

# CANADIAN NONITE

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Volume 19 Number 3

## From Africa to Saskatchewan

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Repairing the peace

HENRY KRAUSE

**B**efore things “broke badly” for the actor Bryan Cranston, he was in a great family TV show called *Malcolm in the Middle*. If you’ve seen it, you will remember the catchy theme song with the refrain, “You’re not the boss of me now . . . and you’re not so big.”

I thought about this as I reflected on Ike Glick’s feature article, “Breaking the peace,” on page 4. Often our first response to disagreement is, “Who made you the boss over me!” Even in the church, even among committed Christians, this is something that bubbles to the surface. We espouse community, consensus and good healthy conversation; however, our actions often overtake our values and beliefs.

How do we lead well and encourage healthy, dynamic leadership in the “Jesus way”? What do we do when God’s people disagree? These are perennial questions for the church. Over its 2,000-year history, the tendency to move from servanthood to power-based leadership has been a common theme, as Glick points out. Conflict over theological concepts is nothing new, but there are also profound movements through the last two millennia that have rediscovered leadership from below and within, and have found common ground amid disagreement.

The Desert Fathers and Mothers left behind the hierarchy of the church to imagine new ways of living faithfully with God. St. Francis called the church to humility and servanthood. The Anabaptist leaders called Christians back to

community and the giving up of physical force to change people’s minds. Later followers of Jesus, like the Quakers, early Pentecostals and liberation theologians, gave power back to their communities. The New Monastics are examples of how the church has never been satisfied with the status quo.



Our history as Mennonite Anabaptists is littered with the debris of conflicts. And yet there have also been profound healing and renewal through time and through the Spirit’s nudging.

Acts of repentance between ancestors of the Reformed church and Anabaptists in Switzerland, ongoing conversations between Catholic and Mennonite theologians, and Mennonite denominations coming together, all point to ways in which overwhelming disagreements have found reconciliation.

In this time we again are engaged in disagreement over God’s intentions for us as Jesus’ followers, and how to live faithfully. I would suggest that we can learn from our past that reconciliation is possible in the midst of disagreement, and that Jesus’ call to servant leadership is a viable option in the midst of differing understandings. In our history we have learned skills in building consensus and moving towards common ground. These include:

- **LISTENING CAREFULLY TO** each other’s stories and history. Theological positions and understandings cannot be separated from who we are and how we have come to be. Listening is much more

significant than defending our own positions on various theological points.

- **ASSUMING GOOD** will in the other is a core value in finding common ground. In difficult conversations it is important to take seriously the other’s commitment to Christian faith, and that they, too, are Spirit-filled and longing to live faithfully.
- **RECOGNIZING THAT** there are genuine differences in understanding for what it means to be faithful disciples of Jesus. The question then becomes not who is right, but how do we live together with differing understandings of what the Spirit is saying.
- **BUILDING CONSENSUS** takes patience. Jesus did not coerce his followers or his enemies, but was always inviting. This form of leadership takes time. In a great book, *Living Gently in a Violent World* by Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier, Hauerwas writes: “Gentleness is a vital dimension of the kingdom of God, but it is a learned skill that requires work and demands patience, slowness and timefulness. Such work means that we have to become ‘friends of time,’ a patient people who recognize that ‘we have all the time we need to do what needs to be done.’”

I know we long to make things work out and to do it quickly; however, I would suggest that the way of Jesus—the way of suffering, self-giving love; the way of servant leadership—is one that takes time, patience and grace, and that we do have “all the time we need to do what needs to be done.”

*Henry Krause is the pastor of Langley Mennonite Fellowship, B.C., and continues to strive towards the goal of being a faithful servant leader. If only it didn’t take so long to learn how to do it well!*

## ABOUT THE COVER:

**With confidence this young member of Asante Children’s Choir drums as his female counterparts perform a traditional African dance at Eigenheim Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan. See story and more photos on page 17.**

PHOTO: DONNA SCHULZ, CANADIAN MENNONITE

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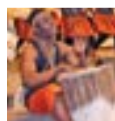
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## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

# Breaking the peace

*What happens to churches when God's people disagree because they can't get along?*

BY IKE GLICK

**W**hat to do?" is our anxious impulse. "In the beginning," God was revealed in creation before there was anyone to appreciate the self-disclosure this represented. It was long before any documentation by either Scripture or photograph was possible.

But at mid-20th century, by the flick of a camera something of the character and intention of the Creator was visually portrayed. With astronaut Scott Carpenter's now famous photograph, we've come to see the organic oneness of our habitat, with its various parts in life-sustaining interdependence. Many parts and functions, but one planet.

This serves as symbolic shorthand for our consideration of the interdependent oneness of God's people: many members and functions, but one body. When the oneness of God's people is threatened by fractious disagreement, patient and prudent leadership is essential.

### ***New Testament principles of leadership***

We can profitably look to the New Testament for principles of leadership. Peter admonishes: *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"* (I Peter 4:10).

In Ephesians 4:12-13, Paul, the itinerant church leader and church planter, identified the purpose of leadership: *"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ."* It's a journey, then, a process. *"Speaking the truth in love"* (verse 15) is part of that process, so the body's members grow in Christlikeness. In Romans 12:1-8, Paul spoke of different gifts, one Spirit, and in I Corinthians 13 he said *"love is the greatest gift."*

Christ did not address the issue of organization or structure for his followers, but he demonstrated profoundly in his washing of the disciples' feet the principle of servant leadership. In John 13:2-17, he told them, *"the servant is not greater than his master."*

Whether in government or at General Electric, the employee is not greater than his boss. Everybody knows that! God help anyone who doesn't! So what is Christ's purpose in rehashing the obvious? Christ apparently used it on several occasions.

To give it our attention is to be impacted with a bit of unconventional wisdom. On one occasion, Luke 6:40, Christ gave a variation on the theme: *"A student is not above his teacher, but*

*When the oneness of God's people is threatened by fractious disagreement, patient and prudent leadership is essential.*

ISTOCK.COM/RAPIDEYE PHOTO



*Sometimes people dislike each other, so they disagree. Or they disagree because of envy, jealousy or personality clashes.*

*when fully taught will be like his teacher.*

The context was his “do not judge one another” lesson, and was followed with the startling imagery of making a big deal about a “speck” in the eye of another while a grotesque log is protruding from one’s own! Might a judgmental spirit be the log?

Ponder the moment of the foot washing. No servants were present and there was no initiative by any of the disciples to perform this simple act of hospitality. Luke records (22:24) that they had just been bickering about who would be the greatest in Christ’s kingdom. So Christ takes the initiative with the basin and towel, noting that the kings of the gentiles lord it over others, but they are not to be like that. Servant leadership, in other words, means to lead by example. This lesson is not for leaders alone. As

redeemed ones, all are on one level. Not by might, wealth, profession or education ought we to claim superiority.

Patterns of leadership in the early church evolved over time. In the New Testament period, it was determined by need, which led to divisions of responsibility. Deacons were appointed (Acts 6:1-4). Or it was based on giftedness; in Ephesians 4, Paul explains it this way: *“some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, some teachers.”* There is no evidence of hierarchy or levels of authority at the beginning, other than that accorded the eye-witness apostles.

As the period drew to a close, and numbers in the church increased, leadership patterns began to change. Before the end of the first century AD, some features of organization began to appear involving

deacons, elders, presbyters and bishops. Motives appear driven by historical context: to preserve the purity of the gospel against false prophets or to preserve the unity of the church. These concerns would also spur the development of the New Testament Scriptures a bit later, in order to weed out heretical voices, false prophets and cults, and to make the body of Christ visible.

One might ask whether this was seeking visibility in the right place, particularly considering the spectacle of costume and pomp that followed, along with special titles of honour. Christ, on the other hand, had taught: *“By this shall everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35). This is what makes the body of Christ visible, according to him.

### Early church patterns emerge

While leadership patterns and the rise of church government by bishops sprang from specific needs—defence of Christ’s teachings against heresy and division—they soon took on a life of their own and didn’t need the emergency of the moment to keep going. What early church fathers had to say reveals a kind of evolution of hierarchy and authority.

In the first century AD, Ignatius is thought to be the first to speak of one bishop as head of presbyters and deacons in each congregation. To the church in Smyrna, he admonished church members “to follow the bishop as Christ the Father; follow the presbyter as they would the apostles, and to reverence the deacons.”

He also stated: “Let no man do anything connected with the church without the bishop.” “It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love feast.” “There is no one in the church greater than the bishop, who ministers as a priest to God for the salvation of the whole world.” “Let the laity be subject to the deacons; the deacons to the presbyters; the presbyters to the bishop; the bishop to Christ, even as he is to the Father.”

While in retrospect we can observe the seeds of an emerging hierarchy, historian Neve wrote that Ignatius did not intend his statements to be understood in a hierarchical sense. The leadership was still congregational, not diocesan, although he did develop the concept of the church universal, what he called the “household of God,” extending beyond the local congregation.



*‘Old Believer priest Nikita Pustosviat disputing with Patriarch Joachim on matters of faith,’ by Vasily Perov, 1880.*

*But most often, disagreements arise out of misunderstanding or because we haven’t sat or prayed together long enough to understand each other, and avoid doing so.*

In the second century, Irenaeus emphasized strongly what has come to be understood as “apostolic succession,” a hierarchical tradition that leadership was transmitted from the apostles through an unbroken succession of presbyters in the churches, and that this gave the church authority to refute heretics. He claimed that, while “we are in a position to . . . demonstrate the succession . . . to our own time, it would be too tedious to trace succession of all the churches,” and so he appealed for agreement with “the very great, the very ancient and universally known church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles Peter and Paul . . . for it is a matter of necessity that every church should agree with this church on account of its preeminent authority.” Thus, the Roman Catholic Church was being birthed. He claimed that truth is found nowhere else but in the catholic church as “the sole depository of apostolic doctrine.”

A century later, Cyprian carried the authority of the bishop to a new high, claiming a parallel between Old Testament priests and bishops of the church (Deuteronomy 17:12,13, and I Samuel 8:7 plus a few New Testament references). Cyprian suggested that all difficulties in the church are due to people violating the rightful authority of the bishop: “For neither have heresies arisen, nor have schisms originated from any other source than from this, that God’s priest is not obeyed.”

Cyprian’s theory of unity is maintained by communion with one’s lawful bishop: “The church does not depart from Christ; and they are the church who are a people united to the priest, and the flock who adhere to its pastor.” “The bishop is in the church, and the church is in the bishop.” “The church which is catholic [universal] is one, is not cut nor divided, but is indeed connected and bound together

by the cement of priests who cohere with one another.”

Further evolution of authority and structure resulted in development of the papacy and claims of papal infallibility.

### Reformation changes to church order and unity

A 16th-century challenge occurred when the Scriptures and Christ’s teachings were rediscovered after becoming available in the language of the people, facilitated by Gutenberg’s printing press. Anabaptists emphasized believer’s baptism, the priesthood of all believers, the Scriptures available to everyone, discipleship in daily living and servant leadership. Rapid growth, persecution and love for each other prevailed for a time that echoed the experience of the early church after the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit of God descended, along with a renewed spirit of oneness, and the drive to develop a confession of faith was, once again, to preserve the purity of the gospel and the unity of the faith. The leadership pattern was commonly a shared one, with today’s practice of a lone pastor in each Mennonite congregation a relatively recent phenomenon.

Shared leadership is highlighted in Article 16 of the current *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*: One body, many members; one Spirit, one Lord, one baptism. Scriptural references buttressing these ideas include: “God is not a God of disorder [disunity], but of peace” (I Corinthians 14:33); Ephesians 2:20-22, where Paul uses images like “household,” “dwelling” and “holy temple”; and I Peter 2:5, where Peter speaks of being built into “a spiritual house.”

Christ’s prayer for unity in John 17 is also included as a reference: “I pray for those who will believe . . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us

*'For neither have heresies arisen, nor have schisms originated from any other source than from this, that God's priest is not obeyed.'  
(Cyprian, third-century church father)*

*so that the world may believe that you have sent me . . . may they be brought to complete unity, to let the world know that you have sent me, and have loved them as you have loved me."*

### **What about when God's people disagree?**

Disagreements happen! Some are inevitable, even normal, and occur for a variety of reasons: different experiences; different histories, hence different perspectives; different training, both formal and informal; and different levels of smarts and maturity. For these reasons, disagreements may be completely honest on both sides, and say no more about one than the other.

Other disagreements are inappropriate. Sometimes people dislike each other, so they disagree. Or they disagree because of envy, jealousy or personality clashes. At other times, we lack self-confidence and feel threatened, so we disagree. Sometimes, we up the ante and become disagreeable ourselves. We may even imagine or exaggerate theological differences.

This has been a recurring sin in our fractured history. Symptoms of such disagreements are gossip, slander, impatience, and attempts to discredit or belittle another person. When we engage in such, it usually reveals more about us than about the issue being debated.

But most often, disagreements arise out of misunderstanding or because we haven't sat or prayed together long enough to understand each other, and avoid doing so. So we go on disagreeing on the basis of false perceptions of each other. That's a tragedy in the household of God.

The New Testament records some options that were common in Christ's day and Paul's: judging one another (Matthew 7:1-5, Romans 2:1-4); lording it over one another to ensure things come out right

(Mark 10:43); refusing to talk to each other (Matthew 18); denying oneness by disassociation (John 17); and seeking to destroy others by calling down fire from heaven (Luke 9:54). Christ did not bless any of these options; neither did he condone the evil his followers were reacting to. By highlighting the fact that judging another is not included in our job description, these passages confirm that the challenges and symptoms of Christ's time are very similar to our own.

