

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Volume 20 Number 9

## What's up with Mennos and mission?

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## EDITORIAL

## Of mission and politics

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Two articles in this issue point to a shift in our Anabaptist/Mennonite thinking about both our mission in international witness and our place in the government arena.

“Toss aside western church culture and rhetoric,” Deborah Froese, the director of Mennonite Church Canada’s news service, opens her “What’s up with Mennos and mission?” feature on page 4, quoting Witness worker Daniel Pantoja, who ministers with his wife Joji in the Philippines.

“Don’t call it church-planting,” cautioned Pantoja of their work in a Muslim context, “since words like ‘church’ and ‘Christianity’ carry too many colonial connotations. We pray that *salaam* [holistic peace] communities of Isa-al Masih [Jesus Christ] will be formed, but don’t ask what they will look like. We don’t know.”

“He doesn’t know?” you might ask. How is it that a Witness worker, commissioned to introduce Jesus to communities in the Global South, doesn’t know what a church “plant” looks like? Doesn’t their calling and the mandate from our Witness office give them some pretty clear guidelines as to what this is all about?

Well, yes, no doubt. But what Froese’s feature so clearly points out from several interviews with Witness workers and their overseers back home in Canada, is that there is a disconnect between what some of our expectations back home look like and what is actually happening abroad.

We are living in a different, more

complex world than even a decade ago. Islam, for instance, has become a far-more visible world religion, one that forces us to recognize that, as a competing faith, it is more integral to our local and worldwide communication. Many of our congregations and area churches are working intentionally at Christian-Muslim relations.



In our global witness we have discovered that, contrary to a deeply embedded belief, we were called to introduce new revelations of God to nationals that, to our surprise, found that God was already there, albeit in different forms, and that to be successful it was necessary to recognize this and integrate the gospel with another prevailing spirituality. To do less was to offend important components of the local “community” and prohibit communication with local leaders in a particular culture.

And that business takes a long and patient effort, requiring years of sometimes painstaking development to achieve. But when done with compassion and understanding, it results in a “vibrant and growing ministry,” as the Pantojas have demonstrated.

Witness workers try to convey this to us “back home,” but are we listening? Do we get it?

In a similar fashion, there has been a transformation in our thinking about our role in politics, happening mostly under the radar. The appointment of one of our own to the Liberal cabinet in the

person of Jane Philpott as health minister has brought us, front and centre, to see how we will work out our faith values in that setting. Philpott, who grew up Presbyterian, is now a member of Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville, Ont.

In an interview with *Canadian Mennonite* before her appointment, she said her Anabaptist core beliefs would influence her political work: the values of generosity, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, looking out for the interest of others and respect for others. These “are woven into the fabric of my character and should always influence my thought processes, decisions and actions,” she said, adding that her faith community helps her by “being a place of refuge and restoration.”

In contrast, on page 19, Peter Harder, recently appointed as the Liberal government’s leader in the Senate, applauds his Mennonite roots growing up in the Vineland, Ont., area, but is now more “comfortable with the United Church.” Unashamedly, though, he brings his Anabaptist core beliefs to his position, saying, “When we talk of peacebuilding, we are really talking about how to build political communities that work, that share certain core values and that can deliver essential services to their members.”

In both the missional and political arenas, we are changing our thinking about how to adjust to life in a post-Christendom era. No longer can we afford our religiously parochial views as we carry the gospel to our international neighbours, nor should we keep our core beliefs to ourselves as we interact with our government in the many issues that face us as a nation.

Both Philpott and Harder have their challenges already, as do our Witness workers in various global settings. Can we stand behind all of them with our prayers and personal support?

## ABOUT THE COVER:

MC Canada Witness workers Nathan and Taryn Dirks are pursuing the development of a safe community park in a rough area of Gaborone, Botswana, and Sunday school children in Canada recently raised money to help provide a climbing structure for their counterparts there. Read our “What’s up with Mennos and mission?” feature on page 4.

PHOTO: NATHAN DIRKS, MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

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• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD FEATURE

# What's up with Mennonos and mission?

BY DEBORAH FROESE

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

PHOTO BY TODD HANSON



*An artist's conception of a stained glass window that has been commissioned for the Anqing Cathedral that is being restored in Anhui province, China. With the city's distinctive bridge and two ships in the background, the window features western missionaries arriving on the left and Chinese Christians from all walks of life on the right who are ready to carry the gospel forward.*

*'If we really believe that the body of Christ is a global body, we need to learn who God is through the eyes of others.'*  
(Witness worker Jeanette Hanson)

**A**bout eight years ago, Daniel Pantoja shared the approach he and his wife Joji employed as Mennonite Church Canada Witness Workers in the Philippines: “Toss aside western church culture and rhetoric.” By shaping their approach from a Muslim context, they bridged the gap between perception and Jesus.

“Don’t call it church-planting,” Pantoja cautioned then, since words like “church” and “Christianity” carry too many colonial connotations. “We pray that *salaam* [holistic peace] communities of Isa-al Masih [Jesus Christ] will be formed, but don’t ask us what they will look like. We don’t know.”

Today, their ministry is vibrant and growing. It connects communities across the country—from the populace to government, military and rebel army leaders—with a coherent, inspiring and contagious message of shalom based on the transformative power of Jesus Christ.

The Pantojas’ story is a compelling testimony to the impact of mission, but mission seems to be getting a bad rap these days, especially its components of evangelism and church planting.

### **Evangelism: freedom or oppression?**

Last summer, Hippolyto Tshimanga, MC Canada’s director of Africa, Europe and Latin America ministry, addressed the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly in Pennsylvania and brought attention to the uneasiness some North American Mennonites have towards evangelism and church planting. He noted that in Canada such concerns are likely impacted by Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) exposure of the church’s role in oppression and abuse of Indigenous Peoples.

In the aftermath of those TRC revelations, feeling skittish about mission is understandable. But Robert J. Suderman, a former MC Canada general secretary and a past MWC Peace Commission secretary, with significant mission experience in Latin America, says it isn’t warranted. “I think that the ‘mission’ of Mennonite Church Canada today is vastly different than what most people who criticize mission have in mind,” he states in an e-mail interview.

The disconnect between what MC Canada is doing and what

PHOTO COURTESY OF MC CANADA



*'Toss aside western church culture and rhetoric. . . . We pray that salaam [holistic peace] communities of Isa-al Masih [Jesus Christ] will be formed, but don't ask us what they will look like. We don't know.'  
(Witness worker Daniel Pantoja in a presentation to MC Canada circa 2008)*

people in the pews think it is doing is worth a closer look. It affects support for ministry abroad, but just as importantly it impacts local congregations. Without the ability to verbalize our faith and share God's love in all nations—including our own—the church and its message of shalom cannot thrive.

Sharing faith is a natural response to worship, says Tim Froese, executive minister of MC Canada Witness: "If we are truly meeting God when we worship, and allowing God to transform us, how could we not be inspired to share that transformation with others?"

### ***Sharing the good news in our own way***

When Willard Metzger, MC Canada's executive director, was invited to speak at an Ethiopian evangelism conference in Toronto last year, he hesitated. "The idea of speaking at an evangelism conference made me uncomfortable," he admits. "My first thought was that Mennonites don't do that any more, but the more I thought about it, the more I realized that we do. We just do it differently." Metzger accepted the invitation and conveyed a message appealing to the voice of God already at work in listeners.

"As outsiders going into foreign contexts, our first posture is to listen to God and what he's doing," reflects Darnell Barkman, who serves in the Philippines. "Our second posture is to listen to the people and see what they're doing, and hear how they are meeting God."

George Veith, who, along with his wife Tobia, helped plant a small but thriving church in Macau that is now led by local pastors, agrees. "Anabaptists have taken a different approach to mission because we have a different approach to theology," he says. "We've worked hard to be more sensitive towards things, like being invited by the locals, taking their opinions seriously, being sensitive to their culture, seeing what God's been doing even before we get there."

In the 1950s, Mary Derksen of Abbotsford B.C., and her late husband, Peter, began 45 years of service in Japan with two years of immersion in language, culture and getting to know the community. "I didn't feel compelled to make anyone make a decision 'now,'" she says, refuting a commonly held notion about evangelism. "I'm not in control. God is in control. I can be a friend and share my experience and leave it up to the Lord." A tribute to her approach is the strong relationships she maintains with friends in Japan today, both Christian and Buddhist.

