

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

June 8, 2015

Volume 19 Number 12

**"South Africa  
belongs to all  
who live in it"**

**Freedom  
Charter**

**#NoToXenophobia**

**#PmbSaysNoToXenophobia**

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## EDITORIAL

# Death of a cousin

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

As of the end of 2015, the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, the 54-year-old periodical of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, will cease to exist. This untimely death calls for a eulogy and some lessons learned, some warnings implicit, as it goes through its dying throes.

Most of all, we are mourning because, when such a passing occurs, it affects other members of the Mennonite media family, like *Canadian Mennonite*. Some of the same dynamics voiced by the MB denominational leaders for this historic decision are being voiced by our own church leadership. The official reason is that the *Herald* has served its purpose and needs to be replaced by a new, yet unnamed publication focussed on the MB goal to “multiply Christ-centred churches to see Canada transformed by the good news of Jesus.”

Canada transformed? That’s a tall order for such a small denomination when national polls show that a majority of Canadians have no interest in religion. And narrowing the focus to serve the needs of church planters? What about the high number of faithful serving the church for a century-and-a-half? Do they not need a forum in which to develop their faith and share their stories, voice their opinions and challenge each other’s faith expressions?

According to its own history, the MB denomination began in 1860 as a “new

expression of Mennonite faith,” growing to some 250 congregations today. Has that newness worn off? Is it time to change the menu? When I put these questions to Willy Reimer, executive director of the Canadian MB staff, he dodged, saying he had little to say before reviewing everything with his board. This was disappointing. He, of course, doesn’t owe us any explanation, but it does seem to call for some clarity with his own grieving members.



In a Facebook discussion led by Dora Dueck, an MB insider, a high-profile writer and one of those grieving, weighed in on the issue of protecting new Christians—of church plants—from bad news and controversy, by saying “the ‘protection’ is not necessary; the sense of community that was felt, on the contrary, was welcomed and reassuring and enabling. [And the Bible doesn’t exactly hide that fact that debate and a variety of voices have always been part of the church.] . . . Nowadays, most people know how to read media: they differentiate between advertisements, public relations pieces and releases, news reporting, editorial opinion, reviews. They ‘listen’ to them differently.”

When contacted, Rudy Wiebe, founding editor of the *Herald* dismissed after a year for his critical editorials, recalled the initial action of the MB conference in 1961 as creating a weekly magazine that “serves the brotherhood in manifold ways.” In light of this founding concept,

he says, “the unilateral decision to replace the *Herald* with a ‘new print initiative’ is disturbing. What happened to our united believers way of making decisions?”

Another inside MB media observer is disturbed by the top-down approach, saying, “Some of us are looking for something to inspire and inform us about how to deal with the messiness and contradictions and questions of life today. How can you be a Christian in a post-Christian world?”

The MBs share a common Anabaptist spiritual heritage with members of Mennonite Church Canada, but in recent years have struggled officially with that identity and, most recently, with our shared belief in peace and justice as one expression of that faith. In their last national assembly, there was considerable conversation as to whether that tenet should remain one of their identifying core beliefs.

So there seems to be a larger context to the death of this publication than meets the eye. At a time when the faithful need a place to struggle with their sisters and brothers, we need more opportunity for more open discussion—a “village square” around which to gather as a faith family—not less. We, along with many in the MB community, are deeply saddened by this death.

## New letters policy on sexuality

In line with the need for open discussion, we are announcing a new policy regarding letters to the editor on the subject of sexuality. Sensing reader fatigue from the many letters on the subject, beginning with the June 22 edition, we will print only the essential paragraph of any letter discussing sexuality, with the full text carried online. This will be in effect until July 2016, when MC Canada, finishing the Being a Faithful Church process, will arrive at some conclusion on the sexuality matter.

## ABOUT THE COVER:

Trees wrapped in yellow fabric to symbolize friendship, warmth, welcoming, joy and hope sported a statement from South Africa’s Freedom Charter: ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it.’ See Cover Story and more photos on page 6.

PHOTO: KAREN SUDERMAN, MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

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# Journeying towards reconciliation

*This is the second in a five-part series leading up to the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Harrisburg, Pa.*

BY ANDREW SUDERMAN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

**T**he journey towards reconciliation is not easy. Attempts to repair wrongs involve time and intentionality. Healing broken relationships takes longer still.

In 2009, Canada began a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process that followed the example set by South Africa after the fall of apartheid. Given Canada's desire to learn from South Africa's creative model of the TRC, it might also be helpful to consider South Africa's post-TRC experiences.

Apartheid was a policy of racial segregation. While apartheid officially began in 1948, the practice of racial separation and white European dominance was common since the first settlers arrived in the 17th century. The introduction of apartheid as law was accompanied by an evangelical zeal that justified ever-increasing forms of violence and repression to maintain the desired separation. Apartheid created inherent privilege for the white minority in South Africa with governmental policies that increasingly oppressed the majority of the population who were considered "non-white."

After the demise of apartheid in 1994, South Africa was left to deal with its history of violence, atrocities and injustice.

In order to wrestle with its painful history, South Africa established the TRC in 1995. This was the first process of its kind. It was a mechanism that would work towards national restoration, reconstruction and healing. Desmond Tutu, the appointed chair of South Africa's TRC, noted in an April 25, 2014, article in *The Mail & Guardian*: "We were a wounded people, all of us, because of the conflict of the past. No matter on which side we stood, we all were in need of healing."

The South African TRC confronted the gross violations of human rights with the hope of getting a clear and truthful understanding of the violence and dehumanization that were consequences of apartheid, so that forgiveness and reconciliation could be made possible for the nation as a whole. To paraphrase Tutu: "In order to forgive, we must know whom to forgive for what." Truth was needed so that reconciliation could follow.

The commission was an innovative, creative and eye-opening way of wrestling with South Africa's painful history. Indeed, it has

*South Africa's example raises questions for Canada and its post-TRC era. What will reconciliation mean between indigenous and settler communities? What actions should we stop now to prevent further harm to relationships?*



*Pressure is increasing once again. The violent and repressive imagination created by apartheid still dominates. Recent violence directed at African foreign nationals is but one example of this.*

become an example for others. Those who were oppressed, repressed and dehumanized by the apartheid regime were able to share their stories, and ultimately their pain and suffering. They were able to regain a sense of dignity and humanity. For once, they mattered and were heard. Whites, on the other hand, could no longer hide behind the pretence of ignorance as to the horrid cost paid for their privilege and comfort.

The TRC served several significant purposes. It provided a venue for the truth to be told about apartheid: the atrocities that it created and justified, and the society it engineered. The TRC provided an avenue through which victims could find their collective humanity as well as release from what had happened to them. It lifted the shroud of secrecy that clouded much of South Africa's history.

As South Africa transitioned from apartheid to democracy, the TRC played a particularly crucial role as a pressure-cooker valve. The apartheid system had generated much pent-up tension and steam, and the TRC can be credited with helping to prevent a full-scale "explosion."

South Africa is often touted as an example of a relatively peaceful transition of power, and the TRC was one of the mechanisms that allowed for the birth of a new South Africa. This is surely worthy of praise.

### ***Life in the aftermath***

But today, 17 years after the TRC's

conclusion, obstacles in South Africa's journey towards reconciliation are becoming increasingly apparent. Pressure is increasing once again. The violent and repressive imagination created by apartheid still dominates. Recent violence directed at African foreign nationals is but one example of this. (See *"Pushing back with colour"* on page 6.)

Although the TRC served a critical role in releasing some of the steam, South Africa continues to grapple with what reconciliation actually means.

This term was often used to encourage civility between races without substantially shifting the apartheid-created social order. This had the effect of pacifying those who challenged the status quo while maintaining the logical inevitability of separation, inequality and injustice.

Others understood true reconciliation as that which would radically alter the apartheid-created social order so that justice and equality could exist for all. This is more in line with the biblical notion of reconciliation. It is deeply unsettling because it tirelessly pursues right relationships with God, with one another and with creation. It challenges and alters our ways of being so that right relationships are a priority.

After the demise of apartheid, even those who were battle-hardened in the struggle against it and sceptical of reconciliation, were willing to begin talking about it. The anti-reconciliatory system had now been eliminated, at least in theory, thus making room for the

possibility for true reconciliation.

Unfortunately, the different understandings of reconciliation became a stumbling block for the TRC and beyond. Some, for example, thought that South Africa would be reconciled once the TRC process finished. Some assumed that people would suddenly be able to get along with each other.

However, the reality experienced by most South Africans has not been foundationally altered. Privilege and inequality continue to dominate. In fact, the gap between rich and poor has become worse. Tutu and many others in the TRC process tried to inform the nation that the TRC should be seen as the beginning of a longer walk towards reconciliation. However, the intentionality required for true reconciliation has been put on the back burner if it indeed remains on the stove at all. Tutu notes that there is a lot of "unfinished business" in re-weaving the fabric of South Africa's society.

The work needed for true reconciliation has not been done. Confused understandings of reconciliation have made it difficult to pursue.

### ***Churches dropped the ball***

On Oct. 28, 1998, Tutu presented the TRC's final five-volume report to South Africa's first elected president, Nelson Mandela. With the report, the people and the church assumed that the "ministry of reconciliation" was now the responsibility of the state.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## COVER STORY

# Pushing back with colour

BY KAREN SUDERMAN

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

**W**hat do you do in the face of hatred, a hatred so immense that it drives people to pillage, beat and even kill others? What do you do when that hatred is simultaneously “out there” and in your own backyard? How do you show love, kindness and hospitality in rejection and defiance of such wanton violence?

These are questions that we wrestle with regularly as we recognize our complicity in ongoing violence in the world today. For us, these questions have taken on new meaning as violence has once again emerged in South Africa over the last weeks. Violence directed at African foreign nationals erupted in Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg,

killing at least seven, displacing more than a thousand and causing fear to spread throughout the country.

Some have termed this violence xenophobic, which means “fear of the foreigner.” But it is more than that. This violence is born out of an immense frustration and disillusionment that is more about economics than about nationalism or tribalism. Apartheid ended in 1994, but many people in South Africa are still waiting for things to change. Many struggle to eke out a living. Unemployment rates hover at 25 percent or higher. Perceived issues of “foreigners” taking jobs, though by and large a misconception, fuel anger and resentment.

With the complexity of such issues swirling around us, we met with a small group of concerned people in Pietermaritzburg who also felt some kind of action needed to be taken. A message other than violence needed to be given, a demonstration to foreign nationals that the attitude reflected in the attacks is not the attitude held by the majority of South Africans.

It came down to the colour yellow. Yellow signifies friendship, warmth, welcoming, joy and hope—everything that we want for our cities, country and world.

On the evening of April 18, about 20 of us gathered with bolts of yellow fabric and set out to wrap the trunks of trees lining the streets in the downtown core of Pietermaritzburg. In the heart of the central business district we wrapped about a hundred trees along two kilometres of city streets using more than 200 metres of fabric. To each tree we posted a statement from South Africa’s own Freedom Charter: “South Africa belongs to all who

live in it.” Another sign read, “Maritzburg says no to xenophobia.”

As we moved down the street, people observed us through the windows of their homes. Others came out onto the street or stopped as they walked by to see what we were doing. Many of these people were from places other than South Africa—the targeted foreign nationals from Ethiopia, Somalia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and elsewhere.

They invited their friends to come and our numbers swelled. Some of our new friends took fabric and posters, and draped the trees themselves. They chatted and laughed with us. Mostly they thanked us.

