

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Learning
by doing

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EDITORIAL

Injustice 'once removed'

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Just as Carol Penner, in our lead article calling us to account on Remembrance Day, persuasively makes the case that killing is killing even though it is "once removed," so does much of our engagement as "Caesar's citizens" keep us distanced from the grim realities of injustice in our world.

Other horrors of war are sanitized and removed from our personal experience, such as landmines or cluster bombs. We really don't experience the

suffering of family members losing limbs or even dying when children innocently play in schoolyards or the family garden, unaware of the violent instruments of war after the armed conflict has subsided.

Ours is a peaceful land where soil is productive with the growing of corn, wheat, barley, pasture grass and soybeans. Our gardens are not only flush with vegetables and flowers, but are places of solace and connecting with our Creator as we dig into the soil and indulge the joys of harvest. Never does it occur to us that an enemy has planted a landmine.

Never are we given a half-hour's notice from the governing authorities that our house will be bulldozed to rubble because one of our sons has thrown a brick at the security police driving by, as happens regularly in the land of Palestine, where Israel is so preoccupied with security and in keeping an occupied people under control that the slightest provocation is considered treasonous and criminal.

It wasn't until I heard the anguish of

that family in Bethlehem during the 1988 Intifada that the consequences of that action became "personal" for me, my spouse and my Christian friends. The family's home business was destroyed, suddenly depriving them of an income, as well as

their comfortable living quarters wiped out in a matter of minutes. Such daily terror is not a part of our lives here in Canada; we get annoyed when our taxes increase for services, or our privacy invaded by telemarketers calling at dinner

time. Our freedoms are so entrenched that they are a matter of entitlement.

We do not "see" the degradation of indigenous communities and culture when Canadian mining companies exploit the minerals of developing countries like Colombia and the Congo while turning a blind eye to the needs of a poor and struggling population. Jobs are often short-lived, says Mennonite Central Committee, Ottawa, and the financial benefits to the economy are meager. Mines often displace people from their homes, destroy land, and contaminate water supplies. Frequently, the people who occupy the land are not adequately consulted. Sometimes, Canadian mining operations contribute to human rights violations, violence and armed conflict.

It is indeed shocking to know that 75 percent of all mining companies in the world are based in Canada. That, we can say, is injustice "once removed," but all of us who benefit in a boost to our own economy can so easily and glibly separate



ourselves from any complicity in the suffering.

As Canadian citizens enjoying the "good life," we can so easily forget that our primary citizenship is not of this world. Our priorities and values are distinctly different from those of the political and economic forces that govern our lives, even though they seem inconsequential and "once removed." My former pastor, Phil Kniss of Park View Mennonite Church in the U.S. put it best recently when talking to high school students about their involvement in the upcoming presidential election where the electorate is severely polarized. This is what he said, in part: *Let's first ask ourselves about who we believe we are.*

We embody the presence of Jesus in the world.

We represent the character and values of Jesus, as a body.

So, what were the character and values of Jesus?

Jesus was political.

Jesus was sometimes an activist in his Jewish community.

His people were under occupation by a brutal empire.

And he engaged the political powers—both religious and Empire.

He confronted both, but not on their terms.

Jesus confronted the religious powers, not by taking over their power positions in the temple,

but by touching lepers, eating with tax collectors,

hanging out with sinful people, and otherwise living a different kind of righteousness.

And Jesus confronted the powers of the Empire, not by taking up arms and staging a takeover, but by simply refusing to bow to their absolute power.

That is who we are as Jesus followers.

That is how we live.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Students from Bethany College, Hepburn, Sask., learn about First Nations culture by helping to put up a tipi at the Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation, Duck Lake, Sask.

PHOTO: BETHANY COLLEGE PHOTO BY RANDY KLASSEN

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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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Peace to our neighbour once removed

BY CAROL PENNER

PHOTO BY RANDY KLAASSEN



In 2008, Bethany Mennonite Church in Virgil, Ont., used flowers to put a peace symbol around the church's peace pole. The symbol, first developed for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in England, is made from the semaphore flag signals for the letters "N" and "D," standing for nuclear disarmament.

When I was little, I remember my dad explaining our relatives to us: "She's my cousin, twice removed." It's an expression that talks about a relationship that is a bit more distant. Today I want to talk about our neighbours, once removed. Why is it easier to hurt people when they are removed from us? What does it mean to be a Christian when so many of our neighbours are once removed?

The story of David and Uriah is a story of a neighbour once removed. David commits adultery with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. Uriah is a man who is loyal to King David, who has fought valiantly for him. In the book of 2 Kings, Uriah is listed as one of David's 30 great warriors. David can't bring himself to commit cold-blooded murder, so he conspires with General Joab to have Uriah put at the forefront of the fighting. He instructs Joab to abandon him to the Ammonites, to pull back the other soldiers, and leave him to be killed.

In David's mind, this is not murder. He didn't push the spear into Uriah's heart, it was the Ammonites who did it! Soldiers are always dying in the line of duty. When David hears of Uriah's death he says, "The sword devours now one and now another." He deflects guilt about this murder from himself to the weapon of the sword, to war itself. It's violence once removed, towards a neighbour once removed—so much easier on the conscience. There is no blood on David's hands, or so he thinks.

At the end of the day, Nathan the prophet comes with the message from God that David has displeased the Lord. David has done the wrong thing. Violence once removed towards the neighbour once removed is still violence in God's eyes. It is still a sin.

It's a sin that is so easy to commit, because sinning

ISTOCK PHOTO



A drone can deliver a missile from the other side of the world.

against our neighbour once removed just doesn't feel so bad. We know that on a personal level.

Words can injure

Think about people in our workplace or neighbourhood. Even if we are mad at them, we hold back and don't say hurtful things to their face. But it is very easy to tell other people what we really think about them. You can call this activity by a lot of names: bad-mouthing, back-biting, backstabbing, belittling, casting aspersions, defaming, gossiping, libelling, muck-raking, mud-slinging, slamming, slandering, vilifying. We have a lot of words in the English language to describe saying bad things about someone once removed! I think we have that many words because we do it so often.

And we've all done it. We say something nasty about someone, or we write a snarky comment on a Facebook page. "We're just getting it off our chest;" "We're just letting off some steam." But

the words are like a hot potato or a bomb, they get passed quickly from person to person, not hurting anyone who passes them on, until they reach the person they are about, and it's there that they explode. BANG! We all have been on the receiving end of a gossip bomb.

If we've done the gossiping, and the person comes to us with their hurt feelings, we stammer out an apology, that usually goes; "I never meant for you to hear that." And you know truly that you would never have said that to someone's face; it's not in your character to do that, to openly push the spear of a naked insult into someone's heart. But the deed is done, and it's done to the neighbour once removed. It's easier to hurt people when you don't look them in the eye.

Scripture reminds us to watch our actions; to carefully monitor our tongue, because words are like a raging fire. We need to be careful about the tiniest sparks that come out of our mouths. That is our responsibility, as surely as it is our

responsibility not to throw a match into a forest in a dry summer. We may not mean to burn down our local conservation area, but if we are careless about a match, that is exactly what could happen.

Killing at a distance

What about hurting our neighbour once removed on a more global level? I recently read a book called *On Killing* by Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman, a psychologist who has worked with veterans in the United States. Through his work he has discovered that there is an innate quality in human beings that prevents us from killing each other.

He observes that while violence between people happens, it is not the norm. Everyone does not kill everyone all the time or the human race would not have survived this long. We may not love our neighbour, but we don't want to kill our neighbour, most of the time.

Grossman explains studies done of Civil War battles in the United States.

In the 1800s soldiers lined up on fields and just shot at each other at close range. Studies have shown that hundreds of people should have been killed each minute, but instead only one or two people were killed each minute, prolonging battles for hours and even days. The simple fact is that when faced with the body of an enemy, most people will not aim at that body, they will aim above it. They will try to scare their opponent away rather than shoot them dead.

What made a difference in the Civil War were cannons, because a cannon is operated by a team of people, which changes the personal dynamic of the weapon. It is able to kill many people at once; from further away. The army soon learned that the enemy once removed is easier to kill than the enemy near at hand. It's not surprising that weapon development has always tended in the direction of weapons that kill more people from further away.

In August 1945 an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in Japan. It was one of the most effective weapons ever used on our neighbour once removed. Hiroshima was a city of around 350,000 people. The American B-29 bomber the Enola Gay, piloted by Paul Tibbets, was 31,000 feet over the city when it dropped the bomb, which contained 64 kilograms of uranium. The plane was 11 miles away before it felt the shock of the bomb going off. Up to 100,000 people were killed within the first day from radiation, burns, and the explosion, and probably an equal number died in the following months and years from radiation sickness. That is a lot of destruction; destruction on a bigger and more devastating scale than had ever been perpetrated in such a short period of time.

Now it is not the first time, nor would it be the last time, that 200,000 people were killed in the world. In six years, Hitler killed millions of Jews in gas chambers. Stalin killed millions in a two year period in the Ukraine in the 1930s with a policy of starvation by simply removing almost all the food from a geographic area. In Rwanda in 1994, Hutus killed 800,000 Tutsis in a six month period, mostly with machetes.

The army soon learned that the enemy once removed is easier to kill than the enemy near at hand. It's not surprising that weapon development has always tended in the direction of weapons that kill more people from further away.

There are blood-soaked windows in the history of the world, but in each of these last three cases, there were people who saw what they did. In Rwanda it's clear, you don't get much closer than the end of a machete. In terms of the gas chambers, someone who was following orders heard the screams, and cleared the bodies. In the Ukraine the people who were charged with carting away the food saw the skeletal bodies lying on the roadside. We do violence to our neighbours close at hand. But when we do that, there is a cost, a psychological cost to that violence because we have witnessed the destruction we have caused.

What is most troubling in modern warfare is that we are becoming more and more removed from the victims of war. We have fighter jets that can drop bombs on people from kilometres in the air. As Canadian taxpayers, we buy fighter jets. It seems very removed from us. I personally have never seen a crater created by a bomb that Canadians have dropped. I have never seen a list of people killed by Canadian bombs. The crew that drops bombs or fires missiles never visits the site to see the destruction they caused, and the grieving families. It is our neighbour once removed. It's easy; we are just following orders, we're just paying taxes.

Power of darkness

The writer of the letter to the Ephesians talks about the cosmic powers of this present darkness. When I try to understand what that means today, in our world, I think about the darkness that comes over us when we fail to see our own responsibility for the violence of wars. There are forces conspiring to keep the public in the dark, to not let us see what we are doing, to not see that there is blood on the hands of Canadians. We

don't declare war, we just send troops and fighter jets and we never get the butchers bill from that. We say we don't have responsibility, "the sword devours now one and now another." There's nothing we can do about it, it seems. We are in the dark. And it's getting darker.

Recently if you've followed the news, you may have seen some debate about the ethics of drone warfare. A drone is an unmanned aircraft that monitors and can deliver a missile to a remote location. Drone warfare is increasingly popular in the war against terror. At least we call it "the war against terror." From the perspective of the people on the receiving end, it is terrorism itself.

In our world we have courts of law; if someone threatens you, you bring them before a court and charge them, they are tried by judge and jury, and a punishment is given if they are found guilty. This works within countries, but also to some degree between countries, with extradition treaties and international courts to bring criminals to justice.

What the United States is increasingly doing is bypassing the extradition process and international law (they say it is ineffective), and looking for the people they say are the bad guys, and just murdering them in their homes in other countries with these drones.

The argument for the drones is that they are very good at what they do. The drones monitor the compound of a terrorist. (Have you ever noticed it that bad guys always live in compounds, while the rest of us have homes?) The home is monitored to watch their movements, to see when they are alone or with their family. And the operator of the drone tries to kill them when there aren't bystanders around. So it's seen as a very clean kill, with little collateral damage.

You have to admit there's a lot more



MCC Remembrance Day logo

finesse to drone warfare than dropping a bomb on a city and killing the whole population. I find that it's very tempting to be complacent about drone warfare; it seems expedient and handy, and not that many people die. There is less violence, but does that mean it's acceptable violence?

I was reading an article about the people who operate these drones. They are nowhere near where the drone is flying. They work in the Pentagon or secret locations in North America, and they sit in a dark room all day looking at a screen, flying these little unmanned aircraft. They are given orders, they push a button and someone on the other side of the world disappears. They then leave the room and go home to their family. Their work is top secret. No one knows that this is their job. It's almost a virtual kill, in that they not only never see the victim's body, no one even knows that they have done this deed. Almost everyone is in the dark about this type of violence—the cosmic powers of this present darkness are great! It's our neighbour once removed, twice removed, a thousand times removed; so removed that the neighbour doesn't even seem real. It's almost like a video game.

But the reality is that the bomb does go off. BANG! Bodies are blown to bits, families are picking up the pieces of bodies and the pieces of their lives. It's very real at the receiving end.

I think we would see it differently if we were on the receiving end of the drones.

Imagine if the Bolivian government finally got fed up with the way Canadian mining companies are polluting their country and exploiting their people. So the Bolivians send a drone here to kill the president of a mining company in his backyard, his compound, in the Calgary suburbs.

What would happen? I guarantee that our newspapers would give front-page coverage to the bomb crater and the faces of the grieving family and in-depth interviews with witnesses. We would feel outraged that instead of trying to legally extradite and convict someone in a criminal court, the Bolivians would disrespect our boundaries and our sovereignty and just decide who they want to kill. We would call it a terrorist act.

Proclaiming peace

We are called to proclaim the gospel of peace. As Christians we need to confront the powers of darkness. We need to read the newspaper as Christians, and think about what Jesus would do in our world today. The Bible teaches that all human beings are created by God; sacred, holy, loved, and that killing each other is a sin. Killing with a machete is a sin. Killing with a drone is a sin. David found out that killing with the enemy is a sin. Even though one person is covered in blood, and one person simply presses a

computer key, both are guilty.

We live in a democratic country where we can influence what our government does. Since 2001 our military spending in Canada has increased by over 50 percent. Why since 2001? That's the year the United States declared a war on terror; Canada has risen to that call. Last year Canada spent \$21.2 billion on the Canadian military. Now the government is planning the purchase of 66 F35 fighter jets. The debate in the press has been whether they will cost \$15 or \$25 billion. While the cost is being debated, the question might be, what do we want to do with 66 fighter jets? More chillingly, Peter Mackay, our defence minister, has announced that he is looking into the purchase of unmanned aerial drones. Is that how we want to spend our tax dollars?