I conclude with a few questions, and a few Scriptures that appear relevant to our time and situation:

- **IS THE** truth threatened when another disagrees with me? Or is it just me who's threatened?
- **CAN THE** truth be embraced by another when I impose it, with judgment, ahead of another's readiness? (Romans 2:1-4)
- **IS THE** purity of the faith actually

preserved when we isolate ourselves from those with whom we disagree and take a judgmental spirit with us?

- **"WHEN THE** Word became flesh, he dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and from his fullness have we all received grace upon grace" (John 1:16).

- **"THE LAW** was given by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

- **AFTER A** long list of sins in Romans 1:28-32 comes a warning in Romans 2:1-4 against hasty judgments, recognizing that God will be the judge based on truth: ". . . or do you show contempt for the riches of God's kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads toward repentance?" This seems to suggest that, instead of jumping to the question, "What to do?" when we disagree, we'd do well to consider, "How can we be filled with grace and truth—not just truth—in the household of God?" ✎



*Adapted from a presentation by Ike Glick at Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton, April 21, 2002, as part of a series on The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective.*

### **/// For discussion**

1. What acts of servanthood have you seen carried out by church leaders? Do your church leaders take a turn working in the kitchen? What message do they send when they do menial jobs? What does it mean to be a servant leader?
2. In what situations does a congregation need a hierarchical structure of authority? What happens when there is no formal structure? What happens when people try to assert their authority outside of the formal structure? Does a clear hierarchical model reduce church conflict?
3. Ike Glick says that "most often, disagreements arise out of misunderstanding or because we haven't sat or prayed together long enough." Do you agree? How important is it to have face-to-face discussion when there are disagreements? How can social media help or hinder such a discussion?
4. Glick refers to Romans 2:4, where Paul says that the tolerance and patience of God should lead us to repentance, rather than judgment. What does it mean to be repentant when there is disagreement in the church? Why are tolerance and patience so difficult when others disagree with us?

—BY BARB DRAPER

## 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](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) or by postal mail or fax, marked "Attn: Readers Write" (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author's contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Preference will be given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

## ✉ More support for Conscience Canada efforts needed

RE: "FIGHT, FIGHT, fight the madness of war" letter, Dec. 15, 2014, page 13.

With respect to the madness of war, I agree completely with D.E. Hubert's letter. It is a powerfully written statement with important truths for all who have ears to hear. It seems that Canada is presently determined to give away what little remains of its tattered reputation as a peace-loving/peacekeeping nation, in order to prove that it has now grown up and must be recognized as a warrior.

In my opinion, his third paragraph should be highlighted, as it provides a classic example of our federal government's priorities: We have plenty of funds, and are asking for more, to send our children into harm's way and almost none to help them when they return as damaged victims of our aggression on foreign soil.

When I read "Peace brings local community

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Jesus' table manners

ELSIE REMPEL

My recent project, a downloadable study booklet called "Come Lord Jesus, be our Host," inspired me to dig more deeply into the table manners of Jesus. I'm not referring to how he placed his knife and fork, but the way he approached the table.

Jesus' table manners concerned a lot of his contemporaries, including his disciples. When he told them to provide food for a crowd of the five thousand, they worried. How could they possibly feed so many people (Matthew 14:17)? I certainly would have fretted and fussed aplenty. But Jesus' graciousness taught them the practical theology of abundance. There was more than enough to feed everyone.

Some people worried about Jesus' practice of eating with sinners and tax collectors. Yet he seemed quite unconcerned. He taught that salvation was

coming to the very social outcasts with whom he was willing to sup.

Jesus sometimes mixed up the roles of guest and host. Consider the time our resurrected Jesus met his despondent disciples on the road to Emmaus. Following a deep and moving conversation with this "stranger" about the violent death of their beloved rabbi, they invited him to share supper and offered him a place to spend the night as their guest. But then we read, "*When he was at table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them*" (Luke 24:30). Jesus, the guest, stepped into the bread-breaking role of host! As he did so, he revealed himself not only as guest-turned-host, but as their risen Lord.

This alternating relationship between guest and host recalls the inclusiveness expressed by Jesus in John 6:56: "*Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.*" His words come after he feeds the crowd of five

thousand. He is clearly the host, but a host who receives the bread and fish for blessing and sharing from a boy who is willing to share his lunch.

Jesus' examples of sharing and his words of blessing are often reflected upon in communion services. In our Anabaptist and Mennonite church practice, we've made strong distinctions between the meals and fellowship we offer freely to all and the communion meal by which we remember Jesus and his saving sacrifice—a meal traditionally reserved for baptized believers. I'm learning that the purpose of Jesus' tables went well beyond what we typically think of as communion. It is becoming increasingly clear to me that we need to acknowledge Jesus' place at all of our tables, and his.

"Come Lord Jesus, be our host—please and thank you."

*Elsie Rempel is a Mennonite Church Canada Formation consultant. Her new resource, "Come Lord Jesus, be our Host," will be available through [www.commonword.ca/home](http://www.commonword.ca/home) this spring.*





together” on page 21 of the same issue, I can’t help but wonder why, when a few dozen people from one small Canadian region participated in a prayer walk to express their desire for peace, Conscience Canada is unable to motivate more Canadians from across the country to register their displeasure at having their taxes used for military purposes.

ERIC UNGER, WINNIPEG

## ✉ Canadian military offer their lives sacrificially . . . as did Christ

RE: “FIGHT, FIGHT, fight the madness of war” letter, Dec. 15, 2014, page. 13.

D.E. Hubert wrote an eloquent letter promoting nonresistance and I passionately agree with him that

(Continued on page 10)

## GOD, MONEY AND ME

# Why take up a Sunday morning offering?

DORI ZERBE CORNELSEN

The practice of regularly passing the collection plate in churches has only been around for about 100 years, and thankfully it replaced church revenue streams such as the annual pew rental auctions.

Offering practices also vary widely among congregations. Some take up offerings during worship every week, while others have an alms box at the entrance of the sanctuary. In addition, many seeker-sensitive services often lack an offering time in worship to avoid creating offence.

Times continue to change and one blogger asks, “Why, even in our era of digital banking and services . . . does plate-passing still rule in churches?”

I believe there are many good reasons to have an offering time in worship. Instead of being a time when the church asks for money, the offering can be a vigorous expression of our loyalty to God, not money.

In the revised edition of *Teaching a Christian View of Money*, authors Mark Vincent and Barbara Fullerton observe, “Resources on congregational worship and stewardship are easy to find, but

most say nothing about the offering. . . . Perhaps we are uncertain what to do with the offering because we have divided hearts. It’s tough to bring both of our gods into the same building on Sunday mornings!”

There is a reason why Jesus said that we can’t serve both God and money. Money has an illusion of being the source of our security. A well-planned offering in worship can remind us that this is not true. Rather, the ritual can help us understand that all that we have and are is a gift from God, to be used for the good of all.



*Taking up an offering is a tangible, physical activity of giving that has the potential to reveal God’s incredible love and faithfulness to worshippers.*

Taking up an offering is a tangible, physical activity of giving that has the potential to reveal God’s incredible love and faithfulness to worshippers. It can also be a time of confession that confronts us with our tendency to trust in ourselves and our material resources.

An offering time can also make gospel preachers out of the whole congregation. According to Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, through the ministry of generosity, “you glorify God by your

obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ” (II Corinthians 9:13).

Beyond the impact on individual worshippers, the offering has the potential to transform us as congregations. We collectively express our values in many ways, but perhaps more than any mission statement we may write, our values are demonstrated by our financial statements. Our hearts personally and collectively go where we put God’s money. A time of offering in worship gives us an opportunity to express generosity together.

Maybe with the change in the way we process our financial transactions brought on by the digital age, we have an opportunity to approach the time of offering and money in worship in a new way. Has your church been trying something new? I’d love to hear about your experiences as Mennonite Foundation of Canada considers how we might assist

congregations with generosity worship resources.

*Dori Zerbe Cornelsen (dzcornelsen@MennoFoundation.ca) is a stewardship consultant in the Winnipeg office of Mennonite Foundation of Canada. For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit MennoFoundation.ca.*

(Continued from page 9)

taking up arms is the least desirable means to resolve a conflict. Both of us were brought up to resolve differences without resorting to violence, but unfortunately we live in a world where not everyone shares that position.

I support the necessity of the Canadian military and the local police because they fill the role of protectors

of those who are unable to defend themselves.

I grieve with Hubert at our loss of the 158 Canadian soldiers who died in Afghanistan, but I wonder how many thousands of Afghani civilians would have been killed by the Taliban for disagreeing with their theology had Canada not intervened.

Hubert correctly points out that Canada sent CF-18s to Libya to remove “a vicious dictator.” I wonder

## FAMILY TIES

# On being a ‘holy family’ today

MELISSA MILLER

This past December I learned that many Catholic churches designate the Sunday following Christmas as “the feast of the Holy Family.” It’s a relatively new designation, officially adopted less than 100 years ago. The Scriptures that are read on this day remind us of the important role that family played in the life of Jesus. The feast helps people link the biblical stories of Jesus and his parents to families today, and underlines the significance of family in the life of the church. (From *God With Us: Rediscovering the Meaning of Christmas*, edited by Pennoyer and Wolfe).

At our church, we heard Luke’s account of the infant Jesus being carried in his parents’ arms to the temple, just as faithful parents today carry their children to church for Christian nurture. Luke’s story also includes the double blessing of the well-aged, godly Simeon and Anna, celebrating the birth of the Lord’s Messiah. Their presence in the story reminds us that families need, and are surrounded by, many supports, including the priceless treasure of wise elders. And Anna and Simeon show us that family is larger than biological connections; we need a whole church to raise

our children.

We readily make connections between the Scripture readings of Jesus as a young child in the care of his parents and our own families. Through our imagination, we linger on images of Jesus being nursed to sleep by Mary. We can almost see Joseph curling his hand over Jesus’ as he teaches him how to use a tool.

When Mary and Joseph lose Jesus in the crowded streets of Jerusalem, their fearful, frantic search blends with our own experiences of lost children. These glimpses of the beginnings of Jesus’ life show clearly, if briefly, that he was a human child growing up in a family, faithfully cared for by Mary and Joseph. Jesus knew family life intimately, with all the

*Jesus knew family life intimately, with all the delights and struggles that affords.*

delights and struggles that affords.

Might we borrow this family life concept from our Catholic friends? Could we designate the Sunday after Christmas as a family life day? I confess that initially the idea seems a little strange. I’m a Protestant, after all, and an Anabaptist at that! I am not an inheritor of feast days and designated prayer times. I’m

supposed to pray without ceasing, right? I’m supposed to pray every day for my family, right? Such prayers are not stored up for just one special day a year.

Well, in reality, I don’t pray every day for my family members, except in a generic way. And designating a family life Sunday doesn’t preclude the possibility of praying every day for one’s loved ones. Still, I find that some days are more special than others. Like birthdays and wedding anniversaries and the day of a death. And certainly we are fortified when we meld the biblical story with the nuts and bolts of our lives.

We’re still close to the beginning of a new year. It likely is a good day in which to pray a prayer of blessing for our families:

- **TO ASK** God to help us demonstrate the same nurture, protection and fidelity that Joseph and Mary showed to Jesus.
- **TO RENEW** our wedding vows, which some couples do on their anniversaries.
- **TO SEEK** reconciliation where there is strain or wounded silence. Perhaps we do this with the family members we live with

or with those who are closest to us.

The Holy Family of Mary and Joseph and Jesus can show us some things about how to be a holy family today.

*Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) is a pastor and counsellor, seeking wholeness in relationships.*



how many Libyans would have died had the United Nations coalition not intervened.

His next point, in which he condemns the Canadian military for not intervening in Gaza, which resulted in Palestinian and Israeli citizens being killed, seems to support my position. He goes on to condemn the Canadian military for intervening in Iraq, where the so-called Islamic State is in the process of killing every man and raping every woman it captures, including children.

Those who support passivism will quote Luke 6:27-36 or Matthew 5:43-45, which refer to loving your enemies. Anabaptist founders Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz and Dirk Phillips all interpreted those passages as a basis for pacifism. In stark contrast, they ignore Romans 13:4, that clearly suggests that righteous men should take up arms to punish the evildoers.

How do we resolve this contradiction?

I would suggest that the Bible tells us that those who have the ability to do so, have the responsibility to protect those who do not have the ability to protect themselves from pain, suffering and death. But if evil acts occur, then we have the responsibility to forgive, extend grace and show love to those who trespass against us.

I can't understand how people can enjoy the benefits of living in a peaceful society and then condemn the Canadian military and local police, the very people who are willing to sacrifice their own lives—as Christ did—in order to protect ours.

Father, forgive all of us, for we know not what we are doing.

JOHN PIERA, CALGARY

### ✉ It's not our grace . . . but God's grace that we extend

RE: "IS IT really a choice?" letter, Dec. 15, 2014, page 13.

In his letter to the editor, Walter Klassen wrote in part, "I find it very difficult to accept the fact that God would deny LGBTQ people, whom he created, the right to love and be loved. Maybe God is finding out how far we, as heterosexuals and Christians, can extend our grace."

I'm not sure we have grace to extend. In II Corinthians 12:9 we read about God's grace, and II Timothy 2:1 tells us to "*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*"

It is God's grace that helps us separate the person from the behaviour. Jesus did not condemn the adulterous woman (John 8: 1-11), but, instead encouraged her to not sin again.