These actions may not have a long-lasting effect on attitudes of hatred or create enduring change. Such a shift requires ongoing work and effort. These actions may not be very effective in the larger scheme of things. However, those who joined us and those who see the yellow on the trees and read the signs know differently.

Because we pushed back against hatred in a colourful, nonviolent way, some foreign nationals now know that there are people who stand against hate, who stand with them, who welcome them. They know that there are people who love them no matter where they come from. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN AND ANDREW SUDERMAN



*On April 18, Karen and Andrew Suderman and at least 18 others protest recent eruptions of xenophobia by wrapping about 100 trees in the downtown core of Pietermaritzburg with yellow fabric and a statement from South Africa’s Freedom Charter: ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it.’*

PHOTO BY ANDREW SUDERMAN



*As a colourful protest against xenophobia unfolded in downtown Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, people living in the neighbourhood come out and help wrap trees in yellow fabric to symbolize friendship, warmth, welcoming, joy and hope, and to fasten posters of inclusion to the fabric.*



**(Continued from page 5)**

Sixteen years to the month later, a re-enactment of the TRC Faith Communities Hearing invited churches to share what they have been doing towards reconciliation since the original hearing in 1997, when most of South Africa's faith communities committed to dismantling apartheid and to pursue reconciliation, both in society and in their own denominations. But during the re-enactment, they admitted that they had "dropped the ball," and had substantial shortcomings in meeting their commitments. Several Christian denominations, for example, are still racially segregated.

Although this was a sad realization, ironically it was also quite hopeful because, at least officially, the church in South Africa has begun to remember and re-commit itself to the pursuit of reconciliation. Many churches and denominations are also asking why they assumed that the state would bring about reconciliation.

Since the close of the TRC in South Africa, appalling violence continues. Inequality is increasing. The rich have maintained their wealth while the poor continue to live on scraps. The education system is failing. Striking miners are gunned down by police. Obscene spending is justified on the president's private property. Corruption is rampant, according to Tutu in the same *Guardian & Mail* article.

Why, the churches ask, have they assumed that a neo-liberal government would be the agent of reconciliation? After all, it operates on assumptions of individual competition, on freedom from the other rather than communal belonging to each other, and on the myth that government is somehow neutral in ordering and structuring society.

**A re-awakening church**

The church in South Africa may be re-awakening to its biblical calling as agents of true reconciliation. The Apostle Paul reminds us that true peace and reconciliation do not come from those who rule, but from those who seek to be part of God's new creation and humanity in the world (Ephesians 2:11-22; II Corinthians

5:17-21). The responsibility of the church is to reveal this new reality of God's new creation and humanity (Ephesians 3:10). There are some hopeful sparks indicating that the church's amnesia is ending, and that it may rekindle its mission of actively pursuing that which will allow people to live rightly with one another.

South Africa's example raises questions for Canada and its post-TRC era. What will reconciliation mean between indigenous and settler communities? What actions should we stop now to prevent further harm to relationships? How can settlers meaningfully apologize for the way in which we have dehumanized our indigenous brothers and sisters? How will settlers pursue the restoration and restitution that true reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous Peoples will require? Will we also be tempted to think that responsibility for reparation is the government's alone? How will we be a community—a people or church—that will tirelessly seek to demonstrate God's new creation and be a witness to God's new humanity? How will this change the way we relate to—and include—indigenous sisters and brothers? How can we embody a way of being that demonstrates our common humanity and belonging?

The TRC process may be coming to an end, but the journey towards reconciliation is far from over.

May God be with us as we continue this journey. ✎



*Andrew Suderman is a Mennonite Church Canada worker in South Africa with his wife, Karen, who wrote the reflection on page 6.*

*They coordinate the Anabaptist Network in South Africa (anisa.org.za) as it strives to walk with, support and grow communities of peace, justice and reconciliation.*



Article commissioned by Canadian Mennonite in preparation for the July 21-26 Mennonite World Conference Assembly To register: [mwc-cmm.org/pa2015](http://mwc-cmm.org/pa2015)

**/// For discussion**

1. Have you ever been in a situation where hatred was expressed against you or people you know? What is your initial response to hatred or injustice? What are some examples of creative or loving responses to violence or injustice? What role does the church play in teaching us to respond nonviolently?
2. Andrew Suderman reports that the churches of South Africa assumed that reconciliation after the end of apartheid was the responsibility of the state, not the church. What is the role of the Christian church in working at justice and reconciliation in society?
3. How much has the Mennonite church been involved with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) dealing with past wrongs against Canada's Indigenous Peoples? Has the TRC been mentioned in your congregation? How could your church work at reconciliation with indigenous people in your community?
4. Where are the biggest needs for reconciliation in your congregation or in your families? What can the church do to promote love and reconciliation? When does publicity help or hinder the work of resolving disagreements or injustice?

—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 300 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.*

## ✉ 'What a blessing' the Bible is

**RE:** "BIBLE READING meant less *Canadian Mennonite* reading" letter, March 30, page 13.

The Bible cannot be read like any other book. The truths of the Bible are scattered from beginning to end, and revealed only through the Holy Spirit little by little. The book is hard to understand, but the "blessing" does come.

Before we attempt to understand deeper spiritual truths, we must first have a concept of what is right and wrong. If there is one idea that the Book of Proverbs emphasizes, it is this: "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*" (9: 10).

If we were to read the Bible like any other book, it would take a long time before we get to Jude, which tells us in verse 20: "*But you beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.*" Now I see why the Lord came to Steve Hoepfner, who wrote "Stand up for God's truth," Feb.

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## New mission frontiers

DAVID MARTIN

**H**ow to plant a church is not a big mystery. Any good Mennonite gardener knew how to take a clump of bulbs from her front garden, split them up and transplant them into the bed at the side of the house. In the spring, the new garden proudly displayed the same brilliantly coloured daffodils and tulips for all to enjoy. In a few years, both beds were full again, bursting with the gorgeous colours of spring.



The same successful strategy worked just as easily, it seemed for churches. Without even stopping to think, I can rhyme off the names of half a dozen church plants in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada that have relied on this tried and true strategy. You simply take a few key members from the established church, add a few more interested ones from the local community, plant them together in the new location, tamp the soil down firmly, add a bit of upfront

money and resources to water and fertilize the lot, and presto, with a bit of elbow grease you have a functioning new congregation.

In today's world, life is not quite that simple and old strategies are not working like we expect. Simply replicating what we have is not necessarily what is needed within our new urban settings and their rapidly changing social contexts. As congregations and area church leaders, we need bold, innovative strategies that will sprout exotic new plant species that may look very different from their historical roots but have in their DNA the very same dedication to Christ and our Anabaptist faith and values.

MC Eastern Canada is encouraging congregations to experiment with new approaches and new avenues of church planting so that together we can try, fail, learn, succeed, and in the midst of it all foster new forms of church that are relevant to our next door neighbours and the communities in which we live.

One new way to sprout more Anabaptist congregations is working intentionally with our new Canadian congregations. On a recent trip to Myanmar, I experienced firsthand the passion and dedication of our new Canadian leaders in sharing our Anabaptist faith. My travelling companion, Pastor Jehu, founder of the Chin Christian Church in Kitchener, Ont., has already been hard at work establishing new Anabaptist congregations across North America.

Why the interest in Mennonite faith and theology? "We never heard this kind of teaching on peace, discipleship and caring for others," exclaims Pastor Jehu. "It has changed my life. It has changed how I live my faith at home and how we live our faith as a congregation. I want this for the Chin people."

So in addition to the 13 Chin congregations he has connected with Mennonites across North America, Pastor Jehu now wants to see the Anabaptist faith flourish among the Chin and Burmese people in Myanmar. Whatever the new strategies for planting and watering, pray with me that God will give the growth.

*David Martin is executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.*



2, page 15, in a dream with the message, “Read the Book of Jude.”

Jesus said in John 5:39: “*You search/read the Scriptures, for you believe they give you eternal life. And the Scriptures point to me! Yet you won’t come to me so that I can give you this life eternal.*” Then in John 17:3 Jesus said: “*And this is the way to have eternal life—by knowing you, the only true God, and Jesus*

*Christ, the one you sent to earth!”*

The value of praying in the Holy Spirit is that it draws one to Jesus. What a blessing!

WES EPP, CALGARY

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

# My renewed confession: Jesus Christ is Lord

PHIL WAGLER

I’m in a beautiful and sorrowful place. My travels have brought me to a stunning seaside within a country that significantly restricts the proclamation of Jesus as Messiah and Lord. Here, unless you were born Christian, you can’t abandon the national religion to follow Jesus. Those who change their mind in that way are not treated well. They are considered traitors, sometimes even martyred. Still, there’s so much beauty: amazing people, deep history and the glories of creation.

When I’m in places like this I can’t help reflect on what it means to live where I live. It’s also beautiful and sorrowful. I could fill a page with lists under both those categories, I’m sure. Nothing quite helps seeing what’s good and ugly about your own culture as being in another one.

So here I sit and I’m struck by a renewed thought. No, more than a thought; it’s a conviction. Actually, it’s even more than that; it’s a renewed confession. Thoughts are common to us all. Convictions can arise, but a confession takes both a step further and puts my word to what I think and have become convicted of. Once I utter a confession I invite accountability as to whether I live as I have said I am convinced of.



What is this renewed confession of mine? That Jesus Christ is Lord.

Why are there nations in the world that forbid that confession in the 21st century? Why are there other places, like the North American one I reside in, that increasingly chide that confession? I’m struck anew by the fact that there’s something to this name, this person, this Saviour, that deeply disturbs humanity. He is so beautiful, so full of grace and truth. He is the image of the invisible God. He is the love of God in human flesh and he bears our sorrows, even becoming a man of many sorrows. He is

*I’m struck anew by the fact that there’s something to this name, this person, this Saviour, that deeply disturbs humanity.*

beautiful and sorrowful.

Saul, the religious fundamentalist who silenced the confession of Christ as Lord, eventually wrote as the Apostle Paul: “*... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*” (Romans 10:9). Some Christians in North America are dismissing the power of those words because they’ve been minimalized or trivialized into meaningless church-speak. We must

repent of such dismissiveness. From where I write—a context not unlike the first century—to make that confession is rebellion. These are not trite words, but the clarion declaration of a name that is above every name.

On this trip I heard of a prominent Christian scholar who met with a leading cleric of a country more restrictive than the one I am in. When asked, “What should I tell Christians in North America?” the cleric replied, “Tell them to follow Jesus, because when they follow Jesus, good things happen.”

I know that sounds so counter-intuitive: the leader of another religion telling North Americans to follow Jesus. Can we receive that as a prophetic word, a corrective to our shrugging at the uniqueness of the one who said he was the light

of the world?

I don’t know where you’re sitting as you read this. But is it time to make a new or renewed confession? Jesus Christ is Lord! In many beautiful and sorrowful places this still matters deeply. Does it matter to you? Does it matter to Mennonites?

*Phil Wagler (phil\_wagler@yahoo.ca) is author of Kingdom Culture and can’t wait to get home to British Columbia to live out the confession with his family.*

## ✉ Peace in Christ does not depend on believers reaching an agreement

RE: "IT'S TIME to vote," March 30, page 14.

Russel Snyder-Penner assumes that a vote on same-sex relationships would move us forward. Perhaps it would, but not unless we recognize first that there is no expectation in the Bible that all believers will reach

an agreement on matters of faith and practice. Nor does our peace in Christ depend on doing so.

See Romans 12 and Ephesians 2 for examples of the difference between peace and agreement. Unless we recognize this difference, voting will continue to build walls that separate us. "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Romans 14:19).