How will we be a church that proclaims a gospel of peace in Canada? What does it mean to be a church that confronts the cosmic powers of this present darkness? We are called to love our neighbour near at hand, and love our neighbour once removed. ☞



Carol Penner is pastor of The First Mennonite Church, Vineland, Ont. This is an edited version of a sermon she preached earlier this year.

☞ For discussion

1. Carol Penner says, "sinning against our neighbours once removed just doesn't feel so bad." Do you agree? Who might be a "neighbour once removed"? What might be some examples of sinning against such a neighbour? What is it about injuring someone close at hand that is abhorrent?
2. How is drone warfare different from conventional warfare? Is it better to use drones rather than a conventional army? If Canada used drones, would you feel responsible for the destruction they caused?
3. Penner says that for the person controlling a drone strike, it is "almost like a video game." Why do you think killing is so prevalent in video games? Are the lines between reality and virtual reality becoming blurred? Are we all becoming more desensitized to violence?
4. Instead of increasing military spending, how might Canada work at building peace around the world? What can we as individuals do to promote peace in our neighbourhoods and our relationships?

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.

✉ Food shared with the hungry represents God's table

WE APPRECIATED THE Sept, 17 issue of the *Canadian Mennonite* with its focus on "Food and Faith." Marlene Epp wrote a wonderful article on how food has meaning in other cultures and even our own if we but slow down and think about what we are eating.

But how we think of food is determined by the circumstances within which we live. I wonder what food means to us when we have the propensity in our culture to eat out at whim. What does food mean for us when its cost is "a coupon and change for a cheap burger?" I also wonder about those within our society who walk through life in poverty. What do they think when many of us have the privilege to think nothing of buying a fast burger or hotdog on a busy day?

I remember some years ago talking about food with several men from our congregation in Winnipeg. They were young boys with their mothers on the "Great Trek." With tears in their eyes they related how hungry they had been and the pain they experienced from lack of food. They saw food as a special blessing from God provided by MCC workers from North America. For them, that food represented the care and concern of others who were thinking and praying for them in their refugee plight. One of them noted, "That food was like communion for us. It represented coming to God's table in fellowship with other believers that we did not even know."

KEN REDDIG, PINAWA, MAN.

✉ Mennonites need to resist violent destruction of the earth

I REALLY APPRECIATED Randolph Haluza-Delay's fine article, "Care for Creation and Environmental Justice" (Aug. 20, page 4) and would love to see more pieces exploring such matters. He's right in saying that personal lifestyle changes will not address the current situation. He's right in calling us to discover communal ways of simplicity that can live against the death-dealing ways of mass consumption. This is solid stuff. But it's not enough. We need something more radical and more urgent, for the situation is not merely a challenge, but a "crisis."

As Christian environmentalist Bill McKibben recently said, we are in a precarious, "almost-but-not-quite-finally hopeless—position." The best and vast majority of climate scientists agree that we cannot up global temperature by more than two degrees, or we are cooked (we've already upped it by a degree). We cannot add 565 more gigatons of CO₂ or we will exceed two degrees, and the horrific reality is that there are 2795 gigatons of carbon contained in the oil, gas, and coal reserves of fossil-fuel companies—fuel that the big corporations are planning to burn (i.e., have billions already invested in). This is an emergency.

Over the past six months I've immersed myself in book after book on global warming. They all pretty much say the same thing, and it's utterly depressing. "We are," laments Christian theologian Paul Collins, "facing a massive, overarching moral problem, bigger than war. . . it is geocide, the very killing of the earth." I want to disbelieve it. But I can't, and I feel the incredible despair that such knowledge brings, especially when I ponder the future of my three kids.

It's time we Mennonites push beyond conversations about incandescent light bulbs and recycling and even sustainable communities. That's all good, but it's tinkering at the edges. It's not a sufficient response to our culture's destructiveness, and it will not stop our culture from destroying the planet. We need to massively resist and stop the "pushers"—the fossil-fuel corporations—from extracting and selling the drugs that industrial society is addicted to.

Within our Mennonite community we have subversive traditions, like Christian Peacemaker Teams, that seek to get in the way of the violence of warring peoples. What if Mennonites were to mobilize and try to resist—nonviolently, courageously, even unto jail and death—the violent crucifixion of the earth? The creation is not simply groaning, it's dying—150 species a day, more plastic than phytoplankton in giant swathes of the ocean, an Arctic that could be seasonally ice free by 2020. If global carbon emissions continue to go up by the current rate of 3 percent each year,

we only have 16 years left before we exceed that 565 gigatons and “muck” the planet. It sounds apocalyptic. *It is.* We need Mennonites to take Christ’s call to peacemaking and apply it with risk-taking abandon to the earth and this land we live in. We need to prevent the expansion of the Tar Sands, and shut that whole thing down. We need to stop the industrial train in its tracks. And we need to do it now.

STEVE HEINRICH, WINNIPEG

(The views expressed here are personal and do not represent Mennonite Church Canada.)

✉ State-sanctioned human rights cannot override church rights

I READ WITH interest Alex Hunsberger’s letter (Sept. 3, page 10) where he was heartened by some Manitoban congregants participation in the Winnipeg Pride parade and concurrently dismayed by the statements made by church leadership with reference to the LGBT community. He clearly disagrees with “welcoming but not affirming” those in the LGBT community. He then goes on to attempt to equate a

FAMILY TIES

Pies at the potluck

MELISSA MILLER

My friend surprised me a few years ago when she told me she hated potlucks. “They’re intimidating!” she explained. “Not everyone knows how to cook or what to bring. It’s scary.” My friend had not arrived at our Mennonite church with the same history of shared food culture, nor with the same 500-year ancestry of mothers who groom their children in the unwritten rules of potluck etiquette—what to bring, how to prepare it, how to respond to other people’s offerings, how to be “successful” (bringing food that is heartily and wholly consumed), how to manage disappointment if one’s dish is not favoured. She was right. Potlucks are complex social interactions, at least for the cooks and bakers.



I better understood her critique when I became a part of a church that played by different rules than the ones I had learned. Initially, I carried my pies to the potluck, brimming with confidence and pleasure. In truth, I had an unchristian pride in my pies, helped in no small part by my husband who regularly asserts, “My wife makes the best pies!” Surprisingly and sadly, I carried my same pies back home, with nary a piece removed. Even the offerings of the sublime apple maple syrup custard and the delicate lemon sponge (from

the *Mennonite Community Cookbook* no less!) were rejected. Gradually, I realized that the potluck diners were eagerly turning to food prepared by the “insiders”—their grandmothers and aunts and long-term friends, and I was outside of those categories.

With diminished enthusiasm and wounded pride, I withdrew my pies from the potluck, no longer willing to throw my pearls before swine (or some such thought). (I can hear the sympathetic “ahh’s” of *Canadian Mennonite* readers.) My mother, who completely understood my feelings, empathized astutely, “It’s

A potluck is as good a place as any to live into the oneness of Christ.

your ego, right?” Except she pronounced it “egg-o,” making me chuckle and gain a wee bit of perspective.

One thing I gained was more understanding for those who come to the potluck from the outside, who might feel unsure of how to negotiate the expectations around such an event. Perhaps when churches offer “new member” instruction, or buddy up with newcomers, they ought to provide a section on “what you need to know about potlucks.” Certainly we all ought to have our eyes and ears peeled

towards greater sensitivity for insider/outsider dynamics, at potlucks and beyond. In churches and in our family settings, we can aim for gracious inclusion.

We can take note of insider references and language that excludes some people, and communicate in ways that fills in the gaps. We can engage newcomers in conversation, asking for their stories, while we provide information about the church and our families. We can be on the lookout for and welcome the contributions of everyone. We can even try a piece of pie that doesn’t look like it came from familiar hands.

The New Testament has lots of things to say about (former) insiders and outsiders. Jesus’ life was given in part to melt divisions between people. As Paul tells the Colossians, “*Jesus is our peace. In his flesh, he has made both groups into one and has broken down the divid-*

ing wall that is between us.” (2:14) Of course, it takes a while for us to learn all that means and to live it out. Some of us might need a little pride shaved off our ego, while others might need an injection of welcome and hospitality. A potluck is as good a place as any to live into the oneness of Christ.

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.

Hispanic church community with the LGBT community and infers that if the church can welcome and affirm Hispanics, why not the LGBT community.

From my perspective his argument is very weak as the Hispanic community is an ethnic community like any number of diverse communities in our nation. The LGBT community is unlike any other community and not at all similar to an ethnic community as it is based on sexual preference. It should be noted this sexual

preference stands in opposition to our theology; in other words it is sin. That is why the LGBT community is “welcomed but not affirmed.” The church welcomes but does not affirm any sinner.

The LGBT have their fundamental human rights as set out in the Canadian Human Rights Act which allows them to be who they are. However, that Act also allows the church to continue to follow its traditions and beliefs, which in this case sets out their sexual

FROM OUR LEADERS

Anabaptist footprints, fingerprints

VIC THIESSEN

On a cold, windy afternoon, the first snow is falling outside my office window. For many, this is a depressing sight, especially so early in October, but for me it heralds the coming of winter and the joys of cross-country skiing, my favourite outdoor activity. Winter is also a time for sitting in front of a fire or under an afghan and reading a good book—my favourite indoor activity.

Since Bible college, reading has been my primary tool for understanding God and learning how to faithfully follow Jesus. The Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre offers a considerable selection of profound books just waiting to be read, but I want to draw your attention to one that was published in September.

For passionate, faithful disciples seeking a dynamic, inspiring, engaging, liberating, empowering, healing and transforming read, take a look at *Fingerprints of Fire . . . Footprints of Peace: A Spiritual Manifesto from a Jesus Perspective* by Noel Moules.

Moules is a co-founder of the Anabaptist Network and a teacher whose Christian Education program called *Workshop* has inspired thousands to become more faithful followers of

Jesus. He’s also the person who came up with the provocative title of *The Naked Anabaptist* by Stuart Murray. Many Mennonite congregations have encouraged their members to read, Murray’s book, which has inspired readers to a renewed enthusiasm for the unique distinctives of our Anabaptist theology. Murray also chairs the Anabaptist Network in the UK.

Fingerprints of Fire . . . Footprints of Peace presents Moules’ lifetime of teaching in an easy-to-read format that is ideal for individuals and discussion groups. It is the perfect follow-up to Murray’s book, taking us beyond naked Anabaptism



reading has been my primary tool for understanding God and learning how to faithfully follow Jesus.

to the daily challenge of being faithful followers of Jesus—or in Noel’s words,; *shalom activist*—in the 21st century. The book is full of stories, insights and provocative questions which can help each of us deepen our spirituality and to live our lives from a Jesus perspective.

Murray writes, “Noel Moules sums up the integrating themes of his life

and teaching, . . . challenging conformity, encouraging creativity and inviting readers to journey with him into new understandings and ways of living.” Alan Kreider, author and retired Professor of Church History and Mission at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, writes, “All who read this book will find Noel to be a wise guide . . . and a joyful bearer of hope.”

Whether you agree with everything Moules writes or not, you will be struck by his passionate faith and disarming humility. You can catch a glimpse of Noel and his book on YouTube: www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1852. Noel will visit Canada late next spring and is hoping to connect with some Mennonite churches.

The Anabaptist Network is playing a key role in revitalizing Christianity in the UK. In 2013, Michael and Cheryl Nimz, Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers, will tackle their assignment as resource ministers with the Anabaptist Network in London, England. I know they would appreciate your financial and prayer support as they help shape

authentic Jesus followers in the UK.

In the meantime, enjoy the winter and take the opportunity to dive into some great reading.

Vic Thiessen is Executive Minister, Church Engagement and Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Mennonite Church Canada.

orientation as sin. This is the benefit of a separation of church and state. The state allows for the LGBT lifestyle while concurrently the church is allowed to hold different perspective.

In conclusion, those in the LGBT community are attempting to equate sexual human rights with church rights and privileges. They are not the same; as the Act clearly sets out the rights of both and they are mutually exclusive. To equate human rights with church rights is an incorrect and false view of these rights.

KEN BERGEN, NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C.

✉ 'Postmodern shift' column is refreshing

"LIFE IN THE Postmodern Shift" is a refreshing and timely addition to our church paper. Troy Watson has the wonderful gift of forcing us to think about matters of faith in new and creative ways without leaving the safety and comfort of tradition and accepted

Mennonite theology. For example in his most recent writing, "Is the Bible Reliable?" we are comforted by the inspiration and authenticity of the Scriptures but with a better understanding of the human factor in the writing, the choosing of the writing (with divine guidance) for final inclusion in the Bible as we know it today.

There those of us who might want to ask more questions of Troy, or even suggest that he was too tentative and careful. I want to know more about Marcion, the visionary (my assessment) heretic! Marcion's Bible was rejected but did it not predict the state of Christianity some 2000 years later—too Pauline, not enough Gospels and the followers of the Old Testament and the followers of the New Testament seem comfortable with their separate Gods and wide schism?

Troy, thank you for helping me feel comfortable in placing as much value on faith as truth as I walk the Christian journey.

PETER A DUECK, VANCOUVER, B.C.

GOD, MONEY, ME

Training to live generously

MILLY SIDERIUS

This summer, as I watched the Olympics, I was amazed by the performances of the athletes. I was even more impressed by the stories of determination, dedication and discipline. Years before competing at this level these athletes are determined to be the best. They dedicate their lives, and in many cases, their own resources, to achieve their goal. Their unwavering discipline pushes them to train every day, rain or shine, to earn the honour of representing their country.

I was reminded of Paul's athletic metaphor to "run the good race" as Christians, focused on the goal of service to God. I wondered what would happen if we had the same commitment to live generously?

Many of you already have made that commitment. You prayerfully and thoughtfully have determined your goals for generosity. Then you dedicate your



Giving is an act of worship that proves our words of faith are true. Generosity is faith in action.

resources to the work of the Kingdom. In many instances, you have the discipline to regularly set aside a portion of God's good gifts to share with others. Your example of determination, dedication and discipline are an inspiration for us all.

At Mennonite Foundation of Canada, we believe that our God is generous and that our generosity is a reflection of God's

character. We believe that God owns and we are charged with being good managers or stewards of His bountiful blessings. And we believe that God invites us to share this bounty with others. Giving is an act of worship that proves our words of faith are true. Generosity is faith in action.

During this fall season, a time when we often celebrate God's goodness and bountiful harvest, will you consider the benefits of a determined, dedicated and disciplined plan for your giving? Make this the year you take another step towards putting your faith in action and

discover the joys of living generously.

