

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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“Walking with God”

Mennonite World Conference
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EDITORIAL

A historic moment

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

The irony couldn't have been more self-evident. Here were 7,500 modern-day Anabaptists celebrating the beliefs and convictions that hold them together in 65 countries around the world, following on the heels of a troubled assembly of Mennonite Church USA which appeared to be coming apart at the seams over sexuality.

The unfettered joy and inspirational singing in the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania stood in sharp contrast to the sadness and division in Kansas City that caused many to doubt whether MC USA could sustain its unity and fellowship with the threatened withdrawal of its largest conference body—Lancaster Conference, located, again ironically, in the environs of the Mennonite World Conference assembly.

The part of the MWC world body that had the unique opportunity in North America to lead the way in "Walking with God" (the MWC theme) was instead steeped in an inner struggle, preoccupied with whether they could stay together over one item in the Mennonite Confession of Faith (1995)—that "marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman for life," ruling out same-sex unions and marginalizing a growing and more vocal LGBTQ community.

The founding "western/white" segment of the world body was now floundering while the non-white majority was rising to the occasion with a level of spiritual energy that inspired those attending and those looking in via the social media and live-streaming of the main events. The joy was

not shallow, though, with acknowledgment of pain and persecution in many parts of the globe. Honesty and candour were evident from the outset with the marching in and drumming of native Americans in Pennsylvania and the recounting of native people losing their land to whites.

This confession resonated strongly with the nearly 1,000 Canadians attending, fresh from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee hearings in Ottawa. There was the call from a Young Anabaptist, Kevin Ressler, son of an American father and a Tanzanian mother, for the Anabaptist church to "regain its confidence and become boldly prophetic again." There seemed to be a shared determination to be peacemakers around the world, even though peace making manifests itself differently in different cultures.

A clarion call for unity amid diversity was another dominant theme. Wieteke van der Molen, a Dutch theologian living in a post-Christian setting, defined autonomy as "not about making your own rules, but accepting the other people in your lives." That's what makes community, she said, citing the story of Jacob, who though charting his own course, was stopped in his tracks by God to acknowledge those around him who helped to shape him.

The powerful words, the uniting music, the rich fellowship of this particular gathering gave us a model for living our Anabaptist faith in the 21st century. It was best expressed by incoming president of MWC, Nelson Kraybill, who said: "If Jesus could break bread with

Judas, who betrayed him, and wash the feet of Peter, who denied him, perhaps we can remain in loving fellowship even when we do not all agree. If Mennonites in North America are reconfiguring ecclesial relationships, it is essential to do that with love and mutual respect, and to continue to find ways to work together."

And in music by Canadian Bryan Moyer Suderman who coined these lyrics in "You're Not Alone." "Look close," he wrote and sang, "you'll see this body's not a pretty sight/ wounds and blemishes and sores/ but with the saints of every place and point in time/ we are the body of our Lord."

We predict this Mennonite World Conference assembly will go down in history as a milestone on our global faith pilgrimage. It pointed the way at a time of unusual struggle within and without, a time of new resolve to "walk with God" despite a rough path, an occasion for sisters and brothers, no matter what the colour of their skin, their language or their culture, to make common cause in following Jesus.

Staff changes

After working as *Canadian Mennonite's* administrative assistant in the early 2000s, **Natasha Krahn** is returning to cover Lisa Jacky's maternity leave. Natasha and her husband, Dave Chodos, have two children, Sam and Rachel, and attend Waterloo North Mennonite Church. **Rachel Bergen** is leaving her role as Young Voices Co-Editor to take part in Mennonite Central Committee's Serving and Learning Together program. She will be stationed in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, for a year working for the Interfaith Cooperation Forum as a writer and editor.



Krahn



Bergen

ABOUT THE COVER:

Debora Prabu, from Indonesia, sings during one of the nine worship services at Mennonite World Conference Assembly, held July 21 to 26, 2015. She was part of the 17-person international music ensemble led by Marcy Hostetler, of the U.S.A. Each day they focussed on music from one of the continents.

PHOTO: DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE

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Walking with God and each other

7,500 Anabaptists share joys, burdens at global assembly

BY PAUL SCHRAG

For Meetinghouse
HARRISBURG, PA.



*"The church will test our faith"
– Tom Yoder Neufeld*



*"We are all ethnically
Anabaptist..." – Kevin Ressler*



*"...we are first and foremost a
Jesus church" – Bruxy Cavey*

In his friendship group at the Mennonite World Conference assembly, Francis Ojwang found that getting to know fellow believers from distant places brought an unexpected blessing.

The Kenyan pastor had hoped that his wife, Everline Achieng, could travel with him to the 16th global assembly of Anabaptists. The once-every-six-years event drew more than 7,500 people from 65 countries to the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg, Pa., from July 21-26. The theme was "Walking with God." It was the first time since 1978 that U.S. churches hosted the global assembly. But, like about 300 others from various countries, Ojwang's wife's visa was denied. The couple had spent more than \$1,000 on expenses such as visa interviews and passports—and half of it had been for nothing.

"I was disappointed, but not to the breaking point, because I believe all things work to good for those who love the Lord," Ojwang said July 25. He shared his story with friendship group No. 348—one of more than 250 circles of about 10 people each that met for 45 minutes after each morning worship service.

The rest of Ojwang's group, all from the United States, took up a collection. At their last meeting, they gave the father of six an envelope containing enough cash to cover a significant part of his loss.

"This is a great surprise and blessing," he said. "Now I will be able to buy a couple of books and a t-shirt for my wife."



Morning and evening worship services featured songs from various cultures and countries. Many people found the music inspiring.

He could do more than that. Not knowing how much was in the envelope, he promised some of the funds would help the orphans who make up about half of the 120 children in his congregation's Sunday school.

Before the gift, he had \$5 in his pocket. Appropriately, the day's theme was "Walking in Receiving and Giving."

Friendship group No. 348's experience of cross-cultural sharing was one of countless moments—worshiping with the multitude, listening to music in the Global Church Village, competing for the Anabaptist World Cup or visiting in the hallways—that drew Anabaptists from around the world into closer fellowship.

"The church will test our faith. After all, you and I are in it," Tom Yoder Neufeld of Canada said in a July 22 sermon. "But the church is also God's gift of us walking together."

With colourful MWC banners hanging on each side of the stage and a huge video screen behind the podium, worshipers gathered in a 1930s-vintage arena that hosts events such as rodeos, tractor pulls,

motorcycle races and farm shows.

Howard Good, national coordinator for the assembly, said planners wondered, "Would attendees be OK with the occasional farm smell? I grew up on a farm, so I've enjoyed that."

The assembly rented 30 large tents to create more space for smaller meetings, such as afternoon workshops, within the complex. Volunteers sped to their errands on big-wheeled Amish-made scooters that resemble bicycles.

Spirit-filled music

Each evening worship service featured songs from various countries and cultures. On July 22 the crowd sang consecutive songs from Korea and India, the latter with Hindi words, but both with one word in common: "Hallelujah!"

On the day that featured Europe, a string ensemble played while the crowd sang "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring." American folk songs like "Down by the Riverside" enlivened the closing service, which became a clap-along hoedown, with a few worshipers dancing in the aisles, during "I'll Fly Away."

"The spirit touches our hearts as we sing together, as our brothers and sisters sing in different parts of the world," said worship leader Don McNiven of Canada.

Music wasn't limited to worship services. For Benjamin Krauss of Germany, hymn singing created a meaningful moment during the Global Youth Summit, a three-day pre-assembly event that drew more than 400 young adults from around the world.

He said the North Americans formed a circle around the other participants and sang "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow," known by its *Mennonite Hymnal* number, "606." Then the entire group sang together. To Krauss, the hymn singing was a way the North Americans "blessed us as their guests."

"It's a culturally specific thing," he said. "You are very good at four-part harmony singing. It is very Mennonite for North Americans, but it is very North American for us from other parts of the world."

"It was a way of speaking your truth without excluding other truths. We experienced our differences and also found what we have in common."

Critique and praise

At twice-daily worship services, sermons brought encouragement and challenge. Each morning service included a “young Anabaptist” response from a different continent.

Kevin Ressler, the young North American speaker, said “many of us have become Pharisees” eager to condemn the sins of others while ignoring our own. With a Tanzanian mother and an American father, Ressler called himself a “Suba-Luo-Swiss-German-Tanzanian-American-Anabaptist-Mennonite.”

“Yet I am ethnically Mennonite on both sides,” he said. As one who considers Anabaptism his core identity, he said, “I am unicultural. . . . We are all ethnically Anabaptist, for we carry that version of Christ with us wherever we go.”

Rebecca Osiro of Kenya emphasized MWC’s unifying power.

“Through MWC, we have a forum to fellowship,” she said. “It is not a time for us to be critical of or distance ourselves from one another.”

Bruxy Cavey, a Canadian Brethren in Christ pastor, praised Anabaptists for carrying the simple, clear message of Jesus through the centuries: that love for

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



The assembly was a “green” event with strong encouragement to compost as much as possible.



More than 250 friendship groups allowed MWC assembly participants to become friends with believers from around the world.

others is an essential reflection of love for God.

“We are a peace church because we are first and foremost a Jesus church,” he said.

Diverse contexts

Workshops included testimonies about living out the Anabaptist principles of peace and community in diverse contexts.

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Martin Junge, executive secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, was among the guests from other world churches who addressed the assembly. He said he was “amazed and humbled by the gift of reconciliation and forgiveness” in the Anabaptist-Lutheran dialogue.

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE

In Indonesia, with the world’s largest Muslim population, Mennonites face the challenge of building a positive image of Christianity among people who distrust it as a “foreign faith.”

“We live among 150 million Muslims, and they don’t want to read the gospel, so we must help them read the gospel in our lives,” said Paulus Hartono, an Indonesian pastor. He told of befriending a military commander of Hezbollah, a radical Islamist group

Mennonites in the Netherlands, by contrast, navigate a post-Christian society mostly populated by people content to avoid church. Henk Leegte, a pastor from Amsterdam, said many Dutch view the church as a place for hypocrites. But he is happy to be a listening ear for spiritual seekers.

“Sometimes the people who come in are very different from us, but we open up still,” he said. “When people knock on the door and think maybe this is a place to ask spiritual questions, I always say, ‘Yes, come in.’”

In a workshop led by members of the MWC Faith and Life Commission,

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Martin Junge of Chile, executive secretary of Lutheran World Federation, said he believed the word of God was too big to be comprehended by one human being—or any single faith tradition.

“As churches with different emphases and entry points, when we witness together to the gospel of Jesus, we are capturing something that no single denomination can own,” Junge said. “We need those others to get a larger view of what this word of God is all about.”

A choir’s remnant

Carrying a skateboard, Devon Landis sometimes rode through the Farm Show Complex hallways, crossing paths with African women in brightly colored dresses. Curiosity and a sense of duty

drew him to the assembly, said Landis, of Lancaster.

“I want the Mennonite faith to continue,” he said. “The spiritual progress of any group is possible only because individuals are working toward it.”

A highlight for him was sitting in the midst of an exuberant choir from Zimbabwe during a worship service.

Another African choir, from Kenya, arrived with only a fraction of its strength. After years of planning and saving money, only five of their 30 visas requests were approved.

“They are not the only group that experienced this kind of heartbreak,” worship leader McNiven said before the five Kenyans sang. He invited the crowd to stand for 30 seconds in prayer and

For more information on the 16th MWC assembly, go to canadianmennonite.org/mwc-2015-roundup.

Videos of worship times, highlight videos and photos are available at: pa2015.mwc-cmm.org/share-with-your-congregation/.



solidarity with those who didn’t get their visas and to show that “we care for them and miss them here.”

Before an offering for the MWC Deacons Commission, the crowd was reminded that most of the Anabaptist churches’ growth is happening among people who are financially poor.

Meanwhile, 95 percent of Anabaptists' financial resources are located in North America and Europe.

New leadership

The final worship service included the symbolic passing of a shepherd's staff from outgoing President Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe to new President Nelson Kraybill of the United States. Rebecca Osiro of Kenya succeeded Janet Plenert of Canada as vice president.

The final worship service ended with what was described as "the national anthem of Mennonites in North America," an *a cappella* "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow."

"Worship here this week is not simply a foretaste of heaven, it is the reality of heaven come down to earth," Kraybill said.

On Sunday morning, July 26, at least 34 local congregations hosted international guests, concluding the assembly activities.

The United States had the largest number of registrants, 3,931, followed

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Liesa Unger, chief international events coordinator for MWC, rides one of the Amish-made scooters used by volunteers and coordinators to get around the enormous complex.

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



A group of five from Kenya sang on Thursday evening. Of the choir of 30, only these five received visas to come to the U.S. For a report from the visa task force, go to canadianmennonite.org/mwc-2015-visas

by Canada with 1,162. Other leading countries included Zimbabwe with 265, India with 250, Congo with 215, the Netherlands with 125, Germany with 112, Mexico with 106 and Switzerland with 97.

The 17th world assembly is scheduled for 2021 in Indonesia. ☞

Paul Schrag is editor of Mennonite World Review. This article was written for Meetinghouse, a group of Mennonite publications.

Music brings unity at world conference

International songs draw participants into worship despite unfamiliarity

BY LAURA KRAYBILL

For Mennonite World Conference

Worship rises to the rafters as Mennonites and Brethren and Christ join their voices in music from around the world at PA 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Differences exist in theology and culture, yet music is a unifier at the conference, even when it stretches comfort zones.

Whether new or familiar, songs are among the highlights of the conference for many. "I just wish we could sing and sing,"

remarked one participant.

