breeze of Champaign, Ill., and released by Herald Press in late March. Not only did her Sunday school class help shape the devotional book, but it was their idea in the first place, says Breeze.

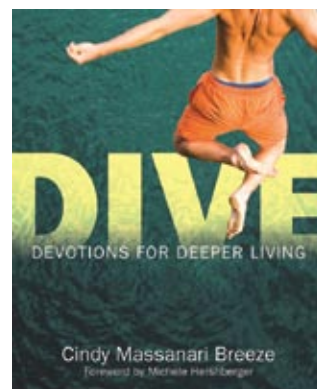
The book, rooted in Scripture and prayer, uses more than 100 meditations to look at a variety of issues important to young people who want to grow in their relationship with God. *Dive* covers difficult topics like trauma and failure, but it also offers plenty of humour, real-life stories and celebration. Each topical section in the book concludes with specific suggestions for “living it out.”

The author, recently retired, has worked with children and youths her entire adult

life, first as a public school music teacher and then as an associate pastor. “One of my greatest joys in ministry,” she says, “was teaching the high school Sunday school class at First Mennonite Church for 17 years.”

Michele Hershberger, a Hesston (Kan.) College instructor and frequent speaker at youth gatherings, recalls in the book’s “Forward” the devotionals of her youth, with their “trite little stories that make it all

sound too easy.” Not so in *Dive*, she writes. “Cindy dares each of us to love ourselves, to gather the courage to claim for ourselves the radical identity of God’s beloved daughters and sons. . . . In our day, nothing takes more bravery.” ❧



# Curriculum, cookbooks top sellers for MennoMedia

BY STEVE SHENK

MennoMedia

The top sellers for MennoMedia since it began as a merged agency in July 2011 are Christian education materials and cookbooks, according to recent sales reports. Other top sellers are hymn books, a cappella music CDs, periodicals like the Rejoice! devotional, and newer books like *The Naked Anabaptist*.

The No. 1 seller since the merger is *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*, which has sold more than 26,000 copies since its release. Based on a successful blog by the same name, the book was authored by 10 women, most of whom are of Russian-German heritage and live in British Columbia. The No. 2 seller is Adult Bible Study, which is used by many Sunday school classes across Canada and the U.S.

The sales of MennoMedia, which serves both Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A., fall under three categories of products:

- **Herald Press**, a brand name for books that has been used since the 1940s. Its all-time best-seller is the *More-with-Less*



*Cookbook* by Doris Janzen Longacre, which has sold nearly 750,000 copies since its initial release in 1976.

- **Third Way Media**, which provides electronic media such as the *Shaping Families* radio program and website, and the *Waging Peace* documentary.

- **Faith & Life Resources**, offering a variety of curricula, periodicals, hymn books, worship resources and church supplies. It has accounted for about 60 percent of MennoMedia’s sales since the merger. ❧


## /// Briefly noted

### The Top 10 bestseller list since MennoMedia’s founding last July:

1. *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*
2. Adult Bible Study
3. *Simply in Season*
4. *More-with-Less Cookbook*
5. Who are the Mennonites? (brochure)
6. Sing the Story: Hymnal Supplement
7. Sing the Journey: Hymnal Supplement
8. *Extending the Table*
9. *Martyrs Mirror*
10. *The Naked Anabaptist*



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*Graffiti painted on the Wall surrounding the West Bank.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VANESSA SNYDER-PENNER



*Vanessa Snyder-Penner at Qumran, the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.*



*Daoud Nassar's brother shows the Yella group a well at the Tent of Nations.*

## Swords and ploughshares

*How a farm in the West Bank is using land to practice turning the other cheek*

BY VANESSA SNYDER-PENNER

Special to Young Voices

**“T**o live in the Holy Land, you must be crazy, or you must believe in miracles,” farmer Daoud Nassar tells our group assembled in a cave just outside of Bethlehem. He is sharing the story of his family’s land and their struggle to keep it. Yet the man sitting in front of us does not seem crazy. He has quiet, intense eyes and a resolute tone. There is fire behind those eyes, but not insanity.

Daoud’s family farm is more than just an agricultural operation, it is a battlefield. Named the Tent of Nations, it is a traditional, Palestinian farm, complete with an olive grove and a vineyard. The Tent of Nations is located within the 60 percent of the West Bank that is completely controlled by the Israelis.

Unlike areas such as Bethlehem, in which day-to-day life is controlled by the Palestinian Authority, the area around the Tent of Nations is under Israeli civil and military control. Standing on a high point on the farm, you see Israeli settlements in every direction you look, populated by Orthodox Jews who believe they have a God-given right to the land of the West Bank. The slow encroachment of Jewish settlements and the restrictive legislation

placed on Palestinians living in the Israeli-controlled West Bank are gradually choking the Palestinians.