"If we really believe that the body of Christ is a global body, we need to learn who God is through the eyes of others," says Jeanette Hanson, a Witness veteran with 24 years experience in China with her husband Todd. "We cannot feel sufficient in ourselves."

### ***Learning from each other***

In a Skype interview, a pastor in China says that the church there benefits from Anabaptism's long history, its approach

to teaching and its experience reaching out into the wider community.

Similar expressions of gratitude for the Anabaptist vision come from Kyung Jung Kim of South Korea. He says the South Korean relationship with MC Canada is like an international spiritual family of God, which he trusts and feels close to despite the distance between us.

In Germany, where a new partnership is emerging with Arbeitsgemeinschaft Südwestdeutscher Mennonitengemeinden, chair Wolfgang Seibel writes, "We feel like a family. We are working for the same God."

And what do Canadian Mennonites learn from our partners? Andrew Suderman, who serves in South Africa, queried fellow Witness workers and notes a similar response from all. "It teaches us an appreciation for the church beyond ourselves and who it is we belong to, and how we belong," he says.

### ***So why can't the rest of us talk about it?***

Professor Jonathan Bonk, executive director emeritus of the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, Conn., attends Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg. He grew up in Ethiopia with missionary parents and continues to travel extensively among other cultures. Things were simpler when his parents served and biblical interpretation was more straightforward. "Everything that was said could be applied with great literalness, and that kind of faith is easily replicated because it's

a simple message,” he says. “It’s between the covers of a book. You can point to the references.”

But our understanding of the Bible has expanded through scientific and cultural discoveries, and a growing awareness of how its content was selected by humans from an array of writings.

“I think actually we realize there must be more,” Bonk says. “That God must be a more generous spirit than our theology has given him credit for. At a deep level—we’re even unconscious of it—there’s this subliminal agnosticism. We doubt. Otherwise, we’re terrible people. Because we shouldn’t be wasting time here, we should be rushing around screaming at people, ‘You’re going to hell.’ Deep, deep inside, we know that God is better than that and better than what our ancestors were able to construct.”

In the *Missio Dei* booklet, “Tongue screws and testimony,” Alan Krieder admits to personal hang-ups with evangelism. “What had formed me to be this kind of person, who was articulate with Christians about matters on which we agreed or disagreed, but to be relatively inarticulate with non-Christians about the convictions and experiences of God and life that are central to my life and that might transform theirs?”

Krieder, professor emeritus of church history and mission at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., suggests the need and ability to share faith stories declined as Christianity was more widely accepted.

Postmodernism plays a role, too. Our multicultural, multi-faith society and its strong sense of individualism and “live and let live” attitudes, encourage us to keep opinions private.

### **Mission silos**

North American Mennonite mission work has grown more specialized and compartmentalized. For example, the provision of relief, development and support services comes through agencies such as Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite Economic Development Associates. They address the service side of mission, but their programs are

generally short-term and they do not plant or nurture faith communities.

Planting and growing faith communities is the job of missionaries like MC Canada Witness workers. They sometimes engage in service projects, but their projects are specifically geared towards an outcome of building up the church. They work collaboratively with locals to establish and nurture communities that worship and walk together, sharing Jesus’ transformative message in culturally appropriate words and deeds.

Confusion about mission appears in other ways as well.

“On the one hand, there are all the stated suspicions of colonialism, imperialism, cultural insensitivities,” Robert J. Suderman writes. “On the other hand, we are heavily influenced by our society, which much prefers to live and let live; to organize in ‘affinity’ groups, rather than profoundly embrace diversity. And yet, we are very inspired by MWC and what that is and means, and how tantalizing and dazzling it is to get together across cultures, and know we are one in Christ.”

He notes that about 84 percent of all MWC member churches are a direct result of North American/European mission efforts. “So we tend to applaud the

fruit, but not the planting and tending needed for fruit to grow.”

Hanson quotes a statement frequently shared by Myrrl Byler, director of Mennonite Partners in China: “In an increasingly globalized world, it is all the more important for the church to engage international ministry. If the church isn’t involved internationally, then we are leaving the global agenda to governments, militaries and business interests.”

Perhaps it’s time to follow the Pantojas’ lead and lift Jesus out of cultural restraints everywhere, even here at home. To live into our calling, we need to be comfortable sharing—not imposing—the joy, challenge, delight and freedom we find in Christ, and, at the same time, be open to the perspectives of God held by others. ❧



*Deborah Froese is the director of MC Canada's news service, based in Winnipeg.*

*To learn more about the work of Nathan and Taryn*

*Dirks pictured on the front cover, visit [canadianmennonite.org/gabarone-futsal-field](http://canadianmennonite.org/gabarone-futsal-field).*



## /// For discussion

1. Who are the evangelists or church planters that you have known? How have the roles and profiles of mission workers changed over your lifetime? Do you agree with Hippolyto Tshimanga that we have become uneasy about evangelism due to exposure to the oppression of Indigenous Peoples in Canada?
2. Deborah Froese writes, “North American Mennonite mission work has grown more specialized and compartmentalized.” Can you think of examples to show this is true? What are the implications of this professionalization? Has interest in, and vision for, evangelism and church planting been declining? Have the people in the pew lost touch with mission workers abroad?
3. Daniel and Joji Pantoja, working in the Philippines, don’t use words like “church” or “Christianity” in their ministry. Are young churches today significantly different from older, established Mennonite churches? How is this diversity of culture healthy and how is it a challenge for the established church?
4. Why is it so difficult for Canadian Mennonites to articulate their faith and their experiences with God? How can we better encourage each other to share our faith stories?

—BY BARB DRAPER

## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

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

## ✉ 'You betcha' climate change is real

RE: "Is CLIMATE change real?" by Will Braun, Feb. 29, page 17.

Is climate change real? You betcha!

Just ask northerners who are seeing their ice roads, permafrost and sea ice disappearing from warmer winters. Just ask people in Calgary, Toronto and along the Assiniboine River in Manitoba who have experienced record floods from overheated rain clouds. Just ask those in coastal communities experiencing more flooding as warmer seas expand onto their lands. All of this from just a one-degree C increase in global average temperatures since pre-industrial times.

Braun's tepid embrace of the consensus warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's hundreds of professional climate scientists and the sponsoring nations of the world undermines

*(Continued on page 8)*

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Art can make a difference

RAY DIRKS

My exhibit of paintings, *Along the Road to Freedom*, remembers and honours the journeys of Russian Mennonite women who led their families to freedom in Canada, mostly in the 1920s and 1940s. It also acknowledges those thousands who did not escape. It's a story that is familiar to many cultures and faiths.

During *Along the Road to Freedom's* opening in Saskatoon on March 6,

a Syrian refugee listened intently as I introduced the exhibit. She nodded as I described some of the trials Mennonite refugees experienced, wiping tears from her cheeks.

At the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery in Winnipeg, where I am curator, the trials of displacement are shared through a new exhibit, *Stories in Art from Iraqi Kurdistan*. This emotionally powerful, honest and intimate collection consists of more than 70 artworks



from Syrian refugees; internally displaced Assyrian Christians, Yazidis and Muslims; and resident Kurds living in Iraqi Kurdistan. Most of the pieces were brought together by Kathy Moorhead Thiessen of Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraqi Kurdistan. Eight were added by Rasen Haddad, an Assyrian Christian artist who is a refugee in Amman, Jordan.

The exhibit overflows with themes similar to those found in *Along the Road to Freedom*: horror, resilience, love, faith and hope.

The gallery seeks to tell stories from many faiths and cultures, times and regions. Although it is an openly Christian-Anabaptist institution and a self-funded ministry of Mennonite Church Canada, it has a reputation across cultures and faiths as a place to share stories through art.

The stories in *Along the Road to Freedom* and *Stories in Art from Iraqi Kurdistan* point us to honouring, remembering and even to action, while

reminding us that many of us come from refugee or immigrant roots. We share stories to help create a better community of understanding, respect and acceptance. With our new fellow Canadians or soon-to-be Canadians, we join in thankfulness that we were able to come to Canada.