Furthermore, what or who has created the need for

## NEW CANADIAN VOICE

# Led to a team of fixers and helpers

MACIEL HERNANDEZ

I am, and always have been, a "doer," and my late husband was the same. If people needed help, we found a way to help them. If something was broken, we found a way to fix it. I guess God decided we should meet a large team of fixers and helpers known as the Mennonites.

I came to Canada in my early 20s with my two daughters, my husband and a heart full of gratitude. I wanted to volunteer with seniors in honour of an elderly woman we'd met in Miami. She gave us shelter, food and kindness, all of which were hard to find as an immigrant family in the U.S. I began volunteering at the St. Clair O'Connor Community, a Mennonite Project in Toronto, in the early 1990s. I would eventually obtain a paid job as a hostess in the dining room.

Things seemed okay until we received a removal order from the Government of Canada. Everyone at work would soon learn of my situation because I couldn't hide my sadness.

The seniors and staff took initiative and began collecting petitions. They would bring them to the official in charge of my case at the immigration office at the border in Niagara Falls. They travelled

with me the day I was scheduled to leave the country. I'll never forget the caravan of vehicles loaded with seniors and their wheelchairs, walkers and canes. Some of the staff also came, and they even brought their children with them to show support. Their goal was to keep my family and myself in this country.

I'll never forget the 100-year-old English man who said to the official: "What do you think you are doing sending her away? Who is going to look after me? She is like my sister, my daughter, granddaughter, my mother. We need her and you can't send her away."

During this time we also met Betty and Adolfo, pastors of Toronto Mennonite

New Life Centre. They helped us with our case, and eventually we obtained our permanent resident status.

My late husband and I became part of the Toronto Mennonite New Life congregation. In 1996, we were baptized and we decided that perhaps it was time we were married as well. The members of this church became our family in the years that followed.

In 2011, we learned of my husband's

cancer for the first time. He underwent a liver transplant in 2012. My youngest daughter donated a portion of her liver. Members of the faith community accompanied me to the hospital as I tried to remain at peace during the eight-hour surgery. Others held me in their thoughts and prayers.

My husband endured a shaky recovery after this surgery. His cancer returned a year later, and I had to leave work for several months to take care of him at home. Faith came to our door again and again in the form of groceries, little envelopes filled with cash, prayers and kind words as my heart broke. Relatives and members of our church brought more food than I could accommodate in my kitchen. People filled my home with love in one of the darkest periods of my life.

These demonstrations of faith carried us into the night my husband took his last breath. He would sometimes quote scriptures to my daughters. I remember him telling my eldest: "The harvest is great, but the workers are few."

My heart is filled with gratitude to God for leading me to this team of doers. There is much to be done. Our journey continues.

*Maciel Hernandez is the mother of three children. She has lived in Toronto for the past 24 years and has been a member of Toronto Mennonite New Life Church for more than two decades. She works at the St. Clair O'Connor Community, a Mennonite project, as a nurse.*



*I'll never forget the 100-year-old English man who said to the official: 'What do you think you are doing sending her away?'*

Mennonite Church Canada to take a position on this issue? Who, if anyone, will benefit from the outcome regardless of what the vote says? Will congregations fall in line with whatever decision is reached? Or will they continue to live comfortably, or otherwise, with their own understanding within or outside MC Canada?

What would be missing if the national church backed off and individual congregations were left to address this matter if and when it becomes an issue for them, or when its members want to be more informed on the reality of same-sex attraction? For those of us who are in this situation, it becomes an invitation to walk with individuals and their families, rather than speaking to a matter that is completely outside our experience and frame of reference.

CLARENCE EPP, WINNIPEG

### ✉ Jesus' Spirit not limited to a literal reading of the Bible

RE: "A BIBLICAL and better way' is neither" and "Bible written without an understanding of genetics" letters, March 2, pages 10 and 14, respectively.

We finally have two readers—David Neufeld and Frank Hiemstra—who provide us with useful insights into why the present debate on the homosexuality issue is so intense.

Our Bible readers and scholars generally do not take science seriously enough, while at the same time they continue to rewrite old doctrines and confessions of faith to fit ancient worldviews for modern times. The Old World cosmologies could not include the facts of modern science because there was no awareness of the science of genetics in biology, let alone the physics and chemistry in geology or astronomy.

Science and religion are two different perspectives on truth, almost like two different languages. Sometimes they overlap, and what is claimed by one can be translated into the other. But sometimes they see different aspects of the truth and measure reality according to different standards and commitments. Each has something of value to offer to the quest for truth; both have blind spots; and a richer quest for truth comes when science and religion engage in civil, mutually attentive conversation.

This is why old doctrinal statements are often inadequate statements for today's life situations. Like Neufeld, I believe that followers of Jesus today still may discern together what is God's truth. The Spirit of Jesus is alive and dynamic, and is not limited to an understanding of the ancient theological doctrines, and certainly not to a literal reading of the Bible.

PETER PETERS, WINNIPEG

### ✉ Hague doesn't need another church like Hague Mennonite has become

RE: "WE WEREN'T on the same page," April 13, page 19.

After reading about Hague Mennonite Church's decision to leave Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, I was saddened but not surprised.

I was also disappointed that the congregation chose to claim its adherence to the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* as part of its defence, suggesting that the area church had strayed away while ignoring the fact that Hague Mennonite no longer supported the Confession's peace statements. Even so, the Confession is not a creed, but merely a snapshot of who we were back in the mid-1990s.

Our core Mennonite/Anabaptist values and perspectives do include an emphasis on the gospels, community and peace. Community depends on grace and toleration, and pacifism and social justice are essential for peace.

While pastoring Hague Mennonite's neighbouring church, I witnessed Hague's intentional shift away from being in community with other Mennonite churches, its rejection of the peace position and its embrace of judgmental evangelistic theology.

Hague Mennonite rightly identified in its apology that it was not on the same page as the rest of MC Saskatchewan, and that reality makes me sad because Hague and the surrounding community don't need another church with that flavour of theology; there are already plenty in the area. They do need more churches that value community and peace in a 2015 perspective. Fear and war are growing in prominence. Churches that lift up grace, build trust and community, and live out peace are desperately needed, and that is why Hague Mennonite's departure makes me sad.

GORDON ALLABY, WATERLOO, ONT.

### ✉ Jesus taught openness and inclusion, biologist maintains

I'M A HAPPY member of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary. I think we have an excellent fellowship of believers in our congregation who represent wide-ranging views on various subjects and who almost always manage to maintain a healthy respect for each other even when we don't always agree.

One thing I don't understand is, why does the issue of sex and gender keep coming up? What I do in the privacy of my home is no one's business unless someone is getting hurt. Anyway, we have no right to judge.

If I was asked to explain further, I would make two points why this is not an issue for me:



1. **AS A** trained biologist, I understand that diversity in nature—plants and animals—is extremely important to the survival of a species. Life is a bell curve, and there are always a few individuals at each extreme, just in case the environment changes enough to negatively affect the majority, in which case some of the exceptions might survive better than the mainstream. God, in his wisdom, made the rules that way.

2. **I'M A** Christian. Therefore I follow, as best I can, the example and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, who is called the Christ. It seems a main theme that he emphasized over and over again was, “*Love your neighbour as yourself*.” That sounds to me like openness and inclusion.

**RICHARD PENNER, CALGARY**

### ✉ **It's best we struggle together, rather than alone**

**RE:** “**DISBELIEF OF** God’s Word is another reason why people leave the church” letter, April 13, page 12.

I would like people to remain in the church and to appreciate the Bible. The Bible is a book that preserves for us human encounters with God and conversations with one another about who God is from quite early in our human history. A valuable book, preserved even though humans tend to destroy the communications of those they disagree with.

Does believing that evolution happened really make atheists of us? I have met and listened to Denis Alexander, an evangelical Christian from Britain who is also a scientist. For him, the evidence is there: Evolution happened and is happening, and God exists, too, and is with us in it. Alexander regrets that so many Christians feel they need to be in opposition to evolution and to science in general, thus leaving the field to unbelievers. Therefore, he wrote *Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?*

It is true that believing in evolution will raise questions about the Bible. It did for me and there was struggle. The alternative, not looking at the evidence, also creates struggles. Why not struggle with our culture?

Jesus said he would be with us to the end of the age, and he is our example. He chose Isaiah’s view that all who choose to align themselves with God are welcomed by God. This is the contrary view of some laws, which exclude handicapped people, and some passages, like Ezra, that exclude foreigners.

I would invite people to remain in the church so we can struggle together. Let’s not do it alone. There is danger in that, too.

**ANNEMARIE ROGALSKY, WATERLOO, ONT.**

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Enns**—Aviva Sylvia (b. April 1, 2015), to Doug and Shana Enns, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Horne**—Nathan Peter (b. April 30, 2015), to Amanda and Spencer Horne, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Kampen**—Leah Charlotte Ann (b. April 24, 2015), to Peter Kampen and Kimberley McBeth-Kampen, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Witzel**—Lydia Naomi Anne (b. May 1, 2015), to Naomi and David Witzel, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Victoria Brown**—North Leamington United Mennonite, May 3, 2015.

### Marriages

**DeGurse/Fulmyk**—Paul DeGurse (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Ali Fulmyk, at Grace Lutheran, Winnipeg, May 15, 2015.

**Huys/Thiessen**—Nathanael Huys and Kailey Thiessen, at The First Mennonite, Vineland, Ont., May 9, 2015.

**Regier/Remoue**—Kalissa Regier (Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.) and Tyler Remoue, in Montana, Feb. 20, 2015.

### Deaths

**Barker**—Keith, 89 (b. June 15, 1925; d. April 11, 2015), Carman Mennonite, Man.

**Dyck**—Judith (nee Martens), 93 (b. May 15, 1922; d. May 12, 2015), Springridge Mennonite, Pincher Creek, Alta.

**Ens**—Helen (nee Dyck), 98 (b. July 3, 1916; d. May 7, 2015), Cornerstone (Mennonite), Saskatoon (formerly of Hague Mennonite, Sask.).

**Erb**—Annie (nee Jantzi), 90 (b. Jan. 14, 1925; d. May 13, 2015), Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.

**Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send announcements by e-mail to [milestones@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:milestones@canadianmennonite.org) including the congregation name and location.**

## /// Correction

Sam Steiner was a draft dodger during the Vietnam War. Incorrect information appeared in “This will lead to dancing,” May 25, page 28-29. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# On being the church: United but divided

JOHN H. NEUFELD

**W**e are the church united in Christ, but divided.

We have been given the gift of unity, being one body with many parts, but it seems a distant dream. We are called to be one: one body with many members, with different gifts, functions and roles to play.

Already in the first century in Galatia, Corinth and Rome differences surfaced, quarrels erupted. But Paul urged the divided body to live as one body even though the differences seemed important. Some despised those who seemed to be too conservative, some judged those who were too liberal. But Paul did not suggest that each group become independent and live its body-life separated from the body that had nurtured them.

Paul named the disunity in the body, accepted the tragic reality and suggested that, in the body, diversity rooted in different convictions is not to lead to separation.

Each group wanted to have it its own way. Each group wanted all the others to conform, to agree with it both in its beliefs and how they are expressed.

The impulse of all, wherever they were on the continuum of faith and practice, was to create sameness and conformity. The assumption underlying this strong impulse was this: Oneness means sameness, and the goal of unity is sameness in faith and expression.

From a human perspective the logic is logical; since we are one in Christ, we are to be the same. Isn't that what unity, being one, means? This seemingly "sensible" logic seemed sensible in the first century, except that Paul taught otherwise and declared the sensible logic to be fleshly or natural, not Spirit-driven. Paul put it bluntly: There is one body. Though many,

we are one in Christ.