There is always the possibility that we can become

deceived when it comes to sin. Sin is "missing the mark." I Corinthians 6:9-10 tells us, "*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God.*" All of those listed "missed the mark." We have all missed the mark; verse 11 says, "*And such were some of you.*"

A recent same-sex marriage ("It felt like a big deal . . . it was so powerful," Jan. 19, page 13) may have marked a point in history for the Mennonite denomination in Canada, but it has also set a precedent. If Mennonite churches are publicly welcoming of LGBTQ people, they must also welcome the others listed in I Corinthians 6 with open arms.

WES EPP, CALGARY

### ✉ Paul provides an answer to question of sexual misconduct in the church

RE: "FOR DISCUSSION: An 'experiment' in sexuality gone wrong," Jan. 5, page 6.

Question 2 asked: "How does your church work at being a safe space, free of sexual misconduct? If something like this should happen at your church, how would the congregation respond?"

Paul said what to do in I Corinthians 5:9-12 (biblehub.com): "*I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.*"

ELAINE FEHR (ONLINE COMMENT)

### ✉ Bible played major role in leading reader to Christ

RE: "MY YEAR of reading the Bible," Jan. 5, page 8.

Well put! I read the Bible in its entirety once in my late teens out of a desire to settle my own beliefs. What I found was a desire to live for Christ in a way that was not possible before, and I can't say that I've stopped reading it daily since I started—more than seven years, with more to come, God willing. I credit the pages of the Bible, and wrestling with the God in its writings,

with leading me to Christ more than anything else in my life.

Is daily Bible reading necessary? I'm not sure. Is it beneficial to a person's faith and instruction? Definitely.

RYAN CARNEY (ONLINE RESPONSE)

### ✉ Which church is closer to God's dream for our world?

MUCH HAS BEEN made about "what the Bible says" in the context of a tradition that has often confessed it believes the Bible to be the final authority in matters of faith and ethics.

Rarely has this reference to "what the Bible says" been particularly helpful, since what the Bible says seems to have far less to do with what is printed in Scripture and much more with who it is holding the Bible and reading it.

I am less and less inclined to think of the Bible as having "final authority" in matters of faith and ethics. Instead, I think the Bible's authority is primarily the authority to point us to Jesus, who revealed God to us. The question in matters of ethics, then, is not what the Bible says, but what is consistent with God's dream for our world as revealed in Jesus.

This was brought into clearer focus for me as the result of three events that recently touched my life:

1. AT THE meeting held in Saskatoon to discuss Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's decision to adopt a hiring policy that will not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation ("Equipped to listen, but not to agree," Nov. 10, 2014, page 21), three pastors or former pastors were clear in their indictment of any area church or congregation that would pass or support such a policy.
2. I HAD a conversation with a father who told me that his young-adult daughter, a lesbian, had recently attempted suicide because leaders and others in their congregation and denomination were making unkind comments.
3. ON NEW Year's Eve, two Saskatchewan Mennonite men were married at Osler Mennonite Church by the pastors of Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon ("It felt like a big deal . . . it was so powerful," Jan. 19, page 13).

If I have to choose between the church called for by the three people in No. 1 and the church in No. 3, I will choose a church that helps, encourages and supports men and women of whatever orientation. Based on my understanding of the Jesus story, a church that encourages and supports people making and

entering a life-long covenant of love is much closer to God's dream for our world than one that drives the people God loves to give up on life and want to kill themselves.

RAY FRIESEN, SWIFT CURRENT, SASK.

### ✉ Online/Facebook comments on first MC Canada-officiated gay wedding

RE: "IT FELT like a big deal . . . it was so powerful," Jan. 19, page 13; also online at canadianmennonite.org.

CONGRATULATIONS, CRAIG AND Matt! Thank you, Anita and Patrick!

GAIL SCHELLENBERG

I AM CONFIDENT that we are going to repeat history, since we have not learned from it the first time. Here we go again, Sodom and Gomorrah.

PAM FAST

ACCEPTANCE THAT SOME people are naturally gay or bisexual has been steadily growing in society and in religion. Establishing gay rights, including the right to marry, is more progress. Thus, I wish the newlyweds all the best, like any couple.

HOWARD BOLDT

HAS THE MENNONITE church in Saskatchewan abandoned its statement of faith? That statement clearly states that it upholds the biblical standard of marriage as between one man and one woman. What will happen to a church that refuses to uphold its own confession of faith or rejects a confession of faith which is biblically faithful in favour of one which is not?

It's all well and good when non-believers accept sin as normative and even right. It's an entirely different thing when believers—or unbelievers posing as believers—begin to call evil good and good evil.

May God grant repentance to this "couple" and the church and denomination which have chosen to call this sinful action good.

DARYL LITTLE

I AM SO happy for Craig and Matt, and I am very happy also to attend Osler Mennonite Church, Sask. (where they were married on New Year's Eve).

SARAH BUHLER

THERE IS A misunderstanding about some people "being born that way." The Bible clearly labels homosexual activity as sin. It also labels adultery and fornication, along with many other deeds and actions,

as sin. Sin is common in human behaviour because we are all born with a corrupt human nature. So, in that sense, some people are born with the nature to engage in homosexual activity as are others to commit adultery, fornication, murder or theft.

However, the good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for all of our sin, and then he rose from the dead. All who repent of their sin and receive him by faith can be born again spiritually and receive a new sinless nature with the power to have victory over their sin so that they can be changed and stop their sin.

The message of God and Christ in the Bible to all sinners, including homosexuals, is that God loves you so much that he gave his son to die for your sins. He can and will change you into a new person with a new nature if you will repent of your sin and receive Christ as your personal saviour by faith! It is a free gift by the grace of God!

It is sad to me as a Mennonite pastor (First Mennonite Church, Burns Lake, B.C.) that many don't seem to get it and are not preaching this very simple yet profound gospel message to their people.

STEVE SWIRES

I AM SORRY. I pressed "like" in error.

RUTH FISHER

I PRESSED "LIKE" on purpose.

HELEN REHAN

I PRESSED "LIKE" 'cause I was there—and it was faaaabuuuullloouuss.

BEN BORNE

I PRESSED "LIKE" because Ben said it was fabulous and I trust him.

JEFÉ DE LA MARTENS-KOOP

CRAIG AND MATT, I don't know you, but heartfelt congratulations! Mennonite Church Canada, it took until 2015, but glad at least one congregation has cleared this milestone.

MICHAEL DRIEDGER

## ✉ The time is now to show the love

THE PROCESS OF re-examining what it is to be Christian and how we interpret Scripture can be seen occurring from as far back as the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 to recent discussions around the topic of sexuality and sexual identity.

Today, we have scholars such as Reverend Jeff Miner (*The Children Are Free*) or Brian D. McLaren (*A New*

*Kind of Christianity*), who challenge how we look at Scripture. Some Christians believe that the Bible actually does not condemn loving relationships between people of the same sex. Their arguments are worth analyzing, but, for many Christians, these discussions go beyond personal and church-based "comfort zones."

If we look at how Jesus responded to the concerns of the Pharisees' interpretation of scriptural law, we can move forward in how we deal with acceptance of people who identify themselves as lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer. In Mark 7:19, the writer states that Jesus "*declared all foods clean.*" Jesus had made a very pragmatic argument about what comes out of the heart as opposed to what goes in the stomach, challenging interpretation of the law.

Today, we see institutions such as Mennonite Central Committee and World Vision making abstinence a requirement for employment of gays and lesbians. This example of "love the sinner, hate the sin" is one that does not encompass mercy and compassion. This statement still stigmatizes the individuals and puts conditions on the love they seem to espouse. It's up to the leaders of the church and other Christian institutions to examine how we stigmatize people and how we can change, and if it doesn't happen at the top, change needs to happen in individual churches. With the tools of modern times we can move on from archaic ideas, using practicality, compassion and love, as Jesus did.

We can come together—Jews and Gentiles, Christians and Muslims, gays and straights—with what Jesus taught was the second greatest commandment: "*Love your neighbour as yourself.*" Along with the first commandment of loving God, we can re-examine how we interpret Scripture, considering all law "*can hang on these two commandments*" (Matthew 22:40).

"*Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*" We can do this. We can open our hearts, stop stigmatizing and help create "*earth as it is in heaven.*"

DENNIS WIENS, LEAMINGTON, ONT.




**Do you know of someone in your congregation not getting *Canadian Mennonite*?**

Ask your church administrator to add them to the list. It is already paid for.

## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

## Faith vs. belief (Pt. 4)

TROY WATSON

When I first started hanging out with Mennonites in the 1990s, I noticed a lot of them talked more about the Sermon on the Mount than the cross. They seemed to have a different gospel than the one I was raised with. The gospel of my childhood was simple: Jesus died for my sins, and if I accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour I was saved from everlasting hellfire.

My conversations with these Mennonites rekindled suspicions I already had about this version of the gospel. For starters, nowhere in the Bible does it mention accepting Jesus as one's personal Lord and Saviour.

So I asked my new Mennonite friends about their gospel and one of them summarized it this way: "The gospel is the totality of Christ, not just his death and resurrection, but also his example, his teachings and his life. His being is the essence of the gospel."

At first, this seemed obvious. Of course, Jesus is the gospel! However, upon further reflection, I realized this Anabaptist approach had a substantially different focus than my childhood faith. And I found it very compelling.

You see, as a teenager I was consistently puzzled by Jesus' teachings. His message didn't sync with my fundamentalist understanding of salvation. I was repeatedly told the only thing I needed to do to be "saved" was to believe that Jesus died for my sins and accept God's free gift of salvation. But Jesus seemed to add a lot of confusing clauses to this alleged "free" gift.

Here are a few snippets of my conversations with Jesus during high school:



• "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Wait, I have to do God's will? I thought I just had to believe? This sounds like a salvation based on "good works" to me.

• "An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus answered him, 'What is written in the Law? What do you read there?' The man replied, 'You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, all your soul, all

*I thought I received God's forgiveness by believing that you paid for my sins on the cross? Are you saying God's forgiveness depends on my extending forgiveness to others? It seems like you're much more concerned with what I do than what I believe, Jesus.*

your strength, and all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.' Jesus replied, 'You have answered correctly; do this and you will live'" (Luke 10:25-28).

Wait a minute, Jesus. Loving God and other people is how I inherit eternal life? That doesn't make sense. I thought eternal life was a "free" gift I received by believing?

• "I tell you, on the day of judgment everyone will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:36).

Excuse me, Lord? Did you say, by my words I will be justified or condemned? I thought I was justified by faith alone,

by believing in you and your redemptive work on the cross. Isn't that what faith is? What does the way I talk have to do with justification?

• "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14-15).

Seriously? I thought I received God's forgiveness by believing that you paid for my sins on the cross? Are you saying God's forgiveness depends on my extending forgiveness to others? It seems like you're much more concerned with what I do than what I believe, Jesus.

• "Then Peter said, 'Now I understand that God doesn't play favourites. Rather, whoever respects God and does what is right is acceptable to him in any nation'" (Acts 10:34-35).

Is Peter out to lunch here, Jesus? He seems to be saying God accepts anyone

from any background as long as they respect God and do what is right. No mention of beliefs whatsoever. Don't some people from other religions fit this description? This sounds like heresy, Lord.

These are just a few of the Bible passages I struggled with as a youngster that eventually planted seeds of profound mystery and transformation in my mind, heart and soul. I'm now convinced that whatever Christian faith is, it's definitely more than believing a bunch of things about God and Jesus. ❧

Troy Watson is pastor of Avon Mennonite Church, Stratford, Ont.

## VIEWPOINT

## Stand up for God's truth

STEVE HOEPPNER

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

**“T**he Lord's patience is running out with Mennonites over the issue of homosexuality.”

How different this message is from the one coming out of our denominational offices! From our leaders the message appears to be, “Let us continue to dialogue, to discern and to hear from God; and let us continue to show grace to one another, and learn to work through differences.”

These same leaders, however, need to be challenged with a key question: “Are you hearing this message from God or from mainstream culture?” It's an essential question because much is at stake for Mennonite Church Canada, since this issue has the potential to split us apart.

But what I have been hearing from the Holy Spirit of late runs in completely the opposite direction. Over the course of the last five months I have been receiving what I strongly believe to be prophetic dreams of warning—not congratulations—about our denomination's direction on the homosexual issue. To be blunt, what I am hearing is that Jesus is very unhappy with us.

I fully understand that this will be a difficult, if not impossible, message to receive for many. But because I believe so strongly that it is from God, I am willing to expose myself to ridicule, if not outright wrath, that now awaits those who dare to call homosexuality what the Bible calls it: sin.

If it counts for anything, I am, in many ways, the last person God should choose for this assignment. Throughout most of my adult life I have not only been sceptical of charismatic Christianity, I have been downright hostile towards it. But now in my 40s, I can no longer deny that God is still very much in the miracle business: dreams, visions and healings in all areas of life, including sexuality.

And so I come asking you—the

community of faith—to prayerfully discern what I am about to say, just as Paul instructed the Thessalonians: “Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” (I Thessalonians 5:19-22).

**The Book of Jude**

The most recent message from the Lord—“*Read the Book of Jude*”—came to me in a simple, yet powerful dream one week prior to the New Year's Eve wedding of two gay Mennonite men in Osler, Sask.: After several hours studying Jude

*God's immense grace and kindness cannot be presumed upon while willfully breaking his commandments.*

since, I believe this tiny 25-verse book is essential for our times.

Jude's message is straightforward and urgent. He exhorts believers to “*contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints*” (3b). The reason is that within Jude's flock there was, just as there is for us today, a dangerous misunderstanding about grace.