Milly Siderius is the Director of Stewardship Services for Mennonite Foundation of Canada working out of the Kitchener, Ont., office. For stewardship education and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit Mennofoundation.ca.

✉ Making peace with technology

IN RESPONSE TO the editorial, “Our electronic world,” by Dick Benner (Sept. 17, 2012 issue), I want to suggest an Anabaptist approach to our conflict with electronics. The editorial repeats the increasingly prevalent view of our electronic world—escape when you can, but live in conflict with this curse when you cannot. Benner writes, “our ecstasy and dependence on the computer has to be reined in. We need to get control of it . . . We need to know when it becomes a curse on our shalom.”

It’s more complicated than this. It is problematic to reduce this conflict narrative down to just electronics without fully taking account of the incredibly complex web of technologies that we are enmeshed within. In escaping to a peaceful place, how did you get there, who built the roads, the car, etc.? Water, sewage, power, food supply, housing are all technological in some form and because they are old we accept them without much awareness, thanks or analysis. Has the computer made our faith stronger, probably not, but then what about cars, cameras, telephones, electricity, printed books, even writing?

This conflict storyline needs a reboot. Instead of just running away from electronics we need some Anabaptist peacemaking. First recognise the depth of the problem. We have been creators or tool-makers from the beginning. We as human will always be tool-makers. Second, understand that we lay our personal failings and fears at the feet of the latest technologies. Third, from this recognition of where the conflict actually resides, we can begin the process of transformation. Computers, iPads, and Facebook may or may not be helpful in faith building; that responsibility continues to be where it has always been since the very beginning—with us as morally responsible people. Don’t blame technology for a lack of faith or for the opportunity to be greedy, blind, or to exert power. The story of

Babel shows you could do that with bricks and tar.

Look for how the variety of technology enhances life in health and relationships and also discourages it. Adapting Dann Pantoja’s (<http://peacebuilderscommunity.org/>) elegant concept, constructing a peace with technology requires seeking our and its harmony with the Creator, harmony with ourselves, harmony with others and also harmony with the created world.

BRIAN WIXTED, RICHMOND B.C.

✉ Hands-on experience also valuable for pastors

RE: “CHOOSING A pastor,” Oct. 1, 2012, page 4.

While seminary has been and continues to be an important institution for the instruction of our future leaders, its importance should not be overstated. The diligent student may learn much from the classroom but his deep comprehension of the subject matter will always pale in comparison to that of the autodidact. Professors may instruct and guide you but they can’t tell you anything about your soul.

Nor can the importance of a pastor’s hands-on experience with his prospective flock be discounted. This is one point in favour of looking within for a pastor. The fact that there is a prohibition against interim pastors becoming full-fledged ones is something that continues to baffle me.

After all I’m reminded of a certain first century Jewish rabbi whose words and leadership I have found to be very inspiring despite his lack of a formal education.

By the way, I didn’t appreciate the insinuation that seminary students who don’t wish to move their families to Indiana are somehow racist in the phrase, “But ultimately, the parents must decide if their child can handle being in a racially-integrated learning environment.”

BENJAMIN WEBER, KITCHENER, ONT.

Pontius' Puddle



/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

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

Poovong—Joseph (b. Sept. 27, 2012), to Christine and Tom Poovong, Trinity Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

Marriages

Bartch/Dyck—Amy Bartch and Ryan Dyck (Hanley Mennonite, Sask.), in Saskatoon, Sept. 8, 2012.

Dyck/Fehr—Ben Dyck and Lynette (Neufeld) Fehr (Blumenort Mennonite, Man.) in an outdoor ceremony, Aug. 4, 2012.

Elias/Giesbrecht—Cassandra Elias and Gerry Giesbrecht (Blumenort Mennonite, Man.), in an outdoor ceremony, Aug. 18, 2012.

Falk/Penner—Heather Penner and Tyler Falk (Blumenort Mennonite, Man.), in Morden, Man., Sept. 22, 2012.

Kroeker/Peters—Kailey Kroeker and Jordan Peters (Blumenort Mennonite, Man.), at Emmanuel Mennonite, Winkler, Man., Sept. 1, 2012.

Neufeldt/Wincott—Michael Neufeldt (Lethbridge Mennonite, Alta.) and Mae Wincott, in Winnipeg, Aug. 25, 2012.

Deaths

Barkman—Ron, 59 (b. Aug. 7, 1953; d. Sept. 22, 2012), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Bartel—Kornelia (Nellie) (nee Heinrichs), 92 (b. June 29, 1920; d. Oct. 4, 2012), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Friesen—Ernie, 94 (b. Oct. 21, 1917; d. Aug. 14, 2012), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Friesen—Susie (nee Penner), 84 (b. March 27, 1928; d. Sept. 5, 2012), Blumenort Mennonite, Man., Man.

Funk—Abram J., 96 (b. June 15, 1916; d. Sept. 16, 2012), Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

Funk—Irene May (nee Epp), 85 (b. March 5, 1927; d. Sept. 23, 2012), Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

Hiebert—Marianne, 70 (b. Aug. 20, 1942; d. Sept. 27, 2012), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Jantzi—Orland, 72 (b. July 9, 1940; d. Aug. 30, 2012), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Jutzi—Clara, 85 (b. July 6, 1927; d. Sept. 22, 2012), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Peters—Edward, 83 (b. April 2, 1929; d. Aug. 29, 2012), Hanley Mennonite, Sask.

Ruby—Violet, 91 (b. Feb. 12, 1921; d. Sept. 29, 2012), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

announcements within four months of the event.

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

OBITUARY

Pastor, institutional leader dies

John Wilfred Snyder of Kitchener, Ont., a founding director of *Canadian Mennonite* and of Conrad Grebel University College, died Oct. 2, 2012 at the age of 87.

John served as pastor of Bloomingdale Mennonite Church from 1951 to 1962. Concurrently, and until 1967 he was also manager of the

Golden Rule and Provident bookstores in Kitchener. He and his first wife, Lois, joined Rockway Mennonite Church in 1964, the church he served as pastor from



*John Wilfred Snyder
Sept. 20, 1925 – Oct. 2, 2012*

1967 until his retirement in 1991. He and his second wife Iva Taves were members of Rockway for the remainder of their lives. John also had a vital engagement in the development of various Mennonite institutions: the Ontario Mennonite Conference and Rockway Mennonite High School.

Son of Oliver A. and Lillian N. Snyder, John was born and lived on the family farm in Cambridge much of his life. In 1948 he graduated from Goshen College, Indiana, where he majored in

natural science and became involved with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). He was ordained into the ministry at Bloomingdale Mennonite Church in 1951 and that same year married Lois Ruth Buckwalter. Academic interests were always close to his heart. He earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Goshen in 1958 and a Master of Sacred Theology degree from Yale Divinity School in 1964. From 1976 to 1977 he was enrolled as a Senior Fellow at Regent's Park College, Oxford, England.

He was predeceased by his first wife, Lois Buckwalter (1990) and his second wife Iva Taves (2011). He is survived by his children Jed (Michele Dickinson) of Cambridge, Patricia (Christopher Dustin) of Connecticut, Julia (Hans Behrendt) of Germany, and granddaughter Abigail Dustin; and Iva's family, Mila, Mark, Jilienne, Caitie, Jacob and Jesse Reusser, Mary Taves and Ruth Fallding. ❧

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Divinely Inspired

BY TROY WATSON

I grew up in a church where 2 Timothy 3:16 was almost as important as John 3:16. It declares, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” This verse was quoted regularly to defend the divine authority of every word in our Bible. The obvious problem here is the author was not referring to the New Testament, as the only Bible that existed



at the time was what Christians now call the Old Testament. The second problem is there's no single unified theory on what divine inspiration means in Christianity. The third problem is trusting in the divine inspiration of Scripture is much more complex than believing God told the authors what to write and “poof”—there was the Bible.

Trusting in the divine inspiration of Scripture means trusting in the divine inspiration and leading of many people and processes over a long period of time. It means trusting for almost 40 years after Jesus' resurrection that God's Spirit was guiding the early Christian communities as they passed on the Gospel message of Jesus, stories of his life and his teachings, orally.

It means trusting that over the span of a century numerous human beings were led by God's Spirit to write new sacred texts for “people of the way.” It also means trusting that God had a reason for not safekeeping any of these original manuscripts as we have none today.

It means trusting that God guided the messy process of increasing numbers of people copying these texts over centuries so the Church would have enough material to discern the essence of the original manuscripts later in history. It means trusting God's movement through

this process even though we know many scribes made mistakes and some scribes made intentional changes.

It means trusting the Holy Spirit guided and moved through the conflicted proceedings of men debating, researching and deciding which books should be included in our Bible, knowing these bishops, scholars, priests

and church leaders were endowed with a great deal of authority and at times engaged in ongoing power plays to ensure their version of competing Christian views “won” in the end.

It means trusting that God guided this centuries-long canonization process even though virtually no women were involved, suggesting the male-dominated

Trusting in the divine inspiration of Scripture means trusting in the divine inspiration and leading of many people and processes over a long period of time.

“worldly” culture influenced this process more than the culture of equality Jesus had christened his Church with.

To trust in the reliability, authority and inspiration of Scripture is to trust that God's Spirit successfully guides and moves through flawed human beings and imperfect human processes. So, if we can have such deep trust in the Holy Spirit's ability to lead and guide so many humans, over such a great span of time back then—why not us, today?

The wonder of the doctrine of divine inspiration is not so much that the Bible is inspired (although I believe it is) but that human beings like us can be divinely inspired! Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2 that regardless of the inspiration of

Scripture, we cannot understand God's truth (including the spiritually discerned words of Scripture) unless we are also inspired, or “in the Spirit.” Paul concludes this chapter saying, “Who can know the mind of God? We can, because we have the mind of Christ.” The mind of Christ (Spirit-filled consciousness) is the necessary ingredient to understanding God's truth.

Most Christians and churches now place far more trust in the divinely inspired Bible than in the unfettered guidance, inspiration and movement of the Holy Spirit in people today. This is probably because the Bible is a tangible object and the leading of the Holy Spirit is elusive and uncertain. The words of the Bible are easier to manage, master and manipulate whereas the Holy Spirit is free to do new things and move in ways we cannot predict or control. Is there a danger of being led astray by what we think is the leading of the Holy Spirit? Without question. But risk has always been essential to following the way of Jesus. It's no coincidence that Jesus chooses the one guy willing to get out of the boat and attempt to walk on water amidst a raging storm, to lead his church

after he's gone.

Our closed canon of Scripture is a wonderful gift of God's past revelation as long as it does not close us off to present revelation. Can you imagine if the early church had not been open to adding to their closed canon of Scripture—now known to us as the Old Testament? ❧

Troy Watson is pastor of Quest Community. This is part five of an ongoing series on “The Role of Scripture for Postmodern Life.” troy@questcc.ca

Jesus encouraged more attention to scripture, not less

Response to Troy Watson, 'Shedding Sola Scriptura,' Sept 3, 2012, page 12, Canadian Mennonite

BY BRYAN MOYER SUDERMAN

While I agree with Troy Watson's observations that "when we interact with the Bible, we engage many additional resources besides Scripture" and that "no one approaches Biblical texts purely and objectively," I was surprised by his claims that Jesus de-emphasized Scripture, made relatively little use of Scripture, and the implication that following Jesus' example would have us do the same. My reading of the Gospels leads me to rather different conclusions.

1) Watson states that "Jesus did not use Scripture exclusively or even primarily when he taught. He used contemporary

explicitly, his "stories, riddles, questions, object lessons" are also steeped with Scriptural images, echoes, and allusions. Vineyards, sheep/shepherds, bread, living water, seeds, harvest, fig trees, banquets—these and other images demonstrate Jesus' intimate knowledge and thorough-going appropriation of Scriptural themes to address new contexts and issues. Jesus was adept at reading Scripture in light of his current context, and vice versa. To follow in "the way of Jesus," I believe, we would do well to do likewise.

2) Watson observes that "Jesus rebuked the Bible experts more than anyone," listing

An appeal to the example of Jesus should lead us to more and deeper engagement with Scripture, not less

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."

While Watson does not specify which "stories, riddles...object lessons" or "zen-like sayings" he is referring to, it is striking that every Biblical reference cited in his article portrays Jesus as Scripture interpreter and teacher (Matthew 13:14; the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7; John 5:39-47). Jesus is consistently portrayed in the Gospels as engaged in Scriptural discussion and debate, drawing explicitly upon Scripture, and often pointing his discussion partners toward Scripture (Mark 2:23-38; 7:1-16; Luke 4:16-30; Matthew 22:23-23:39, as well as frequent statements like "Have you never read...?"; "Is it not written...?"; "didn't the prophets say...?"—Matthew 21:16, 42; Mark 14:27; John 6:45; 8:17; 10:34; etc.).

Where Jesus does not cite Scripture

the insulting names that Jesus calls them. Watson then states that "Jesus treats virtually everyone else with kindness and compassion," and suggests that being Biblically literate was (is) more a "hindrance" than "advantage in knowing God or truth."

Jesus does not only call "the Bible experts" nasty names—he engages repeatedly in detailed Scriptural discussion/debate with them. In fact, Jesus continually urges the religious authorities to pay more attention, not less, to their own Scriptures (Matthew 5:17-20; 9:13; Mark 7:1-13; Luke 16:19-31). To be sure, Jesus' interpretations are often seen as surprising, innovative, and even scandalous to the religious authorities. This should give pause to any who think that an appeal to Scripture "settles the issue," shuts down debate, and precludes other interpretive possibilities.

But clearly these are not debates where only one side appeals to Scripture. The Jesus portrayed in the Gospels

consistently draws from Scripture, argues from Scripture, and claims that he is interpreting Scripture correctly and his opponents are not. This should give pause to any who think that to de-emphasize or de-value Scripture is to follow the example of Jesus.

Jesus engages in detailed Scriptural conversation not only with "Bible experts," but with a host of culturally unlikely (even scandalous) candidates—women, foreigners, sick people, outcasts. Many of these unlikely conversation partners are portrayed as interpreting Scripture (which includes acting on what they learn) more appropriately than the so-called experts. Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman (John 4), and the controversies around the healing of the man born blind (John 9) are two of many vivid examples of this.

Jesus' criticism of "Scriptural authorities" is hardly evidence that Jesus de-valued Scripture and that we should do the same. If anything, I believe it is evidence to the contrary.