There are many possible responses one can have as a Palestinian living under such conditions Daoud says. Some leave, some turn to violence, and still others do nothing, paralysed by self-inflicted victimization. The response taken by the Tent of Nations is different from all of these, and can be best described as turning the other cheek.

Turning the other cheek, as Jesus taught us to do, is not a passive response, but rather it is a creative form of protest, meant to undermine the wrongdoer without disrespecting him or her. By offering the other cheek, you are forcing your oppressor to strike you with the palm of his or her hand. This signifies your status as their equal, as opposed to the degrading back-handed slap given to slaves.

Likewise, the Tent of Nations has found creative, non-violent ways to work around the pressures placed on them by the Israeli government and to make themselves completely self-sufficient. Instead of buying electricity from Israel, the Tent of Nations generates its own using a Solar Array donated by a German company. Instead of buying

Israeli water, they dig large cisterns on their land and live almost entirely dependent on rain water. And finally, when Israel refuses to grant them building permits to renovate their homes, they dig caves underground which are used as meeting rooms, bedrooms and a chapel.

Back in the cool cave, the main meeting room of the Tent of Nations, with its walls painted with slogans of peace in a multitude of languages, I realize that the people here fully encapsulate what it means to work for justice and peace, not only for their family, but for their neighbours and their planet.

The Nassar family has literally scorned the sword and has instead picked up its ploughshares. By the time our group of travellers drives away from the Tent of Nations, I too, am ready to believe in miracles. ☸

*Vanessa Snyder-Penner is an 18-year-old university student from Waterloo, Ontario, and a member of Waterloo North Mennonite Church. She recently took part in Yella, a tour of Israel/Palestine for young adults organized jointly by Mennonite Central Committee Ontario and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.*



*One of the cave-bedrooms built underground at the Tent of Nations*

## Marching to Zion

*Mennonite reflections on the idea of pilgrimage*

BY VANESSA SNYDER-PENNER

Special to Young Voices

I have always thought of pilgrimage as an old concept, something that Christians did in the past, but rarely do today. I certainly never imagined myself going on a pilgrimage. Even when I made the decision the travel to Israel/Palestine this spring with the MCC Yella tour group, I saw it simply as a trip to explore the historical sites and the modern political situation of the area. It wasn't until our last week in

Israel, when we arrived in Jerusalem, that I realized I was on a pilgrimage.

What is a pilgrimage? Certainly, it is a journey to a sacred place, but it is more than that. It is an act of devotion to God, an act of worship, though not one we frequently discuss in the Mennonite Church.

To read the rest of Vanessa Snyder-Penner's reflections on pilgrimage visit [youngvoices.canadianmennonite.org](http://youngvoices.canadianmennonite.org)

PHOTO BY VANESSA SNYDER-PENNER



*The Upper Room, where Jesus was said to have eaten the Last Supper with his disciples.*

## Journeying to foreign lands

*Young women go on overseas learning and service trips*

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-Editor

All the anticipation in the world cannot prepare someone for the experience of leaving home to live in a foreign country for a period of time, even though one understands that it will be a difficult undertaking and different from one's expectations. This was the case for Shina Park and Laura Dueckman, who both attend Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, BC.

Dueckman, who lived in Kopeng,

Indonesia for this past year, worked as an English Language Coordinator and writer for Mennonite Central Committee's Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program. She sat in on theology classes at a local Bible college, in order to answer questions and to help with homework. She also hosted an informal English conversation class.

Dueckman wrote stories for Mennonite Central Committee about MCC Indonesia



*Shina Park (far right) visiting with some young people from a Mayan community in Guatemala.*



*Laura Dueckman (far right) with some of the girls from the school in Indonesia.*

and some of the programs they support. She also wrote about a church that was bombed while she and her team were in the area. They had to be evacuated by an organization called, Stlag.

“I’m not entirely sure what I’ll take away from this experience. I was hoping that this year would give me some clarity on my future career. That didn’t exactly happen, but whatever lessons I’ve learned, whatever ways I’ve changed, I think that will take a bit for the experience to make itself evident,” she said.

Park, a second year Goshen College student, spent two months learning Spanish and volunteering for the Anabaptist seminary, SEMILLA in Guatemala City, Guatemala this summer. She did website updates and design for the seminary.

What was most evident for Park during her time there was the overwhelming gap between the rich and the poor, and the ways in which people are using art to pull themselves and others out of poverty. She was introduced to an organization called, “Becoming Fools” in which a man used the art of clowning to help get children off the streets. Park also hopes to use different kinds of art to work with children, possibly in Guatemala in the future.

