

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Volume 20 Number 2

Sharing gifts

inside

The challenge of diversity 4

Entrepreneurship in Botswana 20

Making peace through service 22

EDITORIAL

FDTF: more discernment needed

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

“We know that the North American context and culture, and Christianity within it, is in the midst of immense change. Conversations with and feedback from hundreds of our constituents across Canada these past two years shows broad understanding that old assumptions about the place of church in society have changed.”

Thus opens the final report of the Future Directions Task Force sent out to congregations last month. This momentous assignment, chaired by Aldred Neufeldt of Toronto, assistant moderator of Mennonite Church Canada, and assisted by seven persons in leadership, including pastors, leaders from area churches and a retired university president, placed enormous responsibility on a small but representative group, to ascertain the state of national, provincial and congregational conditions across a whole country.

They could have been overwhelmed to presume to know all of the dynamics of this change in more than 220 congregations scattered across the country, all with different cultures and histories of their own. But they rose to the task, doing their research, visiting congregations, engaging persons from the pulpit to the pew, talking to church partners across the spectrum of our church life that encompasses leadership development, our global witness, schools and universities, camping ministries and communication.

In reading the report, one gets a bird's eye view of just how far-reaching and

accomplished we have been as a small denomination and how complex, despite our attempts to keep things simple and workable, our structures have become. Therein lies the conundrum. It is no coincidence that this final report is coming to us at the same time MC Canada announces a \$300,000 shortfall in donations that triggered five staff layoffs.



Indeed the coming together of these two events represents a cautionary tale. Which one is driving the other? Our discernment of these Future Directions

findings and recommendations could be much more sound and wise if we didn't have the financial pressure to “do something” with all haste so that we can keep our entire faith system intact. When you are hastily changing any system—religious or otherwise—your judgment can be tainted and your vision blurred.

FD is placing huge new responsibilities on the local congregation, for instance, expecting it to pick up the larger functions of leadership development and global witness that were MC Canada's. This is to be done through what they call a “cluster of congregations” under the direction of an “executive minister” assigned to work with these clusters.

Our sense is that local congregations, already challenged with expanded programs in faith formation with larger staffs working with children and youth, outreach in their communities, elder care and taking in refugee families, have their budget and staff stretched and will not welcome new responsibilities of a “cluster.”

The recommendation to move our global Witness program to “short-term assignments” is meeting resistance from all 24 Witness workers around the world. They have sent a lengthy letter to the Task Force and to MC Canada, questioning this move. The workers have worked long and hard to develop relationships with their partners in national churches and with colleagues from other mission agencies, all with a high consciousness of avoiding colonialism in their attitudes and efforts. These dynamics are not created overnight, they say; short-term workers would not have that perspective.

Besides, they lament, none of the 24 workers were consulted by members of the FDTF, in formulating this recommendation. They are asking for more time and conversation before making such a move.

In the area of communication, the Task Force is recommending that, rather than depending on national and international agencies to provide curricula and worship resources, the responsibility should shift mostly, again, to the local congregation, using social media and the internet, even producing their own videos.

That's a grand idea but falls short, again, of the reality of most congregations. In our work with our own correspondents at the provincial level, we at *Canadian Mennonite* have a fairly good grasp of the capabilities and communication tools of the local congregation. To think they will pick up this function is a stretch.

FDTF also names *Canadian Mennonite* in this list of communication resources and questions its “independent status” role. This highlights an old and ongoing tension within the denomination, one that we have repeatedly said is an important stance to keep our constituency objectively informed. We do not see this publication as a propaganda piece or as a cheerleader for the institutions.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Jay Siemens is a self-taught photographer who used his gift to raise money for Syrian refugees. See his story on page 27. Among his photos is this one of the northern lights at Wollaston Lake, Sask.

PHOTO: JAY SIEMENS

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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

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contents

JANUARY 18, 2016 / VOL. 20, NO. 2



The challenge of diversity 4

Fernando Enns of Germany challenges us to receive diversity as a gift from God while we also work for unity in the community of faith.

Imagining open spaces in the midst of transitions 13

Naomi Unger reflects on the decline of women's groups and the end of Saskatchewan Women in Mission, encouraging us to trust in God and find new ways to serve others.

Saskatchewan church receives funding from larger community 14

Grace Mennonite Church is getting support from the broader Regina community in its efforts to welcome refugees, writes **Donna Schulz**.

CMU pledges to bring indigenous knowledge into classrooms 19

Canadian Mennonite University was among the Manitoba colleges, universities and school boards who committed themselves to respect, celebrate and support indigenous people, writes **J. Neufeld**.

'What if there is no precedent?' 24

Dave Rogalsky describes the Rosco Films movie about the Elmira case that led to restorative justice organizations being created around the world.

Young Voices 27-29

Two stories by **Aaron Enns** feature the photography of Jay Siemens, who shared his gift to raise funds for Syrian refugees, and Geekdom House, a ministry to help the nerd and geek community connect with faith.

Regular features:

For discussion **6** Readers write **7** Milestones **11**
A moment from yesterday **11** Online NOW! **26**
Calendar **30** Classifieds **30**

FDTF: more discernment needed 2

DICK BENNER

The new face of mission 7

DAVID MARTIN

When everything shakes 8

PHIL WAGLER

My resolution for 2016 9

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY



Award-winning
member of the
Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

The challenge of diversity

A call to discernment and transformation

BY FERNANDO ENNS

Today, our community of Anabaptist-related churches spans the globe, incorporating people from many different cultural, ethnic and political backgrounds. We are, without a doubt, a diverse community. Whenever we gather, we enjoy this diversity and feel enriched.

Still, at times questions arise and we find ourselves irritated. Diversity is also a challenge! Are there limits to this diversity within our global Anabaptist family?

In order to reflect on this challenge, it is necessary to first clarify our identity. This poses a challenge in itself! If we are to explain who we are, we usually tell our story. What are the “shoulders we stand on?” Even those Mennonite communities that do not trace back their genealogy to the European Anabaptists of the 16th century will refer to that particular history, because at some point they have adopted that story as part of their own identity. And even if we might relate to this history in a critical way, we still use it as a reference point in order to explain who we are and to seek orientation in today’s questions of identity and diversity.

Early Anabaptism: Born in diversity

Anabaptism has never been totally homogeneous. Diversity has been a challenge within the Anabaptist movement from its very beginnings in the Reformation era. This movement did not start with a single understanding of a new face of the church, but rather developed different ideas in the many struggles in various contexts of Europe. Slowly, uniting principles emerged and provided opportunities to strengthen each other over against the dominant church of the Middle Ages.

While sharing the key insight of Reformers like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli—the conviction that we are saved by grace through faith alone—these Anabaptists embraced a more radical understanding of the church as a nonconformist faith community of committed believers. The most obvious expression of that conviction was believer’s baptism, a radical act based on an individual confession of faith and made out of free choice. These Anabaptists rejected any state or church authority to prescribe a certain interpretation of faith. Instead, they opted for a non-hierarchical and

We have learned to receive this diversity as a gift from God, since we understand now more than ever that diversity and unity are not contradictory, but complementary dimensions of that one creative movement of God.

PHOTO BY WILHELM UNGER



Mennonite World Conference (MWC) leaders from different nations and cultures spend time in prayer, Bible study and corporate discernment during a recent MWC Executive Committee meeting in Bogotá, Colombia.

non-credal model of a “priesthood of all believers.”

As the movement grew, it became obvious that only a congregational structure of the church would be appropriate. Without the top-down leadership of priests and bishops, the congregation would engage in joint Bible reading and the sharing of insights as a means to discern the will of God. How to follow Christ—as most clearly expressed in the Sermon of the Mount—became the primary concern.

Claiming this freedom of conscience and faith obviously posed a threat to the existing powers of church and state. Many of the first- and second-generation Anabaptists paid with their lives.

A history of discord and schism

All of this is part of our common story as Anabaptists. It shapes our identity as individuals and as congregations in different contexts, as well as our way of being church together.

Yet even as the early Anabaptist movement knit together individuals and groups with varied yet complementary ideas about how to practise Christian faith, disagreement occurred. Our story is also marked by discord and

schism—difficult parts of our story to which we still need to relate. In retrospect, we might observe that such discord is quite contradictory to the faith claims made by our early brothers and sisters.

For example, disputes about the appropriate amount of water to be used for baptism or the kind of music to be played in the worship service became reason enough to go separate ways and to condemn each other. Patriarchal behaviour, the misuse of uncontrolled power and the victimization of individuals, and the stigmatization of whole groups as “heretics” are all as much a part of our story as they are for other churches.

The inability to live up to the precious theological insights of the earliest Anabaptists can be quite disillusioning. While we continue to claim, as did our founders, that the congregational model with believer’s baptism at the centre provides the highest possible degree of diversity within church—since it puts so much trust and respect in the individual—it seems that we have continuously failed to prove its legitimacy and practicability.

Diversity in contemporary Anabaptism

Yet another identity marker of all churches of the Reformation is our common conviction that the church is *semper reformanda* (always to be reformed). We claim the liberty and the responsibility to renew the church in every generation, if that seems necessary and appropriate to new insights.

Today, we find ourselves in the global community of Anabaptist-related churches: Mennonite World Conference (MWC). It is here that we have learned to respect and value diversity. Different cultural expressions, manifold ethnic identities, contextual biblical readings and theologies, and differing authentic ways of celebrating God’s love, all constitute the richness of that community. We have learned to receive this diversity as a gift from God, since we understand now more than ever that diversity and unity are not contradictory, but complementary dimensions of that one creative movement of God. MWC is first of all that space wherein we give thanks and enjoy that richness together.

However, there is a risk that this celebration of diversity can become quite superficial if we take a tourist-like approach—a “cheap unity.” As long as the diversity in the global family does not challenge the powers in the local church, it will be quite easy to accept all kinds of opinions.

Are we ready to allow others within the global family to challenge our traditional way of believing? Are we ready to really tolerate (to bear with) the other? Would we really change a certain opinion or behaviour if another feels offended by it?

I envision MWC also as a space wherein we discern together the limits of our diversity, a space in which we hold each other accountable. That work might at times be difficult, frustrating, even painful. Still, if we are not ready for that challenge, we will miss the key to a true community of faith in Christ: a “costly unity.”

Practising diversity

Of course, such sentiments, although profound, must also be practical. How do

we navigate the complexities of diversity today? In other words, what does it look like to practise this process of mutual discernment about the limits of our diversity? How do we hold one another accountable?

To answer such questions, it might be helpful to state two interrelated questions:

1. WHAT ARE the unity-threatening issues?

How do we determine those issues on which we must stand united? For the prophets of the Old Testament, the limit of diversity was reached when a conviction or behaviour led to blasphemy. Whenever someone questioned the uniqueness and unity of the One God—the God who liberated the people of Israel from bondage and slavery—the prophets called for a clear and unambiguous confession. The same is true for the New Testament accounts: Whenever the lordship of Christ was questioned, tolerance no longer seemed to be an option.

In theological terms, this approach is called *status confessionis* (a situation when the confession to Christ itself is endangered). This was the case when the German Christians of the early 20th century gave into the absolute authority claim of the Nazi regime, even in church affairs. In opposition, the emerging Confessing Church issued the Theological Declaration of Barmen in 1934, in which they condemned the German Christians' acquiescence to Nazi ideology and confessed the inalienable lordship of Christ as the sole head of the church.