3) Watson concludes his article by commenting that "Nowhere does Jesus mention or even hint at the promise of a future book of collected writings from the apostles (or anyone else) that would be essential for us to get to know God or discern spiritual truth," and that "Jesus promises his followers only one thing . . . the Holy Spirit. If anything, Jesus preaches 'Sola Spiritus' rather than 'Sola Scriptura.'"

Watson neglects to notice that Jesus didn't need to promise his followers a Bible because they already had one! Jesus took the Hebrew Scriptures seriously. To suggest that the promise of the Spirit somehow proves that Jesus de-valued Scripture is simply inaccurate.

An appeal to the example of Jesus should lead us to more and deeper engagement with Scripture, not less, in the midst of shalom-bringing ministry in the world. I believe that we should take "the politics of Jesus" seriously, and we should take "the hermeneutics of Jesus" seriously as well. ✎

Bryan Moyer Suderman is a former youth pastor and teacher who writes and performs songs for the church. He and his family live in Stouffville, Ont.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

BEING A FAITHFUL CHURCH PROCESS

The paths and ditches of Biblical interpretation

At the July 2012 Mennonite Church Canada Assembly, delegates approved Being a Faithful Church 4 for study. These articles are to stimulate further thought and discussion. For more information, visit www.mennonitechurch.ca and follow the “Being a Faithful Church” links.

Path #3: Scripture already interprets scripture

BY ROBERT J. SUDERMAN

For the Being a Faithful Church Task Force

“Scripture already interprets Scripture. It is very important to pay close attention to this inter-textual interpretation because this already gives us essential clues in the ways we need to understand how various passages relate to each other.”

This is wise counsel. It recognizes that the Bible is not a “flat” book. Each verse and story gains meaning in relationship to other verses and stories. The church, in its wisdom, has collected a “canon” of literature that all together has been understood to be an authoritative source for Christian faith and life. This means that it behooves us to be alert to the ways in which different parts of Scripture relate to each other.

Many examples could be given. One is the appropriate understanding and the proper use of power as God’s people relate to each other and to the world. This concern relates to family, marriage, community, and nation. Multiple voices speak to this concern; sometimes they nuance what other voices have said before them. This has raised the questions related to the use or rejection of violence in the life of discipleship. It has also raised questions about the best way to structure and organize the life of the church. Another example is the concern about inclusion and exclusion in the life of God’s people. Whereas Deuteronomy 23:3 teaches that



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“No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord,” Matthew includes the Moabite Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah.

What makes these scriptural connections even more interesting and complex, is that it is not simply a matter of chronology, i.e., the last voice is not necessarily the definitive voice. If that were the case, we could simply do away with the Old Testament, or the letters of Paul. But this is not necessarily the case and, again, it behooves the Christian community to be alert to the mind of God as revealed in Scripture.

For some, these inter-textual relationships may seem daunting and frustrating, and might prefer something simpler. But God, through the Holy Spirit, has determined that this kind of Scripture is best for us. It is a record of God’s presence with God’s people and the world. Both the good and the bad are included, as unsavoury as it may seem to us at times. Scripture does not avoid the realities we experience. It does provide counsel and wisdom to be faithful within our realities as it did to the people of old. God blesses our capacity for

discernment and it is an honour to be part of God’s people gifted in this way.

Path #5: Consider the entire canon of scripture

BY ANDREW REESOR

McDOWELL,

Co-chair, Being a Faithful Church Task Force

“It is important to take the entire canon of Scripture as our base of operations for healthy hermeneutics. The fact that Scripture already interprets Scripture compels us to use the whole of Scripture in order to better understand each part.”

Douglas B. Miller, writer of the *Ecclesiastes* (the Believers Church Bible Commentary), writes that the basic theme of *Ecclesiastes* is that “... life brings the unexpected, the tragic, and the confusing—and (readers) have found in the author a trustworthy companion for walking through such experiences.” *Ecclesiastes* “may be the most personal book of the Bible, revealing the author’s frustrations, indignation and reflections on mystery.”

Miller nicely outlines how *Ecclesiastes*, “reflects a contentious conversation with traditional wisdom,” (page 244) and gives the following examples:

- Proverbs makes high claims for wisdom, something worth the discipline necessary to attain while [*Ecclesiastes*] emphasizes the limits and pain of wisdom which can never guarantee safety, success or the respect of others;
- Proverbs praises diligence while [*Ecclesiastes*] emphasizes the hardship and futility of toil;
- Proverbs anticipates a glorious life for the wise and righteous and destruction for the foolish and wicked while [*Ecclesiastes*] insists that all people die regardless of their character and that the wicked sometimes thrive;
- Proverbs stresses the importance of timeliness and is particularly confident that those who speak wisely will achieve success or bless others whereas [*Ecclesiastes*] questions whether discerning the appropriate moment give humans an advantage and is sensitive to the limits of speech.
- Proverbs and Psalms had a creed that

the wise and righteous live on through the memory of others though the wicked are forgotten whereas [Ecclesiastes] insists that the dead are not longer remembered.

By taking the entire canon of Scripture in Biblical interpretation we can benefit by the conversations that happen among the writers of what has been called the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament (Psalms, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes). In addition to listening in on the conversation

among the wisdom writers, we then include what the New Testament writers say regarding the difficult questions of life and see for example in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and how he trusted God in spite of pain, humiliation and lack of immediate success in this life.

Listening in on these conversations and then making application to our lives as congregations and individuals is an exciting and awesome task. ❧

CMU honours Tall Grass Prairie Bread Company

2012 Blazer Distinguished Community Service Award winner

Canadian Mennonite University
WINNIPEG, MB

Canadian Mennonite University presented its 2012 Blazer Distinguished Community Service Award to Winnipeg's Tall Grass Prairie Bread Company to pay special tribute to company owners Paul and Tabitha Langel and Lyle and Kathy Barkman.

It took strong faith to start a community-based, environmentally sustainable organic bakery in the 1980s. As a business, it was risky. Who could predict growing a church-kitchen bakery into a thriving business? Who could be sure that customers would pay six or seven times higher on bread prices so that the bakery could pay farmers enough to sustain their organic grain operations? Who could have foreseen the

goodwill of the community, starting with a customer who would give back a paid-for loaf on opening day to use in blessing the new venture?

In 2012, "the little bakery that could" presents both a lifestyle and a business model. It shows what a group of friends can achieve with a good idea done well. The innovative company today employs over 60 people, with everyone earning fair wages and what the owners describe as "a good living," above standard industry pay. One location has grown to two; they have opened a second business, Grass Roots Prairie Kitchen, selling preserves, baking products, and organic sunflower oil. Their organic grain is ground at the downtown

site, and the oil is also pressed on site—not to save on the cost of fuel (which also happens), but to save on the use of fuel, to help conserve finite resources.

Sitting around a small table at their Winnipeg Forks location, the owners serve a generous selection of Tall Grass Prairie cinnamon buns, delicious breads, and local fruit to their CMU guests. Tabitha Langel, who focuses on the baking operations, pours lemon-flavoured water from a large mason jar and places it on the table. The four owners gather round the table, chatting about an afternoon conflict resolution meeting that they will attend—a customary practice for the company that helps maintain healthy working relationships.

"If any of us have issues or are angry with each other, we won't make bread while angry," explains Lyle Barkman, who takes care of technical and mechanical aspects of their operations. The bread, they feel, is an expression of reconciliation and blessing, and it needs to be made in a wholesome environment.

"We have undergone a lot of change, but the core vision has never changed," says Paul Langel, who takes care of the company's website and promotions. Their core vision is simple: to serve nutritious bread, made in a spirit of blessing and reconciliation; steward the earth's gifts; share among neighbours; pay suppliers and workers well; nurture the soul and the body. They strive to nourish, bless, sustain, and heal.

"Our philosophy is about reconciliation," adds Paul, "and about how we work that out in our world: person to person, us to the land; rural to urban. We focus on blessing and respect for everyone."

Coming as a group from the Grain of Wheat church family, the partners fundamentally agree that their work is bigger than themselves. They also recognize and value the fact that each person brings special attributes.

Kathy Barkman, who prepares the company's financial records, comments on the contributions of the partners and of their employees. "Our diversity, and what each of us brings, is a gift," she says. "It is humbling when stories come back to us about what we have done here. We are making something that is so basic. We make bread, but we are baking love into it." ❧



Company owners (from left) Paul Langel, Tabitha Langel, Kathy Barkman and Lyle Barkman

Retreat planners learn to trust God

STORY AND PHOTO BY WALTRUDE GORTZEN

Mennonite Church B.C. Women's Ministry

The planning committee for the Mennonite Church B.C. women's retreat learned the hard way that God is in the details as they struggled to put together a weekend of renewal and refreshment for Oct. 12-14 at Camp Squeah. The theme and speaker had been in place for well over a year, filling in the details became a challenge overflowing with frustrations, requiring many prayers and lots of patience.

The planners started off with many grandiose ideas, but one by one they fell by the wayside as unforeseen circumstances prevented their use. Idea after idea had to be reworked or discarded and enthusiasm was in danger of lagging.

Trying not to get discouraged, they

asked themselves, "What and why can't we get our ducks lined up this year?" and "What exactly does God want from us this year?" In the end God showed what He can do when we relinquish the reins to Him.

It turned out to be a wonderful weekend filled with great music, an amazing speaker and just over 100 women. The worship and laughter came from the heart. The fun and fellowship was evident throughout the time that was spent together. The generous spirits of women came through in shining colours as funds were raised for Mennonite Women Canada's Spiritual Growth Assistance Fund.

Jackie Ayer in her presentations encouraged the women to love themselves and to

realize that women are the crown of God's creation plan (Gen. 2:21-22).

Watching from the sidelines with grateful hearts, the Planning Committee learned again that everything is in God's hands and how fulfilling it is to be His Servant. ☯



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Ka Moua (left), Kia Xiong and Seng Yang wore traditional Hmong attire to dress up for the Saturday afternoon High Tea at the women's retreat at Camp Squeah.

Black Creek United Mennonite celebrates 75 years

By DICK HILDEBRANDT
BLACK CREEK, B.C.

Over 200 people came to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Mennonite Church in Black Creek, B.C. on Aug. 11 and 12. Black Creek is a small community about half way between Victoria in the south and Port Hardy in the north on Vancouver Island's east coast.

The church was founded in 1937 at the time of the formation of the Conference of Mennonites in B.C., now Mennonite

Church B.C. The promise of plenty of cheap land drew many families to the Comox Valley area in the 1930s. Unfortunately, a great forest fire had ravaged this area in the mid-30s and the land was covered in great charred stumps that had to be removed before people could even think of using the land for farming.

It was a difficult time and soon many of the men began working in the logging

industry, where they established a reputation of being hard workers and became the preferred employees in the area. During WW 2 many young Mennonite men served their CO assignments planting trees in this area. Later a number of the men in the congregation began to work in the new pulp and saw mills in Campbell River, just north of Black Creek.

At the anniversary celebration, the Saturday meal had many delicious, traditional Russian Mennonite foods. Many of the present generation wondered how our ancestors could eat all those rich perogies, farmer sausage, cabbage rolls and egg noodles all smothered in cream gravy. It's to die for!

Making egg noodles has been a long-standing tradition in the church. Each year the congregation makes over 100 pounds of noodles for the annual MCC Sale. This fundraising event, sponsored together with the Mennonite Brethren Church, is held at the end of May.

The guest speaker for the evening was former pastor, Peter Neudorf. He stressed that the church had much to rejoice about, even though there had been struggles along the way. A local bluegrass band played many familiar and traditional songs, inviting the congregation to sing along.

The Sunday morning worship was assisted by an impromptu choir made up of many former and present members. Albert Wedel, a long-time choir conductor led the choir's four songs. Garry Janzen, B.C. Executive Minister, spoke about the need to live in the faith of Christ, saying, "Jesus will never leave us, so we need not be afraid."

During the children's time, Dick Hildebrandt introduced the newest baby in the church, Solomon Babcock, and said that in 1937 the church was like a new baby, it needed God's help to grow.

Because salmon is king in Black Creek, some experienced barbecue chefs served up the best salmon barbecue for lunch. This was finished off with *rollkuchen* (fritters) and watermelon. As one of the deacons said, "Life is good."

The Black Creek congregation was thankful for the incredibly beautiful weather and the many friends and guests who joined them for the two-day celebration. ☸

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO



Pastor Benjamin Mubenga (left), president of the Evangelical Mennonite Church in Congo, and Siaka Traoré (right) president of the Mennonite Church in Burkina Faso, visited Mennonite Church Canada offices in Winnipeg on Sept. 27 at the invitation of Willard Metzger, Executive Director (centre). The leaders exchanged information about how their respective national churches are structured and how revenue comes in for ministry, among other matters. Mubenga and Traoré spoke glowingly of the hospitality they received and the interest staff took in their respective ministries. Their visit coincided with an invitation from Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM) to visit and celebrate the founding of North American-based AIMM and its predecessor, Africa Inland Mission, 100 years ago. Mubenga also serves as chair of AIMM's International Central Council, and Traoré its vice chair.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Meet the church in South Africa

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Spectacular water falls. A sweeping, ruggedly beautiful coastline. Exotic wildlife, sophisticated cities and an endless variety of cultures. These are some of the treasures attracting visitors to South Africa. But these treasures coexist with the long and painful history of South Africa's people.

Few Canadians know that Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, designed to help bring healing to residential school survivors, is modelled on South Africa's post-apartheid experience of the 1990s—a process that was heavily influenced by a Christian social-justice world view. It is also a country whose population professes to be 80 percent Christian—and where Andrew and Karen Suderman are working to make a difference.

The Sudermans have been in South Africa since 2009 as Mennonite Church Canada workers helping to build the Anabaptist Network in South Africa (ANiSA). In a social context shaped by apartheid, the Sudermans provide Anabaptist resources and work at creating safe spaces for people to meet and get to know each other across

racial and cultural divides.

From Feb 6-19, 2013, they will host a Mennonite Church Canada Learning Tour.

The Sudermans are excited about the prospect. "We get to show people why it is that we have grown to love this country so much; its people, its beauty, even its history as it challenges us how to live faithfully, participating in and witnessing to God's peaceable kingdom on earth."

As Director of Partnership Development at Mennonite Church Canada, Daniel

Horne is organizing the tour from the Canadian end. "Participants will be more than tourists," he says. "We hope that they will learn about culture and worship, and grow a heart for the people."