"I want people to come away from this week saying 'Wow, I didn't know I could have a worship experience with Asian music,'" said Marcy Hostetler, song leader for the week and choir director at Lancaster Mennonite High School.

As participants learned songs and movements from many countries, Hostetler was hoping for a common worship experience. "When you open up, you experience

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Marcy Hostetler, led the international music ensemble

something outside of yourself, you experience God.”

The music ensemble itself was diverse, with a pool of talented musicians from around the world. With only three days to practice and a variety of cultural views on women in leadership, Hostetler had concerns about how the group would function.

“We have not had a single issue. I’m experiencing joy leading with these people.”

Part of the joy comes from unexpected connections. When Hostetler recorded an Angolan refugee boy singing in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1983, she could not have imagined being on the same music team at assembly 32 years later.

Though all her cassette tapes were later stolen, Hostetler’s brother found the tape containing Dodo Miranda’s voice in his home. When Miranda applied to be in the MWC music team, Hochstetler had the joy of sharing the found recording with him.

Each day featured a different continent in music selection, including Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. By worshipping in a variety of styles, Hostetler has a vision that the music will be “a powerful bonding medium. There is nothing like singing together to cross cultural boundaries.” ☞

Laura Kraybill of Elkhart, Ind., will begin studying theology this fall. For the past five years she directed the theater program at Hesston College, Kansas.

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Nomthandazo, from Canada, gets involved in the children’s activities at Mennonite World Conference Assembly.

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Comforter knotting was among the service projects available to the children.



Natasha Neustaedter Barg gets some tips on playing a gamelan instrument from player Andrew Beltaos, as part of an evening youth event.

MWC youth program supported by MC Canada

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DOREEN MARTENS

For Meetinghouse

Megan Breidigan may be only 16, but she's already figured out there's nothing quite like a Mennonite World Conference assembly. The Douglasville, Pa., high school student says this is different from national youth conventions because of the diversity of the young people you can meet: "all different cultures are coming together and it's really an experience that makes you realize it's not just your own little bubble in the United States."

She's one of nearly 700 teenagers who added a special vibe to Assembly 2015, thanks in part to cooperation between MWC and Mennonite Church Canada, which decided to hold its usual biennial youth event in conjunction with the assembly and then threw its evening programming open to U.S. and international participants. Some 315 of the participants were from Canada, with the rest mainly

from the United States and about 70 from other countries.

An international MWC committee under the leadership of Egon Sawatsky of Paraguay, offered morning sessions connecting with the theme of each day, following the first part of the morning worship.

Planning began in September with other participants including Sheri Wenger and Lynn Carlson of Lancaster, Pa., Aharon Gonzalez of Costa Rica and Liesa Unger of Germany. On Thursday, hundreds of youth paired up in a game involving Skittles and what most interpreted as an arm-wrestling competition to earn them—which in the end offered a vivid lesson in the value of cooperation and sharing. Then they formed rotating concentric circles for a speedy series of conversations on topics important to teens, from their relationships with their parents to their future goals, to "What



Clara Flores (left), Kailey Schroeder and Joel Heppner, who knew each other as youngsters in Bolivia, were able to spend time together.

does it mean to walk in conflict and reconciliation (the theme of the day) in your community?" And—the one that drew the most gasps—"What are the non-negotiable qualities of your future spouse?"

Thursday morning closed with prayer circles of about 16 participants each near "prayer poles," on which was placed a summary of an issue—the conflict in Ukraine, for example—which the teens discussed and then prayed about together.

For some teens, the youth events have been just as much about happy reunions as the Assembly is for adults. Clara Flores, who now lives in Honduras, and her BFF, Kailey Schroeder, met when they were 5 or 6, when their parents were serving in Bolivia, and are delighted to be spending time together.

Evenings at Messiah College, where many of the teens stayed, offered more fun activities, from a concert one night by The Walking Roots to a giant Dutch Blitz game. On Wednesday night, the Grebel Gamelan visited, giving youth a chance to try their hand at playing the Indonesian instruments. Others played indoor soccer or board games, or just hung out enjoying an evening snack.

David Bergen, executive minister for Christian formation at Mennonite Church Canada, said that once the conference had made the decision to hold youth events in

Harrisburg, two Canadian colleges stepped in to help: Canadian Mennonite University and Conrad Grebel University College. When a significant number of Americans also registered, Eastern Mennonite University also joined. Each planned activities for one of the evenings.

Ashaneé Cooper, from Capital Christian Fellowship in Maryland, was wearing a collection of other kids' Assembly tags around her neck Wednesday night while watching a wild game of Hungry Hippos. In this

game players, lying on their stomachs on a tethered moving dolly, roll into a pile of balloons holding a plastic bin with which to capture a balloon or two before being reeled back by their teammates.

The 14-year-old said she loved the music and getting to know new people from other countries like Canada and Brazil. "I was already close to God, but this helps me meet new people who are as close to God as I am," she said. And really, isn't that what this gathering is all about? ❧

delegation consisting of MWC incoming president Nelson Kraybill, treasurer Ernst Bergen, and general-secretary César García.

"Never forget that while you need the wisdom of those older and more experienced than you, revolution starts with young people," said García. "Jesus was young. So were Jesus' disciples. And they turned the world upside down."

While delegates focused on discerning how to use their gifts for the global church, participants were offered many activities to learn more about their Anabaptist roots and the global church.

Workshop subjects ranged from interfaith and cross-cultural engagement, incorporating social media in the church while still making relationships real, to case studies on living out peace and justice in different parts of the world.

Activities from concerts, sports and games, a collaborative art project, drumming and dance showcases, to movie nights enhanced the cross-cultural experience. ❧

Elina Ciptadi-Perkins is a copywriter and communications consultant. She is an Indonesian Mennonite who lives in Singapore with her family.

Global Youth Summit calls young people to share gifts

BY ELINA CIPTADI-PERKINS

For Mennonite World Conference

The three-day Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Global Youth Summit (GYS) concluded Sunday, July 19, with a strong call to young adults to impact the world by sharing their gifts.

Under the theme, "Called to Share: My Gifts, Our Gifts," 42 delegates and more than 400 participants discussed what they wanted to offer the global church. For three days, they gave gifts of presence, stewardship, service, empathy, creativity, knowledge, leadership, the ability to accept different opinions and use technology, among many others. They also spent considerable time discussing how they could use those for the kingdom of God.

"GYS delegates are already doing good work in their respective churches and communities. They work well together and have empathy for each other," said Rodrigo Pedroza, Latin American representative and chair of the Young Anabaptists (YABs) committee. "But after three days of cross-cultural interaction and exploration of biblical texts about gifts and callings, their confidence and understanding of sharing has grown.

"Now, their task is to share this message and energy to enrich their church conferences," Pedroza said. "We hope that their church leaders will support them to grow

in their spirituality and leadership capacity. The gifts from the different generations in the church will be a powerful testimony for the kingdom of God."

This offering of gifts to the church was highly appreciated by the MWC Koinonia

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE PHOTO



Participants in the Global Youth Summit wrote messages of encouragement to Lee Sang Min, a conscientious objector under detention in South Korea.

PHOTOS BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Roland Yoder (centre) puts his own thumbprint on the three-dimensional sculpture of the MWC logo that he designed. Vikal Rao (left) from India was the overall creator of the Global Church Village and Lowell Jantzi (right) helped to carry out the concept.

Global Church Village invites visitors to leave their mark

By **CONNIE FABER**
For Meetinghouse

“This seems like an innocent form of community graffiti,” Roland Yoder said with a smile as he watched the hub of activity around the three-dimensional sculpture of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) logo that Yoder designed for the Global Church Village (GCV).

Visitors to the village were invited to put their thumbprints on the wooden sculpture located in the GCV square. By Saturday, the last day of the MWC Assembly, the white spokes were covered with colorful prints left by people from around the globe.

Yoder, who spent almost 12 hours onsite each day during the Assembly, observed the transformation in silence. A note pinned to his shirt read, “My voice is on vacation through July.” Yoder is quiet by nature, says his wife, Dottie. But his silence during the MWC Assembly was not

by choice. Yoder was recently diagnosed with polyps on his vocal chords, and his doctor prescribed six weeks of silence; this was week five.

“Not a convenient time,” wrote Yoder on the notepad he kept in easy reach. “Thank God for email. When my wife and I made phone calls, we needed two phones. She would talk and I would write answers when necessary, which she would relay.”

The sculpture of the MWC logo was intended to be a focal point in the large equine arena that housed the village. Originally Yoder was asked to design something that could be hung from the ceiling, but Yoder wanted people to be able to touch the sculpture and to interact with the piece in a way that would encourage them to identify with MWC. That led to putting the sculpture on a simple pedestal and the idea of decorating the sculpture



Young people enjoy playing Dutch Blitz in the North American tent.

with thumbprints.

“A thumbprint is a personal thing,” said Yoder.

Designing the sculpture was only part of Yoder’s assignment. Creating an indoor gathering space for the GCV that evoked the outdoors was his other task. Yoder, a retired art and biology teacher, worked with Wes Neuswanger, a high school shop teacher, and Lowell Jantzi, a builder. The three communicated regularly with Vikal Rao of India, who was the overall GCV coordinator.

The result of their collective creativity was a gathering place at the front of the arena that reminded some visitors of a Spanish village square and others of an African market. Carpets covering the dirt floor followed a color scheme created by Yoder. Area greenhouses provided trees,

potted flowering plants, ornamental grasses and bushes that were artfully arranged on the edges of the center green. Benches and wooden lawn chairs offered visitors a place to visit or rest. Empty floor space gave some the chance to lie down for a nap.

Yoder and his crew added touches of Pennsylvania rural life to the GCV. Visitors entered the village via Irishtown Bridge, a covered bridge constructed for MWC by a Lancaster County Pennsylvania Amish farmer and builder. An Amish buggy and a pulley clothesline hung with “plain” clothes were located near the bridge. A 50-year-old John Deere tractor was parked beside one of the display tents.

Tents housing displays from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America as well as the Storytelling Tent and MWC Global Tent circled the village green. The displays typically included photographs, banners, posters, artifacts, videos and recorded music that informed visitors about the culture and church life of the different continents.

The Asia tent was one of the busier exhibits thanks to crafts and other activities that changed daily. People frequently waited in line for a henna tattoo. Visitors could pose with a colorful bicycle taxi from Bangladesh and children could crawl inside a grass roof hut.

The North America tent took advantage of the spacious village green for fast-paced games of Dutch Blitz played with giant cards. Dutch Blitz is very popular among the Pennsylvania Amish and Mennonite communities in the U.S. and Canada.

The Global Church Village stage at the back of the arena also benefitted from Yoder’s creativity. He painted cityscapes on several Styrofoam panels that served as the backdrop for the musicians, dancers and other performers. Volunteers, including residents at Landis Homes, where the Yoders live, shared their artistic talents by painting triangular cardboard columns—no two alike—that stood along the sides of the seating area.

Yoder’s voice was out of commission but not his eyes or his ears.

“I experienced a lot of joy in seeing people from around the world enjoying the natural environment which we had the privilege to be a part of creating,” he said. ❧

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



From left, Emmanuel of India, Khanyisani Ngwenya of Zimbabwe and Tim Hochstetler pack green beans into cans on July 22 in Mennonite Central Committee’s mobile cannery at the Mennonite World Conference assembly. MWC volunteers prepared 3,500 cans of beans destined for food pantries in Pennsylvania. This was the last hurrah for this mobile cannery; by August the new cannery should be ready for the next season of meat canning.

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



The first soccer tournament for Mennonite World Conference involved 269 players—210 males and 59 females. The Anabaptist World Cup was held at Logan Park in Dillsburg, Pa. with players from 23 countries and an age range from 6 to 64. The teams were intentionally diversified by country, gender and age.

Women gather to explore global network

Virginia A. Hostetler, with reports by Harriet Sider Bicksler and Elina Ciptadi-Perkins

For Meetinghouse

For the first time Anabaptist women gathered from across the world to consider forming a global Anabaptist women's network. The Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly, provided the occasion for regional gatherings of women as well as a joint meeting to explore the vision for greater connections among women doing theology and pastoral work across the Anabaptist world.

In regional sessions during the week, women from Asia, Latin America, North America and Europe met to hear updates of what is already happening in their regions and to consider how they might work together in more formal networks within their own regions.

These sessions were followed by a joint gathering on Friday afternoon, in which women from all the continents were invited to give perspectives about a global network. Hosted by the Latin American women theologians, the three-and-a-half-hour gathering included liturgy, singing,

movement and art, along with reports and group discussions. Close to 100 women participated.

The participants explored two main questions:

- Is there a need for a global women's theological network?
- What would the function of this network be?

When asked about the need, the Latin American participants responded with an enthusiastic "Si!" They seemed to speak for all. Comments included, "I know that my world is too small and I need others." The consensus was to move ahead by appointing regional contacts to work on implementation of a network.

Over the years MWC has supported networking opportunities and theological training for women. However, some participants of Friday's meeting expressed concerns about the small representation of women on the MWC General Council and in the commissions. Of the 150 delegates

to the Council, which met July 16 to 20, fewer than a dozen were women. As one woman from the Global South exclaimed, "Is this equality? Is this just? In our churches the majority is women!" Another one said, "Without women's voices, we're missing half of the wisdom of God"

The MWC General Council is comprised of church leaders from around the globe and helps shape the mandate of MWC. Members are selected by the MWC national member churches and conferences.