In a sincere attempt to welcome those struggling with same-sex attraction, I believe many in our denomination have, just as Jude describes, become those who “*pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*” (4b).

This stunning rebuke comes with clear and dire warnings of condemnation for those who persist in watering down God's Word, along with a sobering reminder “*that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe*” (5b).

What I believe God is saying is that we can no longer tolerate the teaching of

those who pervert God's grace by promoting homosexual—or heterosexual—immorality. It is rare today that one hears a message of God's desire for holiness in the church. We often label it legalism, and, instead, we wink at sinful lifestyles, thereby sending the message that “God is too gracious to judge anyone.”

This is not grace, though. God's immense grace and kindness cannot be presumed upon while willfully breaking his commandments. Grace is grace, not something God owes us. It is offered in order to lead us to repentance of sin, not to more sin (Romans 2:4).

Tragically, I believe God will soon move in judgment upon us if we continue to bless behaviours that he hates. According to Jude, those who give licence to immorality are offensive to Jesus. They are “*hidden reefs at your love feasts*” (12), and, “*scoffers, following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions,*

*worldly people, devoid of the Spirit*” (18-19).

If the prophetic messages I've received are indeed accurate, the question is an obvious one: “What shall we do?” In a word: “Repent.” I believe it starts with our leaders taking a firm yet loving stand against those who have now openly and boastfully violated our Confession of Faith's definition of marriage. True Christian love requires that such congregations be put out of the denomination and its clergy defrocked, in order that repentance might occur so as to be restored to fellowship (I Corinthians 5).

I urge each of us to prayerfully read Jude because I believe Jesus is warning us that being his disciples requires the pursuit of holiness. If our leaders will not take a stand for God's truth, we must do so, just as many of our ancestors did. ✎

*Steve Hoepfner is a minister within MC Canada and currently serves as a prison chaplain in the Kingston, Ont., area.*

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Johnson**—Rhena Marie (b. Sept. 11, 2014), to Steven and Colette Johnson, Carrot River Mennonite, Sask.

**Krahn**—Alexander Eddy Penner (b. Dec. 31, 2014), to Trishia Penner and Dennis Krahn, Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Krahn**—Jane Helen (b. Dec. 23, 2014), to David and Heather Krahn, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Pauls Braun**—Rowan Norman (b. Dec. 19, 2014), to Lora Braun and Gerald Pauls, Morden Mennonite, Man.

### Baptisms

**Justin Brideau-Gough**—Zion Mennonite, Elmira, Ont., July 6, 2014, in Hanover, Ont.

### Marriages

**Friesen/Wiens**—Craig Friesen (Osler Mennonite, Sask.) and Matt Wiens (Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon), at Osler Mennonite, Dec. 31, 2014.

### Deaths

**Bourton**—Annie (nee Boehr), 90 (b. July 24, 1924; d. Oct. 14, 2014), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

**Derksen**—William (Bill), 82 (b. April 8, 1932; d. Nov. 4, 2014), Carman Mennonite, Man.

**Epp**—George, 90 (b. July 28, 1924; d. Dec. 20, 2014), Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont.

**Fransen**—Jack, 93 (b. March 13, 1921; d. Dec. 19, 2014), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont., in Fresno, Calif.

**Friesen**—William (Bill) N., 64 (b. Dec. 10, 1949; d. Oct. 28, 2014), Elim Mennonite, Grunthal, Man.

**Gerber**—Orland, 86 (b. Feb. 28, 1929; d. Jan. 3, 2015), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Goering**—Luise (Zuzol) (nee Dyck), 96 (b. June 8, 1918; d. Dec. 31, 2014), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Hildebrand**—Nettie Hilda, 94 (b. April 6, 1920; d. Jan. 7, 2015), Morden Mennonite, Man.

**Janzen**—Arthur L., 81 (b. Jan. 21, 1933; d. Nov. 11, 2014), Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Janzen**—John H., 83 (b. March 4, 1931; d. Dec. 26, 2014), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Koop**—Dietrich, 91 (b. July 22, 1923; d. Dec. 18, 2014), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Lidtke**—Kaethe, 87 (b. Dec. 23, 1926; d. Oct. 25, 2014), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

**Neudorf**—Selma (nee Woelk), 89 (b. Sept. 16, 1925; d. Oct. 10, 2014), Toronto United Mennonite.

**Roth**—Elda Elizabeth, 88 (b. Jan. 6, 1926; d. Dec. 22, 2014), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

**Thiessen**—George, 66 (b. Nov. 11, 1948; d. Nov. 20, 2014), Carman Mennonite, Man.

**Tiessen**—Hardy, 88 (b. June 18, 1926; d. Dec. 11, 2014), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Tiessen**—Jacob Edward, 78 (b. March 29, 1936; d. Nov. 16, 2014), Crystal City Mennonite, Man.

**Tiessen**—Robert, 60 (b. May 27, 1954; d. Jan. 7, 2015), Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

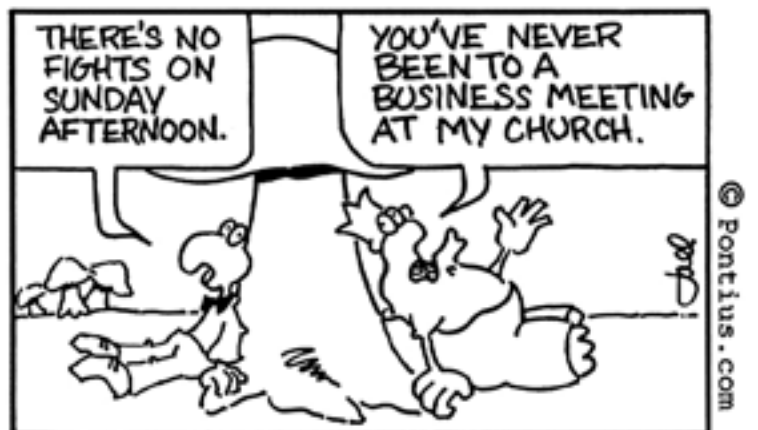
**Wagler**—Dorothy (nee Bast), 96 (b. March 9, 1918; d. Dec. 16, 2014), Steinmann Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

**Warkentin**—Henry, 85 (b. Jan. 21, 1929; d. Sept. 3, 2014), Elim Mennonite, Grunthal, Man.

**Weber**—Patricia (nee King), 82 (b. Aug. 22, 1932; d. Dec. 10, 2014), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

**Willms**—Annie, 99 (b. June 28, 1915; d. Dec. 29, 2014), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

## Pontius' Puddle





## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

## COVER STORY

# From Africa to Saskatchewan

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
ROSTHERN, SASK.

Enthusiastic singing, energetic dancing and electrifying drumming set the tone as the Asante Children's Choir worshipped African-style with Eigenheim Mennonite Church congregants, near Rosthern, Sask. on Jan. 18. Although not their typical Sunday fare, the congregation responded warmly to the choir's music.

The 15 singers, ranging in age from 12 to 16, have been touring western Canada since last September, broadening their own horizons as well as those of their Canadian audiences.

Allan Friesen, Eigenheim's pastor, said having the choir come to his church was a great opportunity for the congregation, and particularly the youth, "to be exposed to [expressions] of Christian faith from another part of the world without having to leave home," adding, "We're so small and isolated in this part of the world and we don't always get a sense of how big the Christian church is worldwide."

Amon Munyaneza, a college student with \$30 to his name, founded Asante Ministries in Rwanda in 1999. Munyaneza, who grew up as a Rwandan refugee in Uganda, met 10-year-old Naomi, who was caring for her dying mother. Munyaneza used his \$30 to buy books so he could teach Naomi to read. When his friends heard what he was doing, they asked if they could help, and his ministry began to grow.

Today, through a child sponsorship model, Asante Ministries cares for about 1,200 children whose lives have been impacted by war, disaster and disease in the Eastern African countries of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. Sponsored children are given a home, health-care, education and love, and they learn about the God who loves them and knows each of them by name.

In 2007, Munyaneza and his wife Erica founded the Asante Children's Choir as a way to thank North American Christians who have sponsored children through their ministry. "Asante" is a Swahili word meaning "thank you."

The choir that visited Eigenheim Mennonite is one of several touring groups. Each choir member is sponsored through Asante, "so they all know what it is like to be in need, and the amazing way that child sponsorship has changed their lives," said tour coordinator Karen Klippenstein of Winnipeg. Through their singing, dancing and testimonies, the children raise awareness of the needs of children like themselves who don't as yet have sponsors.

Travelling and living together for five-and-a-half months is challenging for choir members and chaperones alike.

"Every single one of us has [a] different mood, especially in the morning, so you have to be careful what you say or how you [perceive] their actions and words," said Ugandan chaperone Simon Ssemwogerere.

But through the inevitable challenges,

relationships grow. Findley, a female choir member, said, "On this tour I have made friends and discovered the true meaning of love and friendship."

The choir is scheduled to return to Uganda later this month with many stories to tell their friends and families. The cold Canadian winter has, understandably, made an impression on each of them, and some, like Kennedy and Patience, look forward to telling friends at home that they "walked on water" across a frozen lake. Others, such as Hellen, Mary, James and Findley, will remember the people they met. "Canadians are loving and beautiful people," said Findley

"Coming to Canada is such an amazing experience for each child," said Klippenstein. "Not only do they get to travel, but they get to experience another country and culture, learning so many things that they are only told about in school."

And the children have embraced the experience to the fullest. "We tried every food," said Grace. "And the coldness, even if it was -40 we went out and played and we did everything with enthusiasm."

For the congregants of Eigenheim Mennonite, who worshipped with the choir and met them only briefly, the enthusiasm was palpable. On the church's Facebook page, one member wrote, "I was definitely blessed by their songs, their smiles, their testimonies and their incredible energy!" ❧

For more photos and video, visit [www.canadianmennonite.org/from-africa-to-saskatchewan](http://www.canadianmennonite.org/from-africa-to-saskatchewan).



*The Asante Children's Choir sings with feeling "He Knows my Name" during a recent performance at Eigenheim Mennonite Church.*

# Menno-lympics breaks down generational barriers

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ALLISON GOERZEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

EDMONTON

With 19 youths and 17 seniors turning out to test their strength and agility in six Olympic-styled table games, First Mennonite Church's Menno-lympics was a huge intergenerational success.

The games, held on Jan. 11, were cleverly devised by First's own Ted Rempel, who used to run these games as a team-building exercise where he used to work. With such names as the Long Threading Jump or Pole Stacking Vault, the games were made from simple household items. With a few wooden blocks, beads and some clever ingenuity, the church hall filled with a light and good-spirited energy.

When asked why putting together games for the church was meaningful for him, Rempel replied that "having events like these is an excellent chance for youth to get to know their elders, who are also young at heart."

Which is exactly why First's youth council planned it. Council member Liam Kachkar originally approached Rempel about the idea because the council felt that it was important to have opportunities for youths to know the seniors in the church.

"It can be scary when you don't know all the people in your church," Kachkar says.



*Menno-lympian Rebecca Janzen tries her luck at Weight Squeeze Lifting and sends her blocks flying!*



*Kaya Thiessen, left, Olivia Neufeldt and Kevin Stoesz stand up proudly to receive their Menno-lympics medals in the Long Threading Jump event.*



*Kevin Stoesz and Sean Baergen cheer on Kaya Thiessen, the Long Threading Jump champion, as she showcases her skills at First Mennonite Church's Menno-lympics on Jan. 11.*

"Getting to know who they are and a little more about them really helps break down barriers and alleviate the chance for conflict and tension between generations."

Sharing a common experience like table games brings to light how similar youths and seniors are. Events like this create opportunities for youths to hear their elders'

stories and wisdom, perhaps especially for those who don't have grandparents attending the same church.

With relationships forming over a little Sliding Discus or Sucker Basketball, youths at First are well on their way to forming an open-minded and cohesive congregation multi-generationally. ☞

## /// Staff change

### Pastoral transition in Alberta

• **MARCIAL (ELIAS) MIRANDA**, bivocational pastor of Calgary's Word of Life Mennonite Church (Iglesia Palabra de Vida), displays his ordination certificate following his ordination service on Nov. 23, 2014, five days after a car accident left him with internal bruising. Dan Graber, Mennonite Church Alberta's area church minister, led the service, which was held at First Mennonite Church in Calgary, where the Spanish-speaking congregation regularly meets. Miranda was licensed by Mennonite Church Saskatchewan from 1996-98 to pastor in Regina. He has been the pastor at Word of Life for 12 years. He is currently doing some Anabaptist theological studies by correspondence. Over the years, he has worked as an aluminum fabricator in Calgary and a male nurse in El Salvador, where he is from.

—BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD





*Clearbrook Mennonite Church has closed its doors after more than six decades of service to German-speaking Mennonites in Abbotsford, B.C.*

## Clearbrook Mennonite closes its doors

*Small German congregation just not sustainable*

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

More than 62 years of ministry came to an end on Jan. 11, when Clearbrook Mennonite Church held its final worship service. With weekly attendance under 50 and a lack of ongoing pastoral leadership, the congregation had voted four days earlier to disband.

Clearbrook Mennonite had formed in 1952, a daughter church of West Abbotsford Mennonite. At its peak, membership had been more than 200, but the congregation's decision to retain German as its primary language eventually led to dwindling membership and a congregation populated entirely by senior citizens.

The church had also been struggling to find regular pastoral leadership. When Pastor Siegbert Zukowski resigned last summer for health reasons, the church had to rely on German-speaking guest pastors.