The Sudermans hope the tour will inspire everyone who participates and that those who visit will bring great encouragement to the church in South Africa. Andrew Suderman says, "Our hope is that the church in South Africa will feel that there are others around the world who want to learn from them and their experiences, and who want to walk in solidarity with them as they continue the struggle to live rightly with one another as witnesses to God's shalom in South Africa."

To find out how you can participate in the South Africa Learning Tour, see www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1828. ❧

Peace Church Philippines begins

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Darnell and Christina Barkman left Canada several months ago as Mennonite Church Canada workers with Integrated Mennonite Church (IMC) of the Philippines with the goal to plant a peace church in Metro Manila, Philippines.

Since 2008, Mennonite Church Canada has appreciated a deepening relationship with IMC, a connection enhanced with the partnership of Peacebuilders Community Inc. (PBCI) based in Davao, Mindanao. PBCI is the ministry of Dann and Joji Pantoja, Mennonite Church Canada workers in the Philippines since 2006. Together, IMC and PBCI envisioned a congregation that would actively spread God's message of peace and reconciliation and rebuild broken relationships, both inter-personally and nationally.

This vision is taking root. Peace Church Philippines has begun to gather regularly in the Barkman home. "We love spending time getting to know this amazing group of people who are so eager to be the church with us," Christina Barkman reports.

Although some of their new friends were introduced to them by the Pantojas



Enjoying a Thanksgiving meal are members of the Peace Church Philippines which gathers regularly at the home of Christina and Darnell Barkman.



Andrew and Karen Suderman, Mennonite Church Canada workers in South Africa, are hosting a Learning Tour Feb. 6-19. They have been in Pietermaritzburg since 2009 and their daughter, Samantha, was born there.

and other mentors, they have been making additional connections. With the two young Barkman boys in tow—Makai, 6 months and Cody, age 2—Christina is getting to know other mothers and their children at the local playground. Darnell is making new friends in the complex where they live, by spending time in communities

around the city, and by engaging in one of his favourite activities twice a week—playing basketball.

Recently, several of their new friends and church members took part in a Canadian-

style Thanksgiving feast at the Barkman residence.

“We praise God for the friendships that are developing!” Christina Barkman exclaims. ❧

Filipino Mennonites study Vocation of the Church

BY CHRISTINA BARTEL BARKMAN
Mennonite Church Canada

Robert J. (Jack) Suderman, travelling ambassador for Mennonite Church Canada, led a three-day study session in the Philippines Sept. 10-12, sponsored by MC Canada. The “Vocation of the Church in Society” seminar was held at the Central Luzon State University with 35 attendees from the Integrated Mennonite Churches (IMC) of the Philippines.

Participants studied the politics of Jesus, his rejection of the existing political system, and a “Kingdom of God” approach to living as a community. Suderman described the church as a sign of the Kingdom and God’s instrument of reconciliation. As members of the church, we must engage the world the way Jesus did.

Mennonite Church Canada workers Darnell and Christina Barkman, who are developing a new church in Manila in partnership with the IMC, were also in

attendance.

On the final session day, Suderman provided a comprehensive history of Mennonites, including early Anabaptists. The group was attentive and many said that they were deeply encouraged by the radical

MC CANADA PHOTO



Jack Suderman leads a study session on the Vocation of the Church at Central Luzon State University in the Philippines.

reformers who held fast to their faith, even in face of martyrdom.

In an email following the event, participant Matda Castillo del Rosario wrote that it was a blessing and a privilege to take part in the seminar. “It made me realize as he (Suderman) shared the Ephesians 1: 8-10 that nothing is outside the agenda of Christ,” she wrote, and “the issues that were tackled are very timely, relative and have the power to touch the Pastor’s and church worker’s perspective in handling their different local churches.” She also noted that the ideas Suderman taught showed her that the church can impact all aspects of society—the economic system, culture and family systems.

Suderman’s wife, Irene, led worship music in response to a spur-of-the-moment invitation and taught the group songs from around the world. During their stay, the Sudermans were interviewed for one hour on a Filipino television program broadcast across the country. The Sudermans have visited the Philippines on teaching tours twice before. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

MEDA succeeds in GlobalGiving Challenge

WATERLOO, ONT.—Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) successfully completed GlobalGiving’s Open Challenge, earning a permanent spot on the crowd-funding website. In 30 days, MEDA received 63 donations for a grand total of \$4,485. This new support will provide funding for the EDGET project (Ethiopians Driving Growth through Entrepreneurship and Trade), which is helping 10,000 farmers and weavers to create more sustainable livelihoods. MEDA was one of over 300 organizations from around the world challenged with raising \$4,000 from at least 50 unique donors within the month of September in order to receive a permanent place on the site. This victory has opened the gateway to an international marketplace for philanthropy, connecting MEDA to individual donors who wish to support their favourite causes.

—Mennonite Economic Development Associates

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Breanna Longden tackles the high ropes course at Camp Squeah.

Youth reaches new heights through employment program

BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

Mennonite Central Committee B.C.

Crossing a vast expanse might not seem like a hard thing unless you're 33 feet off the ground and your footholds are nothing more than a series of wooden slats suspended by rope. As Breanna Longden watched her peers making their way across the Bosun's Steps she was sure she would never be able to do it.

Longden was taking part in a team-

building day at Camp Squeah, in Hope, B.C., as part of Youth Keep Working (YKW), an employment program for youth with multiple barriers. The day included several activities that required the seven participants to challenge themselves individually and to work together as a team. The high ropes course proved to be the biggest challenge for Longden.

"It was way beyond my boundaries," she recalls, but by the end of the day, she conquered the Bosun's Steps and much more. "Once I was up there, I didn't want to disappoint myself or the others."

YKW is offered through Agora Employment Essentials Inc. in Abbotsford (a company wholly owned by Mennonite Central Committee B.C. to deliver its employment programs) and provides life and employability skills training to youth, assisting them to connect them with paid employment or return to school. Program facilitator Cherie Lynn Wagar says that experiences like the team-building day at Camp Squeah are essential to the program because of the confidence and trust that are built.

"This group becomes like a family," she says, explaining that they are together six hours a day, five days a week, for 13 weeks. "It's important for the group to learn to trust each other, encourage each other and learn that they actually have the power to do what they thought they couldn't do."

Activities teach them problem-solving, leadership skills, the ability to work with others—all skills that will be valuable in life and to any future employer. YKW participants also learn how to write resumés, cover letters and conduct a job search. Another unique component of the program is time spent in a community service project in which they learn valuable workplace skills while working together on a project that benefits a local community organization.

For Longden, the whole program has been life-changing. She began shy, unsure and dependent on others and has grown to be confident and independent. When family members balked at the idea of having to drive her from Mission to Abbotsford every day, she decided to start using the bus pass she'd been given through the YKW program—something she'd never have done before. Now she commutes by bus every day.

Longden loves animals and hopes to find work in a place where she can put her newfound confidence, work skills, and love for animals to good use. Knowing that she has literally reached heights that she never thought she'd reach, Longden is confident about her future. ☺

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COVER STORY

Bethany College takes classroom on the road

JERRY LETKEMAN

Bethany College

Students from Bethany College, Hepburn, Sask., spent Sept. 19-27 learning outside the classroom. While first-year students learned about poverty and homelessness by working in food banks and shelters in various cities, second-year students visited three Cree communities in Saskatchewan. Bethany College teams have been intentionally connecting with Cree communities for over a decade so that students can make new friends and gain greater understanding of the strength of First Nations communities and the issues they face.

Luke Heidebrecht, Associate Director of Missions, led a team to the Bigstone community in Air Ronge where students were involved in various activities including running kids clubs, clearing brush, over-nighting at a remote cabin, and visiting elders. Randy Klassen, Instructor in Biblical and Theological Studies, led a team to the Beady's and Okemasis First Nation. They built a tipi, participated in an elder's panel, were involved in a local radio broadcast, and helped in elementary classrooms. Jerry Letkeman, Service Learning Director, led a team to Hall Lake where they played blind volleyball, street hockey, badminton and helped out in elementary classrooms. Both the Beady's and Hall Lake teams coincided their visits with an



Kaeli Fineday and Randy Klassen enjoy the camping experience.

annual Culture Camp that the respective schools hold in September. These camps allowed students to snare rabbits, catch fish, eat moose meat, bannock and duck soup, create beaded bracelets, hear stories and have lots of fun.

"Each year the Beady's community has been wonderfully welcoming to our Bethany team," said Randy Klassen. They share with us their stories, their humour, their food and their friendship. This year, as we listened to the elders and their stories

BETHANY COLLEGE PHOTOS BY RANDY KLASSEN



Bethany College students had the privilege of participating in a First Nations Culture Camp in September.

of the residential schools, we learned about hardship and abuse, resilience and forgiveness. We see their reverence for the Creator, we pray the Lord's Prayer with them, and we share the love of Jesus. It's an experience of service learning that is already leaving a legacy in the Beady's community, even as it is reshaping our students." ❧

Conflict over water in northern Mexico

Mennonite farmers accused of unfair water use

BY JOHN D. ROTH

When Mennonite farmers first arrived in Chihuahua, Mexico, in the 1920s they faced the daunting challenge of growing crops in the dry, dusty soil of the high desert plains where the average rainfall barely exceeded 13" per year.

The fact that Mennonites today are among the wealthiest inhabitants of the region is attributable not just to hard work and frugal living, but also to the bountiful water table they discovered beneath the barren earth. Access to water has turned the Mennonite colonies of Chihuahua into the breadbasket of northern Mexico. Virtually all of the enormous quantities of corn, cotton, beans, hay and apples Mennonites now produce is dependent on deep wells, artificial reservoirs and complex systems of irrigation.

But that economic transformation has come at an ecological and social cost. During the past year, a loosely-organized

populist movement—the so-called *Barzonistas*—has accused Mennonite farmers of drilling wells and creating dams without proper permits. Through a series of public demonstrations on Mennonite farmland, the group is trying to rally public opinion to their cause.

Tensions came to a head in mid-July when a large number of Barzonistas—with the apparent support of CONAGUA, the government agency that oversees water usage—destroyed a dam belonging to a Mennonite farmer and shut down a series of wells. Those aggressive actions escalated in the weeks that followed as CONAGUA officials, supported by large crowds of Barzonistas, have closed additional wells, claiming that Mennonites had drilled them illegally. The Mennonites, in turn, have insisted that they paid significant amounts of money (from \$20,000-\$40,000) for permission to drill the wells, but that CONAGUA

representatives simply pocketed the money and failed to properly register the permits.

In August and early September confrontations between Barzonista protesters and Mennonite farmers have become increasingly tense. The Barzonistas defend their actions by citing the drought, a declining water table, and Mennonite immunity from the laws. The farmers, in turn, faced with the loss of their land and livelihood as their crops are not adequately watered at this crucial point in the growing season, have denounced the actions as unjustified and illegal.

The public debate over water usage has also revealed deeper fault lines, both within the Mennonite community and between Mennonite colonies and the broader Mexican society. The aggressive actions of the Barzonistas have prompted, for example, a lively internal discussion among the Mennonites regarding their commitment to nonviolence. But it has also raised more profound questions about the persistent ethnic, linguistic and ecclesial divides that have separated the Mennonite

colonies from their Spanish-speaking neighbors for nearly a century.

In the book of Acts we read about Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). The urgent question for the Ethiopian was whether the good news of the gospel applied to him as well—someone who was outside the promise of Israel and without hope for a family. The answer, of course, was yes. Somehow, there in the middle of the desert, they found water sufficient for a baptism, and the Ethiopian was welcomed into the new family of faith.

The immediate crisis in Mexico is a legal debate over permits, corruption charges, and access to limited resources. But the deeper question is whether the waters in the Chihuahuan desert will be sufficiently plentiful to baptize those who remain outside the family of faith, so that they too can be included as full participants in the shalom of the gospel. ☞

Written for the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism. Reprinted, with permission, from The Mennonite

Hungry for Restoration

BY JENNIFER VANDERMOLEN
Mennonite Central Committee Ontario
KITCHENER, ONT.

There is hunger for restored relationships all around. Mennonite Central Committee Ontario is using Restorative Justice Week, Nov. 18 - 25, to encourage dialogue on valuing the restoration of each person and to launch its new website at liverestored.ca.

MCCO's Restorative Justice initiatives are rooted in the belief that all are created in God's image; no one is disposable. The team has learned that inclusion leads to enhanced community safety rather than isolation and rejection which tend to foster negative behaviour. Through intentional relationships and the sharing of everyday experiences like eating meals, their prayer is that victims and those who have offended can move from isolation to community.

For instance, a man banished from his community because of offenses was encouraged to start baking for MCC Restorative Justice gatherings as a way to give back in a positive way. For him, baking is not only a new skill, it is a small step on his journey to restoration as he learns to think beyond himself and his own needs.

An elderly woman, abused and neglected by her family, became isolated, fearful and anxious. Through new relationships and trust building, she finally agreed to a visit by a hairdresser, the first time for many years.

Learn more about Restorative Justice week at www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/rj/rj2012/index-eng.shtml. ☞



A cake served at a Restorative Justice retreat shares a message each person needs to hear.

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GOD AT WORK IN US

An effective evangelist

BY CARL DEGURSE

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Katie Goetz, a church sister, asked if we could talk. Something was bothering her.

As we drank coffee on a patio outside a McDonald's restaurant, she told how she had been the target of evangelists who tried to heal her by prayer. They were from a different denomination, but Katie knew them socially and when they asked if they could pray with her, she invited them into her apartment.

It quickly became clear the couple intended to restore sight to Katie, who is legally blind. They put an open Bible on Katie's lap, and the husband paced back and forth, enthusiastically calling on God for a miracle.

"He was so loud, I think the neighbours could hear him," Katie related later. The wife touched Katie's shoulder and uttered sounds that were unintelligible to Katie. After several minutes of the wife speaking in tongues while the husband forcefully directed God to use his healing powers, they asked Katie to read the Bible on her lap. She couldn't. The husband then told Katie "unconfessed sin" was blocking the miracle. They urged her to search her life, and repent.

Before they left, they told Katie they would continue to pray and they pledged her vision would return in one week. Several weeks later, Katie hadn't heard back from the couple. That perturbed her. They had promised her a miracle within a week, but they didn't care enough to check back and see whether it happened.

Katie is a life-long Mennonite Christian and her strong faith wasn't shaken. But she was worried that such tactics could repel non-Christians or new Christians, especially when promised miracles didn't happen.

"Instead of leading people to the Lord, they could be turning people off," she worried.

