

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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inside

Asking and seeking 4
Hearing refugee stories 20
Planting cross-cultural peace 22

EDITORIAL

What do we take away from the TRC?

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

The ripples from the final Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing and report held in Ottawa early this month after five years of hearings across Canada are far-reaching and damning. Almost no one in the religious and political establishment is left untouched.

During this process thousands of victims recounted stories of cruelty and abuse at the hands of those entrusted with their care. The heart-breaking accounts—almost all videotaped—will now form part of a lasting record of one of the darkest chapters in this country's history.

The chilling term now coming into our consciousness and conversation is “cultural genocide,” a concept launched by Justice Murray Sinclair of the TRC, which visited some 300 communities since 2010. It is now well-known that the tools used were the residential schools sanctioned by the state but run by the churches to, in the language of the report, “destroy those [indigenous] structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group, such as language, spiritual practices, land use, freedom of movement, and intergenerational bonds and knowledge transfer.”

While the state has apologized through Prime Minister Harper in 2008, Justice Sinclair is calling now for specific action to fulfil the spirit of that apology. The Commission has come up with 94 recommendations that embody that action, including a call for a national public inquiry



into missing and murdered aboriginal women, a request for the Pope to apologize for the Roman Catholic's role in the residential school system, and for Canada to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

So how do Mennonites fit into this national tragedy? While we were not any of the direct offenders in the residential school fiasco, we are complicit in that we benefitted from the land grab that occurred with the European colonization of this country early in the 20th century when, persecuted by the Russian state, many of our families found refuge and opportunity for a new life here in Canada.

The only evidence of abuse in Mennonite-run residential schools is the one noted by Ontario historian Sam Steiner at one of Northern Light Gospel Mission's schools known as Poplar Hill in northern Ontario, where an official investigation showed “no evidence of sexual abuse by teachers or staff. The primary complaints were the use of the strap in corporal punishment and the destruction of aboriginal culture.”

Preoccupied mostly with our own survival during this dark period of Canada's history, we are only now, in this generation, gaining awareness that we are the “settlers” who prospered at the expense of our indigenous neighbours about whom we had only vague ideas of how they were shunted off to reserves and

hidden from sight.

At a deeper level, though, the implications of this “cultural genocide” points the finger at how our so-called evangelistic efforts were misguided and harmful to the people we most wanted to reach, not only in the stolen lands of Canada, but globally as our missionaries and church emissaries, with all good intentions, considered the indigenous peoples as pagans needing to, first of all, rid themselves of the demonic in their cultures. There was no recognition that these various cultures had any form of “spirituality.”

Fortunately, our present mission efforts have deserted that mentality and instead have made every attempt to find God at work within the culture and not outside of it, to recognize that our God is much, much bigger than our own provincial experiences and religious history.

We also need to acknowledge that, in forming our mission approaches and strategies, we were too much influenced by the larger culture which formed us. Colonialism was the political and economic engine that drove our domestic and foreign policies, and subconsciously our missionary efforts fit right into that ethos. The goal was to “civilize” and “educate” these pagans as a part of receiving the light of Christ. What we missed was seeing how God was endemic in their culture already and rather than incorporate that into our efforts, we felt the need to rid them of those “un-spiritual” qualities. We now know that this was a mistake.

God has and is stretching us as we become more and more aware of his mighty power in our lives and in the lives of many people. Humbly we recognize he has been working in many cultures. We just need to tune in.

That is our takeaway from the Ottawa Truth and Reconciliation Commission events.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Lorraine Clements holds burning sage for Gerry Shingoose, a residential school survivor, as she smudges at the closing ceremonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Winnipeg.

PHOTO: J. NEUFELD, CANADIAN MENNONITE

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contents



Asking passively, seeking aggressively 4

In the third of a series leading up to Mennonite World Conference assembly, **Brian Quan** reflects on how other cultures understand Jesus' words about asking and seeking.

Ex-offender finds new home in the church 19

Ryan Grills turned his life around and was baptized at Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon on May 24, writes **Donna Schulz**, Saskatchewan correspondent.

Camp work weekend brings new friendships 21

The Markham, Ont., Montreal, Que. and Petitcodiac, N.B. youth groups worked and played together at Fraser Lake Camp on the May long weekend.



Concerts raise funds for relief 26

On May 24 concerts were held in Kitchener and Toronto specifically to raise funds for MCC's work in Nepal. Another concert the same day raised funds for relief sale costs.

Young Voices 28-30

"Staying close to God" about a Portuguese student at Canadian Mennonite University by **Michael Veith**. "Where are the young board members?" by **Rachel Bergen**.

Regular features:

For discussion **6** Readers write **7** Milestones **11** Yellow page **27** Calendar **31** Classifieds **31**

What do we take away from the TRC? 2

DICK BENNER

A graduation blessing 7

DAN EPP-TIESSEN

Is that driving you to lust? 8

MELISSA MILLER

Communication is key 9

KEVIN DAVIDSON



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Asking passively, seeking aggressively

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

BY BRIAN QUAN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?” (Matthew 7:9-10).

I have never eaten a stone, but if given a choice between the offerings of a fish or snake, I think half the members of my church would answer, “Yes, I’ll have both please.” In addition to fish, Chinese people enjoy seafood of every shape, size and shade. Snakes, on the other hand, are land reptiles, but they are quite a delicacy in our culture.

Jesus’ illustration of God’s goodness can sound quite puzzling to a new Chinese believer. Words can have very different meanings and interpretations in different cultures. The full meaning of one’s words cannot be fully transmitted between cultures because of differences in context, time and space. This can be quite a conundrum for us teachers and preachers, whose trade is in words. This is especially challenging in my church context of three distinct cultural groups that speak English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Each of these groups will come with a unique set of eyes on the biblical witness.

In the larger context of serving fish and snakes, Jesus is teaching about prayer (Matthew 7:7-11). He instructs his disciples to do three things: ask, seek and knock. I notice instinctively how this passage naturally lends itself to a perfectly structured sermon. It offers three precise points and it closes with an illustration. I also notice that the three verbs are in the active voice. I sense the Spirit leading me to exhort the church to pray courageously, assertively and persistently.

This is my default mode of reading and approaching the biblical text. While I may believe that I am being logical, practical and

Industriousness, diligence and a belief in the virtue of hard work are parts of Chinese thought and practice. So if prayer means seeking the heart of God and to pursue him with great effort, then this resonates powerfully in the heart of the believer.



*'Which of you, if your children ask for a moon cake, will give them a stone?'
(Matthew 7:9, paraphrase)*

exegetically faithful, I also recognize this is a North American way of thinking. This approach is probably best suited to listeners who are native to Canada and whose mother tongue is English. So I need to be mindful that those who come from countries outside of Canada will experience and interpret Scripture quite differently.

Jesus instructs us to ask God our Father to grant us our requests. The ability to bring our petitions before God is an expression of our desire to be in relationship with him. This is also an expression of trust and dependence on a loving and caring God.

In the Chinese culture the act of asking is a complex one. The one who asks must weigh many relational parameters before making the request. There is a proverb ascribed to a Chinese author that says, "He who asks a question remains a fool for five minutes. He who does not ask remains a fool forever." In this proverb, the word "fool" probably doesn't quite capture the full extent of the injury. The injury is not merely the feeling of embarrassment, shame or being inadequate.

Being a fool means losing face. This

unique phenomenon of losing face is a grave contravention of social etiquette in Chinese culture. It basically means the loss of honour, respect or communal prestige. Losing face is to be avoided at all costs because it disrupts harmony in our relationships.

There is also a complex system of rules

In Chinese culture positional authority is unearned; it is simply recognized. Deference is therefore given to the elderly and to those of a higher standing.

that govern how face is lost or given. One could lose face if a request is made at an inopportune time, if one is overly assertive with the request or if one approaches the wrong individual with the request. On the flipside, face is saved or given when a request is prefaced with a compliment or accompanied with a personal gift. Face can also be saved when you avoid a conflict or if you suppress a sensitive issue. This all-important face-management is captured in this proverb: "Men can't live without face, trees can't

live without bark." So in this high-context culture the simple act of asking isn't as simple as one would imagine.

Let us consider Jesus' promise of petitions and prayer: "Ask and it will be given to you . . . everyone who asks receives." When this promise is accepted, one would still need to consider the negative

outcome. What happens when genuine and selfless prayers go unanswered? How would this affect the petitioner, especially if the prayer was presented in public? This could result in a socially awkward situation. Someone may end up feeling like a fool and lose face. The immediate response may not necessarily be one that attempts a theological answer. The response may very well be one that attempts to save face. One of finest ways to save face is to avoid all future mention of the issue.

Another complexity in the act of asking is to understand the relational dynamics of power and authority. Relationships in Chinese culture tend to be structured from a hierarchical family structure. In a traditional family the patriarch would make all the decisions on behalf of the family and his word would be the final word. Typically he would rule the clan without any challenge to his authority. Invariably children growing up at home would remember hearing phrases like, "Children have ears, not mouths."

In Chinese culture positional authority is unearned; it is simply recognized. Deference is therefore given to the elderly and to those of a higher standing. "High-power distance" is the terminology I have come across to describe this dynamic, so in our high-power distant culture the authority structure is simply accepted as a part of life. In such a system authority is rarely questioned, decisions are accepted, and personal opinions are internalized and left unexpressed. These insights may offer some explanation to the commonly held perception that Chinese people are quiet, reticent and passive.

Given these unique cultural factors, how would a newer Christian understand Jesus' instruction to ask? When one weighs the power distance, the chasm between the petitioner and God seems impossibly far. How could one's request be even considered by an all-knowing and all-powerful God? I imagine one can feel quite inadequate, undeserving or unworthy before a transcendent God. When prayers are offered, they may at first sound timid, guarded and unassertive.

Is unassertive prayer not the malady that Jesus is asking us to remedy? In our western context we admire people who are bold, courageous and assertive. These are qualities that we look for in our church leaders and pastors. So if I were to exhort the church to pray courageously, assertively and persistently, would everyone resonate with me? I hazard to guess that I could be perceived by some as being immodest, insensitive or even arrogant. Why? Because a true follower of the king is never outspoken or forthright; he cannot assert his own view or opinion. Instead, he is obedient and submissive, and he always

defers to the benevolent king.

"Seek and you will find . . . the one who seeks finds." This seeking and searching theme, especially for peace and harmony, resonates deep within Chinese culture. Both the idea of searching and the beauty of harmony have been at the core of Chinese philosophy since ancient times. To seek for something requires effort, persistence and perseverance. From this perspective, seeking God in prayer is hard work.

The stereotype of the Chinese being hard workers has been noted in the West. Arthur Smith, the American missionary who had spent 54 years in China, wrote books introducing the hard-working Chinese people to American readers back home. He wrote about their industriousness, diligence and their love for work.