"They, as church, tried as best to be healthy and effective," Garry Janzen,

Mennonite Church B.C.'s executive minister, told *Canadian Mennonite*. "At the same time, eventually they were unable to continue. Given the fact it was a German congregation, and considering the age of people, [the closure] seemed inevitable."

Another local congregation, Eben-Ezer Mennonite, which still retains a German service, has opened its doors to any Clearbrook members who wish to attend. Others may attend nearby Clearbrook Mennonite Brethren Church.

The Clearbrook Mennonite Church building sits in a prime location at the corner of Peardonville and Clearbrook roads. It is hoped that by the MC B.C. annual general meeting in February, a plan will be in place for short-term use of the building and property, with long-term plans pending. ❧

### /// Briefly noted

#### Thrift in Ontario turns 40

KITCHENER, ONT.—More than 425 Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario Thrift Shop volunteers, staff and supporters packed the hall at Bingemans in Kitchener on Oct. 26, 2014, to celebrate 40 years of "thrift" in Ontario. Patty Ollies, MCC Ontario's outgoing thrift development officer, reflected on the celebration, saying, "It was deeply moving to see so many of our volunteers from all over Ontario together in the same room. MCC Thrift has a large reach that is made possible by the incredibly dedicated volunteers. It was such a blessing to be part of the 40th-anniversary celebration of such a wonderful network of individuals that live what they believe." MCC Thrift has grown by leaps and bounds in Ontario, with the first small shop opening its doors in St. Catharines four decades ago. Now the thrift landscape looks much different, with 13 shops, dozens of management staff, hundreds of community partnerships, thousands of volunteers, tens of thousands of donors and customers, millions of kilograms of items kept out of landfills, and more than \$31 million dollars raised for MCC.

—MCC Ontario

MCC PHOTO BY JENNIFER VANDERMOLEN



*Pictured from left to right at the party celebrating 40 years of 'thrift' in Ontario: Patty Ollies, the new MCC Canada national thrift coordinator; Rick Cober Bauman, MCC Ontario's executive director; and Matthew Kok, MCC Ontario's thrift development officer.*

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## Staff changes

### Pastor in transition in Ontario

• **PATRICIA WAGLER** was ordained on Jan. 11 at Tavistock Mennonite Church, where she is the associate pastor. Wagler was in lay ministry at Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, and served as associate pastor at Riverdale Mennonite Church, Millbank, both in Ontario. Besides working at Tavistock Mennonite, she is a labyrinth/retreat/workshop facilitator and resource person, as well as a spiritual director. She earned a bachelor of theology degree from Emmanuel Bible College, Kitchener, Ont.; took spiritual formation/direction training from Jubilee Ontario; and became a certified labyrinth facilitator through Veriditas. *(Read about one of her labyrinth events at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate on page 28.)*



**Patricia  
Wagler**

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

### Overseas pastor in transition

• **DANISA NDLOVU**, president of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), retired from his position as bishop of Ibandla Labazalwane KuKristu eZimbabwe (Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe), effective Dec. 31, 2014.

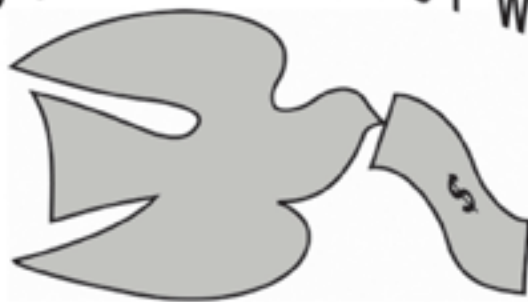


**Danisa  
Ndlovu**

Ndlovu had been bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church since 2000. Beginning in 2015, he assumes a new role with the Susek Evangelistic Association, a U.S.-based ministry committed to the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ by strengthening and building of the church through evangelism, conferences and other initiatives. In this new role, Ndlovu will help organize and co-facilitate leadership summits in Africa and elsewhere. Ndlovu was succeeded as bishop by Sindah Ngulube on Jan. 1.

—Mennonite World Conference

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## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# Countering Islamic State

*Short-term military gains against Islamic militants only pave the way for longer-term chaos: Peggy Mason*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

WATERLOO, ONT.

“There is no military solution [to Islamic State (IS)], only possibly some short-term tactical gains that might give the illusion of success, but which pave the way for longer-term chaos, as we now see in Libya. There is no political solution without addressing the underlying local grievances that IS exploits and that will take time and concerted effort.”

So said Peggy Mason, president of the Rideau Institute in Ottawa, whose provocative presentation, “Countering ISIL: Why Canada needs to change course,” on Jan. 15 at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, was sponsored by Project Ploughshares and the Canadian International Council.

Her description of IS is of a politically savvy organization playing its bloody public relations cards carefully. When Barack Obama seemed to not be considering a military intervention in Iraq in response to IS, the terrorist organization upped the ante by beheading a series of international prisoners. This resulted in the U.S. and other western countries, including Canada, to begin a military campaign in Iraq, with some members of the coalition also active in Syria. The main position of IS is that the West is out to destroy Islam, according to Mason, and it needs western military intervention to continue to be seen as the saviour of Islam to its supporters.

“Bombing without a comprehensive strategy with regional players at the core of the solution is a recipe for long conflict and further regional destabilization, the very conditions in which organizations like ISIL thrive and grow,” Mason said,

“You cannot bomb an ideology out of existence,” she countered. “You have to

understand its appeal and work to address the huge array of political, social and economic grievances and marginalization that Islamic State exploits to get and maintain local support, without which it cannot succeed.”

The suggestion that one cannot—or should not—negotiate with terrorists is the ideology of the Gulf States, which are the West’s allies against IS. They do not allow dissent of any kind in their lands while criminalizing political opposition

of all kinds, she said, suggesting that Saudi Arabia uses the same tactics as IS on opponents—beheading—which fuels the very extremism the West is fighting.

In conclusion, she said, “To delegitimize the Islamic State ideology, we must work to create legitimate governments in the Middle East, which, in turn, means, as an urgent priority, we must work with the Gulf States to introduce incremental democratic reforms. In other words, we must start living up to Canadian democratic values.”

During questions following Mason’s presentation, the issue of IS’s claim to speak for Muslims and Islam was raised. Suggestions included not giving IS that privilege and, instead, calling it a “criminal organization” that doesn’t represent Islam or any valid religious group.

Along that line of reasoning, Bob Nally of Erb St. Mennonite Church, Waterloo, said that Christians feel uncomfortable with calling the Crusades Christian and would not like to have the ongoing drone war being called Christian either. ❧



*Peggy Mason of the Rideau Institute, left, talks with Nancy and Ernie Regehr after her presentation, ‘Countering ISIL: Why Canada needs to change course,’ at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., on Jan. 15.*

## VIEWPOINT

## Bin ich Charlie?

*MC Canada Witness worker in Germany responds to the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris*

JENNIFER OTTO

In the hours after the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings last month, my social media newsfeeds were colonized by the “Je suis Charlie” hashtag. Yours probably were too. I even considered posting it myself. Perhaps you did.

But over the next few days, my initial urge to express solidarity with the victims—victims who did not deserve to die for drawing cartoons, no matter how offensive—was tempered by a flood of articles reminding me that *Charlie Hebdo* was, in fact, quite a racist publication and one that regularly ridiculed not only Muslims, but practitioners of all religions. So while I mourn for Charlie, I am not Charlie.

I am not Charlie because, while I support the rights of a press that’s free



to print offensive material, I’m also troubled by the magazine’s willful stoking of anti-Muslim sentiment on a continent that is becoming increasingly hostile toward Islam and its adherents. In Germany, where my husband

and I work as Mennonite church planters and community builders, Muslims make up about 6 percent of the population. Although they make up a rather small segment of society, Muslims are the source of a disproportionate amount of anxiety among average Germans.

A poll conducted by the Bertelsmann Foundation think tank last November found that 57 percent of non-Muslim Germans say that they feel “threatened” by Islam, with 40 percent agreeing that they “feel like foreigners in their own country” due to the presence of Muslims.

Publications like *Charlie Hebdo* profit from this irrational fear and encourage the further marginalization of the Muslim minority by setting them and their beliefs up as targets for ridicule.

Recent months have seen the rise of the right-wing populist movement, PEGIDA, a German acronym for “Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West.” The movement departs from recent populist rhetoric that blames foreigners more generally, or membership in the European Union, for Germany’s problems. Instead, PEGIDA locates the source of unrest in German society in the growing influence of a religion, Islam, and, by extension, the five million Muslims who call Germany home.

For PEGIDA, it is interloping Islam that’s changing the face of German society, and not for the better. PEGIDA’s leaders pit the country’s supposed Islamization against its traditional “Judeo-Christian” values. But one gets the sense that PEGIDA is also suspicious of religion that takes itself too seriously. Christianity is acceptable insofar as it is an expression of authentic German heritage. But PEGIDA’s affinity with Christianity stops short of embracing Jesus and his radical call to love its enemies.

In the wake of *Charlie Hebdo*, we, as Mennonite Witness workers in Europe, are challenged to persistently redefine for our non-religious friends and neighbours what it means to follow Jesus. We must explain that “Judeo-Christian values” do not include alienating and ridiculing Muslims. We must also resist the urge to position ourselves as “moderates” in relation to the “radicals” whose religious ideology motivates them to commit acts of terror. We, too, must be extreme in our commitment to loving our neighbours and welcoming the stranger. We must demonstrate with our actions that the solution to radical religious violence is neither tepid traditionalism nor strident secularism, but radically nonviolent religion.

The cardinal virtues of secularism—freedom, tolerance, irreverence—are incapable of transcending the deep

ISTOCK.COM/TERROA PHOTO



*A PEGIDA rally in Berlin, Germany, on Jan. 12, attracted more than 400 demonstrators marching against the Islamization of the West. It was blocked by more than 4,000 counter-demonstrators.*

differences that divide us and forming genuine community. Only love can do that, a love that enables us to feel the pain of scapegoating suffered by Europe's Muslims and horror at the destruction of the image of God that occurs whenever any human being is murdered. This is the love that Jesus demonstrated in his life and in his death—extreme, radical love in the face of extreme violence. ❧

*Jennifer Otto and her husband Gregory work in partnership with the South German Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church Canada Witness as a church worker and community builder in Mannheim, Germany. The article first appeared on the [www.anabaptistwitness.org](http://www.anabaptistwitness.org) blog.*



## Building bridges of reconciliation through Jesus

BY HENRY NEUFELD

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

“It is high time for society and intellectuals to speak against violence. Violence in the name of religion is not acceptable. . . . Violence is not the answer. We must find common ground,”

a father running to meet his son, illustrates God's love. “God loves us personally and individually,” he said.

Laya Behbahani, a Shia Muslim, spoke about Mary, the only woman who has a

*Jesus is, for us, our identity. . . . God loves us personally and individually.  
(Tim Kuepfer)*

Mohammed Akbar spoke these opening words at a conference on interfaith harmony at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Surrey mere days after the *Charlie Hebdo* and kosher grocery store shootings in France, and his sentiments were well received.

The conference on Jesus and how he is viewed by various religions was sponsored by the Baabul Ilm Education Society, with Christian, Sikh and Muslim speakers. The society seeks to promote peaceful coexistence between Christian, Sikh and Muslim groups.

Pastor Tim Kuepfer of Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, provided the Christian perspective. People from at least three Mennonite churches attended the event.

“Jesus is, for us, our identity,” said Kuepfer. Using the children's song, “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know,” he focussed on love as God's message through Jesus. The story of the Prodigal Son, with the image of

whole chapter of the Qur'an devoted to her. She said that Mary had universal qualities: complete trust in God, humility, modesty and a commitment to do what is right. “Like Mary, belief in God, trust and action [are] required to seek truth and justice,” she said.

Balwant Sanghera, representing the Sikh faith, said Jesus and the gurus are seen in the same light: each speaks to the human

condition and both show love as the pathway. “Who is Jesus to me?” he asked rhetorically. “He helps me to grow as a Sikh. He opens me up to a new spirituality. . . . Jesus is a wonderful leader.”

Sanghera commented on the “Highway to Heaven,” a street in Richmond, just south of Vancouver, where 42 different faith groups have their worship buildings. “Canada is a wonderful country and we have a role in making it better,” he said.

Nasir Zaidi, a Muslim chaplain at the University of British Columbia, spoke about “Jesus in the eyes of the Qur'an.” “Jesus has been described in the Qur'an as a word of God,” he said, “which means he speaks on behalf of God that reflects God's personality and his attributes.” In other words, Jesus reflects God's image. “Jesus has special power to intercede and help us in reducing our suffering on the Day of Judgment,” he said, adding that God shows people mercy through Jesus Christ.

Zaidi said that Jesus came not only to cure physical blindness, “but also to cure blind people who have become blind because of their ignorance and zealotry.”

“I'm surprised at how much the different faiths have in common,” said Kuepfer after the conference. “That's one of the reasons I'm passionate about this. . . . The only way to bring peace is to get together. We need bridges of reconciliation.”

Wayne Tebbs, dean of Kwantlen's school of business, said it was important for a business faculty to host this event since the unequal distribution of wealth in the world is an important issue. “It's time for gentle people to act,” he said, musing what might happen “if everyone did one simple act of kindness to a person of another faith.” ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF NASIR ZAIDI



*Speakers at last month's Baabul Ilm Education Society's interfaith conference on Jesus include, from left to right: Mohammed Tariq, Pakistan's consul general to Canada; Tim Kuepfer; Balwant Sanghera; Nasir Zaidi; and Laya Behbahani.*

# 'Reclaim our water'

*Winnipeg rally supports Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, source of the city's drinking water for nearly a century*

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

Residents of Winnipeg know and trust that the water from their taps is clean, but in recent months a growing number are realizing that this water is also "tainted."

