

CANADIAN MENNONITE

September 14, 2015

Volume 19 Number 18

Listening and learning

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EDITORIAL

What do you think?

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

It's been 14 years since *Canadian Mennonite* conducted an independent readership survey. In the next edition (Sept. 28), print and digital readers will find a list of questions that invite your feedback, solicit your opinion on content and attempt to ascertain your reading habits in both venues—print and digital.

For more than six decades, this publication has given voice to the person in the pew, to our leaders at the congregational, area church (previously conferences) and denominational levels. It has helped shape the narrative of life within the bounds of some 230 congregations and 33,000 members comprising the faith community of Mennonite Church Canada.

We like to think of *Canadian Mennonite* as the “village square” of our denomination, where we come together every two weeks to talk about our life together, to challenge each other on our faith journey and to keep up to date on church family events (milestones, calendar events). It is a place where, in broad strokes, we share an identity as a modern Anabaptist/Mennonite community, but where, more and more as part of a global church, we temper our tendency toward protecting and promoting a cultural heritage in favour of opening our doors and hearts to others who are not like us.

Likewise, in the communication field, we are moving from a solely print product to a digital one where more and more of us are dwelling. For the larger

period of *Canadian Mennonite's* life, we came to you via your mailbox. From the testimony of many older readers, it is a welcome guest, rising to the level of a letter from home, helping them keep in touch with sisters and brothers across the church, maintaining that strong family bond.



Now, all that is changing—and rapidly. To keep abreast of fast-pacing events, many of you now spend more time on your computer, your digital tablet, your smart phone, than you do reading newspapers and magazines. Information online is immediate and visually pleasing. You are made aware of important events as they happen, not waiting for the cumbersome process of putting together stories and opinion on 32 or 40 pages and reading them two to four weeks later. An item is posted on Facebook and in minutes your friends are weighing in on the merits of the information and sharing it with a host of their friends.

This evolution in communication has been likened to the invention of the printing press, more than five centuries ago by Johannes Gutenberg. The press completely changed the way persons communicated. It opened up a whole new world of spreading information. The digital revolution of today is young, by comparison, and nobody knows for sure where it is headed. We are in this curious time between the old and new—between the power of the printed word

and the speed and immediacy of the digital.

It is precisely because of this new, sometimes puzzling, phenomenon that it is important to hear from you, our readers, through this upcoming survey. Our mission remains unchanged, but the way in which our product is delivered is undergoing a huge change.

We need to know your expectations, your thoughts on how and what we are doing, and how you receive information. Please do us a favour us by taking a few minutes of your time to complete the survey and send it back to us.

The Vernon Leis story

We have been accused, wrongly, of sitting on the devastating story of the alleged sexual misconduct by the late Vernon Leis, deceased now for 21 years (see page 16). Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) first alerted us to the story of the leader's misconduct between publishing the last issue and this one.

We had no intention of not publishing the story, but first did some background checking, off the record, with officials at MCEC and also contacted the Leis family to give a statement. MCEC would not divulge anything about the investigation process, citing “confidentiality,” and the Leis family, after some conversation back and forth, decided not to comment.

We think that it is only fair to get more background, since it is very unusual for a person to be charged this long time after his death. That's why we wanted to satisfy ourselves as to the investigative process and to give the Leis survivors a chance to speak. Both the abused and the surviving family are victims. As a faith community, we should care for both.

ABOUT THE COVER:

While in the West Bank city of Hebron, Hannah Doerksen, left, Naomi Peters and Jenny Sawatzky were approached by local students. The Canadians are students at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg. See story on page 4.

PHOTO: RAMON REMPEL

Circulation: Please contact Natasha Krahn toll-free at 1-800-378-2524 ext. 221 or by e-mail at office@canadianmennonite.org for subscriptions and address changes. Subscriptions can also be ordered at our web site. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund for our publishing activities. ISSN 1480-042X

Canada

CANADIAN MENNONITE

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO

CANADIAN MENNONITE,

490 DUTTON DRIVE, UNIT C5,

WATERLOO, ON, N2L 6H7

Phone: 519-884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 Fax: 519-884-3331

Web site: canadianmennonite.org

Facebook.com/Canadian.Mennonite

@CanMenno

Please send all material to be considered for publication to:

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Obituaries: obituaries@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

Material can also be sent "Attn: Submissions/Readers Write/Milestones/

Obituaries/Calendar" by postal mail or fax to our head office.

Reprint requests: reprints@canadianmennonite.org

Mission statement: To educate, inspire, inform, and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through an independent publication and other media, working with our church partners.

Guiding values:

Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom •

Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will

• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

Area churches and MC Canada financially support 38 percent of Canadian Mennonite's annual budget.

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One-Year Subscription Rates

Canada: \$46 + tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)

U.S.: \$68 **International (outside U.S.):** \$91.10

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



Christian reflections on balance and the Middle East

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RAMON REMPEL



During a recent trip to the Middle East, Ramon Rempel's students met many people, learned about their lives and deepened their knowledge of the world.

Not long ago I returned from a trip to the Middle East, where I led a group of ten students from Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute (MBCI) in Winnipeg through many parts of Palestine, Israel and Jordan. We met many people, stayed in local homes, saw many sights of biblical and recent significance, and I trust the world of my students grew a little wider and deeper than it was before.

At least three times after the trip, and perhaps a couple of time before we left, I was asked whether my students would receive a “balanced” exposure to Israel and Palestine. This question confuses me to the point where I literally do not understand it. The only response that seems appropriate is: “I don’t believe in or worship ‘balance;’ I follow Christ.” This answer did not serve to resolve the question as much as confound the questioner in what I think is an appropriate way. I was glad that none of my students thought of asking such a question—perhaps they actually have learned something despite my too-often ineffectual teaching!

Why didn’t my students ask the “balance” question? In class, we learned how God used strangers and outsiders to show the people of Israel in the Old Testament, and the church in the New Testament, what faithful living means. (There are endless examples of this in scripture). So my students had been prepared to see the hand of God not only in the biblical sites we saw but also the people we met, whether Christian, Muslim or Jew.

Once one learns to see God in the present as well as the past, in people rather than in issues, one can’t fail to acknowledge the problems one sees in the present. Confronted as one is with the God of Bible in the lands



of the Bible, one is faced (as long as one's eyes are open) with the systematic injustice perpetrated today on the Palestinian people. To ignore this would be to ignore Jesus' teachings and to abandon the struggle to be the kind of people God calls us to be.

Approaching the trip in this way, one avoids the question of "balance" by making the question irrelevant. The challenge instead becomes one of how to faithfully see—to see as Christ would want us to—in a confusing land and in confusing times. I am all for hearing dissenting voices, but if one is devoted to following Christ in all things, if one sees the connection between the peace and the justice God calls us to, how does "balance" help?

What does "balance" actually mean and why does the question come up? I am guessing, but let me suppose the following: with respect to the current state

of affairs in the Holy Land, there is an issue—the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. This conflict names a struggle between these two groups in which each has a claim to the same piece of land. In other words, the struggle is one with two sides. As observers of the conflict from the outside, we have but two choices: to pick one side or the other. If one is for the Palestinians, one is anti-Israeli. If one is for the Israelis, one is anti-Palestinian. Balance then is the "virtue" which keeps us from being trapped on one side or the other. I don't know if this is exactly what people mean, but I suspect it is something like this.

The problems with this are manifold. First, the question of Israel and Palestine is not an abstract issue but a matter of real people and real people's lives. Such lives are always more complicated than issues. Real people can't be easily reduced to a simplistic two-sided issue. The

complication of real people is also the joy and sorrow of life in the church, where it is also not a matter of rules or policies but rather how to deal with real actual people as Jesus did.

Second, defining the problems of the Holy Land in terms of a need for balance between sides assumes that we as Christians can speak of injustice and justice independently of who Jesus is. Those who call for balance settle for the definitions of the conflict provided by the protagonists and this should make little sense to a Christian. When I visit the area, my focus isn't to hear all sides, but rather to make some sense of what Christian discipleship might mean in an area where, ironically, Christ often seems far away. I have few solutions to offer (and none which would be universally acceptable), but I long for a Christian community which treats the Holy Land as more than

simply a religious Disneyland.

Third, the call for balance in Israel and Palestine assumes that the struggle is between two equal parties. In reality, the Palestinians have no power—all the cards are held by Israel. Start researching this and the results are more depressing the more one discovers: the overreach and systematic attempts to destroy Palestinian society can in no way be justified by the occasional problematic attacks made by some Palestinians. In fact when you consider even the undisputed actions Israel has taken over the past 48 years of occupation, you will be impressed as I have been at the peaceful level of the Palestinian response. I struggle to think of any other people as peaceful as the Palestinians who would remain so peaceful after so much provocation.

Fourth, there is a way that one can support the Palestinian call for justice and be pro-Israeli at the same time. The great tragedy of “balance” is to forget that to be pro-Palestine is to also be pro-Israeli. For Israel to begin (yes begin) to treat Palestinians decently isn’t simply for the sake of the Palestinians, it is for the sake of Israel as well. That the right-wing Israelis and Christians don’t see this doesn’t diminish its truth. Netanyahu may celebrate Harper’s unqualified support, but Harper isn’t really Israel’s friend. (A student may like it if I reward a poor effort with a high mark, but I am only doing my job if I mark assignments appropriately even though it may make students unhappy. On reflection, the teachers I have valued the most are the ones who have pushed me the hardest.)

Fifth, one needs to recognize that calls for balance play solely to the advantage of the powerful. We can all be relieved when bombings of Gaza cease, when rocket attacks on Israel stop, even if only for a brief period, when we have a respite from suicide bombings, and when periods of relative calm emerge in the Holy Land. Those who look for balance look to such brief periods of peace as a prerequisite for a broader resolution to the conflict. But one needs to recognize that the acts of violence perpetrated by some Palestinians are obvious and unmistakable. However, the systematic theft of land from Palestinians, the legalized destruction of Palestinian

I long for a Christian community which treats the Holy Land as more than simply a religious Disneyland.

houses and crops, the daily humiliation and demonization of an entire people by the Israeli government all proceed unabated in times of relative “peace.” The Holy Land is an unbalanced land—to treat it like a conflict between two equal parties should be mystifying to any Christian interested in justice.

Sixth, with respect to the Holy Land, imbalance already exists in how most North Americans understand both Israel and Palestine. We are taught that violence is prevalent there and that we should be scared to go and see for ourselves. We hear the messages about Israel and Palestine left to us by our government and the reports of the flare-ups of violence that sadly still occur. But unlearning what we think we know is an important step in a faithful understanding of the Holy Land. Go there and see.

It isn’t quite as simple as that because you have to be careful how you go. If you stay in five-star hotels, take large package bus tours, avoid contact with Palestinians, and accept the demonization of the Palestinian people, you will learn nothing. Instead, stay in Bethlehem for a couple of

nights, visit Ramallah, and go to Nablus. Stay in local homes, if you can arrange it, or in local hostels. Walk the streets where Palestinians walk and measure how you are treated. Take your experience and compare it to what the news and our politicians tell us about the region. I strongly suspect there will be quite a difference between the two, but I can’t really explain to you why unless you go and see.

Finally, we Christians need to remind ourselves that we listen to others because we can learn about God from all kinds of strangers. We have no patience in balance; for the sake of balance; we listen to others in our search to hear God’s voice. ❧

Ramon Rempel graduated from Westgate Collegiate in Winnipeg, studied theology at Canadian Mennonite Bible College and taught for a decade at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener, Ont. He currently teaches at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg.