Personally, I feel it was grimly ironic they chose Katie for such imperious methods because, as an evangelist herself, Katie is tactful, full of fun and effective. Katie, who is a church deacon, regularly volunteers to connect with people on the edge. For example, she specializes in meeting people who have no interest in Christ but randomly ring her church for food or money while they await their next government cheque.

I have been with Katie on more than



Katie Goetz

dozen such ministry calls and I admire the sensitivity and joy she brings to these strangers. She always meets people face-to-face, in their home if possible. She usually arrives with a box of Tim Horton's doughnuts as a social gesture, and the modest \$30 grocery-store gift certificate that her church provides to strangers who are hungry. More importantly perhaps, Katie also brings high spirits and a light manner.

As soon as she's inside the door, she jokes about her blindness to put everyone at ease ("I couldn't see a parking spot but, that's okay, they don't let me drive anyway"). The content of the conversation varies with the circumstances, but there are some constants. Katie does more listening than talking, and her manner is always respectful, even to one fellow who smelled of booze at 10 a.m. She talks gently about the glory of God, going as far as her hosts are interested. She offers information about their closest neighborhood church even if it's not Mennonite, and gives them a three-page guide to local social services. She usually gets out her harmonica, which is always in her packsack next to her collapsible white cane, and plays a brief medley of familiar church hymns, but she doesn't play so long that it gets tedious.

Before leaving, she always asks if she can pray. Careful not to put her hosts on the spot, she doesn't ask to pray "with" them, but to pray "for" them. They always say yes. When Katie prays, it's clear that she has been listening closely to the needs of her hosts, both spoken and unspoken.

Katie's never spoken in tongues. She would never bellow directions at God, or accuse someone of having "unconfessed sin."

But I'm sure of one thing. When Katie visits, she reflects a God who is welcoming, loving and joyful. ❧

/// Briefly noted

New Mennonite Church Canada intern

Winnipeg—Daniel Paetkau is serving as a Mennonite Church Canada intern from Sept. 1, 2012 to Aug. 31, 2013. He grew up as part of the Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, and recently graduated from Canadian Mennonite University with a B.A. in Literature. Paetkau is interested in developing relationships with other denominations and working with people in poverty. These two goals, along with a personal family history in Paraguay and a fascination with Spanish literature and language, motivated him to serve with Mennonite Church Canada. He will study Spanish language and culture in Guatemala until Nov. 29 and then will be involved with music and other ministries at CEMTA Seminary in Asuncion, Paraguay. His home congregation is Jubilee Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

—Mennonite Church Canada



Carl DeGurse is a member of Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Focus On

2012 Fall list of Books & Resources

Theology, spirituality

The Jesus Factor in Justice and Peacemaking. C. Norman Kraus. Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, 125 pages.

This is volume I of the Theological Postings Series designed to provide accessible theological writing. Kraus, a Mennonite theologian, gives an overview of how to understand the teachings of Jesus regarding peacemaking.

Joshua: Believers Church Bible Commentary. Gordon H. Matties. Herald Press, 2012, 525 pages.

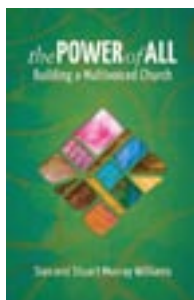
The book of Joshua, with its stories of conquest and ethnic cleansing, can be difficult to read and understand. In this commentary, Matties helps modern readers take the text seriously while providing some context for the violence.

Please Pass the Faith: The Art of Spiritual Grandparenting. Elsie H. R. Rempel. Herald Press, 2012, 135 pages.

Rempel examines the spirituality of both young and old in the modern context, and provides some concrete suggestions of how they can grow and share together in faith. Each of the five chapters has extensive questions for reflection and discussion.

The Power of All: Building a Multivoiced Church. Sian and Stuart Murray Williams. Herald Press, 2012, 180 pages.

One of the authors is the writer of *The Naked Anabaptist* and his wife. They suggest that congregational worship should be inclusive and not run by one or two "professionals" at the front. A healthy congregation uses and listens to all its members.



History

In This Place: A Memoir. Henry Neufeld. Self-published, 2012, 148 pages.

In his memoir, Henry Neufeld of Delta, B.C. uses old letters and diary entries to augment his memories. Among his interesting reflections are his experiences working with Children's Aid in Manitoba, with MCC in a Thailand refugee camp, and the beginning of Portage Mennonite Church. Copies are available from the author at hneufeld@telus.net.

Red Quarter Moon: A Search for Family in the Shadow of Stalin. Anne Konrad. University of Toronto Press, 2012, 356 pages.

Anne Konrad brings to life the story of her search for relatives in the former Soviet Union. She weaves together her personal quest and the stories of people who suffered under the hardships of a Soviet regime and puts it into a larger historical framework.

Winds of the Spirit: A Profile of Anabaptist Churches in the Global South. Conrad L. Kanagy, Tilahun Beyene, Richard Sowalter. Herald Press, 2012, 260 pages.

This book grows out of an Eastern Mennonite Missions study of churches planted around the world.



The many charts show beliefs and attitudes as well as statistics about these churches in the global south. The writers suggest that the growth and vibrancy of these churches is due to revival led by the Holy Spirit.

Other books

By Whatever Name. Elizabeth Reimer Bartel. Self-published, 2012, 241 pages.

Bartel's third historical-based novel follows the Toews family as they leave Russia in 1874 and settle in the new Mennonite community on the East Reserve in southern Manitoba. An important event in the story happens in 1881 when the words of a visiting preacher from Kansas divide the community. Copies are available at deliztel@shaw.ca or 778-433-1864.

Laughter is Sacred Space: The Not-So-Typical Journey of a Mennonite Actor. Ted Swartz. Herald Press, 2012, 280 pages, hardcover.

Using the quirky humour he is known for on stage, Ted Swartz tells the story of how he became a Mennonite actor and the triumphs and challenges he found in that profession. His biggest challenge was coping with the suicide of his friend and creative partner, Lee Eshleman.



Monstrance. Sarah Klassen. Turnstone Press, 2012, 118 pages.

This poem collection includes images from the prairies and from the larger world. She weaves together ordinary life with the sacred.

Relentless Goodbye: Grief and Love in the Shadow of Dementia. Ginnie Horst Burkholder. Herald Press, 2012, 272 pages.

This book follows the slow decline of someone with Lewy Body Dementia. Ginnie Burkholder uses her journal entries over the many years as her spouse slowly slipped away due to this disease. Caregivers should find encouragement in reading her honest reflections.

FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

What's in the Blood. Cheryl Denise. Cascadia Publishing House, 2012, 115 pages.

Among the poems in this collection are those that explore the writer's childhood experiences growing up in a Mennonite community in Elmira, Ontario. This is the second poetry collection by Cheryl Denise published by Cascadia in the Dreamseeker Poetry series.

What You Get at Home. Dora Dueck. Turnstone Press, 2012, 180 pages.

This collection of short stories is by the author of *This Hidden Thing*. The stories explore Mennonite life of the past and present in places like Manitoba and Paraguay where people are struggling with the emotions of their day-to-day lives.

Children's Books

Feeding the Neighbouring Enemy: Mennonite Women in Niagara during the War of 1812. Jonathan Seiling, illustrated by Cynthia Disimone. Privately published, 2012, 32 pages.



Seiling has put together some stories about peacemaking in the War of 1812 that he encountered in his research. They are based on true events involving seven different women. Illustrated with black and white sketches, the book is available at www.gelassenheitpublications.ca.

Resources

Dive: Devotions for Deeper Living. Cindy Massanari Breeze. Herald Press, 2012, 192 pages.



This collection of short devotionals is designed for youth. Each devotional has a scripture text and a prayer and reflections on a topic. The topics are grouped into 18 chapters each with a "Living it out" activity. The author writes from her experience of working with youth at First Mennonite in Urbana, Illinois.

Let Justice Roll Down: Women Engaging the World. Rebecca Seiling. 2012, Faith & Life Resources, 70 pages.

This 12-session study, based on the book of Amos, was commissioned by Mennonite Women Canada and Mennonite Women USA. It is designed to be used by women's groups or individuals. The writer is a member at St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

Merge: A Guidebook for Youth Service Trips. Krista Dutt. Faith and Life Resources, 2009, 68 pages.

This resource has step-by-step ideas for preparing youth for a short mission trip. Four sessions prepare youth for their experience, one session has suggestions for reflection while on the trip and two sessions help youth apply what they learned. Dutt writes from her experience working with a Mennonite Mission Network program in Chicago.

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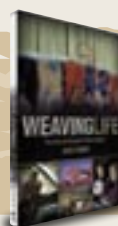
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FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

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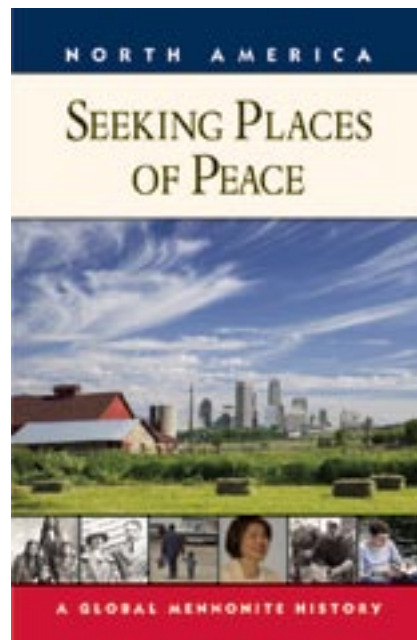
BY PHYLLIS PELLMAN GOOD
Mennonite World Conference

The fifth and final volume in the Global Mennonite History Series, the history of North American Mennonites, was released in late September. *Seeking Places of Peace* by Royden Loewen and Steven M. Nolt, completes the Mennonite World Conference history series, which has been overseen by historians John A. Lapp and

C. Arnold Snyder.

The 400-page book is organized into three sections: "Settling in North America, 1683-1950," "Integrating in North America, 1930-1980," and "Growing in North America, 1960-2010."

Royden Loewen is Professor of History, and the Chair in Mennonite Studies, at the



University of Winnipeg. Steven M. Nolt is Professor of History at Goshen College, in Goshen, Indiana. Together, they describe their task as writers of this inclusive and sweeping history as "seeking to answer a single question: How did Mennonite men and women live out their distinctive religious calling to follow Christ in North America?"

"The answer is that they did so as ordinary people, in everyday life. In their lives they often aimed for holiness, neatness and orderliness, but the fact is that life is not always neat, it is never sin-less, and indeed it is often messy. There have been joys and tears, moments of achievement and times of failure."

Co-published by Good Books in the U.S. and Pandora Press in Canada, the book is available in the U.S. by calling Good Books at (1) 800-762-7171. The book is available in Canada by calling Pandora Press at (1) 866-696-1678.

The first four volumes in the Global History Series, available from the same publishers are: *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts* (2003); *Testing Faith and Tradition* (2006, Europe); *Migration and Mission* (2010, Latin America); and *Churches Engage Asian Traditions* (2011). ❧

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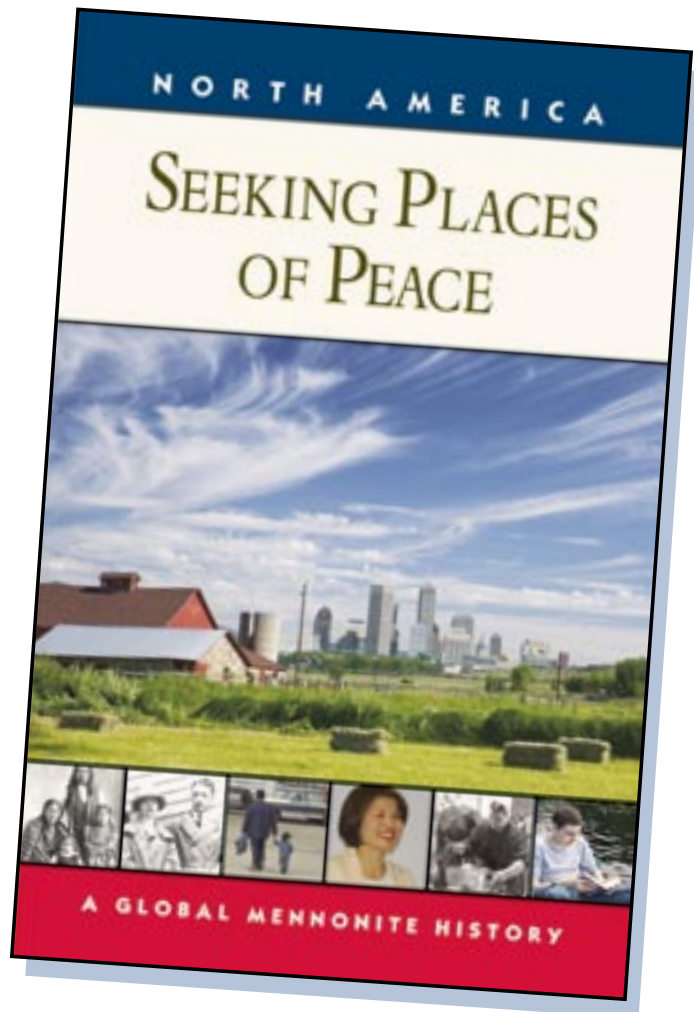
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BOOK REVIEW

Why and how we should evangelize

The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion.
By Elmer John Thiessen. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011. 285 pages.

REVIEWED BY ROSS W. MUIR
MANAGING EDITOR



With the celebration of the missionary efforts that led to the creation of the Mennonite Community in Congo a century ago (Sept. 3, page 4), now is perhaps a good time to review Elmer John Thiessen's latest book, *The Ethics of Evangelism*.

As the title suggests, Thiessen, a research professor of education at Toronto's Tyndale University College and Seminary, sets out to disprove a 2009 online statement: ". . . I am tired of evangelical people going around the world forcing their religion on people. It's just not right."

Thiessen's response is that evangelism—or proselytizing (he uses the words interchangeably)—is right when done properly. And since this is an academic book, he begins with a formal definition of his subject: "The deliberate attempt of a person or organization, through communication, to bring about the conversion of another person or group of persons, where conversion is understood to involve a change of a person's belief, behaviour, identity and belonging."

While this is first and foremost an ethical treatise on evangelism, Thiessen does acknowledge the religious underpinnings provided by Christianity, Judaism and Islam. "Evangelism and mission is at the heart of Christianity," he writes, quoting Emil Brunner's aphorism, "The church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning," followed by Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). He rightly notes that, "[f]or many Christians, this is all that needs to be said about the importance of evangelism—it is mandated by Jesus."