Oneness, unity, is a God-given gift to be affirmed, to be accepted. Yet our unity in Christ remains a goal, something being worked on. Jesus' prayer is still waiting to be answered.

Paul pleaded for unity, but then he added another cluster of insights to the discussion.

His body metaphor dismantles sensible logic, and suggests our understanding and logic be transformed. The new logic affirms the body is one, the body is many, the body is interdependent. Every body part contributes in its own way. No body part is the whole. The whole body is the functioning together of widely different parts. The body metaphor affirms oneness or unity, not by hoping for sameness, but by accepting and celebrating diversity.

This vision is shared with the deeply divided church in Corinth, divided by loyalty to one of four leaders, divided by the reality of a spectrum of gifts in competition with each other, divided by different understandings and priorities, but united by love, which is to be pursued above all else.

Paul's new logic underlies another situation of disagreement, division and conflict between members of the body living in Rome, in the body that was one but not one at the same time, and in the body that is Mennonite Church Manitoba today.

Believers in Rome were different from each other. Some were more conservative, some were less conservative. For them, the issue was: Eat all foods or eat only veggies? For MC Manitoba, the issue is interpreting Scripture, understanding discipleship, including sexuality and relationships.

Paul offers a surprising approach based on his transformed logic: Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Study the issue, discuss the issue, pray about the issue, discern. Be sure of where you stand and why! Each of us will be accountable to God. (Sounds like the Being a Faithful Church process, but suggests going farther.)

He does not urge compromise in order to agree. But each is to strive for peace with all, including the ones who are of different conviction than we. Each of us is to strive to mutually build up even those that we cannot stand, understand or agree with.

Welcome one another, give up despising, give up judging, give up wanting everyone to agree, give up wanting all to conform to your view. Welcome each other, not half-heartedly, but wholeheartedly, with enthusiasm.

Accept the reality of disagreement and conflict, and don't give up on each other, and don't try to get the others to think like you do, because unity is not about sameness, agreement or conformity. In Christ, oneness is about noticing and accepting, and celebrating differences in the body, the church.

All members are welcomed by Christ. Yes, the more conservative are welcomed, accepted by Christ; yes, the less conservative are welcomed, accepted by Christ. We, as congregations and as MC Manitoba, all of us, are accepted and welcomed by Christ, just as we are, with our differences, with our conflicts and disagreements.

The gift of unity belongs to the body, as well as the challenge to work as a diverse body, and to accept and welcome each other because we have all been welcomed by Christ. ❧

*John H. Neufeld is a former president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College (1984-97), a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Winnipeg. Presented at a Leadership in Ministry seminar at CMU in 2015.*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# More study on the Bible and homosexuality sought

*Winkler Bergthaler puts denominational affiliation and financial support 'on hold'*

By J. NEUFELD

Manitoba Correspondent

Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church wants Mennonite Church Manitoba to organize a conference to study “what Scripture clearly states on the matter of homosexuality and the definition of marriage,” and Ken Warkentin, executive director of the area church, says, “I think that’s a great idea.”

In a prepared release given to *Canadian Mennonite*, Winkler Bergthaler states: “Being a Faithful Church is a very important study and we support learning how to be a faithful church. But while there has been

very much discussion on what people think and feel, especially on the topic of same-sex lifestyle, we believe not enough time has been spent studying what the Bible teaches on the subject.”

“We have seen the secular society deviating from what we, as Mennonites and other Christian people and churchgoers, considered a non-negotiable approach to one man and one woman in a Christian marriage,” says the church statement. “We have now seen and experienced our first non-traditional union of two men

in a Mennonite church and they seem to have done so with the blessings of [MC] Saskatchewan and [MC] Manitoba.”

In March, representatives from Winkler Bergthaler met with leaders of MC Manitoba and MC Canada to state their concerns and ask for a formal study on the Bible and homosexuality. In response, the area church has begun planning a study conference for the fall. Warkentin hopes to see representatives from many Manitoba churches there. “I see this as part of the Being a Faithful Church process,” he says.

The purpose of the conference will be to take a closer look at biblical texts that relate to marriage and homosexuality, and to consider how people interpret those texts with regard to biblical authority. Another important question to consider will be how the church works through disagreements.

Congregational chair Dennis Derksen says Winkler Bergthaler’s request for more study on the topic has been “heard and understood,” but the church had hoped for “greater urgency applied to the matter.” Initially, Winkler Bergthaler had requested that discussion take place before June 30, a deadline set by the congregation of nearly 700 members to determine whether it would continue to be a member of the area and national churches; in the meantime, its financial participation in the two church bodies is “on hold.”

However, MC Manitoba wasn’t able to organize the event on such short notice. In the meantime, Derksen says, “Our congregation hasn’t made a decision on whether we’ll extend [the June 30 deadline] or not.”

Warkentin says that he feels the most important question facing the area church right now is how to live with disagreement. “We know we’re not all in agreement with each other,” he says. “How shall we live with disagreements in the church when we’re convinced we’re both led by the Holy Spirit to different conclusions? We’re being invited to live in the messy church, rather than the ideal church.”

Winkler Bergthaler was founded by a group of Mennonites in Winkler in 1895. At first, the services were entirely in German. In the 1970s, the church began offering services in English as well. Since then, the church has grown to its current membership of 694. ॥

CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY PHOTO



Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) president Cheryl Pauls, centre, presents graduates Rebecca Klassen-Wiebe, left, and Mike Wiebe, right, with CMU’s 2015 President’s Medals during the university’s 2015 graduation exercises on April 26. Klassen-Wiebe and Wiebe (no relation) were chosen for the awards in recognition of their qualities of scholarship, leadership and service. Klassen-Wiebe of Winnipeg graduated with a bachelor of music degree with a concentration in performance—collaborative piano. Wiebe, who is originally from Gretna, Man., graduated with a four-year bachelor of arts degree with a major in communications and media.



## VIEWPOINT

# Here's to old white guys and everyone else

WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

I stopped short when the '70s picture of a serious-looking white-haired man in a suit and tie popped up on my screen.

I had started an article about a Mennonite thinker and institution builder who died before I had a chance to meet him. Part-way through my research I stumbled upon his photo.

It was pretty much the standard posed headshot I would have expected had I thought about it, but still, when confronted with the image, I knew the article was dead.

My reaction was partly a capitulation to the anti-authority bias in vogue for the past generation. Old white male big shots have a bad rap. But it wasn't so much the old or white or male aspects themselves that bothered me. I semi-regularly find myself referring in day-to-day conversation to the white male elders who have been, and continue to be, invaluable in my life. My reaction was more to the way in which those three elements sometimes create a particular concoction of authority that has indelibly shaped the church.

I am grateful to those who helped build the institutions I have benefitted from. Many leaders were leaders for good reason. They had innovative ideas and earned authority. But that's not the whole story. Many people have experienced exclusion in various ways and to varying degrees. And our institutions would feel different had others been more involved.

At a gut level I'm more interested in the stories of people on the creative fringes—the excluded ones—than those with



institutional legacies. The tension between the two is important.

Which stories and voices do we privilege? I reviewed a year's worth of this magazine, noting which voices get published. I also looked at the leadership demographics of 12 Mennonite organizations.

The easiest thing to note is gender balance. In the

past year, about 340 pages of this magazine were written by men, and about 320 by women. The stats are imprecise and incomplete. Many articles cover parts of pages so I rounded off. And an article by a woman about a man counted in the woman column.

A glance back to 1997, when the current incarnation of *Canadian Mennonite*

*In the past year, about 340 pages of this magazine were written by men, and about 320 by women.*

began, shows the gender balance has been relatively constant, although then, like now, men wrote a lot more letters. In the last year, men wrote 120 letters compared to 49 by women.

Again, these are only rough indicators. It's dangerous to read too much—or too little—into them.

In terms of ethnicity, only a handful of people recognizably from an ethnic minority wrote articles or letters in the past year, although numerous articles were written about such people and included their voices in one way or another. Ten of 24 covers featured non-Caucasian people.

Age is harder to assess, although

certainly the Young Voices section in *Canadian Mennonite* adds some conspicuous and needed balance.

In terms of leadership in Mennonite organizations—including this publication, Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Central Committee offices in Canada, Mennonite World Conference (MWC), and three post-secondary schools—the numbers show that men make up 60 percent of boards, 58 percent of board chairs and two thirds of executive directors or presidents. There is a distinguishable bias, but no glass ceiling. The numbers 20 years ago would have been different.

I suspect the age gap on these boards would be considerable. And white people generally run the show, with the exception of MWC. One could also look at sexual identity, people with disabilities and rural inclusion.

One finding that sticks out for me, and circles round to my original stumbling block, is that 11 of the 13 obituaries published in this magazine in the past year paid tribute to men. (This does not reflect an intent on the part of editors—that's not how magazines are made—it is just what happened.)

Of course, every life is worthy of note; that's part of the principle behind inclusion and embrace of diversity. We need to be attentive to which stories and over-

arching narratives make their way to the surface. And which don't. Do achievement and success dominate? Do we publicly affirm the stories of little people? Who do we hold up as leaders?

We have made significant improvements. Of course, many people still feel excluded and hurt. We must mark positive change without using it as an excuse to stop striving.

The Old Testament encourages us to sing a new song. The New Testament steers us hard toward the lesser, the least and the powerless. We need leaders who point us in that direction and we all need to look to the margins to lead us. ❧

# Touring the province, touring the church

*MC Saskatchewan members get to know each other through annual bus tours*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

Louise Sawatsky has boarded the bus for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's Touring Mission Fest every year the event has been offered. For the 92-year-old from Saskatoon's First Mennonite Church, the annual tours are worthwhile and enjoyable.

Begun in 2005 under the auspices of MC Saskatchewan's Ministries Commission, Touring Mission Fest was initially seen as a way for urban congregations to connect with their more-remote rural counterparts.

Eric Olfert was part of the original planning team. He says the tours grew out of the Vibrant Rural Churches Project as "a means by which members of our urban churches could become more personally aware of, and more knowledgeable about, these small and distant churches." But, he adds, "over time the focus broadened to helping all of us within MC Saskatchewan

get to know each other better."

Prior to 2005, the area church hosted a series of mission fests focussed on overseas missions.

"With the new focus on being missional, on looking at where we are sent in mission, rather than just sending, it seemed important to look at our congregations through a 'local missions' lens," says Olfert. Congregations are asked "to tell the touring visitors how they are church in their community, what is their mission where they are placed," he explains.

Along with congregations, church ministries have been included in the touring schedule. This year's Touring Mission Fest, held on May 9, visited Warman and Rosthern Mennonite churches, as well as the Youth Farm Bible Camp, the Mennonite Nursing Home Complex and

the Home for the Aged, all three of which are in Rosthern.

In the 10 years since the tours began, participants have visited every MC Saskatchewan congregation and ministry in spite of tours being cancelled in '07 and '11.

In the early years, participation was strong and organizers had little difficulty filling two tour buses. In 2005 and '06, participants chose between two tours because organizers felt that "asking small rural churches to host and feed more than about 50 people would be an unfair burden," says Olfert. At the outset, participants represented "a mix of ages, including a few families with children," he says, although from the beginning most participants have been seniors.

This year's tour accommodated 29 participants, mostly from Saskatoon and area churches.

Over the years, some experiences have stood out in the minds of participants more than others. Olfert identifies the '06 tour of the Old Colony Mennonite villages south of Swift Current as "a personal highlight."

Elmer Regier, leader of this year's tour, recalled the '13 visit to Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, where participants were treated to a musical performance of a familiar hymn by a group of cellists who regularly rehearse at the church.