“It can be a really empowering tool,” Park said. She has learned quite a bit of Spanish and hopes to use it when she goes back to Goshen College in the Fall and takes a study service term class. She plans on going to Peru

Dueckman has discovered a heart for refugees and newcomers to a foreign country and hopes to work with them in the future. “Now I see how that feels,” she said.

For Park and Dueckman, having a church

family that was supporting them from afar helped them get through the rough days, weeks, and months.

Emmanuel Mennonite Church emphasizes overseas work. Their Missions Peace and Justice committee plans community events on occasion, but global awareness is present in Sunday school, worship, and preaching regularly, Pastor April Yamasaki said. Yamasaki personally supports people who go overseas by talking to them about their trip and praying for them, but the church does as well.

“Emmanuel was very generous. There were numerous people who gave money to me as I had to raise a contribution minimum to go. Throughout the year, I would get emails, letters, cards, a care package, and my parents would tell me about when they would pray for me in church. It was really nice knowing that I had this community back home that was thinking about me while I was away,” Dueckman said.

“My mom was telling me how the church was praying for me all the time. A lot of bad things happened to people while I was away. Nothing happened to me! Nothing was stolen and I had a great time,” Park said.

Park and Dueckman both lived in dangerous places during their time overseas, but loneliness was also a challenge they faced.

“Overseas missions can be very lonely and it’s good for us as a church to remember that being the church isn’t just what we do in Abbotsford,” Yamasaki said.

Both Park and Dueckman say that they would consider doing overseas service work again. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMAS EPP



*Thomas Epp (left) went to 10 weddings in 16 weeks, including Stefan and Samantha Penner’s.*

## ***Always the guest, never the groom***

*I went to 10 weddings this summer. What did you do?*

**THOMAS EPP AS TOLD TO AARON EPP**

Special to Young Voices

**L**ast year, a few of my cousins and a bunch of the friends I made growing up in church, in high school and during my time studying at Canadian Mennonite

University got engaged. And when I say “a bunch,” I mean 20. Ten couples, all planning weddings for the spring and summer of 2012.

When I realized I was going to be invited to all of those weddings (including one on each weekend in July, and two on May long weekend—one in Steinbach, Man., and the other the next day in Calgary, Alta.—yeah, I made it to both), I was not looking forward to it.

I thought I would lose all my weekends and I would have to spend a lot of money on gifts. I thought I would have to wear a bunch of nice clothes that I would end up drenching with sweat while sitting in non-air-conditioned churches on hot, sunny Saturday afternoons when I'd rather be at the beach.

That did happen—I did sweat through a lot of really nice clothes this past summer. But once I realized that these weddings were about my friends and not me, it was a lot of fun attending 10 weddings between the start of May and the end of August.

I played guitar and sang at Breanne and Nic's wedding. I watched the congregants work together to get the chairs inside as rain threatened to ruin Kerri and Tim's outdoor wedding. I laughed at Heather's excited gasp after Michael slipped the ring on her finger during their vows. I enjoyed a beautiful sunset over Camp Valaqua after Megan and Francis tied the knot. I danced with my mom, dad and others to ABBA's classic song "Dancing Queen" at Ryan and Julia's wedding. Zach and Julie served me and the rest of their guests communion.

It's great to share in your friends' joy as they make promises to each other that will impact the rest of their lives. With a lot of the couples, I had seen their relationships grow from the beginning. It's nice when you see a relationship work out and make it that far.

It's also fun to spend a day with friends and family, in some cases catching up with people you haven't seen in a long time.

It was interesting to see how each couple

made their wedding their own by giving it characteristics that were unique to them, whether it was the venue or the music or something else. There was an emphasis on making the day special, but I could tell in each case, the people getting married had thought hard about what the day meant, and they had spent the months leading up to the wedding preparing not only for the day itself, but for the marriage that would follow it.

There was so much support from the families of the couples. Parents were visibly happy for their sons and daughters.

As many of the officiants noted in their sermons, there was a community of people to support each couple getting married. That was the best part of all the weddings I attended this summer—getting a chance to see and be a part of the community that surrounds each couple.

Truth be told, I'm still slightly miffed I had to miss so many long weekends. Having attended all of these weddings, I'd like to offer some advice to anyone out there who is planning to get married:

- Try to keep the ceremony short. No one likes long ceremonies.
- There shouldn't be too much time in between the ceremony and the reception.
- Keep the day moving!
- Check with me so I can OK which weekend you have your wedding on. I can already tell you, the May, July and August long weekends are out.
- Weddings outside are awesome.