But just because evangelism is mandated by Jesus—or Mohammed—doesn't make all attempts ethical, Thiessen

acknowledges. However, he claims that many are, despite a variety of ethical and sociological objections to the contrary. In Part 2, he responds by deconstructing, debunking or downplaying a number of these objections. His biggest criticism of these objections, such as claims of arrogance on the part of evangelists or that their efforts impinge on the freedom or rights of individuals or societies, is that they overstep the empirical evidence. "Vagueness" is a term he often uses.

As to the charge of intolerance when it comes to evangelism, Thiessen writes that "the key problem with this objection . . . is that it rests on some misconceptions about the nature of tolerance." He briefly charts the changes from tolerance being seen as a vice (Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas), to becoming a virtue during the Enlightenment; and from being related primarily to people, but not necessarily their ideas, to encompassing both.

"It has been said that error has no rights, but people do. That is why we endure or put up with ideas and practices and institutions that we do not like," he writes, but laments that, "[today] this is condescendingly spoken of as 'mere' tolerance, and it is not seen as good enough. Today, a further demand is made of the tolerant person, namely the requirement of fully accepting and even agreeing with what is different." (See "Dismayed with church's LGBT statement" letter, Sept. 3, page 10, for an example of this type of reasoning.)

In Part III, Thiessen provides a "Positive Approach to Proselytizing," in order to show that evangelism is "in general a good thing." He cites John Stuart Mill's classic defence of liberty, as well contemporary liberal arguments by the likes of John

Rawls and Jeff Spinner-Halev, the latter of whom believes, according to Thiessen, that "a genuine liberalism allows religious language in the public square. A genuine liberalism will therefore also welcome religious proselytizing in the public square."

In the final third book Thiessen sets out detailed guidelines to distinguish between ethical and unethical proselytizing. Those who see evangelism as mandated by Jesus can easily skip the intervening chapters and get right to these "practical" ethics. And for those with a really short attention span, he provides a 15-point summary of his criteria to distinguish between the two forms.

From his perspective, ethical evangelism:

- Ensures the dignity and worth of the person(s) being evangelized.
- Shows concern for the whole person and all of his/her needs.
- Refrains from the use of physical force or psychological coercion, or inducements of any kind.
- Provides information in order for a person to make a rational decision.
- Seeks to tell the truth about the religion being advocated, as well as other religions.
- Is characterized by humility.
- Treats people holding differing beliefs with love and respect, and is sensitive to their culture.

In conclusion, Thiessen quotes Aristotle on the art of persuasion: "A man can confer the greatest of benefits by a right use of these, and inflict the greatest of injuries by using them wrongly." May those who heed Christ's Great Commission take these words—and the advice provided in *The Ethics of Evangelism*—to heart. ❧

ARTBEAT

Hellbound?

Columbia Bible College Graduate Makes a Documentary about Hell

BY VIC THIESSEN

Recently released to wide critical acclaim across the U.S. and Canada, *Hellbound?* is the brainchild of filmmaker Kevin Miller, a graduate of Columbia Bible College and resident of Abbotsford, B.C., where he began his career as a film writer in 2003.

Miller grew up in rural Saskatchewan, where he became a Christian through the “love shown by a Mennonite Brethren church,” which became his church home. Theologically, he still considers himself a Mennonite, but his desire for a more liturgical worship has recently led him to an Anglican church.

Some years ago, Miller befriended evangelical author Brad Jersak and worked with Jersak on his book *Her Gates Will Never Be Shut: Hope, Hell and the New Jerusalem*. The book asks: “Would the God of love revealed by Jesus really consign the vast majority of humankind to a destiny of eternal, conscious torment?”

“I had long struggled with this question,” says Miller, “and with Brad I discovered that the traditional understanding of hell is only one of a variety of views on hell throughout history.” As an example, Miller points to early church father Gregory of Nyssa, who was instrumental in the decision to put the four gospels into the New Testament but did not believe in hell.

Miller decided to make a film in which he would share his spiritual journey with others by exploring different views on hell. He does this through interviews with an eclectic group of scholars and church leaders, including Jersak, Brian McLaren, Gregory Boyd, Mark Driscoll and many more. When Rob Bell’s book, *Love Wins*, took the evangelical world by storm in 2011, Miller knew his timing was perfect. “Many evangelicals today are struggling

with this contradiction at the heart of Christianity: how to reconcile a loving God with the violent God who condemns people to an eternity in hell.”

“Mennonites should be leading the way in thinking about the violence of God,” Miller says. “Our Christ-centred peace theology is about orienting our hearts to be like the God revealed in Jesus, who wants us to love our enemies and rejects violence as a way to peace. If violence is God’s last word, then we would be justified in making violence our last word as well.”

Miller is hoping that both Christians and non-Christians will view *Hellbound?* as good news. “So many people have been turned off of Christianity because of the ‘bad news’ about hell and needing to be saved from a violent retributive God. But Jesus came to bring us good news, to free us from our violent self-centred ways and lead us to the way of self-giving love, the way of the Kingdom. There is so much pain in the world. We are called to be agents of hope and of peace. That is good news.”

Miller hastens to point out that his views do not represent a soft-sell version of Christianity. On the contrary, he says, as those involved in victim-offender mediation will confirm, restorative justice can be very difficult, for it still involves being called to account for what we have done.

For this reason, Miller has trouble understanding those who say hell is necessary for Christianity. “When I was a young camp counselor, I told my campers what they needed to do to stay out of hell and I had a 100 percent conversion rate, but what does it say about a religion when your only motivation for conversion is your fear of hell?”

Hellbound?, a well-made and very entertaining documentary, was a big hit at the Wild Goose Festival in June. The well-

edited interviews provide many thought-provoking answers to questions like: “What did Jesus really say about hell?” and “What does our view of hell reveal about how we perceive God, the Bible and ourselves?”

Particularly appealing to younger audiences, *Hellbound?* is nevertheless accessible to all adults and should fuel many interesting church discussions. Despite what Miller says above, the film as a whole presents a fairly balanced set of opinions on the existence of hell and does not make any strong statements. It is highly recommended viewing! ☼

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PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Gary Leis, former camp director with his wife Brenda, and their son Brandon, tenor performer, teacher and director of music and youth at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, sing at a 50th Anniversary Benefit Concert for Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp on Oct. 14, held at Steinmann Mennonite Church. The concert raised over \$30,000 for camp programming and renovations. The concert also featured Charlene Nafziger, pianist and music director and Daniel Lichti, bass-baritone performer and teacher, on whose parents' farm the camp was built. The concert also brought the reunion of Cherchez Vivre, an early 1970s vocal group which formed at Hidden Acres. The group performed locally and provided concerts and service across North America, to the joy of local youth (now young seniors, mightily moved by the reunion) and the chagrin of some leaders.

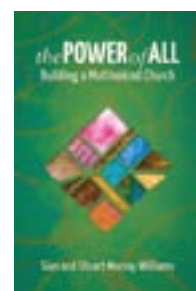
Path to renewal through many voices

MennoMedia

Throughout history, Christian renewal movements have repeatedly emerged as God's Spirit energizes the church and changes lives. According to Stuart and Sian Murray Williams, this usually happens when believers turn back to what they call a "multi-voiced" model of church. In their new book *The Power of All: Building a Multivoiced Church*, they explain how having the entire community involved in all aspects of church life can revitalize Christian life.

The Murray Williamses see God working strongly in churches that encourage the participation of all members. As renewal movements crop up throughout history, God's Spirit is repeatedly poured out on all believers, but Christians often gradually shift back toward "mono-voiced" church, with more passive participation by many and leadership by few. Multi-voiced churches equip their members, shaping mature disciples of Jesus who are less dependent on programs and professionals, and who have skills for effective ministry in the world.

Sian Murray Williams is a tutor at Bristol Baptist College. She is currently moderator of the Faith and Unity Department of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Stuart Murray Williams helps direct the Anabaptist Network in Great Britain, and serves the network as a trainer and consultant with particular interest in urban mission, church planting, and emerging forms of church. He is the author of the bestseller *The Naked Anabaptist*. ❧



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Briefly noted

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To meet the changing needs of the church, MennoMedia is making available its *Adult Bible Study* (ABS) materials in a Spanish-language version and moving to use the New International Version (NIV) 2011 for Bible quotations in the English version. The Spanish-language version is available for download purchase at the MennoMedia website (www.mennomedia.org/abs). English-language *Adult Bible Study* will begin using the New International Version 2011 with its spring 2013 quarter. NIV 1984, used previously, is now out of print and the publisher no longer gives quotation permission. NIV 2011 reflects changes in English usage, progress in Bible scholarship, and concern for clear language. *Adult Bible Study* in English and *Estudios Bíblicos para Adultos* in Spanish provide in-depth, challenging Bible study from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective.

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Shopping: yet another way to give

BY ELISE EPP

Special to Canadian Mennonite
TORONTO, ONT.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELISE EPP



I bought 1kg of sugar for \$7. It is Camino golden cane sugar. As it says on the back of the packaging, it is grown at “the first farmer co-operative in Paraguay to produce and export organic sugar.” I feel pleased with myself for supporting such a project.

Until my second-guessing begins. I spent \$7 on sugar! How frivolous! I feel guilty partly because I have only recently emerged from student-hood, in which money is never plentiful. But I am also very aware of the virtue of frugality—the less money spent the better. In buying the more expensive sugar I participated more than necessary in the commercial world.

And yet, with my \$7 purchase, I supported “sustainable agricultural practices, local community development, and manufacturing by producer co-operatives.” I spent more, because I was actually paying the people who made the product, instead of supporting an environmentally unstable and economically unbalanced structure.

Perhaps with the exception of fair trade coffee, we don’t often talk about how spending money itself can be an act of stewardship, but every time we part with our money we are giving it to someone. When we are giving to charities, we expect nothing in return but a level of accountability. Yet a heavy shopping bag doesn’t have to mean a heavy conscience. There is a reason Ten Thousand Villages, a store dedicated to selling fair trade products, grew out of Mennonite Central Committee—because giving and shopping don’t have to be separate; one can be a consumer in a way that supports communities.

The “Share, Save, Spend” financial model (where you keep three separate accounts with money designated for each category), has been discussed in previous issues of *Canadian Mennonite*. However, sharing and spending can work towards a common goal.

Spending can mean supporting a craftsman in a career about which he or she is passionate. Conversely, by trying to avoid commercialism and always looking for the cheapest price, we may actually buy more harmful items, counteracting what we are trying to achieve through charitable giving to organizations that promote community development.

So I bought my \$7 bag of sugar. A few stores down the road, I found a pair of beautiful \$124 shorts. (Before you start hyperventilating, I will let you know I did not buy them.) They were at a store which re-designs reclaimed fabrics into new clothes. In doing so, they incorporate environmental sustainability with creative design and skilled construction, all of which I value. But all of these things cost money.

If I value sustainability and creativity, I feel I should tell them so by supporting them in a way that will keep them in business. I wince; \$124 for shorts seems like a steep cost, but it also makes me wonder why some shorts are \$20. For the \$104 difference, who isn’t getting paid? How is somebody else impacted by my “steal of a deal?”

To write anything on this subject is to recognize one’s own inconsistencies. However, when I shop I consider four things: 1) environmental impact, 2)

creativity, 3) local community/small business, and 4) the producers/manufacturers. Though I rarely get top marks in all four categories, I try to take into account the impact of each.

The point is not that spending more money on items is in itself virtuous; rather, it is about incorporating our beliefs not just into our giving but also our spending—going beyond fair trade coffee to other food, clothing, and all other purchases.

If we are against a company's labour practices, we should give our money to—i.e. purchase items from—companies whose policies we do support. If we don't like money pooling at the top of the corporate ladder, we should support smaller businesses. If we are concerned about the environment, we should purchase items

that are recycled, repurposed or sustainable. If we are concerned about peace, we should make sure people can earn a living wage doing peaceful work.

The choices we make with our money all have an effect on our world. According to Statistics Canada, Canadians gave \$10.6 billion to charities in 2010, yet as consumers we regularly support the very system that keeps people in poverty. Our purchases can be yet another way to give. Next time you're shopping think of it this way: if you weren't getting anything in return, would you still want to give that company money? ❧

Elise Epp is a musician living in Toronto. She is a member of Toronto United Mennonite Church.

The future of aid

Are corporate partnerships the future for NGOs or the beginning of a concerning trend?

BY EMILY LOEWEN

Young Voices Co-editor

In a time when some development agencies report a chilling relationship with the Canadian International Development Agency, and others have seen their funding reduced, three organizations found a new way to work with CIDA.

World Vision Canada, Plan Canada and World University Service Canada (WUSC) have all entered partnerships with CIDA to work on development projects in countries where Canadian mining companies operate. While they may sound like typical development initiatives, these three pilot partnerships have attracted significant controversy because of a third partner—Canadian mining companies.

The new arrangement leaves development actors, scholars and those who donate asking questions: Are these projects an indirect subsidy for Canadian corporations? Are charities that many Mennonites donate to being used? Will this shift in funding affect the ability of agencies not partnered with companies, such as MCC, to receive government funding?

Aid or subsidy

Many Canadian mining companies already participate in corporate social responsibility initiatives—projects that benefit local communities or repair environmental damage—and some NGOs have long-time relationships with the extractive industry. However, the addition of CIDA dollars to these partnerships has raised questions in the development community.

The government has made it clear that no public money goes to corporations in these partnerships; the funds go directly to NGOs. By supporting these partnerships, CIDA “is leveraging additional financial support from mining companies to increase development impacts,” CIDA media relations staff Isabelle Poirtras, wrote in an email. Adding that Canada's expertise in the extractive industry will help countries benefit from their natural resources.

But international development expert Stephen Brown, professor at the University of Ottawa, said that while corporations do not receive CIDA money they still receive

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHEN BROWN



Stephen Brown believes the new corporate partnerships are a misuse of CIDA's funds.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MCC



Don Peters believes that corporate partnerships are not a natural fit for MCC.

benefits. As part of the five-year project in Burkina Faso, worth \$7.6 million, some funds are dedicated to skills training in mining, in addition to other professions. While the training programs operate around the country some of the graduates are expected to work for IAMGOLD, the project's corporate partner.

That some of the training money comes from CIDA bothers Brown. "If mining companies need to train workers they should train them, and they don't need CIDA to pay for that and call that corporate social responsibility," he said.