In his mind, Olfert says the tours have been "a very worthwhile endeavour, particularly for the smaller and more distant churches. Some small church leaders have expressed deep appreciation for the tour visits, feeling appreciated by the larger church in a very meaningful way." Those warm feelings are mutual. "Tour members have also deeply appreciated the perspective change they were offered by the visited churches," says Olfert.

What does the future hold for the Touring Mission Fest? The Ministries Commission is considering several possibilities. Regier suggests that a return visit to some of the southern churches might be in the works. Olfert says that "visiting our first nations neighbours" might be a possibility, but concedes that "a new model" might be needed in order to "engage a broader age spectrum." ❧



*Participants board the bus for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's 2015 Touring Mission Fest.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Women's group votes to disband

STORY AND PHOTO BY LOIS SIEMENS

SASKATCHEWAN WOMEN IN MISSION

“It all feels so final,” someone said during lunch at the 73rd annual meeting of Saskatchewan Women in Mission (SWM) hosted by Zoar Mission Circle in Waldheim, Sask., on April 25. She was referring to a vote taken that morning to disband. After several years of difficulty finding women to fill executive and program positions on the committee we chose to let it go. By a very slim margin the women present voted to disband.

The program committee had prepared for this possibility and offered a litany of thanks to honour all women over the years who participated, to remember and to say the first goodbye.

We sang, “Now Thank We All Our God,” ate bread together and took a final photograph of the group of 65 women. Outgoing president Myrna Sawatzky lamented the loss of dollars for the many

organizations that SWM presently supports, from Witness workers to Rosthern Junior College (RJC). While it felt final, the group voted in favour of a motion to develop a position within Mennonite Church Saskatchewan to represent women and to organize events.

The earliest group of women organized in Rosthern in 1906-07. In 1941, David Toews asked the women's groups to organize an evening program at the Canadian Conference in Laird. It was so much fun that they met at the 1943 Canadian Conference in Langham and voted to organize the Saskatchewan Women's Missionary Conference.

Mrs. Hugo Bartel of Drake was chosen as the first president, Mrs. G.G. Epp of Eigenheim as secretary-treasurer and Mrs. P.B. Willms of Saskatoon as the third member. The first project was the Margareta Toews Scholarship for a needy



*Barb Wolfe, president of the Eigenheim Women's Fellowship, shows the braid made by her group to represent how strength comes when women work together.*

girl at RJC. SWM continued to support RJC and to offer scholarships. Projects have ranged from supporting missionaries at home and abroad, to making quilts, bandages, soap and layettes.

Conversations in the foyer on April 25 were subdued yet hopeful. The afternoon program focussed on “Voices of change: Navigating life's transitions.” Patty Friesen led the group through three stages of transition, drawing from the Book of Ruth: endings, transition and new beginnings. Naming what many have experienced, Friesen wove our story together with the biblical text. Transition, she said, is “finding our way in the darkness.” As a new beginning, she offered a vision of hope with the image of birth.

Between each presentation women moved into groups and shared music that helped them cope through an ending, created something new out of yarn and built a recipe for change. Several groups, holding up their yarn creation, reflected that one strand is easily broken, but three together are strong. Alice Pilatus and Mary Loewen created a bird's nest out of yarn—a fitting image for the three stages of transition.

The recipes for change were inspiring and included humour, good music, patience, flexibility, prayer, joy, friendship, generosity, thankfulness and love. ❧

## /// Briefly noted

### MC Saskatchewan pastors confer on the ethics of relationships

LANGHAM, SASK.—After stating that he was not sure what wisdom he could have to share with a group of pastors, Harry Huebner, professor emeritus at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, proceeded to spend the rest of the day sharing many wisdom-filled insights with the 33 pastors and church leaders attending Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's spring pastors gathering. Held at Zoar Mennonite Church in Langham on April 8, the gathering featured two presentations by Huebner on the theme, “Healthy pastoral relationships.” The first, “Biblical ethics: Christ living in us,” explored the question, “Who are you?” using Galatians 2:19-20 and the fundamental idea that Christ lives in everyone. In his second presentation, “Sex and the church: Being Christian in a promiscuous world,” Huebner offered many thought-provoking ideas, including that pastors are among the loneliest people in the world, and that it's important for pastors to have non-spousal friends. At the end of the day, participating pastors expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be on “the other side.”

—BY KIRSTEN HAMM-EPP





*Canoes and kayaks arrive at their final destination after a successful paddle-a-thon down the Fraser River. The \$51,000 raised will support summer staff volunteers pay for post-secondary education.*

## 'A community event'

*Paddlers raise \$51,000 for B.C. camp bursary*

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent

FT. LANGLEY, B.C.

**W**eather was again the main story at the annual Camp Squeah paddle-a-thon held on April 18 and 19, but this time—unlike some years—for all the right reasons. Sunny skies, warm weather, little wind and no major mishaps meant that the 31 paddlers who finished their two-day sojourn down the Fraser River arrived energized and in great spirits.

The convoy left Hope on the morning of April 18 in kayaks, canoes and two 10-seater voyageurs, and stopped for the night in Chilliwack, where a volunteer crew made supper. After a hearty breakfast the next morning, provided by Theo Epp and his crew, the paddlers resumed the journey, with lunch provided by more volunteers in Mission, and wrapped up in late afternoon on the banks of the Fraser in Ft. Langley.

While camaraderie and enjoying nature

are always a great reason to get together, the paddlers who make the voyage every year do so for a good cause: raising money for the camp bursary fund that supports summer volunteer staff returning to college or university in the fall. Each participant must raise at least \$500 in order to make the trip. This year, the total was \$51,000. Over 17 years, the paddlers have raised some \$760,000 for the cause.

At the final wrap-up and supper at the marina park, camp director Rob Tiessen praised all who had a part in the event, from paddlers to sponsors and ground crew.

"We are so grateful for the paddlers, for people who support the paddlers, for the great weather we've had, and for the volunteers who came together," he said, noting the spirit of cooperation from a number of Mennonite Church B.C. congregations.

### /// Briefly noted

#### **Menno Simons memorial needs updating**

**BAD OLDESLOE, GERMANY**—Physical reminders of 16th-century Anabaptists are not easy to find, but the Menno-Kate (cottage) at Bad Oldesloe is one of these rare memorials. Originally, it housed a printing company that duplicated writings of Menno Simons. There is a chance that Menno Simons himself lived there for a period of time, as he spent the last years of his life among Anabaptist groups near the village of Wuestenfelde. It is not clear whether the Menno-Kate has always been in the same location because the village of Wuestenfelde was destroyed during the Thirty Years' War. Since 1902, a memorial stone has been in place to remember the life of Menno Simons. Beginning in the late 1950s, Mennonites were able to restore the completely decayed cottage, and since 1961 it has been a museum. It houses Mennonite writings, testimonies of Menno Simons, and pictures and maps of Mennonite life in the Netherlands, Germany, East and West Prussia, as well as Ukraine, and attracts visitors from around the world. It is run by the German Mennonite Historical Society with representatives from the Mennonite congregations of Hamburg and Lübeck. The present caretakers are leaving for health reasons and successors are desperately needed. Donations are also needed for renovations to the cottage. For more information or to donate, e-mail the German Mennonite Historical Society at [mennoforsch@t-online.de](mailto:mennoforsch@t-online.de).

—German Mennonite Historical Society

"Different churches with different pockets of representation helped make this a community event."

Every year, the camp awards a canoe to the paddler who raises the most money. This year, the prize went to Josh Kuepfer of Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, who raised nearly \$4,000, and who will be on camp staff this summer. ///

# MCC pre-sale fundraiser exceeds expectations

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent

“I thought if we could do \$3,000 to \$4,000, that would be what we’ve done in the past. When I was off by \$10,000, I was elated!”

These words came from Gordon Baergen, a member of Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton who helped to organize a May 21 pre-sale fundraiser in preparation for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta’s annual Relief Sale held in Didsbury on June 5 and 6.

Jodi Tse, a member of the Edmonton Christian Life Community Church, was the idea person and a main organizer for the fundraiser. She booked the Chinese Dynasty Century Palace Restaurant so donors could enjoy a great meal as the featured evening entertainment. More than 180 people paid for tickets to cover the cost of the meal.

A silent auction, highlighted by five dozen *zwieback* buns selling for a combined total of \$710, and generous donations rounded out the record-setting total.

A “change” table was also a big hit. Starting with one coin in the centre of the table, donors were encouraged to add change in an outwardly spiralling pattern. A second table was set up part way through the event to keep up with pocket change donations totalling more than \$550.

A small music group’s contributions to the event were largely drowned out by the restaurant crowd, but Baergen said the singing of “We’re Marching to Zion” was an excellent, unifying way to end the evening. “It was like a huge choir,” he said.

Monies raised at MCC pre-sale events go to offset the cost of the Relief Sale, so that 100 percent of the proceeds on sale day can

PHOTOS BY GORDON BAERGEN



*MCC Alberta supporters add pocket change to a growing spiral, netting more than \$550 to go toward paying the costs of the annual Relief Sale held in Didsbury on June 5 and 6.*

go directly to relief efforts around the world. When pre-sale totals exceed costs, any profits also go directly to relief work. ☼

## Staff changes

### Pastoral changes in Ontario

• **CHRIS BRNJAS** has been interim chaplain at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., since January 2015 during Ed Janzen’s sabbatical. With Jessica Reesor Rempel, he is co-founding pastor of Pastors in Exile, a pastoral movement for young adults who struggle with the confines of institutional church but want to live out what it means to follow Jesus. He lives in Waterloo with his wife Rachel and attends The Gathering Church in Kitchener. He has done youth ministry at The Gathering and has been a chaplain’s assistant at Parkwood Mennonite Home. His education includes an honours bachelor of arts degree from the University of Waterloo with a major in peace and conflict studies, and a master of theological studies degree from Grebel.



Chris Brnjas

• **RACHEL BRNJAS** fills the children’s ministry pastor role at The Gathering Church in Kitchener, a position she has held since last September. She also works for the Region of Waterloo as the community engagement coordinator and she previously worked for two years as a community animator at the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement. She holds an honours bachelor of arts degree from the University of Waterloo with a major in English literature.



Rachel Brnjas

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



*The popular pocket change spiral spreads onto a second table.*



## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# A partner for healing help and freedom

*Toronto United Mennonite Church gets behind drive to build a home for survivors of human trafficking*

BY DOREEN MARTENS

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

TORONTO

*“And when you send a slave out from you a free person, you shall not send him out empty-handed. Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the Lord your God has blessed you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you” (Deuteronomy 15:13-15a).*

Those Jubilee instructions have an antique ring today. Slavery seems a thing of the distant past. But in fact, it has only gone underground and exists in modified form even here in Canada, often right under our noses.

“We walk past people who are in bondage all the time and don’t even realize it,” says Christy Langschmidt, a member of

Toronto United Mennonite Church who has led the congregation’s project to launch a transitional housing project for survivors of human trafficking, today’s form of enslavement.

When Aurora House opens in a large church-owned house, hopefully this fall, it will be a historic first for Mennonites and the City of Toronto.



Survivors of human trafficking may include Canadians, as well as foreigners brought in through legal channels but on false pretenses—told they had been lined up for good jobs, and then abused, threatened and coerced into doing degrading work for long hours and little or no pay. Some are forced into the sex trade, or underground labour in construction, agriculture and restaurant work, or as domestic help. Typically, they may know little of their rights in Canada, may be intimidated by threats to their family back home, have had their important documents confiscated and have no idea where to turn for help.