Regional networks

The history of the women theologians' movement has its beginnings in Africa, with the formation of the African Anabaptist Women Theologians in 2001. The group has encouraged and facilitated theological training for women from various African countries, in partnership with Mennonite Church USA and MWC. The African group did not meet in Harrisburg.

At the 2003 MWC assembly in Zimbabwe, Latin American women were inspired by their African sisters and began exploring a network in their own continent. They went on to form the Latin American Women Theologians Movement and held their first continental meeting at the 2009 MWC assembly in Paraguay.

At the 2015 assembly, the Latin American women told stories about their unique realities and expressed appreciation for the activity of the Sister Care program in various Latin American countries. Sister Care is a program of Mennonite women USA that has conducted workshops in Anabaptist communities in Latin America and Asia.

Conversations about an Asian women theologians' network began in India in 2012 under the name Theologically Trained Anabaptist Women of India. This was a local initiative, endorsed by MWC, to empower theologically trained Anabaptist women. At the 2015 assembly they had further conversations.

Women in Canada and the U. S. have held events related to women and theology, but there has not been an official structure formed. About 50 interested women met in Harrisburg to determine whether there was interest in creating a more organized network for North American women. The

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Lesly Henriquez (Honduras), Albita Castillo (Guatemala), and Aurora Pereira (Honduras) work at a communal art project titled, "Women in Conversation."

group brainstormed about practical ideas that would be useful to women in North America and beyond.

A small group of European women gathered on Thursday, from the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland. They reported that, at this point, they do not have a continental network, and they weren't sure how one would function in Europe. They had conversation about what ordination is and whether it is something women pastors should seek. The session ended with Elizabeth Soto, the former moderator of Mennonite Church USA, "sharing" her ordination with Coot Winkler Prins, a Dutch pastor who has not been able to receive ordination for her ministry.

PA 2015

In Harrisburg a room was designated for the regional and joint meetings. Perhaps reflecting the larger reality of women's struggles to gain recognition and status in the church, the meeting room was at the far side of the Farm Show Complex, distant from the dining and informal gathering areas and from the mass meetings, with little signage along the way.

Questions that emerged during the various PA 2015 sessions included:

- Who is a theologian? Some groups have

expanded the definition to include women who are doing pastoral work and community leadership. There was also a recognition that women "do" theology differently than men.

- What can women do to get to know their sisters from other countries and walk alongside them, in spite of the differences and the distances?
- How can younger women be encouraged to engage in the theology?
- Is the MWC structure helpful for making these connections?
- What can women offer to MWC and what can they ask of MWC?

The gatherings also had a communal artistic expression. Audrey Kanagy, an artist and pastor in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, spearheaded a decoupage project titled "Women in Conversation." Four panels, each with a sketch of a woman from a specific continent, were available for attendees to help express themselves creatively. Kanagy invited women to paste coloured bits of paper on the sketches, and some worked on the art as the sessions were happening.

At the large Friday gathering, a piece of the communal artwork was signed by participants, with the plan to send it to the women from the Democratic Republic of Congo who could not get visas to attend the assembly. ❧

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Two prefabricated houses were built for Mennonite Disaster Service at PA 2015. MDS staff were on hand every afternoon to guide volunteers in constructing the floors and walls for houses destined for two families who lost their homes in natural disasters, one in Nebraska and the other in Maryland.

/// Briefly noted

Global Anabaptist Health Network envisioned

Harrisburg, Pa.—More than 90 health care leaders from 18 countries met in the days preceding PA 2015. They gathered to worship, learn from each other and think creatively about how Anabaptist-related health care organizations and those working in this field might cooperate more fully in the future. A major focus under consideration was the development of a Global Anabaptist Health Network. Pakisa Tshimika, former associate general secretary of Mennonite World Conference and founder of the Mama Makeka House of Hope, has long championed this idea. "For many decades, I dreamed of a space where Anabaptist health professionals and institutions from around the globe could meet to share and exchange on subjects of common interest," he says. "Clearly, there is interest among us to lean into some new kinds of connections," says Rick Stiffney, president and CEO of MHS Alliance, a not-for-profit organization that supports Mennonite and Anabaptist faith-grounded health and human service providers. A coordinating group representing the breadth of MWC will advance the summit's ideas over the next three years, says Stiffney. They will develop a database, facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges and lay groundwork for a second leadership summit. Summit moderator Karen Baillie, CEO of Menno Place, a community of care in Abbotsford, B.C., says the summit reaffirmed the mission to serve as Anabaptists who value loving our neighbours, peace and justice. "Our decision to commit to each other and create a global network reinforces our vision of community and allows us to serve others better," she says.

—by Larry Guengerich, director of communications and church relations for Landis Communities.

General Council fosters interdependence in global communion

By RON REMPEL

Mennonite World Conference
HARRISBURG, PA.

In four days of meetings just prior to the July 21-26 Mennonite World Conference Assembly, the General Council gathered with about 120 representatives from MWC member churches around the world. About half the time involved sharing stories and reflecting on themes of unity and diversity. Members shared stories from Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Panama, Angola, Venezuela, India, South Korea and other countries. A common theme was appreciation for prayers and expressions of solidarity from other MWC member churches.

In their business sessions, the General Council sought to strengthen the organizational structure that make global relationships possible. Each of the four MWC commissions—Faith and Life, Mission, Peace, Deacons—which have been in place for only the past six years, reported on their vision and work. They have a wide range of involvements with the limited funds available to them.

The General Council also heard that

relations with and among member churches have been enhanced through the work of regional representatives on each continent. As finances permit, plans call for the appointment of additional regional representatives in Africa and Latin America.

To fund the work of MWC, each member church is asked for a “fair share” contribution based on the “purchasing power parity” of each country. All contributions from individuals and congregations of MWC member churches count toward their fair share.

In an evening gathering, the General Council expressed appreciation for Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe, who is completing his six-year term as the MWC president at this Assembly. The incoming president, Nelson Kraybill of the United States, began his term as president immediately following the Assembly. The General Council also elected Rebecca Osiro of Kenya as MWC vice-president, to succeed Janet Plenert of Canada. ☸

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Gay Kauffman from Calgary distributes communion during the Friday evening service. She and her husband Ed, who is pastor at First Mennonite Church in Calgary, volunteered by helping to set up chairs for seminars and ushering. “We’re from North America, so we have a responsibility to help host,” said Kauffman. “We couldn’t just sit!”

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Danisa Ndlovu (left) of Zimbabwe and Janet Plenert of Canada have completed six years as president and vice-president of Mennonite World Conference.

Peace workers imagine a global network

BY TIM HUBER

For Meetinghouse

Mennonite peace workers from around the world huddled in a tent July 24 at the Mennonite World Conference assembly to dream of a global Anabaptist peace network. Though many advocated for concrete steps to make that dream a reality, for now it remains something less.

MWC already has similar global networks focused on missions and service. Outgoing MWC Peace Commission secretary Jack Suderman of Canada led the meeting and said such a peace network would be intended to facilitate interaction among peacemakers from around the world.

There are several Anabaptist peace organizations around the world, in addition to an estimated 10,000 MWC member congregations that can be agents of God's peace in their immediate vicinities. A peace network would provide an opportunity to share stories and practices, successes and failures, in both physical settings and online.

Suderman said one concern is whether it will be financially possible to not only start such a network but sustain it long term. Since the 1970s there have been efforts to establish a global peace organization, but none survived very long.

"Our budget for the entire Peace Commission for the entire year is \$5,000," he said. "You can begin to do the calculations to determine what our capacity is for travel, for meetings, for personnel. So that becomes a very real concern for us as well."

Suderman said it makes sense for MWC to orchestrate such a network. A pre-assembly survey of peace institutions showed wide interest in a global network. It also asked if those institutions would help fund it.

"Almost unanimously the answer was 'no' or 'I'd rather not,'" he said. "So that gives rise to our suspicion that MWC has

the capacity to be the institutional home."

For several meeting attendees, that answer wasn't good enough.

"We started this discussion three years ago, and I think it's clear with all of us that we want this network," said Fernando Enns of Germany, pressing Suderman and the Peace Commission to introduce a clear proposal rather than potential focuses and vague framework ideas. "... I would assume there is also consensus that MWC should also be that instrument. The next question is obviously how do we make that happen?"

"For us Mennonites it has never been the first question. The first question is what do we want to do? Let's go start it, and then we will find the funds."

Others shared Enns' optimism.

"I have been working with Mennonite agencies and institutions most of my life," said David Shenk of Eastern Mennonite

Missions' Christian Muslim Relations Team. "I would be hard-pressed to remember any time when there has been a shortage of funds when a vision has clearly been defined."

Suderman expressed an interest instead in sharing ideas about what a network could look like, perhaps what location might be willing to give it a space to operate and who would pay for it.

"If there is a way of resolving that particular question in a way that is reasonable, it makes a lot of sense for MWC to be that institutional home," Suderman said. "So far we have no proposal and we don't have a lot of optimism that we have a plan to overcome that [lack of financial] momentum."

Conrad Grebel University College Centre for Peace Advancement director Paul Heidebrecht said one path forward could be the Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival the institution will host June 9-12, 2016.

"We think this could be a helpful vehicle not only for sharing stories ... but also to wrestle with the question of how to move forward with the peace commission," he said, offering the centre's "peace incubator" to help explore what could take shape for MWC. ☸

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Joji Pantoja, being interviewed by Michael Hostetler, works at peace-building in the Philippines through Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

Chinese church leaders working at Anabaptist vision

BY JEWEL SHOWALTER

Harrisburg, Pa.

It was more than a reunion, although it was that too, as more than 30 Chinese guests and friends of China gathered at the Harrisburg Brethren In Christ Church on July 25, the closing afternoon of the Mennonite World Conference assembly.

Myrrl Byler, director of Mennonite Partners in China (MPC), says MPC remains one of the best examples of inter-agency cooperation for more than three decades. Under its auspices, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Church Canada Witness, Eastern Mennonite Missions and several Mennonite colleges have collaborated to place English teachers, connect with the Chinese church, sponsor learning

tours and coordinate student and faculty exchanges from middle school to university levels.

Byler noted that today MPC places only about 10 English teachers per year in China compared to three or four times that many in previous years.

"Anabaptist influence in China shouldn't just fizzle away," Byler said. "We hope our work is not just dependent on a few foreign staff." A network of Chinese church leaders who have interacted with MPC staff over the years has picked up the vision to work together in theological training, social welfare programs and bridge building between registered and unregistered churches, said Byler.

"For example, we are looking to pioneer a home for the elderly as that is currently a big social need in China," said a young Chinese church leader* who is interning at the Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community in Harrisonburg, Virginia, this year.

MPC will also be involved in administering various MCC projects in China, involving local leaders to do the administration. "We're excited to pull these different projects into local churches," Byler said.

"I am committed to the Anabaptist vision," one of the Chinese church leaders* commented. "It's very important for the Chinese church which is growing rapidly and influenced by various and sundry theological winds. . . . I hope Anabaptist theology can make a strong contribution in this context. ☺

**Leaders are intentionally not named because of sensitivities in the China context.*

Jewel Showalter is a writer, grandmother of 14, and servant of the global church.

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO



The Mennonite Church Canada booth was one of the only places in the whole complex with comfortable seating. The couches were often full of people resting and chatting.

MWC PHOTO BY DANIA CIPTADI



An extensive art exhibit was available for assembly participants.

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN, FOR MEETINGHOUSE



On Sunday, July 26, 34 local congregations hosted international guests as part of “assembly scattered.” Here Tinodashe (Tino) Gumbo from Zimbabwe meets Bill Sykes, a member of West End Mennonite Fellowship in Lancaster, Pa. Next to Tino is his host, Mark Averill. Tino works for Mennonite Central Committee in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. West End held its service in the Lancaster County Park with a baptism and a fellowship meal.

Walking with God through art

BY BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER
For Mennonite World Conference

Mennonite World Conference assemblies are often remembered as festivals of words, with many stories, songs, sermons and conversations. But what about visual art?

“There has been a surge of interest in art in the Anabaptist world,” says Geoff Isley, PA2015 visual arts planning team coordinator.

Following the tradition of the last few MWC gatherings, Assembly 16 featured six exhibits organized around themes, from Ray Dirks’s *On the Road to Freedom* paintings of the suffering of the Mennonite migrations out of Russia, to a series of paintings of the stations of the cross, used liturgically in Community Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa.

For the first time, Assembly 16 also included a juried art exhibit. Featuring some 30 paintings and sculptures, the collection reflected a variety of mediums and styles, from representational art to more abstract forms.

A year prior to assembly, the visual arts team invited churches to have their artists submit digital images of their art. Some 30 of these were selected by Theodor Prescott, art instructor at Messiah College, who was not part of the visual arts planning team.

Isley is pleased with the interest shown by assembly-goers. He was, however, disappointed that there was only

one submission from outside of North America: an abstract painting by Lucy Riquelme of Chile, entitled “Walking with Jesus.” The logistics of transporting art across borders may have been a factor.

Still, the juried exhibits and the non-juried shows offered a way for assembly participants to communicate and learn at a level deeper than words.

“We wanted people from outside North America to know that [visual communication] is important, too,” says Isley. ❧

Byron Rempel-Burkholder is a freelance writer and editor from Winnipeg.

❧ For discussion

1. Mennonite World Conference has been meeting regularly (more recently about every six years) for the last 90 years. What are some of the blessings that come out of these international experiences? How important is it to have large assemblies where many people gather?
2. As well as Europe and North America, MWC assembly has been held in Brazil, India, Zimbabwe and Paraguay. What are the advantages and disadvantages of holding MWC assembly in North America? How much is paternalism still a major problem? Do North Americans assume they know how to do things better?
3. Mennonite World Conference is an organization of churches while Mennonite Central Committee works to provide relief from suffering, development and peace training. How much should the work of MCC be tied directly to international churches? How could the churches of MWC do a better job of sharing their gifts and resources?
4. What vision do you have for the future of Mennonite World Conference?