2. HOW DO we deal with these unity-threatening issues?

Today, Mennonites are well-known and respected as one of the historic peace churches. In facing challenges of diversity within the church, this nonviolent approach to conflict resolution has been a leading principle from the beginning of the Anabaptist movement. Yet we certainly cannot claim to be experts in mediation when it comes to internal conflicts.

Still, I want to believe in the wisdom

and potential of that identity marker. If we hold on to that key conviction that Jesus called all his disciples to be peacemakers and to seek first the righteousness of the kingdom, then this characteristic of being a church of just peace has to inform our methodology of going about our own differences.

Primary questions to be asked in a conflict would then be:

- **IS THE** topic at stake really a question of *status confessionis*, or can we tolerate (bear with) the fact that others also claim to be in line with what Scripture tells them?
 - **WHAT IS** the perspective of the most vulnerable or discriminated ones in this matter?
 - **ARE WE** victimizing anyone in the conflict, and, if so, how can we cease such victimization?
 - **ARE WE** inappropriately presenting ourselves as victims in this conflict, and, if so, how can we take a more appropriate route?
 - **ARE WE** paying respect to the fact that everyone involved is, and remains, indestructibly created in the image of God, even if our opinions or behaviours differ?
- I want to believe that the church of

just peace implies a profoundly humble approach: Always to differentiate the absolute truth, which is only in God, from all our approximations to that truth. If we add that humbleness to our ambitious way of being a church of just peace, not only can the credibility of our peace witness grow, but we will also discover anew Christ's ability to tolerate (bear) our diversities.

The worshipping community, gathered in God's name, remains the ultimate space for mutual accountability. MWC has the potential to grow into such a community. ❧



Fernando Enns is director of the Institute for Peace Church Theology at the University of Hamburg, Germany, and professor of peace (theology and ethics) at the Free University of

Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

This reflection was originally published on page 6 of the October 2014 issue of Courier magazine.

/// For discussion

1. Do you have Mennonite or Anabaptist-related churches in your community that are different from yours? How are they similar to your congregation and how are they different? Are these differences problematic or something to celebrate?
2. How do you deal with differences of opinion in your family or in your congregation? When is diversity of opinion a serious challenge and when is it only an irritant? What happens when we cannot agree on essentials?
3. Fernando Enns says that Mennonite World Conference has helped Mennonites to respect and value diversity. Do you agree? Can you think of examples of how you have learned to value diversity? What do you think Enns means by his comment that celebrating diversity runs the risk of "cheap unity"?
4. Why have Mennonites historically found it so difficult to peacefully mediate conflicts within the church? Do you think that Enns's self-reflecting questions for conflict situations will be helpful the next time you find yourself in a serious disagreement? What words of Jesus do we most need to remember in times of conflict?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

✉ Are dreams and visions welcome in the Mennonite church?

RE: "RETREAT SPARKS women's spiritual gifts," Nov. 23, 2015, page 17.

I saw the advertisements for the Mennonite women's retreat at Camp Squeah last fall event and initially got excited about the topic, "Igniting our

spiritual gifts." After some thought, however, I decided not to go due to my assumption that gifts like mine would not be in great focus and it would not be an ideal setting for me to open up and find understanding, teaching and growth.

Upon reading the statement, "Our specific gifts may be quite different from Timothy's," my discomfort came a little more into focus. I feel like in the Mennonite church it is assumed that our gifts only fall into certain categories.

Some churches fail by elevating what they consider

(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

The new face of mission

DAVID MARTIN

When I was a kid, I took great pride in taking the dimes that I earned from my paper route and placing them in the dime cards that we received from our denominational mission agency to support overseas mission. Mom took notice of my interest and told me more than once that she was praying that I would be a missionary. Well, I never quite met Mom's lofty ideal, but being a pastor was probably the next best thing.

For Mom, a key component of her understanding of mission was overseas missionary work. For many of our congregations, this has been the primary understanding of mission. For the most part, we have assumed that congregations are places of worship and nurture. The real mission of the church happens "over there."

Since the days of dime cards, the world has changed dramatically. For congregations that now find themselves in the middle of a secular Canadian society, the "over there" understanding of mission is no longer an adequate understanding of what it means to be the church. This is something my parents understood over fifty years ago. Balancing their passion for overseas mission was an equally

strong passion for mission in the local community.

Our little faith community, the Waters Mennonite Church, was an active mission outpost that engaged its local neighbourhood. Members developed personal relationships with people outside the congregation and shared with them a thriving Anabaptist faith, which meant that the congregation was filled with people who were new to the Mennonite faith.

Many Mennonite congregations today do not have that kind of balanced commitment to mission. It's a lot easier to only be worship and nurture centres, leaving the call to mission to the saintly few that go "over there."

I believe that God is calling us to re-engage mission in our local congregational contexts so that, in addition to being places of worship and nurture, congregations are also actively relating to their neighbours and inviting them to experience the quality of life, the rich relationships, and the meaningful spirituality that we take so for granted within our faith communities.

We need to re-learn what it means to be communities of Christ's peace. This kind of commitment to God's mission

for the church in our secular society will require a whole new way of thinking and some entirely new skill sets for both pastors and church members. God is calling us to redefine what it means to be "missionaries" right here in the local neighbourhood.

Actually, maybe my mother was on to something. Maybe it is not too late for me to become a missionary. Perhaps we each need to start acting like missionaries in our local communities, a new kind of missionary who shares God's love with authenticity and grace so that others can also experience what God has shared with us.

In November the Mennonite Church Canada General Board and leaders from its five area churches accepted a proposal from the Future Directions Task Force to restructure our national and regional churches. The purpose is to realign our structures, staffing, and programs to support this new "face of mission" that invites our congregations to be vibrant communities of worship and caregiving that are intentionally building relationships with their neighbours, actively sharing their faith, and inviting others to experience the richness of an Anabaptist Christian community. Please pray for God's wisdom and guidance as our church leaders across Canada envision a new path for mission and lay the groundwork for being the church in a secular society.

David Martin is executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.



(Continued from page 7)

to be more flashy gifts like prophecy or healing over other equally important functions of the children of God. However, I sometimes feel that the Mennonite church fails in assuming that its children no longer function in these capacities and fails to disciple similar gifts as well.

I know I am not the only Mennonite who dreams dreams and sees visions. I feel like there isn't a lot of room for discussion on these points, so people shut down these gifts, instead of growing and loving God

through them. The thing that gives me hope and comfort, however, is that this trend isn't normally due to the scarring of having watched these gifts being misused, but, rather, a lack of personal exposure and a focus on a "heady" faith.

Although my brothers and sisters in my home church do a great job of loving me, I still feel lonely. I crave the opportunity to use and grow the gifts I have been given and it seems hard to find that in the Mennonite Church.

JANNA JANZEN, VANCOUVER

OUTSIDE THE BOX

When everything shakes

PHIL WAGLER

Just before midnight on Dec. 29, with our little ones nestled snug in their beds, the earth shook. While earthquakes happen all the time—there were more than 40 in Canada in the past 30 days—this was the first we really felt while living in British Columbia. Our house popped as if one mighty gust had blown against the back of our house. It was confusing and unsettling. Googling “earthquake kits” suddenly became relevant.

Just after the dinner hour on Jan. 1 our family wearily wandered through the doors after a glorious day of skiing. It was a day with spectacular views of rolling seas to the west and rolling mountains to the east. My heart was full of song and praise. Suddenly another shaking took place. One of the kids bolted down the stairs in panic: a window had been smashed and we had been burglarized. It was confusing and unsettling. Googling “security systems” suddenly became really tempting.

What do you do when everything shakes?

The Scriptures often use the imagery of shaking to describe God's activity.

Through Isaiah the Lord declares an end to the arrogance and pride of the nations. When God is moved by righteous anger, things shake (Isaiah 13:13). We would be wise not to leave these words only for ancient kingdoms and peoples. When things shake, sometimes we are called to repentance and awakening.

When the Jews look despairingly upon the post-exilic temple they had mustered resources to rebuild, the Lord speaks hope: *“In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house*

When things shake, sometimes we are called to repentance and awakening.

with glory.” (Haggai 2:6-7). When things shake, sometimes it is a call to hope and expectation despite appearances.

When Jesus, the desired of all nations, is crucified, the moment is marked by an earthquake. The veil in the temple that separated humanity from God was torn from top to bottom, and very peculiar things western churches don't preach at

Easter occurred—once-dead holy folk rise and reintroduce themselves (Matt. 27:51-53). When things shake, sometimes it's a call to wonder at what is really taking place and what foundations are newly being established behind the headlines.

This “shaking” image continues in the letter to the Hebrews, who are needing encouragement to live as followers of Jesus in confusing times. When God shakes things, says the writer, it is purposeful, revealing, and in line with how the Lord always works. The shaking and quaking that disturbs us is to remove the stuff that won't last and to call us back to what will. Christians *“are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken”* (Hebrews 12:28) and so we rejoice when the shaking reveals what really matters and causes us to rediscover our place as worshippers. In other words, when things shake we are called to remember who we are, who God is, and what that requires of us.

Have you been shaken lately? Has your church community been shaken? Has it brought you back to the kingdom that

cannot be shaken? Has it made you more sensitive to the Spirit of God? Or has it left you googling for answers?

Phil Wagler serves the development of global workers from B.C. He's ready for the shaking to cease but is thankful for what has been revealed (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca).



✉ Another reader 'sickened' by Leis coverage

RE: "COVERAGE OF Vernon Leis called 'disrespectful'" letter, Nov. 9, 2015, page 9.

I agree with Irvin Jantzi's letter, and was also sickened to think *Canadian Mennonite* would publish something that was alleged about him.

Many of us know the well-respected and loved Leis family, and are so very sorry that they must suffer like this. It is so unnecessary.

EDITH REGEHR, ROSTHERN, SASK.

✉ Call to witness is 'mandated in the life and teachings of Jesus'

RE: "JESUS IN a world of upheaval," Oct. 12, 2015, page 8, and "Ready to listen and learn," Nov. 9, 2015, page 9.

While challenging us to love people unconditionally, Phil Wagler strongly suggests in his Oct. 12 column that "in a world in upheaval" we have "unprecedented" opportunities to verbally introduce people to Jesus Christ. In contrast, Katie Doke Sawatzky, in her Nov. 9 column, asserts, "It's now time for listening, and for helping with open hands and closed mouths." She correctly reminds us of the devastating effects of colonial

(Continued on page 10)

NEW ORDER VOICE

My resolution for 2016

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

I've written before about not driving to church and what this might mean for how we worship: planning a longer bike ride or walk each Sunday morning, trying out the church in our neighbourhood (even if it's not Mennonite!). These are good ideas. But it's time to go farther, which is why, this month, my family and I are getting ready to go car-free(er). (I have to add the suffix because we're not willing to sell our van right now.)

This is crazy. It's the middle of January, we have very young children, and we don't live centrally in the city. Also, public transit in Regina is awful (having recently moved from Vancouver, I can say this with absolute certainty). But we're working on a plan, and God willing, it'll work.

Why such a dramatic experiment? It's been a while coming. Over the past several years, I've tried to cycle more, enjoying the exercise while also saving gas. But we kept the van for summer vacations and, especially since having our second kid, for grocery trips. As we've decreased our vehicle use, I've become aware of how tightly connected driving is with consuming other goods. Not only

do I often drive somewhere to buy something, but when I get in the car I always think about how many errands I can do to maximise the efficiency of each trip.