Catherine Coumans, Research coordinator and coordinator of Asia Pacific programs for Mining Watch Canada, agrees that even without receiving direct funds the corporations benefit.

"Local level conflict and social opposition to mines is actually costly and it creates uncertainty and instability for the industry, Coumans said by phone from Ottawa. "Anything that they can do to essentially calm down opposition and conflict at their mine sites is good for them."

She also suggested that by joining with CIDA and development NGOs, companies will have an easier time gaining permission to operate. Now when a mining company meets with the government in countries where it operates "they're in the door as a mining company with a development NGO and the Canadian government in tow, and it sends a much stronger message to the governments of these countries that our government supports this industry," Coumans said.

Reputation or real improvement

MiningWatch is also concerned about these partnerships because it allows the companies to improve their reputations without necessarily changing practices. She suggests that one of the benefits the corporations receive is "this bigger message that they're putting out to the world to shareholders to others, 'they must be a good company because they're partnering with World Vision or WUSC,'" Coumans said.

Over the years the reputation of Canadian mining has become increasingly tarnished. When a company tries to set up

a new mine, Coumans said, communities are more skeptical than they were in the past because of environmental damage and other local concerns. "We're finding more and more communities, even in very remote areas, starting with no instead of starting with yes," she said.

After the World Vision-Barrick Gold project in Peru was announced, valued at \$1 million, Miguel Palacin Quispe the coordinator of an Andean Indigenous group, wrote an open letter of opposition to then Minister of International Cooperation Bev Oda, World Vision Canada and Barrick Gold.

"Unfortunately, Canadian mining companies have a bad track record in our countries, where companies such as Barrick Gold are the source of many conflicts because of the dispossession of lands, destruction of water sources, and ignoring of internationally recognized rights," he wrote.

World Vision, however, said it is not worried that its name might be used to improve Barrick's image. "We use the opportunity to share our development expertise and help improve Barrick's approach in working with communities." Patrick Canagasingham, vice-president for international and Canadian programs wrote in an email.

World Vision had an opportunity to critique Barrick's corporate social responsibility report and participates with Barrick at a government-led forum that meets with community leaders to discuss local development.

Other charities have also touted the idea that through these partnerships they can improve the operating practices of Canadian mining companies.

In a January 26th interview with CBC's *The Current*, Rosemary McCarney, president and CEO, of Plan Canada said that Plan requires that its partners sign onto all governments corporate social responsibility programs as well as Plan's own partnership principles designed to protect children's rights.

But MiningWatch remains skeptical that real improvements will result, aside from reputation. If the participating NGOs are concerned about improving the policies of

these corporations, Coumans said, there should be clear guidelines on how NGOs monitor the positive effects of their partnerships. “You ask them well, how are you monitoring that you are having an effect and how are you verifying those claims etcetera, and there’s no response.”

The future of Canadian foreign aid

Experts are also concerned that these pilot partnerships may represent a shift in the nature of Canadian foreign aid. Some worry that aid organizations that choose not to partner with mining, or other, corporations will not receive the same consideration from CIDA.

“I find [these partnerships] extremely worrying,” said Brown, who edited a book on foreign aid titled *Struggling for Effectiveness, CIDA and Canadian Foreign Aid*. “They’re [NGOs] being forced to com-

said that these projects make up just a small part of CIDA’s work and she doesn’t believe that non-partnered NGOs will see any change.

Don Peters, executive director of MCC Canada, has not followed the partnerships closely, but said that working with a corporation would make an unusual fit for MCC. “North American companies are not natural partners for us. We are rooted with community-based organizations worldwide and that’s our niche,” he said by Skype from Winnipeg. If the opportunity arose for MCC to form such a relationship Peters suggested MCC would have to investigate the motives, “we have to ask the question what’s in it for them,” he said.

While an MCC application for CIDA funds was turned down earlier this year, Peters does not believe that MCC’s advocacy on mining issues has affected the

“If mining companies need to train workers they should train them, and they don’t need CIDA to pay for that and call that corporate social responsibility,”
—Stephen Brown

pete against each other in these special calls, those who work with mining bypass that process, so they’re not actually being assessed in the same way as everybody else just because they’re partnering with mining companies.”

Brown believes these projects are a test run for a new foreign aid strategy. He sees this as part of a trend where development money is used to bolster Canadian industry instead of devoted to foreign aid. “If we want to help Canadian businesses there are other government funds for that,” he said, “CIDA should not be used for that, CIDA is not about advancing Canadian interests, it’s about fighting poverty.”

In her interview with *The Current*, McCahey suggested we could see repeats of this partnership style if the initial projects are considered successful. “There’s a handful of pilots that are not terribly large in terms of the ODA [official development assistance] budget but are significant enough to test some new models of working together,” she said. But she also

organization’s relationship with CIDA. He suggested that its advocacy is not altogether anti-mining and because its suggestions are reasonable the funding relationship has not been damaged. “Really what we’re saying is we, we don’t want anything less for people who live outside of Canada than we have in Canada. It seems pretty reasonable to me,” he said.

The three pilot projects are just one year old, and their impact on the future of foreign aid remains unclear. But regardless of any possible shift in CIDA’s priorities, MCC’s considerations on government partnerships will remain the same. “My perspective is that in our application for government source funds we need to know first of all who we are and what our objectives are,” said Peters, “if we’re not convinced they will be met or will be met more handily we won’t apply for them.” ❧

With files from Will Braun

/// Briefly noted

Waldheim Missions Conference finds renewal at 60

WALDHEIM, Sask.—The 60th conference of the Waldheim Missions Conference held July 27 to Aug. 1 was historic as there was some question about whether it would be the last conference. The event is planned by volunteers from Waldheim, Sask., and the surrounding communities, primarily from the local churches, including Zoar Mennonite Church. At the end of the five-day conference, a full slate of board members was chosen (four existing plus five new), most of them younger than 50 and one a 20-something. The new board now has the challenging task of figuring out in what direction to take the conference. In a ballot vote, 12 people voted to close down the conference, while everyone else voted to reorganize and update its format. The conference opened with a Steve Bell concert and featured Dr. Jay Moon from the Sioux Falls Seminary in South Dakota. The board chair challenged the people to raise \$60,000 for the 60th anniversary, though it was clear that even he had trouble believing it could happen. Everyone was amazed when the final total of \$63,000 was announced, as more than half was donated on the final evening.

—Waldheim Missions Conference

/// Briefly noted

Living gift festival launches for holiday season

The Living Gift Festival kicks off at Ten Thousand Villages stores across the country on Nov. 3, offering Canadians the opportunity to give meaningful gifts including items like trees, farm animals or classroom support. Prices range from \$20 to \$350. With every Living Gift, friends and family receive a detailed description of the present chosen for them, while the actual gift goes to the people who need it most. Ten Thousand Villages is a non-profit, Fair Trade organization, providing vital income to people in the developing world by marketing their handicrafts and telling their stories in North America. Each Living Gift will help Ten Thousand Villages' parent organization, Mennonite Central Committee, carry out important relief and development work. For store locations or online shipping, visit www.TenThousandVillages.ca.

—Ten Thousand Villages

/// Calendar

British Columbia

Nov. 16-18: Youth Sr. Impact retreat at Camp Squeah.

Dec. 8-9: Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford (8) and Knox United Church, Vancouver (9). Offering to Menno Simons Centre.

Feb. 8-10: Young adult retreat at Camp Squeah.

Feb. 23: MCBC annual meeting and LEAD conference.

Apr. 12-14: Youth Jr. Impact retreat at Camp Squeah.

May 4: MCBC Women's Inspirational Day at Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church.

Alberta

Nov. 10: "Under Construction: What is a Spiritual Man?" with Gareth Brandt at Trinity Mennonite, Calgary, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. To register contact Marvin Baergen at 403-256-2894.

Nov. 13-15: Pastors and spouses retreat at Camp Valaqua. Contact Dan Graber, dan@mennonitechurch.ab.ca or Tim at pastor@edmonton1st.mennonitechurch.ab.ca or 780-436-3431.

Saskatchewan

Nov. 17: MC Sask Leadership Assembly.

Nov. 18,19: RJC fall theatre.

Dec. 14: Buncha Guys Concert at

Rosthern Junior College.

Dec. 15: RJC Choir Concert at Knox United Church, Saskatoon.

Dec. 21: RJC Christmas Choir Concert at RJC, 7 p.m.

Jan. 4-5: RJC Alumni Tournament of Memories.

Jan. 18: RJC Friday Night Live Youth Event.

Jan. 25-27: SMYO Sr. Youth Retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

Feb. 3: Choir Concert at Third Avenue United Church, Saskatoon, featuring RJC Chorale, CMU Male Choir, Sonrisa and Buncha Guys.

Feb. 22-23: MC Sask Annual delegate sessions at Rosthern Junior College.

March 17: RJC Guys & Pies fundraising event.

Manitoba

Nov. 10: Camps with Meaning fundraising banquet at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler, 5:30 p.m.

Nov. 11: Camps with Meaning fundraising banquet at Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, 5 p.m.

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

Nov. 18: Mennonite Community Orchestra concert conducted by William Gordon at Canadian

Mennonite University Chapel at 3 p.m.

Nov. 22-24: Cottonwood Community drama production *Sherlock Holmes* at

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2013 Focus: Anti-Modernity & 'Horse and Buggy' Mennonites

Buhler Hall, Gretna, 7:30 p.m.

Nov. 23: CMU Campus visit day.

Nov. 24: Christmas@CMU, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Nov. 25: Installation of Cheryl Pauls as CMU President at River East MB Church, 2:30 p.m.

Nov. 26: Westgate Collegiate annual general meeting, 7 p.m.

Dec. 1: A Cottonwood Christmas featuring Cottonwood Youth Chorus and Grades 5-8 drama class, at Buhler Hall, Gretna, 7 p.m.

Dec. 1: First Mennonite Church Choir presents Mozart's Te Deum and Saint-Saens *Christmas Oratorio* at First Mennonite, Winnipeg, 7 p.m.

Dec. 3: Westgate Collegiate Christmas concert at Westminster United Church, 7 p.m.

Dec. 20,21: MCI Christmas concerts, at Buhler Hall, Gretna, at 7:30 p.m. each night.

Dec. 22: Canadian Foodgrains Bank fundraising concert, "Singin' in the Grain," at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler with Winkler Men's Community Choir, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 15: Grade 6 day at Westgate Collegiate.

Jan. 30-31: Westgate Collegiate junior high three one-act plays at the Franco-Manitoban Centre.

Feb. 1: CMU Campus visit day.

Feb. 6: Open House at Westgate Collegiate, 7 p.m.

Feb. 7-9: Worship + Imagination at CMU.

Feb. 21: CMU Open House for perspective students.

March 3: CMU Choral Connections.

March 7-9: MCI Musical at Buhler Hall, Gretna.

Ontario

Nov. 2,3,4,8,9,10: *Job's Blues: A Blues Opera*, based on the Book of Job with words and story by R William Muir (managing ed., *Canadian Mennonite*), at Harriston Town Hall Theatre. All shows 7:30 p.m. except 2 p.m. on Nov. 4. Call 519-338-2778 for tickets.

Nov. 3: Mennonite and Brethren Marriage Encounter annual meeting at 3950 Lawson Line, RR 3, Wallenstein. 4 p.m. with supper at 5 p.m. Phone 519-698-2091.

Nov. 7: "Transitions in the Latter Years," sponsored by Fairview, Parkwood and

Tri-County Mennonite Homes with Dr. David Grant and Bev Suderman-Gladwell at Greenwood Court Auditorium, Stratford, 7 p.m.

Nov. 9: Youth worship concert, "Praising the Prince of Peace," featuring Instead of Silver. For information go to <http://mcco.ca/princeofpeace>.

Nov. 10: MCC Ontario fall conference in Fort Erie. For information go to <http://mcco.ca/faith-action-O>.

Nov. 13: MCC Ontario presents a night of Fashion and Thrift at Bingeman's, Kitchener. Tickets sell out fast. For information go to <http://mcco.ca/splash>.

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

Nov. 17: Soli Deo Gloria Singers fall concert, "Hope is..." at Leamington United Mennonite Church at 3 p.m. and at UMEI at 7:30 p.m. Call UMEI at 519-326-7448 for tickets.

Nov. 23: *Gadfly: Sam Steiner Dodges the Draft* supporting Fraser Lake Camp, at Breslau Mennonite Church, 7:30 p.m. Tickets at nov23fraser.eventbrite.ca or 905-642-2964.

Nov. 23-24: Spirit of Christmas music and craft show at Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig, with Valleyview Men's chorus, Ten Thousand Villages, crafts and tea room 7-9 p.m. (23) 10 a.m.-4 p.m. (24). Call Barb at 519-232-4720 for information.

Nov. 24: Nithview Christmas Tea and Bake Sale sponsored by Nithview Auxiliary, 200 Boullee St., New Hamburg, 2-4 p.m.

Nov. 25: Acoustic Advent Carols, at Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, 3 to 4:30 p.m. Led by the PMS Singers and No Discernible Key. For more information, call Will Stoltz at 519-696-2805 or Laurence Martin at 519-208-4591.

Dec 8: Handel's Messiah by Menno Singers with Mennonite Mass Choir and KW Symphony Orchestra at Centre in the Square, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m.

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

Classifieds

Announcement

**75th Anniversary
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- Ability to work and mentor in a pastoral team environment. Actual responsibilities will take into account the gifts each pastor brings to address the needs of the congregation.
- Commitment to Anabaptist theology.
- Post secondary religious education (preferably an M. Div.)
- A completed Ministerial Leadership Information Form.

Interested candidates may contact the Search Committee at laura.penner@gmail.com.



Jeremy Wiens finds out what area conference minister, Dan Graber, knows about curling while they play together.



In keeping with the curling theme, which table went first at dinner was determined by salt-shaker curling. Jenna Blank (centre) had the best shot, landing her shaker within a few centimeters of the end of the table.

Mennonite Church Alberta celebrates

By DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD
AB Correspondent



Matt Wiens catches his son Jordon so he doesn't slide after their throw.

PHOTO BY MEL WEDLER



(From left) Cheryl Thiessen, Lowell Thiessen, Vince Friesen, and Tim Friesen added a "Mc" to their last names as they hosted a variety show celebrating the wacky and wonderful talent found in Mennonite Church Alberta. Hoisting tankards of Pluma Moos, they joked their way through what it might mean to be a "Menno-Scot."



Between choir practices, Reece Retzlaff visits with Nancy Mark in the First Mennonite Church sanctuary