/// For discussion

1. When there is a contentious issue in your community, how do you decide which point of view is more accurate? What does it mean to have fair and balanced reporting? Under what conditions can someone’s perspective be considered inaccurate? Can an opinion ever be wrong?
2. Emily Hunsberger reports on her visit to Israel/Palestine on page 27. Do you think she was given a fair and balanced perspective of the conflict in the Middle East? Who might consider it to be unbalanced?
3. Ramon Rempel says, “I long for a Christian community which treats the Holy Land as more than simply a religious Disneyland.” What do you think he means by that statement? Rempel suggests that being a Christ-follower means having a deep concern for justice. Do you agree?
4. Rempel points out six reasons why insisting on a “balanced” perspective on the conflict in the Middle East is problematic. Do you find his arguments persuasive? Why does this conflict matter to Christians in North America? Which do you consider to be more important, living justly or having the correct biblical interpretation?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

✉ MWC should celebrate mission conference in 2027

THE 2015 MENNONITE World Conference assembly was indeed a significant event for our movement. In

response to the question posed in one of the workshops and reported in your excellent coverage, let me suggest that the MWC assembly in 2027 feature the synod of Anabaptist leaders held in 1527 in the German city of Augsburg. At this meeting they came to agreement on some crucial principles, set aside their different views on the end-times and sent themselves as missionaries to various regions in Europe.

In 1925 at the first Mennonite World Conference assembly we celebrated the 400th anniversary of the first

OUTSIDE THE BOX

How do you pray?

PHIL WAGLER

“There are no atheists in foxholes.” So goes the maxim with roots in the Second World War. Caught in a pinch, surrounded by stress and fear, most human beings turn to some higher power. In fact, one must rationalize away the desire to beseech the divine from deep holes.

It follows, doesn't it, that all human beings are given to pray. Under fire and feeling the heat, we don't simply satisfy ourselves with belief systems. No, we begin to talk. “God, if you're there...”, “God, I don't know what to do...”, “God, deliver, save, or heal.” These soul-cries come surprisingly naturally, even for the unreligious.

Prayers from foxholes, however, are kind of like being able to say a few words in another language.



They are understood, even heartfelt—*gracias, merci, tesekkurler*—but thoroughly incomplete for real life, friendship and community. That's not to say in the least that such praying doesn't matter; of course it does. Let's be honest, though, if that is the extent of your prayer life it's really rather shallow—even if it is from a deep, dark, hole.

Prayer is not so much a religious activity but a learned language. Jesus' disciples observed such closeness and richness of conversation between him and the

Father that they asked for some tutoring. He obliged deeply. The Lord's Prayer is a gateway into the language of heaven, and it goes far beyond where much of our praying generally takes us.

Evaluate your life of prayer, or that of your church, by Jesus' vocabulary of prayer. He teaches us: to engage a holy God with fatherly love and respect; to desire heaven and pray into being another kingdom within this present mess; to be given only what is needed, not wanted; to be led away from what would tempt us toward sin and a rejection of the Father's will and thereby fall into the grip of the evil one. This is a tongue that requires

Prayer is not so much a religious activity but a learned language.

practice, coaching, and consistent development.

We need to pray more than foxhole prayers. We need to pray without ceasing, conversationally with our Father in heaven, and with authority and expectation. This is what Jesus models and calls believers to. We need to pray for more than what is visible, but balance that with praying into what is invisible. Jesus' instruction holds both in dynamic tension. Are we learning his language of prayer?

We pray thanksgiving for a meal, but

do we pray to be freed from the infection of materialism which has fed our propensity to gorge? We pray for our children to be safe, find good jobs and be a blessing, but do we pray for them to know the redeeming power of Christ, to discover the will of God and to become selfless, generous, courageous disciples of Jesus?

We pray for those who suffer physically and spiritually, but do we pray for the Lord to raise up workers for the harvest that is ripe in this generation? We pray for God to bless our choices and to hear the desires of our hearts, but do we pray for the longings of our hearts and our choices to be what he desires? We pray for our governments because we're in an election, but do we pray for the light of Christ to bring forth justice and righteousness in our land? We pray for our churches and leaders, but do we pray for Christ to be revealed and proclaimed through us and for courage to be a people

of the Good News, grounded in truth, and rich in good deeds?

How do you pray? I wonder: are we just uttering foxhole prayers or are we learning to converse in the language of heaven?

Phil Wagler is celebrating an ever-deepening capacity to pray. He's working on PFL—prayer as his first language (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca).

re-baptism in Switzerland. In 1936 at the third MWC assembly we celebrated the conversion of Menno Simons in the Netherlands. In 2027 we should celebrate the first mission conference of the Anabaptist movement to highlight our calling to be witnesses for the gospel of Jesus Christ to all parts of the world.

PETER REMPEL, WINNIPEG, MAN.

✉ “Cultural Mennonite” reacts to being excluded

RE: “ABSURD TO think an atheist can be a Mennonite” July 6, 2015, page 9.

This letter decrees that a Mennonite is—and only is—a baptized adult believer. For added emphasis it also apparently helps to scold all those who do not vigorously self-identify as a “cultural only” Mennonite. Guilt? Ladle it on brethren—those tongue screws ain’t

NEW ORDER VOICE

Staying put

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

My family and I moved from Vancouver to Regina in July and are slowly searching for a faith community. So far we’ve attended two churches close to where we live, and with which we would feel comfortable, theologically. When we arrived (late) at both services, the first thing I noticed was that there were mostly older folks sitting in the chairs. We chose seats at the back and silently joined the worship.

If I’m honest, I felt sort of disheartened. As a young person with kids sitting among a crowd of older folks, I worry it’ll be difficult to make connections or friends. But after a little soul-searching, I realize that this pattern of thoughts is unhelpful and even disrespectful towards those whose welcoming spirits and lifestyle choices I find inspiring.

I have several relationships with older folks that are life-giving. Bill and Marge, our next-door neighbours, just celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary. They’ve been in their house 51 years. Marge was often tempted to buy a larger home for her family, but decided not to. We met them the day we moved in and they’ve already given us veggies from their garden.

Janice goes to the Mennonite church we attended in Vancouver and reached

out to me the first Sunday we were there. Within the first few months of our moving, I had tea at her house while my son played in her garden. We became friends. Janice and her husband have lived in their pre-1940 house for forty years and refuse to sell it only to have it demolished like the countless others in their neighbourhood. The \$2 million incentive from the realtor is not worth losing their home and community.

Something these folks know about, that we millennials can learn from, is place. As a member of a generation that regularly moves somewhere else to get a “better” education, job, etc., encountering those who have stayed in one place for longer than 20 years is powerful. The elders I have met have rejected the claims of capitalism—more is better—in a pro-



Something these folks know about, that we millennials can learn from, is place.

found way, simply by staying put.

Prolific American writer and activist Wendell Berry is 81. In a rare in-person interview with American journalist Bill Moyer (also 81), Berry gives advice to young folks who are overwhelmed by the desecrated earth around them: “Don’t go into this [sustainable agriculture; activism; civil disobedience] thinking you’re

going to solve all the problems. Get to know where you are, make common cause with that place, becoming patient enough to work with it over a long time.”

This comes from someone who farms the same land his ancestors lived on for hundreds of years.

So, instead of worrying that I won’t have anyone to relate to, I can recognize that these churches are places with people who have worshipped in them a long time, who *know* these places. Sure the churches aren’t romantic spots like age-old family farms, but they’re sacred spaces, with their own communities and outreaches.

I can think about how it’s been the older folks who are the first to come and greet me and my family, at church or in the neighbourhood. And I can remember my older friends who’ve taken an interest in my life and inspired me with their choices, like Bill, Marge, and Janice.

In his *A Poem for Hope*, Berry writes: “Hope/ then to belong to your place by your own knowledge/ of what it is that no other place is, and by/ your caring for it .../ knowledge cannot be taken from you

by power or wealth.”

As I try to be more attentive to my place, I look forward to getting to know a few of those who have been here long.

Katie now writes and edits in Regina, Saskatchewan. She can be reached at katiesawatzky@gmail.com.

gonna tighten themselves.

Am I to suppose that we of little-questioning-bumbling-no-faith must strike from the record all those life experiences previously counted as part of a personal Mennonite journey? It was all just the Molotchnian meanderings of an *aufyefegfallen* (backslidden) Menno wannabe? Hands off the heritage! Great-great grandfather a delegate from Russia? Irrelevant happenstance. Tears of joy shed when your daughter was baptized? Meaningless theatrics at best—specious grandstanding, more likely.

It does not matter how many relatives named Corny one may have, how many votes for Jake Epp were cast, or the number of over-priced MCC auction *plauts* (fruit pastry) bought and consumed. These are simply distractions—*knakzote* (sunflower seeds) in the wind—no matter how formative they are when taken as a whole, lifetime immersion. Without public declaration, all of it is just a mildly quaint collection of absurd non-sequiturs in the intellectual property for “Mennonite.” *Oba nay* (surely not)!

MITCHELL TOEWS, CHILLIWACK, B.C.

✉ Theologically conservative position not respected

DESPITE APPEALS FOR more respect for our gay members/adherents, I find *Canadian Mennonite* quite intolerant of theologically conservative positions. Our leaders and institutions unapologetically promote unpopular positions, such as peace and justice, despite many members who do not. But they will not take a similar stance on our official position regarding human sexuality.

IVAN UNGER, CAMBRIDGE, ONT.

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



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

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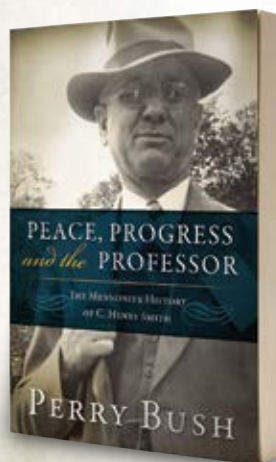
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VIEWPOINT

Breathing new life into the bones of mission

BY HIPPOLYTO TSHIMANGA
MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA
WINNIPEG

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life.' Ezekiel 37: 4-6

Mennonite Church (MC) Canada and its predecessors have a rich history of starting and strengthening churches in countries all around the world. But are the bones of traditional mission work drying up? Do we need to breathe new life into those bones?

Our ministries in more than 25 countries include church planting, Bible college and seminary instruction, Bible translation, English teaching and peace and justice training. All MC Canada funding for these ministries comes from the generosity of congregations, individuals and corporate donors.

In the past, missionaries worked with a large degree of independence. Today, we carry out mission in a close partnership and on equal footing with church bodies and organizations. For example, in African countries we work with Mennonite Mission Network (Mennonite Church USA), the Evangelical Mennonite Church, the Association of French Mennonite Churches, Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and a constellation of sister African Mennonite churches.

In meetings with our ministry partners, we often receive project proposals that include an expectation of North American funding. It has become clear that we need to help partner churches overseas become more self-reliant. That is why we now focus much effort on what we call "capacity building ministry."



Tshimanga

In entrepreneurship seminars, participants learn the rules of Christian ethics-based business and gain a sense of responsibility toward their community and their church. This is a first step on the road to self-reliance.

Encouragement for this approach has come from many places. Jean Junior Lutumba of Congo and Bala Sourabie of Burkina Faso are two young men who approached us after meetings in their countries and said, "Please help us to learn how to support our own church. We believe we can do that."

In Colombia, church leaders approached MC Canada with a request for training on "self-reliance" during their church general assembly.

Since capacity building ministry began, MC Canada has delivered seminars in the Democratic Republic of (DR) Congo, Burkina Faso, Cuba, Colombia and Botswana. In some cases, we have provided modest micro-financing to help church members start small businesses.