Carl Crow, an American newspaper businessman, was the first westerner to open an advertising agency in Shanghai, in the 1940s. In his book *The Chinese are Like That* he wrote: "If it is true that the devil can only find work for idle hands, then China must be a place of very limited satanic activities."

This is humorous and perhaps overstated, but I would agree with him. Industriousness, diligence and a belief in the virtue of hard work are parts of Chinese thought and practice. So if

prayer means seeking the heart of God and pursuing him with great effort, then this resonates powerfully in the heart of the believer.

If seeking God in prayer means to persist and to go beyond the minimum because of a future promise, then prayer must be pursued. If seeking means it will bring benefit to oneself, family and community, then how can one not help but pray? From this perspective, prayer is a necessity. Prayer then cannot be avoided; it is to be embraced naturally, willingly and openly. ✎

Brian Quan is the English ministries pastor at Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church. He earned a master's degree in pastoral studies from Tyndale Seminary, Toronto.



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To register: mwc-cmm.org/pa2015

/// For discussion

1. What examples of cross-cultural misunderstanding or mix-ups have you experienced? Have you ever had to interpret one culture to another? What makes it so challenging? In what ways are cross-cultural experiences inspiring or energizing?
2. Brian Quan explains what it means to lose face in Chinese culture. Is there anything equivalent in North American culture or in Mennonite culture? Are there other cultural influences that can make it difficult to ask assertively? How does Quan's explanation of Chinese culture help us to better understand Jesus' words?
3. When Mennonites from around the world get together this summer in Harrisburg, what role will worship play in bringing cultures together? How can music help to bring unity and when does it act as a barrier between cultures? Will the dominance of North American culture be a hindrance to good worship and fellowship?
4. What are the challenges facing a multi-cultural church? What happens when there is more than one culture within a congregation? If everyone is persistently seeking for God, do cultural differences matter?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. In light of the many recent letters on the topic of sexuality, we will edit any letter on this topic to a paragraph and post the rest online at www.canadianmennonite.org. All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to letters@canadianmennonite.org and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

✉ Integrity doesn't hinge on the name 'Mennonite'

RE: "'MENNONITE' NAME should stay" letter, March 30, page 10.

My friend Albert Isaac used the former Niagara Credit Union as an example of what happens when you open the membership beyond just Mennonite, as the new proposal suggests for Mennonite Savings and Credit Union (MSCU). I would like to address a few errors in his letter:

- **NIAGARA CREDIT** Union (NCU) was founded in 1945 by 18 members, and the first board had five directors, two of which were non-Mennonites. This was done intentionally to show that NCU was there for everyone, not just Mennonites. There is no doubt that in the early years the membership of NCU consisted of a high percentage of Mennonites, as was the area it

(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

A graduation blessing

DAN EPP-TIESSEN

This is the season of graduations. Society recognizes graduation as an important transition in the lives of young people and so we ritualize the event with special ceremonies. At a typical ceremony young people hear various words of encouragement: A whole world of opportunity lies before you. Pursue your passions and dreams. Become whatever you want to be.

The subtext of such comments is that our lives are in our own hands and we are free to do with them as we wish. Some graduation comments suggest that joy and fulfillment come from pursuing our personal desires and dreams, especially dreams focussed on a well-paying career that will provide all the trappings of the upwardly mobile consumerist lifestyle that we should supposedly aspire to.

As congregations, we ought to challenge our young people with a counter-vision. Graduation provides an opportunity

to bless them as they transition to a new stage of life and to speak important words into their lives that go far beyond what they are likely to hear from others. A simple ritual during Sunday worship could introduce graduating students,



bless them in God's name, pray for their physical and spiritual well-being, and challenge them to live alternatively. Here are six basic challenges for our graduates:

- **THIS TIME** of transition is an opportunity to take stock of your life and ask questions: What are my deepest life commitments? What are my life goals? What kind of person do I want to become?

- **REMEMBER THAT** your life is not your own, but is a precious gift from God. Live every day and make every decision remembering this basic fact.

- **THE PURPOSE** of your life is not to pursue your own dreams. Your purpose is to discern how to utilize your gifts, abilities and interests to pursue God's

dream for the world.

- **KEEP JESUS** at the centre of your life. In the world of work, higher education and social media, you will encounter many influences that try to push Jesus out of your life. Remember that Jesus is the way to fullness of life.

- **A WORLD** of opportunity stands before you, but not all of life's options lead in healthy directions. Some of the dreams that our world seeks to entice you with are nightmares that will harm you, others and God's world. Learn to be discerning.

- **WHEREVER LIFE'S** journey takes you, stay connected to the church and God's people. At times we will frustrate you with our pettiness and you will hear many voices proclaiming that the church is irrelevant and hypocritical. But we will care for you. We will remind you of God's infinite love for you. We will discern with you which choices lead to fullness of life. We will welcome you home if you should stray. We "will hold the Christ light for you in the nighttime of your fear."

Challenges like this may encourage all of us to take stock of our lives.

Dan Epp-Tiessen is a member of Mennonite Church Canada's Faith and Life Committee.

(Continued from page 7)

served. These are the facts obtained directly from the founder, A.P. Regier, who was my father-in-law.

• **OVER TIME**, NCU grew and amalgamated with several smaller credit unions and, in 2005, amalgamated with a credit union of almost equal size, taking on the name of Meridian Credit Union, with head offices in St Catharines, Ont.

I was privileged to serve as director of the original NCU and at the amalgamation of Meridian, and can assure readers that the integrity of the organization does not hinge on whether you are exclusively “Mennonite.”

HENRY KOOP, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

FAMILY TIES

Is that driving you to lust?

MELISSA MILLER

Looking out the café window on a warm spring day, I watched as a short, rotund man pulled off his shirt and bared his quite large tummy to the friendly rays of the sun. “There’s a man sitting at the bus stop who’s just taken off his shirt—” I started to tell my companion, a pastor colleague thirty years my junior.

“What?” he teased. “Is that driving you to lust?”

“Uh ...” I stumbled, blushing slightly. “Actually that was not at all the direction my thoughts were going,” I managed, “though I suppose that’s a possibility.” I looked again at the bare-chested man, who had thrown his arms up in the air enthusiastically, as if cheering on the sun, or worshipping it. “No,” I repeated, “he’s not really my type.” I went on to propose that most Canadians feel sun-starved after winter’s darkness, and might like to follow suit, even if modesty prohibits us from doing so. My companion and I returned to our previous conversation.

Upon later reflection, I concluded I enjoyed my friend’s flippant remark. For starters, we are sexual beings; we carry our sexuality with us everywhere we go, often as unconsciously as the air we

breathe or the water we drink. When it is openly named, there is often a little frisson of energy, a reminder of the power and liveliness of our sexuality (hence my blush). It is good and necessary to acknowledge openly that we are sexual beings.

Our sexuality is separate from and connected to our sexual behaviours. Our sexuality is twinned with our deep experiences of being male or female, of how that is understood in our world and how we have lived out of being a woman or being a man. Our sexual behaviours relate to arousal and sexual touching and intercourse. We need to be honest with ourselves about our sexuality and our sexual behaviors, and we need safe, friendly places to honour our sexual

We need to find ways to hold lightly the sexual attraction that pulses between humans and enlivens our interactions.

elves. God forbid that entertainment avenues become the only place where awareness of sexuality or sexual behaviours occurs. Should lust be a problem, we need sisters and brothers who call us to account and help us gain sexual wholeness.

We also need places where we can tease each other about sexuality. Sex

is (or often can be) funny. If we fear or deny ourselves the gift of playing with our sexuality, we are missing a big piece of the joy and delight of being human. I believe we need people with whom we can tease or flirt; we need to find ways to hold lightly the sexual attraction that pulses between humans and enlivens our interactions. And those places and people need to be respectful ones, where boundaries are understood and honoured.

I also appreciated the joke about lust because I’m old. That’s a relative term, I know, but certainly when I was a teenager, I would never have imagined my grandparents (who were “old” like I am now) could have had any kind of sex life. I now know it’s entirely plausible. To have lust suggested, in a playful manner, was a reminder that old people are sexual beings too.

The Christian church has been beset with ambivalence on the goodness of sexuality and its open expression, a legacy that is far beyond the scope of this column. I take heart in the inclusion of the sensually drenched *Song of Songs* in our Bible, in spite of the controversy and discomfort that has resulted from it.

Surely its unabashed descriptions of juicy, loving bodily pleasure is a sign that God creates, takes delight in and blesses our sexuality.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) has a passion for helping people develop healthy, vibrant relationships with God, self and others.



✉ Credit union not a charitable institution

RE: “‘MENNONITE’ CREDIT union perceived as ‘exclusive’” letter by Brent Zorgdrager, April 27, page 11.

The letter speaks of the pressures in the financial marketplace and the need for growth of assets to make it possible for current and future generations “to live

out their faith and values through their finances.”

I attended both meetings in Leamington mainly because I was concerned about the rumoured possibility of a name change.

At the last meeting it was said that this particular meeting was not about a name change, but rather about what we expected from our credit union and

(Continued on page 10)

GOD, MONEY AND ME

Communication is key

KEVIN DAVIDSON

A will is your last communication with your family. Many of us are uncomfortable planning for our death, but the chaos, confusion and potential for conflict in families where there is no will should offset your discomfort. A properly written will explains how you want your assets distributed.

I would argue it is equally important to explain why. The best way to communicate your intentions is to have a conversation with your family explaining your priorities. Even American billionaire and philanthropist Warren Buffet agrees. “Once the kids are of a certain age, they should be participants in the will. Your children are going to read the will someday. It’s crazy for them to read it after you’re dead for the first time. You’re not in a position to answer questions.” (*Globe and Mail*, May 19, 2013).

There are many sad examples of what happens when this face-to-face conversation doesn’t happen, and the details are left to the secrecy of a will. “Ken” didn’t have much of a relationship with his father after his parents divorced. His father moved away and remarried. He later notified Ken that he had been named as executor. When his father passed, Ken dutifully fulfilled his role as executor, received his inheritance and transferred the majority of his father’s estate to his stepmother.

Several years later, Ken received

another call saying his stepmom had been diagnosed with dementia, and he was her representative for all health care decisions. The couple had assumed the father would outlive the stepmom, so there would be no need to inform Ken. But they were wrong. Ken is currently making health care and final decisions for a woman he hardly knows and with whom he had never had a relationship.



The size of your assets is not significant. If you have something to give away at death, you have wealth.

To further exacerbate the situation, the stepmom is estranged from her children, and she didn’t prepare a will. When she dies, her estate will automatically go to her next of kin. Ken is frustrated and regrets not having a conversation with his father and stepmom to clarify both the how and why of their intentions.