Plus, my first read of the year has me awash with conviction. David Suzuki has a new book out called *Letters to my Grandchildren* (Greystone, 2015). In each chapter Suzuki shares lessons he's learned throughout his life. The third chapter, "Forgotten Lessons from the Great Depression," is about what it was like growing up in poverty. After living in



I've become aware of how tightly connected driving is with consuming other goods.

an internment camp during World War II, his family moved to Ontario. Each member of the family worked hard to make sure all of their necessities were met.

"I don't know what your generation would consider a necessity, but for us it was food and clothes, then a stove, an ice-box or a refrigerator, a bed and bedding, a radio, and cooking utensils like pots and pans. People were just beginning to think that telephones and cars were necessities too. So we were on the cusp of huge changes. In a society in which consumption is

a sport, entertainment, or even our civic responsibility, it seems we work hard to fulfill our *wants*, not our *needs*. And there's no end to what we want."

Again, it seems crazy to argue that a car isn't a necessity. It is for some folks, but I'm not so sure it is for me. Decarbonizing my life allows me to imagine a different way of living, a slower way, and one that acknowledges that I have enough. It's a way to show solidarity with northern indigenous communities negatively affected by the oil industry, and to teach my children that fast and efficient isn't the only way to be.

When I get into our van, I'm struck by the reality that I can go anywhere, do anything. After all, this old suburb and these streets were built for my benefit. But what power and what privilege, and

what resources to squander for my sense of accomplishment.

"It is the hyperconsumption driven by the need of industrialized countries to keep their economies growing that is the primary cause of ecological devastation today," Suzuki writes.

My faith compels me to do this. Jesus challenged people to do things that were impossible for them to do, right? This seems impossible, but I'm hoping it won't be. *Katie Doke Sawatzky can be reached at katiesawatzky@gmail.com.*

(Continued from page 9)

Christian evangelism.

Mennonites need to be applauded for their Christ-motivated service, peace and justice activities. However, an underdeveloped part of Mennonite witness is the ability to verbalize our faith in Christ in appropriate ways, whether on personal or societal levels. How do we discern when to speak and when not to? How do we speak about our faith without being manipulative? How do we develop a healthy self-confidence that can guide someone in becoming a Christian? What language speaks in our post-Christendom culture?

Many of us have reacted to an evangelism that is narrowly individualistic and divorced from sustained relationships, but the call to speak about our faith in Christ is mandated in the life and teachings of Jesus. Why would we avoid that part of witness? Can we together work at an alternative to colonialism, one that integrates peace, justice and service, and one in which mutuality in relationships flourishes?

We are indeed living in an “unprecedented time,” when people may well be open to the love of God in Christ Jesus. Can we learn to talk about what Christ means to us, not only in church but also with our neighbours, on the ball diamond, in our places of work and at city hall?
HUGO NEUFELD, CALGARY

✉ Allegations of impropriety require due process

I APPRECIATED THE editorial “More transparency please” (Dec. 14, page 2). No one wants to see persons who trespass appropriate boundaries protected. No one. No one wants to see victims placed in a setting where they might be re-victimized. That’s why we have administrative due process.

At the same time, an allegation is an allegation. There need to be appropriate protocols in place to protect a person from spurious allegations, as well as protecting the person making the allegation, until appropriate verification can take place. It is called due process and it protects everyone by ascertaining facts.

Just as some of us applauded the truth-telling by Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, we also applaud the call to transparency, which is a verifiable process that establishes facts beyond a reasonable doubt.

Barking at the messenger and making allegations that the editor doesn’t “understand” is just nonsense. Transparency of process protects everyone with the truth.

WALTER BERGEN, CHILLIWACK, B.C.

✉ God’s word and gay marriage

IN ROMANS 1:21 we read, “[A]lthough they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God . . . Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves . . . women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature . . . men with men committing what is shameful” (NKJV). Is this what believers of a church should engage in, or tolerate?

MARY GIESBRECHT FRIESEN, WINNIPEG, MAN.

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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/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

- Ens**—Parker Abram Anthony (b. Oct. 20, 2015), to Stephanie Ens and Timothy Coughlan, Springstein Mennonite, Man. (*Correction for Dec. 14 announcement.*)
- Ewert**—Roslyn Jane (b. Dec. 31, 2015), to Nicholas and Naomi Ewert, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Gunn**—Isaac Luke (b. Nov. 14, 2015), to Anne and William Gunn, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.
- Joice**—Aviva Dawn (b. Dec. 11, 2015), to Peter Joice and Ashlee Mulligan, Ottawa Mennonite, Ont.
- Kleinschmidt**—Otis Peter (b. Dec. 9, 2015), to Anna and Paul Kleinschmidt, Waterloo North Mennonite, Ont.
- Miller**—Brinley Courtney (b. Nov. 29, 2015), to Jon and Courtney Miller, Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.
- Neufeld**—Alivia Anne (b. Dec. 16, 2015), to Melissa and Tom Neufeld, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Neufeld**—Gemma Devine (b. Dec. 19, 2015), to Hilary and Steven Neufeld, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Marriages

- Ramage/Wyse**—Rod Ramage and Bonnie Wyse (nee Harder), at Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Nov. 27, 2015.

Deaths

- Andres**—Irene (nee Bergman), 88 (b. March 30, 1927; d. Dec. 8, 2015), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.
- Bauman**—Laura (nee Martin), 77 (b. Jan. 7, 1938; d. Nov. 11, 2015), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.
- Buhler**—William (Bill), 84 (b. July 28, 1931; d. Nov. 27, 2015), First Mennonite, Calgary.
- Dyck**—Anna (Annie), 74 (b. Oct. 1, 1941; d. Dec. 15, 2015), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Falk**—Willie, 78 (b. March 12, 1937; d. Dec. 10, 2015), Fort

Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

- Goertzen**—David, 94 (b. Jan. 31, 1921; d. Dec. 18, 2015), Lethbridge Mennonite, Alta.
- Guenther**—Anna (nee Driedger), 95 (b. July 28, 1920; d. Jan. 2, 2016), Osler Mennonite, Sask.
- Janzen**—Helen, 88 (b. April 22, 1927; d. Dec. 6, 2015), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Janzen**—Margaret (nee Wiebe) (widow of Siegfried), 93 (b. Aug. 18, 1922; d. Nov. 7, 2015), (formerly of Petitcodiac Mennonite, N.B.), in Kentville, N.S.
- Klassen**—Anna (nee Dick), 86 (b. Sept. 30, 1929; d. Dec. 31, 2015), North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Klassen**—Lydia (nee Martens), 95 (b. Dec. 17, 1919; d. Dec. 8, 2015), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.
- Kroeker**—Renata (Rena) (nee Dyck), 92 (b. April 11, 1923; d. Nov. 30, 2015), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Lichti**—Loretta (nee Steinman), 86 (b. Oct. 12, 1929; d. Dec. 14, 2015), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.
- Martin**—Minerva (nee Gingrich), 98 (b. May 27, 1917; d. Dec. 23, 2015), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.
- Pauls**—Katharina (Tena) (nee Lehn), 94 (b. Dec. 5, 1920; d. Nov. 30, 2015), North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Pyper**—Caroline (Carol) (nee Dueck), 83 (b. May 23, 1932; d. Dec. 10, 2015), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Scheerer**—Merv, 81 (b. Feb. 16, 1934; d. Dec. 21, 2015), Wilmot Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.

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

A moment from yesterday



Do you enjoy the TV show Star Trek? If so, thank Allan Kroeker, who directed 39 episodes between 1996 and 2005. Kroeker continues to direct and this year is working on two projects. Kroeker began producing for Mennonite Brethren Communications in 1976, Mennonite Central Committee, and MBMSI. Kroeker grew up in Winnipeg, Man., and credits his grandfather A.A. Kroeker of Winkler for his interest in film. In 1981, the *MB Herald* dubbed him a “talented Christian film-maker.” In 1983, he was featured by Cinema Canada, which stated that at that point, Kroeker’s Mennonite heritage was evident in “each and every Kroeker film.”

Text: Conrad Stoesz, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies

Photo: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies



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VIEWPOINT

Will Mennonites join climate battle?

BY WILL BRAUN
SENIOR WRITER

Climate is back on the global agenda, but still not squarely on the Mennonite agenda. Following a period of major global attention that peaked around 2007—with heads of state, celebrities and filmmakers backing the cause—the climate struggle bottomed out at the 2009 Copenhagen conference, which was clouded with pessimism and excuses. Now, the pendulum of public concern has swung back.

The pope's encyclical on the topic helped. With the deaths of Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela, and the inability of Barak Obama to rise above the role of politician, Francis has emerged as the most prominent global moral authority figure. His encyclical gained traction, coming at a time when humanity was ready to return to climate concerns.

And Justin Trudeau came along just in time to shine some sunlight on the cresting wave of global care at the Paris climate talks late last year.

Another focal point of energy on the climate front has been the fossil fuel divestment campaign. The crux of this initiative is to push institutions—foundations, churches, cities and especially universities—to withdraw investments they have in the 200 largest fossil fuel companies and to reinvest the money in companies dedicated to an alternative energy future.

The campaign is the calculated strategy of Bill McKibben, a leading environmental thinker and gifted mobilizer. It launched with a tour of U.S. universities and an article in *Rolling Stone* magazine in 2012. The goal is largely to stigmatize the fossil fuel sector, not unlike the way similar initiatives put the tobacco industry in the public bad books.

McKibben calls the fossil fuel sector a “rogue” and “reckless” industry. Yes we all depend on fossil fuels, but these companies, unlike us, actively seek to maximize

the consumption of fossil fuels meanwhile fighting the public policy changes that much of the public would support. Of course, these companies all have their niche green activities and green PR campaigns, but the heart of their business model is to maximize extraction and sales of fossil fuels.

McKibben has the support of people like Desmond Tutu, who compares this initiative to the divestment campaign that helped topple apartheid.

Today, more than 500 institutions representing over \$3.4 trillion in assets have made some form of fossil fuel divestment commitment. Mennonite Church Canada is not among them. At least not yet.

Two years ago a few members of MC Canada churches, myself included, initiated a campaign to get MC Canada to consider divestment. We called it Fossil Free Menno and we asked people to sign an online letter asking conference leaders to study divestment. It was a volunteer, small-budget (\$16) initiative, but it provided MC Canada members an opportunity to express a desire. Only 117 people signed.

Nonetheless, church leaders set up a working group. That group will have a report out in advance of Assembly 2016. Greener pension options have also been created for individuals under the MC Canada pension umbrella.

For a 2007 article, I asked MC Canada about climate change and setting specific emission reduction targets—I proposed a 50-percent reduction. Jack Suderman, MC Canada Executive Director at the time, said that a target of some sort was “definitely worth considering.” He said many staff already biked or walked to work and air travel was kept to a minimum, but more could be done.

A year later I returned to ask about progress. I heard about compostable dinnerware at Assembly, primarily online registration and paperless promotion for



Climate change threatens millions of coastal people, such as these people in Dhaka, Bangladesh. “Stilt houses, coping with climate change” by Development Planning Unit University College London bit.ly/22N3YMO Licensed under CC BY 2.0

the event. In addition, the event site and lodgings were consolidated to minimize travel during the event.

The current MC Canada executive director has consistently talked about the importance of climate change. According to an MC Canada release, Willard Metzger’s “pursuit of climate justice” has landed him meetings with Stephen Harper, Elizabeth May, Tom Mulcair and Justin Trudeau, prior to him becoming prime minister.