Through those who have not or did not make it, like Mennonites who did not escape the Soviet Union and the people in Iraq and Syria represented in *Stories in Art from Iraqi Kurdistan*, we are reminded to pray and to act, to stand beside those who anonymously suffer as our own ancestors may have suffered. As our ancestors searched for hope and a new home, people in places of uncertainty and war do the same today.

Haddad, formerly from Qaraqosh, not long ago the largest Christian community in Iraq and one of the oldest in the world, wrote in an e-mail to me that his art is no longer just a pile of papers. It has been freed and given a voice in Canada: "Thanks from all the victims who share their suffering with you, who really want our stories to help people appreciate love and peace, and how difficult it is to have these values in this part of the world."

Art can tell stories, ours and those of others. It can make a difference.

(Continued from page 7)

the urgency of our climate crisis.

He also fails to mention the recent Paris climate meetings, at which 195 countries agreed that “climate change represents an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet and . . . that deep reductions in global emissions will be required.”

Global warming is accelerating in recent decades. While computer models cannot predict every blip along the way, they do point to the grave, long-term risks of further delay.

The simplest and most comprehensive way to address this problem is to put a rising fee on carbon emissions and return the revenues to Canadian households on an equitable basis, as advocated by the

## FAMILY TIES

# My conversion

MELISSA MILLER

Recently the *Listening Church* video (listeningchurch.ca) was released, in which lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) people speak of their experiences in Mennonite churches. One speaker challenged people “who had changed their minds” to tell their stories. Here I take up that challenge.

Although it was not always the case, I have viewed myself as “gay-positive” for many years. (I no longer know if such a designation is even used or valued. Hopefully, the positive intent carries my meaning.)

Three significant steps mark my conversion:

• **AS A** teenager secure in my parents’ love, I remember thinking there were few things that could strain our bond; one of those was if I were homosexual. Like many others, I grew up with a sense that to love someone of the same sex was abnormal and wrong.



• **THEN I** became a counsellor, and people who were lesbian, gay and bisexual came into my office. By and large, they were lovely people: generous of spirit; inspiring in the ways they tended their wounds; yearning to be in loving and faithful relationship with God and the church; and kind, playful and funny. By training, counsellors look for

health, with an eye to determining what steps and behaviours lead to wholeness. Without exception, each one of these men and women became healthier and more emotionally sound as they named themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual. Accepting their own identities and revealing themselves to their communities were essential to their well-being.

• **THEN I** was introduced to the term “heterosexism,” meaning, according to Wikipedia, “a system of attitudes, bias and discrimination in favour of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships. It can include the presumption that other people are heterosexual or that opposite-sex attractions and relationships are the only norm and, therefore, superior.”

People spoke to me about the complexities of dating: “I don’t really know

*Like many others, I grew up with a sense that to love someone of the same sex was abnormal and wrong.*

for sure if he’s gay, so I’m not sure if I can signal my attraction to him.” Or of the barrage of cruel jokes that surround them in schools, churches and workplaces. Or of even the simplest act of kissing one’s loved one in public, like I do with ease when I greet my husband. Once I understood the term, I saw its presence everywhere, and saw that I benefitted from it,

while non-heterosexuals struggled under its suffocating norms.

From these influences, I moved towards a personal desire for LGBTQ people to be fully accepted in society and in the church. Ken Wilson’s *A Letter to my Congregation* was useful in my understanding of biblical material, as was a Bible study conference, “Seeking to be faithful together: The Bible and same-sex relationships,” with presenters Dan Epp-Tiessen, John H. Neufeld and Michael Paul, that is available online through commonword.ca.

I have participated wholeheartedly in Mennonite Church Canada’s current discernment exercise, *Being a Faithful Church*, on same-sex attraction and relationships. At points, it has been unimaginably difficult, yet I know that my “muscles” and those of the people around me are being stretched and strengthened. I am heartened by churches that are making space for the full inclusion of all people, regardless of sexual orientation. Paul’s spirited letter to the Galatians proclaims new life in Christ that shatters old categories of in/out, righteous/de-

filed, welcomed/rejected. His summary declaration offers words on which to stand: “*The only thing that counts is faith working through love*” (Galatians 5:6).

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



Citizens Climate Lobby. Our own first ministers, in their Vancouver Declaration on Clean Growth and Climate Change, agreed to include carbon-pricing mechanisms in their comprehensive approach to climate change. We now need to insist that these words be turned into action very soon.

DOUG PRITCHARD, TORONTO

## ✉ Discern God's will in order to be a faithful church

WILLIAM BOOTH (1829-1912), founder of the Salvation Army, wrote, "I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without

*(Continued on page 10)*

## GOD, MONEY AND ME

# Reducing the potential for drama

PETER DRYDEN

There was an interesting scene on a recent courtroom drama in which a dying, wealthy woman had taken the time to place sticky notes on precious items around her home to indicate to whom the items should go after she died. Unfortunately, the woman passed away during the night. By morning, all of her carefully placed sticky notes had fallen to the floor. Oops!

A forensic investigation attempted to piece together the intent of the deceased by trying to match the unique particles found on the sticky notes. As you can imagine, the conflict increased when investigators discovered that the most valuable item was to go to the maid.

While this makes for great television drama, in reality it causes chaos. Have you ever had to deal with a family heirloom? Perhaps you've served as an executor and had to give away someone's valuables. It's not a task for the faint of heart. But putting together a good plan to manage our personal effects after we are gone demonstrates our love for those we leave behind.

My grandmother, who was an avid rock collector, somehow acquired a unique table. She was proud of this table that contained rocks from all over Canada,

encased in glass. When my grandparents started the conversation with their adult children about receiving their possessions, my grandfather was prepared for a battle over their infamous "rock table." My grandparents were confused when they realized no one wanted the table.

This isn't uncommon, in my experience. I have many conversations with families about estate planning, and when it comes to heirlooms and items, the theme I most often encounter is that the kids are not interested in the china collection. In some cases, families feel quite

*[T]he theme I most often encounter is that the kids are not interested in the china collection.*

burdened with heirlooms from an estate.

If we're not careful about putting a plan together for any highly coveted items and heirlooms, however, it can lead to some very challenging dilemmas for the family, and can even damage relationships. Should a battle arise over our stuff, it can become quite costly to everyone involved. One person explained it this way: We might as well just randomly pick two lawyers whom we don't know and leave our entire estate to them! So, by taking the time to clarify our

intentions while we're still able to answer questions about our estate plan and any contentious items, we can avoid any potential battles and costs over heirlooms.

Giving away items while you are still around to see the recipients enjoy the gifts can be quite rewarding, not to mention that it can save your executor a lot of work managing your personal items after you are gone. To honour their loved ones, some families deal with heirlooms by selling the items and donating the proceeds to the favourite charities of their loved ones.

Whether you are managing the distribution of heirlooms and personal effects, property and finance, or gifts to charity from your estate, ensure that everyone understands the process.

Do you have a plan for your estate? Perhaps it's time to have the conversation and learn what your children would, or perhaps wouldn't, like to inherit. Is a gift to charity from your estate a consideration? Certainly every family's situation is

unique, and so is our approach to each Mennonite Foundation of Canada client. Let us help you create your estate plan.

*Peter Dryden is a stewardship consultant at Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) serving generous people in Alberta. For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit [MennoFoundation.ca](http://MennoFoundation.ca).*



*(Continued from page 9)*

Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell!"

We have arrived at this time in history. The past 100 years of postmodern history has seen incredible advancement in every area of life, both for good and bad. For example, in communication and evangelism, the whole world can be reached with the gospel; we are living in the final age of worldwide evangelism. People who are seeking Allah are finding Jesus.

We are also living in times of worldwide fear of terrorism, nuclear war, persecution, erosion of Christian freedoms, diminishing church values and doctrines, and the imposition of lifestyles contrary to Scripture. They say just love God and your neighbour, forgetting that God is holy and just. He came to transform people's lives by his indwelling Spirit of grace and forgiveness (Colossians 2:8, 3:1-17). His Spirit, like the wind, is mysterious and powerful, working according to his own will (1 Corinthians 12:11).

To the extent that we earnestly ask, seek and knock, God will reveal his will, but never contrary to the living Word. As the Beatitudes become our attitude, the Ten Commandments our actions, and the Lord's Prayer our prayer, may his people be united to further his kingdom. May his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

C. NEIL KLASSEN, ROSEMARY, ALTA.

### ✉ Structural problems aren't what's ailing MC Canada

I WOULD LIKE to commend editor Dick Benner for his boldness in critiquing the proposal for restructuring Mennonite Church Canada and the area churches. I, too, believe that the current proposal seriously misses the mark of what needs to change.