Creating a plan is just an important first step. We need to communicate that plan to all stakeholders, too. Your executor and your representative for incapacity or power of attorney have a significant responsibility, and you owe it to your loved ones to include them in your planning. MFC consultants often hear from people who wish they had been more involved in those important decisions.

“John” updated his will and incapacity documents naming his son as executor and his sister as representative for incapacity. In his will, John planned to give

his house to his son, Hector, the cottage to his daughter, Romy, and the remaining cash to his grandchildren. Then John’s health declined and he was diagnosed with dementia. John’s sister, Livia, stepped into her role managing his health care and financial decisions. She was responsible for maintaining the house and finding renters. With John incapacitated, Livia felt it was best to sell the house and to have the proceeds deposited into John’s bank account. After John passed, Hector assumed his role as executor and soon realized the disappointing situation. Romy received the cottage, the grandchildren received the cash, but Hector received nothing because the house had

been sold. John’s intentions had never been communicated.

In both scenarios, communication and discussion may have helped the family carry out the wishes of the deceased. The size of your assets is not significant. If you have something to give away at death, you have wealth. This process can be intimidating, but MFC can assist you along this journey.

Kevin Davidson is a stewardship consultant at Mennonite Foundation of Canada, serving generous people in Alberta. For more information on generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit MennoFoundation.ca.

(Continued from page 9)

what we wanted it to look like in the future, but the elephant in the room was still the name change. Most credit unions are started by a group of people with a common purpose—usually to serve their particular needs and interests—and Mennonite Savings and Credit Union is no different.

I do not believe the founders intended it to serve as a charitable institution. I want our credit union to be a business-like financial institution. Its first priority should be to provide the services any other financial institution provides, look after our assets in a responsible way, invest wisely, maximize profit—not at any cost—with the best interest of its members as the guiding principle.

One of the reasons for founding a credit union is to have any benefits from the operation returned to its members and not to a group of shareholders. If in the process there are profits beyond those needed to operate, and perhaps realize a modest profit for its shareholders, then and only then should these funds be used for the benefit of the community and other worthwhile causes. If we as individuals wish to support charitable causes, we can do so; there is no lack of opportunity to do good in a broken world.

ERNIE NEUFELD, LEAMINGTON, ONT.

✉ Fair trade book would have been better gift for former PM

RE: “MCC 50TH full of historic symbolism,” May 11, page 14.

The selection of Joe Clark as keynote speaker at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba 50th anniversary, whose picture was on the front cover of the same issue, is undoing a lot of educational work being done by MCC’s Ten Thousand Villages (TTV) stores on the life-and-death difference between “fair trade” and “free trade” of food essentials. I speak of food/land essentials for indigenous people.

From 1984-91 Clark was the chief negotiator and co-creator of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was, and still is, considered a “death sentence” by the indigenous people of Chiapas, Mexico. In a desperate act of self-preservation, this indigenous group, impoverished and made vulnerable by 500 years of persecution, rose up in arms on NAFTA’s first day of implementation on Jan. 1, 1994.

If we truly believe in peace, then we must educate ourselves about the injustices that kill peace. A good place to start would be to go to a TTV store, buy the book *No Nonsense Guide to Fair Trade*, and read the chapter on “The problem with free trade.” Perhaps this book should have been emblazoned with the

MCC peace logo, and then given to Clark, instead of indigenous moccasins.

BOYD REIMER, TORONTO

✉ Unless they inquire, they will not be told

RE: “GROWING MENNONITE,” April 13, page 36.

The Young Voices article caught my special attention. Young people digging into an archive to find out where their roots are, is commendable. It means “growing up,” according to Cicero, who is quoted as saying: “Not knowing what happened before you were born means always to remain a child.”

There are some “walking archives” among us nonagenarians, and listening to their stories from the past is often more impressive than turning pages in an archive.

Some time ago when I asked my children to attend to some chores, I told them, “When I was your age, we had to do this or we were not allowed to do that.” The answer to those remarks was, “But that was a century ago, Grandpa. We are living now in the postmodern era.”

However, my daughter once replied, “Dad, what did you really do then? I would be interested in any detail how you lived without telephone, radio, TV and automobile, not to mention computer and iPhone. How did you experience living under a dictatorship and taking part in a war and post-war occupation?”

Once I sat around the fireplace with my son and his friends and told them my war stories. One of them said quite excitedly, “But Uncle Helmut, you have to write that down.” That stimulated me to write my memoir, *Crossing Frontiers*, to share with them my life.

I am sure many can tell similar very moving stories from past times that happened in different parts of the world. Some of these stories will be added to the archives and become accessible for researchers.

HELMUT LEMKE, VANCOUVER

Helmut Lemke is a member of Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver.

✉ TRC helps us rethink evangelism?

THE FINDINGS OF the Truth and Reconciliation Inquiry related to residential schools should likely bring us to contrition, reflection and a willingness to help heal the wounds.

We Mennonites might argue that our hands are clean; we did not operate any of the schools named. I’m not so sure. After all, not just the named churches did wrong but all Canadians who far too long have tolerated policies of paternalism, isolation and racism.

And while we might argue that this was not “cultural genocide,” it was wrong.

Some may wish to reflect further; what went wrong? Well-meaning Christians tried to educate and “Christianize”! Has this not been the role of the church since the start? Maybe we need to rethink “evangelism”; is it cultural genocide?

PETER A. DUECK, VANCOUVER, BC

✉ Reader responds to atheism feature, sexuality letter

I WAITED IN vain for someone to respond to Robin Fast’s feature article, “Mennonite me,” April 27, page 4, claiming that he is a Mennonite and an atheist. Since Mennonites are a people who follow the teaching of Menno Simons, this, of course, is quite impossible.

In the May 11 letter, “Are sexuality debates ‘chasing after wind?’” on page 8, Harold Macy wonders why we don’t spend as much time and resources on unacceptable behaviour such as lust, gluttony, wrath, laziness, envy and pride as we do on non-traditional sexual issues. My answer would be that all Christians know that these are all sins that we need to repent of and try to overcome with God’s help. No one is trying to convince anyone that that they are not sins.

CORNIE MARTENS, RABBIT LAKE, SASK.

✉ Replaying the Garden of Eden

TODAY, SOME 6,000 years later, 6,000 voices say to the Adams and Eves the same thing: “Did God really say?” Did God really say, “*Do not practise homosexuality. . . . It is a detestable sin*” (Leviticus 18:22 NLT).

HELEN REDEKOPP, WINNIPEG



Read the rest of this letter online at canadianmennonite.org.

✉ Questions to consider about sex

RE: “IS GAY celibacy a form of sexual abuse?” letter, April 27, page 8.

If one of Victor Fast’s parents developed Alzheimer’s disease, which can render them incapable of having sex, would he expect the other parent to remain celibate, commit adultery, or divorce the spouse with dementia and have the opportunity to remarry again?

ELIZABETH L. SCHICK, EDMONTON



Read the rest of this letter online at canadianmennonite.org.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Janzen—Evangeline Erika (b. May 12, 2015), to Ed and Janice Janzen, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Kroeker Peters—Rehema Ruth (b. April 16, 2015), to Heather Peters and Joel Kroeker, Hanley Mennonite, Sask.

Lang—Flynn Louise (b. May 16, 2015), to Tracey and Wildrew Lang, Hanley Mennonite, Sask.

Baptisms

Daria Hildebrand, Zachary Tiessen—Crystal City Mennonite, Man., May 24, 2015.

Ryan Grills—Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon, May 24, 2015.

Amanda Doerwald, Chris Friesen, Julia Friesen, Eric Froese—Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., May 17, 2015.

Donny Cheung—Toronto United Mennonite, May 24, 2015.

Adam Harms, Brianna Hildebrand, Myles Tiessen—Trinity Mennonite, Mather, Man., May 24, 2015.

Marriages

McTavish/Shantz—Meggy McTavish (Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.) and Cody Shantz, at Elmhurst Inn, Ingersoll, Ont., April 25, 2015.

Deaths

Bergen—Katherine (nee Kathler), 88 (b. Jan. 15, 1927; d. May 28, 2015), Arnaud Mennonite, Man.

Dueck—George, 94 (b. Dec. 11, 1920; May 3, 2015), Hague Mennonite, Sask.

Dyck—Bernhard, 92 (b. Sept. 25, 1922; d. May 25, 2015), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Friesen—Wilmer (Bill), 82 (b. Jan. 17, 1932; d. April 17, 2015), Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

McTavish—Jen, 48 (b. Aug. 14, 1968; d. May 13, 2015), Rockway Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Neufeld—Franz, 85 (b. March 6, 1930; d. April 28, 2015), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Rempel—Elvira, 88 (b. Sept. 15, 1926; d. May 6, 2015), Springstein Mennonite, Man.

Steckly—Mabel (nee Jantzi), 91 (b. Oct. 8, 1923; d. May 5, 2015), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.


Wall—Abram (Abe), 89 (b. May 10, 1926; d. May 30, 2015), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Wiens—Luella Annie (nee Dyck), 89 (b. Nov. 29, 1925; d. March 29, 2015), Carman Mennonite, Man.

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/// Obituary

John Letkemann

Nov. 11, 1926 - April 17, 2015



It is with deep sadness that the family of John Letkemann announces his passing at home, on Friday, April 17, 2015, at the age of 88. Devoted husband of the late Irma Letkemann, who predeceased him in 2008. Beloved father of Rudy Letkemann, Hilda and Brian Doherty, Irma and Herb Goertz, and Martha and Rudy Goertz. Cherished grandfather of Jacob Letkemann and Benjamin Lefebvre, Katie and Craig Underwood, Nicholas Doherty, Meghan Doherty, Matthew and Stephanie Goertz, Jonathan Goertz, Melinda and Ryan Schmidtke, Christin and Jon Schwarz, and Stephanie Goertz. Special, proud great-grandfather of five boys, Joshua, Joseph and Benjamin Underwood, Brady Goertz and Oliver Schmidtke. Also fondly remembered by the Neufeld family, his longtime cherished friends, and his church family. John was the last surviving member of his family. Predeceased by his parents, Jakob and Helena (Klassen) Letkemann; two sisters, Helena and Tina; five brothers, Jakob, David, Heinrich, Peter and Dietrich; as well as sister and brother-in-law, Elfrieda and Arthur Neufeld. John was a faithful member of W-K United Mennonite Church, Waterloo, and volunteered as long as he was able. He worked 44 years, his last 21 years spent in the Building Maintenance Department at the University of Waterloo. After his retirement he enjoyed many walks and gardening. His skillful craftsmanship and attention to detail in his woodcarvings are a testament to what gave him the greatest sense of accomplishment. There are treasures in one's life that cannot be seen, cannot be touched and are impossible to measure. They cannot be bought yet are freely given. John showed us this throughout his life. His strong faith and courage, his thoughtful, caring nature and gentle manner, his deep love and total devotion to family and friends, all have truly been a blessing to us. He will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

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/// Correction

The Montreal Lake Children's Home near Timber Bay, Sask. was not a residential school, but a residence. It was not owned or operated by the Mennonite Church, but there were Mennonites and MCC representatives on staff at the residence. Incorrect information appeared in the May 25 issue, page 18. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

VIEWPOINT

Our revolving door and why we love it

CHRISTINA BARTEL BARKMAN

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

My friends and family often comment on the number of guests who come through our doors. I often hear, “How do you do it?”