Some have asked me if capacity building ministry overlaps or duplicates the work done by other Mennonite organizations. This is certainly not the case. MC Canada first consults with other Mennonite organizations in our ministry locations to learn if similar work is being done, and we strive to collaborate with partners in the region where possible. There can also be legal restrictions on what relief and development agencies can and cannot do. For

example, when governments match donations to aid organizations, restrictions may prevent them from working directly with religious groups. This too is taken into account.

International church growth has benefitted from years of dedicated financial and service support from many long-term and committed mission workers and donors in North America. But the ground beneath the church in North America is shifting. Church decline and shrinking demographics have placed a strain on support for overseas ministry. Our hope is that our partner churches around the world will gradually grow financially self-reliant.

Training fellow Mennonite church members for small business development in DR Congo, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Colombia and Cuba is already showing modest results. In Burkina Faso, the first church to receive micro-financing, most people have already paid back their loans. Some are already generating income for their families, in addition to helping others in their community.

This year, a sustainable fish farm on the Colombian Mennonite Church property provided fish to feed the participants during the church's general assembly. MC Canada is encouraging the new, fledgling church in Cuba to think "self-reliance" in the early days of their formation.

The future is unpredictable, but we have everything to gain by helping our brothers and sisters walk toward self-reliance.

This is a form of church-to-church work that national churches (like MC Canada) are uniquely positioned to do. We want the churches we planted years ago to thrive and grow. We need to find ways of helping them become more self-sustaining.

Hippo Tshimanga is director of Africa, Europe & Latin America ministry for Mennonite Church Canada. In his spare time, he raises rabbits for food and experiments with small-scale sustainable aquaponics farming in his backyard in Winnipeg.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Coulter—Tanner Hugh (b. Aug. 18, 2015), to Kirsten Unrau and Justin Coulter, Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Fehr—Nathan Zidane (b. April 21, 2015) to Ally and Kyle Fehr, Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man., in Winnipeg.

Friesen—Colt William (b. June 15, 2015), to Carmen and Jacy Friesen, Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

Hilker—Emily Grace (b. Aug. 2, 2015), to Sarah and Trevor Hilker, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Wall—twins Lennon Rae and Rylieh Olivia (b. May 6, 2015), to Dayna and Tremayne Wall, Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

Baptisms

Morgan Fehr, Cindy Friesen, Lawson McDonald, Ravae McDonald—Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man., May 24, 2015.

Stefan Rogalsky, Kurtis Wiens—Glenlea Mennonite, Man., June 14, 2015.

Owen Baerg—Glenlea Mennonite, Man., June 28, 2015.

Alex Rallis—Kingsfield-Clinton, Clinton, Ont., Aug. 9, 2015.

Marriages

Bennett/Loewen—Sheldon Bennett and Ang Loewen, Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta., March 7, 2015.

Dowell/Nelson—Marjorie Dowell and Wes Nelson, Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta., June 27, 2015.

Feth/Konrad—Al Feth and Ruth Konrad, Breslau Mennonite, Ont., Aug. 7, 2015.

Heidebrecht/Karau—Alex Heidebrecht (Bergthal

Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.) and Jackie Karau (of Nairobi, Kenya), May 9, 2015.

Heidebrecht/Pauls—Ethan Heidebrecht and Lorianne Pauls, Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta., Aug. 8, 2015.

Deaths

Anderson—Irene Suzie (nee Hackett), 86 (b. July 10, 1929; d. Aug. 20, 2015), Hunta Mennonite, Ont.

Baker—Robert, 98 (b. Dec. 17, 1916; d. Aug. 18, 2015), Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Barkey—Norma (nee Reesor), 91 (b. Aug. 14, 1923; d. July 26, 2015), Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Friesen—Dick, 84 (b. Oct. 2, 1930; d. July 31, 2015), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Friesen—Irma, 59 (b. Feb. 10, 1956; d. July 18, 2015), Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

Good—Margaret (Brubacher) (nee Culp), 103 (b. Feb. 11, 1912; d. Aug. 15, 2015), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

MacLeod—Margaret Eleanor (nee McCluer), 93 (b. 1921; d. June 27, 2015), Brussels Mennonite, Ont.

Martin—Sidney, 91 (b. July 10, 1924; d. July 24, 2015), Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Neudorf—Betty (nee Driedger), 84 (b. April 26, 1931; d. July 3, 2015), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Snyder—Dorothy Marie (nee Kipfer), 92 (b. June 25, 1923; d. Aug. 18, 2015), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Steckley—Kathleen (nee Gerber), 70 (b. July 17, 1944; d. May 28, 2015), Brussels Mennonite, Ont.

Tiessen—Olga, 99 (b. July 11, 1916; d. Aug. 17, 2015), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Wiens—John, 95 (b. May 1, 1920; d. May 11, 2015), Glenlea Mennonite, Man.



A moment from yesterday

Missionary to the city of Winnipeg, Anna Thiessen, is seated with some girls she worked with in 1919. Rural life has been an important part of Mennonite life and self-understanding. The city was seen as dangerous and unhealthy and therefore shunned. Mennonite Brethren missionary Anna Thiessen was one of the first Canadian Mennonites who chose to work in the city, beginning in 1915. She helped form a church community that eventually saw a large influx of Mennonites into cities such as Winnipeg. Between 1930 and 1970, half the Canadian rural population migrated into towns and cities. Mennonites were one group that stayed on the farm the longest.

*Photo: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies/Mennonite Archival Image Database
Text: Conrad Stoesz, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies*



archives.mhsc.ca

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Gathering footprints of faith at Mennonite World Conference assembly

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LIZ KOOP

I can hardly find words to describe the experience of worshipping, singing, eating and fellowshiping with about 7,500 others at Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly, held in Harrisburg, Pa., this summer. We came from so many different countries, speaking so many different languages, yet connected to each other by a common confession of faith. What an amazing and inspiring week it was!

As president of Mennonite Women Canada (MW Canada) I was excited to have a display table at conference, highlighting our work and featuring a partially completed pieced quilt top made of batik fabrics. As women stopped by, I encouraged them to write their name and country of origin onto a “footprint” to pin onto the fabric, with the hope that the completed quilt might become part of the parade of banners at the opening worship service at the next MWC assembly in Indonesia in 2021.



women from other countries to attend the assembly. Several women from the Netherlands wanted to learn about quilting, so I directed them to the area where Mennonite Central Committee was offering quilting/sewing workshops, which were hives of activity.

Several men also wanted to add their footprint to the banner. I had an interesting conversation (partly in English, partly in French) with Ekien-E-Kiag Baudouin. He is from Durban and involved in starting a Mennonite church in South Africa. He was interested to hear how women are organized in Canada and wants to connect women from his church with Mennonite women in Canada. It'll be interesting to see what develops from our exchange of email addresses!

Three women from the Zimbabwe Brethren in Christ Church were eager to add their footprints and even helped cut them out and pin them on.

Another woman, J.V. Vidya Ranjanihad from South India, helped to host the 1997 MWC in Calcutta. She's a pastor's wife and works with groups of women leading weekly Bible studies and offering counselling services.

Conversations were sometimes challenging despite the fact that most could speak some English. One gentleman from India, Christopher Meesaalu, was very hard to understand but we ended up playing “the Mennonite game” when I finally figured out that he had been a student under the guidance of missionary Anne Ediger (now deceased), my husband's grandmother's cousin! His joy at finding her kinfolk and his expressions of deep appreciation and love for her were overwhelming. Meesaalu is the director of LEADS Ministries (Logos Educational and Developmental Services) in Telangana State, India, involved in evangelism, church planting, adult education and social activities in rural communities.

What a joy it was to meet these Anabaptist Christians and to share stories of “walking together in faith.” My hope is that the all the footprints on the completed banner will symbolize our commitment to overcoming our differences in language, styles of worship and culture as we bring praise, honour and glory to God in all we do.

Since the conference, while sewing the footprints onto the banner, I've been thinking and praying about the individual women who helped to make my MWC experience an unforgettable one!

Liz Koop, a member of Vineland (Ont.) United Mennonite Church, is president of Mennonite Women Canada.



Antje van Dijk stopped by the Mennonite Women Canada display to chat with Liz Koop. Van Dijk coordinates women's groups in the Netherlands.



The Mennonite Women Canada quilt gathered 160 footprints at MWC assembly.

The footprints we gathered totalled about 160, representing many countries including the U.S.A., Canada, Zimbabwe, India, Japan, Honduras, Bolivia, Switzerland, France, Uganda, Germany, Botswana, the Netherlands, Zambia, Mozambique, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay and Brazil. By the last afternoon I had run out of footprints as well as pins.

One of the first women to stop by the display was Antje van Dijk of the Netherlands, who coordinates the Landelijke Federatie van Doopsgezinde Zusterkringen (Anabaptist sister groups), which began in 1952, the same year as MW Canada. Van Dijk helps organize Bible study groups and assisted in fundraising for

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Conrad Grebel partners with Tabor Manor in chaplaincy internship

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

Michelle Koop grew up going to Vineland (Ont.) United Mennonite Church, next to the Vineland Mennonite Home. She worked at the Home and helped care for the father of Ed Janzen, chaplain at Conrad Grebel University College (CGUC). In part, it was her stories of that care that convinced Janzen of Koop's "heart for the aged and seniors—living out the love of God."

Koop is a fourth-year health studies and gerontology student at the University of Waterloo. She has lived in residence at CGUC, where she had been very involved in the chapel program. Janzen has been encouraging her to think about ministry of some kind.

In the meantime, Waldo Pauls, the newest member of the pastoral team at Tabor Manor, a full-spectrum seniors' complex in St. Catharines, Ont., had been hired with a job description that included

mentoring potential new chaplains. This aspect of the job interested him very much as he had mentored many potential pastors through his many years as pastor in both Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregations. Tabor Manor is owned and operated by the Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

Pauls and Janzen had a conversation that resulted in Koop spending the summer at Tabor Manor, learning the ropes of chaplaincy. Pauls notes that she took part in all parts of the ministry. She was involved in visiting all the levels of residency, from those who lived in apartments to supportive living and those in the long-term-care facility. She also did hospital visitation, led Bible studies, preached and travelled on outings with residents. Koop received very positive feedback from both staff and residents on all her involvements.

Koop has learned a lot about dealing with older people with their different levels of cognition and different abilities, but has also learned that many of them have a vibrant and growing faith. She has found that they are willing to learn from a young person. She heard many stories of the challenges which seniors have overcome.

The work also has a downside, with the many losses common to this type of ministry—sicknesses, hospitalizations, deaths and funerals. She very much appreciated the focus on the whole picture of health—social, spiritual, physical and mental/emotional—that is different from what she has seen in some hospital settings or other seniors' facilities.

In spite of the encouragement, Koop does not see herself going into chaplaincy in the near future. She expects that what she has learned will help her in a future congregation to carry out ministry and to help the congregation formulate what they will do in ministry with seniors.

Koop was paid a stipend as the internship was funded by CGUC, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Mennonite Church Canada, Vineland United Mennonite Church, and Tabor Manor. ❧

Staff changes

Pastoral transition in Ontario

Jim Whitehead began serving as the interim supply pastor at Community Mennonite Fellowship, Drayton, Ont., on June 14, 2015. He was formally installed on June 28. He had previously served in various ministerial capacities at Brussels Mennonite Fellowship, Cassel Mennonite Church, Maple View Mennonite Church, Hillcrest Mennonite Church and Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church. He also served Mennonite Church Eastern Canada in the past as chair of the Theological Concerns Council, Agape Reference Council, and the Peace, Justice and Social Concerns Commission.



Whitehead



Michelle Koop served as a summer chaplaincy intern at Tabor Manor, St. Catharines, Ont., for the summer of 2015. She worked under the supervision of Waldo Pauls.