Although little noticed here, they are part of an estimated 30 million people around the world who live in some form of bondage.

“These stories are being lived out all around us,” says Langschmidt. “Crops are being picked by slaves, highrises are being built by slaves.”

The seeds for the church’s mission to help these marginalized people were planted unknowingly nearly 20 years ago, when an elderly man approached the church about buying his house. Having recently built a new sanctuary at the time, the congregation wasn’t prepared to commit to such a purchase, but some members pooled their money for a down payment in faith that someday the building would serve some future missional purpose.

Enter Langschmidt two decades later, a new congregant who had been nurturing seeds in her heart for this project for many years. The daughter of a non-denominational minister who trained others in urban



*Toronto United Mennonite Church members on the Aurora House board include, from left to right: Pastor Marilyn Zehr (ex-officio), Christy Langschmidt, Lisa Horrocks and Mary Klein.*



ministry, she had volunteered briefly as a teenager with an organization that helped prostitutes get off the street. It left her with a passion for empowering people who have been exploited.

So when church chair Doug Pritchard made an announcement one Sunday about a congregational meeting on what to do with a house the congregation owned, Langschmidt snapped to attention.

A newbie Mennonite, she soon realized that Toronto United Mennonite was a church with “a heart for justice issues.” Pastor Marilyn Zehr’s sermon inviting congregants to help discern God’s purpose for the house encouraged her to share her passion with the church’s Mission and Service Committee and a task force struck to decide what to do about the house as well as ponder building an addition to the

*‘After some years of exploring good uses for this house, the vision for serving the survivors of human trafficking has really caught our imagination.’  
(Doug Pritchard, church chair)*

church’s own facilities.

Gradually, anti-human-trafficking work began to seem like a natural extension of the urban church’s 35-year history of refugee sponsorship and work with the homeless. Those working on the project were stunned and thrilled to learn that the Toronto Mennonite New Life Centre, the refugee settlement agency that co-owns the church’s building, had been thinking independently about how it could help trafficking survivors, and was enthusiastic about offering the case management and programming the shelter will need. Sources of financial help were also beginning to appear.

“After some years of exploring good uses for this house, the vision for serving the survivors of human trafficking has really caught our imagination,” says Pritchard. “The vote last June to move in this direction

passed by 90 percent and we have pledged for over two-thirds of the capital costs.”

The home was christened Aurora House by a congregational vote: a reference to dawn, or perhaps the northern lights—glimmers of beautiful light shining in the lives of those who have lived so long in darkness. Its motto: “Partnering for healing, hope and freedom.”

There is still a long way to go, but with

God’s help Aurora House looks forward to becoming, very soon, a warm and welcoming sanctuary for people in desperate need. ❧

*To learn more about the project, visit [aurorahouse.ca](http://aurorahouse.ca). To learn more about human trafficking, visit <http://on.fb.me/1HzKtyW>. To read a longer version of this story, visit [canadianmennonite.org/aurora-house](http://canadianmennonite.org/aurora-house).*



## Concert held for Nepali earthquake survivors

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Members of the Mennonite community and other citizens of Abbotsford, B.C., raised more than \$25,000 in a benefit concert at Emmanuel Mennonite Church on May 17 to aid survivors of the earthquakes that ravaged Nepal in April and May.

Vanj Thiessen, who, with her husband Ernie, had served with Mennonite Central Committee in Nepal in the early 1980s, felt moved to help in some way. She contacted Calvin Dyck, local professional musician, and together with many volunteers they organized a fundraising concert in less than two weeks.

Local businesses covered the costs and all musicians donated their services so that all monies raised could go directly to help those in need in Nepal. An appreciative audience of more than 500 heard several vocal and instrumental numbers, including Nepal’s national anthem, and saw pictures contrasting Nepal’s natural beauty along with its recent destruction.

Thiessen reports that three temporary workers from Nepal attended the concert and afterwards she had a chance to speak with them and hear their personal stories.

“Before they left, they handed me \$150 for Nepal,” she says. “I didn’t want to take it, as they are working here in order to send money home to their families, but they were determined to also be a part of what we were doing to help the remote villages

at the epicentre of the first earthquake” that occurred on April 25.

Funds will be channelled through Habitat for Humanity to a Nepali charitable organization that can help the affected communities. ❧

*To view a video of the destruction caused by the earthquakes in Nepal, visit [canadianmennonite.org/emc-nepal-fundraiser](http://canadianmennonite.org/emc-nepal-fundraiser).*



*Violinist Calvin Dyck, wearing a traditional Nepali men’s hat called a topi, performs at the Abbotsford benefit concert to raise funds for survivors of Nepal’s two earthquakes this spring.*

# MCC provides initial relief to Nepal

*By tractor, truck and foot supplies reach isolated rural communities*

Mennonite Central Committee

Using tractors and people power to haul supplies where trucks could not go, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partner organizations finished an initial distribution of emergency supplies to Nepal earthquake survivors on May 12, the same day a second major earthquake rattled the country.

The second earthquake caused further landslides in rural areas and exacerbated damage to buildings already affected by the initial April 25 quake that killed more than 8,000 people and devastated entire villages in rural areas. In addition to the major quakes, more than 240 smaller quakes and aftershocks also caused damage.

"All areas hit by the first earthquake were

affected by the second one," says Bruce Guenther, MCC's director of disaster response. "We have already responded in

some areas, and continue to provide assistance through our partners in rural and remote areas."

In the weeks following the earthquakes, MCC's local partners delivered assistance to more than 2,800 families in the districts

of Dhading, Lalitpur and Okhaldhunga. Families received food and household items such as tarps, blankets, mattresses, hygiene items, kitchen utensils and flashlights.

Carrying out the distribution is difficult in some places because the remote areas may only be accessible by foot or by mountainous dirt roads.

In Darkha, a community in remote northern Dhading, MCC partner Shanti Nepal learned that the food situation was dire soon after the quake. While Shanti Nepal hurried to prepare a shipment of

*'We have already responded in some areas, and continue to provide assistance through our partners in rural and remote areas.'*  
(Bruce Guenther, MCC's director of disaster response)

emergency, ready-to-eat food, a subsequent landslide, triggered by heavy rains in the days after the first quake, blocked the only road that leads into the community. It took more than a week for the road to be cleared so that trucks carrying food relief could get to the area.

In Okhaldhunga District, getting to the Khijifalate main village after the first quake was a 10-hour truck journey, followed by transfer to smaller trucks, followed by a three-hour journey on a road passable only by tractors and motorbikes. From there, beneficiaries had to carry supplies on foot to their homes in even more distant villages unreachable by motor vehicle. MCC partner Group of Helping Hands made five tractor trips in two days to get relief supplies from the trucks at the road head.

MCC continues to assess the situation in Nepal, to determine its longer-term response. ❧

To learn more about MCC's response in Nepal, including a map, photo galleries and stories, visit <http://bit.ly/1Hn3Eqk>. Donations can be made online at [mcccanada.ca/nepal-earthquake](http://mcccanada.ca/nepal-earthquake), by phone at 1-888-622-6337, or by contacting your nearest MCC office.



MCC PHOTO BY DURGA SUNCHIURI

*With some extra manpower, a tractor pulls a wagon full of relief supplies up a gravel hill in the Okhaldhunga District of Nepal. Through Group of Helping Hands, a Mennonite Central Committee partner, 300 families received enough food for three weeks, shelter materials, blankets, soap and cooking supplies.*





## GOD AT WORK IN US

# A generous legacy

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

The late Isaac Andres and his wife Mary are sharing their passionate faith and generosity in a legacy that continues to inspire and nurture new generations of Mennonites.

As a young man, Isaac could afford to attend Bible school for only one year due to a lack of funds, but he longed to ensure that others who wanted to study the Bible had the means to do so. As a result, in 1988 the couple established the Andres Bible School Bursary Foundation, Inc.

At that time, they determined they would award student bursaries for 25 years and then dissolve the foundation, dividing the seed money between two ministries. Thus in 2013, 70 percent of the original funding for the foundation went to Mennonite Church Canada and the other 30 percent went to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a ministry working to end global hunger.

"We're grateful for the Andres' long-term vision and generous donation," says Tim Froese, executive minister of MC Canada Witness. "Making disciples means investing in people and their faith development. Growing future leaders of the church is one of Mennonite Church Canada's top priorities." He notes that the Andres' donation is being treated as a bequest that will provide a resource for Witness's ministry for some years to come.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ANDRES FAMILY



Isaac and Mary Andres are pictured in 1994, the year they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

"They both felt that evangelism and missions were a very important part of life," says the Andres' son Edwin. "It isn't enough to feed the hungry, but we need to share the gospel as well."

Isaac Andres and Mary Enns met while attending Swift Current Bible Institute in the late 1930s. They married in 1944 and farmed near Eyebrow, Sask., attending Eyebrow Mennonite Church and raising three sons and three daughters. They retired in 1978 and moved to Herbert, Sask., where they became active members of Herbert Mennonite.

Since the Andres' bequest was received in 2013, it has supported a number of Witness projects that will help to secure the future of the church:

- **HIPPOLYTO TSHIMANGA**, director of Africa and Latin America Ministry, led several theological teaching events in Colombia to strengthen the Colombian Mennonite Church for ministry.

- **THROUGH THE** efforts of Tshimanga and Tom Roes, mission capacity builder, congregations in Colombia and Africa are learning sustainable entrepreneurial skills that will provide economic security for families and local congregations, empowering them to flourish and grow.

- **HIGH-CALIBRE INSTRUCTORS** like Palmer Becker are teaching Anabaptist theology in places such as Asia, Palestine, Ethiopia and Latin America.

- **GEORGE AND** Tobia Veith, long-term MC Canada Witness workers, are preparing for a new assignment in teaching and leadership development in mainland China.

Isaac passed away on Oct. 21, 2006, at the age of 86. Mary now lives in Regency Manor in Central Butte, Sask., close to Eyebrow. ☺

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## ARTBEAT

## BOOK REVIEW

# Mennonites extend influence via media

*Mennonites and Media: Mentioned in It, Maligned by It and Makers of It.*

By Steven P. Carpenter. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2014.

REVIEWED BY VIC THIESSEN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Steven Carpenter's new book, *Mennonites and Media: Mentioned in It, Maligned by It and Makers of It*, offers a summary of both the ways Mennonites have been portrayed in popular media and the ways they have used it in North America to convey distinctive Mennonite insights. While not exhaustive, the book provides a representative study that allows Carpenter to draw some important conclusions about the relationships between Mennonites and media.

Among the numerous examples of how Mennonites have been portrayed in popular media, we learn that Joseph Heller's classic novel, *Catch-22*, has a central character who is identified as an Anabaptist chaplain. While the character is not realistic, he is the only sympathetic character in the novel and positively represents Anabaptist faith as pacifist and compassionate. We also learn that President Lincoln had some very positive things to say about the "sturdy and honest" Mennonites who have "always been against slavery" and whom he gladly excluded from military service.

Carpenter goes on to show how Mennonites have been portrayed, both positively and negatively, in the news (Canadian Olympic speed skating medalist Cindy Klassen and disgraced American cyclist Floyd Landis), in magazines, art, drama (Voltaire's *Candide*), and in film (*Witness* and *Silent Light*) and TV (*The Simpsons*).

I remember how our family was struck



last year by the mention of Mennonites in the hugely popular sitcom, *Modern Family*. Carpenter mentions this as an example of how Mennonites are known

more widely than one might expect given the number of them in North America and their history of being media shy.