How do I do it? Why does it seem like so much work to everyone outside of our house, yet I don't feel overwhelmed by it?

During the first two months after I gave birth to Teyah, we hosted a friend/intern from France, a friend from Abbotsford, B.C., and my parents, with PeaceChurch friends Fread, Reg and Kathleen staying countless nights in between, or even at the same time as other guests.

In addition, PeaceChurch gathers in our home every Wednesday and one Saturday a month, and all kinds of friends visit throughout the week. Sounds tiring, right?

But it's not and here's why:

• **OUR FRIENDS** are helpful. We may not have a dishwasher, but we have

countless “dishwashers” who love us and enjoy helping out. After a PeaceChurch gathering there are always volunteers to clean up—or we play the Filipino version of “rock-paper-scissors” and the job gets done.

• **WE ARE** a family of extroverts. We don't need a lot of quiet time by ourselves, and, for the most part, being around friends energizes us. The boys absolutely love the people who fill our home and Baby Teyah has a ready smile for all who greet her.

• **WE MAKE** family time a priority. While we often have an extra “family member” with us, we also carve out time to be just the five of us and make it special. We love to have extra guests, but sometimes it is important to be just “us” and we make sure that happens one night a week and on the weekend, too.

• **I HAVE** learned that when I—or we—need space, it's okay to say no to guests.

After trying it out a couple of times now, I've discovered that people respect it and we certainly don't lose friends over it!

• **WITH NO** daycare, grandparents or teenage babysitters to watch our kids here, we have hired help in our house a few days a week. Her name is Sam, and she is absolutely wonderful. Not only does she watch the kids, but she does some cooking and cleaning, which makes hosting non-stop, even following Teyah's birth, much more doable.

• **HAVING AN** open door is what we're called to do. Darnell and I—and our children—are church planters. We have the personality and heart for this ministry, and sense a strong calling from God to do it. So we open our home again and again to the variety of people whom we call family. And we do it with arms open wide, embracing these people in the love Christ shows us with hearts full of thankfulness for the ability to extend our home, our food and our joy to those we meet.

You are welcome to visit anytime! ☺

Christina and Darnell Barkman are Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers committed to living in Jesus' way as they help to lead the new PeaceChurch congregation in Manila and the Philippine Anabaptist Network.

PHOTO BY DARNELL BARKMAN



Christina and Darnell Barkman have a welcoming, open-door policy that they consider part of their calling as church planters in Manila, the Philippines.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Thin places (Part 5)

TROY WATSON

The brilliant Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said, “The world is in truth a holy place.” He was echoing the words of the prophet Isaiah who wrote, “the whole earth is filled with God’s glory.” God’s presence and glory can be perceived anywhere if we have “eyes to see and ears to hear.” Yet it is clear certain places, people and things help



When they arrived they found Samuel and the prophets in a spiritually animated state. The presence of God’s Spirit was so intense that it overcame the armed guards and they too began worshipping, praying and prophesying.

When Saul heard what happened he sent another company of armed guards and they

us tune into the reality of God’s presence more easily and directly. Even Jesus regularly sought out particular types of environments to pray, re-centre and recharge. He typically chose remote places of solitude in nature (wilderness, mountains, gardens, lakesides, etc.)

Most Christians have encountered at least one place or person that mysteriously opened them up to God in a unique and profound way. Certain objects also become thin places for many. For instance, the Bible has become a thin place for me. It has been helpful to let go of my childhood view of Scripture and approach it as a “thin place” that enlivens my connection with God.

Discovering thin places that empower us to tune into the Divine Frequency are important for our faith and spiritual development. However, one of our primary callings as followers of the way of Jesus is to become “thin places” ourselves. When we are “thin” together in the context of community, remarkable things can occur.

As a child I came across an account in 1 Samuel chapter 19 that made a lasting impression. In this story King Saul had decided to kill David because he was a threat to Saul’s throne. Saul heard that David was hiding near Ramah with Samuel and a “school” of prophets so he sent armed guards to go and arrest David.

too became overwhelmed with God’s presence when they arrived and joined the worshipping community. It happened yet again, with a third company of armed guards.

Finally the frustrated king went himself to arrest David. When Saul approached the gathering of prophets in Ramah, the

Spirit of God came upon him and he also fell into an animated spiritual state. The Bible says he stripped naked and lay at Samuel’s feet prophesying all day and all night.

What struck me as a child was how powerfully contagious this spiritual gathering was. How amazing that an assembly of praying prophets became such a thin place that unwitting passersby were overwhelmed with the presence of God and began participating in the worship! As I youngster I wanted to experience a church gathering like that! I still do.

Now I’m not implying this ought to be the norm for churches today, yet there have been a number of spiritual movements in different parts of the world since the dawn of Christianity that affirm

this can and does happen.

I believe God’s intention for Christ communities is for us to be thin places. Perhaps more subtle than the gathering of prophets in 1 Samuel 19, but at the very least a gathering where the spiritual awareness, curiosity, hunger and sensitivity of everyone is enflamed.

Here are a few examples of communal experiences I’ve shared in that I believe became thin for everyone present:

- When a group of us met weekly to simply and silently be present with God for an hour.
- When a church decided to stop overscripting our worship gatherings to flow in an “appropriate” and orderly manner and instead be guided by our attentiveness to God’s activity in our midst.
- When a multi-faith group I helped facilitate stopped dialoguing for one meeting and prayed together instead.
- When members of a small group I participated in stripped off our outer garments, like the prophets and Saul did in 1 Samuel 19, shedding our facades, personas and pretense and became “naked” (authentic and vulnerable) with God and one another.

I’ve reached a broad and rather gener-

Most Christians have encountered at least one place or person that mysteriously opened them up to God in a unique and profound way.

ous understanding of “thin place” to mean any place, person or thing that animates or enlivens our spiritual awareness, curiosity or sensitivity. My hope is our churches will become increasingly thin places for us and the people around us who still haven’t found what they’re looking for. ☿

Troy Watson is pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont. (troydw@gmail.com)

TRC WRAP-UP REPORT

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools released its final report on June 2 after five years of conducting hearings and gathering thousands of witness statements from former students and their families across Canada.

Children taught to hate themselves says TRC report

By JANICE SCHROEDER

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
OTTAWA

In front of a packed ballroom at a downtown hotel in Ottawa, Commissioner Justice Murray Sinclair twice used the term “cultural genocide” to describe what happened to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people as a result of settler state policies of assimilation and colonial domination. In their summary of the final report, which will be released later this year, the commissioners define cultural genocide as “the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group,” such as language, spiritual practices, land use, freedom of movement, and intergenerational bonds and knowledge transfer.

Residential schools were a key tool of cultural genocide, their effects felt today by survivors and their families. The Government of Canada oversaw these schools together with national churches, including the Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, and Presbyterian Churches of Canada. Archbishop Fred Hiltz, primate of the Anglican Church, called on the “Creator to guide us in our work to address the harm associated with residential schools.”

Between 1883 and 1996, over 150,000 children were placed in these schools, where abuse, hunger, humiliation, disease, isolation, and neglect were the norm. Commissioner Dr. Marie Wilson called these institutions—139 in total—“school houses of shame” in which children who had been forcibly removed from their parents under Canadian law were deliberately “taught to hate themselves and their culture.”

Wilson also spoke of the approximately 6,000 children who died while attending the schools, many of whom were buried

in unmarked graves, their names, gender, and cause of death unrecorded, often with no attempt made to contact their families. A national registry of student deaths established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is in progress.

Commissioner Chief Wilton Littlechild, himself a survivor, proposed that honouring the treaties signed between First Peoples and Canada, and the 2012 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, are the “two wings of an eagle” that can help guide Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in Canada to *witaskiwin*—Cree for “having good relations.”

One of the report’s 94 recommendations is the establishment of a National Council for Reconciliation, appointed but not operated by the federal government, to oversee Canada’s “post-apology progress on reconciliation.” The official apology of the Canadian government, delivered by Prime

Minister Stephen Harper in the House of Commons in 2008, was frequently invoked by the commissioners and other speakers.

Justice Sinclair cautioned that “words are not enough. Reconciliation requires deliberate, thoughtful, and sustained action.” Other key recommendations urge federal and provincial governments to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in state care, and to enact policies in health, language, education, and justice that would close discriminatory gaps between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. Changes to public school curricula at all levels and to the Oath of Citizenship for new Canadians are also recommended.

The Commission calls on Pope Francis to travel to Canada to apologize in person to survivors. A national research centre at the University of Manitoba will be a public repository of witness statements and other documents collected by the TRC.

The release of the report was the highlight of four days of events in Ottawa, including a Walk for Reconciliation through downtown Gatineau and Ottawa and the ceremonial planting of a Heart Garden at Rideau Hall, in which hundreds of children from the Ottawa-Gatineau region participated. Many witnesses, survivors, and officials remarked throughout the four days that the conclusion of the TRC’s official mandate must not be regarded as an imposition of closure on the “dark chapter” of the residential schools, but as an imperative to continue the ongoing work of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. ❧

PHOTO BY DENNIS GRUENDING



One of the many hearts in the Heart Garden at Rideau Hall.

TRC WRAP-UP REPORT

We've heard the truth. Do we have the courage for reconciliation?

STORY AND PHOTO BY J. NEUFELD

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG, MAN.

“**R**econciliation is not an aboriginal problem. It is a Canadian problem. It involves all of us.” Justice Murray Sinclair spoke those words on June 2 at the closing ceremonies of Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Ottawa. I watched a live feed of Sinclair’s speech at the University of Winnipeg, among tens of thousands of Canadians who tuned in to witness the historic event. Sinclair reminded us that we were not simply spectators.

After watching the broadcast I joined a crowd who marched solemnly through the streets from the university to Thunderbird House, a centre for aboriginal cultural events. There we shared a feast and a pipe ceremony.

Standing in line for a bowl of stew, I met

a young man named George. He looked to be in his early 30s—around my age. He had an easy smile and wore his hair tied back in a short twist at the nape of his neck. His eight-year-old daughter was climbing all over his arms and back. She was proud of having walked the two-and-a-half kilometres from the university. Now she wanted her dad to hold her so she could rest her feet.