South Korean CO freed after 15 months

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

Conscientious objector (CO) Sang-Min Lee, a member of Grace and Peace Mennonite Church in Seoul, South Korea, is free. He was released from prison on July 30, after serving 15 months of an 18-month sentence for refusing military service. The time he spent as a barber in the prison system was credited as additional time served.

News of Lee's stand for peace travelled quickly through Mennonite channels garnering messages of support from individuals and churches around the world during his imprisonment.

Military service is mandatory in South Korea. A demilitarized zone (DMZ) was imposed between North and South Korea in 1953 following the Korean War, creating a divided country for the first time in Korea's recorded history. It serves as a reminder that the Korean War has not ended; a peace treaty was never ratified.

The 4-kilometre wide, 250-kilometre-long DMZ holds the distinction of being the most heavily militarized border in the world. The tension of separation has been constant since 1953 and periodically flares up as in recent border incidents on land or sea.

"In light of this reality and threat, military service in South Korea is viewed as a true patriotic duty and necessity, one more associated with defense of land and family than with military aggression," says Tim Froese, who is now Mennonite Church Canada executive minister, Witness. Froese lived in South Korea for six years.

More than 660 COs were jailed each year from 2012 to 2014 for their refusal to participate in South Korean military service. Most of them have been Jehovah's Witnesses; Lee is the first Mennonite CO in the country.

Mennonite Church Canada is responding to this and other peace issues through the efforts of workers Bock Ki Kim and Sook Kyoung Park. They work closely with the Korea Anabaptist Fellowship, which includes Grace and Peace Mennonite

Church, and the Korea Anabaptist Center which produces and distributes Anabaptist resources for Korean Christians.

In a letter written to supporters prior to his release and translated by Abby Long, Lee noted that he changed during his time in prison. "Above all, I talk less. I don't know if it's because of the solitary life I've lived since last summer, but it seems like my speech has really disappeared."

He also acquired the habit of writing with a pen because there was no access to computers. "It seems like a good habit to have. Writing letters that way is good of course, but I've also found that writing things down in a little notebook is also nice. Later on it seems like it will be something valuable."

To learn more about the Mennonite

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE PHOTO



Sang-Min Lee enjoys some of his favourite fast food after being released from prison, where he served 15 months for refusing to participate in mandatory military service.

presence in South Korea, see <http://news.mennonitechurch.ca/south-koreas-anabaptist-way>. ❧

PHOTO BY LANI GADE; TEXT BY MARIA H. KLASSEN



The Niagara United Mennonite Church sells peach salsa and peach jam as well as serving samples of salsa on tortilla chips every August at the annual peach festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont. This project started as a fundraiser five years ago, and approximately 500 jars of salsa are prepared and bottled by members of the Mission and Service Committee and other volunteers. In previous years this fundraiser has supported projects such as helping to fund the church-sponsored refugee family and the work of Mennonite Church Canada Witness in Botswana.

MWC recognizes some long-serving volunteers

Mennonite World Conference

At a dinner following the July 21-26 Assembly, César García, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), expressed appreciation to a number of staff members who are ending their work involvement with MWC.

Merle and Phyllis Good were recognized for their service as communication consultants and fundraisers. Over the past 31 years, since the 1984 Strasbourg assembly, they volunteered by writing articles, taking photos, editing *Courier*, developing the Anabaptist Shelf, publishing and promoting the Global History series, helping with social media and marketing, raising funds and advising on overall strategy. During some of those years, Phyllis also served on the general council and the executive committee.

Eleanor Miller was recognized for 25 years of service. She served as a volunteer in the MWC Strasbourg office from 1990-1997, assisting in the planning of meetings and also the 1997 assembly in India. From 1997-2015 she served as administrative assistant and until 2014 was also a member of the communication team. In addition, from 2003 to 2015 she collected all national church information and statistics for the MWC global census of Anabaptist-related churches.

Tim Lind was recognized for several key roles with MWC. He and Pakisa Tshimika worked on a Global Gift Sharing project and co-authored *Sharing Gifts in the Global Family of Faith* (Good Books, 2003). From 2003 until 2014, Lind served as MWC's church-to-church relations coordinator. In the months leading up to the 2015 assembly, he provided assistance to individuals from the Democratic Republic of Congo in dealing with visa issues.

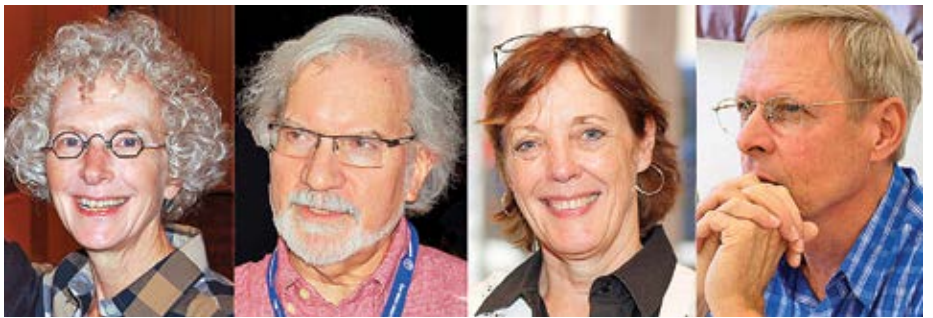
Other departing staff recognized at the dinner event were Robert J. Suderman, who served as Peace Commission secretary for the past six years, Devin Manzullo-Thomas, who served as editor of *Courier/*

Correo/Courier since January 2013, and Ron Rempel, who served as chief communications officer since January 2012.

Also recognized were two individuals

who completed a six-year term as commission chairs: Richard Showalter of the Mission Commission and Paulus Widjaja of the Peace Commission.

At the dinner event, Liesa Unger, chief international events officer, Howard Good, national coordinator for the 2015 Assembly, and Lynn Roth, North America representative also took the opportunity to thank the many paid and volunteer staff who helped with Assembly planning. ☘



Phyllis Good (left), Merle Good, Eleanor Miller and Tim Lind were all recognized for their significant contribution to the work of Mennonite World Conference.

☘ Staff changes

Hannah Heinzekehr has been named the executive director of The Mennonite, Inc., the organization that publishes *The Mennonite* magazine. Heinzekehr currently serves as director of communications and convention planning coordinator for Mennonite Church USA. Prior to that role she worked in church relations and communications for Mennonite Mission Network. In her role as executive director she will bring broad vision to the organization and work to develop programs appropriate for the digital age. Heinzekehr has a B.A. in communication from Bluffton (Ohio) University and M.A. in religious education and theology from Claremont (Calif.) School of Theology. Her writing has been published in numerous publications, and her personal blog, *The Femonite*, receives significant web traffic. Heinzekehr lives with her husband, Justin, and two children in Newton, Kan. She attends New Creation Fellowship Church, a Mennonite Church USA congregation in Newton. She will work for The Mennonite, Inc., from Newton beginning Oct. 1. Anna Groff, outgoing executive director, will begin as executive director of Dove's Nest, an organization that works to equip faith communities to keep children safe. Gordon Houser will continue to work as editor of the print magazine *The Mennonite*. Houser was associate editor of *The Mennonite*, beginning in 1998. From 1992-1997, he served as editor of *The Mennonite*, the General Conference Mennonite Church publication, which merged with *Gospel Herald* in 1998. After 13 years as editor, Everett Thomas left The Mennonite, Inc., in Jan. 2014.

—Mennonite Church USA



Heinzekehr

Alleged sexual misconduct against Vernon Leis, deceased pastor

Canadian Mennonite staff report

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) has received an allegation of sexual and ethical misconduct against a former credentialed pastor, the late Vernon Leis. "It is a painful recognition of human sin and failure," says an Aug. 31 news release from MCEC. "In the midst of this challenging and painful situation, MCEC will do its best to walk alongside all those who are impacted."

Leis, 60, was killed in a head-on collision while driving home in the late afternoon of Feb. 26, 1994, on Highway 7 near Baden, Ont. Pastor of East Zorra Mennonite Church (Tavistock, Ont.), Leis, a well-known figure in the conference, was the first moderator of MCEC and chair of the Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service, among other positions.



Leis

In a situation such as this, the release says, "MCEC typically removes the pastor from ministry until an investigation has been completed. As part of such an investigation, the accused pastor is advised of the specifics of the accusation, and given an opportunity

to respond and tell his/her side of the story. "In the case of an allegation against a deceased pastor, it was not possible to follow the usual investigative course, nor to give the pastor an opportunity to respond," says MCEC. MCEC's Executive Council therefore established a task group to advise on how to respond to this unique situation. After review, MCEC is satisfied that the complainant's account is sufficiently compelling and credible, despite MCEC's inability to test it in the usual investigative fashion.

As a result of this review process, MCEC feels compelled to release the name of the pastor. "This is an important step in facilitating the process of healing because it allows the affected parties and the wider faith community to confront a hidden truth and bring it into the light for healing. As painful as it may be, we as a faith community are called to support those paths that lead to healing and wholeness.

"MCEC holds all pastors to a high standard of ethical conduct. We want to assure congregations that we have policies, procedures, and training for pastoral leaders that promote safe and ethical interactions between pastors and participants in our faith communities. MCEC commits to ongoing review and strengthening of these safeguards. In addition, MCEC also has a web-based resource for understanding, reporting, and responding to sexual misconduct by church leaders."

When contacted by *Canadian Mennonite* for a response to the allegations, the Leis family had no comment. ❧

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GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

MCC PHOTO BY KAITLIN HEATWOLE



Qasim's family is able to rent an apartment with a kitchen in Erbil, Iraq, due to rent assistance through an MCC's partner organization and funding by a Canadian government grant. Qasim and 28 other relatives were displaced from their homes and lived in very difficult conditions for 10 months.

MCC supports displaced families in Iraq and Syria

By Emily Loewen

Mennonite Central Committee Canada

It's been a year since Qasim* left his home in Sinjar, Iraq. He was fleeing an advance by the Islamic State group—the same one that left tens of thousands of Yazidis like him stranded in the mountains. Qasim, his parents and three brothers, along with their wives and children, spent two days in a camp before moving on because it was too crowded.

Back in Sinjar, life had been good. They made a living from the farms and shops they owned, and the families lived close to each other in the village. But after being displaced, all 29 members of the extended family lived together for 10 months in an unfinished building owned by a friend. The roof leaked, the floors were wet and mould grew on the walls. They had no source of water.

Now the families are able to rent two apartments near Erbil, thanks to a rent assistance project carried out by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partner Rehabilitation, Education and Community Health (REACH). The project provides

monthly rent allowances for approximately 570 households in Erbil and Kirkuk using a \$1.9 million grant from the Canadian government.

In both cities many displaced people live in unfinished houses, says Hawkar Aziz, project manager with REACH. "No doors, no windows, bad sanitation, no water," he says. "As well as no furniture, no property

because they came [here] with nothing."

For Qasim and his family, the rent assistance is one step towards building a new life. The news they hear from Sinjar is bad, so they hope to find work and stay in Erbil. The family lives in a new development with affordable housing. They hope to register their children in an Arabic-language school this year. "It's not perfect, but it's better than anything else," Qasim says.

Two other Canadian government grants are also supporting MCC's response to the Syria and Iraq crisis. In Iraq's Baghdad and Najaf Governorates, a \$1.2 million grant is providing essential items to displaced families. More than 1,960 households are receiving locally purchased kitchen supplies, water filters and hygiene kits. Each kit includes items such as soap, towels and laundry detergent. The project is being implemented by MCC partner *Première Urgence Internationale—Aide Médicale Internationale*, and will also provide training on sanitation and hygiene practices to help prevent water-borne illnesses.