For nearly a century, pure, clean water has flowed from Winnipeg taps, but at the other end of the 155-kilometre aqueduct is a story of broken promises, human rights violations and unjust treatment. (See "Water of life," Nov. 24, 2014, page 32.) While Winnipeg residents enjoy safe, clean, running water, Shoal Lake 40 First Nation residents have to bring in bottled water at the cost of \$240,000 a year and are cut off from road access to schools, healthcare and any economic opportunities because of the aqueduct.

Moses Falco, a member of Sterling Mennonite Church and a participant in the Partnership Circles program of Mennonite Church Manitoba and MC Canada, was part of a group that visited the Shoal Lake 40 First Nation community last fall. "Being there got me interested in thinking about what more we can do," he said.

When he heard their stories of disappointment and failed promises, Falco continued to dialogue with members of this community to discern ways of showing ongoing support. "Is there something they need us to do?" Falco kept asking. "Shoal

Lake 40 asked us to organize a rally. They were saying we have these meetings [with various levels of government], but nothing ever happens. If we had a rally while this meeting was going on, to show some support from Winnipeggers, it might help to fix the injustices that are going on."

Falco accepted the invitation. With the help of Steve Heinrichs, MC Canada's director of indigenous relations; Neill von Gunten, former director of MC Canada's Native Ministries; and others, he organized a rally that took place on Dec. 8, 2014, at the provincial Legislature, while Shoal Lake 40 Chief Erwin Redsky; Kevin Chief, the provincial jobs and economy minister; and Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman met inside.

These yearly meetings are a requirement of the tripartite agreement that was signed in 1989 protecting Winnipeg's drinking water and promising sustainable economic development to the Shoal Lake 40 community. However, in the 25 years since the agreement, "not a single job has been created, people have died as they have tried to cross the lake, and the community has been under a boil water advisory for more than 17 years," said Cuyler Cotton, who participated in the meeting and is a former human rights officer who has worked closely with the community.

Von Gunten estimates about 250 people attended the rally. "It was so cold that a lot of people came and then they dispersed, but a core group of about 100 stuck around," he said. "There was a good representation of Mennonites."

Von Gunten addressed the rally: "My family and I have used water from Shoal Lake 40 to the mainland," Falco said. "They think the planning stage of building an all-season road will take about a year. Our hope is to keep spreading awareness, but even more to let our elected representatives know we support Shoal Lake 40." ❧

PHOTOS BY TIM FROESE



*Amanda Leighton sings at the rally at the Manitoba Legislature in support of Shoal Lake No. 40 First Nation while drumming on a water bottle like the bottles Shoal Lake residents import their water in.*



*Winnipeggers hold a sign during the rally at the Manitoba Legislature asking the city to respect the water from Shoal Lake.*

needs to be built to so they can have a water treatment plant and access to other resources. A road will also enable them to bring in what they need to upgrade their housing and general way of life."

Kaitlyn Duthrie, who is part of a *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry* book study group, spoke at the rally. "It's really important for Winnipeggers to know this history and how it came to be this way," she said. "It is an exploitative relationship and we are complicit in this situation. We need to make sure that our indigenous brothers and sisters have access to the same rights and privileges that we have."

"I think what came out of the rally was a general spreading of awareness on the water issue in Winnipeg and a commitment from the two levels of government to the planning phase for a road from Shoal Lake 40 to the mainland," Falco said. "They think the planning stage of building an all-season road will take about a year. Our hope is to keep spreading awareness, but even more to let our elected representatives know we support Shoal Lake 40." ❧



# Mapping communities for Christ

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

It is possible to transform communities one house, one street, one neighbourhood at a time, participants learned at a workshop on Jan. 17 at Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford.

“Transforming lives and communities by loving our neighbours” with Karen Wilk of Forge Canada drew 80 people from various Mennonite Church B.C. congregations who wanted to learn practical ways to carry out Jesus’ command to “love thy neighbour” in today’s world.

The group studied various Bible texts that referred to Jesus Christ coming and dwelling among humanity and commanded people to “love your neighbour as yourself.”

As the place where people make their home, neighbourhoods matter, Wilk said. Neighbourhoods enrich people’s lives and

are the building block of society. Being a good neighbour involves being a faithful presence, living among, and making ourselves available to others, according to her.

Wilk also noted that, while at one time it was assumed that to be a missionary meant travelling overseas, today the mission field is anywhere Christians live. “Neighbour’ is the person right in front of your nose,” she said. “God calls us to be attentive to our neighbours.”

Participants considered various ways to interact with those living near them, including block parties, eating together, working on community projects, going for walks together, and borrowing tools and cooking items if needed.

In one exercise, participants were challenged to map out their street house by house, noting as much information as



Janette Thiessen, left, Marlene Daku and Natalie Dahl share what they know about their neighbours and neighbourhood through a mapping exercise.

possible about those living near them: occupation, living habits, pets, children. While some people knew many details about their neighbourhood, others found the exercise difficult. “This takes intentionality to learn,” said Wilk.

Traditionally, the church has thought of itself as serving “for and not with,” Wilk said. “What if we imagined ourselves as the pastor or priest of our street?” she concluded. “How can you serve with and in the ‘hood? I encourage you to support and walk with each other on the journey.”

# Courage inspires generosity

Women’s group hosts Christmas banquet to help others

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
LANGHAM, SASK.

Stories of courage inspire people to do great things. At Zoar Mennonite Church in Langham, the story of one courageous woman inspired an evening of generous giving.

On Dec. 12, 2014, Zoar’s Homemakers group hosted a Christmas banquet for the congregation. They chose “Courageous women” as the theme, having studied Linda Gehman Peachey’s book *Courageous Women of the Bible*.

Planners invited mission workers with

ties to the congregation to speak at the banquet, and asked the workers if they knew a courageous woman who needed help. The workers told them about Ruth.

A single mother with three daughters, Ruth works in a garment factory, earning \$500 a month. Because of the high cost of living in the Latin American country where she lives, Ruth struggles to support her family and put her daughters through school. Although it is difficult to make ends meet, she trusts God to help her keep

her girls in school.

Inspired by Ruth’s story, the Homemakers invited fellow church members to bid on 12 wrapped Christmas gifts in a live auction. Unsuccessful bidders were encouraged to make donations. By the evening’s end, the Homemakers had raised \$1,500, which the mission workers delivered to Ruth in person.

“We have no words to describe what we feel when people as beautiful as you join together and, without even knowing us, have opened your hearts to help,” Ruth wrote in response to Zoar’s gift. “With all my heart, I wish you many blessings and may the presence of God our Lord accompany you always.”

*Ruth’s surname and the actual country she lives in are not used to protect the identities of her and the mission workers who nominated her for the donation.*

# Planting opportunity, rebuilding lives

*Five years after the Haiti earthquake*

BY MARLA PIERSON LESTER

Mennonite Central Committee  
PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI

In Cabaret, 39 kilometres outside the capital city of Port-au-Prince, breezes flutter the sheer fabric hanging in the doorway of Gladys Joseph's new home. There's room in the yard for her children to play. And for the first time since she was sent to Haiti's capital city as a child, she has a garden full of corn, beans, manioc and okra.

Five years after a devastating earthquake tore across Port-au-Prince and surrounding towns, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has spent \$16.9 million to help Haitians recover. An additional \$2 million is allocated for earthquake recovery projects in 2015 and beyond.

In the months after the Jan. 12, 2010, quake, MCC responded to immediate needs, providing food assistance, cash allowances, water filters, and thousands of comforters and relief kits. MCC sent structural engineers to inspect the safety of public buildings and instruct masons in safe building techniques.

Even as aftershocks rippled, MCC's Haitian partners and others in local non-profits and government called for a broader response outside Haiti's overcrowded, sprawling capital. They pointed to the inadequate housing in the city and lax building standards that compounded the tragedy—and the lack of opportunity in the countryside that led so many to Port-au-Prince in the first place.

With decades of experience working in Haiti's rural Artibonite Valley, MCC responded, dedicating more than half of its earthquake response funds to projects in education, livelihoods, housing, water and agriculture there and in other areas outside the capital.

In Cabaret, MCC and local partner Christian Center for Integrated Development used support from the the

MCC PHOTO BY SILAS CREWS



*Dieunold Sterling works on a motor at his motorcycle repair business in Desarmes, Haiti.*

Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development to build a village with 100 homes, a market, playground and

community centre.

Joseph, who lost her rented home in Port-au-Prince in the earthquake, recalls what a relief it was to no longer impose on friends or rear children in a space that was not her own. "When you stay with someone else, it's like being humiliated," she says. "Your kids can't play, can't make noise, can't run."

At her new home in Cabaret she has a cistern to capture rainwater for cooking, bathing and washing clothes. In addition to vegetables, she grows cherries, papaya and citronelle for tea in her garden.

In the town of Desarmes, MCC's work has helped produce a different crop: vocational school graduates from École Professionnel de Desarmes.

Thanks to classroom studies and practical training in mechanics at the school that was re-energized through MCC and a grant from the Canadian government, 28-year-old Dieunold Sterling can now complete complicated repairs he once would have had to turn down. It's a change that boosts his income and opens opportunity for his family.

"We eat better, is the first thing," he says, adding that he has easier access to credit to help pay off professional school debt and pay school fees for his oldest child. And through his studies, his vision grew for a future in his hometown, not Port-au-Prince. He dreams of a full-service garage and a shop selling parts and maybe eventually new motorcycles, which people currently drive to other towns to buy.

What he's done so far, he says, is only the beginning: "I've got a shop here, but I want to have an enterprise." ❧

## MCC's Haiti earthquake response by the numbers

- 45,528 people received food assistance.
- 26,788 comforters distributed.
- 6,680 water filters provided.
- 6,344 people received cash transfers or were part of cash-for-work projects.
- 2,981 participants gained skills in agriculture or livelihoods trainings.
- 1,718 homes repaired or constructed.

—Mennonite Central Committee

## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

# TWU launches Anabaptist-Mennonite centre

*Partnership with Mennonite Faith and Learning Society sees establishment of multi-disciplinary research facility*

Trinity Western University  
LANGLEY, B.C.

**M**ore than 100 guests gathered for the launch of the Anabaptist-Mennonite Centre for Faith and Learning at Trinity Western University (TWU) late last fall.

An initiative of the Mennonite Faith and Learning Society, a non-profit organization that promotes Mennonite studies in higher education through the establishment of chairs and research centres at Canadian universities, the TWU Centre will be a strong point of connection between the university and the Lower Mainland's strong, vibrant Anabaptist-Mennonite faith community, its supporters believe.

"The Anabaptist-Mennonite Centre for Faith and Learning will have a high impact on TWU students and Mennonite students," said Myron A. Penner, TWU's director and associate professor of philosophy. "It will inject an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective into faith and learning, something TWU is all about."

As well as facilitating research opportunities for TWU and visiting scholars, the Centre was created to enhance the experience of TWU students.

"Most TWU students are engaged in topics and speakers who talk about what it means to live out their faith," said Penner. "The stakes are high when it comes to theological matters."

"The Centre will also serve as a resource for intellectually disenfranchised people who are curious about how faith connects with information and learning across disciplines and in a variety of forms, topics that churches may not directly address in a credible way, if at all, because of limited resources or expertise," Penner explained.

The first university-based research

centre for the study of the integration of faith and learning from an Anabaptist Mennonite perspective, TWU's Centre will promote Anabaptist-Mennonite research, publication and dissemination that will broadly enrich theological awareness and application at TWU and beyond.

TWU alumna and author Connie T. Braun said she sees the Centre as "a critical space for fostering conversation about the relevance of our Anabaptist tenets of faith to our lives and to others . . . and that it will enlarge the perception about what Christians care about. This Centre will be a place where hard questions and challenges can be posed, where rich intellectual conversations and even disagreements will be had, and where bright minds, older and younger, can feel at home in faith and in the church."

In addition to the TWU Centre, the Mennonite Faith and Learning Society has partnered with the University of the Fraser Valley (UVF) to establish its Centre for Mennonite Studies, and will be an ongoing contributor to UVF's emerging peace studies program. ☘

WESTGATE MENNONITE COLLEGIATE PHOTO



**Jasmin Epp, left**, a student at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg, takes Dyala and Mayar, students from the Mar Elias High School in Ibillin, Israel, for a bike ride during their recent visit to Manitoba. During the Israeli students' time in Canada, they were taken to a cottage to experience the Canadian wilderness, went shopping and go-karting, explored the Forks, took a tour of the Manitoba Legislature and got lost in a corn maze, among many other activities.

## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

# Sacred space, holy time

*Students introduced to prayer labyrinth experience*

BY LORIE WILLIAMS

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate  
KITCHENER, ONT.

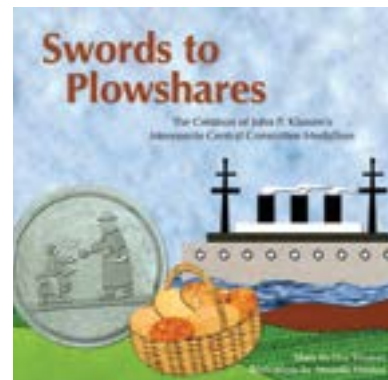
On Dec. 13, 2014, Grade 10 church history students had the unique opportunity of experiencing a prayer labyrinth.