Turning to the way Mennonites have used popular media, we are introduced to a variety of Mennonite writers (Rudy Wiebe), performers (Ted Swartz), filmmakers (Joel Kauffmann) and more who have used the media to say something about being a Mennonite or to convey Mennonite ideas. In particular, Carpenter highlights the wide impact and influence of John Howard Yoder's 1972

book, *Politics of Jesus*, and Doris Janzen Longacre's 1976 *More-with-Less Cookbook*.

Finally, Carpenter notes how quickly Mennonites moved to the use of the Internet to promote Mennonite faith and values when they launched Third Way Cafe, now part of MennoMedia, in the mid-1990s. This reveals a new and critical desire to make use of the most modern media tools and engage with today's media in every possible way.

With the help of a detailed statistical analysis, Carpenter observes that, especially in print, Mennonites have had a media presence far in excess of their numerical size. And with a growing hunger in the wider church for an Anabaptist understanding of the faith, Mennonite influence through the media is likely to keep growing in the years ahead, which Carpenter sees as both positive and necessary. I agree.

Carpenter ends his book with a brief autobiography that highlights the fact that he was only introduced to Mennonites as an adult, beginning with the *More-with-Less Cookbook*. This is an important addition, because I think Carpenter's book is enriched by having it written by someone who was once an outsider who benefitted from the Mennonite use of media.

Far from being a typical academic study, *Mennonites and Media* is a very

*Carpenter ends his book with a brief autobiography that highlights the fact that he was only introduced to Mennonites as an adult, beginning with the More-with-Less Cookbook.*

easy and enjoyable read. I breezed through the book, appreciating the scope of the study reflected in the dozens of well-presented examples, as well as the in-depth analysis verifying Carpenter's conclusions. While I personally would have valued a broader geographical analysis, this book is a delightful and fascinating summary of Mennonites and the media in North America and an invaluable resource for those engaged with all forms of media.

Highly recommended. ❧

# New Christian music festival focusses on justice

*Skylight Festival inspired by Greenbelt, Wild Goose events*

By J. NEUFELD

Manitoba Correspondent

Organizers of Canada's newest festival of music, faith and social justice hope that the Skylight Festival will invigorate a generation of socially conscious Christians.

The first Skylight Festival will take place this summer in Paris, Ont., from July 31 to Aug. 2. It's patterned after the Greenbelt Festival in England that draws more than 20,000 people each year.

"I'd call Greenbelt the most exciting thing happening in Christianity in the U.K.," says Skylight director Vic Thiessen. "For some people it is church, it is their Christian experience. It's attracted people who haven't been to church in many years—or ever."

Thiessen hopes Skylight will offer something similar in Canada.

In 2013, representatives from the United Church of Canada and Mennonite Church Canada attended the Greenbelt Festival and began discussing the possibility of

organizing a similar event in Canada that would galvanize young people around issues of faith and social justice.

Skylight organizers are also taking notes from the Wild Goose Festival, a four-day outdoor festival of spirituality, justice and the arts held annually in North Carolina.

The Skylight Festival is being organized independently from any particular church denomination, but the United Church has agreed to underwrite the costs of the initial festival. It hopes to recoup its costs through ticket sales.

Originally, organizers were planning to launch the festival in the summer of 2016. But when they met earlier this year to begin making plans, there was so much energy at the meeting they decided to hold the first Skylight Festival this summer.

Despite the short planning window, the festival has managed to put together a promising and diverse line-up of musicians and speakers.



*The Greenbelt Festival in the U.K. draws 20,000 people a year.*

the Skylight Festival an anti-oppressive, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ)-inclusive event that prioritizes gender balance and the voices of people of colour, says Thiessen, adding, "We want to deal with the issues Canadians are facing as a nation." The talks and performances will focus on Canada's relationship with indigenous people, climate change and peace.

Thiessen says that members of the vision-

PHOTO BY BEAR IMAGE PRODUCTIONS  
MARCHAND/VAUGEOIS



*Diem Lafortune (Mama D), nominated for a 2013 Canadian Aboriginal Songwriter of the Year Award, will play at the inaugural Skylight Festival in Paris, Ont., this summer.*

*Organizers are committed to making the Skylight Festival an anti-oppressive, LGBTQ-inclusive event that prioritizes gender balance and the voices of people of colour.*

Indigenous Canadian folksinger Diem Lafortune and singer-songwriter Matt Epp are among the musicians who will be performing. The speakers include Sylvia McAdam Saysewahum, a founding member of the Idle No More movement; Doug Pagitt, a popular author and speaker associated with the emerging church movement; and Judy Da Silva, an Anishinabe activist who has been recognized internationally for her nonviolent activism in protection of her community of Grassy Narrows, Ont.

Organizers are committed to making

ing team for the festival believe there are people out there—some of whom have left the church—who are ready to hear "people talk about Christianity from a different perspective, from a perspective that deals with the issues of our time. There's a hunger for change," he says. "What we hope to do is inspire people to action." ✎

*Festival goers can register online at [skylightfestival.ca](http://skylightfestival.ca).*





Promotional Supplement

Schools Directory featuring Columbia Bible College

# Putting 'Praxis' into practice

## Columbia Bible College

It's not uncommon to think of Bible college as an escape. You retreat onto a peaceful campus to dig into your Bible and grow in your faith. Later, you emerge back into the "real world," trained and ready to serve God.

David Warkentin had the opposite in mind when he designed Praxis, Columbia Bible College's one-year urban discipleship program. "Praxis," he explains, "is about how we live as Christians in the real world, in the middle of life's ordinary experiences."

Praxis is full of these "ordinary experi-



David Warkentin

ences" (emphasis on the "experiences"). As Columbia's youngest faculty-member, Warkentin created an innovative curriculum that gets students out of the classroom, engaging with four key elements of our culture: the church, the arts, social justice issues and the marketplace. Field trips include visits to local entrepreneurs, the theatre, Vancouver's impoverished Downtown Eastside, urban worship services, and even to his house for dinner with his wife and little kids.

One Praxis field trip in particular isn't so

"ordinary." The program's highlight is a nine-day trip to New York City. "New York's got everything," he explains. "Just show up and open your eyes." Encounters with yellow cabs, a Broadway musical and a humanitarian project are only some of the cultural experiences trip members dive into.

Experiences, of course, are not enough. Warkentin is an expert at pushing students to observe and critique—whether it's a TV show, architecture or a church service. After Praxis, he notes, it's almost impossible to be a mindless consumer.

But he is not interested in creating cynical critics. This is why another key focus of Praxis is integration—learning how to bring Christian faith into every part of life. His hope, he explains, is that Praxis will set students on a firm trajectory as disciples, no matter where their path takes them.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF TASHA JANZEN

## Lessons learned at L'Abri

*Tasha Janzen finds life balance in the midst of new work opportunities and involvement in the church*

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Co-editor

When Tasha Janzen thinks back to her time in Switzerland last year, learning the importance of life balance is one of the biggest things that sticks out for her.

The Abbotsford, B.C., resident travelled to Huémoz, a small village surrounded by the Swiss Alps, in May 2014. She spent two weeks living at the Swiss branch of L'Abri, a Christian ministry with locations around the world, where people come to work and grow in their faith through independent study.

Janzen heard about the program from an older student during the year-and-a-half she spent studying at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford. "He spoke about it and I knew I had to go," says Janzen, who turns 21 at the end of June.

Days at L'Abri are typically divided between a half-day of study and a half-day of helping with practical work such as cooking, cleaning and gardening. Started in 1955 by the late Francis and Edith Schaeffer, L'Abri takes its name from the French word for shelter.

Janzen says that L'Abri's emphasis on the balance between form and freedom—schedules/work and sabbath/rest—was refreshing. She explains this as having a schedule and being diligent when it is time to work, but being at peace when it is time to stop working. It also means finding meaningful ways to spend one's time when work is over.

"When doing garden work, you do as much as you can in the time you have, but when it's dinner time, you go to dinner," Janzen says. "There are times when deadlines are important and you need to get things done at your job, but really trying

to find the balance between the form and freedom is important."

She admits to struggling with life balance prior to her time at L'Abri. "I learned not to say yes to everything and then get stressed out with so much on my plate," she says. "It allowed me to see the freedom in the times of busyness, and also the importance of doing things that are actually rejuvenating, like reading a book or playing music."

It's a lesson that has proven useful this year, as Janzen has been balancing a variety of different commitments. She recently completed a one-year program in hospitality and event planning at the University of the Fraser Valley, which included a practicum at Menno Place, a faith-based residence for seniors in Abbotsford.

Janzen recently was hired to be an event coordinator with the African Children's Choir, a humanitarian effort that raises funds for a variety of initiatives across Africa. Janzen also works as the director of operations for Rock the Valley, an organization that aims to foster a live music culture in the Fraser Valley.

Through her work with these organizations, Janzen is able to combine her interests in music and event planning, interests that were cultivated at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, the congregation she was born into and raised in. Her involvement at Emmanuel began at an early age, when her grandmother paid her \$5 to play piano during the offertory.

"I'm very glad she did, because I wouldn't be where I am if she hadn't," says Janzen, who would go on to join, and eventually lead, one of the church's music teams.

*(Continued on page 28)*



*An accomplished musician, 20-year-old Tasha Janzen first got involved in her church as a child when her grandmother paid her \$5 to play piano during the offertory.*

PHOTO BY TASHA JANZEN



*The red piano in Janzen's room represents the importance of music in her life. It also inspired the name of her Red Piano Rhapsody blog.*

PHOTO BY TASHA JANZEN



*The view at the L'Abri branch in Huémoz, a small village surrounded by the Swiss Alps. Janzen spent two weeks there last year.*

*(Continued from page 27)*

“Being involved in the local church is just something that I’ve always seen, especially in my family.”

Her father did sound, her mother led worship, her grandmother helped cater church functions and her grandfather was on the maintenance team.

“I’ve been surrounded with it in my family, and I’ve been encouraged to [get involved],” she says.

Janzen recently began attending Bethel Mennonite Church in Langley, B.C., and is looking forward to getting more involved

in the congregation as time goes on. As she adjusts to a new job and getting involved in a new church, Janzen will take with her the lessons she learned at L’Abri last year.

“Over time, I have grown to be able to look at a busy schedule as a life full of opportunities and blessings,” Janzen recently wrote on her Red Piano Rhapsody blog. “For that, I give my Lord, and his work in me through L’Abri, full credit.”

Read Tasha Janzen’s Red Piano Rhapsody blog at <http://redpianorhapsody.weebly.com>.



## Home Depot and a dog named Flash

*Woman with disability finds meaning, joy in job and service dog*

BY EMILY HAMM

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

### VOICE of the marginalized

PHOTOS COURTESY OF EMILY HAMM



*Megen Olfert at work at Home Depot with her dog Flash.*

**H**ome Depot and a golden lab: these two things are important parts of Megen Olfert’s life.

Olfert, 31, of Saskatoon, has paraplegic high spastic cerebral palsy. The condition keeps her brain from telling her muscles what to do, and all her limbs are affected. According to the Cerebral Palsy Alliance, spasticity affects how people move their limbs and how muscles turn off or on. High spasticity means that all of Olfert’s muscles are trying to stay on all of the time.

Olfert is a determined, life-loving and caring person. When she was growing up, her parents challenged her to do things by herself. It’s because of these encouragements that Olfert has aimed for the independent life she has, which led her to Home Depot and a dog named Flash.

Olfert says she is “eternally grateful” for her work at Home Depot. “Home Depot has accommodated me to the best of their ability so that my disability has no effect on doing my job properly,” she says.

The company added a lift for the bathroom, allowing Olfert to work a full day. It also made her a different desk and provided her with special technology so she

can use a computer. Not only have these relatively simple changes given Olfert the ability to work, it has made it possible for this Home Depot to employ other people with physical disabilities in the future.