In Syria, a \$1.5 million grant is providing children's clothing, hygiene kits and feminine hygiene supplies to 4,300 households. The distribution is being done by MCC partner Middle East Council of Churches in the Daraa province, where fighting continues in the countryside.

The crisis is now in its fifth year. Since 2012, MCC has responded with more than \$30 million in emergency relief, education, peacebuilding and trauma support for people in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. ✎

** All last names withheld due to security concerns.*

**CANADIAN
MENNONITE**

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MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE PHOTOS BY HENK STENVERS



A Mennonite World Conference delegation attended a worship service at the Mennonite Brethren church in Majé, Panama, in February, 2015.



The mother of a man sentenced to 20 years in prison on false charges participates in a community meeting in the Wounaan village of Majé, Panama.

Mennonites in Panama oppose clear-cutting, request prayer

BY WILL BRAUN

With the future of the Wounaan indigenous people of Panama being chopped down before their eyes, the largely Mennonite leadership of the group is asking the global Mennonite community to stand with them, and kneel with them in prayer for fair treatment.

The Wounaan are known for carvings they make from hard, rich cocobolo wood, but this wood is in high demand and the logging of cocobolo by outside interests is creating an ever deepening crisis for the Wounaan.

Though the Panamanian government has designated a large tract of land in the eastern part of the country as belonging collectively to the Wounaan, it has turned a blind eye as outsiders brazenly move in, harvest trees, clear forest for grazing, and sometimes threaten Wounaan villagers.

Last February, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) sent a delegation of four people, each from a different continent, to visit the Wounaan. Jack Suderman, a Canadian with extensive experience in neighbouring Colombia, was among them. Gladys Siemens from Brazil, Joji Pantoja of the Philippines and Henk Stenvers of

the Netherlands were the others. The delegation travelled to Rio Hondo, Rio Platanares, and Majé, three small villages in the jungle, without phone service, an electrical grid, and accessible only by boat. There, the delegates heard hours of accounts of the incursions by outsiders.

Suderman said the clear-cut areas were easy to spot throughout the mountainous region, some less than a 20-minute walk from the villages. Suderman said “invaders” come in with bulldozers and semi trucks to indiscriminately cut trees. In some cases they build cabins and bring in cattle.

The delegation heard “story after story” of villagers going to their fields only to find them “taken over” by people threatening to shoot the locals.

“They are rapidly loosing their land,” Suderman said. A common refrain was: “So now we don’t know what to do.”

The encroachment not only robs villagers of wood and their ability to feed themselves, but it increases erosion and environmental degradation. And it creates a climate of constant fear.

The MWC delegation also attended a worship service in each of the three

communities. While about 600 of the roughly 15,000 Wounaan are Mennonite, all of the members of the Wounaan tribal government attend Mennonite churches.

These churches date back to the late 1950s when Mennonite Brethren anthropologist Jacob Loewen moved to Panama. Previously based in Colombia, which is also home to Wounaan people, Loewen had been working on a translation of the Bible into the Wounaan language. When changes to Colombian visa policy forced him out, Loewen went to neighbouring Panama to complete the task. There are now 13 Mennonite Brethren churches in Panama, predominantly in outlying villages and predominantly made up of Wounaan peoples, with some Embera people as well.

Suderman, who also visited Panama last year, said he was particularly impressed with the degree of organization among the Wounaan leadership. They have carefully mapped their territory, including identification of thousands of cocobolo trees at various stages of development, and created a long-term plan for harvesting and replanting the trees in an economically and ecologically viable way. “They understand that to be their future economically,” said Suderman.

But each tree that is hauled away by outsiders undermines the plan and the future of the Wounaan.

In 2012, one Wounaan villager and one logger died in an armed altercation. Now, Wounaan leaders, in keeping with their

Mennonite faith, are trying hard to keep the struggle non-violent. Mennonites from Colombia have been brought in for non-violence training and MWC has notified its networks of the request for more training in conflict transformation. But the MWC delegation was repeatedly told, “The young people are losing patience.”

Following the delegation’s visit, MWC notified Mennonites around the world of the request to pray for the Wounaan and arranged for Wounaan representatives to share their story at the MWC assembly in Pennsylvania. It is also working on a statement of solidarity with indigenous peoples.

In June, MWC sent a letter to key ministers in the Panamanian government regarding Wounaan concerns. Wounaan leaders report that shortly thereafter, key government representatives not only met with them but travelled to the jungle to do so. They also report that three Wounaan men sentenced to 20-year prison terms on false charges inexplicably had their charges dropped.

The Wounaan, who had considered launching a more concerted international campaign, are now weighing their options and watching for follow-through on government commitments.

Suderman said Wounaan leaders took encouragement from the fact that MWC representatives from four continents came to visit them. They also place great confidence in the prayers of Mennonites around the world. Their primary request is for prayer. See the sidebar for a prayer used at MWC assembly. ☞

For more on the Wounaan see canadianmennonite.org/panama



This household in a remote village in Panama hosted the Mennonite World Conference delegation.

Prayer

The Commission of Diaconia and Peace of the Iglesia Evangélica Unida Hermanos Menonitas de Panamá (United Evangelical Church: Mennonite Brethren of Panama) has requested that God’s people around the world pray this prayer on their behalf.

Creator God of Justice, Peace, Love and Mercy:

You know the struggles of your people.
You know the struggles of the Wounaan People of Panama: a struggle for justice related to their ancestral domain amid the continuing invasions of those lands.

We pray to you.
We lament the ongoing loss of valuable resources of the Wounaan people.
We pray that the government of Panama might act to secure the collective title to the land.

We pray to you for justice in the case of the three men who have been falsely accused and condemned to 20 years of prison due to their leadership in this struggle for land.

We pray for your justice in the legal processes led by their lawyer Leonidas Quiróz; processes that still seem to be without the sympathetic ears and hearts needed to resolve these struggles.

We pray for wisdom and patience for the local pastors and conference leaders of the United Evangelical Church: Mennonite Brethren of Panama.

We give thanks for their firm commitment to keeping this struggle free of violence.
We give thanks for their concerns for the life-giving flora and fauna created to secure life for generations to come.
We give thanks for their wisdom and patience.
We give thanks that they are your people and you are their God.

Thank you God for listening to our lament. Thank you for knowing the integrity of our hearts. Thank you that your will is the welfare of all your creation.

May your will be done.

Amen.

Mennonites have yet to reckon with their role in 'sixties scoop'

STORY AND PHOTOS BY J. NEUFELD

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Marcel French's tanned complexion and dark hair easily identify him as Anishinabe. Which is why he likes to drop a Low German word or expression into his speech and watch the surprise on his listeners' faces. "When I go to Jake's Restaurant in Steinbach, I always ask for *Gnurpel*," he says with a chuckle.

Marcel French jokes about the fact that he's an indigenous man who's fluent in Low German, but the circumstances that brought it about are anything but humorous. French was one of tens of thousands of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children taken from their birth families in the 1960s, '70s and early '80s and put into the care of non-indigenous families as part of the Canadian government's strategy of assimilation. It's commonly referred to as the "sixties scoop."

Some children went to loving homes while others were abused or mistreated

by their adoptive or foster families. But nearly all, it seems, were disconnected from their families, language, culture and identities as indigenous people. In an indicting report published in 1985, the late Justice Edwin Kimelman referred to the actions of the child welfare system during this period as "cultural genocide"—a term that's been used more recently to describe the residential schools system. This summer Manitoba became the first province to publicly apologize to survivors of the sixties scoop for "this historical injustice."

French was a baby when his parents were diagnosed with tuberculosis and sent to a sanatorium in the town of Ninette, Man. He was placed with a Mennonite foster family in Altona who had as many as 26 children in their care at a time.

"We were sleeping eight or nine to a room," he says. In the summertime, French and his siblings were put to work hoeing



Steve Heinrichs (left), Delvina Kejick and Marcel French

beets in the hot sun from seven in the morning until eight at night. Sometimes their parents would then take them into town for half an hour of swimming before the pool closed. It was a small consolation. By then the heat of the day had passed and all the other kids had gone home to their dinners.

French remembers his foster parents as very strict. "You didn't question them." He says they would strap him and his siblings with a belt or yardstick for offences as small as being late for dinner or accidentally muddying a pair of new shoes. In the small Mennonite town, it seemed to French that he and his siblings were blamed for everything that went wrong.

French ran away from home when he

A starlight tour

"My brother and I were coming home from church. Our church was in the middle of town and we lived in the south of town. The chief of police stopped us and said, 'Get in.' We thought, 'Well, it's the middle of winter; he's going to give us a ride home.' So we got in. We had nothing to be scared of. But then he turned around and we went down Centre Avenue and kept going. We said, 'Where are we going?' We were only dressed to go from home to church and back. He drove us four or five miles west of Altona into the middle of nowhere and said, 'Get out.' My parents were strict. We had to be in by a certain time. If we weren't in by that time, we got it. Here we were, five miles out of town in the middle of winter, walking. We couldn't get rides because there was no one out there at that time of night. So we walked. When we got home, we told my parents. They said, 'Why would he do that?' They didn't believe us."

—Marcel French

'These are your people'

"When I was eight years old, I was in our town and I saw this native man from a distance, and I ran and hid. My parents had to look for me. I really couldn't verbalize why I ran and hid like I did. They saw that fear, but they also recognized it wasn't just fear; there was some sort of shame to it. My mom said, 'It's not good for her to be scared of her own people.' And so after that they took more deliberate action to get together with another family who had native foster kids. And they took us out to Sioux Valley during a powwow and we sat and we watched. I remember my mom saying, 'I don't understand it, but it's beautiful. These are your people.' I remember having this sense of how I looked like everybody else. I never really said it out loud. There was just stuff starting to happen within me that I recognized."

—Delvina Kejick

was 17. “I always said to myself, if I ever have kids, my kids aren’t ever going to put up with what I went through,” he says.

Delvina Kejick was placed in a Mennonite foster home near Kilarney in the 1960s, after her birth parents were sent to the Ninette sanatorium. Her foster parents were much more alert to the day-to-day racism that affected indigenous children living in small Mennonite towns than French’s were. When visiting missionaries singled out Kejick and her siblings as examples of brown-skinned people in need of salvation, her mother put a stop to it. Kejick also witnessed her mother confront school teachers who laid unfair blame on indigenous students.

Still, it wasn’t until Kejick got to know other indigenous people as an adult that she began to fully accept herself as a Cree woman. Thirteen years ago Kejick started hosting weekly community powwows at her home in Brandon. The events feature drumming and dancing, feasts and spiritual teachings.

“We sing ceremony songs or prayer songs for somebody who’s passed away,” she says. “It’s definitely comparable to church. It’s our spiritual place. It’s our community place.” With her own people Kejick feels a depth of acceptance she

never experienced in a Christian church. And there’s a spiritual expressiveness in her own language—which she’s learned as an adult—that she doesn’t find in English. “I now see that whether you call him God or the Creator, that he delights in me coming to him as he created me—as a Cree person,” she says.

Steve Heinrichs, director of indigenous relations for Mennonite Church Canada, believes Mennonites have yet to fully reckon with their role in the sixties scoop. Even though many families had good intentions, most didn’t understand “the complexities of cross-cultural adoption,” he says. “And I really don’t think we are all that different today from that 1960s Mennonite community that was blind to its white normativity,” he says. “Despite all the struggle we’re having in our church to talk about sexuality, I think it’s harder for us to talk about race or whiteness.”