Patricia Horst Wagler, a pastor and

trained labyrinth facilitator, led students and staff in exploring the history of the labyrinth as a Christian tool for prayer. She explained the meaning and symbolism of the shape and various features of the labyrinth, and the benefits for many of an active, physical way to pray. She described walking the labyrinth as a way to focus the mind and give insight into one's life and spiritual journey.

She then invited students to walk the labyrinth in silence. While this was a new experience for many students, they respected the silence, took their time and reflected thoughtfully on this experience of active prayer. Some found it a bit weird! Some found it calming, some noticed it helped them find clarity with a problem or decision, and some liked the way they could use their whole body to connect with God.

An open invitation was extended to anyone else who wanted to walk the labyrinth during their spare or at lunch during Friday's "sabbath space." ❧



the book, young Isaak assists Klassen with creation of the medallion, which was presented to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) workers as a token of appreciation for sending food and relief supplies to the village following the Russian civil war.

"It's a timeless story," says Louise Matthews, director of The Lion and Lamb. "I contend that picture books are relevant for all ages. The messages don't go away because we're adults."

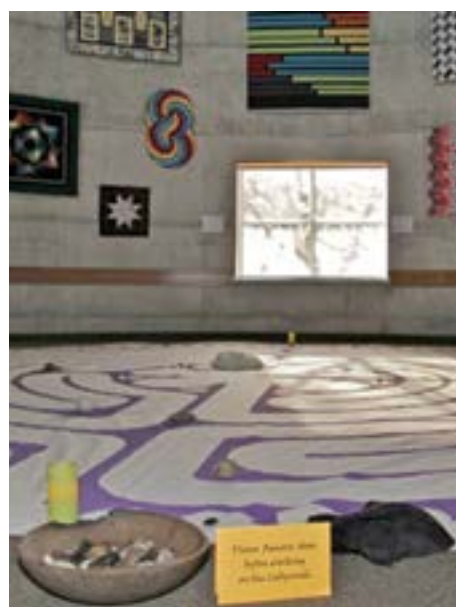
The book was written by Lisa Weaver, a Bluffton native, and illustrated by Amanda Huston, a 2013 graduate of the university. All proceeds will support The Lion and Lamb's peace education mission.

Weaver was inspired to write *Swords to Plowshares* after talking with Klassen's son, who, she says, "mentioned that the medallion had been made from melted bullets—the very bullets that had caused so much destruction and sorrow in his father's village."

The medallion depicts an MCC representative handing out bread to children in Ukraine as part of a North American relief effort in the region.

"It immediately struck me as a modern-day 'swords to plowshares' story," adds Weaver, the daughter of J. Denny Weaver, professor emeritus of religion at Bluffton. "It is a story of peace witness through art."

"If people are looking at ways to make the world a better place, hopefully this kind of a story will challenge us," Matthews says. She also hopes that the picture book will encourage children to "reach out to help people who are in need. . . . Regardless of where we see ourselves in the story, there are always ways to reach out to others, and there are always ways to share gratitude." ❧



*Grade 10 church history students at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont., had the unique opportunity of experiencing a prayer labyrinth last December.*

# Peace arts centre publishes children's book

BY CHAY REIGLE

Bluffton University  
BLUFFTON, OHIO

A new children's book published by The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center of Bluffton University tells a true story of violence turned to hope through the eyes of a fictional boy in Ukraine in the 1920s.

*Swords to Plowshares* uses the simplicity

and colourful illustrations of a picture book to recount how art teacher John P. Klassen—later a Bluffton art professor—collected bullets scattered throughout his Ukrainian village, melted them down and moulded them into a lead medallion. In

# Giving back in a small way

*Student-created cookbook aids children in Peru*

BY MIA ENGLE

Goshen College  
GOSHEN, IND.

Last summer, two Goshen College students created a Peruvian cookbook, *Los Sabores del Peru*, to sell for charity.

Gretchen Geyer, a senior social work major, went to Peru for a study-service term (SST) in early 2014, living in Ayacucho, in southern Peru, where she worked to prepare food at the local *comedor*, a free soup kitchen hosted by the Luz Y Vida Church. There, she says she and two other chefs worked “making food for 50 to 60 little children from the ages of 3 to 14.”

For her final project, Geyer studied differences between food preparation in Peru and North America. Geyer collected recipes from the *comedor* and her host families while observing how they prepared the food. “I spent seven hours one day with my host grandmother making food together and got lots of recipes from her during that time,” she says.

As part of her project, Geyer adapted authentic Peruvian recipes for North American chefs, since some ingredients aren’t readily available here. Soon her classmates were asking for the recipes.

Enter Jake Smucker, a senior communications major, who also spent a semester in Peru for SST in the spring. He volunteered to edit Geyer’s project into a cookbook, and the two worked for hours during the summer to perfect *Los Sabores del Peru*.

“We really just want to get people their cookbooks and smell Peruvian food cooking all over campus,” Smucker says.

Despite their hard work, Geyer and Smucker won’t be reaping a profit. The cookbooks cost \$4.50 to print, and the remainder will go to the *comedor* in Ayacucho where Geyer worked, to help feed the 60 children. A single meal for the full group costs around \$25.

Geyer that hopes funds from the cookbook will make a difference. “These were kids who otherwise would not have had maybe anything to eat,” Geyer says. “I

would really like to see us be able to provide enough food for a month.”

So far, Smucker and Geyer have received 80 orders for the cookbooks, and they hope to sell more. “It feels great to be personally supported, but I also realize that it’s ultimately supporting this community that has such a place in my heart,” Geyer says. “It’s just great to be able to give back in a small way.” ☘

To order *Los Sabores del Peru*, e-mail [gegeyer@goshen.edu](mailto:gegeyer@goshen.edu).



PHOTO BY DEZ LOPEZ



*Jake Smucker and Gretchen Geyer show off the Peruvian cookbook they created this past summer.*

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PHOTO / TEXT BY ALLY SIEBERT



**We can all acknowledge that reading has benefit unto itself, even though many university students lament the amount of reading necessary for school. But the ever-growing movement of shared reading, in which a small group, school, neighbourhood or nation is involved in reading and discussing the same book, carries with it the ability to transport a diverse group of people into a singular, shared story. And with that goal, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., chose the novel *Indian Horse* by Richard Wagamese for the inaugural Grebel Reads program. The Grebel Reads program provides a connection point for people at the beginning of the school year and has continued building community throughout the year by discussing larger issues reflected in the book.**

## FOCUS ON EDUCATION



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## EMU alumni win award for counselling service

BY STEVE SHENK  
Eastern Mennonite University

Paula Weaver had to take a moment to let a substantial blessing sink in. The 1988 social work graduate of Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., had just heard that her agency was the winner of the top award from a local organization called 100 Women Who Care.

Weaver's non-profit organization, Archway Counselling Association, received \$17,300 during the awards event in Truro, N.S., on Dec. 2, 2014. Weaver is a therapist there and Brian Schrock, her husband and a fellow 1988 EMU social work grad, is the executive director.

At the presentation, more than 400 women from Truro and the surrounding Colchester County heard Weaver describe the work of her agency, which offers professional counselling for families, couples and individuals at reduced and affordable prices. It also offers a drop-in centre for youth, called Slate.

The agency, founded by local citizens 21 years ago, now employs eight staff and has two satellite offices. They receive referrals from physicians, schools, clergy, the government's Victim Services and Children's Aid, and others. Weaver and Schrock were hired to help with the start-up.

"None of us go through life unfazed," Weaver told the women. "We all have, or will have, to deal with something. Often these moments catch us off guard. To have a safe place to land is almost always imperative in surviving and in regaining our solid footing."

At the end of her speech, Weaver read from a letter Archway Counselling had received the day before: "Without Archway and the option of reduced rates, I wouldn't have been able to get the help I needed. You have given me life skills that I needed and the confidence to lead a fuller, happier life."

Weaver and Schrock dated their senior year at EMU, but went their separate ways after graduation. Schrock and a friend rode their bicycles all the way home to Colorado. Weaver and a friend drove to Boston to find jobs in social work.

“My first job was doing child-protection work in a tough part of the city,” said Weaver. In 1990, she went to Smith College in Northampton, Mass., to earn a master’s degree in clinical social work. After graduation, she and Schrock married and moved to Philadelphia, where he enrolled in a master of social work program at Bryn Mawr College.

When he finished, the couple decided to take a volunteer assignment somewhere in the world. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) had an opening in Nova Scotia, where a board had been organized to establish a counselling centre that would be affordable and accessible to all. They were looking for therapists and a director.

“I’m embarrassed to say that we had to look up Nova Scotia on the map,” Weaver said, “to confirm where we thought it was—above Maine, in Canada.”

The couple helped get the centre up and running. When their two-year MCC term ended, they extended it for six months and then another six months.

“We joke that this was our Gilligan’s Island,” Weaver said, referring to a TV comedy that appeared in the late 1960s. Two decades after their first two-year stint, they are still there.

Weaver and Schrock sometimes talk about returning to the U.S. “I look up real estate listings in our home states of Colorado and Pennsylvania,” Weaver said. They now have three children—aged 15, 13 and 11—who consider themselves Canadian. When the family watches the Olympics or World Cup soccer, the parents cheer for the U.S. and the children for Canada.

“Nova Scotia is beautiful, and I have become quite attached to the sight and sound of the ocean, along with the wonderful landscape of trees and rocks,” said Weaver. “I take for granted whale and moose sightings.” ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SCHROCK FAMILY



*Eastern Mennonite University social work alumni Paula Weaver, far right, and Brian Schrock, second from left, pause during a hike in the Wentworth Valley of Nova Scotia with their children, 15-year-old Kellan, 13-year-old Eliana and 11-year-old Ingrid.*

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## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

### /// Briefly noted

#### CMU announces recipient of first Dr. Robert Janzen Memorial Scholarship

WINNIPEG—Jonah Langelotz has been awarded the first Dr. Robert Janzen Memorial Scholarship by Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). Janzen was particularly interested in the environmental aspects and impacts of agriculture. He pursued his interests through studies at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, the University of Manitoba and the University of Alberta, where he received his doctorate in soil science. A hard working farmer and steward of the land, Janzen supported agricultural communities around the world by sharing his expertise with farmers. Langelotz is in the fourth year of his international development studies degree and completed his practicum this summer by working at a small-scale organic farm in southern Manitoba. He says he's "very interested in exploring the hands-on aspects of farming," and how the topics of agriculture and the environment connect with international development. Students qualifying for this \$1,000 scholarship demonstrate inter-disciplinary interest in courses in geography, environmental studies, international development, biology and biblical/theological studies, and are involved with CMU's market garden/farm and in connecting this experience with their studies. The annual scholarship is awarded to a third- or fourth-year student who is exploring some combination of land use and ethics, rural-urban land issues, agricultural capacity building, soil biodiversity and nutrient cycles, environmental sustainability and urban agriculture.

—Canadian Mennonite University



**Jonah  
Langelotz**

### /// UpComing

#### Living faith: MCI 125

From June 5 to 7, MCI (Mennonite Collegiate Institute) will celebrate 125 years in Gretna, Man., by throwing a party. Given who we are, we are likely to sing a few songs. We will pitch a tent, prepare a feast and tell stories. We will remember classes, athletic fields and musical stages, quonsets and halls, roommates and friends, teachers and parents, road trips and school trips. We will give praise to God who set us here to teach and to learn. We will tell our stories to our children so that they continue to take their places among the living, among those who would be faithful to the God who is faithful. We will thank God for 125 years at MCI and ask God to bless and sustain all the wonderful years yet to come. To learn more, visit [www.mci blues.net](http://www.mci blues.net) and follow the "About MCI" link.

—MCI



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# ‘Where does that spark come from?’

*Consultation explores designs for preparing multi-vocational entrepreneurial pastors*

STORY AND PHOTO BY MARY E. KLASSEN

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary  
CHICAGO, ILL.

Designs for equipping multi-vocational leaders with entrepreneurial skills and a view toward mission took shape as 23 business, mission, pastoral and educational representatives gathered for a three-day consultation in Chicago last fall at the invitation of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS, Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) and Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

In welcoming the participants, AMBS president Sara Wenger Shenk pointed to God’s Jubilee vision, expressed in Jesus’ proclamation, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good news to the poor.”* This, she said, was the inspiration for calling people from business, mission and education to imagine a program that

would provide formation for ministry that is holistic, is grounded biblically and theologically, and also is accessible and affordable.

All of the pastors who participated combine congregational ministry with other occupations. For some, it is a necessity.

Yoel Masyawong, pastor of Grace Lao Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., said that he works several other jobs so “I don’t need to burden the church.”

Others choose to combine ministry with another occupation.

“If I find myself in bi-vocational ministry, it’s because I can’t make up my mind,” Gerry Binnema said. He is pastor of United Mennonite Church, Black Creek, B.C., and is an airline safety consultant.

Leonard Dow was involved in banking when he began to feel a strong sense of call to ministry in his congregation, Oxford Center Mennonite Church in Philadelphia, Pa. “I didn’t walk into my call; the call jumped on me,” he said. Conversely, Jeremy Shue, a member of the pastoral team of Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., said that when he studied at AMBS, “I knew I had a call to ministry and I knew that I had a call to business.”

While the stories from participants were interspersed through the weekend, an environmental scan provided context for the discussion from the beginning. AMBS staff reported from recent research on student educational debt, showing upward trends in the financial burden students carry into ministry. MMN and MC Canada Witness staff reviewed how educational debt has become a disincentive for people who feel called to serve in mission work.

In the opening session, SaeJin Lee, research assistant for AMBS, pointed to the Christ-given gifts for apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds (pastors), and teachers, highlighted in Ephesians 4:11-13. This text became a recurring theme in the following discussions, as participants emphasized the need today for the gifts of apostles, prophets and evangelists, describing them as generative, entrepreneurial gifts.