The same release says “climate change is widely expected to continue increasing poverty levels by impacting food and water resources and livelihoods, eventually making some parts of the earth unliveable.”

In 2011, Metzger attended the United Nations climate talks in Durban, South Africa. He was scheduled to attend the Paris conference as well—along with an estimated 40,000 others—but cancelled in order to deal with the latest round of MC Canada lay-offs.

What has MC Canada done to reduce actual emissions? Metzger says they have “reduced the number of face to face meetings for its various boards.” Metzger’s year-end letter to congregations did not mention climate. Given the response to the Fossil Free Menno campaign, that omission won’t have bothered many people.

The global community mustered a new level of resolve in Paris. This should help reduce human suffering, something Mennonites care about. Will Mennonites now join the global community? ❧

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Imagining open spaces in the midst of transitions

BY NAOMI UNGER

The illustration in the children's story book showed a wagon with three flower pots. My three-year old grandson counted four. I asked him to count them again. "I don't need to, Grandma," he said. "I know there's space in the wagon for four."

I wonder what story he would have imagined if I had pursued his answer. I also wonder what the future story will be for church women's organizations, such as Saskatchewan Women in Mission (SWM), as we make the transition to living in an "open space" in our wagon.

Organized in 1943, SWM held its final event, the women's retreat, last fall (see Nov. 4, 2015 issue, page 16) and is revoking its charitable status. Mennonite Church Saskatchewan (MC Sask) will forward donations from still-active women's groups, if requested, to ongoing projects such as Mennonite Women Canada's Opportunities for Giving, Bible study guides, church camps or specific missionaries. A women's ministry representative has been created within MC Sask to nurture women's connections, especially through retreats. Meanwhile, volunteers will plan the 2016 retreat.

Reflecting on this transition, Ruth Quiring Heppner (last treasurer of SWM), noted, "as we move on, let's not get weary in doing good, for it is in serving others that we are blessed."

Many congregational women's groups are also in transition as their numbers decline. Disbanding, even reducing activities, are difficult choices. However, if groups are unable to do God's shalom work, their desire is that others—women and men—will use their gifts and energy for that purpose.

On a personal level, I remember the wooden-handled knitting bag that my mother took to every *Naehverein* (sewing circle). There women would gather to knit, embroider or crochet articles for their mission sales to support missionaries and local needs, while enjoying each other's fellowship.

When my husband and I settled in Rabbit Lake, Sask., and again, as Mennonite Central Committee workers in Jos, Nigeria, I happily joined women's groups, because singing, studying the Bible and making blankets together were, and still are, meaningful activities. Later, as Christian feminism, women theologians and spiritual

leaders, helped to shape my faith, it remained important to me to belong to a denominational body that nurtured women's gifts and skills for leadership and service.

For my daughters, who live in large cities with their young families, friendships with other women continue to be vital as they interact as playground moms, neighbours, book club members and at church. Nurturing spiritual growth, environmental care, community building and openness to others are important aspects of their faith, even though their activities are different.

As times change, it is a significant task to stop to reflect on and celebrate the work and witness of the past, to learn from and be thankful for older women.

The familiar "flower pots" don't need to be tossed out nor should they be held in tightly-clenched hands. With patient pauses can come fresh courage and a renewed reliance on God's Spirit to explore the opportunities created by that open space in the wagon.

Such opportunities are God's gift to us, encouraging us to imagine and explore fresh approaches to traditional priorities, consider timely responses to contemporary issues, or work with expanded relationships. New questions, interests and insights may change the story entirely, but we can be confident that the gospel of Jesus Christ is always new and life-giving, with the potential to change humanity's story.

Such explorations are an ongoing task which, according to 1 Corinthians 13, must be undergirded and permeated by God's gracious and forgiving love, in all we do, past, present and future. Unless we do that, all our efforts are bankrupt and we'll sound like clanging cymbals or noisy gongs.

However, if we "trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly and love extravagantly" as Eugene Peterson puts it, we, like my grandson, may come to know that there's plenty of space in the wagon for many more pots of flowers to bloom in the future!

Naomi Unger lives in Rabbit Lake, Sask., with her husband, Don. She is a retired lay pastor and served on the program committee of SWM for six years.



Mennonite
Women
Canada



Naomi Unger reads to her grandson.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Saskatchewan church receives funding from larger community

"I don't have a church, but I want to help"

By DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
REGINA, SASK.

It's a nice problem to have. Grace Mennonite Church in Regina currently has almost \$30,000 in donations and pledges designated for helping refugees. The donations come from a variety of sources, both within and outside the church.

The congregation has a long history of refugee sponsorship. Peter Neufeldt estimates that over the past four decades his church has helped over 35 refugee families establish new homes in Regina. Rose Graber, who co-pastors the church with her husband, Dan, says, "This congregation is founded on refugees." She notes that its earliest members or their families came to Canada as Mennonite refugees. Among the church's current membership are Lao people who also came as refugees.

"I think we are known in this city for sponsoring refugees and for being sympathetic to refugees," says Graber. Word does get around, but the church also promotes their willingness to accept donations for refugee resettlement, both on a large sign outside their church building and on their website.

And so the donations and pledges have come in, both small and large. They have come from church members, as expected, but also from total strangers. Graber says people have stopped her on the street and offered their cheques, telling her, "I don't have a church, but I want to help."

Other congregations from within Mennonite Church Saskatchewan have contributed as well. Churches in remote areas have the financial means to give but can't offer jobs or the community support newcomers would receive in an urban centre. Zion Mennonite in Swift Current,



PHOTO COURTESY OF PETER NEUFELDT

When it comes to sponsoring refugees, Grace Mennonite Church welcomes support from the broader Regina community.

Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite in Glenbush, and Eyebrow Mennonite are among the congregations that have pledged support or expressed interest.

What has all this interest meant for Grace Mennonite? "Like every congregation, we are always looking where we can cut the budget," says Graber. But the gifts they've received have inspired congregants to give more themselves. "Pledges are up," she says, and members are feeling thankful. "People are eager to get involved," she adds.

And the hope is that members will get involved beyond just giving financially. "We need more volunteers," says Graber, "especially if we sponsor two families." Neufeldt believes the needed hands-on help, like the money, will come from within the church and also from the larger

/// Briefly noted

Mennonite Brethren historian dies

Paul Toews, long-time history professor and Mennonite historian, died on Nov. 27, 2015, at his home in Fresno, California, at the age of 75. As well as teaching for 44 years, he served as director of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies for 31 years and executive director of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission for 17 years. Among his books is *Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970*, published in 1996, the last of a four-volume series. Toews was the lead historian on the Mennonite Heritage Cruise between 1995 and 2010. This annual visit to Ukraine, as well as the time he taught and studied there, gave him the opportunity to find many state records dealing with Mennonites. He was able to copy 200,000 pages of documents, enhancing the collection at the Center for MB Studies. He is survived by his wife Olga, his children Renee and Matthew, brothers John and James and their respective families. He was the son of Mennonite Brethren patriarch J.B. Toews and his wife, Nettie.

—Canadian Mennonite staff

community. "We have had offers from recent Syrian refugees to help with the newcomers," he says. There are also initiatives from organizations showing the Regina community to be strongly supportive. For instance, the Log Cabin Thrift Store, a former Mennonite Central Committee thrift store, has offered \$60 vouchers to refugee families.

The people of Grace Mennonite are not unique in their ability to raise funds, or in their desire to help refugees, but they are uniquely equipped with experience and the support of a generous community that will make the task of refugee resettlement an easier one. ▮

VIEWPOINT

East meets West ... again

*One church's experience in bringing a
Syrian refugee family to Canada*

MARIA H. KLASSEN
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

The church council of St. Catharines United Mennonite Church agreed to sponsor a Syrian refugee family last spring with money that had been donated to its benevolent fund. One of the council members volunteered to get a committee together, then he and the lead minister approached the local Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) office. With the necessary funds to sponsor a family of five, it was agreed that the family would come from an area where MCC saw the greatest need, regardless of religious affiliation.

Once word of who the family was and when they were coming came, the work of finding an apartment and getting it furnished started. Everything for every room was needed, as the family was coming with nothing. A central location to school, stores, doctors, dentists and banks was taken into consideration.

This was a dual sponsorship, with the Canadian government providing some of the funds for the first six months, and the church taking full responsibility for all other expenses for a year.

Much paperwork needed to be done in both countries, including immigration documents, permanent resident cards, and applications for health and financial cards. Doctor and dentist contacts were made. As the Balo family spoke no English, interpreters were needed.

When they arrived, several people became very involved with the family, showing them how to work the apartment buzzer, taking them grocery shopping, orienting them so they could walk to the park and so much more. There

were visits to the petting zoo, and going out for ice cream and swimming visits that needed a van for transportation.

Because the Balos came in June, an appointment was made at the local school board office. It was clear that the children spoke no English and would be enrolled in an English-as-a-second-language site school. The two older children were introduced to their teachers and classmates, and there was a Syrian student in each of their classes who had been there for a year already. They were a big help with integration.

Throughout the summer several church members spent some time every afternoon working with the children in language and math skills. The parents attended English classes during the summer, and continue to do so.

The family has been here several months now, and with the help of an interpreter, I asked them about their family history.

The parents were from the same village and had known each other since childhood, marrying young. While they were growing up, their fathers worked outside the home and their mothers took care of the children. Their early years of marriage were uneventful.

All that changed in 2011, when revolution broke out in Syria. In 2012, the revolution came to Aleppo, where the Balos lived. Soldiers and rebel forces fought in the streets, making their home part of a war zone. And with fighter jets bombing the city, the burning of buildings and shelling of the local mosque, their lives were put in extreme danger.

Work was sporadic, there was no



Members of St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, Ont., welcome the Balo family from Syria to Canada in June of last year.

power, schools were closed, there was little food. What was available was very expensive, caused in part by a persistent drought since 2008. People were told to leave.

The parents, along with their extended family, went to the countryside, where 35 people lived in one room. Schools and police stations were housing as many people as they could. The Red Cross set up tents.

The father left for Turkey and worked for a few months to earn enough money to go back to get his family. They got to the border in a car filled with sugar sacks in which they could hide.

Once across the border, they managed to make their way to Istanbul, where they lived with extended family for a week, and then they rented a two-room apartment with four other families.

After a month, the father got a job as a tailor, even though he had been a painter in Syria. They registered with the United Nations, were interviewed, and after seven months, were told they could go to Canada, a process that took two more years. But they feel very lucky, as it takes some families five to seven years to be able to leave.

The Balos are very happy to be here, even though they are far away from their family. The children like school and the parents are busy learning English. The father hopes to drive a car someday and the mother hopes some of her family will come to Canada. Life is good, they say.

I can't help but compare this story to that of my own Mennonite parents and grandparents, who left the East to come West. ▮

Bearing witness effectively

Spirituality and aging seminar explores dignity in end-of-life care

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

Dr. Harvey Chochinov and his team at the University of Manitoba have been working to quantify the effects of psycho-social interventions in the care of patients in palliative care situations. As UofM distinguished professor of psychiatry and director of the Manitoba Palliative Care Research Unit, he chaired the federally appointed panel on physician-assisted death struck this past summer by the former Conservative government. He spoke at the annual Schlegel-UWaterloo Research Institute for Aging's spirituality and aging seminar held at Conrad Grebel University College on Nov. 13.