Olfert first met Flash, a golden lab, about five years ago. Flash is a service dog trained to help her be more independent in her daily life. Now Olfert is less dependent on others. Flash presses the automatic door opener, picks up items that get dropped, and turns lights off and on.

Flash also saved Olfert’s life three years ago. “Flash alerted me about my anemia when I had no clue that I was even anemic,” she says.

When Olfert arrived at the hospital, her iron levels were so low that the doctors were shocked she was still alive. If Flash had not alerted Olfert, she would be dead.

“Flash has become my world,” she says. “I won’t trade her for anything.”

While caring people at Olfert’s job help her to be self-sufficient and do the work that she loves, her adoring animal helps her work through some of the things she needs help with. However, Olfert still finds people misunderstand her.



“Some people think that since I’m physically disabled I must be mentally disabled as well, which is not true at all,” she says. “When people can see past my physical disability, they know that I’m an ordinary person.” Above all, Olfert wishes that everyone would treat people as they would like to be treated before jumping

to conclusions about people with disabilities. ❧

*Emily Hamm, 20, is a communications and media student at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg. She worships at Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon.*

## Spreading the word about GROW

*Former MEDA interns bike across Canada for Ghanaian women farmers*

BY RACHEL BERGEN  
Young Voices Co-editor

Mary Fehr just learned to ride a bike a few years ago, when she was 17. Now she and Sarah French are cycling thousands of kilometres across Canada—from Victoria, B.C., to St. John’s, Nfld.—to raise money for Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) through their Bike To Grow campaign.

Fehr, 24, attends Leamington United Mennonite Church in Ontario. She met French, 25, in 2013, at an orientation before they embarked on MEDA internships. Fehr was bound for Tanzania, French was headed to Nicaragua. They both worked as impact assessment interns.

Even two years ago, Fehr says French was interested in doing a cross-Canada bike trip so she could see the rest of the country. “She kept talking about it. I kept avoiding the conversation,” Fehr jokes.

After their several months abroad, the two decided to embark on the trip together. Almost immediately after the decision was made, they decided to take the opportunity to give back to MEDA and support women entrepreneurs in the process.

“We had both seen different levels of inequality with women during our internships, and how much of a difference MEDA’s making. We wanted to give back,” Fehr says, adding, “I was really shocked at how much of a difference [MEDA] made.”

The women are hoping to raise \$150,000

for MEDA’s Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) program, a sustainable development program that helps women farmers in Ghana grow more soybeans and forge market links that increase their incomes.

By their first day on the road, the pair were almost a third of the way towards their fundraising goal. All monies raised will be matched nine times by Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, meaning that if they reach their goal the total will jump to \$1.45 million.

They also want to raise awareness about the work MEDA is doing in the world, and encourage people their age to get involved in projects that create sustainable development. “Cycling really helps spread the word,” French says.

After reaching St. John’s, they will then finish their tour off at the MEDA chapter in Leamington, Ont., on Sept. 5. Along the way, they’ll stop at the six other MEDA chapters across the country to give presentations on the GROW program and their campaign to support it. ❧

*To support the Bike To Grow campaign, and to follow Fehr and French’s progress as they bike across Canada, visit [meda.org/bike-to-grow](http://meda.org/bike-to-grow). To watch a video of the fundraising cyclists, visit <http://bit.ly/1LgJd1q>.*



Emily Hamm

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SARAH FRENCH AND MARY FEHR



*Sarah French and Mary Fehr start their trip on May 18 at Mile 0 in Victoria, B.C.*



*Mary Fehr and Sarah French will stop at each of Mennonite Economic Development Associate’s seven chapters across Canada to give presentations about their work with Bike to Grow.*





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## Calendar

### Saskatchewan

**June 26,27:** RJC year-end musical performances.  
**Aug. 22:** Sixth annual Spruce River Folk Festival, near Prince Albert, beginning at 11 a.m. Enjoy live music, food and fellowship while learning more about “landless bands” in Saskatchewan. Proceeds to the Young Chippewyan Genealogical Project.

### Manitoba

**Until June 20:** Mennonite Heritage Centre and Gallery exhibit “A Place in the Kingdom: Paintings and Heritage Stories Celebrating Farm Animals” by artist Lynda Toews.  
**July 1:** Celebrate Canada Day at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach. For more information, visit www.MHV.ca.  
**July 4:** “Cycle Clear Lake,” an MCC Manitoba fundraiser, at Riding Mountain National Park. Registration deadline is June 4. To sign up, visit mccmanitoba.ca/cycleclearlake.  
**July 8:** 13th annual MCC Manitoba golf tournament at Bridges Golf Course, Starbuck. In support of MCC’s Global Family program. To register, visit mccmanitoba.ca/golf.  
**July 13-17:** Pioneer Day Camp at Mennonite

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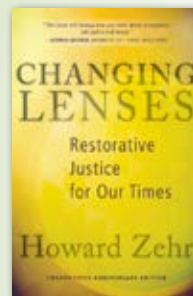


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Photo: Dominique Burgunder-Johnson, director of digital innovation at Sierra Club

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Heritage Village, Steinbach, for children aged 5 to 8. Register early. For more information, visit [www.MHV.ca](http://www.MHV.ca).

**July 31-Aug. 3:** Pioneer Days at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, includes steam-powered threshing, music and food. For more information, visit [www.MHV.ca](http://www.MHV.ca).

**Aug. 10-14:** Pioneer Day Camp at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, for children aged 9 to 12. For more information, visit [www.MHV.ca](http://www.MHV.ca).

**Aug. 10-21:** CMU Blazers summer sports camps. (10-14) grades 9 to 10 volleyball and basketball; (17-21) grades 5 to 8 soccer, grades 7 to 10 ultimate sports, and grades 6 to 8 volleyball and basketball. For more information, e-mail [sportscamps@cmu.ca](mailto:sportscamps@cmu.ca).

**Aug. 25:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate 11th-annual golf tournament at Bridges Golf Club, Winnipeg. For more information, call 204-775-7111.

#### Ontario

**June 13:** Mennonite Historical Society bus trip to Leamington to learn about

"The Mennonite Experience in Essex County." Bus leaves Kitchener at 8 a.m. For more information visit [mhso.org](http://mhso.org) or call 519-884-1040.

**June 17:** "I will tell" national tour event at Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, at 7 p.m., featuring John Neufeld from "Back to the Bible"; Phil Callaway, the voice of "Laugh Again"; and worship artist Andrew Marcus.

**June 18:** MCC Ontario annual general meeting at Sommerfeld Mennonite Church, Aylmer, at 6 p.m. For more information, or to register, call 519-745-8458 or visit [mcccanada.ca/Ontario-agm](http://mcccanada.ca/Ontario-agm).

**June 20:** Annual strawberry social at Nithview Community, New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m. and from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

**June 20:** MennoHomes "Out-spok'n for Affordable Housing" bike-a-thon, at Elmira Mennonite Church. Options for hikers, cyclists and motorcyclists. For more information, contact Dan Driedger at 226-476-2535 or [ddriedger@mennohomes.com](mailto:ddriedger@mennohomes.com).

**June 21:** Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite celebrates its 90th anniversary with a worship service

at 9:30 a.m., a historical display of church history ("Journey through the decades"), a fellowship lunch and a time capsule. For more information, call 519-578-0660 or visit [wkumchurch.ca/events.html](http://wkumchurch.ca/events.html).

**June 24:** Strawberry social at Fairview Mennonite Home, Cambridge, with vocal and hand bell choirs at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Strawberry pie served after each program. Everyone welcome. For more information call 519-653-5719.

**June 26-28:** Family camping weekend at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Pitch a tent, park a trailer or stay in a cabin. For more information, or to reserve a cabin, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail [info@hiddenacres.ca](mailto:info@hiddenacres.ca).

**Aug. 10-14:** Peace Camp summer program at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo; for children 10 to 14. For more information, visit [grebel.ca/peacecamp](http://grebel.ca/peacecamp) or e-mail camp coordinator Katie Gingerich at [peacecamp@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:peacecamp@uwaterloo.ca).

#### U.S.

**Aug. 20-23:** 14th annual Bridgefolk (Mennonite-Catholic) conference, "Ecumenical healing and the mystery of the communion saints," at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. Keynote speakers: Nozomu Yamada and Father Alfonso Fausone, both from the Nanzan University, Japan. For more information, visit [www.bridgefolk.net](http://www.bridgefolk.net).

**To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by e-mail to [calendar@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:calendar@canadianmennonite.org). For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](http://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).**



## Classifieds

### Announcement

Three-bedroom cottage at Red Bay on the Bruce Peninsula, nestled among maple trees. Short walk to sandy beach and small park. Includes a rear deck and a new kitchen stove. Available June 27 through September 5. Call Diane at 519-746-4920.

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## Employment Opportunities

### Employment Opportunity

Zion Mennonite Church, Swift Current, Saskatchewan, is seeking a full or part-time pastor or pastoral couple. We are a church of approximately 70 attenders, most over the age of 50 in a city of 17,000 in the southwest part of our province.



We are in need of leadership focused on outreach with a view to revitalize and build the church into the future. The current pastor will retire no later than April 1, 2016. We will consider all applications and options related to our mission within the next twelve months. Please contact search committee member Grace Funk at the church office: Mail address: 78 - 6 Ave. NE, Swift Current, SK S9H 2L7; email: [zion@sasktel.net](mailto:zion@sasktel.net); telephone: 306-773-4770. Website: [zionmennonite.ca](http://zionmennonite.ca).

## UpComing

### Silver Lake Mennonite Camp wants your messages

This summer, Silver Lake campers and staff will be exploring MennoMedia's proposed theme, "Message received." To help us consider our theme, we would like individuals, families, committees, classes, pastoral teams or entire congregations to send us messages! Your message can be about anything you feel inspired to share. Maybe you'd like to tell us about your days as a Silver Lake camper, staff person or volunteer. Maybe you'd like to pass along an important life lesson or a scripture verse, or something puzzling that's been on your mind. Send your message via mail to Attn: Messages, Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, 72 Pine Forest Dr., Sauble Beach, ON N0H 2G0, or via e-mail to [messages@slmc.ca](mailto:messages@slmc.ca). You can also send your message in an audio or video format, in a package, or request to be a guest, and if we can make it work, you can deliver your message live! There is no deadline for sending your message, but the sooner you send it, the better! When you send your message, please indicate if you do not wish us to post it on our website or Facebook page. For more information, contact Melanie Cameron at [melanie@slmc.ca](mailto:melanie@slmc.ca) or 226-751-4007.

—Silver Lake Mennonite Camp

## REFLECTION ON LAST WINTER

# Making peace with the snow

THOUGHTS AND PHOTOS BY GERALD WARKENTIN

SPECIAL TO *CANADIAN MENNONITE*



In an effort to do something creative with the snow from this past winter, these three snow words were made in front of Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. However, these words were vandalized one night. The heart in “love” and a couple of the letters in “peace” were destroyed. This seemingly small act of destruction brought a new symbolic meaning to this project. I felt like my heart was broken and my efforts to create peace had been destroyed.

A couple days later I saw that my snow heart was no longer broken and it could stand upright again. This encouraged me to work hard at making peace with the freshly fallen snow.

So it is with living out our faith. Sometimes our hearts are broken; sometimes our efforts to create peace are destroyed. At these low points, we must work even harder to fix our broken hearts and to create peace in the world.



Although these signs have already melted into the ground, may these words now melt into our hearts and souls. Let us all work together to live in love, joy and peace. ☯