—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.canadian-mennonite.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.

✉ TRC not a road map forward

RE: "WHAT DO we take away from the TRC?" editorial, June 22, page 2.

What do we take from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Not much, I am afraid. The Canadian TRC has documented a sordid chapter in Canada's history, a chapter that has left many scarred. That injustice took place, and that injury continues to damage people's lives is a fact.

Unfortunately, the way forward seems much more confused. No country should affirm the UN statement on Aboriginal Rights, because it calls into question national sovereignty. It is folly for Canada's government to give one statement pre-eminence over the founding law of our land.

Our prime minister has apologized. There is no benefit to Canada or to residential school survivors in having the Canadian government approach the pope to apologize.

FROM OUR LEADERS

A word from the MC Sask moderator

BY KEN WARKENTIN

As the new moderator of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, I am dealing with feelings of anticipation, apprehension, excitement and a little fear.

As with the other area churches, we are an association of individual churches. These churches are located in different areas, understand some scripture slightly differently, and see their role of living out the Christian message in unique ways. However, we still work together enthusiastically in the ministry of camps, seniors' housing, education etc.

In an ever-changing society, and an ever-changing understanding of God's creation and God's work, it is sometimes difficult to stay on the same page as we try to work together. It is understandable that it is difficult and troublesome

when the way one has been taught and instructed for many years is now viewed and understood differently by others. We can still support each other and work together on many things when we



We do church differently these days.

have different beliefs and understandings on some of these issues. I believe that we can support each other in churches, our area churches and our national church as we work together to understand each other and encourage each other.

We do church differently these days. With winter and summer getaways, children and grandchildren scattered around the world, we need to find ways to stay connected. How do we do church now?

There are many needs in our society. There are also many marginalized in

our society who are in great need of the Good News. How each of us and our churches live out that Good News varies with how we see the need, the abilities we have, and our willingness to get involved. I look forward to working together as we support each other in the work.

Some are very apprehensive about the future of the organized church. There is no doubt that we need to change and adjust how we will function, but I am encouraged when I see the possibilities in our new young pastors. They have vision, drive and ability and are willing to work as a team in their churches, with fellow

pastors, and in society in general. We also have pastors with experience and many other church workers who have done and continue to do much good work.

It is my hope that with love, care, forgiveness and grace, we can encourage each other as we seek to live out the love of Jesus in a world that needs that Good News. We can leave the judging to God and give our energy, guided by the Holy Spirit, to living the Jesus way.

Ken Warkentin is moderator of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

Would it not render the previous apologies insincere?

By calling non-aboriginal persons “settlers,” we fall into the trap of defining persons by an obscure, malleable definition that diffuses responsibility. To say all settlers are guilty because they belong to this group, not because of their actions, is the philosophical basis for racism. It is nonsense to argue that we are guilty of the sins of government policy created generations ago, because in some way we benefited.

The injustices of the past continue to haunt us.

The solutions and strategies offered here will do little more than alienate Mennonite lay believers and continue the narrative that has left aboriginal communities dependent on tax dollars and kept aboriginal communities in a semi-permanent state of infantilism.

The TRC gave us a window into a truth. It has not given us a road map forward. Not one that all Canadians can navigate, and in that the TRC will be judged in years to come as a failure.

WALTER BERGEN, CHILLIWACK, B.C.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Mission drift

PHIL WAGLER

In the last couple decades, most churches caught the mission statement bug. To revisit, renew, or finally wrestle with a reason for being is crucial for any organism. As human beings we all eventually ask the big “why” of existence, so why should it be any different for groups of human beings.

Sometimes, however, these exercises in finding ourselves are just anxious navel-gazing and unnecessarily complicated. Sometimes we seek to discover the “new” when we should be recommitting ourselves to more faithfully steward what has been active long before we showed up. At the end of the day, as local churches or faith-based organizations, we’re really building upon a foundation with the materials necessary for our time and circumstance.

We are free to build with all the new creativity we can muster, but if we mess with the foundation we become fundamentally flawed and create the haughty conditions for our own downfall. Rejecting foundations is the wickedness of the evil one. “Pride,” says the teacher, “goes before destruction” (Proverbs 16:18).

Authors Peter Greer and Chris Horst in *Mission Drift* highlight the need to labour long at remaining “mission true.”

Surveying the stories of numerous organizations—including those like Harvard and the “Y” who have overtly abandoned their original mission—Greer and Horst note that mission true organizations know three big things:

- Why they exist (remaining students of their history, values, and *raison d'être*).
- How to differentiate means from mission (understanding what can and cannot change).
- How to change in order to reinforce the mission (not avoiding change, but pursuing it when it brings truer life to their values and purpose).



Anabaptists find their foundation in Scripture and confession.

These three things should be humbly considered by every organization claiming roots in the Christian gospel. What might such an exercise reveal about how true we are remaining to what the Holy Spirit breathed into being? What might we discover about what we have been willing to change but shouldn't have, and should have changed but didn't?

Anabaptists find their foundation in Scripture and confession. Menno Simons famously called the floundering congregations of northern Europe to 1

Corinthians 3:11: “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” That was a clarion call to steadfastness in a time when the foundation of Christian faith had disastrously shifted and the good news of the kingdom hung in the balance.

Before Menno came along, the earliest Anabaptists rallied with one mind around the seven points of the 1527 Schleitheim Confession. It begins: “Baptism shall be given to those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ...”

The significance of Menno's foundation and the Schleitheim Confession cannot be understated. They still call those in their spiritual lineage to Christ-centeredness, repentance, demonstrated obedience to the teachings of Jesus, disciple-making community, and fully surrendered lives that for Jesus' sake

perpetuate and participate in no religious or secular evil.

This is the foundation we build on and steward in our time. It is dangerous to disregard either, and folly to think faithfulness means living in the past. Which brings us back to those three big things for remaining “mission true.” Is it time to apply these before we drift too far?

Phil Wagler lives in Surrey, BC and is author of Kingdom Culture (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca).

✉ Thank you for resources for survivors of abuse

THANK YOU FOR your willingness to print material which is shedding light on a very dark and secretive part of our Mennonite history. In particular, I thank you for publishing information regarding the Fund for Survivors of Abuse established by Mennonite Church USA, along with the formation of the Anabaptist/Mennonite chapter of SNAP—The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. It is a sad commentary on religious communities when networks such as these are required because of inappropriate behaviour by

Join the conversation by contributing your own thoughts and opinions. You can read and respond to readers' letters online at canadianmennonite.org.



ordained leaders and others in positions of power. May God have mercy on all the offenders, may all those who have been wounded find healing, and may we have courage to work toward justice for all.
—**MARTHA SMITH GOOD, NEW HAMBURG, ONT.**

NEW CANADIAN VOICE

Ministry in Richmond and in the Punjab

CHARANJIT KUMAR

I'm not exactly a new Canadian as I arrived in Vancouver back in 1989, leaving behind my hometown of Dadwan, Punjab, India.

My grandparents were traditional Hindu and Sikh, but my father joined the British army and so converted to Christianity, though he was a very nominal Christian. My mother had been born into a Sikh family, but she attended a Catholic Church.

Growing up I only attended church very irregularly such as on Christmas Eve. But when I came

to Canada, I met some friends who were attending a small Indo-Canadian gathering at Sherbrooke Mennonite

Church in Vancouver, organized by Pastor Jake Giesbrecht. Rob Sinclair, who would later become a dear friend and partner in ministry, would play Hindi Christian songs on his guitar, and we enjoyed many social events with this small Indo-Canadian Christian fellowship, especially around Indian holidays.



I was baptized June 6, 1992 at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church. Later the Indo-Canadian group disbanded and I joined a local church in Richmond which had a focus on reaching out to Indo-Canadian families in my neighbourhood.

Peace Mennonite Church is very near to our home. My wife Sudha and I began attending Peace in May 2013. Once again we were members of a Mennonite Church. My wife joined a weekly Bible study led by the pastor's wife, and I

I met some friends who were attending a small Indo-Canadian gathering at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church

joined a weekly prayer group that intercedes for the needs of the community and the congregation. I also participate in Peace Church's bi-monthly community meal, and I have just started to lead worship.

In 2007 I started a ministry in my hometown, Dadwan, in the Punjab. I joined together with my friend Rob

Sinclair and his organization Dusty Sandals, which was doing ministry in other parts of India. In Dadwan, Dusty Sandals started a church plant. We began building a church in 2007 and it was completed in 2009. Church attendance is now around 200. We sponsor many kids from local schools, providing them with nutritious meals and soymilk. We also started a hydroponics vegetable garden project. There are seven team members who are evangelists and teachers. One of the exciting new ministries is our theology course for young people. Youths can do one- to three-year diplomas or even a bachelor of theology at the church. Many young people are coming to know Christ through this theology course.

I am thankful for all the support that Peace Mennonite Church gives to me and Sudha here in Richmond and when we are ministering in the Punjab. Last year I developed some serious medical problems with my liver and was not able

to stay in the Punjab for the time I had planned. Please pray that God will give me good health so I can return. Also pray for the Christian churches across India, as there have been attacks, torching of churches and persecution of church leaders recently because of some of the policies of India's current Hindu nationalist government.

VIEWPOINT

How should Anabaptists celebrate 500 years?

BY GORDON HOUSER, EDITOR OF *THE MENNONITE*

FOR MEETINGHOUSE

Mennonite World Conference held its first assembly in 1925, which was the 400th anniversary of the beginning of the Anabaptist movement. With the 500th anniversary now only 10 years away, many people are wondering how MWC plans to commemorate it.

A workshop on July 24 at the MWC Assembly in Harrisburg, Pa., addressed that question. "From Reformation 2017 to Anabaptist 2025: How Should the Global Church Commemorate a 500-Year Birthday?" provided some hints of what may happen.

Hanspeter Jecker, Astrid von Schlachta and John D. Roth convened the workshop and asked for suggestions from those in attendance as well as explaining the context of this question.

In a word, the answer to how to commemorate this is, "carefully."

Roth, who is American, explained how Mennonites first got involved in ecumenical conversations. When Lutherans were set to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, they invited Mennonites to participate. Mennonites explained the awkwardness of this, since the Augsburg Confession damns Anabaptists.

This led later to dialogue between those groups. Roth said, "How we commemorate our beginnings helps us understand who we are today." He also cautioned against any exuberance by saying, "We are celebrating a church division."

Jecker, who is Swiss, explained that Lutherans started a decade of celebration in 2008, leading up to 2017, the

500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation. Meanwhile, the Reformed Church, much more present in Switzerland, is celebrating its origins from 2017 to 2024. He said there have been good contacts between the Reformed Church and Mennonites in Switzerland, with the former taking the lead and proposing projects they want Mennonites to take part in.

Schlachta, who is German, noted that the first MWC Assembly emphasized renewal, being Christocentric, the danger of materialism and the church being the first object of mission.

Roth pointed out that renewal is also of keen interest now. Back in 1925, there were few Anabaptists; now there are 1.9 million. He said the planners of any

events want to be in conversation with the 103 groups that belong to MWC as well as groups that are not members but related, such as the Amish, Old Colony groups and free-church groups in Germany.

Jecker said that any commemoration should reflect our theological commitments, ecumenical partnerships, and our global reality. He presented a set of proposals that include a decade-long commemoration that runs from 2017 to 2025/27.

Tentatively called Renewal 2025, it would include a regional event for each of five continents, to be held every two years. A possible schedule includes a meeting of commissions in 2016, a General Council meeting in 2018, the next MWC Assembly in 2021 in Indonesia, another General Council meeting in 2025, and an MWC Assembly in 2027, possibly in Switzerland.

The regional events, Jecker said, could focus on an array of topics, including the Holy Spirit, Scripture, just peace, religious toleration, unity and diversity, church and society, witness, baptism, revelation, and gender and sexuality. Goals could include intra-Anabaptist relations, ecumenical relations, global witness and self-understanding.

Roth emphasized that the Faith and Life Commission welcomes suggestions for how to proceed. ☸

PHOTO BY DALE D. GEHMAN FOR MEETINGHOUSE



Outgoing MWC president Danisa Ndlovu prays for the new president Nelson Kraybill and his wife Ellen, while members of the MWC executive committee surround them. The new vice-president, Rebecca Osiro, stands beside Ellen.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Brubacher—Naomi Grace Suffling (b. June 9, 2015), to Kate Suffling and Jonathan Brubacher, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Derksen—Caroline Margaret (b. July 29, 2015), to Kevin and Pam Derksen, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Driedger—Andrew Michael (b. June 20, 2015), to Gina Nighswander and David Driedger, Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Fast—Ada Helen (b. July 26, 2015), to Breanne and Nick Fast, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Green—Maxwell Stephen (b. June 28, 2015), to Gloria and Justin Green, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Leis—Eric Vernon (b. June 24, 2015), to Ben and Marlie Leis, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Mader—Richard John (b. June 18, 2015), to Andrea and Scott Mader, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Neufeld—Kiefer James (b. July 17, 2015), to Natalie (Smith) and Scott Neufeld, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Peters—Rehema Ruth Kroeker (b. April 15, 2015), to Heather Peters and Joel Kroeker, Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Rachul—Hannah Taylor (b. July 14, 2015), to Amy and Devin Rachul, Morden Mennonite, Man.