Kejick feels her foster parents did the best they could with the knowledge they had. Still, she recognizes the harm done by the government’s attempts to strip indigenous people of their culture. “It just made our journey in life harder—being placed in non-aboriginal homes,” she says. “There is so much that happens in the realm of your own people and language.” ❧

armed interventions in countries if a country’s government was not protecting its own civilians from military or paramilitary forces—raised some eyebrows among the pacifist denominations but, according to Siebert, the broad range of issues worked on by Project Ploughshares has meant continued support from all nine. Ploughshares is run by a governing committee, and staff are employees of CCC.

Siebert had previously worked for the United Church of Canada on issues of aboriginal justice as well as the inclusion of gays and lesbians in society. While he was there the whole issue of Indian residential schools blew up, since both the United Church and its founding denominations had run such schools for the government of Canada.

Ploughshares depends on the program officers, who work at the various policy desks, to work in-depth with issues like outer space security (keeping space arms-free), in order to influence public policy with well-thought-through and strongly researched briefs and presentations. Early in Siebert’s tenure, Canada’s federal government made major and lasting changes which have affected both the sources of funding for Ploughshares and the availability of information.

Siebert shepherded the organization in a time of greater dependence on individual and corporate donors. As a “middle-aged white guy” he also helped move the organization through a generational shift with new program and younger executive staff.

His departure has been two or three years in the making, with a recent strategic planning process leading to a five-year plan. Under the new executive director, Cesar Jaramillo, who is moving from a program desk, the organization will focus on: building up a younger support base; more public education and popularizing of issues; and strengthening Ploughshares’ relationships on the academic side. Part of this has been facilitated by moving back to CGUC, where they are located in the new Mennonite Savings and Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement, the fourth floor of CGUC’s new building.

Presently Siebert has a contract consultation position with Mennonite Central Committee. ❧

John Siebert reflects on 10 years at Project Ploughshares

DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

As he takes leave of his position as the second executive director of Project Ploughshares, John Siebert says coming to the 39-year-old organization was a learning curve, even though he was used to working with human rights issues.

Project Ploughshares was founded by Conrad Grebel University College (CGUC) under the leadership of its then-president, Frank Epp, and was focused on disarmament, defence and foreign policy. Ernie Regehr, the first director, had a high



Siebert

level of expertise in these issues, and after his retirement in 2005, continued researching and writing on armament and involvement in wars.

Within a year of its founding, Ploughshares became a part of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and garnered support from nine denominations, with Mennonites and Quakers being the two pacifist groups. Ploughshares’ support of “R2P” (Responsibility to Protect)—allowing for

Sunday dinners with the homeless

MCC partners provide meals, clothing

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Mennonite Central Committee B.C.'s offices and thrift shop may be closed on Sunday, but two Sunday afternoons a month there is plenty of activity in the back parking lot of the MCC Centre. Here homeless and low-income people meet with volunteers for a hot meal, friendship, and free clothing and groceries.

Lifeline Outreach Ministries of Aldergrove, a registered non-profit organization, has ministered to homeless people in the Fraser Valley since 1988. One of their ministries has been serving Sunday night suppers alternately in Aldergrove and Abbotsford. This past May the Abbotsford location has moved to the back of the MCC Centre, which opened for business last fall in the east part of downtown Abbotsford.

According to Lifeline founder David Poulette, up to 200 people come to the Sunday night suppers. Hot meals are prepared at the Lifeline warehouse in Aldergrove, then are transported by Lifeline's signature "Blue Bus" to the MCC Centre location. Guests also receive a bag of groceries and are able to "shop" for free clothing donated by MCC.

With the new MCC building situated right across the street from the Abbotsford's homeless camp, the location is ideal for establishing a caring presence among the city's disenfranchised. Jane Ngoju, MCC B.C.'s homelessness prevention and outreach program coordinator, has been involved in the Sunday suppers and has been actively seeking volunteers to help with preparation, serving and cleanup. The ministry relies totally on donations.

Volunteers from MCC or from local churches sit down to eat with the guests, lending a listening ear or support as

needed. Longtime MCC volunteers Bill and Diana Ferguson have been reaching out to homeless people for years and have a relationship of trust with many. The Fergusons come to the Sunday night fellowship dinners because they feel called to minister to hurting people. "We believe what the Bible says; God said we are to give to the needy," explained Bill Ferguson.

Diana Ferguson says that she hopes



Volunteer Ingrid Schultz, right, enjoys dinner and fellowship with a guest at one of this summer's fellowship dinners in Abbotsford.

those in need have their spiritual needs as well as their physical needs met. A prayer table is provided at the meal. "We really want to give opportunity to pray for [the homeless guests]," she says. "We ask if we can pray for them and we've never had anybody say no." ❧

CHRISTIAN PEACEMAKER TEAMS PHOTO



During a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation to Grassy Narrows First Nation in August, Allan Reeve-Smith, Peter Haresnape, Tom Abel and Hubert Den Draak participated in the Kenora "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" event where men don women's heels and walk to raise awareness about sexual violence and to support the Kenora Sexual Assault Centre.

Bomb anniversary remembered

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Seventy years ago, in 1945, the United States detonated atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Japan, Aug. 6 and 9 are sombre dates of remembrance as an estimated 246,000 people died.

Mary Derksen, a former missionary to Japan, suggested a recognition service in her congregation, Emmanuel Mennonite Church (Abbotsford, B.C.), on Aug. 9.

Barb Nickel presented “A Sabbath from War: Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 70 Years Later” in church that Sunday. The words and pictures included the story of Dr. Takashi Nagai, dean of radiology at the Nagasaki Medical College. Dr. Nagai lost his home, his wife, his medical college, and his church in the blast, but was able to serve God and minister to the world until his own death in 1951.

In 1947 the Japanese cabinet drafted a peace article in its constitution to say, “The Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.” But now the Japanese government is considering the establishment of a national defence force to take offensive action outside its borders.

In 2013, 14 Japanese Mennonite and Brethren in Christ leaders issued a call against these proposed changes, saying: “As an historical peace church, now is not the time to close our mouths and keep silent. It is time to stand up by the power of our Lord Jesus and say that war is the greatest of sins and that we must not open up any path that would cause our country to engage in war again.”

When Tadayuki Ishiya, pastor of the Mennonite Church in Hiroshima, heard that a congregation in Canada was remembering them he was very thankful. “I express gratitude with all my heart that you remembered us,” he wrote to Derksen. “The government wants to resort to military power again. Please keep praying for us.”



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Charting Walks with God

This five-part video series picks up on the theme of the July 2015 Mennonite World Conference assembly, “Walking with God.”

Each video gives voice to members of one of the five Mennonite World Conference regions: Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. The interviewees reflect on what the Sermon on the Mount—a foundational and formational text for the Anabaptist faith—means for them today. Music from each continent gives the flavour of the worship times.

The videos are in English and run between five and nine minutes in length. They can be used in worship services, Sunday school classes, and small group settings to stimulate conversation about the faith perspectives of Mennonite-Anabaptist brothers and sisters across the world.

View all the videos at canadianmennonite.org/stories/video-charting-walks-god



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“I think it’s really important to give back,” Victoria Pelletier says. “One way to do that is to sit on boards.”



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canadianmennonite.org/stories/where-are-young-board-members
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GOD AT WORK IN US

New director hopes to increase restorative justice

By DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
PRINCE ALBERT, SASK.

Parkland Restorative Justice has a new executive director. The agency, which is supported by Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (MC Sask), hired Heather Driedger to fill the position recently vacated by Ryan Siemens. Originally from Saskatoon, Driedger is a 2004 graduate of Rosthern Junior College. She earned a BA degree in peace and conflict transformation studies from Canadian Mennonite University.

After a year in the Netherlands, Driedger returned to Winnipeg, where she volunteered with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba at Sam's Place, helping young people acquire employable skills such as operating a cash register or preparing food. Later, as an MCC Manitoba employee, Driedger worked with a program called Journey to Justice. Volunteers helped inmates of Stony Mountain Penitentiary to craft beaded jewelry. These items were sold outside the penitentiary, and proceeds went toward purchasing a house for victims' families to stay in during trials. The program "was an attempt to have inmates try to repair some of the harm they had done," says Driedger. Conversations with both volunteers and inmates deepened her interest in restorative justice.

Most recently, Driedger completed a two-year term with Mennonite Voluntary Service in Alamosa, Colorado. Here, part of her time was spent working in a conflict management diversion program. Youth who were arrested on alcohol or marijuana charges could opt to participate in this program instead of being charged with their crimes.

Parkland Restorative Justice offers two programs. Person to Person or P2P is a prison visitation program, which has been in operation for 40 years. Currently about 60 volunteers visit inmates in the Prince

Albert Penitentiary. Circles of Support and Accountability help sex offenders safely reintegrate into the community after completing their sentences.

Parkland's new director hopes these programs can continue but admits the organization is "at a critical point with funding." Government and grant money are one source of funding, but these are not always reliable. "It's very important for the church to be involved because [restorative justice] is exactly what Jesus talks about," she says.

Driedger hopes to grow support within the church; she expects her job will include raising funds and awareness for Parkland. Recently Parkland's base of support has

PHOTO COURTESY OF HEATHER DRIEDGER



Heather Driedger is the new executive director of Parkland Restorative Justice, an agency supported by MC Sask.

become more ecumenical. Driedger says she wants "to continue nurturing voices from other denominations." She also hopes to educate youth about her agency's programs, because she says they are often receptive to the concept of restorative justice. "What does it mean to be a pacifist today? How do I live out my pacifist beliefs?" she asks. "Restorative justice is a way of discovering where pacifism lies."

Driedger, who began her new job on Aug. 15, looks forward to becoming involved with Grace Mennonite Church in Prince Albert. ❧

/// Briefly noted

Ministry leads mission worker to PhD

PHOTO BY LARISA IUSIPENKO



Mary Raber is congratulated by Vladimir Pomazkov following the successful defense of her doctoral dissertation at the Odessa Theological Seminary.

Odessa, Ukraine—On April 24, Vladimir Pomazkov, president of Odessa Theology Seminary, congratulated Mary Raber, who teaches at the seminary, for her successful defense of her doctoral dissertation, "Ministries of Compassion among Russian Evangelicals, 1905-1929." Raber received her PhD in history from the University of Wales through International Baptist Theological Seminary in Amsterdam. She is a Mennonite Church Canada partner who has been involved with many churches in Eastern Europe. She became interested in this topic after spending time with church groups who have worked with homeless children, alcoholics or the elderly since the collapse of the Soviet Union and assumed it was something new. "I chose 1905-1929 because those were years of relative freedom for evangelical believers, just at the end of the Russian Empire and the beginning of the Soviet Union," she said. She plans to incorporate insights she gained from her research into her teaching at the Odessa seminary and elsewhere in Europe.

—Mennonite Church Canada

ARTBEAT

Ontario Mennonite Music Camp explores “pride and prejudice”

DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

When Linnea Thacker suggested to her co-director of Ontario Mennonite Music Camp, Elizabeth Rogalsky Lepock, that they perform a shortened version of *My Fair Lady* as the musical at the camp's closing program, Lepock wondered at its non-religious content. In other years the camp

performed *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, exploring faith issues with the campers. But a focus in the musical on the deep prejudice on the part of professor Henry Higgins, who grows out of his hubris, led to much learning about attitudes and ‘isms’ of many kinds. An example was when Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario, came to teach campers about settler/aboriginal relations.

The closing program on Aug. 28 at Conrad Grebel University College, which sponsors and hosts the two-week residential camp, included instrumental and voice



Laura Bruno (Eliza Doolittle), Josh Neufeldt (Henry Higgins), Kate Strathdee (Eliza Doolittle), and Ben Thiessen (Colonel Hugh Pickering) perform in *My Fair Lady*. At music camp roles are often shared and at this point the two Elizas were changing places.