I chatted with George about my own three-year-old son, and I tried to imagine how I would feel if government officials arrived on my doorstep, seized my children, and sent them away to an institution where they would be taught to forget their language and despise the spirituality of their parents. It was a terrifying thought. Earlier

that day I’d heard an First Nations woman say that her generation was the first to raise their own children.

Both of George’s parents were sent to residential schools. His father died without ever speaking a word about the experience. His mother was watching the live feed of the closing ceremonies from her home in South Indian Lake. George felt he was representing her in some way.

As we sat outside on the grass eating our stew, George told me how he’d grown up without any knowledge of residential schools. Whenever he saw one of his people homeless or drunk on a street corner, he felt embarrassed. It was only after he started reading about residential schools and the history of colonialism that he began to understand the trauma his people had suffered. There was no animosity in his voice. He was open, eager to talk.

I told George about my own ancestors—Russian Mennonites who came to Canada to escape a different kind of oppression. They were given fertile prairie

Strengthening our connections

STORY AND PHOTO BY DENNIS GRUENDING
OTTAWA

Eighty people gathered in Ottawa Mennonite Church (OMC) on the evening of May 31 for a time of worship and storytelling. Ten were indigenous people, survivors of Indian residential schools, who had travelled from various locations in Ontario to attend events surrounding the release by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of its summary report into the history and legacy of the schools. The visitors were accompanied by Lyndsay Mollins Koene of Timmins, Indigenous Neighbours Coordinator with MCC Ontario.

Survivors told stories of observing or experiencing sexual abuse in the schools, being forced to eat their own vomit when they became sick, and of looking down upon their parents after a time of indoctrination in the schools.

From the other side, one OMC member said that her parents worked in a residential school. “They were kind and loving people but they were part of a system which did a lot of harm. I feel some amount of guilt and shame



Women sign a blanket at the Ottawa Mennonite Church story-telling circle.

on behalf of settler society for this.”

The group shared songs and scripture readings in addition to the stories. People also wrote messages to survivors on an MCC blanket, which will be deposited with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Winnipeg.

Dennis Gruending is an Ottawa-based author and blogger and a member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery.

TRC WRAP-UP REPORT



About 200 people marched from the University of Winnipeg to Thunderbird House for a feast and a pipe ceremony following the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.

farmland that the Canadian government had recently cleared of its Ojibway, Cree and Metis inhabitants through a combination of military force and unfair treaties.

“They didn’t know,” George said, shaking his head. I sensed he wanted to absolve me in some way.

While my Mennonite forebears may not have understood the extent to which they were displacing the inhabitants of their new home, they were—and still are—beneficiaries of a system built on the oppression of others. The consequences of that colonial policy can still be seen today in the disproportionate incarceration rates among indigenous people, the statistics of missing and murdered indigenous women, the abysmal state of Manitoba’s child welfare system, where 87 per cent of children in care are aboriginal. Mennonites also had a hand in running residential schools.

Those are the facts. “But simply dealing with facts, dry and hard, will not resolve our differences,” said Stan McKay, a Cree elder and former moderator of the United Church of Canada, who spoke at the event in Winnipeg. McKay had a kind smile and a gentle voice, but the thing he asked for was difficult. “I’ve spent a lot of time with church people,” McKay said, “I am very

tired of people who want to help us. We don’t need help. We need relatives...Our philosophy is that we are all related. If we are to be truly healthy as a society we must be together in dignity.” McKay asked for an “attitude change” from non-aboriginals. “All of us need healing, all of us need each other, all of us can be transformed,” he said, “not because we are special, but because we are relatives.”

Cultural genocide doesn’t occur in a vacuum. It requires a foundation of cultural superiority. A Mennonite friend I met at the event confessed to me that his first thought when he showed up on the front lawn of the University of Winnipeg for the opening ceremonies was that “there was just a bunch of Indians here.” I understood what he meant. He used those shocking words intentionally to acknowledge his own inherited sense of superiority.

Mennonites have also been wounded by colonialism. Our wound is a superiority complex. I don’t believe true reconciliation will be possible as long as we harbour the belief that our culture, our values, our spirituality are superior to those of our First Nations relatives.

During the TRC hearings in Vancouver I listened to residential school survivors

/// Staff change

Dave Bergen announces retirement from MC Canada

WINNIPEG—After 11 years of serving with Mennonite Church Canada as executive minister of Christian Formation, Dave Bergen is retiring at the end of August. “This is the culmination of several



Dave Bergen

years of discernment, thinking about what I yet want to do while I still have the energy, and when the right moment would be,” Bergen says. It wasn’t an easy decision to make. Bergen says that while he would like to help shape the future of MC Canada as it transitions through the work of the Future Directions Task Force, he would also like to pursue other opportunities. Before he assumed his current role in Formation, Bergen spent 17 years as pastor of MC Manitoba congregations and several years as director of Camp Assiniboia. “Dave’s commitment to the church and his passion for Christian Formation has been an asset to Mennonite Church Canada,” says executive director Willard Metzger. “His leadership has been appreciated and will be missed.”

—Mennonite Church Canada

speak through their tears about the abuses they suffered at residential schools. Many of them also spoke with grief about the ways they had turned that abuse around and hurt their own children and families.

The courage it must have taken for them to be this vulnerable stuns me.

I wonder if we have enough courage to do the same?

See also “KAIROS hosts Time for Reconciliation” by Dennis Gruending and “Thoughts on Peru and the TRC” by Dave Rogalsky, online at canadianmennonite.org.



SEE MORE ONLINE



Workshop to explore church's welcome of autistic persons

The mother of an autistic son has seen the challenges autistic people face in social settings. She and her young adult son are exploring ways in which the church can be more autism-friendly. canadianmennonite.org/church-autistic

Europeans support peace ministry in the Philippines

The commemoration of the Second World War bombing of the city of Dresden, Germany, reached across the world to promote peace. Donations collected in an ecumenical service went to support the training of peace and reconciliation teams in the Philippines. canadianmennonite.org/dresden-philippines

Cross-cultural experiences lead to growth in faith and skills

Participants in the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN) learn leadership skills and grow in faith as they experience life in another culture. YAMEN, a joint program of Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite World Conference, has helped more than 100 young adults share with the global church.

canadianmennonite.org/yamen-faith-skills



Kidnapped in Ukraine

A volunteer in Ukraine helped deliver supplies and transport people from the war zone. But one day this choice led to his kidnapping. He's one of the many volunteers who work with Mennonite Central Committee partners in the region.

canadianmennonite.org/kidnapped-ukraine



Briefly noted

Leamington Mennonite Home celebrates 50 years

On June 7 the Leamington Mennonite Home celebrated 50 years of caring for seniors and frail elderly in the community. The Home was officially opened on June 23, 1965, as a not-for-profit, faith-based, charitable organization, owned and operated by area Mennonite churches. Begun as a Retirement Residence on Garrison Avenue, the Home has expanded its facilities to offer independent living for seniors in townhouses and condominiums, assisted living in apartments and providing a continuum of care for seniors requiring comprehensive support in a Retirement Residence and Long-Term-Care Home. Approximately 300 residents live in this faith-based community of care. On June 7 over 500 guests, supporters, staff, volunteers, residents and their families attended a service of thanks at the Leamington United Mennonite Church followed by an Open House at the Leamington Mennonite Home. The Home is now owned and operated by eight area Mennonite Churches, with significant community support and resources. The Home's model of care has inspired other communities and organizations throughout the province.
—Leamington Mennonite Home



Participating in the 50th anniversary celebration were: Peter Neufeld (past chair), Victor Winter, Debbie Roy (staff member), Linda Tiessen (administrator), Agatha Neufeld (resident/volunteer), Robert Schmidt (chair, board of directors).

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GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Ex-offender finds new life and home in the church

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON, SASK.

He's the newest member of Mount Royal Mennonite Church and he loves his church. Ryan Grills started attending Mount Royal just over two years ago, when he was released from the Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatoon.

Grills is an ex-offender. He has served time at numerous correctional institutions throughout western Canada for a long list of violent offenses. While at Headingley Correctional Centre near Winnipeg, feeling alone and desperate, he cried out, "God, if you're real, send someone." It was the middle of the night. Two hours later, the prison chaplain showed up. He'd been awakened with the sense that God wanted him to talk to Grills. "We talked for about four hours," he says, "and when we were done, I prayed the sinner's prayer. Gave my life to the Lord. And everything's been turning around ever since."

One step Grills took toward turning his life around was writing a letter to a church. He said he knew churches cared for people in prison, and the reply he received from Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg proved him right. The pastor gave Grills' letter to Carl DeGurse and the two began a correspondence that would grow into a lasting friendship. (*Canadian Mennonite* featured a story on their correspondence in the July 30, 2007 issue.)

Once in Saskatoon, Grills participated in the Person 2 Person program. Eric Olfert, a member of Mount Royal, was Grills' regular visitor, but Dave Feick, who coordinates the P2P program through the Micah Mission, and Mount Royal pastor Garth Ewert Fisher also became his good friends. Even before his release, Grills got a day pass and attended a Sunday service at Mount Royal. "I was very, very nervous because I only knew Pastor Garth and

Eric and the chaplain who brought me," Grills recalls. "You've got to remember, [I'd] never really been in a church before." Feeling too self-conscious to sit with the congregation, Grills opted for the balcony. There Trevor came up to him "with this big smile on his face and says, 'Hi, how are you doing? Glad you came,'" says Grills, and remembers thinking, "This place is kind of cool."

Grills' relationship with Feick and the Micah Mission continues now while he's on parole. A couple of years ago, Feick bought him a Bible for his birthday. Grills says, "I made him a promise that I would read that Bible every single day, and I've kept that promise."

Grills' friendship with Ewert Fisher has also grown since his release, and there is teasing aspect to it that bespeaks deep affection. "I got an awesome pastor," he says and, turning to Ewert Fisher, quips, "Ten bucks, please!" But then, more seriously, he adds, "I got nothing but respect for Pastor Garth, he's been so good to me."

Grills told Ewert Fisher, upon his release, that he wanted to be part of the Mount Royal congregation. He wanted his own church mailbox and, in about two years, he

wanted to be baptized. "I wanted to make sure I was ready, I wanted to make sure Pastor Garth thought I was ready and that I was in a position to become a member of the church," he says.

And so, on May 24, Grills was baptized on confession of his faith into the Mount Royal church family. "My baptism to me means gaining community," he says, "officially making it public, my love for Jesus Christ." Of the baptism itself, Grills says, "When Pastor Garth and Pastor Jaime put that water on my head, I just felt like a totally different person. It was like night and day."