Having good music at your wedding is also awesome.

- See #3.

Finally, my seventh tip: Don't worry about what people are going to think about your wedding day. So in other words, ignore my whole list.

It's your day. Do whatever you want with it. ☘

PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMAS EPP



*One of the moments that stuck out among the 10 weddings that Thomas Epp attended was Heather Schellenberg's (middle) reaction when Michael Harms (left) slipped the ring onto her finger as they exchanged vows.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF AARON EPP



*Thomas Epp (left) and his brother Aaron before their friends Tim and Kerri's wedding near Steinbach, Man. (Thomas isn't dressed for the ceremony yet!)*

PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMAS EPP



*Thomas Epp's wedding adventures this past summer took him to Boissevain, Man. for Codi Guenther (left) and Jon McPhail's (right) wedding.*

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Sept. 13-Oct. 25:** 7-week, Embracing Aging series at Menno Place, Abbotsford. Thursdays 7-9 p.m. For more information go to [mennoplacement.ca](http://mennoplacement.ca).

**Sept. 27, 28:** Voices for Peace concerts at Peace Lutheran Church, Abbotsford, 7:30 p.m. (27) and Regent College, Vancouver, 8 p.m. (28).

**Sept. 29:** Mennonite Fall Fair at Civic Centre in Prince George. For information call 604-850-6639.

**Oct. 12-14:** Women's retreat weekend at Camp Squeah. Theme: "Simply majestic." Speaker: Jackie Ayer, family literacy coordinator for Chilliwack Community Services.

**Oct. 27:** Columbia Bible College annual fundraising dinner. Visit [www.columbiabc.edu/fundraisingdinner](http://www.columbiabc.edu/fundraisingdinner) for more details.

**Oct. 16-17:** JJ. Thiessen Lectures at CMU.

**Oct. 19:** CMU Campus visit day.

**Nov. 2:** MCI soup and pie fundraiser and fall concert, at Buhler Hall, Gretna.

**Nov. 13:** Evening of the Arts at Westgate Collegiate, 7 p.m.

### Ontario

**Sept. 8:** Wanner Mennonite Church 23rd annual corn roast, at the church, at 5:30 p.m. Bring a donation for the local food bank.

**Sept. 9:** George Albrecht reunion at the KW Khaki Club, Wellesley, potluck at 1 p.m. Contact [bongingrich@gmail.com](mailto:bongingrich@gmail.com) for information.

**Sept. 12:** Energy Futures and Health Conference at Centre for Family Medicine, IGC classroom, 25 Joseph St., Kitchener; "Building a Clean/Healthy Energy Future" 1-5 p.m. and "How Ontario can lead Canada to a Low-Carbon Economy" 7-9 p.m.

**Sept. 15:** Erb Street Mennonite Church open house 10 a.m.-5 p.m. as part of Doors Open Waterloo Region. Lecture by Jonathan Seiling at 1:30 p.m. "War resisters and non-resistance in the War of 1812." Visit [www.regionofwaterloo.ca/doorsopen](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/doorsopen) for information.

**Sept. 21-23:** East Zorra Mennonite Church 175 anniversary celebration. Fri, Storytelling at 7 p.m.; Sat., displays and refreshments 4:30-6:30 p.m., Songfest 7 p.m.; Sun. worship with Fred Licht speaking 9:45 a.m.

**Sept. 24:** Seniors retreat at Hidden Acres with presentation by Michael Newark, meteorologist and photographer. Special music by Paul Bowman. Visit [www.hiddenacres.ca](http://www.hiddenacres.ca) or call 529-625-8602. Register by Sept. 17.

**Oct. 12-14:** Marriage Encounter weekend at Jericho House, Port Colborne. Go to [www.marriageencounterrec.org](http://www.marriageencounterrec.org) or call 529-669-8667.

**Oct. 14:** Ninth annual Gospel Vespers, at Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, from 3 to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call Will Stoltz at 519-696-2805.

**Oct. 14:** Hidden Acres Camp benefit concert at Steinmann Mennonite Church, 7 p.m. featuring Daniel Licht, Brandon Leis, Charlene Nafziger and Cherchez Vivre. For tickets contact 519-625-8602 or [info@hiddenacres.ca](mailto:info@hiddenacres.ca).