Reddekopp—Hudson Benjamin Lucas (b. July 15, 2015), to Rachel (Guigon) and Randy Reddekopp, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Tsirimokos—Atticus Bernhardt (b. July 11, 2015), to Laura Giesbrecht and Alex Tsirimokos, Toronto United Mennonite, Ont.

Wiebe—Adam Robert Friesen (b. June 30, 2015) to Sara Jane Friesen and Jeremy Wiebe, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Williamson—Petra Josephine (b. June 22, 2015), to Brandy and Mike Williamson, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Yantzi—Bauer Maitland (b. July 8, 2015), to Erin and Dustin Yantzi, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Baptisms

Ethan Haluza-DeLay, Liam Kachkar, Darian Wiebe-Neufeld, Justin Stoesz—First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta., June 14, 2015.

Amber Bonvie, Andrew Janssen, Greg Mason, Isaac Ward, Katrina Steckle, Rachel Schultz, Aaron Oesch—Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite, Zurich, Ont., July 19, 2015.

Ian Epp, Shawn Friesen, Richard Woelk—Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask., May 10, 2015.

Marriages

Clifford/Roes—Michael Clifford and Natalie Roes (Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.) at Waterloo-Kitchener United

Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., July 11, 2015.

Dyck/Enns—Laura Dyck and Joshua Enns, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., July 18, 2015.

Goerzen/Stoesz—Allison Goerzen and Kevin Stoesz (First Mennonite, Edmonton) at Camp Valaqua, Water Valley, Alta., May 16, 2015.

Horniachek/Schellenberg—Burl Horniachek and Angela Schellenberg, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, July 10, 2015.

Moses/Taylor—Stephen Moses and Kayla Taylor at First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta., April 22, 2015.

Deaths

Barratt—Noah, 34 (b. Aug. 2, 1980; d. July 20, 2015), Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Bauman—Maurice, 88 (b. Nov. 28, 1926; d. April 21, 2015), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Belanger—Edmond (Ed) Victory, 61 (b. March 4, 1954; d. July 10, 2015), Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Bergen—Jacob (Jake), 84 (b. Dec. 3, 1930; d. July 2, 2015), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Brenneman—Gerald (Gerry), 71 (b. Sept. 21, 1943; d. June 18, 2015), Cassel Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont., in London, Ont.

Fast—John Peter, 90 (b. Nov. 24, 1924; d. July 17, 2015), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Fast—Wilfrid, 88 (b. April 23, 1927; d. July 22, 2015), First Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

Hofstetter—Ron, 81 (b. Sept. 1, 1933; d. July 9, 2015), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Lichty—Elaine, 56 (b. July 10, 1959; d. July 17, 2015), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Martin—Adeline, 91 (b. June 18, 1924; d. June 24, 2015), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Penner—Mary Marie (nee Klassen), 93 (b. May 4, 1922; d. July 6, 2015), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Poole—Ethel, 84 (b. Aug. 22, 1930; d. July 24, 2015), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Regehr—Eileen (nee Hale), 89 (b. July 9, 1925; d. May 26, 2015), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Regier—Dietrich (Dick), 87 (b. Dec. 17, 1927; d. July 4, 2015), St. Catharines Mennonite, Ont.

Reibling—Dave, 71, (b. Aug. 17, 1943; d. June 19, 2015), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

Reimer—Marie 93 (b. Sept. 2, 1921; d. July 8, 2015), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Rempel—Helen (nee Thiessen), 92 (b. Aug. 19, 1922; d. July 21, 2015), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Rempel—Tina (nee Kehler), 96 (b. Feb. 16, 1919; d. July 25, 2015), Altona Mennonite, Man.

Rempel—Wally, 78 (b. Dec. 3, 1936; d. May 7, 2015), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

Sauder—Wesley M., 94 (b. Jan. 22, 1921; d. July 4, 2015), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Sawatzky—Jim, 81 (b. Dec. 31, 1933; d. June 8, 2015), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Schmidt—Helen (nee Krahn), 84 (b. March 31, 1931; d. June 3, 2015), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Schmidt—Peter, 82 (b. Jan. 19, 1933; d. June 20, 2015), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Shimpo—Mitsuru “Mike,” 83 (b. July 23, 1931; d. May 24, 2015), Waterloo North Mennonite, Ont.

Unruh—Lindsey, 24 (b. June 21, 1991; d. June 25, 2015), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

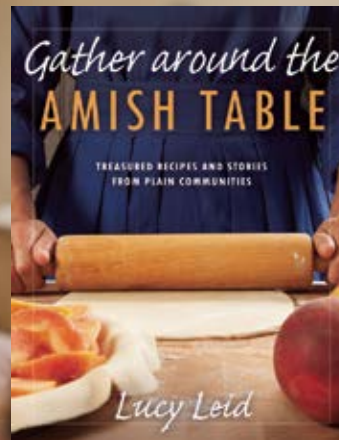
Wallace—George 83 (b. Jan. 27, 1932; d. May 19, 2015), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Zehr—Curtis, 92 (b. Nov. 20, 1922; d. July 29, 2015), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event.

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

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A moment from yesterday



Lenore Mendes of Guatemala addresses Mennonite World Conference 12 in Winnipeg in 1990. She thought she would be speaking to a few hundred people, but was surprised to see thousands. The Winnipeg gathering was the biggest to date with 13,000 registrants. Her sermon in Winnipeg was an important stepping stone to her election to the Executive Committee of MWC. It was the first time a Central American woman would represent Latin America in the MWC Executive Committee. When visiting MWC partners in India and Europe she was troubled by the economic disparity, asking “Why is it that all human beings cannot live under the same conditions of dignity?” Lenore died on January 18, 2014.

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Centre/Mennonite Archival Image Database
Text: Conrad Stoesz, Mennonite Heritage Centre



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GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

VIEWPOINT

Slowing church down

BY RANDELL NEUDORF

HAMILTON, ONT.

The Commons is starting to slow down. No, we are not retiring as a church, we just think it is time for a little different pace. The plan is to switch things up in the fall for our Sunday worship gatherings. We plan to use our gathering time to dig a little deeper into liturgy, spiritual practices, hospitality, old traditions and new creative expressions. To do this we are going to have to slow down a little.

Think of it as “slow church.” Instead of just getting a quick taste of something novel (like a one-off liturgical reading or a cool creative segment), we will slow down and savour what we are learning for a month or so. We want to turn exposure into long-lived practice. The hypothesis is that the repetition of a segment or practice would help us to enter into a deeper form of spiritual participation, and with practice become more aware of what the Holy Spirit might be whispering to us as a community as we seek to get to know God better.

Previously at The Commons we have worked to keep trying something new, to not get stuck in a rut. Gatherings could take many shapes and forms from week to week—a panel discussion, tag team preaching, a lament, a meal, a party. Even communion might look different from month to month for us. This creative drive will still be true for us, but the pace of trying something new will slow down.

Imagine taking time to practice the same breath prayer for four weeks. The chance that those same words might come to you outside of a gathering are much higher than if you just recited those same words for just one week, as a novel experience. With the slow church model we hope to not just expose our



Through July and August, The Commons, a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation in Hamilton, Ont., has been meeting in Beasley Park on Sundays at 6 p.m.

community to interesting spiritual tools, but to actually embed practical spiritual tools into our collective spiritual journey.

Our gathering planning team has begun to brainstorm about which portions of our gatherings and learning opportunities need to be slowed down. Even something as seemingly simple as being responsible for coffee and tea can morph into a spiritual practice if we slow down and become intentional about it. Are we welcoming the other? The newcomer? Has the coffee been brewed to perfection out of love for our neighbour? Is there room to pray for the people you serve? Can fair trade coffee, loose leaf tea, and ice water become a form of communion?

As we slow down we also want to increase the sharing of responsibilities. We believe collaboration and repetition will be a formative experience for both the community and individuals stepping

into leadership. Take for example, if we decided that we were going to engage in a *Lectio Divina* reading for a month. We would pair up two people to craft, prepare and lead the experience each week as mini team.

The benefits of this are:

- Repetition reduces preparation time. The work that used to go into a single gathering segment will now be spread over an entire month.
 - You get a chance for a redo. If you put time and energy into a creative reflection and then were able to improve upon it for four weeks in a row, you might be surprised where that could lead.
 - Diversity reflects God better. As more of us become involved we reflect a richer fuller image of the Triune God.
 - Collaboration can promote deep friendship leading to stronger community ties and compassionate support. As people take the time to chat over coffee about their project, they will inevitably begin to chat about the rest of their lives, the successes, the struggles.
 - Our communal spiritual journey is strengthened. Not every person can be at Sunday gathering every week and the repetition of learning will allow more people to metaphorically “turn to the same page.”
 - Everyone is needed but no one is indispensable. People will be able to commit to crafting something for four weeks in a row because they are able to do it together as a pair. If one person is sick or away, the other person on the team can jump right in.
- It takes a lot of repetition to remember anything worth learning. This true for learning how to lead something specific and for digging deeper into what God is trying to teach us.
- I’m looking forward to seeing where this slower journey takes us. Just like walking a labyrinth, meaning is not always found in the destination but rather in the process and the commitment of repeating the steps. ☸

This article is taken from Randell Neudorf’s blog. To follow what is happening go to www.hamiltoncommons.ca/slowing-church-down/.

AMBS recognizes Nigerian church leader

BY MARY E. KLASSEN

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
ELKHART, IND.

Obed Dashan, pastor and church leader in Nigeria, is receiving the 2015 Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS). He earned a Master of Divinity degree from AMBS in 1990 and did further pastoral training and studies in the Chicago area.

Obed was ordained in 1986 in the Church of Christ in Nations, formerly the Church of Christ in Nigeria. He currently serves as vice president of the denomination and oversees 85 regional church councils.

In the last several years, as the Boko Haram group has targeted Christian churches and institutions in northern Nigeria, Obed has drawn on the peace theology he learned at AMBS. Much of Obed's ministry is encouraging people to live faithfully in the midst of persecution.

"AMBS gave me insights for living effectively and faithfully with ambiguity," Obed wrote. "What do you do when your members are being killed on a daily basis by those who hate the faith? How do you tell them to respond? Responding in love is not natural. It is a supernatural behavior that comes with a deep relationship with the risen Lord Jesus."

In the face of these challenges, Obed says it is God's word and the stories of Jesus and



Obed Dashan, an alumnus of AMBS and a pastor and church leader in Nigeria, received recognition for his ministry and service.

Paul that sustain him. "I anchor my life in my relationship with God and entrust my life into his life and ask for his daily presence and peace. Here, I include death in my daily budget. That helps me to live each day aware that I am a sojourner here and cannot hold on to the world as if it will not end."

Phena, Obed's wife, also earned a Master of Divinity at AMBS, completing studies in 1991. Their two sons were young boys when the family came to AMBS; their daughter was born in their apartment on the campus.

Obed and Phena hope to visit the United States later this year when the seminary will have an opportunity to honour Obed and to hear more directly about his ministry. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

EMU and Goshen expand hiring policies

Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg, Va., and Goshen (Ind.) College announced on July 20 that they have updated their non-discrimination hiring policies to include employees in same-sex marriages. Both schools indicated that they spent time carefully considering this move and chose to delay making the announcements until after Mennonite Church USA met in Kansas City this summer. The Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) has responded with a statement saying this action has placed EMU and Goshen "at variance with the Mennonite Education Agency and Mennonite Church USA." The statement goes on to say that "MEA will show forbearance to these two institutions" and "is committed to move forward with a spirit of humility, a willingness to listen and a commitment toward mutual respect." Both EMU and Goshen declared that they will hire those who are committed to the mission and core values of the institutions. Loren Swartzendruber, president of EMU said, "In making this decision, the board affirmed EMU's strong commitment to our relationship with Mennonite Church USA even while the denomination continues its discernment." James E. Brenneman, president of Goshen College also affirmed the strong relationship between Goshen and Mennonite Church USA. He said there is "diversity of interpretation of Scripture on this issue within our denomination and the broader Christian church, a diversity reflected within the board of directors and on our campus as well. We seek forbearance and grace amidst our differences. We deeply affirm the goodness of marriage, singleness, celibacy, sexual intimacy within marriage, and a life of faithfulness before God for all people."

—By Canadian Mennonite staff

❧ Staff change

Pastoral transition in Ontario

Anthony Siegrist began serving as minister of the Ottawa Mennonite Church on July 1, 2015. His installation will be Sept. 27, 2015. Siegrist is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary (MA) and Wycliffe College, University of Toronto (ThD). Previously he was professor of theology at Prairie College in Alberta. Together with his wife Sarah he has three children. Siegrist co-authored *Dietrich Bonhoeffer the Assassin?* (Baker Academic) and *Participating Witness: An Anabaptist Theology of Baptism and the Sacramental Theology of the Church* (Wipf & Stock).



/// Briefly noted

Peace and conflict studies association formed

At the first annual Canadian Peace and Conflict Studies conference held at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) on June 18-20, a key topic was the formation of a peace and conflict studies association. More than 70 academics, students, and conflict resolution practitioners from across Canada gathered for a series of keynote addresses, panel discussions, and workshop sessions. The impetus for the conference was sparked in May 2014, during a meeting of academics at Saint Paul University in Ottawa. On June 18, those assembled at CMU made the decision to put together an association in Canada for peace and conflict studies. An interim board has been put together, with Timothy Donais, associate professor for global studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, serving as interim coordinator. The board's first meeting is scheduled for September. Wendy Kroeker, one of the organizers, says she is pleased with how the conference went. She and her fellow organizers wanted to allow for the possibility of relationship-building, and planned an academic conference that left plenty of time and space for registrants to mingle and speak with one another during breaks and mealtimes. "Our focus was to get some cross-fertilization going, and people said we did accomplish that," says Kroeker, who teaches peace and conflict transformation studies at CMU.