The newest member of Mount Royal Mennonite is eager to work in the church. "I love the people that come to this church," he says, "I would do anything to help them." He dreams of working with youth, both within the church and beyond, preventing them from getting into trouble by offering them something more worthwhile. "I want them to know that God has changed my life," he says.

Just as God has changed Grills' life, his presence is changing Mount Royal Mennonite. "I think he's helped broaden our definition of who a neighbour is," says Ewert Fisher. They are learning that their neighbours may come "from a very different background than we did," he says, and that welcome is "a mystery" that means accepting "people who walk through our doors and who are given to us as a gift."

It's a two-way relationship. Grills and his congregation are learning from each other. "I believe I'm in this church for a reason," says Grills. "I believe God put Pastor Garth and the rest of this church in my life for a reason." ❧



Ryan Grills (right) and his pastor, Garth Ewert Fisher, share a deep mutual respect and affection.

Ottawa Mennonite Church hears stories from refugees

JOLENE TIESSEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Ottawa Mennonite Church recently spent time intentionally listening to stories through the written stories of the People on the Move: the Human Face of Migration Exhibit, provided by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), and through spoken stories, in which refugees and the people who supported them when they arrived in Canada told of their experiences. Each of these interwoven sets of stories were moving and challenging. As Pippa Wiens put it, “The incredible resilience of each person shines through, as does the commonality that unites us all as human beings. It was also very valuable to hear about the practical realities of arriving in a country with no knowledge of the local language and customs, and without family or friends to turn to.”

Lilian Ghusen shared about her family of four’s recent experiences fleeing from Syria. She spoke of the difficulty of leaving everything—family, friends, home, and possessions—and her gratitude for the support she has found in Canada. Lilian humorously shared how her husband George was so excited to have running water that he took a shower almost as soon as they arrived at their host family’s place. And another two hours later.

Faduma Mahmoud came from Somalia via Yemen in 2001 as a six-year-old. She spoke of how “as a refugee child, you have to work twice as hard to prove to others that you are capable of doing anything that you put your mind to.”

Mary Enns was Faduma’s high school teacher and remembers Faduma as an angry, disengaged youth. When Faduma approached Mary, upset that nothing was planned for Black History month, they were able to turn Faduma’s frustration into positive energy with the formation of a Black History Club. Faduma soon became deeply engaged in school and community organizations and by Grade 12 had won numerous awards and was valedictorian.

Hibah Shawafee and Naseer Al Rawi are a Muslim refugee couple who came with their two daughters from Iraq two years ago. They spoke of the difficulties of being Muslim in this country. Hibah spoke shyly, being tentative of her English, and shared how people have asked her, “Why did you come to Canada? Why don’t you go back to your country? Why don’t you dress like me?” Her response shows courage and patience: “If my country have safety as Canada and if it was a good place to live, would we visit Canada or live in Canada? Of course we come visit. But my country no good safety. I love Canada. My country now is Canada. I have freedom. You have freedom.”

We also heard from Reem Ammouneh, who had arrived in 2006 from Syria and translated for Hibah and Naseer. She talked about how she was not just translating

words but also culture. “Let me tell you,” she said, “it was not easy!”

Valentina Rodriguez came from Colombia in 2006 with her family. She spoke of her strongest memory from that time: “As the escalator descended [at the Ottawa Airport], I remember seeing a group of strangers standing at the bottom of the escalators waiting for us. I remember feeling an immense sense of relief. Relief from knowing that somehow those strangers would make everything better and perhaps even knew what was going to happen to the four of us.” When asked to act as translator for another Columbian refugee family coming to Ottawa years later, she jumped at the chance to offer someone else that sense of hope and relief.

In her thanks to the speakers, moderator Joanne Lalonde summed up our experience as the welcoming community: “It was a privilege to hear all of you speak so eloquently about your personal experiences of migration. Each of you shared your story, but in so doing, you also revealed what we all have in common as human beings: we all have dreams of a good life for ourselves and for our families . . . and our beloved children are the future.” ☿



Joanne Lalonde (left) moderated a panel discussion at Ottawa Mennonite Church including Valentina Rodriguez and her mother, Arlene Patino, in which recent refugees described their experiences.

Camp work weekend brings new friendships

BY BRYAN BERG
BANCROFT, ONT.

For decades the Markham area youth have come to Fraser Lake Camp every May long weekend to clean cabins, haul firewood and prepare for another summer of camp in the North Hastings Highlands. This spring this fun retreat was a little different as it included new friendships.

Montreal Mennonite Fellowship is 400 kms from Fraser Lake and Petittcodiac Mennonite Church (N.B.) is over 1,300 kms, yet this year the youth groups from these two churches joined the Markhamites for their retreat. The idea for this connection was born when Kristen Berg, Fraser Lake Camp's director, visited Montreal Mennonite last November. In conversation with Mel Shantz, the idea of bringing together these more "far-flung" MYF groups seemed like a great opportunity for new friendships and connections. Seven months, countless hours of driving, and an unexpected auto repair later, 40 youth and about a dozen sponsors and leaders came together at Fraser Lake.

What followed was a fun and productive work weekend. The youth split into groups, blended between the different churches. They dragged firewood and brush away from the site of a new cabin slated to be built, they hauled canoes, bikes, and kayaks out of storage, and the cabins, programs areas, and even the tree-house were cleaned and made ready for summer.

The youth also enjoyed a music and comedy talent show with sessions based on "True Colours" personality tests, and plenty of excellent food courtesy of Sheryl and Bob Wideman and Julie Moyer Suderman. The weather stayed warm and even the blackflies chose to ease up from their usual spring feeding frenzy.

Camp is a place to experience God's wondrous creation and share in the fellowship of a warm campfire, a cool dip

in the lake, and quiet nights hanging out under the stars. It is a chance to develop deep friendships and to explore faith in a natural setting. As the cars left Fraser Lake on Monday morning—headed for very different destinations—it was clear that these youth had experienced a sense of connection and belonging to something bigger. ✎



Madeleine Ashworth (left) and China Palmateer work to get Fraser Lake Camp ready for summer. Over the May long weekend three "far-flung" youth groups from Mennonite Church Eastern Canada were able to work together and make new friends.

PHOTO BY KEITH REGEHR



The 2015 MCC Relief Sale in New Hamburg (Ont.) had torrential rain around lunchtime on May 30. Wading in the resulting water are (from left) Jack and Elise Klassen, Arli Klassen and Wanda and Howard Falk (cousins visiting from Manitoba). The sale was a success in spite of the much-needed rain and raised approximately \$350,000. The 2015 Feature Quilt, "Threads of Africa," designed by Renske Helmuth, raised \$42,000 and the 1964 Massey Ferguson 35 Tractor sold for \$6,100.

Young adults plant cross-cultural peace

By NICHOLAS POPE

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
CALGARY, ALTA.

In front of a small crowd in the basement of Calgary's Foothills Mennonite Church, an arrangement of people formed a tableau: one brandishing an invisible gun, another cowering in fear, yet another lying deathly still on the ground. A young woman approached the microphone, "Hi, my name is Lauren," she began confidently. "Based on the borders created by politics and the winners of war, I am from Canada . . . and two weeks ago, this was not my story."

For two weeks in May, young adult peace workers from Bolivia, Cambodia, Canada, Guatemala, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa and Syria gathered in Alberta to live, share and learn together at Planting Peace, a cross-cultural peace-building conference hosted by Mennonite Central Committee. They travelled the province hearing stories and learning about social justice issues and approaches to peace-building. In Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray and Lethbridge they heard from First Nations people, mining representatives, people working to alleviate poverty, Mennonites and Muslims.

Speakers also addressed the group on building bridges between Muslims and Christians, the role of personality in peace-building, and understanding how worldview affects peace. They closed off their time with two public presentations, one in Lethbridge and one at Foothills Mennonite Church.

As the conference concluded at Foothills Mennonite, Lauren continued: "A friend of mine, Ali, who is a former Planting Peace participant from Lebanon, is adamant that he may live in, and was born in, the place we call Lebanon, but he is not Lebanese—he is a child of the world. As a child of the world, I am proud to have brothers and sisters from all over the world."

"Although I am not from Syria," Lauren continued, "I now have two brothers, Subhi and Father Lukas, who are both from the city of Homs." The tableau behind Lauren provided a sobering mental image of the

violence taking place in their home country. "Your story is my story. And somehow," she paused, "we stand with you."

The participants of Planting Peace 2015 formed close relationships with one another. The issues ongoing in other participants' countries became deeply personal parts of their lives. The highlight of the two weeks they spent together was new friendships, and that their new friends' stories became their own. ☸

Alberta relief sale raises \$172,000

By DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD
DIDSBURY, ALTA.

Low oil prices in 2015 have not dampened the generosity of Alberta Mennonites. On June 5-6, the annual Mennonite Central Committee relief sale was held in Didsbury and as of June 8, over \$172,000 had been received with donations still trickling in. The last Didsbury sale, held in 2012, raised \$170,000.

MCC Executive Director Abe Janzen, was impressed with the organization of the sale and the breadth of participation. "[People left with] a positive feeling about the work of MCC and the local organizing committee...there was plenty of evidence that the cross section of people doing the work and attending the sale is very broad." Janzen also noted that in the last few years; "Young adults and teenagers were everywhere doing the work. It's not primarily an older people's event." He said.

New to the Alberta sale was the auction of two sets of MCC Learning Tour tickets. The tours, one to Kenya's sand dams, and one to the border wall between Mexico and the U.S.A., provide opportunities to

PHOTO BY CAROL MCNAUGHTON



Lauren Harms talks about the need for peace as Desiree Patkau, Pagna Ran and Messiahbringspeace Price (on floor) participate in a tableau as part of a cross-cultural peace-building conference.



Children and their parents remained engaged in the children's auction time led by Darcy Krahn on Saturday afternoon at the Mennonite Central Committee Alberta relief sale in Didsbury.

see MCC's work first hand and learn from the people MCC serves.

The annual sale alternates between three locations, Didsbury, Coaldale, and Sherwood Park. In addition to providing needed funds for MCC's relief work, it offers a valuable opportunity for the larger Mennonite community to gather for fellowship. ☸

PHOTOS BY HOWARD GILES



At a coffee house, held April 25, members of Nutana Park Mennonite Church entertain one another with music and slides. Pictured, left to right: Susan Ens Funk, Peter Hooge, Ron Peters and Lynn Driedger.

Nutana Park celebrates 50 years of God's blessing

NUTANA PARK MENNONITE CHURCH
SASKATOON

Voices joined together in celebration for the opening hymn, "Now Thank We All Our God," in a service of worship at Nutana Park Mennonite Church commemorating 50 years as a congregation.