Some years ago now we concluded we had a structural problem and we dissolved the General Conference. That did not solve everything, so we concluded we were suffering from "too radical a congregationalism," and we restructured the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, and, among other things, essentially removed debate and resolutions on the floor and empowered the General Board to make decisions for us.

Now, facing a financial crisis, we have again concluded that the problem is structural, and are proposing that what we actually need is a "more radical congregationalism." When ministerial leadership gathers, we even want to call that a congregation.

Let us liberate ourselves from the bias that when anything goes wrong it must be a problem of

structure. We could focus our attention on some other options:

- **THE RAPID** slide into the pleasures of an extravagant lifestyle.
- **THE HOARDING** of unprecedented levels of wealth.
- **OUR DEEP** integration into the mainstream cultural identity.
- **ALLOWING THE** laws of the land to become our teacher and mentor in the decisions of faithful Christian living.

No doubt, there are some structural adjustments that need to be, and could be, made. My fear, however, is that the current proposal will take up all our energy over the next four or five years, and by then we will conclude again that we have a structural problem.

DAVID NEUFELD, HERSCHEL, SASK.

### ✉ Simple speech preferred to professorial pontifications

RE: "LIVING WITH paradoxes," March 14, page 2.

After reading this editorial, I wonder if I can make a suggestion: Now, more than ever, when our leaders speak, we need them to be very plain and simple in their speech. No more "paradoxical curiosity," "forced dualistic categories" stuff.

Not all of us understand our leaders when they sound like one professor talking to another. Use the "keep it simple, stupid" (KISS) principle. When an issue is smothered in language that few can grasp, it loses its importance and meaning.

Did Jesus speak in a way that only a few could understand or did his simplicity cause his words to echo down the ages to us?

MALCOLM MACDONALD, PERTH EAST, ONT.

### ✉ It could soon be 'time to run'

RE: "WE ARE in a heap of trouble," Oct. 12, 2015, page 18.

At the delegate assembly in Saskatoon in 2016, the recommendation is that "we create space/leave room within our body to test alternative understandings [of same-sex issues] from that of the larger body, to see if they are a prophetic nudging of the Spirit of God."

If Mennonite Church Canada votes to retain this clause, then it is time to run.

LAETTA ERB, STE. AGATHE, MAN.

To read the full letter, visit [canadianmennonite.org](http://canadianmennonite.org).



## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

## The pursuit of truth (Pt. 4)

TROY WATSON



In my experience, Mennonites live by the adages “Actions speak louder than words” and “Faith without works is dead.”

One of the things that drew me to Anabaptism was its emphasis on “walking the walk” more than “talking the talk.” I was raised in a church in which passionate shouting was the hallmark of faithful gospel preaching, so it was refreshing to discover a Christian tribe known as the “quiet in the land.”

I’m convinced the most effective way to bear witness to the truth of Christ is to embody the truth we profess and demonstrate the utility of our faith with our lives. Yet I also believe that for us to fully embody and live out the truth of Christ, we must first understand it conceptually, on some level, and, in turn, communicate our understanding to others. This is core to the church’s mandate.

I Peter 3:15 tells us: “*Always be prepared to give an answer [explanation] to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*”

More than a few Mennonite leaders have suggested that we’ve done a great job demonstrating and passing on our principles, ethics and values of peace and justice to others with gentleness and respect, while often failing to communicate to others, including our children and grandchildren, the reason we live this way, namely, our new life in Christ. I’m not sure how fair or accurate this critique is, but it highlights the need to both demonstrate our faith with our lives and communicate our understanding of the truth, intelligently and meaningfully, with words. I believe we must dialogue about

truth, not only to share our understanding of it with others, but to authentically pursue the truth ourselves.

A few months ago, a friend of mine was grieving over the dying art of conversation. He said, “Meaningful dialogue is becoming an endangered

species.” He was not only referring to the gong show that qualifies as political discourse these days, but also what passes for dialogue between friends, colleagues, church members and acquaintances.

He identified many factors contributing to the loss of quality conversation, including social media, political correctness, narcissism, entitlement, post-modernism, suspicion of others and limited attention spans. For the most part, I agreed with him. We need a revitalization of quality dialogue in our world and I’m

*Many people have a greater commitment to their jargon—doctrinally sound or politically correct language—and the cultural currency of certain ideas . . . than to the pursuit of truth.*

convinced Christians are called to be part of this revitalization.

Jesus was a master communicator; even most atheists agree on that. He was a conversational genius. Disciples of Jesus would be wise to not only study his teachings, but also the way he taught. We need to learn the ropes of his remarkable approach to conversation and communication. This requires developing certain skills and practices, such as active listening, asking good questions, establishing shared interests, and resisting the need to be right so we can remain open to other

perspectives and a greater understanding of truth.

One of the most peculiar hindrances to meaningful conversation nowadays is focussing more on our terminology than the truth. Many people have a greater commitment to their jargon—doctrinally sound or politically correct language—and the cultural currency of certain ideas in their society, group or church, than to the pursuit of truth. The perceived value and “appropriateness” of certain ideas and beliefs becomes more important than whether these beliefs and ideas are actually true or not.

C.S. Lewis talked about this in his book *The Screwtape Letters*, in which Screwtape, a seasoned demon, mentors an apprentice demon named Wormwood in how to lure a Christian away from his faith.

Screwtape writes: “A few centuries earlier . . . humans still knew pretty well when a thing was proved and when it was not; and if it was proved they really believed it. They . . . were prepared to alter their way of life as the result of a chain of reasoning. But with [mass media] and other such weapons, we have largely altered that. Your man has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head. He doesn’t think of doctrines as primar-

ily ‘true’ or ‘false’; but as ‘academic’ or ‘practical’; ‘outworn’ or ‘contemporary’ . . . Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the church. Don’t waste time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make him think it is strong or stark or courageous—that it is the philosophy of the future. That’s the sort of thing he cares about.”

To be continued . . . ❧

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

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Kaethler**—Walter James (b. March 19, 2016), to Martin and Stephanie Kaethler, Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Shantz**—Lucas Jackson (b. March 20, 2016), to Dave and Melanie Shantz, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

**Watemambala**—Joseph (b. March 25, 2016), to Didier Watemambala and Gisele Kashindi, Ottawa Mennonite.

### Baptisms

**Brian Casavant, Jacquelyn Janzen, Jonathan Vis**—Grace Mennonite, Prince Albert, Sask., March 27, 2016.

**Charlie Clark**—Osler Mennonite, Sask., March 20, 2016.

### Marriages

**Kuepfer/Martin**—Elsie Kuepfer (Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.) and Laverne Martin (St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.), at St. Jacobs Mennonite, March 12, 2016.

### Deaths

**Hiebert**—Betty, 87 (b. Aug. 16, 1928; d. March 25, 2016), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Janzen**—Helen, 98 (b. July 3, 1917; d. March 23, 2016), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Klassen-Wieler**—Bertha (nee Goering), 89 (b. Aug. 23, 1926; d. March 21, 2016), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Lebold**—Edna Jane (nee Lichti), 67 (b. March 29, 1948; d. March 24, 2016), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

**Martin**—Evanne Leigh (nee McPherson), 27 (b. Nov. 28, 1988; d. March 20, 2016), Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont.