—Canadian Mennonite University

/// Briefly noted

CMU announces new MBA program

Winnipeg—Canadian Mennonite University is launching two new graduate studies programs in the 2015/16 academic year. In addition to the Master of Arts in Peacebuilding and Collaborative Development, CMU will participate in an accredited online Collaborative Masters of Business Administration program jointly offered by Eastern Mennonite University, Goshen College, Bluffton University, and CMU. Built on six core values—honouring community, leading as service, upholding justice, planning for sustainability, global citizenship, and growing spiritually—classes are delivered in live video conferencing and online learning, to accommodate both learning and employment. "The world needs new sustainable business models. Call it 'capitalism for the common good.' Models that focus on the triple bottom line of people, planets, and profit," says Jim Smucker, program director. Divided into nine core courses and three courses directly related to one of the eight concentration areas, the 26-hour program is typically completed in 22-24 months. With global citizenship as a core value, a one-week international residency is integrated into the coursework to provide students with a global perspective and context for an on-going case study for the entire Collaborative MBA curriculum. For more information about the Collaborative MBA program, please visit www.cmu.ca/gradstudies.

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THE COLLABORATIVE
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GOD AT WORK IN US

Refined by fire

Saskatchewan canoe outfitter ponders lessons learned from recent wildfires

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

MISSINIPÉ, SASK.

“I’m not very good at being helpless,” says Ric Driediger as he reflects on the impact Saskatchewan’s forest fires have had on his business and his life. Driediger and his wife, Theresa, own Churchill River Canoe Outfitters in Missinipe, Sask., 457 kilometres north of Saskatoon. This summer promised to be one of their best, with many bookings. But when wildfires threatened the community of La Ronge, 78 kilometres to the south, burning along the highway between La Ronge and Missinipe, the road was closed and Driediger’s customers couldn’t reach his place.

The media, says Driediger, made it sound like all northern Saskatchewan was burning. Though 125 wildfires destroyed 480,000 hectares of forest, many areas were untouched. Driediger was also frustrated with the government, who allowed mining trucks through, but not his clientele. When the La Ronge fire moved north toward Missinipe, Driediger felt frustrated that there was no plan in place to protect the town.

The nearby First Nations community of Grandmother Bay took matters into their own hands when firefighting crews were unavailable to protect their community. They fought the fires on their own, and when firefighters arrived and told them to leave, they refused, saying it was their community and they were going to save it. In the end, firefighters worked under the community members. “I was so proud that I knew them,” says Driediger.

Though the Driedigers’ Missinipe property was never in immediate danger, Forest House, a remote property owned by the family, came very close to being destroyed. Situated on the shore of an unnamed lake,

the property is accessible only by canoe or float plane. Driediger knew the property was in danger and sent two staff members to secure the place and wet everything down with sprinklers. Uneasy with the nearness of the fire, one returned to camp, while the other remained to keep the sprinklers running. The next day Driediger and his son, Dan, travelled to Forest House to check out the situation for themselves.

While they were there, firefighters came and set up their own sprinklers on the property. They advised Driediger and the others to get out as the fire was approaching rapidly. Driediger says they hoped the sprinklers would save the place, but “fully expected it would burn.”

When the Driedigers were able to return, they were overjoyed to discover Forest House still standing. A plastic water jug and a canoe, both of which had been left on the dock, were partially melted. Yet Driediger and his family stood in the yard of Forest House, picking and eating saskatoon berries from a bush right beside the burned area. He heard a squirrel chattering and wondered how it had survived. He saw a grouse with singed tail feathers and wondered what had happened to her chicks.

“I totally feel it’s a miracle,” Driediger says. Alluding to Troy Watson’s series of columns in *Canadian Mennonite* (“Life in the Postmodern Shift”) Driediger explains: “Forest House has always been a ‘thin place’ for me. When we went there after the fires it felt like God was sitting there with us, as if God thought it was too important to burn.”

Driediger wonders why Forest House was spared. That many people told him they were praying for him and his property

PHOTOS BY SARAH DRIEDIGER



Looking bleak and lifeless today, the burned area surrounding Forest House will explode with life by next summer, says Ric Driediger, who owns the property.



Forest House survived the wildfires that destroyed the surrounding forest. Ric Driediger, who owns the property, ponders why his place was spared while others were not.

seems both comforting and unsettling. “Our neighbour’s house burned and others that we know also lost property,” he says. “Why didn’t ours burn?” He ponders the “age-old question” from the book of Job: why does one person suffer while another is spared?

Yet, “even in the power of destruction there is beauty,” he says. “By next year the place will be red with fireweed, and the blueberries will be thick.” Morel mushrooms will be there in abundance, too.

“Life explodes after something like this,” he says. In the destruction and re-growth, Driediger sees a parallel to spiritual trauma. “Often when we go through the worst, then life explodes.” ☞

The luthier of La Riviere

STORY AND PHOTO BY J. NEUFELD

Manitoba Correspondent

LA RIVIERE, MAN.

Pop psychology writer Malcolm Gladwell popularized the 10,000-hour rule—the notion that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to master a craft. Jeremy Hamm will tell you a different story. He figures it took him at least 25,000 hours of painstaking trial and error before he got good at making guitars.

“I learned by making every mistake you could make,” says the bearded 36-year-old luthier. He talks while he works. Using a pair of needle-nose pliers he slides a bolt through the slender F-hole of a guitar he’s building, then threads it through the top of the guitar’s body where he’ll attach the neck.

“It’s only been about four years now where I’ve felt authoritative enough that I’m happy to grab a fifty-five thousand dollar guitar and rip it apart and put it back together,” Hamm says. “Ten years ago I’d have been very nervous.” Hamm spent a decade repairing guitars in music shops before he started his own guitar-making



business. Then he sought out expert luthiers to learn from.

Now he builds his own Hamm-tone brand guitars for Canadian musicians and teaches guitar-building classes in a brightly lit shop attached to his house in La Riviere. “I like to go through history and figure out which instruments failed and which succeeded and why, and then incorporate some of the more modern techniques I’ve learned,” he says.

The guitar he’s working on today is a lovely archtop acoustic. The front and back panels of the guitar are slightly domed to give it a more resonant tone. Hamm carved the soundboard from a slice of Sitka spruce and the back from curly maple using tiny brass finger planes. The carving alone took

him 40 hours. Then he applied 34 coats of finish to build up a warm burnished glow that darkens towards the edges.

Hamm says his archtops have clearer frequencies and deliver more harmonic overtones than many other guitars. “If you put this beside a Gibson or a Martin, my guitar’s always a tiny bit louder,” he says.

On the workbench beside him is another guitar, a left-handed flattop he’s is making for Manitoba folk-rockers Del Barber. Barber’s name and a tiny trout are inlaid in mother-of-pearl on the fretboard. Actually, it’s imitation mother-of-pearl since the real stuff comes from mollusk shells and its transport across certain borders is restricted for conservation reasons. Hamm does his best to build guitars that are beautiful and melodious but also ethically sourced. He uses mainly wood from Canadian trees: Sitka spruce, curly maple, cherry, ash, cedar and walnut. “I’m a local person making guitars for a local clientele, and I think a local economy’s the smartest way to go,” he says.

It took Hamm a while to decide to become a luthier. At one point he thought he’d be a youth pastor and then concluded he was “maybe a little too wild.” He also considered a career as an automotive journalist, an engineer or a classical violinist.

Ultimately he settled on work that combines

I’m So Dry

BY RIC DRIEDIGER

I’m so dry. I need rain—really bad. My muskegs are so dry. Instead of water oozing up when something walks on my muskegs, all I get is dust. The moss under my forests just crunches when it is stepped on. My beauty seems to be leaving me as I get dryer.

I’m so dry. I need rain—really bad. This dryness makes me really tense, really uptight. I just don’t feel like my normal self. I feel like I can’t look after myself when I’m this dry. When lightning strikes, I can’t put the fire out anymore. I need the help of others to look after me.

I’m so dry. I need rain—really bad. I remember other summers, when I had lots of rain. I remember how I used to be—how I used to look. How I used to have

flowers: orchids and marsh marigolds. How I used to grow berries: blueberries and cranberries, strawberries and raspberries. I remember loving the summer heat. I remember dancing in the rains. I remember loving the sound of the wind as it whispered to me through my forests. Now, I’m dry. These are only memories.

I’m so dry. I need rain—really bad. My moss, my forests, my muskegs are like a huge sponge. I am waiting, with my pores wide open, waiting for the rain—waiting for a big drink. When it finally rains—I will be ready. I will soak up the water. I know I can hold a lot. My muskegs and forests will share this water with the lakes and rivers. When this water does come, I will blossom with flowers and berries. My moss will again turn green.

But until then, I’m so dry. I need rain—really bad.

Based on Psalm 42.

J. NEUFELD



Jeremy Hamm shows off a few of the guitars he has made in his shop.

his mechanical skills with his musical instincts. He comes by both skills honestly. His father, Nick Hamm, worked as an engineer for John Deere, and his grandfather, John Goertzen, played mandolin in the Lincoln County Peach Pickers, the first bluegrass band recorded in Canada.

Hamm, a musician himself, likes to play the instruments he builds. He's married to the bluegrass-folk singer Jess Reimer and every summer they tour folk festivals around Canada together with their three children. Hamm, Reimer and their three children attend Pembina Fellowship, a house church that's part of Mennonite Church Canada.

Hamm teaches two five-week acoustic guitar building courses and two three-week electric guitar-building courses every year at his home. Even though he doesn't advertise, he gets students from as far away as Thailand and Germany. Last fall one of his students was a private investigator with New York City police department. "He was tired of being a cop and he wanted to be a guitar maker," Hamm says.

"It's a wonderful thing to be able to do something you love," Hamm says. He

makes enough money to pay the bills, but isn't interested in getting rich. Although he could sell likely his guitars for more money in high-end music stores, he prefers to keep them affordable for working

musicians, many of whom are his friends. "I'm sort of an anti-capitalist that way. I'm not doing it for the money, that's for sure. If I was doing something for the money I'd be a car salesman or something." ❧

/// Briefly noted

Shantz re-instated as mayor

ELMIRA, ONT.—Sandy Shantz, a former moderator of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and a member of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, has been re-instated as mayor of Woolwich Township July 24 after being removed from that office 17 days earlier, according to *The Kitchener-Waterloo Record*. Questions about filing her expenses properly in her election campaign were raised by citizen Alan Marshall, who brought what he considered irregularities before the Municipal Elections Compliance Committee. In order to fulfil the letter of the law, she was removed from office. Shantz acknowledged violating the act by failing to get an audit, mistakenly accepting a donation above the \$750 limit and incorrectly reporting her election income. Marshall argued that the mayor knowingly submitted false information, but Justice David Broad didn't buy the argument and re-instated her as mayor. In an interview with *Canadian Mennonite* immediately after winning the election, she said she would apply "kingdom ethics" to her position. "I will lean on God as the issues arise," she said on the topic of Mennonites entering politics.

—Dick Benner, editor and publisher



GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

MCC Global Family program goes local

STORY AND PHOTO BY MEGHAN MAST

Mennonite Central Committee Canada
SASKATOON, SASK.

A group of children visited a greenhouse on the last day of Bread for Success, an after-school project in Saskatoon supported by Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) Global Family education program. The kids are learning about how vegetables are grown, and Chris Buhler, co-owner of Floating Gardens Ltd., showed them around where tomatoes and eggplants twist their way toward the ceiling.

Most of the participants are new immigrant, refugee and indigenous children from Meadowgreen, a historically underserved neighbourhood in Saskatoon. Bread for Success operates from a rented apartment suite in the neighbourhood. Staff and volunteers help children with homework and teach them about nutrition and cooking.

Bread for Success is part of a new approach by MCC. Global Family supports education around the world but, until this year, has not run programs in North America. "I think at times we can be focused on these important needs far away and then lose sight of what's right around our corner," said Lynn Longenecker, education coordinator at MCC.

To address these local needs Global Family is now supporting three programs in North America—Bread for Success in Saskatoon, Gee Gush Koon (You Can Do It) in Kashechewan First Nation in Ontario, and Kingdom Builders Network in Philadelphia.

At the greenhouse in Saskatoon, Buhler showed them a mullein plant, pointing to white Dicyphus bugs crawling around the green leaf and explained that these small winged creatures eat harmful insects, particularly white fly that can devastate crops.

Field trips like this are novel. Many of

the parents work several jobs to make ends meet and the children don't often get to leave home. They are sometimes left unattended and during these moments can get into trouble with their friends.

Bread for Success provides a safe space for kids to learn and spend time with their friends. "Sometimes we think about it as a restorative justice program because kids are learning alternatives to violence," says Kaytee Edwards, who runs the Bread for Success program. ☘



Beatrice Kuzinza holds up a small lettuce plant she found in the compost during a Bread for Success field trip. Bread for Success is a new approach by MCC.

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE CANADA PHOTO



Don Peters (right), the executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Canada, thanked the Canadian government on July 15 for a contribution towards MCC's work in Afghanistan. The \$9.3 million grant from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development was announced by the Honourable Candice Bergen, minister of state for social development, and Joyce Bateman (left), the member of parliament for Winnipeg South Centre. The money will be used to support a three-year project, focusing on maternal, newborn and child health. MCC has worked with partners in Afghanistan since 1999.