The theme of "blessing" infused every moment of the celebration service on May 3, which was postponed a week by a crippling snowstorm that kept everyone at home on April 26. A choir led by Duff Warkentin offered anthems of blessing and thanksgiving in English and German reflecting the origins of 50 years ago. Peter Hooge planned music for the anniversary service.

A birthday cake festooned with 50 candles caught the imaginations of the children. As part of the children's time, worship leader Brent Guenther donned a party hat calling forward the adults who had grown up in the congregation to join the current group.

In short reflections, pastors Patrick Preheim and Anita Retzlaff spoke of God's

steadfast love and blessing. Five decades have seen significant changes in worship style, biblical interpretation and congregational membership. Several couples and individuals in attendance were charter members of Nutana Park.

The evening before the storm and the original date for the anniversary, a coffee house took place as scheduled. In spite of the falling snow, music was performed in abundance and in various styles, by three generations of Nutana Park congregants. A slide show prepared by Nicole Tiessen and Brent Guenther was part of the sharing of memories that evening.

Fifty years of pictures were displayed on the walls of the education wing, a project of Debra Heinrichs and others who helped document our history. Food was shared as usual. Potlucks are a very important part of Nutana's history and community life. Carolene Funk and many volunteers hosted this essential part of church fun together.



Nutana Park Mennonite Church celebrates 50 years of God's blessing with a special time of worship, led by Brent Guenther, on May 3.

God has been faithful over the years. The congregation at Nutana Park Mennonite Church gave thanks for such blessing over a half-century. Praise to God for the many years of sharing faith and friendships together and the gift of connections to the larger Mennonite Church!

Written by the church's anniversary committee. For more photos of the anniversary, visit canadianmennonite.org/nutana-park-50. #



Photos depicting the congregation's history cover the walls of the hall.

/// Briefly Noted

New director of mission for MCM

Dorothy Fontaine is the new Director of Mission for Mennonite Church Manitoba. She's replacing Norm Voth, who stepped down in April. Previously she worked as pastor at Bethel Mennonite Church and spiritual care manager at Siloam Mission. Fontaine grew up Baptist. Her father was a prison chaplain for 30 years and Fontaine and her sisters travelled around with him singing in prisons and churches. Fontaine says this ecumenical experience made it easy for her to transition to a Mennonite church when she started attending Bethel Mennonite Church more than 20 years ago. Fontaine is working on an M.A. in theology at Canadian Mennonite University. In her new position, she's excited about working on a new vision for Camp Assiniboia. "The vision is to nurture the spiritual growth of the next generation and also to create spaces and opportunities for our churches to explore and live out this notion that God's big goal is to reconcile all of creation back to him," she says. "We think camp could be a microcosm of what that could potentially look like in the world." Fontaine has been hired for a one-year term.



Fontaine

/// Briefly noted

Rob Wiebe ordained

GRANISLE, BC—Pastor Rob Wiebe was ordained on May 31 at the Church of the Way, the only church in town on Babine Lake in B.C.'s northern interior. Garry Janzen, Mennonite Church B.C. executive minister, led the ordination and Ken Ha, of the MC B.C. Church Health Committee also attended. Wiebe works full-time during the week at a sawmill in Burns Lake, about an hour away from Granisle, but weekends he travels with his family to hold youth meetings on Saturday night and then holds Sunday school and worship services on Sunday. "Rob is an awesome man of God, teaching the truth from God's word," says Ruth Crossley, the church's moderator. "We at Church of the Way are so blessed to have Rob, his wife Tammy and their three boys." Granisle has a population of about 300. Most of the local residents are seniors, with only a handful of young people. Of those residents, about 10 percent come to weekly services at Church of the Way, which has the distinction of being the northernmost Mennonite Church Canada congregation in the country.



—Church of the Way

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GOD AT WORK IN US

OBITUARY

Henry Poettcker remembered as a servant leader

Henry Poettcker

March 27, 1925 – June 4, 2015

Henry Poettcker, who served as president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC), one of Canadian Mennonite University's (CMU) predecessor institutions, died on Sunday, May 24, following a stroke. He was 90 years old. A scholar with a PhD from Princeton, Poettcker joined the faculty of CMBC in 1954 and became its president five years later at the age of 34. He held that office for 19 years.

Waldemar Janzen, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament and German, worked as CMBC's dean during Poettcker's presidency. He remembers Poettcker as a calm, steadfast person who steered a steady course for CMBC during the turbulent youth movements of the 1960s and 70s. "He was a humble, unpretentious leader," Janzen says.

Harry Huebner, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Theology, says Poettcker gave the faculty the freedom to help shape CMBC. "Perhaps his greatest gift was to interpret the constituency to the faculty and the faculty to the constituency," Huebner says. "A most sensitive skill."

Poettcker was born in Rudnerweide, Russia on March 27, 1925. His family moved to St. Elizabeth, Man. when he was just a few months old, and then to a farm 25 km. west of Pincher Creek, Alta. when he was two. While attending Menno Bible Institute in Didsbury, Alta. throughout the winter of 1942-43, Poettcker met Aganetha (Agnes) Baergen. After marrying in 1946 in Tofield, Alta., they spent eight years in Alberta, Kansas, Illinois, and New Jersey while Poettcker furthered his education.

After CMBC, Poettcker moved to Elkhart, Indiana, where he served as



President and Professor of New Testament beginning in 1978 at Mennonite Biblical Seminary, one of the two seminaries that constituted Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, now Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. He was named President Emeritus

when he retired in 1990.

Jacob Elias, Professor Emeritus of New Testament, who served as dean at AMBS most of the years that Poettcker was president, describes Poettcker as gracious, dedicated, pastoral, organized, warm, and humble.

"His style of leadership was to empower others in their ministries," Elias says. "He had a keen awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing congregations in Canada and the United States, as well as internationally. He had a deep love for Christ and the church, and a heart for pastors and other church leaders."

As the first Canadian president of MBS, Poettcker fostered a closer link between the seminaries and CMBC/CMU, says Walter Sawatsky, Professor Emeritus of

Church History and Mission.

In addition to his contributions to CMBC and MBS, Poettcker served as president of the General Conference Mennonite Church (now Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA) from 1962 to 1968, wrote Sunday school curricula for adults in German and English, and frequently contributed to Mennonite periodicals. Upon his retirement in 1990, Poettcker returned to Winnipeg. In 2005, CMU honoured his years of service by naming one of its buildings Poettcker Hall. Four years later, CMU Press published Poettcker's book, *A President's Journey: The Memoirs of Henry Poettcker*.

In his later years, Poettcker gave loving care to Agnes, who suffered a severe and debilitating stroke. She passed away in February 2014.

Poettcker also participated in the professor emeriti group that meets every Thursday morning at CMU for fellowship, professional discussion, and mutual support. This past March, 10 of Poettcker's CMBC colleagues gathered with him to celebrate his 90th birthday.

A line Poettcker wrote in the resignation letter he sent to CMBC board members in 1977 perhaps best exemplifies his humility and faithfulness in the face of his many contributions to the Mennonite Church: "If I have been one link in helping along, I give thanks to God."

Poettcker is survived by daughter Chrystyanna, sons Ron (Carol-Ann) and Martin (Erna), seven grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren, and extended family. ❧



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ARTBEAT

Concerts raise funds for relief

Four events on May 24 raise monies for Nepal and the New Hamburg Relief Sale

DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent

With the Canadian Federal Government's pledge to match funds for Nepal relief coming to an end, a

flurry of events in Waterloo and Toronto raised an additional \$28,000 on May 24. The Grand Philharmonic Choir under the

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE GRAND PHILHARMONIC CHOIR



Six local Nepalese youth sing in the benefit concert in Kitchener on May 24, helping raise funds for MCC's Nepal Relief fund.

direction of Mark Vuorinen, also assistant professor of music at Conrad Grebel University College, performed Fauré's "Requiem" and Bach's Cantata 39, "Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot" (Break your Bread for the Hungry). They were joined by six Nepalese girls singing "The darkest night will end, the Sun will rise again." As Rick Cober Bauman noted in an email to CM, a "Moving and a hard act to follow!!" All the soloists donated their time, as did singers from eleven local choirs. The concert was free but donations to MCC's Nepal relief were gathered.

The same day at the Registry Theatre in Kitchener an event called "Stand by Nepal: 1 song, 100 guitars" saw many guitarists gather to play Ben E. King's song "Stand by Me." In Toronto a concert and bake sale was held the same day at the St. James Town community centre with funds going to MCC's Nepal Support.

The day's events were wrapped up with a concert at the Steinman Mennonite Church in Baden. The Martin Family singers performed Hayden's "Creation," raising funds to cover costs of the Mennonite Relief Sale in New Hamburg. ☺



Bethany Horst sings in the benefit concert in Kitchener on May 24, helping raise funds for MCC's Nepal Relief fund.


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Staying close to God

Student from Portugal finds hope for the future in spite of economic recession

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MICHAEL VEITH

Special to Young Voices

VOICE |
of the marginalized



Afonso Arrais left his home in Portugal to find better career opportunities abroad.

When people complete high school, they are often overwhelmed and stressed because there are so many career options. When Afonso Arrais graduated, his stress came from a lack of options.

Arrais, now a student at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, was born in Portugal and attended high school in the capital city, Lisbon. He was constantly concerned about his future.

“What went through my mind was, ‘Is it worth going through all of this and ending up not having a job?’” he says. Graduating in 2011, Arrais wondered what to do next in a society wracked by an economic recession.

As part of the European Union (EU), Portugal has always been a relatively poor state. After the European debt crisis in 2009, Portugal was hit even harder.

Jeff Huebner, associate professor of international business at CMU, says that prior to 2009 there was a general feeling that jobs were “pretty easy to come by.” When the debt crisis hit, that evaporated.

“The government has to cut back on social spending right at a time when more people are unemployed,” Huebner says. “So instead of being able to have more money to help those on employment welfare, education, university [and] job retraining, the government is spending less and it’s happening at a time when more people are in need of that.”

To Arrais, the mood changed with the money. “You could just feel it everywhere in the country. People were just so depressed. I feel this every time I go back

home,” he says. With every walk downtown in Lisbon, Arrais saw more businesses closing. “That was really shocking to slowly see your country degrading and see everything become abandoned.”

His close group of friends began to splinter as high rates of youth unemployment forced them to look abroad.

“There was a really close friend of mine who was the first one to leave. It was really shocking to all of us. He said the best thing he did in his life was to leave Portugal.”

According to Statistics Portugal, the youth unemployment rate in 2012 was more than 40 per cent, and has only improved five per cent since then. Pedro Passos Coelho, the prime minister of Portugal, even encouraged an exodus of young people to help alleviate the problem.