**Metzger**—Edwin, 93 (b. May 2, 1922; d. March 7, 2016), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

**Mierau**—Gerald, 71 (b. April 18, 1944; d. March 2, 2016), Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.

**Penner**—Katherine (Tena) (nee Sawatsky), 98 (b. May 7, 1917; d. Jan. 22, 2016), Oak Lake Mennonite, Man.

**Peters**—John, 92 (b. Aug. 19, 1923; d. March 10, 2016), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Rempel**—Gertrude, 79 (b. Feb. 7, 1937; d. March 17, 2016), Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

**Sawatsky**—Rosie (nee Tiessen), 87 (b. June 6, 1928; d. Jan. 14, 2016), Oak Lake Mennonite, Man.

**Unruh**—Mary (Mika) Unruh (nee Klassen), 94 (b. Aug. 6, 1921; d. March 17, 2016), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

## /// Corrections

- **THE “A moment from yesterday”** photo that appeared in the March 28 issue, page 12, was taken by Wes Brown, not Herbert Enns. The Mennonite Archives of Ontario regrets the error.
- **THE TWO** bottom photos on page 29 of the March 28 issue (“Welcoming the vulnerable”) were taken by Erin Bader, not Thomas Coldwell. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.
- **THE GOOD** Friday Blues Band has raised \$15,000 for the Cyrus Centre over the past five years. Incorrect information appeared in the April 11 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*, page 13. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

## /// Clarification

- **THE ALONG** the Road to Freedom art exhibit currently on display in Saskatoon is a project of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery. Incomplete information appeared in “Celebrating the resilience of Mennonite women,” March 28, page 24.

## A moment from yesterday



Banff, Alta., has hosted numerous Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren national youth gatherings. Pictured are youth “crowd surfing” at a 1995 Mennonite Brethren event in Banff. Events like these have been important times of building friendships with youth leaders, people within one’s own church, and those from across the country. Youth were inspired to be faithful Christians and became aware of the wider Mennonite church. Will these events continue? If not, how will youth continue to have opportunities to deepen friendships, be inspired and become part of the larger Mennonite church in the future?

*Text: Conrad Stoesz / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies*

*Photo: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies*



archives.mhsc.ca

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# A search for common ground

*Mennonite, indigenous healing practices run deep together*

BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY  
Manitoba Correspondent

The Ojibway word for medicine is *mush-ki-ki*, meaning “strength of the earth” or “power from the soil,” explained David Daniels of Long Plain First Nation, located near Portage La Prairie, Man., in *First Nations Voice* some years ago.

More recently, Daniels has been working in collaboration with Morden researcher Jason Dyck to trace the paths of medicinal practices in Manitoba Mennonite and Ojibway communities, in a search for common ground.

The idea for their research sprang from a medicine chest currently housed at the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum in Steinbach. Once the property of a Russian Mennonite homeopath, Aeltester Franz F. Enns (1871-1940), the chest contains preparations of local medicinal plants, which led Daniels to believe it might point to common practice—and perhaps even shared knowledge—between Manitoba’s Ojibway and early Mennonite settlers.

While Daniels and Dyck were unable to positively confirm that Ojibway knowledge influenced the contents of Enns’s medicine chest, Dyck is quoted as saying in a March 20 online story of the southeastern Manitoba publication, *The Carillon*: “What is for sure is that [Ojibway and Mennonite Manitobans] did use common healing ingredients. Some of the plants that they used in those remedies were also held in common.”

Their inquiry is not the first of its kind. For some time, scholars and lay people alike have been conducting research into historical cooperation between Mennonite and indigenous healers in Manitoba. According to provincial documentation, the Ojibway and Mennonites in Manitoba have been drawing strength from the earth

and power from the soil together since the early 1900s. One of the earliest known instances of this revolves around a woman named Elizabeth Russel.

According to Conrad Stoesz, an archivist for Winnipeg’s Mennonite Heritage Centre, Russel was an indigenous healer who lived in the East Reserve area around the turn of the last century. She is known to researchers today as a “cancer specialist.” Stoesz cites an article from the *Preservings* newsletter of June 1997 that tells the story of Katherina Hiebert (1855-1910), a Mennonite midwife brought by her

*According to provincial documentation, Ojibway and Mennonites in Manitoba have been drawing strength from the earth and power from the soil together since the early 1900s.*

husband to the home of a local indigenous woman for breast cancer treatment. While the indigenous healer is not named in *Preservings*, Stoesz notes that Joe Wiebe, a contemporary researcher on historical indigenous-Mennonite connections, has recently theorized that the woman in question was none other than Russel herself.

What is known for certain is that the wise-woman’s treatment worked. Having applied poultices made by hand from various herbs gathered in the area, an abscess soon developed on the affected area, which she drained, and Hiebert was “cured” of her cancer.

Two local healers, speaking two different languages, both serving their communities. One of them, in this instance, crossing cultural divides to help the other in service of the calling they both owned.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PRESERVINGS



**Katherina Hiebert (1855-1910), seated**

Hiebert’s and Russel’s stories are now more than a century old, but their experiences, and those of other women like them, are still remembered.

Stoesz recalls an instance from a local conference on indigenous-Mennonite relationships in 2000. There, an unnamed local woman told a story about her grandmother, an indigenous midwife, and a Mennonite friend of the family, known only as “the Missus,” who was also a local healer. While the two women did not speak the same language, she said that they spent time together regularly, picking herbs, making and exchanging medicines, and sharing meals as well. Sometimes they even attended births together, she said, working as a team to serve the labouring women of the community. ❧

To read the full *Carillon* story, visit [bit.ly/carillon-healing-roots](http://bit.ly/carillon-healing-roots).



# Listening with the heart

*'Journey of reconciliation' is core value, say indigenous elders*

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Listening on both sides is vital as indigenous people and settlers continue to learn to walk beside, and relate to, each other.

This was one key point that some 70 participants took away from a day-long meeting at Columbia Bible College on April 9 called "Journey of reconciliation: Listening to indigenous elders." The event was jointly sponsored by Columbia, Mennonite Church B.C., and Mennonite Central Committee B.C.

First to share was Patricia Victor, co-pastor with her husband of the Chilliwack Native Pentecostal Church, who said reconciliation will never happen unless settlers listen. "One of the aboriginal values is listening, not just with the ears but with

the heart," Victor said.

She pointed out how differences in cultural practices—something as simple as the western way of asking lots of questions—can form barriers in getting acquainted. "One thing I find offensive is that non-aboriginal people like to learn by asking questions. I like to learn by relationship," Victor said. "We [indigenous people] don't need to be under a microscope. Let it be reciprocal, sitting together."

"People always look at life through their own cultural lens," she said. "Culture is not just drums and feathers; culture shapes what we see, what we think, what we do. We need to sit back and enjoy each other."

The afternoon session featured Robert Joseph, a hereditary chief of the Gwawanuk

First Nation and founder of Reconciliation Canada, who affirmed the mutual storytelling approach. "We start by sharing our truths," he said. "We start by sharing our histories."

Joseph called Canada an "unreconciled country," with broken relationships with indigenous people. "We should adopt reconciliation as a core value, and recognize that doing so means you have to pursue a life of reconciliation every day. Reconciliation is not just about aboriginals and settlers; it's reconciling your life with everyone and everything around you."

When one participant asked, "How do we do this and where do we start?" Joseph answered, "Mediate, meditate and reflect. [Let us] begin to discover our common humanities and approach reconciliation as a trajectory of the heart."

"We will find new ways to move forward together," he concluded. "Reconciliation can and will take place in our beautiful country. You're the most important person in the world when it comes to reconciliation, because it starts with you." ❧



*Chris Lenshyn, left, representing Mennonite Church B.C., presents a blanket made by MCC quilters to elder Robert Joseph, a hereditary chief of the Gwawanuk First Nation and founder of Reconciliation Canada, at the 'Journey of reconciliation' event at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, on April 9.*

## Staff changes

### Transitions at Conrad Grebel

• **SUSAN SCHULTZ HUXMAN**, just entering her second five-year term as president of Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., has been named by Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., as its candidate of choice for the university's ninth president. The Presidential Search Committee will finalize this appointment by the end of April.



• **CAROL PENNER, Ph.D.**, presently lead pastor at Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church in Edmonton, has been named assistant professor of practical theology at Grebel, starting with the fall semester.



—BY DICK BENNER

## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# Staying alive amid new financial realities

*MSCU moves ahead with name change in order to attract more non-Mennonite faith-based members; some Mennonite members object to a loss of community*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
KITCHENER, ONT.

It was the re-entry of the commercial banks into the agricultural lending sector that tipped the balance at Mennonite Savings and Credit Union (MSCU), prompting its leaders to believe that they had to do something sooner, rather than later, for the future success and survival of this 52-year-old southern Ontario institution.

While low residential mortgage rates had been eroding the Credit Union's balance sheets for some time, it was this new and vigorous blow that meant something needed to be done, says Brent Zorgdrager, MSCU's chief executive officer. As leadership examined the Credit Union's records, it seemed that in every five-year period the rate of growth in some area was decreasing, leading to future stagnation or decline.