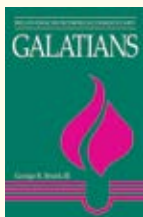
performances by all the campers, as well as an 80-minute version of *My Fair Lady*. Josh Neufeldt, who played Higgins, noted that while he enjoyed watching Rex Harrison play the role in the movie, he came to hate the character as he constantly put down Eliza Doolittle, a woman with a strong cockney accent. ❧

/// Briefly noted

New commentary on Galatians

Passion for learning should be contagious. George R. Brunk III committed his life to scriptural study and *Galatians*, the newest title in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series, extends his passion to readers in an accessible manner. *Galatians*, the 28th volume in the series was published by Herald Press earlier this year. Brunk focusses on the transformative elements of Paul's letter to the Galatians, looking at Paul's role in Christianity's shift from a small sect within Judaism to a new religious movement accepting Gentiles. Dorothy Jean Weaver, professor of New Testament at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., says, “Here is first-order exegesis for the church. This commentary masterfully elucidates Paul's ‘revolutionary manifesto,’ locates Paul's argument within the wider New Testament context, and assesses Paul's message for the 21st-century church.

—MennoMedia



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How did Christianity become so tame?

Todd Wynward “re-wilds” Christianity by investigating Scripture as inspiration for redemptive rebellion

MennoMedia

When did we become addicted to the North American way of over-consumption, status-seeking, gadgetry, and fossil fuels, and how might we break free? Wilderness guide and author Todd Wynward addresses these questions in his latest book, *Rewilding Faith: Breaking Free to Follow an Untamed God* (Herald Press, Sept. 1, 2015).

Wynward, who has spent more than one thousand nights outdoors, writes in the wilderness tradition of John the Baptist and Kurt Hahn (founder of Outward Bound) to discover meaning in self-denial and hope in uncolonized spaces. Wynward and his family have lived in a 30-foot yurt; they milk their own goats, collect rain-water, and use a composting toilet, yet as Wynward is clear to point out, they are still very much part of culture.

“If you’re daunted by our example, don’t be: we’re pretenders,” says Wynward. “Yes, we’ve cultivated a slightly parallel existence, but we’re still solidly embedded in consumer culture.” He points out that his family owns one laptop per person, too many cars, a cappuccino maker, and cell phones, and claims they have a voracious appetite for Netflix. He feels that even though they dabble with home-staying in the high desert, “we’re still entangled in empire, deeply part of the system.”

In other words, Wynward and his family are part of a group of Christians who live between worlds, striving to follow the Jesus Way while still being shackled to Caesar and enthralled by empire. But he says there is hope for these “half-disciples.”

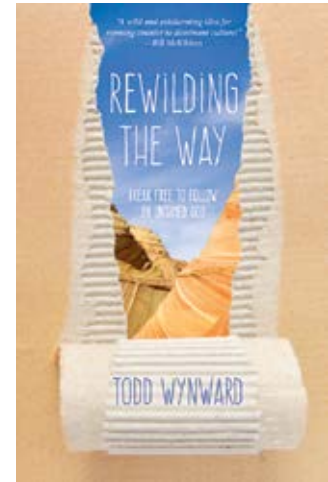
Drawing from writers like Bill McKibben and Joanna Macy and groups like New Monastic communities and nonviolent Anabaptists, Wynward offers concrete ideas—such as re-skilling,

local food covenants, relational tithes, co-housing, transition towns, and watershed discipleship—for living faithfully in an era of climate change. If some of these words and concepts feel new, they are amply explained in the book.

How can we recover from our “a-fluenza”? How can we engage in society without being allegiant to it? *Rewilding the Way* shows how to break free from the empire of Christendom and “become the wild people God wants us to be.”

Todd Wynward is fanatic about re-framing public education and re-envisioning the North American way of

life, starting with his own. He has been engaged in experiential education and social change movements for 20 years. He is the founder of a wilderness-based public charter school, leads backpacking and river trips for adult seekers, and is an animating force behind TiLT, an intentional co-housing community in Taos, New Mexico. ❧

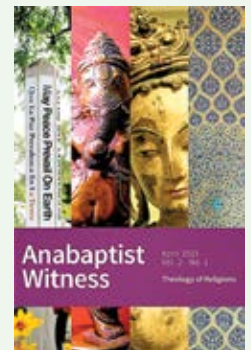


/// Briefly noted

Anabaptist Witness around the world

Anabaptist Witness, a semi-annual journal launched in Oct., 2014, has expanded the legacy of its predecessor publication, Mission Focus, and is reaching readers around the world. Jamie Ross, who co-edits Anabaptist Witness with Jamie Pitts, reports that the journal has 1,336 subscribers from 38 countries on six continents. The writers are mission workers and diverse Anabaptist thinkers, who reflect on issues facing the church in mission in the 21st century. When Walter Sawatsky retired as editor of Mission Focus in 2012, a wide consultation process began between publishing partners Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Mission Network and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. As well as going to the subscribers, over 300 copies have been sold through Create Space on Amazon, and the website has had visitors from 136 countries, with recent averages of 1,500-2,000 website sessions per month. Anabaptist Witness has also garnered attention from the broader faith community. A 2015 PhD seminar on “Modern Theories of Religion” at Southern Methodist University is including readings from Anabaptist Witness. The journal is also being indexed on the database of the American Theological Library Association. “Being indexed with ATLA will certainly expand our readership and weight in academic circles,” says Ross. Anabaptist Witness is available at www.commonword.ca/go/276.

— Mennonite Church Canada



Beholding the grey area

Learning tour offers young adults the opportunity to explore Israel/Palestine conflict

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EMILY HUNSBERGER

Special to Young Voices

The Tent of Nations is a family farm situated in the Palestinian hills near Bethlehem in the West Bank, owned by the Palestinian-Christian Nassar family since 1916. The farm overlooks the valley of a small Arab village.

When our group visited the farm for a tour this past spring, the environmental and educational farm seemed idyllic. However, it is surrounded by five illegal Israeli settlements, one of which has a population of more than 45,000 people.

Since 1991, the family's land has been declared Israel's "state land," and they have received continual threats and vandalism from settlers. The family has full documentation of the original registration of their farm, but only since 2005, and after a decade of challenging the state of Israel in court, have they been permitted to begin registering their land with the Israeli government.

Despite their continued struggles, the Tent of Nations is committed to being a working farm, educating tourists about the conflict in Israel/Palestine and building bridges with local settler communities. For them, and many other Palestinians, simply living life is an act of resistance.

The Tent of Nations is just one of the many inspiring and creative organizations I encountered on a three-week learning tour of Israel and Palestine for young adults organized by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Mennonite Central Committee Ontario. The trip was called "Yella!," which means "Let's Go!" in both Hebrew and Arabic.

The goal of the tour was for young adults to experience the context of Jesus' gospels and learn about the current conflict in the area. It didn't take us long to realize that the two subjects are related, especially in an area of the world where contemporary events are informed by deep historical, religious and geographical contexts. Jesus lived under Roman occupation at a time when saying, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" to a group of oppressed Jews was nothing short of revolutionary.

Our itinerary exposed us to multiple viewpoints. We were hosted in the homes of both Palestinians and settlers. We spent a day with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Hebron, Palestine, and another at Oranim, a Jewish university in Haifa.

We embarked on a two-day trek through the Galilee hills, retracing a likely route that Jesus would have travelled, and spent a few memorable hours walking along the "Apartheid Wall" in Bethlehem. The people we met along our way repeatedly challenged our prejudices and assumptions. Everywhere we went, we encountered people who were open to talk about their unique experience of the conflict.

We quickly found ourselves faced with many questions, and equally quickly found that there were few concrete answers. Whose claim to the land is more legitimate? Whose suffering is more valid? What obligations do we now have as witnesses to the conflict? Despite the often overwhelming amount of information, we attempted to understand the conflict's roots.



Yella participants hike on the Jesus Trail in the Galilee. The trail traces a route from Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, to Capernaum, the base for his adult ministry.



The view from Hunsberger's accommodations in Jerusalem, 50 metres away from the Dome of the Rock shrine.



One of the many graffiti murals painted on the Palestinian side of the Israeli / West Bank barrier.



Emily Hunsberger

Often, as in the case of the Tent of Nations, we found land, and the cultural or religious significance it carries, at the heart. Cultural narratives are not simply stories. Everybody seems to have different narratives for the same places.

Their homes and the stories of those homes have become inseparable. Conflict often erupts in places with religious significance to multiple groups, such as the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, tomb of Abraham and the site of many instances of violence between Jews and Muslims.

One of the primary issues facing Palestinians on a daily basis is lack of mobility, as they are forced to go through checkpoints to get to work or school. These restrictions were designed to limit contact between Palestinians and Israelis in the name of security.

We found that most Israelis' only contact with Palestinians is through reports of extremist groups, and most Palestinians only experience the Israelis at checkpoints. Both groups have suffered loss at the hands of extremists. Limited contact also limits room for peace to grow.

Though we were not experts on the subject, we realized that we had more liberty than any of them in our ability as internationals to move freely through checkpoints and the more imperceptible barriers of religion and race.

On the first day of our hike on the Jesus Trail in the Galilee, our guide told us, "Your only assignment today is to behold." We were there to behold, to bear witness, to listen. The object of the trip was not to

come out with absolute truths, but to find the grey area, beyond binaries of good and evil. The grey area of no-man's-land is where revolution, creativity and change occur.

A great example of this is people working to build social bridges between Israelis and Palestinians, like Rabbi Yudelman. He encourages positive connections between settlers and Palestinians through casual activities like soccer games for the children. His credo is, "Fear God, not the enemy." If religion is at the root of the conflict, it can also be in the remedy. ❧

Emily Hunsberger, 21, lives in Waterloo, Ont., and attends Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden. She is a fourth-year English Language and Literature student at the University of Waterloo.



Yella participants explore Jerusalem by walking down the Via Dolorosa.

Seniors and youth find common ground at Friendship Manor

'Maybe we're all more similar than we think,' youth says

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PAIGE MIERAU FRIESEN

Special to Young Voices

VOICE |
of the marginalized

For Beverley Winter, the Friendship Manor community includes teenagers from the Altona Mennonite Church (AMC) youth group. Winter looks forward to monthly Sunday morning breakfasts with

the youth group, a tradition started in 2011.

"We become a 'nutcase' when we're isolated," Winter says. "But it's been so nice since [the youth group] have been here."

Winter's apartment in Friendship Manor

in Altona, Man., is bright, comfortable, and filled with paintings she has created. A small dining table hosts an array of art supplies and her latest painting project—a bouquet of flowers in a vase. Mismatched furniture items purchased at the MCC Thrift Store fill the small living room.

Winter, 61, is one of the Manor's oldest residents. She has lived in her two-room apartment for eight years. "You hear good and bad things about Manitoba Housing," Bev says of the government corporation that helps finance the facility, but she describes her experience at Friendship Manor as wonderful.

The main common area of the building is bright and hosts four couches and a piano. The walls are light green and yellow, recently painted by AMC's youth group. There is also a small kitchen with mismatched dishes.

Winter grew up in Winnipeg and met her husband in 1974. They moved to Altona, where Bev was a health care worker until she was injured on the job. She became the manager of a Subway franchise for four years but quit due to health issues. She retired early at the age of 54.

A divorce from her husband, after 33 years of marriage, left her looking for somewhere to live. Friendship Manor was ideal.

"I still go to him for advice," Winter says of her ex-husband. He is the most influential person in her life, and their relationship and family is still important despite the divorce. Photographs of their three children cover the shelves of her living room.

Along with the photographs of her beloved family, Winter's white-walled apartment is adorned with vibrant paintings, the majority of which are her own works of art.

"I've been painting like crazy," she says. "I've never done anything like this in my life."