Through cross-country studies involving professionals in patient care, as well

as patients and their families, Chochinov can show quantitatively that taking time to give patients dignity—by effectively bearing witness to their unique lives and needs, granting them personhood, and providing subjective as well as objective science-based medical care—patients do better, families are happier, and even healthcare staff are more effective and less stressed.

While, as a psychiatrist, he does in-depth interviews with patients, resulting in multi-page life stories, he stressed that this can be as simple as listening to a patient for a few minutes, or asking the question: "What do you want the healthcare team to know about you to take care of you?" The person's answer can result in a few

paragraphs that, with permission, gets attached to medical records for all caregivers to see. Such patients often want copies of this material to give to their families, he said.

If dementia has robbed a person of the ability to be articulate, family members can be invited to tell the story, with the person present. The bottom line is "real" communication—and not the pseudo-affectionate elder-speak that uses diminutive and overly affectionate terms like "dearie," "honey" and "sweetie" for the elderly. Such phrases often lead to increased resistance to care by both sound-minded patients and those with dementia.

A seminar participant noted that, as a nurse-in-training some 35 years ago, she had been taught this patient-centred care. Chochinov noted that while that was so, in the intervening years the focus has been on the huge advancements to the science of medicine. He suggested a renewed focus on patients as unique persons, an approach that offers them dignity.

Many of the pastoral participants made other connections between Chochinov's presentation and their work of caring for their congregants, whether or not they were ill or aged.

A piece of Chochinov's presentation, "A model of therapeutic effectiveness," suggested that to be most effective, caregivers must take care of themselves. Several caregivers saw this as difficult, as their case-loads are immense and the balance of care of others and self-care is hard to achieve. ☺

The day after Chochinov's presentation in Waterloo, the Liberal government announced that the committee he chaired "will no longer be asked to make recommendations to the government and will now simply report on its consultations on the issue," according to The Canadian Press. See story at <http://bit.ly/1kKOxDx>.



David Gifford, left, chaplain at the Vineland (Ont.) United Mennonite Home, talks with Dr. Harvey Chochinov at the 2015 Schlegel-UWaterloo Research Institute for Aging seminar, 'Dignity in end-of-life care, held Nov. 13 at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Shalom Counselling Services cuts the ribbon for the grand opening of its expansion on Dec. 10. Pictured are, from left to right: Murray Leis (contractor), Wanda Wagler-Martin (executive director), Brian Shantz (architect), Andrew Roth (board chair), Ken Seiling (Waterloo Region chair), Melissa Durrell (City of Waterloo councillor) and Zyg Janecki (City of Kitchener councillor). The 2,000-square-foot expansion came in under budget and on time. Shalom is the only counselling centre in the city of Waterloo, and the project was funded by the cities, the region and many private donors. The prayer of dedication was led by Jim Erb, chair of Erb Street Mennonite Church, on whose property Shalom's building stands.

God at work in the church Snapshots

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Chuck Kruger (left), Larry Shantz and Marcia Shantz, play "Johnny Be Good" for the St. Jacobs Mennonite Church variety show on Nov. 14, 2015, 100 years to the day since the building was dedicated. In this version Johnny is the horse pulling the Good family buggy to the Heidelberg auction. In behind are members of the congregational prayer shawl ministry. In 2015 the St. Jacobs congregation celebrated 100 years since the congregation, founded in 1834, moved from an old-style rural meetinghouse to a church in the village, complete with a basement and electricity. During the anniversary year the auditorium was remodelled. See the full story of the anniversary and more photos online at canadian-mennonite.org/100-years-village.





Steve Drudge (left) talks with Kara Carter of Wellesley Mennonite Church and Rob Leis of Poole Mennonite Church at the Nov. 27-28 “Moving Back into the Neighbourhood” seminar held at Wellesley Mennonite Church.

MC Eastern Canada supports another ‘Missional’ project

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WELLESLEY, ONT.

The church is beloved of God, but frayed, much like a child’s favourite “blankie,” said Alan Roxburgh at a “taster” workshop, held at Wellesley Mennonite Church on Nov. 27-28. “The unravelling is the work of the Holy Spirit,” he told congregational leaders. “God is inviting [the church] on a journey of discovery about mission and ministry.” He assured them that, “This is good news. This is the dawn of a new day.”

Roxburgh and John McLaverty, from the Missional Network, led the workshop. This organization encourages congregations to work at being missional by focussing on small groups of lay leaders who experiment in faithfully listening to God and world around the congregation rather than trying to change the congregation’s structure or programs. They believe projects should focus not on growing the church in numbers, but faithfulness. Christians can join God in what God is doing by listening to Scripture, listening to each other’s stories and listening to their neighbourhood’s stories. By reflecting on what they have heard, they can discern to what God is calling the group.

Leaders from seven congregations from the Wilmot and Wellesley-West Clusters

of MCEC attended this “Moving Back into the Neighbourhood” workshop. It grew out of a Doctor of Ministry project explored by Steve Drudge, a pastor at Steinmann Mennonite Church in Baden, Ont. (see March 2, 2015 issue, page 25). The congregations were invited to join an 18-month process that includes five steps to faithfully re-engage with the world outside the church. Kara Carter, pastor at

/// Briefly noted

Future Directions Task Force findings ready for discussion

WINNIPEG, Man.—Mennonite Church Canada’s Future Directions Task Force (FDTF) has released its concluding report. The FDTF was charged with envisioning future directions for the area and national Mennonite churches in Canada, in light of two central questions: What is God’s Spirit calling us to in the 21st century? What are the best ways (programs, structures, strategies) for the church to thrive and grow? The concluding work of the task force can be found at www.commonword.ca/go/469. Congregations and area churches are encouraged to review these important documents about the future of our national and area church system prior to area church annual gatherings in 2016, and the national church assembly in July 2016. Group and individual responses can also be sent to wmetzger@mennonitechurch.ca.

—Mennonite Church Canada

Wellesley Mennonite Church, will lead the process as her Doctor of Ministry project. Leaders will meet periodically to share experiences and what they are learning with each other. It is supported by MCEC. ///

/// Briefly noted

Committee seeks ideas for empty church building

The Evangelism and Church Development Committee (ECDC) of Mennonite Church B.C. is seeking ideas on what to do with the building formerly used by Clearbrook Mennonite Church, which disbanded as a congregation in Jan. 2015. The building sits at the corner of Clearbrook Road and Peardonville Road in central Abbotsford. The committee is organizing a community assessment to determine the needs of the surrounding community. Barry Lesser, chair of ECDC, writes in the *MC B.C. News and Notes*, “Community assessment is a process of collecting data about the demographics of the area. Data can include info about the ethnic makeup of the neighbourhood, income level, types of housing, businesses, and family arrangements. The data collected will all be used to help us imagine what ministry God is calling us to begin at this time in this place.” ECDC committee members of the Abbotsford area are forming a sub-committee to plan the future of the building. They welcome anyone with interest in a church plan or ministry in this area to contact Lesser at yumchurch@shawbiz.ca.

—AMY DUECKMAN

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

CMU pledges to bring indigenous knowledge into classrooms

By J. NEUFELD

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Late last month Canadian Mennonite University president Cheryl Pauls signed an unusual document, one that commits CMU to bringing indigenous knowledge and history into its classroom as well as creating a racism-free campus and working to better serve the needs of indigenous students.

In December nine Manitoba colleges and universities and the Manitoba School Boards Association signed the Indigenous Education Blueprint, committing to seek reconciliation with indigenous peoples, support First Nations' right to self-determination, incorporate indigenous knowledge into curriculum and work to help increase success rates of indigenous students.

The blueprint is a response to recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. On June 2, 2015, the TRC asked the federal government to work with aboriginal groups to "eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians" and to work to improve education levels and success rates among aboriginal students.

The blueprint recognizes "the Nation-to-Nation relationships" established when Canada and First Nations groups signed treaties and acknowledges that "historic inequalities and colonial processes have interfered with these relationships and rights."

"It's through relationships that we see this going forward," said Pauls. "We are being intentional about nurturing those relationships."

"Today's signing feels like a natural next step, formalizing what CMU has been doing over the past 12 to 18 months," said CMU communications director

Kevin Kilbrei. He pointed out a number of ways in which CMU has already been working toward reconciliation with First Nations. In 2015 CMU engaged in settler-indigenous dialogue by organizing two community conversations on the future of Kapyong Barracks. CMU also hosted 18 students in from Peguis First Nation for a 10-month program designed together with Peguis First Nation to help students transition from the reserve to an urban setting. Student groups on campus supported the campaign for the construction of an all-weather road that will connect the isolated community of Shoal Lake 40 with

the Trans-Canada Highway. And the university's School of Peacebuilding offers a regular course taught by indigenous scholars on the history of indigenous people in Canada.

Kilbrei says it's too early to say exactly how this new commitment will affect programming or curriculum in the future, but CMU is committing to "incorporating reconciliation into university courses and teaching." The next steps for the university will be to meet with faculty to identify concrete initiatives, particularly within the peace and conflict studies at the Shaftesbury campus and the Conflict Resolution Studies at Menno Simons College.

"The word *reconciliation* is in our mission statement," said Pauls. "Behind that is a strong theological tradition. How does that intersect with the way reconciliation is being imagined now within the TRC use of that term?"

The full text of the Blueprint can be read at: http://umanitoba.ca/admin/Indigenous_connect/media/agamik_PO151363.pdf

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE HEINRICHS



Cheryl Pauls and Steve Heinrichs introduce a new sign on the grounds of Canadian Mennonite University acknowledging the original inhabitants of this land and the treaties signed between First Nations and settler Canadians. Inspired by the provocative artwork of indigenous artist Edgar Heap of Birds, the sign reverses the letters of "Winnipeg" to challenge assumptions about history, public space and land claims. The sign was created by Mennonite Church Canada with Heap of Birds' blessing. Pauls is the president of CMU, Heinrichs is director of indigenous relations for Mennonite Church Canada.

‘What’s that in your hand?’

BY NATHAN DIRKS AND DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Thanks to a question from Tom Roes, Mennonites in Botswana are thinking creatively about launching small businesses to support their families and the local church.

As a short-term worker for Mennonite Church Canada, Roes is engaged with an income-generation ministry. He offers entrepreneurship training to help participants start small businesses, which he begins

by asking them to examine the gifts they already have with a question drawn from Exodus 4:2: “*What’s that in your hand?*”

When Moses deflected God’s call to leadership by pointing to his personal lack of ability and resources, God asked Moses that question. Then God performed miraculous signs using the staff in Moses’ hand—and Moses’ hand itself. The story demonstrates that God behaves in ways

we cannot expect or imagine, but also that God works through whatever resources are available to us.

In early 2015, Roes led a week-long training seminar in Gaborone, Botswana’s capital city, focussing on that question. Students came directly from daily routines of schooling, childcare and work to attend the study funded by MC Canada. They gathered in a local church and sat on plastic patio chairs crowded around metal folding tables. As Roes explored the ethics of Jesus that apply to starting a small business—from the basics of getting started to the minutiae of marketing and financial planning—they listened attentively and took notes.

When participants reviewed the resources God had already given them, a wide

Entrepreneurship training leads to opening of ‘tuck shop’

STORY AND PHOTO BY NATHAN DIRKS

Mennonite Church Canada
GABORONE, BOTSWANA

Bags of sugar, tins of fish, bottles of juice and boxes of matches line the shelves in the slightly sunken room. Various other household and kitchen necessities and food products fill the spaces in between. Treats like *magwinya* (fatcakes) and chicken feet sit ready by the barred window awaiting hungry patrons.