One option to grow the Credit Union was to have more deposits and residential mortgages, but growth in the Anabaptist communities seemed to not be enough. Market surveys with non-Mennonite consumers with similar faith values as MSCU focussed on the "Mennonite" name in 90 percent of the cases, leading to the realization that it was seen as a block to membership.

Having opened the charter of the Credit Union a number of years ago to anyone who agreed with the Mennonite World Conference's seven shared convictions, regardless of church affiliation, the board and staff floated the idea of a name change at the 2015 annual general meeting. Community conversations with invited members were held in three locations, but

three others were cancelled for a lack of interest in the question.

After making a decision in late 2015 to change the name, MSCU leaders sorted through 260 name suggestions. At a special meeting in February, and with the option to also vote online, by mail or at branches, the one name suggested—Kindred Credit

*As is the case with any change, there are opinions to the contrary. Some wonder if dropping the 'Mennonite' name is an erosion of member involvement in step with other faith-based institutions.*

Union—received more than 70 percent approval from the 30 percent of the members who voted, giving the board and staff the go-ahead to change the name.

At that meeting, members were told that no work had been done on publicity for the new name, waiting, instead, for approval before acting.

As is the case with any change, there are opinions to the contrary. Some wonder if dropping the "Mennonite" name is an erosion of member involvement in step with other faith-based institutions.

The "only one name" option, paired with dire forecasts of a future decline, led Mary Lou Klassen of Waterloo to wonder about what felt like a heavy-handed demand to either vote for this name or for the demise of the institution.

Others, like Albert Isaac, also of Waterloo, were led to wonder how much growth is enough, feeling that leadership



*Brent Zorgdrager, MSCU's chief executive officer, says market surveys with non-Mennonite consumers with similar faith values as the Credit Union focussed on the 'Mennonite' name in 90 percent of the cases, leading to the realization that it was seen as a block to membership.*

is building a huge institution. Isaac feels that Credit Union leadership listened too much to "a U.S. consulting company," instead of members, that this takes away a witness by removing the "Mennonite" name from the masthead, and that it will break down community. He attended the town-hall meeting in Kitchener and kept

up with the process. He feels that, beginning at the 2015 annual general meeting, response to his idea was limited by leaders. (See his letter to Canadian Mennonite at [bit.ly/mennonite-name-should-stay](http://bit.ly/mennonite-name-should-stay).)

Aleda Klassen, a young adult, says she also feels that, in the process, "many voices were excluded," including through the lack of anonymity in the voting process, since votes were tied to membership numbers.

Zorgdrager says that it is his and the board's intention to preserve the Credit Union's focus on compassion, responsible stewardship and integrity as corporate values in a faith-based institution that works for peace, justice and mutual aid through its use of profits. It is not MSCU's intention to evolve into an institution out of touch with its membership, he adds. ☸

# The bottle, the dagger and the ring

*Eby Lecture on the reasons for church discipline in 17th-century Dutch Mennonite churches draws full house to Conrad Grebel chapel*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

Academic research can be dry and dusty, and only interesting to others doing research in the field. But Conrad Grebel University College found its chapel full to overflowing to hear Troy Osborne, assistant professor of history and theological studies, give his March 24 Benjamin Eby lecture on “The bottle, the dagger and the ring: Church discipline and Dutch Mennonite identity in the 17th century.”

Osborne fascinated the crowd with story after story of the goings-on in Mennonite churches and the Amsterdam community around them in the 1600s. Such stories included Mennonite church members banned from the communion table or excommunicated for public drunkenness, brawling with neighbours, spousal abuse that roused the neighbours, arming ships and joining the military.

He showed that honour was a commodity in the community very much like financial credit, and that Mennonite churches and their members, while legally allowed to exist even though they did not have the same status as the state church or its members, wanted to be seen as respectable by the rest of the society.

Church membership was a requirement to receive charity from the congregations and, according to Osborne’s research, the ban was used on both upper- and lower-class people who were dependent on the church for housing and food, although the poor faced the greater loss in being banned. Worried that poor people were coming to Amsterdam to dip into the churches’ poor funds, as the years went on it became more difficult to gain membership; a three-year residency in Amsterdam was necessary by the end of the 1600s.

Mennonites were no more severe in using the ban than their Reformed

PHOTO AND TEXT BY BRENDA TIESEN-WIENS



John Biakte, left, Tha Kim and Nan Tin enjoy their first experience of making pizza dough on Feb. 13 with instruction from Karin Krahn, right. More than 20 people from Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary Chin Christian Church and Calgary Chin Evangelical Fellowship got together for an afternoon of learning, laughter and applause over their baking creations, as ‘teachers’ from Foothills shared their favourite recipes and baking tips with ‘students’ from the Chin congregations. Chin participants are now looking forward to trying out their new skills at home.





*Troy Osborne, assistant professor of history and theological studies at Conrad Grebel University College, left, and Tom Yoder Neufeld, professor emeritus, share a laugh after Osborne's Eby Lecture on church discipline in the 17th-century Dutch Mennonite church on March 24.*

neighbours, according to Osborne, and banning decreased in all denominations until it was seldom used in the 18th century. In most mixed-denominational marriages at that time, the Mennonite desire to be respectable led to the Mennonite partner changing denominations in order to have a say in the direction of the Dutch Republic.

Over the course of the 17th century, the number of Mennonite churches decreased from six, with varying degrees of conservatism, to only one. What persecution had not been able to do, the desire for respectability had done nicely.

“The changing discipline of alcohol, violence and marriage show the degree to which the Amsterdam Mennonites were already integrated into Dutch society at the start of the 17th century and how the remaining vestiges of a separate identity disappeared in the 18th century,” he said. “With the exception of sailing in war, Mennonites are concerned about the exact same things as the other faiths in Amsterdam. They are disciplining not because they are separate from the world, but because they are fully part of it.”

“As the congregation no longer added marginal individuals to its membership list, it shaped itself into a gathering of solid burghers, with a few peculiar beliefs regarding the oath and the sword.”

During the reception that followed his lecture, Osborne noted that Mennonites in North America have stopped using the ban for similar reasons: they are already a part of society, and no longer apart from it. ❧

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# 'Deep faith'

*Online conversations of new Faith Formation Cohort result in conference at AMBS this fall*

BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY  
Manitoba Correspondent

Once again the age-old wisdom is proved: Camping leads to all the best conversations.

Two years ago, Elsie Rempel, formerly of

Mennonite Church Canada, met up with Rachel Springer Gerber of MC U.S.A. and Shana Boshart Peachey of the Central Plains Mennonite Conference at

a Mennonite camping convention and got to talking. Rather unexpectedly, their conversations germinated a big idea, and the Faith Formation Cohort was founded.



**Elsie Rempel**

Since the beginning, the team, which has now grown to include Andy Brubacher Kaethler of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., and others, has been meeting regularly online to discuss common concerns in the realms of church, daily discipleship, Christian education and faith formation, and how to address them.

Come this fall, the first fruits of the Cohort's passionate dreaming will be ripe for the picking.

"Deep faith: Anabaptist faith formation for all ages" is a conference designed to "promote deep faith by embracing faith formation as practical theology," according to the event's Facebook page. The goal of the conference is to empower "pastors, teachers and leaders in the church to develop and express a robust understanding of life with Jesus," whereby they can "embrace and nurture people of different ages and stages, different races, ethnicities and cultures, different classes and different genders."

"This group and event are a most inspiring example of how, with some initiative and boundary-crossing friendships, we can work together across geographic and organizational boundaries that often separate us," Rempel says in an e-mail.

"Deep faith" will be hosted at AMBS from Oct. 6 to 8. It will feature roughly 30 workshops on a range of faith formation subjects, and keynote speakers will include Canadian Brian Quan, John Roberto and Rachel Miller Jacobs. ☘

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## GOD AT WORK IN US

# 'I am proud of my roots'

*New senator Peter Harder talks about how his Mennonite background shaped his life in politics and public service*

BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher

**P**eter Harder, a retired senior bureaucrat and high-level corporate advisor with Mennonite roots, was named by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as the Liberal government's leader in the Senate on March 18. Having led Trudeau's transition team following last fall's election, Harder's new job will be to move government legislation through a divided Senate in which the new Liberal appointments are no longer part of the Liberal caucus.