Participants learned that the websites of MC Canada and MC U.S.A. list more than 80 pastoral openings, with about half of those being half-time positions, while approximately half of the congregations in the North American Mennonite denominations have fewer than 150 members, so they also may struggle to pay full-time salaries for their pastors.

Participants then moved to explore options for effective and sustainable models to prepare leaders for a changing church, considering four options: an intensive summer institute, congregational- or community-based learning centres, a certificate program, and a new concentration in an already existing master of divinity degree.

In a listening committee report, Karen Martens Zimmerly, MC Canada’s denominational minister, noted that the church needs the kinds of leaders represented by the apostles, prophets and



*Consultation participants work in groups to review current realities for the church and the surrounding cultures. Working with factors related to congregations and religious groups are Yoel Masyawong, pastor in Kitchener, Ont., left; Safwat Marzouk, professor at AMBS; Karen Martens Zimmerly, MC Canada denominational minister; Leonard Dow, a pastor in Philadelphia, Pa.; and Anna Geyer, a farming entrepreneur in Oxford, Iowa.*

## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

evangelists in the Ephesians text. "We need to do our work to encourage those kinds of leaders and ministries to emerge," she said. "The role of AMBS is to provide the deep theological, biblical reflection that continues to be important."


Recommendations and counsel included an invitation to think in ways that redefine what is important for biblically grounded,

entrepreneurial leaders. Another recommendation was to build partnerships with immigrant churches, reading the Bible with them and learning to be bilingual, intercultural, church-planting, social entrepreneurs. In addition, AMBS could make professors with apostolic-entrepreneurial gifts more available as resources to the church as well as in the classroom.

Speaking to the pastor-business participants at the conclusion of the sessions, Tim Froese, representing MC Canada Witness, said, "In so many of your stories there was a spark or two of God's touch . . . It didn't start with the school or the business; it was that imperceptible touch. Where does that spark come from?" ✻

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(RV Projects)

<http://mds.mennonite.net>

AARON EPP PHOTOS BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY



*'If you really want to get to know God better, spending time reading the Bible is one of the best ways to do that.'*  
(Aaron Epp)

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# 365 days later . . .

*A Year of Reading Biblically concludes*

AARON EPP

YOUNG VOICES CO-EDITOR

“It’s been a whole year already? Crazy!”

That’s what a colleague wrote to me in an e-mail when I told her that *Canadian Mennonite’s* Year of Reading Biblically (YORB) had wrapped up and that I was writing my final reflection on the experience.

Yes, it’s been a whole year already. At the end of December 2013, I told readers that I intended to read the whole Bible from cover to cover in 2014.

“Ask me anything about U2’s catalogue or the TV show *Breaking Bad* and in seconds I’ll give you the answer, with some thoughtful analysis,” I wrote in that first article. “But ask me a question about the Ten Commandments, the minor

prophets or the synoptic gospels, and I’ll struggle to give you a coherent response.

“I want to have deep thoughts. I want to ponder my faith a little bit.”

I’m not sure if I’ve had any deep thoughts as a result of reading through the Bible, but the exercise certainly caused me to ponder my faith on a daily basis. That is probably the biggest thing that sticks out for me from 2014: Because I was spending time reading the Bible, my thoughts regularly turned to God and whatever I had read that day.

It was also meaningful for me to be proactive about my faith. In the few years prior to 2014, I felt like I hadn’t been maturing in my faith. I had done a lot of

*(Continued on page 36)*

PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL LOEWEN



*Reading the Bible 30 to 40 minutes at a time is more meaningful than reading it three or four chapters each day for Paul Loewen, who began 2014 participating in *A Year of Reading Biblically*, but didn't finish.*

*(Continued from page 35)*

work on myself physically and mentally in 2012 and 2013, losing 100 pounds (45 kilograms) in the process. Spending more time with God was the priority for 2014, and through reading the Bible I was able to do that.

This wasn't just my Year of Reading Biblically, though. When I wrote that first article in December 2013, I invited

can make for an encyclopedic reading experience and prevent him from fully melting into the story, the way he believes the Bible's authors intended.

In the past, he has taken entire books of the Bible and formatted them on his computer without numbers and headings.

"There's flow there, there's logic, there's structure behind it," Loewen

*'It was nice to take [the Bible audiobook] in for an hour or two. . . . You notice slightly different things in the Word when you listen to it like that.'*  
(Ian Epp)

anyone who was interested to join me.

It's difficult for me to know exactly how many people participated, but if I had to guess, I would say at least 25 people attempted it.

This past August in Young Voices, I wrote about five people who were in the midst of reading through the Bible like I was. Here are two more stories, one of someone who didn't make it, and one of someone who did.

### **Abandoned after a few books**

Paul Loewen is the youth pastor of Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. The 28-year-old had read through the Bible numerous times before attempting the cover-to-cover, a-few-chapters-each-day approach of YORB.

Loewen made it a few books in before abandoning it. This had to do with his schedule—he and his wife have three young sons under the age of five—combined with the short amount of text allotted each day. Diving into the text for just a few chapters didn't seem as worthwhile as the time a few years ago when he read the Bible for 30 to 40 minutes each day to reach his goal of reading through it in two months.

The shorter amounts of text also made it tempting for him to skip days. Because a daily reading typically only took 10 minutes, Loewen thought he could easily make it up if he missed a day.

He also says that the chapter and verse numbers in Bible, as well as the headings,

says. "In reading the whole Bible . . . it's fantastic, because you see these threads [throughout]."

### **'I like the daily connection'**

For Ian Epp of Eigenheim Mennonite Church, Rosthern, Sask., participating in YORB meant he was able to read through the Bible in a year for the second time in his life.

Epp (no relation to me) read through the Bible some days, and on other days his work as a farmer led him to "read" the Bible by listening to an audiobook version while he was working in the fields, particularly during busy times like seeding and harvest seasons.

"The kind of farming stuff I was doing was monotonous and didn't require a lot of thinking once I was set up," says the 24-year-old Saskatoon resident. "It was nice to take [the Bible audiobook] in for an hour or two. . . . You notice slightly different things in the Word when you listen to it like that."

When you're reading it, Epp says, sometimes you're so focussed on ploughing through and getting your daily reading done that you end up missing a lot of what's there. "By listening to it, I could slowly sit back and let the words wash over me."

Knowing that his wife Kirsten was also reading through the Bible kept Epp going throughout the year. They often discussed what they were reading and gently teased one another when they fell behind.

PHOTO COURTESY OF IAN EPP



*Knowing that his wife Kirsten was also reading through the Bible kept Ian Epp going throughout the year. They often discussed what they were reading and gently teased one another when they fell behind.*

“There was that commitment of, I can’t fall too far behind because I know I’ll get bugged about it,” Epp says with a laugh. “It’s that extra motivation.”

Epp believes that Bible reading is important, but often falls by the wayside. He plans to read through the Bible in its entirety again in a few years.

“In the busyness of everyday life, I like the daily connection,” he says.

I hesitate to tell anyone that they should read the Bible, but I do think most of us could stand to spend more

time with Scripture than we already do. Maybe you didn’t participate in A Year of Reading Biblically. Maybe reading the Bible cover to cover, a little bit each day, isn’t your thing.

That’s fine. But if you really want to get to know God better, spending time reading the Bible is one of the best ways to do that. So find a way of reading Scripture that works well for you.

It may take some discipline at first, but in the end it’s unlikely you’ll regret spending that time with God. ☞



*‘Because I was spending time reading the Bible throughout 2014, my thoughts regularly turned to God and whatever I had read that day.’  
(Aaron Epp)*

## MCC establishes first on-campus student club

*Saskatchewan student organization aims to put faith into action*

STORY AND PHOTO BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor  
SASKATOON

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has never had a presence in student clubs on Canadian university

campuses. Until recently, that is.

On Jan. 15, an MCC-run student  
*(Continued on page 38)*



*Kaytee Edwards, left, David Epp and Myriam Ullah form the leadership committee of the first MCC-run student club in Canada. It is on the University of Saskatchewan campus in Saskatoon.*

*(Continued from page 37)*

club was ratified on the University of Saskatchewan campus. It was started by MCC Saskatchewan community engagement coordinators Myriam Ullah and Kaytee Edwards. Ullah and Edwards are pursuing higher education at UofS and took the opportunity to encourage faith in action among their fellow students.

“We wanted to create a community space for students interested in exploring peace, relief and development work through a faith-based approach,” Ullah says.

Fellow UofS student David Epp is the interim president of the student group. He attends Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, and grew up with a respect for MCC, so much so that he participated in the year-long Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program in Guatemala last year.

Epp believes the on-campus group offers students a unique experience. “This student group offers students an opportunity to apply theory, skills and backgrounds in

says that was important to her when she was studying international development. “For me, it was very important to have something outside of school that I could connect with, that could give me hope and help me to see there are good things happening in the world,” she says.

The leaders have tentative plans to work alongside existing MCC programs in the province, invite speakers to engage with members on topics they are interested in, and to team up with other colleges on campus. But they want the members to decide what the focus of the group will be, so it’s student-driven.

“We want to create a space where students can put their faith in action,” Epp says. “It’s an opportunity for them to find a relevancy to the gospel and to continue to find meaningful and life-giving ways to pursue a walk of faith.”

Ullah says their first order of business is to find new members at the USSU campus club recruitment event. Afterwards,

*‘This student group offers students an opportunity to apply theory, skills and backgrounds in an Anabaptist Mennonite setting...’  
(David Epp)*

an Anabaptist Mennonite setting,” he says, “and offers opportunities to put these to use in local service opportunities and in developing a greater understanding for the world in which we live.”

But the student group almost didn’t happen. There were only three students at its first meeting, including Epp. At least 15 participants are needed to receive ratification.

By Jan. 12, 17 students had signed on, and the leadership committee presented its mandate to the University of Saskatchewan Students’ Union (USSU). The group was ratified a few days later.

### **Hopes and dreams**

The MCC student group is still in its infancy, but the leaders have high hopes for what their membership will accomplish and what MCC can offer them.

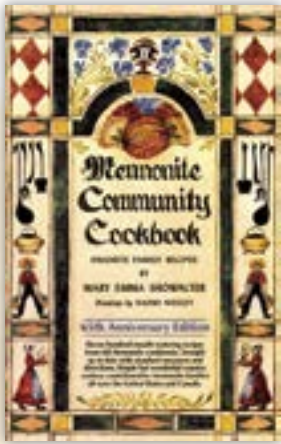
Edwards wants it to be a place where students who feel hopeless about the world and all of its problems can find hope. She

they will determine exactly what the focus of the group will be. One possible event is partnering with the St. Thomas More Student Union at the on-campus Catholic college for an upcoming fasting event. She also hopes to get students to volunteer with MCC initiatives.

“We think valuable, meaningful volunteer opportunities are important and want to give students access to places where they can engage in complex theoretical theological issues they engage with in school,” Ullah says.

Epp says he’s excited to see what will happen now that MCC is exploring new opportunities for engaging with young people. “All of us are excited that this is happening,” he exudes. “We’re aware that this is a bit of a new initiative, but it’s a new opportunity for MCC to engage with those in its constituency who are at the university. It’s a terrific opportunity for a new platform for MCC’s witness.” ❧

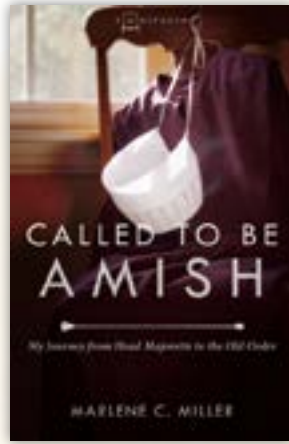
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## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Feb. 20:** LEAD conference, at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond, 1 to 5 p.m.

**Feb. 21:** MC B.C. annual meeting, at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond. Registration through local church offices.

### Alberta

**Feb. 20-22:** Senior high snow camp at Camp Valaqua, Water Valley. Theme: "Faith in transit." Speaker: Ryan Dueck. For more information, e-mail [yltalberta@gmail.com](mailto:yltalberta@gmail.com).

**Feb. 28:** "Sweet Interlude" fundraising event, at Menno Simons School, Calgary, from 6 to 10 p.m. Dessert buffet, silent and live auctions, and entertainment, with proceeds going toward the school's mortgage.

### Ontario

**Feb. 16:** Family Day open house at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Free indoor and outdoor activities from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lunch available for purchase or bring your own. For more information, or to register, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail [info@hiddenacres.ca](mailto:info@hiddenacres.ca).

**Feb. 18:** Mennonite/s Writing, a free public reading series with celebrated Canadian authors, at Conrad Grebel Chapel, at 7:30 p.m.: David Bergen will read from his new book, *Leaving Tomorrow*. For more information, visit [grebel.ca/mennolit](http://grebel.ca/mennolit).

**Feb. 21:** Grand Philharmonic Choir presents "Grant Us Peace," a concert featuring Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* and Estacio's "The Houses Stand Not Far Apart," at Centre in the Square, Kitchener, at 7:30 p.m. For more information or tickets, call 519-578-1570.

More Calendar online.



## Classifieds

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### Travel

PHOENIX (Arizona) MENNO Guest House Bed and Breakfast welcomes guests coming to the Phoenix area. (Web site [www.hscserves.org](http://www.hscserves.org)). Email [phxmennoguest@gmail.com](mailto:phxmennoguest@gmail.com) or call 623-847-0314.

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