Local pedestrian traffic moves in a steady stream past a waist-high fence dividing the yard from a nearby street. A small fire, guarded from the wind by a few small sheets of tin, burns slowly beneath a black cast-iron pot. Baamuchili stands proudly underneath the awning outside of the orange-painted plaster of his sunken room festooned with a sign emblazoned “Tuck Shop.”

The Tuck Shop—the Botswana version of a convenience store—is a new enterprise that resulted from a Mennonite Church Canada entrepreneurship training seminar.

When short-term worker Tom Roes asked Baamuchili, “What’s that in your hand?” based on Exodus 4:2, Baamuchili’s mind worked quickly. He realized that the sunken room at his house beside the road would work well as a shop. His younger brother, Martin, could man such a shop while Baamuchili worked at a local warehouse as a stock manager.

He knew that people would happily pay for his

mother’s homemade *magwinyas* and that his father, who worked at a nearby chicken farm, could bring home inexpensive chicken feet to sell.

A few days after the class ended, armed with his creative ideas, an understanding of his own neighbourhood, his newly sharpened business acumen and the knowledge of what was already in his hand, Baamuchili opened his tuck shop.

Since then, it has grown. His well-stocked shelves reflect inventory that meets the specific needs of his community in Old Naledi, a neighbourhood in Botswana’s capital city of Gaborone. At the same time, Baamuchili and his family continue to make a profit and to bless their community through their honest, well-run, and neighbourly business.



While his brother Baamuchili works as a stock manager at a local warehouse, Martin, pictured, runs the Tuck Shop, a small convenience store that Baamuchili started after attending a Mennonite Church Canada entrepreneurship seminar led by Tom Roes. The Tuck Shop is located in his family’s home.

variety of business ideas emerged, from a nail salon, a driving school and a daycare centre to a computer store and a tuck shop.

Employment is hard to come by in Botswana, especially for ex-convicts. Because the struggle to survive often leads to repeated criminal behaviour and a return to prison, Roes brought the Exodus question to 20 inmates at First Offenders Prison near Gaborone. They learned how to draw upon their existing skills and resources upon their release from prison, including welding, carpentry, sewing and other abilities that were honed during incarceration.

On the last day of class, Tyrone (a pseudonym), one of the attending inmates, presented Roes with an intricate, almost photographic-like drawing of a bull elephant wandering through tall savannah grass, a familiar northern Botswana scene. When Tyrone was released from prison a few months later, he immediately started a small business that used quite literally what was in his hands: his gift for drawing. The artwork he creates now beautifies his community and generates a living that helps to



PHOTO BY TOM ROES

A gifted prison inmate presented Mennonite Church Canada short-term worker Tom Roes with artwork he created. After his release from prison, he used his artistic skills and the training from Roes' entrepreneurship seminar to start a small business.

support his family.

Roes says he was grateful to receive the gift of an elephant drawing from Tyrone's

hands. "My daughter asked me to bring home an elephant from Africa. She wasn't disappointed." ❧

PHOTO BY NATHAN DIRKS



Answering the question "What's that in your hands?" inspired participants in a Mennonite Church Canada entrepreneurship seminar with Tom Roes to look at resources they had access to. For one participant, chicken feet—a breakfast treat in Botswana—were available inexpensively, and he sells them in his newly created tuck shop (convenience store). Here, the skin and hard claw shells of chicken feet are removed before boiling.

Unexpected.



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GOD AT WORK IN US

Making peace through service

Regina man finds expression for his faith through local service club

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
REGINA, SASK.

Peter Neufeldt lives out his commitment to Jesus' way of peace as a member of his church and as a member of the Rotary Club. "There are so many different ways of making peace," he says.

An active member of Grace Mennonite Church for many years, Neufeldt recalls a time when the congregation chose names for its various committees. "Peace" was intentionally paired with "service" to create a name for one committee. "We were really looking at what we could do, action-focused," Neufeldt recalls. "So it wasn't just philosophical, that we would sit around and talk." And so the Peace and Service Committee came into being.

Under the committee's direction, the congregation built peace through service by sponsoring refugees. "I don't know how many refugees we've sponsored," says Neufeldt, "but I think it's over 35 families, the first ones being from the Vietnam War." He adds, "The first family we sponsored are still members of our church."

In addition to sponsorship, the congregation, in partnership with the local food bank, has helped refugees acquire employable skills that would get them out of the low-paying jobs in which they typically found themselves.

As a member of a local Rotary Club, Neufeldt finds even more avenues for making peace through service. One of Rotary's six key initiatives is peace and conflict resolution, says Neufeldt. Rotarians work



Peter Neufeldt

at this within their communities, as well as internationally. Locally, a program called Chili for Children provides lunches for Regina school children from low-income families. Another program supports the Regina branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

An international initiative which Neufeldt is particularly passionate about is the Ripple



Effect Program, which began in 2000, after a church youth group from Canada visited Guatemala and witnessed the lack of educational opportunities in rural communities there. The Canadian youth group, whose leader was a Rotarian, wanted to build a school for their new Guatemalan friends. By 2001, the first school had been built. To date, Rotarians have helped build 70 schools in Guatemala, through the program, most of them in rural areas. The positive effects of the program have rippled outward, says Neufeldt, not only with the number of schools built but also with the quality of education.

In 2009, Neufeldt and his wife, Janet, together with fellow Rotarians, Peter and Marg Peters, travelled to Guatemala to see first-hand how the program works. Rotary Clubs in Canada partner with a club in Guatemala to ensure that funds

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PETER NEUFELDT



Peter Neufeldt (centre) and his wife, Janet, visit a classroom his Rotary Club helped build through the Ripple Effect Program.

for the program are administered fairly. Local tradespeople are employed to build the schools. Strong parental support is essential.

“In one particular community, when we were there, there was a Mayan lady who begged us to build a school,” says Neufeldt. “She couldn’t speak Spanish. They translated from Mayan to Spanish to English.”

Although there was a rough shelter of bamboo slats, a tin roof and wooden benches or tree stumps for seating, “when it rained the water ran through the classroom and the kids sat with their feet in the mud,” Neufeldt says adding, “The teachers did the same.”

Rotary did build a school in this community, says Neufeldt, and this year they purchased 18 computers for the school.

“They take such pride in their school,” says Neufeldt. “It has just changed the community.”

Although Rotary is non-religious and non-political, Neufeldt says many of its members are Christian. The core values of Rotary are compatible with the Christian faith, he says, adding that being involved in Rotary has also given him opportunities to form friendships with people of other faiths.

Rotary “has helped to give voice to my faith,” says Neufeldt. “I find that Rotary has so many parallels to [Mennonite Central Committee] and yet, for me, has an easier, hands-on application.”

Within the service club Neufeldt found he could make friends and live out Christ’s Great Commission, “finding service opportunities that help me to ‘go into all the world,’ first of all the world in Regina, but then discovering the international opportunities with The Ripple Effect Program.”

Neufeldt has been involved in leadership at both the local club and district levels. For a number of years he has been part of a district training team, helping to develop leadership in each of the district’s 47 clubs. In 2017, Neufeldt will serve as district governor.

He finds working with fellow Rotarians very rewarding. “We’re building bridges of understanding, bridges of peace. It’s a way of going out into the world.”



Peter Neufeldt (centre) greets happy school children in one of the communities that benefitted from the Ripple Effect Program.



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ARTBEAT

‘What if there is no precedent?’

The Elmira case has led to more than 400 restorative justice organizations worldwide over the past 41 years

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

It wasn't the premiere of *The Elmira Case*. That happened earlier at the Peace on Earth Film Festival in Chicago, which led to the film being shown in Mongolia. But on Nov. 19, 2015, the local premiere of a local story by a local institution and local film makers finally took place.

Jon Steckley, Ken Osagawara and Trevor Hunsberger of Rosco Films made the movie together with Community Justice Initiatives (CJI) about a case 41 years earlier involving two young men who had “raised a little hell” in the Town of Elmira, just a few kilometres north of Waterloo, slashing tires, breaking windows and destroying yards.

It was after their arrest that parole officer Mark Yantzi sparked the interest of Judge Gordon McConnell in having victims and offenders meet for “therapeutic reasons.” “What if there is no [legal] precedent” of offenders and victims reconciling, he worried.

Russ Kelly, one of the offenders, sat next to two of the victims, Bill and Joyce Crane,

at the Nov. 19 showing of the movie to around 400 people at Kitchener's Apollo Theatre.

In the same row sat Bryan Larkin, chief of the Waterloo Region Police, who spoke as part of a panel discussion of how, as a young constable in Kitchener, he and a more seasoned officer had apprehended a high-school-aged shoplifter. While Larkin was going the whole way to interview and charge the young man, the other officer took him aside and told him that they would be giving the shoplifter another chance, seeing as this was his first offence. As chief now, he sees the idea of working things out between people as the way the police service works together, even among themselves, management and union members.

Yantzi, who could not be present for the screening, said, “Crime is a tear in the fabric of a community.” While it cannot be undone, it can be healed as people meet people. One of the victims said to Kelly and his partner in crime, “When you see me

/// Briefly noted

New Mennonite song collection aims for 2020 release

Kitchener, Ont.—Working in partnership with Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, MennoMedia has begun the process to prepare a new song collection to replace *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (1992). It will take into account the diverse ways Mennonites sing and worship and new digital technologies. The new project is being referred to as Project 606. “The name ‘606’ is a natural for this project. That’s about how many hymns we want to have and that’s about how much we need to raise (in thousands) to fund it,” said Russ Eanes, executive director at MennoMedia. A steering committee with representatives from MennoMedia, MC USA and MC Canada has begun accepting applications for various positions, both salaried and volunteer to solicit and review music and texts. To learn more, go to canadianmennonite.org/mennonite-song.

—MennoMedia

walking down the street, don't you go off to the other side. We're okay now.”

The movie had its beginnings as CJI was going to prepare a five-minute film for the 40th anniversary of the case, since it had spawned CJI's own existence. But after many interviews and much footage was shot, it was decided to bring Rosco Films on board to prepare something professional. With re-enacted scenes, interviews and the surprise that Kelly, training to work in security, had ended up in a class taught by Julie Friesen from CJI, the 16-minute movie has become a tool to use in congregations in the restorative justice tradition.

Yantzi and McConnell's four-decades-old gamble has led to more than 400 restorative justice organizations in more than 50 countries around the world. //

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSCO FILMS



*Tyler Peacock and Jaden Goetz play the two young men who ‘raised a little hell’ in Elmira, Ont., 41 years ago, in *The Elmira Case* movie, a Rosco Films/Community Justice Initiatives production.*

To view the film, contact Julie Thompson at juliet@cjiwr.com or call 519-744-6549 x214.

Deuteronomy, newest Believers Church Bible Commentary, released

MennoMedia

How should we walk in God's way as a faithful people? What tools do the biblical stories of God's people give us?

Deuteronomy is a book of stories, a book of law and a look at the core of faith: "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one," Deuteronomy 6:4 puts it. Sometimes called the "gospel according to Moses," Deuteronomy examines divine grace and the practices of justice and right living.

Herald Press has released *Deuteronomy*, the 29th volume in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series, authored by Gerald E. Gerbrandt, president emeritus and professor emeritus of Bible at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg.