A respected bureaucrat for nearly 30 years, he served as deputy minister for five prime ministers and 12 ministers in five departments, including Immigration, the Treasury Board, Industry and Foreign Affairs.

Following his retirement from public service in 2007, he gave an address to Ottawa's Southminster United Church, to which he and his wife Molly now belong, speaking at length about his Mennonite roots in the Vineland, Ont., area. "I owe much to my heritage," he said. "They are the community that formed me, the home which nurtured my thinking—the values of community, caring, honesty and integrity, family and work that have been essential to my career as they are to any authentic life."

The address was published in the September 2007 issue of *Diplomat and International Canada*.

He told his congregation that his grandfather, Abram Harder, was both a minister and teacher in Russia before the 1917 revolution, and his father was a lay minister and businessman, first in southern Manitoba, then in Vineland. These families of what he calls the Mennonite "Exodus" of the 1920s left Russia in the summer of 1924, crossed the Atlantic, arriving by ship in Quebec City and then by box car in Waterloo, Ont.

His mother, Mary Tiessen Harder, and

her family had arrived in Waterloo County a month earlier. Her father was 60 years old and had been a large landowner in Russia. The family settled in Essex County. His mother attended public school and then worked at the H.J. Heinz factory, all the while longing for education, memorizing poetry and teaching Sunday school. Twelve years later, at 29, she started Grade 9, went on to the University of Toronto Normal School and became a teacher.

His Mennonite values have influenced his political life, says Harder, explaining his conviction that while "freedom of religion can't be permitted to compel freedom from religion, the public servants with whom I have worked don't park their faith at the door."

Regarding the Anabaptist core value of peace, he says, "When we talk of peacebuilding, we are really talking about how to build political communities that work, that share certain core values and that can deliver essential services to their members."

*'When we talk of peacebuilding, we are really talking about how to build political communities that work, that share certain core values and that can deliver essential services to their members.'*  
(Senator Peter Harder)

Harder gives credit to his parents for instilling in him his own faith, telling his Ottawa congregation, "Their faith was their life. I first visited Ottawa when my father, John N. Harder, as moderator of the Ontario Mennonite conference, participated in the opening of Ottawa Mennonite Church. My mother had leadership roles in provincial, national and international women's conferences. Both were active in

PHOTO COURTESY OF PETER HARDER



*'Within the appropriate accountability structures of our democracy, [public servants] animate their action with their beliefs, with their faith,' says new senator Peter Harder who was a former public servant himself.*

Mennonite Central Committee, introducing what has become the Ten Thousand Villages network of thrift stores, and in visiting African and South American church projects. They lived fully integrated lives of faith and action."

How does he bring his Mennonite faith to government, specifically? "Government is by definition not an NGO [non-governmental organization], not a church. Public servants, like myself, strive for the civic virtue of Aristotle," he said. "Within the appropriate accountability structures of our democracy, they animate their action with their beliefs, with their faith."

On reasons why he joined the United Church communion over continuing his

ties with the Mennonite church, Harder told *Canadian Mennonite* that it was the influence of his neighbours and friends, and more theological comfort with the United Church. "I didn't leave the Mennonite church," he said. "I am proud of my roots." ❧

## ARTBEAT

# How fear and mistrust gave way to friendship

*New documentary tells a story of conflict and reconciliation*

By DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATOON

First nations, Lutheran and Mennonite movie-goers crowded into Saskatoon's Roxy Theatre on March 13, popcorn in hand, to watch the premiere of *Reserve 107: Reconciliation on the Prairies*.



*Wilmer and Barb Froese reflect on the meaning of the land. Their farm is on what was once Reserve 107 land.*

The 30-minute documentary, directed by Brad Leitch and produced by Adrienne Leitch of Rebel Sky Media, tells the story of the Young Chippewyan First Nation, the community of Laird, Sask., and a very special gathering that brought the two groups together in 2006.

One-hundred-and-forty years before that, the Young Chippewyans were among the signatories of Treaty 6, which granted them Reserve 107, located northwest of where the village of Laird stands today, just east of the North Saskatchewan River. But the indigenous people left their

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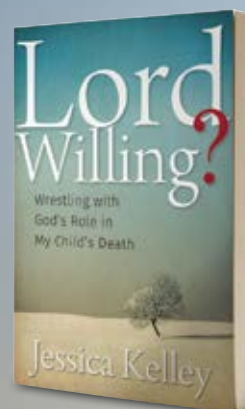
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A Fresh Approach

reserve when food became scarce. The Government of Canada subsequently deemed the land uninhabited and sold it to Lutheran and Mennonite settlers.

In August 2006, Young Chippewayans, under the leadership of Chief Ben Weenie, invited descendants of those Lutheran and Mennonite settlers to a party at Stoney Knoll, on former Reserve 107 land. At that party, representatives of the three groups signed a memorandum of understanding, pledging to work together to right past wrongs.

The film documents how Mennonite and Lutheran farmers became aware of Young Chippewayan claims to their land, and how fear and mistrust gave way to friendship when Young Chippewayan leaders made the first move towards peaceful resolution.

In 2014, Leitch and three friends set out from Stoney Knoll on a 550-kilometre “honour walk” to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in Edmonton. The walk honoured residential school survivors and served to acknowledge non-indigenous responsibility towards reconciliation with indigenous people.

“We had heard stories about the reconciliation efforts between Mennonites and Lutherans and the Young Chippewayan band,” says Leitch, “and chose to depart from Stoney Knoll to bring attention to their efforts.”

When community members learned that Leitch was a filmmaker, they asked if he would create a video about the Stoney Knoll Reserve 107 story. In 2015, Rebel Sky Media partnered with Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, St. Johns Lutheran Church in Laird, and a documentary committee that included representatives of the three communities. Filming took place during the summer of 2015.

“I’m excited about this project because it provides a model for reconciliation,” Leitch says. In making the film he says he was struck by “the power of taking the first step to right the wrongs of the past,” adding that he was “moved by the courage of the Young Chippewayan people to instigate change.”

(Continued on page 22)



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(Continued from page 21)

Leitch says he hopes people who see the film will “be inspired to learn about the history of the land they live on, . . . see themselves as treaty partners and work to fulfill their responsibilities to treaty. I also strongly hope and pray this film will further the cause of the Young Chippewayan

band in their efforts for land justice. As a filmmaker and peacebuilder, I support their struggle and I hope this short documentary honours their experience and contributes to a meaningful peace process.”

Leitch expects a wide release of the documentary this summer. Study guides are being prepared to facilitate group

discussions of *Reserve 107*. ☺

For more photos, visit [canadianmennonite.org/reserve-107](http://canadianmennonite.org/reserve-107). View a trailer for *Reserve 107: Reconciliation on the Prairies* at [bit.ly/reserve107](http://bit.ly/reserve107). For additional information, visit [bit.ly/reserve107-info](http://bit.ly/reserve107-info).

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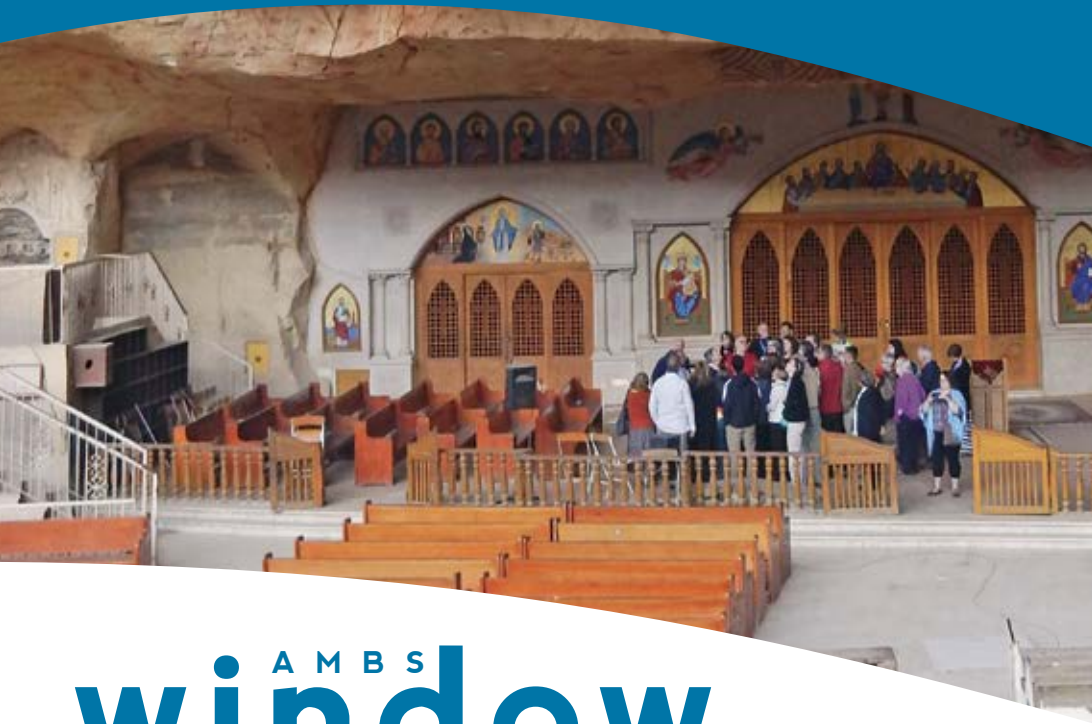