ARTBEAT

BOOK REVIEW

New definitive history of Mennonites in Ontario

In Search of Promised Lands: A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario

By Samuel J. Steiner. Herald Press, 2015, 877 pages.

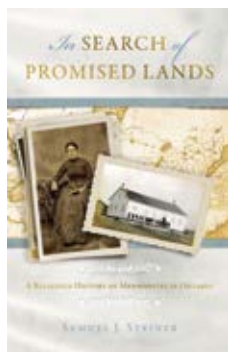
REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER

Sam Steiner has pulled off an amazing feat. He has written the definitive history of Mennonites in Ontario in an interesting way that makes it accessible to ordinary readers. This is a very complicated story with different streams of Mennonites and Amish coming together and with numerous splits and divisions, but Steiner weaves it all together, presenting the story simply and clearly.

There are far too many details for anyone to remember, but rather than getting overwhelmed by the details, readers should follow the story as Steiner draws the larger picture. This book will serve as a good reference if anyone needs to go back later to find specific details.

The 200 years of history are structured both chronologically and thematically. Each chapter begins with an anecdote about an individual who represents the theme of the chapter. Steiner has chosen these anecdotes very carefully to illustrate the time period and what's happening in Mennonite churches. This collection of short anecdotes could be seen as a kind of condensed, mini-history of Mennonites in Ontario.

The greatest strength of this book is the depth of research. Steiner's bibliography runs to 65 pages while his endnotes take up 160 pages. He does not simply accept the traditional historical interpretation of events; his extensive research, often using original documents, means he can make his own assessments. For example,



he debunks some of the mythology around Mabel Dunham's book, *The Trail of the Conestoga*. Steiner points out that the fear of the Beverley swamp was a myth and Richard Beasley was not trying to trick the early Mennonite pioneers. He is also less than complimentary about the leadership of Bishop Benjamin Eby. He

provides a wealth of new information such as how the War of 1812 influenced the Mennonites in Niagara and what happened to the Mennonite Brethren in Christ who eventually changed their name to the Evangelical Missionary Church.

Steiner is particularly well placed to interpret the history of the later decades of the twentieth century since he was the archivist at the Mennonites Archives of Ontario during those years. His ability to tell the story within a broader context is very helpful. For example, he is able to show the individual baby steps that led to rise of women in ministry.

Because the spectrum of Mennonites in Ontario today is so broad, Steiner organizes them into four categories—as-similated, separatist conservatives, evangelical conservatives and old orders. In the appendix he is also brave enough to predict the future of each of these types of Mennonites.

I enjoyed this book immensely, especially the new interpretations and stories I had never come across. Some of these were hidden in the footnotes, so I made sure I skimmed them all. The photos,

maps and charts were very helpful in getting an overview of all Mennonite groups in Ontario. One of the most interesting for me was a 2001 map showing where Mennonites lived in Ontario.

As I was reading, there were only a couple instances where I had questions about Steiner's interpretation. In each case it was very minor, nuanced point dealing with recent history. For example, I would not be inclined to classify Old Order Mennonites as fundamentalists.

My biggest disappointment in the book is the lack of detail about Mennonite settlement in the Waterloo area and how the community grew in the mid-nineteenth century. Steiner tells stories about some of the earliest settlers, but very little more about the new congregations in what is now Waterloo Region. I assume this was due to space constraints. Perhaps if all those details were included, the book would be too heavy to hold!

If any potential reader finds the sheer size of this volume intimidating, a digital version is available. ☘

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MEDA Creating business solutions to poverty

Women's Bible study released

MENNOMEDIA

A new women's Bible study, *Spark: Igniting Your God-Given Creativity*, has been published by MennoMedia, commissioned by Mennonite Women Canada (MW Canada) and Mennonite Women USA (MW USA).

The study is designed to help users rediscover the joys of being created in God's image and nurture their own creativity. "We hope that women will take a look at stories of God as the original artist, and be encouraged to develop their own creativity as a divine gift," says Mary Ann Weber, managing editor for the Women's Bible Study series.

Written by April Yamasaki in consultation with MW Canada and MW USA, the study is one in a series of Bible studies commissioned by the women's groups.

Twelve sessions and one worship session highlight biblical stories of God's creative Spirit at work. Users will look at Scripture as a God-breathed work of creativity, to Jesus as a creative artist through interactions and storytelling, to discovering that the Holy Spirit inspires creativity for the common good. Sessions include Scripture, suggestions for a visual to aid reflection and stimulate the senses, a section to dig deeper into the text, a series of questions integrating



the story with personal experience, and suggestions for session closings. The study concludes with a creative celebration of worship. All sessions are organized into one book

for women's groups, Sunday school, or individual study.

Yamasaki is a pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C., and a graduate of the University of British Columbia and Regent College. She writes a blog about faith and writes and leads retreats on spiritual practices, faith, work, rest, and Christian living. She is also the author of *Sacred Pauses: Spiritual Practices for Personal Renewal*, published by Herald Press in 2013. ☿

☿ Briefly noted

Book advocating Mennonite education available in Spanish

John D. Roth takes on long-debated questions about private and Christian education in his book *Teaching that Transforms*, first published in 2011. A Spanish translation of the book, *Enseñanza que transforma*, was released on May 15. Herald Press teamed up with Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) via Mennonite Education Agency (Mennonite Church USA) to create the Spanish translation edition, with Christina Horst serving as the bilingual translator for the project. When asked about the book's premise, Roth said, "My central argument is that there has been a paradigm shift in almost every level of Mennonite education. Mennonites started their own schools to protect youth from the influences of the world; today schools exist to engage the world." Though Roth recognizes some of the obstacles standing in the way of his vision for education, including cost and location of Anabaptist-Mennonite schools, he highlights the transformative possibilities of this style of education, for individuals as well as the church. In addition to editing the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Roth is director of the Mennonite Historical Library, and teaches history at Goshen College. —MennoMedia release



Women's retreat kit available

MennoMedia has launched a women's "retreat kit" about creativity, planned from material in the recent women's Bible study guide, *Spark: Igniting Your God-Given Creativity*. The retreat will help women discover God as the original Creator and the joys of being created in God's good image—all while nurturing their own creative spirits. The *Spark* retreat kit includes Bible studies that unpack four stories of God's creative Spirit at work; a creative guide with ideas to help women take the study even deeper; and an individual participant guide for women to write in and make personal connections while taking time for reflection throughout the retreat. (Additional participant guides are also sold separately.) A director's guide leads retreat facilitators through the steps of planning and leading the *Spark* retreat, including the usual logistics of coordinating location, schedule, number of days, meals, and the like. The content for this retreat kit was sponsored jointly by Mennonite Women USA, Mennonite Women Canada, and MennoMedia. More information available at www.mennomedia.org/sparkretreat.

—MENNOMEDIA



'We're not sitting on the sidelines'

Youth and young adults reflect on their experiences at Pennsylvania 2015

BY RACHEL BERGEN AND AARON EPP
Young Voices Co-Editors

Youth and young adults from all over the world went to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania from July 21 to 26 for a reunion with the global Mennonite family. We spoke with a handful of young Canadians who were at Mennonite World Conference assembly about their time in Harrisburg. Though, as one young person pointed out, MWC is something best witnessed first-hand.

Noel Dueckman

25, Abbotsford, B.C.
Emmanuel Mennonite Church.

Noel Dueckman served as a youth leader for a group of eight from Emmanuel Mennonite Church. Although Emmanuel is a diverse church, Dueckman says he was surprised by how different the Mennonites of the global church are. However, all these different people are rooted in the same belief systems.

"I discovered lots of new music, food and more that were unfamiliar to me, but the theology remained largely the same," he says.

Dueckman and members of his group from B.C. also took part in a demonstration with Pink Mennos, a group that supports the inclusion of LGBTQ people into Mennonite fellowship. The demonstration involved listening to stories and coming together to sing "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"—dressed in pink, of course.

Dueckman believes it's important to include members of the LGBTQ community.

"Just because I can't relate to someone doesn't mean they don't deserve love and equality, especially from those of us who follow Christ," he says.

Dueckman hopes to attend Mennonite World Conference assembly again.

Gabby Martin

18, Langham, Sask.
Zoar Mennonite Church.

Eighteen-year-old Gabby Martin just graduated from Rosthern Junior College, and says church engagement and leadership feels like something you do when you're older.

Martin's experience at Mennonite World Conference and its youth program changed that, though. She said it helped her learn more about her place as a young person in the global church community.

"One of the speakers said, 'I don't want to be referred to as the future of the church; I am the church,'" Martin recalled. "It blew my mind because I guess we're not sitting on the sidelines, we're really here. I can make a difference as a youth. I don't have to wait to grow up."

Martin says she thinks her experience at the assembly will translate to her local church and area church.

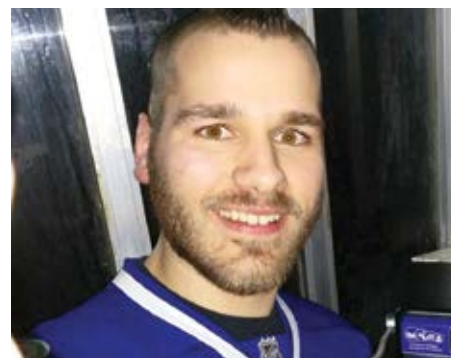
"I'm not going to be afraid to say what I'm thinking, or to join groups at church," she says. "It's just good to know that people appreciate that."

Ben Willms

16, Portland, Ont.
Ottawa Mennonite Church.

For Ben Willms, the trip to Pennsylvania was not only an opportunity to connect with the global church, but also his own. The 16-year-old lives in a small town more than 100 kilometres away from his home church, Ottawa Mennonite. He says it's difficult to make it to youth events.

That was a highlight of the conference for Willms. Another, he says, was



Noel Dueckman



Gabby Martin



Ben Willms

the music, which perfectly illustrated the theme of unity in the church.

“It was wonderful to join in singing with all these people from around the world,” he said. Willms said he felt the conference was engaging and meaningful for youth in some ways, but still felt it was a bit of an “adult thing.” He hopes the conference will make more of a conscious effort to include young people in the future.

Aaron Peters

*18, Regina, Sask.
Grace Mennonite Church.*

Aaron Peters was one of more than 30 youth from Mennonite Church Saskatchewan who travelled by bus to be at the gathering. It was his first.

“I thought it would be a good opportunity to get involved in the wider Mennonite community and learn about my fellow Mennonites,” he says.

Peters enjoyed the worship sessions at the conference. The conference was organized so that halfway through the morning worship session, youth would leave to participate in activities designed specifically for them.

“The speakers were so good that we didn’t want to [leave the worship sessions],” Peters says. “We wanted to stay and listen.”

Asked if he learned anything about being Mennonite at the conference, Peters recalls a few people talking about how it’s important to maintain a relationship with God no matter what cause you’re working toward.

“A few people talked about how Mennonites like to focus on missions and [sometimes] forget about the spiritual side of things,” Peters says. “So when you’re trying to make a difference, it’s important to keep God in that.”

Matthew Veith

24, Winnipeg, Man.

Matthew Veith coupled his first-ever MWC experience with a bike trip. He and his friend, Jim Cheng, flew from Winnipeg to New York City, and from there cycled 300 km to the conference.

Veith says that because he grew up in China as the son of missionaries, meeting Mennonites from around the world is not new. However, after living in Winnipeg for

the past five years, he wanted to reconnect with Anabaptists from other parts of the world.

MWC made a big impression on him.

“All these people gathered are from all over the place and living out the Anabaptist way of following God and following the life of Jesus,” Veith says. “I’m still blown away by that.”

Since attending the conference, he has been thinking about how quick Christians are to judge one another. Instead, Veith says, Mennonites ought to trust the decisions their brothers and sisters are making in other parts of the world.

“We have to trust that they are walking with God, reading scripture and [that] they are approaching the questions of faith humbly, sensibly and openly,” Veith says.

“We’re all following God in different ways,” Veith says.

“If we can get to the commonalities, we have a much better chance of actually understanding our differences and having a conversation [about] them,” he adds.

Diana Jensen

*17, Regina, Sask.
Grace Mennonite Church.*

Attending the Fat Calf Festival, Mennonite Church Canada’s 2013 youth assembly in Winnipeg, sparked Diana Jensen’s interest in going to MWC assembly.

“I knew it would be an incredible experience to make new friends and experience God’s presence,” she says.

At the end of the youth sessions each day, the crowd broke into groups of 15 to 20 people to pray. Jensen says this taught her about the power of prayer.

“Prayer is something that I always want to work on,” she says. “I want to talk to God more and pray for others, and pray *with* others. So many people at the conference were comfortable with prayer—they weren’t awkward or nervous.”

Jensen met people at the conference from Paraguay, Tanzania, South Korea, the Netherlands and France, and hopes to keep in contact with them.

“I think that’s one of the coolest things,” she says. “I can keep in touch with all these people and [we can] talk about our faith journey, even though we’re across the world... I’m so grateful for that.” ❧



Aaron Peters



Jim Cheng and Matthew Veith



Diana Jensen

Hoping for strength and unity in spite of disagreements

Young man hopeful after telling his church he's gay

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ANYA SNIDER

Special to Young Voices

Growing up, Dustin Loewen was sometimes teased by his friends for being a “Mennonite poster boy.” He had a well-rounded Mennonite upbringing, attended Mennonite schools and has attended Charleswood Mennonite Church since he was two years old.

Then, at 27 years old, Loewen stood in front of his church community and told them he is gay.

“I’m a very emotional person, so I was bawling through the whole thing,” he says. “I think one of the most frustrating things about being gay is the fact that you have to tell people about it.”