"Deuteronomy is sometimes perceived as ancient history, but a key word is 'today,'" says Gerbrandt. "There is a power in Deuteronomy to become the word for today in diverse contexts." He notes the words that call out to present-day believers in Deuteronomy 5:3: "Not [only] with our ancestors did the Lord make this covenant,



but with us, who are all of us here alive today."

Like all of the volumes in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series, the *Deuteronomy* commentary is designed to provide guidance for a variety of readers. Written for lay readers, pastors, teachers, and

Bible study groups, it considers the themes that tie together the Old Testament, New Testament and life in the modern world.

Using an Anabaptist reading of Scripture, Gerbrandt examines the Shema of Deuteronomy 6, the call to worship one God that Jesus quotes in the gospels. Gerbrandt looks at how Deuteronomy promotes healthy community relationships. "This is not only intellectual assent or for Sunday morning worship only," he writes. "It requires that justice become the centre of how we treat each other," including the resident "aliens and strangers" among us. Gerbrandt thereby connects Deuteronomy to Jesus' teachings on loving our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Gerbrandt invites readers to engage difficult passages of Deuteronomy that have

been used to justify violence and dispossession. He looks at how hopeful themes of covenant, land and leadership express the heart of Israel's faith.

Like all volumes in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series, *Deuteronomy* includes useful tools like "The text in the biblical context" and "The text in the life of the church." These tools encourage readers to understand the book in its original setting, and to find the ways this fifth book of Moses continues to speak to the church. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

Gospel Herald and The Mennonite now online

The denominational magazines of Mennonite Church Canada's two predecessor organizations, the Mennonite Church (MC) and the General Conference Mennonite Church (GCMC) are now available digitally for free online searching. Within each volume of the MC's *Gospel Herald* (1908-1998) and the GCMC's *The Mennonite* (1885-1998), researchers may conduct a full-text search to locate topics and articles. For more information go to canadianmennonite.org/GH-TM-Searches — Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary

PHOTO BY RANDY KLAASSEN / TEXT BY MARIA H. KLASSEN



For the second year in a row, a concert was presented by the Anabaptist Heritage Choir at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church. About 70 people, from the churches in the Niagara Peninsula came together under conductor John Rempel for the Nov. 1 concert that raised \$11,500 for the Syrian refugee crisis (including a matching government grant). The songs chosen came from Mennonite hymnals, kernlieder books, chorales from Lutheran hymnals, early Anabaptists song-writers and contemporary musicians.

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Professor reflects on Mennonite hymns and their influence

Ken Nafziger, a well-known leader in the Mennonite music circles, gave a presentation on how hymns reflect theology and influence the church's changing theology.

canadianmennonite.org/influence-mennonite-hymns



Loving life, befriending death

The Canadian Mennonite Health Assembly explored ethics, theology, and spirituality related to end-of-life care and assisted suicide.

canadianmennonite.org/life-death

European Anabaptist leaders release statement on refugees

Leaders of Mennonite conferences in Europe drafted a statement to express their concern about the refugee crisis in Europe.

canadianmennonite.org/statement-refugees



Training, persistence lead to new income

Mechanics, hair styling and more—stories of entrepreneurs in Mennonite Central Committee's Global Family education program in Rwanda.

canadianmennonite.org/new-income



Briefly noted

Stories told by Jesus chosen as VBS 2016 theme

“Surprise! Stories of discovering Jesus” is the new MennoMedia Vacation Bible School (VBS) material for 2016. The theme was suggested by users who asked for VBS material that focusses on Jesus. The team producing the upcoming VBS curriculum looked at stories about Jesus and noticed that many of the passages featured people and situations in which Jesus said or did surprising things. These revealed new facets of Jesus and his teachings. Those stories include Jesus in the temple, with children, in the crowd, during the night and while walking along a road. Created for children aged 4 through Grade 5, with free options for junior youth available on the VBS website (www.mennomedia.org/vbs), the material features a time of worship that includes a drama to present the Bible story. After worship, children rotate among activities that relate to the Bible story. The VBS 2016 material was written by a team in Ontario, coordinated by managing editor Mary Ann Weber. “Surprise! Stories of discovering Jesus” may be ordered in an all-in-one boxed set including everything needed for planning and preparation. All items are also available separately.

—MennoMedia



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PHOTOS BY JAY SIEMENS



Siemens took this photo of Tortum Falls in Turkey while on a service trip with MB Mission.



Manitoba photographer Jay Siemens created a 2016 calendar that raised \$20,000 for Syrian refugees settling in his hometown of Altona, Man.

Sharing his gifts to help others

Young photographer raises \$20,000 for Syrian refugees through calendar

AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

When Manitoba photographer Jay Siemens partnered with Friesens Corporation to create a 2016 calendar to benefit Syrian refugees, he had no idea they would print 1,000 copies and raise \$20,000 for the cause in a matter of weeks. But that's exactly what happened last month in the lead-up to Christmas. Siemens, a 23-year-old based in Altona, Man., says it was amazing to see people come together to support the project.

"Everything needed to come together for it to work and for there to be calendars before Christmas. I'm just happy I decided to go along with the idea," Siemens says. "I easily could have just sloughed it off, but I think things happen for a reason and I think the situation turned out the way it

was supposed to turn out."

Siemens was travelling in Iceland during the latter half of November when he read a CBC article saying that his hometown would welcome five refugee families from Syria, increasing the town's population by one per cent. The initiative to sponsor the families was started by Build a Village, a charity supported by Seeds Church, Siemens' home congregation.

Siemens knew he wanted to contribute in some way. Shortly after reading the CBC article, he had the idea to produce a calendar featuring 24 of his photographs from around the world. He planned to sell the calendars for \$20 each, with all of the money from sales going to Build a Village's efforts to help the families.



The calendar Where I Belong features 24 photos by Jay Siemens, a self-taught photographer.



A photo from Arnarstapi, Iceland. Siemens was in Iceland when he had the idea to create the 2016 calendar.



The calendar features this photo that Siemens took in Altona.



Prior to diving into photography full-time, Siemens worked at a fishing lodge in Saskatchewan. This is Wollaston Lake, Sask.



Siemens won a trip to Churchill, Man., where he took this photo.

When he returned to Altona a few days later, he approached Friesens Corporation about partnering with him. He initially hoped Friesens would agree to print 300 to 500 calendars and sell them to him at cost. He was pleasantly surprised when the company said they would cover the cost of printing 1,000 calendars.

Within a few days, the calendars were at the print shop. Siemens filmed a short video explaining the project and posted it to his Facebook page. It quickly garnered thousands of views and received media attention from the CBC, the *Winnipeg Free Press* and Buzzfeed. More than 800 people pre-ordered the calendar, and the rest quickly sold out when they became available before Christmas.

“I couldn’t have expected much better of a response,” Siemens says. “I think we don’t really understand the situation the refugees are going through, so anything we can do to help is huge.”

Curwin Friesen, CEO of Friesens Corporation, says the company’s commitment to supporting the Altona community, its past involvement with Build a Village and its belief in the power of print to make a difference made partnering with Siemens a natural fit.

“We can’t forget that [Friesens] was founded by immigrants,” Friesen says. “We felt it was in line with our history . . . to promote extending the table, so to speak, here in Altona with refugees.”

Like Siemens, Friesen was encouraged by the public’s response to the calendar.

“I think a lot of people would like to get involved [helping refugees],” he says.

“When you give them a project and a product that captures their imagination, things move really quickly.”

The calendar is named *Where I Belong* after a song by the rock band Switchfoot in which the singer explores themes of belonging and asks questions about his place in the world. Siemens thought it was an appropriate title for the calendar, given that Syrian refugees are no doubt struggling with where they belong.

“We want them to feel belonging,” he says. “I want them to feel welcome because I think as humans, belonging is pretty high up on the list of things to have a happy life.”

Siemens’ interest in photography was sparked in 2010 during his final year of high school at Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Man. He is self-taught and made the transition to full-time photography last year.

Siemens does a variety of work, including landscape photography, weddings and commercial work for organizations like Friesens, MB Mission, Youth for Christ and *Canadian Geographic*.

His travels have taken him to northern Manitoba and remote parts of Saskatchewan, as well as overseas destinations like Turkey, Greece and South Africa.

He describes his skills as a photographer as a gift from God and says he is happy he was able to use that gift to create *Where I Belong*.

“It’s important as humans to share our gifts—I think that’s why we have gifts,” Siemens says. “I think if people can remember that, there’s going to be a lot of good work done.” ❧

The geek shall inherit the earth

Duo aims to love and serve the nerd and geek community in Winnipeg and beyond

AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor



Kyle Rudge and Allison Barron are the founders of Geekdom House, in Winnipeg.

Allison Barron developed an interest in computer games and science fiction at an early age. Reconciling her pop culture interests with her Christian faith has not always been easy, though.

“I’ve never felt very ostracized or pressured because of my [interests],” says Barron, 26. At the same time, “I did not feel like that was something I could bring to church, either.”

Kyle Rudge can relate. As he was growing up, his interests in science fiction, comic books and particularly video games made him feel like an outsider at church.

“In society in general, but also in the church, video gaming is considered at best entertainment and at worst the origin of all things violent,” says Rudge, 34.

Today, the two Winnipeggers are working together to carve out a space for people to explore the ways the pop culture they love connects to their faith. The pair are the founders of Geekdom House, a ministry they launched last February in an effort to love and serve the nerd and geek community.

“The nerd and geek community is often considered by society to be misfits and outcasts, those living on the fringes of society, and often a childhood stage to be left behind at adulthood,” the ministry’s website states. “In reality, geeks are the connoisseurs and fanatics of science fiction, fantasy, comics, anime, board games, video games, computers, and all the art and creativity that comes along with these things.

“They are often the forward thinkers of our society, undeterred by what is perceived as impossible with full belief that it can be, it should be and will be possible one day. We seek to be a holy sanctuary for these troubadours of society.”

There are a number of facets to Geekdom House, which is a Christian missions project under Equip Canada. One of these is GeekdomHouse.com, which features a variety of articles that explore themes of faith, social justice and morality in geek culture.

Barron’s work with Geekdom House includes serving as the editor of *Area of Effect*, a quarterly print magazine with articles pulled from the website, as well as additional content. Rudge leads monthly Bible studies at Sam’s Place, a used bookstore and cafe operated by Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba.

The Bible studies have explored faith by looking at television shows like *Dr. Who*, *Firefly* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Last month’s event was a discussion about *Star Wars*.

The Bible studies have drawn capacity crowds, and Rudge says more than 85 different people have attended the events.

GeekdomHouse.com is also having a wide-ranging impact. In less than a year, 37 different writers have contributed more than 200 articles, which have been viewed almost 45,000 times. More than 60 different visual artists have also contributed work.

“The passion we have for talking about the geeky things we love can translate into talking about the faith things we love,” Rudge says.

Geekdom House aims to serve nerds and geeks who identify as Christian believers as well as nerds and geeks who do not have a faith-filled community and may be distant from God because of past judgment, alienation and misunderstanding. The ministry aims to bridge these two groups so that they can discuss mutual passions and share in all aspects of life together.

Both Rudge and Barron are alumni of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. Tenets of the Mennonite faith such as pacifism, service and living out one’s faith are important to them. One of the most popular articles on GeekdomHouse.com is by a writer reconciling his Mennonite faith with his love for *Lord of the Rings*, which is at times quite violent.

While Rudge and Barron have Anabaptist roots, Geekdom House is decidedly ecumenical. In addition to Mennonites, the ministry has reached Baptists, Presbyterians and more.