**Oct. 18-20:** Ten Thousand Villages

## Briefly noted

### Eight faith communities participate in Doors Open

In Waterloo Region, 37 sites, many not regularly open to the public, will participate in the tenth annual Doors Open Waterloo Region on Sept. 15. This free, architecture and heritage open house event began in 2003. Participating faith communities include: Wesley United church (Cambridge), St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (Cambridge), St. Matthews Lutheran church (Kitchener), St. John's Lutheran Church (Waterloo), Erb St. Mennonite Church (Waterloo), St. Boniface Roman Catholic Church and Cemetery (Maryhill), St. Clement Roman Catholic Church (St. Clements), St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church (Wellesley Township). Most sites are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

—Doors Open Waterloo Region

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festival sale at Hamilton Mennonite Church, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. (18, 19) and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (20). Enjoy soup and dessert at the Villages Café.

**Oct. 28:** CD release concert for 'Sing for Joy,' the third recording by Lifted

Voices; at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, at 7 p.m.

**Nov. 17:** Fairview Mennonite Home handicraft sale with Christmas crafts, decorations and more; 9 a.m.- 2 p.m. with lunch available.

## Classifieds

### Announcement

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in the autumn forest;  
Sorry I couldn't take  
both.*

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Kerry Fast Editing  
kerryfast@gmail.com  
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### 75th Anniversary Bethel Mennonite Church

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### Employment Opportunities

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Interested candidates may contact the Search Committee Chair Rick Giesbrecht at 204-746-8365 or rickandliz@xplornet.com

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### INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTOR

Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal (MFM) is currently seeking an Intentional Interim Pastor to provide leadership during a time of transition, healing, and integration.

Located in the heart of a vibrant, multi-ethnic neighbourhood in Montreal, MFM is a diverse urban congregation with approximately 60 regular attenders.

The term is for one to two years at 75% FTE. Flexibility in how the work is arranged and scheduled is possible, depending on the needs of a successful candidate. We encourage all interested and qualified candidates to apply.

Training and/or experience as an intentional interim pastor is desirable.

Inquiries, resumes, and letters of interest may be directed to:

Henry Paetkau  
Area Church Minister  
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada  
4489 King St. E.  
Kitchener, ON N2P 2G2  
Telephone: 519-650-3806 / 800-206-9356, ext. 107  
Fax: 519-650-3947 / E-mail: [hpaetkau@mcec.ca](mailto:hpaetkau@mcec.ca)

Reviews will begin in mid-August 2012 and will continue until a suitable individual is found.



## Vice-President Administration & Finance

Canadian Mennonite University invites applications and/or nominations for the position of Vice-President Administration & Finance.

Applications will be reviewed beginning October 1 until the position is filled.

A full position profile and other details can be found at  
<http://www.cmu.ca/employment.html>

Nominations or expressions of interest should be addressed to:

Dr. Earl Davey, Interim President  
Chair, Search Committee  
c/o Director of Human Resources, [hrdirector@cmu.ca](mailto:hrdirector@cmu.ca)  
Canadian Mennonite University  
500 Shaftesbury Blvd.  
Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2 Canada | [www.cmu.ca](http://www.cmu.ca)



*A food distribution in Mali, implemented by Caritas Mali, with support from Canadian Foodgrains Bank members Development and Peace, Mennonite Central Committee and the United Church of Canada, targets those who are most vulnerable in the community, including widows, pregnant and nursing mothers, men who are supporting very large households, and people with physical disabilities.*

## ***Food distribution helps widow reclaim dignity***

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KELLY DI DOMENICO  
Canadian Foodgrains Bank



*Sara Doua*

**F**or Sara Doua of Bamako, Mali, receiving a three-month ration means she no longer has to go door-to-door asking her neighbours for food.

“It has been at least five months since I have seen this much food in my house,” she said of the 135 kilos of maize, 25 kilos of beans, and nine litres of oil she received through a recent Canadian Foodgrains Bank-supported food distribution. The food, which is enough for two months, means the 50-year-old widow “won’t have to go door-to-door anymore” asking for food. “I can go out without shame,” she said. “This has helped me reclaim my dignity.”

The distribution was part of a \$10 million Foodgrains Bank’s response to the food crisis in West Africa’s Sahel region, where 18 million people are at risk of hunger after poor rains caused massive food shortages in many areas.

Sara, whose small frame seems to sag under the weight of her daily struggle to feed her family, became a widow 15 years ago. She was making millet beer to support her family until she developed respiratory problems; she had to give it up. Before receiving the food ration, she was eking out a living by picking the leaves of the baobab tree, which are used to make a type of sauce in Mali. It would take her about half a day to pick a bag, which she could then sell at the market for a few dollars. This year, however, with her crops all gone, she has also been forced to go door-to-door to ask for food.

The distributions in Mali are timed to provide food until the staple millet crop is harvested in October. Partners on the ground are reporting that the crop so far is looking good. ☺