Despite losing some of his friends from Portugal, Arrais says the crisis brought the remaining young people together in some ways.

“You really connect with people because you are all going through this bad stage. It is bad for everyone. You kind of have those ideas in the back of your mind... [which make] you feel kind of compassionate toward other people.”

Instead of leaving for a job, Arrais would instead leave to attend Capernwray Bible Centre in Austria. He didn’t earn a salary like some of his friends but, after years of rebelling against his Christian upbringing, he gained something more important than money. “I feel that this was a really big time for my relationship with God to grow as well.”

Now at CMU, Arrais is pursuing a

degree in communications and media. He no longer fears the future. However, this isn't necessarily due to abundant opportunities in Canada.

"I ended up not fearing my future because I know God has something planned for me, but I also know that I need to do my part," Arrais says. "It's been a constant learning process, and each day and each experience I go through helps me realize how dependent I am on God. If I stay close to him, I know that I will have this peace, no matter what happens now." ❧

This article is part of a series called Voice of the Marginalized, written by students in Canadian Mennonite University's Journalism: Principles and Practice course. Voice of the Marginalized connected writers with people on the margins of the community. Teacher Carl DeGurse is vice-chair of Canadian Mennonite's board of directors and an assignment editor at the Winnipeg Free Press.

Michael Veith, 21, is a history student at CMU.



Michael Veith

Where are the young board members?

5 tips from young Mennonites who serve on boards

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-Editor

Look at a board of any institution, Mennonite or otherwise. They're mainly made up of middle-aged or retired professionals. With that said, many boards are looking to expand their horizons by diversifying. They want more women, people from different ethnic and professional backgrounds, and younger people.

Boards are seeking out people like Victoria Pelletier and Chris Steingart. Steingart, 35, serves on the board of MennoMedia and Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. He attends Breslau Mennonite Church in Ontario and owns a web and graphic design company in Kitchener.

"MennoMedia is the most recent board," Steingart explained. "I just finished telling my wife as we were deciding how we were going to manage with our first child, I said, 'I don't think I can manage anything else.' And then Dave Bergen (Mennonite Church Canada's executive minister for formation and the CAO) suggested me."

Steingart says he grew up with a family who believed serving the community, including the Mennonite church was important. "It's just kind of been engrained in my family's culture to serve in those ways." But

Steingart says he always felt boards were ways only adults could serve.

"You have to wait for other people to tell you to grow up," he jokes. But that is how he got involved. He was shoulder-tapped by people who recognized his skills and their applicability to board situations.

Pelletier, 25, attends Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship in Vancouver, B.C. She sits on the boards of Pinegrove Place, a Mennonite residential care facility in Richmond, and the two other seniors homes associated with Pinegrove. Pelletier has a business background, and works as a human capital consultant for a large professional services firm. She was approached by someone at church to serve on these boards.

"I have a certain skill set that's around business and around the people side of business. I think it's really important to give back," Pelletier says. "One way to do that is to sit on boards."

While Steingart enjoys pitching new ideas to the MennoMedia board, Pelletier likes providing strategic insight.

"I'm doing what I can to allow the organization to provide better services to the



Chris Steingart serves on the MennoMedia and Silver Lake Mennonite Camp boards.



Victoria Pelletier serves on the board of Pinegrove Place, a Mennonite care facility in Richmond, B.C., as well as two of its affiliated homes for seniors.

elderly people in the community,” Pelletier said.

Tips for boards

Young people like Steingart and Pelletier are still relatively rare. While some boards like Canadian Mennonite University, Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba and Ontario have designated roles for students or young adults, the majority of board members are at least 15 years older than their student representatives. In Pelletier’s case, she says she’s the most junior board member by 20 years at least.

Steingart and Pelletier say Mennonite boards don’t necessarily know how to reach out to young people. General postings in magazines or on social media stating that an organization is seeking a representative often make young people think, “Oh, they don’t want me,” according to Steingart. He thinks young people are likely just waiting to be asked.

Both say the tried and true method of getting young Mennonites to sign on to the task of board member is to get to know them, understand their skills and interests, and ask them personally to serve. Pelletier adds that an education component in schools might be important ways of teaching youth and young adults that boards are important ways to serve the community.

Tips for young Mennonites

But it’s not all up to the boards. Steingart and Pelletier say part of the onus is on their peers to understand how they can best serve. Here are some tips, according

to these young Mennonites:

- **Talk about it with people.** Pelletier got her start on boards by talking about her interests, skills, and goals for the future with people at church. From there, people started asking her to get involved.

- **Do your homework.** Steingart says potential board members should know what they’re getting into before they make the commitment. A board may meet quarterly or weekly, and before joining, a person should be aware.

- **Start somewhere small** where you’ll feel more comfortable. Pelletier’s first board term was for a small organization where she knew everyone. She says she learned how boards work there, and was less nervous when she started working at Pinegrove Place.

- **Don’t doubt yourself** just because you’re young. Pelletier says boards are starting to realize they’re a lot stronger if they’re diverse.

- **Be sure.** “There’s nothing worse than agreeing to be part of the board and us going through the process of bringing you on, and then you discover two months later that you’re actually way too busy,” Steingart said. “It’s a commitment on both sides.”

Overall, Pelletier says serving on boards is not only beneficial for her community and resumé, she says it’s a great learning opportunity. “It allows me to look at an organization as a whole. It’s an incredible opportunity to work at the top of an organization and see how it’s run,” she said. ☞

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATRINA LABUN



Katrina Labun is a Mennonite Central Committee Serving and Learning Together (SALT) participant serving in Kathmandu, Nepal.

When earth breaks apart

BY KATRINA LABUN
Mennonite Central Committee

I was with my host family in a church service in Kathmandu, Nepal when the earthquake struck on April 25. At least 200 people were packed into the meeting hall on the third floor of the church and the pastor was giving a sermon. Without warning, the building began to shake violently and there was a sound like thunder. Everyone began screaming. About an hour after the

quake, we decided to leave the church and return to our neighbourhood. The streets, intersections and all open places were full of people who were afraid to go inside. ☞

See more online.
Canadianmennonite.org/stories/communities-come-together-when-earth-breaks-apart.



Calendar

British Columbia

Oct. 16-18: MC B.C. ladies retreat at Camp Squeah, Hope.

Nov. 13-15: Senior Youth Impact Retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope.

Saskatchewan

July 4: Shekinah Retreat Centre Summer Fun Day—no charge, starts at 10 a.m. Call 306-945-4929 for information.

July 24-26: Grand Camp Retreat at Shekinah for grandparents or great-grandparents and grandkids ages 3-12. For information call 306-945-4929.

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

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 Heritage Village, Steinbach, for children aged 5 to 8. Register early. For more information, visit 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.

Aug. 10-14: Pioneer Day Camp at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, for children aged 9 to 12. For more information, visit 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.

Ontario

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 or e-mail camp coordinator Katie Gingerich at peacecamp@uwaterloo.ca.

Aug. 22: The Detweiler Meetinghouse near Roseville hosts the “Central Ontario All-Day Sacred Harp Singing” event, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

U.S.

July 21-16: Mennonite World Conference at Harrisburg, Pa.

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.

CANADIAN MENNONITE
Online



Employment
 opportunity





This past week I shared with friends

- a story about a woman and her dog
- an employment ad
- a report about relief work in Nepal
- an article on three core values of Anabaptist faith
- a story about Mennonites and gardening

It's never been easier! Share stories with your family, friends and neighbours.

canadianmennonite.org

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Classifieds

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; telephone: 306-773-4770. Website: zionmennonite.ca.



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

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This position supports the Executive Director in agency wide duties related to:

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2. Board functions
3. Inter-MCC collaboration
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This is a full-time salaried position. Only those candidates who are legally eligible to work in Canada should apply. To apply, please email a cover letter and resume to: Marie Reimer, HR Manager at hrmanager@mccbc.ca, or fax: 604-850-8734. Check <http://mcccanada.ca/get-involved/serve/openings> for more information on MCC job postings British Columbia.

Preaching must be from—and to—the margins

It must also be done 'only from a basis of love'

STORY AND PHOTO BY MARY E. KLASSEN

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
ELKHART, IND.

Gennifer Brooks began her presentations for the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) Theological Lectureship the same way she begins the preaching classes she teaches—with the story in Luke 4 of Jesus reading from Isaiah in the temple.

The homiletics professor at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill., uses that text because it illustrates that a preacher needs the anointing of the Spirit and that the purpose of preaching is to offer good news. The third reason, she added, with laughter from students and professors interrupting her, is that “if you have really, really spoken the way Jesus wants you to speak, they will try to throw you over the top of the hill.”

Brooks focussed her spring lectures on preaching to and from the margins. She called listeners to the difficult identification with people who are devalued and disregarded, and to the challenge of speaking to people whose use of power creates injustice.

“The good news of every sermon must speak of God’s present action in human life that is bringing about a change to the hearers,” she said. “And that change should propel the hearers to action that is representative of Christian discipleship.”

In her lecture on preaching to the margins, the beginning point is to listen, she emphasized. Preachers must immerse themselves in the lives of the people to whom they are preaching. Then, listening to the Holy Spirit, they must “look, listen and learn the biblical story of God’s transforming grace. . . . The biblical text must fit the context of the people’s lives.”

In her second lecture, Brooks looked at the challenge of preaching from the margins to those who have power and privilege. Oppressors “are caught in their own situations of coercion and imprisonment,” she said. “They too must be encouraged to find and claim the freedom that they do not recognize they lack. The preacher is faced with the very difficult task of saying to the rich, ‘You are really poor.’”

This must be done in love, she emphasized several times, because love overcomes the evil of oppression. “When one stands with Jesus on the margins, and proclaims justice for the oppressed, regardless of the cause of that oppression, one does so faithfully only from a basis of love.”

Brooks’s third lecture, “With Jesus on the margins,” emphasized helping people recognize the humanity of everyone. “Every preacher’s task is to preach the kingdom of God and call all people to inhabit the kingdom, to have a common and equal identity through Christ.” It is through Christ’s love that



Jennifer Brooks, Ph.D., encourages Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary students to immerse themselves in the lives of the people to whom they will preach, so that their messages are good news that fit the context of their listeners.

preachers can—and must—proclaim justice to the whole world, she concluded.

Brooks holds master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and master of philosophy and doctor of philosophy degrees in liturgical studies from Drew University. She is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and has served in pastoral roles in rural, suburban, urban and cross-racial settings.

Brooks is editor of *Black United Methodists Preach!* (Abingdon, 2012) that showcases 14 black United Methodist preachers. She is currently completing *Talking with Our Bible Sisters*, a daily devotional on the women of the Bible. ✎

For more news from Canadian and American Mennonite post-secondary schools, visit canadianmennonite.org.