“We welcome views of all types,” Rudge says. “We come to the table to communally learn more about God and find him in the geeky things we love.”

Rudge and Barron have a number of things in the works for 2016, including a podcast, a devotional and a choir group. Geekdom House is also the subject of a forthcoming documentary by Winnipeg filmmaker Andrew Wall, who wrote and directed 2014’s *Burning Ember: The Steve Bell Journey*.

Rudge says he and Barron want to call attention to the holy parts in nerd and geek culture.

“We don’t believe we have God and we’re bringing him to the geek community,” Rudge says. “We believe God is already there and we get to discover him.”

PHOTO BY JAMES CHRISTIAN IMAGERY



Growing up, Allison Barron didn’t feel she could voice her interests in computer games and science fiction at church.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GEEKDOM HOUSE



Kyle Rudge leads monthly Bible studies that explore faith by looking at television shows like Dr. Who, Firefly and Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GEEKDOM HOUSE



Area of Effect is a quarterly print publication Geekdom House produces. It features articles from GeekdomHouse.com as well as content that is unique to the magazine.

Calendar

British Columbia

Feb. 12: "Deeper," a conference equipping leaders to understand, support and walk with youth and young adults dealing with emotional, relational and sexual issues, at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Feb. 26: MC B.C. LEAD conference, "Leadership in a Broken World: Walking in God's Mission of Reconciliation" at Level Ground Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, 1:30 p.m.-5 p.m. (sign-in at 1:15 p.m.).

Feb. 27: MC B.C. annual meeting at Level Ground Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (sign-in at 8:30 a.m.).

March 5: LifeBridge Ministries fundraising concert at Level Ground Mennonite Church, Abbotsford.

April 15-17: MC B.C. Junior Impact youth retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope.

April 16: Camp Squeah paddle-a-thon.

Alberta

Feb. 26-28: Senior-high snow camp at Camp Valaqua, Water Valley. For more information, call Jon Olfert at 403-637-2510.

March 18-19: MC Alberta annual general assembly.

Saskatchewan

Jan. 29-31: Senior-high retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim. Theme: "Sharing the well: Faith and diversity in a time of fear and division." Speaker: Cory Funk. For more information, call Kirsten Hamm-Epp at 306-249-4844.

Feb. 5: RJC Friday Night Live youth event, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 21: MCC fundraising concert featuring baritone Matt Pauls (CMU music professor) at Grace Westminster United Church, Saskatoon, at 2:30 p.m., sponsored by the MCC sale committee.

Feb. 28: RJC/CMU concert, at RJC.

March 11: Youth Mega Menno Barn Dance. For more information, visit smy.ca.

March 11-12: Mennonite Church Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions, at Osler Mennonite Church.

April 10: RJC Guys and Pies events, featuring A Buncha Guys.

Manitoba

Jan. 31: Prairie Performances presents An Afternoon of Schubert Music at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2:30 p.m. For more information call 204-269-0525 or spindg2@mymts.net.

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

Feb. 5: Open house at CMU. For more information, visit www.cmu.ca/campusvisit.

Feb. 11: CMU's 11th annual Verna Mae Music Competition, Laudamus Auditorium at 7 p.m.

Feb. 12: Learn about CMU's Outtatown Discipleship Program on campus. To sign up, call 204-487-3300.

March 11: Open house at CMU. For more information, visit www.cmu.ca/campusvisit.

March 18: Learn about CMU's Outtatown Discipleship Program on campus. To sign up, call 204-487-3300.

March 30: Open house at CMU. For more information, visit www.cmu.ca/campusvisit.

Ontario

Until April 23: "As the Women Sew: Community Quilts of Mampuján, Colombia" art exhibit at the Grebel Gallery, Conrad Grebel University College (grebel.ca/events).

Jan. 20: C. Henry Smith Scholar Lecture with Dr. Rebecca Janzen, "Minorities in Mexico: Mennonites

and the 21st-Century State," in Schlegel Community Education Room, Conrad Grebel University College (grebel.ca/events).

Jan. 23: 13th-annual Epicurean Hootenany in support of MCC and hearing-impaired children, at the Conrad Centre, Kitchener. Appetizers at 6 p.m.; singing at 7 p.m., with a dinner buffet and dessert to follow. For more information, visit mcco.ca/events.

Jan. 31: "Glorious Baroque: Music for Trumpet and Organ," at First United Church, Waterloo, at 2:30 p.m. Featuring Jan Overduin, organ, and John Thiessen, baroque trumpet. For more information, call 519-699-5362.

Feb. 4: Bechtel Lecture dinner with Dr. Janneken Smucker, "Abstract Art or Country Craft: The Quilts of the Amish" at 6:30 p.m. Contact Alison Enns (519) 885-0220 x 24217 or aenns@uwaterloo.ca for tickets.

Feb. 5: Bechtel Lecture with Dr. Janneken Smucker, "Unexpected intersections: Amish, Mennonite, and Hmong Textiles and the Question of Authenticity," in the Great Hall, Conrad

Classifieds

Travel Opportunities

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way! Faith based Hotel Tours to Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland and Ukraine, focussing on the Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage. More information online: mennoniteheritagetours.eu

For Sale

SUBSCRIBE! to Rhubarb published by the Mennonite Literary Society. HALF-OFF PLUS GIVE ONE FREE. www.rhubarbmag.com. Please use CMRHUB2015 promo code when subscribing.

Briefly noted

Art exhibition seeks submissions

Saskatoon, Sask.—Visual artists are invited to submit entries for consideration for the 2016 Mennonite Church Canada assembly to be held at TCU Place in Saskatoon, July 6-10. Artists area asked to submit up to three works for consideration. Submissions should be good quality digital images—jpeg, PDF, TIF. Send them to Ray Dirks at rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca by June 13, 2016. Include title, media, size, a statement explaining how the art connects with the assembly and exhibit theme and a brief personal bio. The theme for assembly and the exhibition is "God~Faith~People." Assembly planners say that faith serves as the conduit for relationship between God and people and that the tilde symbol illustrates movement and activity. Artists are asked to illustrate how "faith is our connection between God and the people." Accepted artwork can be delivered or sent to either Saskatoon or Winnipeg. All shipping costs must be covered by the artist. Artists will be notified of the jury decisions by June 18.

—Ray Dirks, Mennonite Church Canada

Employment Opportunities



Mennonite Central Committee

MCC SERVICE POSITIONS, AKRON, PA

Do you know someone interested in service? Mennonite Central Committee needs service workers in our Akron, PA, office for these positions: Administrative Assistants, Canner Operators, Instructional Technologist, Receptionist.

Assignments are one- or two-year commitments. MCC covers the cost of transportation to and from assignment, housing, daily living expenses, medical insurance and assistance with student loans.

For more information see serve.mcc.org or email akronconnection@mcc.org.

Grebel University College at 7 p.m. (grebel.ca/Bechtel).

Feb. 19: MCC Heifer Sale in Listowel.

Feb. 27: Menno Singers present "Bach and His Contemporaries" with soloists and the Nota Bene Baroque Players, at

St. Peters Lutheran Church, Kitchener, at 7:30 p.m.

March 1: Sawatsky Lecture with Sir James MacMillan at Conrad Grebel at 7:30 p.m. (grebel.ca/Sawatsky).

March 6: The Music of James

MacMillan at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener at 3 p.m. For tickets go to grebel.ca/Sawatsky.

March 19: Fundraising breakfast for MCC Elmira meat canning.

April 18-21: MCC Meat canning in

Leamington.

April 25-29: MCC meat canning in Elmira.

For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



Lead pastor

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY Waterloo, Ontario

We are a vibrant Anabaptist congregation located in the heart of Canada's Technology Triangle and within walking distance of two universities. As a welcoming church, we honour our 165-year heritage as well as celebrate our diversity.

Our faith community exists to make a difference:

- in the individual lives of our members
- within the social, academic, and cultural setting of Waterloo Region
- and to a larger post-modern world searching for meaningful connections to the sacred

We invite inquiries from qualified pastors who wish to partner with us in this leadership challenge. Contact Henry Paetkau, MCEC Area Church Minister, at hpaetkau@mcec.ca



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
Faculty position in Practical Theology

Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo invites applications for a full time definite term faculty position in Practical Theology. Persons from all specializations are encouraged to apply. Applicants with research expertise in spirituality and aging may be eligible for connection to the University of Waterloo's Research Institute for Aging (RIA).

The appointment is anticipated to begin on July 1, 2016 at the Lecturer or Assistant Professor level, and will relate primarily to the College's Master of Theological Studies program.

Review of applications will begin February 1, 2016 and continue until the position is filled.

The College is committed to employment equity and welcomes applications from all qualified persons. Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be given priority. For further information about the position, qualifications and application procedures, see: grebel.ca/positions.

140 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G6

LEAD PASTOR
Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church
15 George St., Waterloo, Ontario

Jesus sent out the apostles saying:
"Proclaim the good news, 'the Kingdom of Heaven has come near.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons." (Luke 10:7-8)

His friend Bob Dylan said,
"The times, they are a-changing!"

Can you do what Jesus is calling for in changing times?

We're pretty sure we're not the best at doing Gospel or changing, but we know we need both.

We are a warm and welcoming urban church of approximately 170 members who are seeking to appoint a new pastor with passion for mission and transformation, worship, teaching, care and nurture. We would love to hear from you!

Please forward your interest and information to us by February 5, 2016, through the office of:

Henry Paetkau
MCEC Area Church Minister
50 Kent Ave.
Kitchener, ON
N2G 3R1

In addition to incubating vision, this position includes preaching, pastoral care, worship planning, weddings, funerals, baptisms, dedications, administration. Preferred start date, June 1, 2016.

www.wkumchurch.ca



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite Church is seeking a full time pastor or pastoral couple. We are the only church in Gretna, a community with a population of approximately 575 that is located 125 kms south of Winnipeg, Manitoba. We have an average Sunday morning attendance of 70.

This position will become available in the summer of 2016.

Applications, MLIs and queries may be directed to Rick Neufeld, Mennonite Church Manitoba Director of Leadership Ministries; (204)896-1616; rneufeld@mennochurch.mb.ca.

Learn more about us at www.gretnachurch.com.

Art Exhibits

PHOTO COURTESY OF MSCU CENTRE FOR PEACE ADVANCEMENT



Colombian women who were displaced from their land by a paramilitary group in 2000 sew a tapestry that is part of a trauma-healing project. As the women sewed tapestries showing the history of their Afro-Colombian community, they were able to talk about the pain of their displacement and they learned that violence is cyclical. They began advocating for their rights and are working to create a better future for their community. In November 2015 they won the Colombian National Peace Prize in recognition of their efforts. An exhibit at the MSCU Centre for Peace Advancement at Conrad Grebel University College from January to April features their needlework and ten photographs by MCC worker Anna Vogt.

MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE GALLERY PHOTO



Ray Dirks and Alejandro Aranda stand beside a painting at opening of the Somos su futuro exhibition in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The exhibit focuses on the lives of indigenous women in a remote mountain area of Guerrero State. It includes paintings by Dirks, prints by Aranda and weaving by local women. The exhibit will tour in Mexico then open at the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) Gallery in Winnipeg in Sept. with stops in Ontario to follow. In April an exhibit at the MHC Gallery will feature art from Iraqi Kurdistan by Syrian and Iraqi refugees, internally displaced people and Kurdish residents.