Winter began painting in December, 2014, and has created 25 pieces of art since. She gives them away, hangs them up in her apartment, or places them around the common areas of Friendship Manor, where her passion can be appreciated by the residents.

When she was interviewed for this article, Winter had not smoked for three weeks. The poorly lit and shadowy hallways of Friendship Manor have a distinct cigarette stench due to the habits of a few

residents. Winter has recognized a refreshing difference in the air of her apartment since she stopped smoking.

Winter recognized the realities of her early retirement included a lack of income, isolation from the outer community and less opportunity to socialize. Friendship Manor has allowed her to have a comfortable home despite her financial instability.

In the past four years, the Friendship Manor community has grown and the residents have created stronger relationships. The tenants often sit together in the mornings to wait for their Meals on Wheels. "Everybody's happy here. We get along well," Winter says.

Margruite Krahn, the youth group leader at AMC, initiated the breakfasts four years ago. "The drive behind bringing the youth and the folks at [Friendship Manor] together was to develop friendships, break down barriers, and as a leader to work hard at what it means personally to see my neighbour as myself," Krahn says.

Extending Friendship Manor's community to the AMC teenagers has created a level of trust and connection between two unlikely groups.

"They have been given their dignity and they repay us with trust and a wonderful love," Krahn says.

Madelyn Mierau Friesen, a 16-year-old member of the youth group, says the breakfasts are about finding common ground.

"It's hard for two groups of people who come from very different backgrounds to relate to each other, but I think we teach each other to be real and human," she says. "Maybe we're all more similar than we think." ❧

Paige Mierau Friesen, 19, lives in Gretna, Man. and attends Altona Mennonite Church.

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



Beverley Winter has lived at Friendship Manor in Altona, Man., for the past eight years.



Paige Mierau Friesen

Calendar

British Columbia

Sept. 26: Prince George Mennonite Fall Fair.

Oct. 2-3: Bible conference at Columbia Bible College exploring themes of creation, humanity and God throughout the Bible. Speaker: Rikk Watts from Regent College. 7-9 p.m. (2), 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. (3).

Oct. 5-7: Mennonite Church B.C. pastor/spouse retreat at Camp Squeah with guest speaker Donald Clymer. "Stop! Look! Listen! Are you Drawn by God or Driven by Culture?"

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

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

Nov. 14: LifeBridge Ministries fundraising breakfast.

Feb. 26-27: MC B.C. LEAD conference and annual meeting at Level Ground Mennonite Church, Abbotsford.

Saskatchewan

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.

Nov. 24: RJC Kielke and Sausage Supper at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon.

Dec. 6: RJC choir concert at Knox United Church, Saskatoon, at 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 18: RJC Christmas concert at RJC at 7 p.m.

Manitoba

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

Oct. 2: Opening program for Westgate Mennonite Collegiate at Bethel Mennonite Church, 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 2: Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery fundraiser, 7:30 p.m. Overview of the Gallery's activities by Ray Dirks, music by JD Edwards, and information about the new exhibition by Miriam Rudolph and Terry Hildebrand.

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. 3: Westgate cyclathon and alumni homecoming.

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

Oct. 23-24: "Mennonites, Medicine and the Body: Health and Illness in the Past and Present," an academic and community education conference hosted by the Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg. More info at: <http://mennonitestudies.uwinnipeg.ca/events/>.

Nov. 7: "Singin' in the Grain" fundraising concert for Canadian Foodgrains Bank at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, 7:30 p.m., featuring the Winkler Men's Community choir and Eastman Male Choir from Steinbach. Call 204-829-3570 for information.

Nov. 12-14: Westgate presents "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Gas Station Theatre.

Nov. 17: Evening of the Arts at Westgate, 7 p.m.

Nov. 23: Annual general meeting at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, 7 p.m.

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

Dec. 19: "Singin' in the Grain" fundraising concert for Canadian Foodgrains Bank at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler, at 7:30 p.m. featuring the Winkler Men's Community Choir.

Jan. 19: Westgate grade 6 day.

Jan. 21: Westgate grade 5 day, 4:30-7 p.m.

Jan. 21-22: Westgate Jr. High one-act plays at the Franco-Manitoba Cultural Centre.

Feb. 3: Open house at Westgate, 7 p.m.

May 9: Westgate bursary fundraising banquet.

Ontario

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.

Sept. 27: Sixth annual contemporary hymnsing at Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, chaired by Mark Diller Harder at 2:30 p.m. Bring copies of *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story*. More information at www.detweilermeetinghouse.ca.

Oct. 3-4: 175th anniversary celebrations at Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden. Reminiscing followed by catered dinner and program beginning at 5:30 p.m. (3). Worship and lunch (4). For information go to www.shantzmcc.ca.

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

Oct. 4: Community memorial service at Detweiler Meetinghouse at 2:30 p.m., led by Scott Brubaker-Zehr, Sam Steiner and Will Stoltz. Included in the service will be highlights and updates on the cemetery.

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.

Oct. 15-17: Ten Thousand Villages Festival sale at Hamilton Mennonite Church. Enjoy homemade soup and dessert in our Villages Café, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. (15, 16), 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (17).

Briefly noted

MCC Canada provides election resource

The Ottawa office of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada has produced a resource to help constituents and supporters prepare for the federal election on Oct. 19, 2015. The resource is structured around a few key issues that are important to MCC and its partners. The hope is that constituents will raise these issues with candidates in their electoral riding. It could be used as part of a discussion in a small group or Sunday School class. MCC Canada also asks everyone to pray for wisdom for candidates and for voters, and for those who will be chosen to provide leadership for our country. It is available at: <http://mcccanada.ca/media/resources/3511>.

—Mennonite Central Committee Canada



Oct. 18: Twelfth annual gospel music hymnsing based on *Life Songs II* at Detweiler Meetinghouse at 2:30 p.m., led by Bob Shantz.

Oct. 24: "The Growth and Spread of Old Order Mennonite Communities since the 1960s," hosted by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario at Floradale Mennonite Church at 2 p.m. Speakers: Clare Frey and Amsey Martin.

Nov. 8: Fourth annual male chorus sing at Detweiler Meetinghouse at 2:30 p.m. Former male quartet, chorus or want-to-be members welcome to sing old gospel songs and anthems. Led by Bob Shantz.

Nov. 14: MCC Ontario fall conference, "At Peace and Unafraid," at Bethany Community Church, St. Catharines, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Nov. 14-15: St. Jacobs Mennonite Church 100th anniversary celebration; (14) see website, (15) Worship service and choir at 10 a.m. and "Simpler Times: Stories and Songs for the Soul" at 2:45 p.m. Details including choir invitation at www.sjmc.on.ca or 519-664-2268.

Nov. 21: Annual Fairview Mennonite Home handicraft sale, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Tea room and lunch available as well as Christmas decorations, gifts, bake sale

and more. For more information call 519-653-5719.

Nov. 29: Fourth annual "Welcoming Advent" at Detweiler Meetinghouse at 2:30 p.m. with Christmas music by Lifted Voices and Laurence Martin leading historic Christmas songs. Everyone welcome.

Quebec

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

U.S.

Nov. 5-8: MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) convention in Richmond, Va. Early bird rates until Oct. 8, at www.medaconvention.org.

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



Employment Opportunities

Calvary Mennonite Church in Monctonville is in need of a full-time pastor for our 40 member, northern Ontario congregation. We are located 65 minutes south of North Bay and Sudbury and about 90 minutes north of Parry Sound, near beautiful Lake Nipissing. Please call 705-898-1574 or email calvarymenno@gmail.com for more information.

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 online at www.avenueroadroofing.com



Lead Pastor
Community Mennonite Fellowship in Drayton, Ontario, is seeking a lead pastor for our vibrant rural congregation. Rooted in our local community and our Anabaptist faith tradition, we strive to live out our mission to be "Enthusiastic followers of Jesus Christ, spreading his Good News in our community and around the world."
 Contact Henry Paetkau, MCEC Area Church Minister, at hpaetkau@mcec.ca or visit communitymennonite.com



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
 Mennonite Disaster Service seeks Director of Region V (Canadian) Operations
 MDS is seeking a highly motivated leader to fill the full time position of Director of Region V Operations beginning January 4, 2016, due to the resignation of Janet Plenert, who is moving on to a position at another institution.
 The Director of Region V Operations works out of the MDS office in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This position has the overall strategic and operational responsibility for Canadian programs, staff, financial objectives, and execution of the vision and mission of MDS Region V (Canada). The director also is part of the Leadership Team of the Binational organization. This role reports directly to the Region V Board of Directors.
 The right person for the job will have knowledge of the diverse Anabaptist constituency in Canada, strong communication skills, proven leadership experience, and a vision for growing this ministry of responding to people affected by disasters. The applicant will fully embrace the Anabaptist faith and peace position and be an active member of an Anabaptist church. This person must be able to work competently and sensitively with a diverse group of staff, volunteers and Board members. Experience with a non-profit or volunteer agency would be an asset. Post-secondary education is required. MDS Region V employs only Canadian citizens and those non-Canadian citizens authorized to work in Canada.
 Mennonite Disaster Service is a volunteer network of Anabaptist churches that responds in Christian love to those affected by disasters in Canada and the United States. While the main focus is on clean up, repair and rebuilding homes, this service touches lives and nurtures hope, faith and wholeness.
 Email resume with a cover letter to jobs@mds.mennonite.net. For questions call 866-261-1274. To view the full job description, go to <http://mds.mennonite.net/about-us/employment>. Applications will be considered until the position is filled.

Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due	
October 12	September 29	<i>Focus on Education</i>
October 26	October 13	

Advertising Information

Contact

D. Michael Hostetler 1-800-378-2524 x.224
advert@canadianmennonite.org

Classifieds

Announcements

The Village Casketmaker
 Funeral caskets and urns sold directly to public. Sensible and eco-friendly. Made in Winnipeg. Shipping beyond Manitoba available. Learn more: thevillagecasketmaker.com

If you have ever been sexually violated at any age by, or had what you thought was an affair with, a member of the clergy or lay-leader within the Mennonite Church, confidential help is available at Mennonite@snapnetwork.org. See also snapnetwork.org.



Ruby Ancar sits on the deck of her Grand Bayou home in southern Louisiana. After Hurricane Katrina ten years ago, Ancar's house was the first in her community repaired by Mennonite Disaster Service. For the next four years she ferried MDS volunteers and supplies to her village, which is accessible only by water. Ancar still has a teddy bear mailed to her by a four-year-old Mennonite child after her father spent a week there rebuilding homes and told his daughter about this remote indigenous village. Over 3,000 Canadian volunteers contributed to the MDS response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. —Mennonite Disaster Service

/// Briefly noted

Ten congregations open homes to Syrian refugees

KITCHENER, ONT.—At least 10 congregations in eastern and southern Ontario have opened their homes to Syrian refugees as of Sept. 1, according to Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario, contacted at press time, Tuesday, Sept. 8. They are: St. Catharines United Mennonite Church; Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church; The Parish Church, Peterborough; The Pilgrim Church, Leamington; Grace Community Church, Aylmer; Grace MB Church, Kitchener; The First Mennonite Church, Vineland; Wanner Mennonite Church, Cambridge; Ottawa Meeting House Church; and Valleyview Mennonite, London. These are only the first churches to respond, says Bauman, expecting many more to come forward. In a letter to Ontario churches, Bauman asks “small congregations to partner with others, larger congregations on their own, congregations with time but not money, or the other way round...all of us can be Jesus to our neighbour, the refugee. Invite us to speak in your congregation. Ask us for the application to sponsor forms.” To learn more go to mcccanada.ca/learn/what/refugees/sponsorship.