Following the service, Loewen stuck around for another half an hour or so, talking with people from the congregation who came up to him to show their love and support. It was touching, he says, to feel so much acceptance from the congregation as a whole.

The pastor of Charleswood Mennonite Church, John Braun, says he was proud of the way his congregation reacted to Loewen and reached out to make him feel welcome.

“In every issue there is a wide variety of opinions that we hold strongly,” Braun says. “What I felt good about was that I sensed the atmosphere that people are willing to have differences of opinion, but work through them and still want to be a community.”

Braun says he was never concerned about how the congregation would respond to Loewen’s sharing, and was not surprised the community answered with love.

Loewen has never chosen to be baptized, and is not a member of the church. He says when a lot of people his age were being baptized, he did not feel comfortable doing it just because everyone else was.

Also, Loewen was wrestling with many

questions: “It was right at the period in my life when I was coming to terms with the fact that I might be gay and kind of trying to figure out what I was going to do with that. I didn’t feel like the church was quite jiving with my search.”

After coming to terms with his sexuality in his late teens and early twenties, this realization affected his faith.

“It was a pretty big challenge. I had never heard it spoken about in Charleswood, and when I did, I heard that it was a sin.” He says it was terrifying to understand this was who he was and, initially, he feared he would be unwelcome in the church community he grew up in. “So where do you go with the knowledge of, ‘This is who I am, but it’s probably not right?’”

Loewen has always felt comfortable in his church and hopes for unity. “There is such a strong tendency in the Mennonite church to schism, to split, to walk away when there is an issue, and I think that is so sad.”

Differing opinions are inevitable in matters of faith, but Loewen hopes the fellowship can remain strong in spite of disagreements. “I want to see community, and I want to see an outreach of love.”

Anya Snider, 20, is a communications and media student at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). She attends Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. ✎

This article is part of a series called Voice of the Marginalized. These articles were written by students in CMU’s Journalism: Principles and Practice course. Voice of the Marginalized connected writers with people on the margins of the community. Teacher Carl DeGurse is a member of Canadian Mennonite’s board of directors and an assignment editor at the Winnipeg Free Press.

VOICE
of the | marginalized



Coming out to Charleswood Mennonite Church, the congregation in Winnipeg that he grew up in, was an emotional experience for Dustin Loewen.



John Braun, pastor at Charleswood Mennonite Church, says he was never concerned about how the congregation would respond to Loewen.



Anya Snider

Calendar

British Columbia

Sept. 18-19: MCC Festival for World Relief, Tradex in Abbotsford.

Sept. 26: Prince George Mennonite Fall Fair.

Oct. 5-7: Mennonite Church B.C. pastor/spouse retreat at Camp Squeah with guest speaker Donald Clymer.

Oct. 16-18: MC B.C. women's retreat at Camp Squeah, Hope, with guest speaker April Yamasaki.

Saskatchewan

Sept. 8-11: MC Sask fall Pastors' Gathering at Churchill River Canoe

Outfitters. For more information contact youthminister@mcsask.ca or 306-249-4844.

Sept. 13: Rosthern Junior College opening program at 2:30 p.m.

Oct. 2-4: "Weekend Musical Workshop for the Congregational Voice" with Marilyn Houser Hamm at Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon. Call the church office at 306-374-2144 to register interest.

Oct. 2-3: RJC Alumni volleyball and soccer tournament weekend.

Oct. 3-4: SMYO Jr. High (grades 6-9) retreat at Youth Farm Bible Camp to get a glimpse of Mennonite World Conference assembly and to meet Willard Metzger, executive-director

of MC Canada. Visit www.smyo.ca for more information.

Oct. 16-17: MC Sask/Sask Women in Mission women's retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

Oct. 24: MC Sask Equipping Day at Eigenheim Mennonite, "Engaging Anabaptism Today," beginning at 9:30 a.m. Call 306-249-4844 for information.

Oct. 24: RJC Corporation meeting at 5 p.m. and RJC Appreciation and Fundraising banquet.

Manitoba

Sept. 7: Fall on the Farm at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach. Experience harvest work, hog butchering and pioneer demonstrations. For more information, visit www.MHV.ca.

Sept. 9: Mennonite Heritage Village's Heritage Classic Golf Tournament. For more information, visit www.MHV.ca.

Sept. 26: 31st annual Brandon relief sale at Keystone Centre, Brandon (Manitoba room). More information at mccmanitoba.ca/events.

Oct. 3: Sounds Good! II, workshop for those who work with worship technology such as sound, visuals and lighting at Eastview Community Church, Winnipeg, 9:15 to 3:30 p.m. For more information visit re-worship.

events.blogspot.ca.

Oct. 15: Mennonite Heritage Village volunteer appreciation event for 2015 volunteers. For more information, visit www.MHV.ca.

Ontario

Aug. 28: Ontario Mennonite Music Camp final concert at Conrad Grebel University College, Great Hall at 7 p.m.

Aug. 30: Community picnic at Hunta Mennonite, Hwy 668 west of Cochrane, Ont. 1-4 p.m.

Sept. 11-13: Building Community retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp—a retreat for individuals with disabilities, their family and friends. Speaker: Cheryl Weber Good. For information visit www.hiddenacres.ca or call 519-625-8602. Register by Aug. 28.

Sept. 12: Wanner annual cornfest, rain or shine. Music by No Discernable Key, Gaga ball, campfire and chili cook off. Bring lawn chairs and a donation for the Foodbank. Visit www.wannerchurch.org or contact Nancy Brown at 519-658-4902 for information.

Sept. 19: The Detweiler Meetinghouse near Roseville is participating in the Waterloo Region's "Door Open" event, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Upcoming

Global Mennonite Peacebuilding gathering planned for Waterloo

WATERLOO, ONT.—Conrad Grebel University College is planning to host a Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference and Festival on June 9-12, 2016. In addition to academic papers, workshops, and networking opportunities, the event is intended to be a festival that will include art, drama, and music. This conference and festival will bring together academics, practitioners, artists, and church workers from around the world, to dialogue and reflect on Mennonite peacebuilding accomplishments, failures, challenges, and opportunities in varied international settings, both past and present. "We also want to create spaces for artistic expression," said Professor Marlene Epp, co-chair of the Grebel organizing committee. "Literature, music, drama, and visual art all make powerful statements about peace." Peace and Conflict Studies faculty member Reina Neufeldt, is also co-chair. "We are looking forward to hosting participants from all over the globe in order to hear each other, expand our understanding of Mennonite peacebuilding work, and think together." By raising extra funds especially for international travel, organizers hope to maximize participation of individuals from the global south as well as other voices that are heard less at Mennonite conference gatherings. **A call to submit proposals by October 1** has been issued to academics, artists, practitioners, church workers, students, activists. Details are available in 4 languages on the event website: uwaterloo.ca/grebel/global-mennonite-peacebuilding-conference.
—Conrad Grebel University College



Briefly noted

Workshop offered for worship techs

They're always sitting in the back. No one seems to notice them except when things go wrong, but they're just as important as the worship leaders. The people who manage sound, lighting and visual technology in churches are underappreciated, says Christine Longhurst, who teaches workshops on leading worship. Working with a group of Mennonite worship pastors, she's organizing a one-day workshop for anyone who wants to improve their skills as a worship technician. "We tend to have more workshops available for those who appear at the front of the church," she said, "while those at the back, perhaps have one of the most powerful positions in the church." No matter if you're a complete novice or have been doing this for decades, there will be opportunities to improve your skills. "We're trying to pull in some of the best experts in the field," says Longhurst. The workshop will take place October 3 at Eastview Community Church in Winnipeg. Registration is \$50 per person, \$15 per student or \$40 per person for three or more people from the same congregation. To register email Cori Braun at cbraun@cmu.ca or call 204-487-3300.
—By J. Neufeld

Sept. 19: Toronto Mennonite Festival in support of MCC at Black Creek Pioneer Village.

Sept. 25-27: Men's meat retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp with Chip Bender as resource person. For more information visit www.slmcc.ca/retreats or call 519-422-3200.

Oct. 4: 40th anniversary worship celebration at Wellesley Mennonite at 9:30 a.m. Everyone welcome.

Oct. 5, 6: Fall seniors' retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. (Same

program both days.) Guest speaker: Tom Yoder Neufeld. Join us for a day of worship, learning and fellowship. For information go to www.hiddenacres.ca or 519-625-8602.

Quebec

Sept. 27: Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal potluck supper for young adults, ages 18-25. For more information and/or to register interest, contact pastor:mfm@gmail.com.

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities

Advertising Information

Contact

D. Michael Hostetler

1-800-378-2524 x.224

[advert@](mailto:advert@canadianmennonite.org)

canadianmennonite.org

Avenue Road Roofing is currently seeking skilled trades persons or crews for the following: shingling, cedar / slate, flat roofing eavestrough, carpentry and masonry. Top wages or rates commensurate with experience. Friendly, drug and alcohol free environment. Work is throughout the Greater Toronto Area. Contact: hr@avenueroadroofing.com or call (416)785-5129. Apply on-line at: www.avenueroadroofing.com



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

**MCC BC JOB OPPORTUNITY
Legacy Trust Executive Director
Abbotsford, BC**

Start Date: October 2015

The Legacy Trust Executive Director is the chief executive officer of the "Legacy Trust" group of companies owned by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) British Columbia. The Legacy Trust group of companies is comprised of donated assets that function similar to an endowment, with the purpose of generating ongoing revenue to support the world wide ministry of MCC. MCC is a Christian faith based agency that provides relief, development and peacebuilding initiatives in over 60 countries worldwide. MCC BC carries out programs that address basic needs here in BC and also supports the international work of MCC by generating funds, recruiting personnel and mobilizing material aid.

MCC BC is the shareholder of the Legacy Trust group of companies and appoints the directors of the Legacy Trust Board and related subsidiaries as needed. The Legacy Trust Board is the oversight body of the Legacy Trust group of companies and properties and as such it approves the goals, plans, policies and long-term direction of Legacy Trust within the general parameters set by MCC BC as the shareholder.

The Executive Director of Legacy Trust is a new position starting in the fall of 2015. The Executive Director will be accountable to the MCC BC Legacy Trust Board and will be responsible for the management and development of the Real Estate and Business Subsidiaries of MCC BC. Applicants should have solid business education and significant business management experience.

This position is available on a full-time salaried basis, part-time contractual arrangements would also be considered. Only those candidates who are legally eligible to work in Canada should apply. To ensure consideration please submit your application as soon as possible, no later than September 15, 2015. Applications will be received until a suitable candidate is identified.

The Legacy Trust Executive Director is accountable to the MCC Legacy Trust Board which is accountable to the Board of Directors of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) British Columbia.

For a full job description, please go the MCC website, mcc.org (get involved, work with us).

Please send resume and cover letter to the MCC BC HR Department by email to hrmanager@mccbc.ca or by fax 604-850-8734.

Announcement

ABNER MARTIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

This annual scholarship is awarded by the Menno Singers to a student who is affiliated with a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation and is, or will be, in a full-time program of music study, graduate or undergraduate, during 2015-16.

Applications must be mailed by Sept. 15, 2015. For application documents or further information, contact: Lewis Brubacher, 16 Euclid Avenue, Waterloo, ON N2L 6L9; phone: 519-884-3072; email: lbrubacher@sympatico.ca.



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

**EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
Director of Development and
Advancement**

The Director of Development and Advancement is the chief marketing officer that provides leadership to donor relations, communications and the advancement of MCC BC toward its mission by collaboratively developing and implementing strategies that generate awareness, relationships, engagement, support and various types of donations from within our constituency and the broader public.

The Director of Development and Advancement ensures that activities are focused on approved strategic priorities and are in compliance with standard ethical requirements as well as MCC values, principles and policies.

This position is available on a salaried basis and reports to the Executive Director. Only those candidates who are legally eligible to work in Canada should apply. Please send resume and cover letter to the MCC BC HR Department by email to Marie Reimer at hrmanager@mccbc.ca or by fax 604-850-8734. Start date, Friday, October 30, 2015. For more information about this position please go to: <http://mcc.org/get-involved/serve/openings/director-development-advancement>

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to: a personal Christian faith and discipleship; active church membership; and nonviolent peacemaking. MCC is an equal opportunity employer, committed to employment equity. MCC values diversity and invites all qualified candidates to apply.

CANADIAN
MENNONITE



Get a taste of the global Anabaptist church

Participants from 65 countries gathered for worship and reflection focusing on their shared Anabaptist past and calling. It was a time of celebration of a people devoted to following Jesus. We invite you to join in the celebration at PA 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, as you explore links below.



Be inspired

Find in-depth coverage of MWC PA 2015 by simply browsing the *Canadian Mennonite* website at canadianmennonite.org. Explore and discover the depth of commitment and vision speakers and participants brought to the assembly.



Discover the stories

Follow canadianmennonite.org/mwc-2015-roundup for a listing of stories from the MWC assembly. Read about our faith family's joys and struggles shared through worship, workshops, service projects and informal gatherings.



Hear the music

Go to pa2015.mwc-cmm.org/share-with-your-congregation to watch the worship services and daily video wrap-ups and to choose photos you can share with your congregation.



Catch the vision

In a new video series "Charting Walks With God," leaders share how the Sermon on the Mount shapes the church in the five MWC regions of the world. Access the series at canadianmennonite.org/walks-with-god.

UPPER PHOTOS: DALE D. GEHMAN

LOWER PHOTO: JONATHAN CHARLES



Be faithful, love your neighbours, seek justice, make peace.
canadianmennonite.org