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Spring 2016  
VOLUME 26 ISSUE 2

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President's Window

# AMBS window

## Encountering Egypt

Safwat Marzouk, AMBS Assistant Professor of Old Testament

**F**or this trip we deliberately chose the name “Encountering Egypt” instead of “Touring Egypt.” It was my desire that rather than merely being tourists gazing at exotic places, we would encounter Egypt and in turn be encountered by Egypt (its people, history, and culture) and be transformed by the relationships we built. Although sightseeing was an essential part of the trip, our itinerary included opportunities to meet with Christian and Muslim communities.

The group met with Rev. Dr. Andrea Zaki, president of the Protestant Communities in Egypt and general director of the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services. He described ways the church is meeting spiritual, economic, and cultural needs of an ever-changing Egyptian society. During a meeting with a delegation at Al-Azhar University (one of the largest Islamic theological institutions), deputy Abbass Shoman elaborated on commitments in Islamic theology to peace and freedom of belief. At the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, Dr. Atef Gendi, Dr. Tharwat

Waheeb and Dr. Hani Hanna introduced the group to the vision and mission of the seminary, which trains men and women to become church leaders in the Egyptian context. Another highlight of the community encounters took place when the group visited Saint Simeon



church in Al-Muqattam. A visit to the Saint Maqarios monastery taught us about the spirituality of the Coptic Orthodox Church, with its mystical and liturgical emphases. In Alexandria, Rev. Gendi Rizk, senior pastor of El-Saraya Presbyterian Church, described the simplicity and depth of the gospel, which transforms people within and outside the church.

Every day I shared with the group a text for meditation. We read from ancient Egyptian literature that relates to biblical texts (Hymn to the Aten,

Wisdom of Amenemope, etc.). We read meditations written by Christian Desert Fathers and Mothers (Anba Bakhomious, Saint Anthony, and Amma Syncretica, for example), and contemplative texts by Jewish theologians (Moses Maimonides and others) and Muslim theologians (including Umar Ibn Al Farid). Encountering Pharaonic, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sacred spaces and ancient texts deepened our appreciation for the richness of theological and spiritual strata undergirding Egypt’s contemporary reality. Encountering Egypt in this way gave us an opportunity to reflect on our assumptions about Egypt and on our own spiritual journeys. Encountering Egypt led us to long and pray with renewed fervor—along with many Egyptians—for the fulfillment of the old prophetic pronouncement “Blessed be my people Egypt” (Isa. 19:25).

**Photos** Saint Simon Church in Muqattam, Cairo. Built in a cave, the Coptic Christian fellowship seats 20,000 people. **Center:** Dr. Safwat Marzouk and Dr. Kamal Abd El-Salam chat at Al-Azhar University. **Credits:** Safwat Marzouk and Bruce Baergen



## Encountering Egypt ... and Safwat Marzouk **Hank Landes**

I signed up for this AMBS tour because I would learn about a people who have contributed so much to the human family over seven millennia, and my heart is full of gratitude. But while I was curious about the history, culture, and people of Egypt, I was especially eager to join because the tour was led by an Egyptian, Dr. Safwat Marzouk, assistant professor of Old Testament. Yes, we toured many of the classic antiquities—pyramids, temples, churches, synagogues, monasteries, and catacombs—with excellent interpretation by our local Egyptologist, who brought a thoughtful Coptic perspective. But the thing I valued most was encountering contemporary Egypt through the eyes and heart of Safwat. He arranged encounters with leaders of his alma mater, the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Cairo; with the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services; and with Muslim leaders at the Al-Azhar University. I valued Safwat's knowledge and love of the Old Testament—and also his astute observation of the current political, economic, and religious challenges facing Egypt and God's people today. AMBS students are blessed to have Safwat as teacher and mentor.

— *Hank Landes is the founder of Delaware Valley Family Business Center, Souderton, Pa. and attends Salford Mennonite Church in Harleysville, Pa. He graduated in 1975 with a Master of Arts in Religion degree from AMBS.* ●

**Photos Top:** The group visited Saint Maqarios monastery where Father Marqorios (center) oriented them to monastic life. **Right:** Jim and Sally Longley enjoy a felucca ride on the Nile. **Credits:** Bruce Baergen and Safwat Marzouk

## Egypt's Deep History **Jim Longley**

Egyptian humor is delightful! We experienced it daily in Henry, our Egyptologist guide, whose participation in archeological discoveries and faith as a Coptic Orthodox deacon enriched our encounter with Egypt. To stand before the Great Pyramid of Giza is to experience awe at its massive, unshakable eminence. Political-religious aspirations flowing from Tahrir Square spoke of a people striving to reclaim their land after millennia of occupation.

The deep history of Egypt reverberates into the present. The Christian experience in this land shouts to me of both context and paradigm: the triple-faith-founder Abraham sojourned here, as did his descendant Jesus the refugee; the ancient Pharaonic hieroglyphic art speaks of rich cultural and religious insight; the



Moses story of liberation presages the gospel brought here with St. Mark; and Jesus followers' faithful survival and honest engagement with their Muslim neighbors is testament to perseverance with a humility sadly rare in the West. Sally and I were privileged to be part of the AMBS community, which enabled these explorations. — *Jim Longley, AMBS student, is Deputy Secretary in the Department of Family and Community Services and member of the Anabaptist Network in Sydney, Australia.*

### AMBS Window Spring 2016 Volume 26 Issue 2

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## About the Egypt Learning Tour

From January 12 to 26, 2016, 35 participants joined AMBS president Sara Wenger Shenk and assistant professor of Old Testament Safwat Marzouk on a tour of historic, religious, and contemporary sites in Egypt. Coordinated by Menno Travel, the trip provided opportunities to explore questions around Egypt and the Bible, Christianity in Egypt, and interreligious relationships. The group experienced the hospitality and courage of the Egyptian people, who are still dreaming of social justice, a livelihood, and freedom. Together, participants came to understand some of the social, cultural, and theological depth of the Egyptian communities they encountered. They were also challenged to think about what it means to be global citizens of a world in which cultures and theologies continue to challenge and engage each other. ●

**Photo** At the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut, near Luxor. **Front:** Gerald Shenk, Hank Landes, Sally Longley, Rachel Johns, Ruth Guengerich, Phyllis Stutzman, Caley Ortman and Lisa Schrag. **Second:** Kirsten Schroeder, Naomi Wenger, Sara Erb, Julia Schmidt, Dianne Schmidt, Noreen Kanagy, Rhoda Schrag, Susan Dengler, Carol Lehman, Kristy Shellenberg and Sara Wenger Shenk. **Third:** Ron Guengerich, Lorraine Mueller, Renee Reimer, John Kampen, Hilda Shirk, Wes Farmer, Lee Dengler, Christine Kampen, Carley Brubaker, Debbie Baergen and Steven Dinnocenti. **Back:** Jim Longley, Loren Johns, Bruce Baergen, Phil Wenger, James Brubaker and Wilma Bailey. **Credit:** Safwat Marzouk





## Egypt Sound-by-Sound Naomi Wenger

In the early morning haze of Cairo, tuk-tuk drivers toot their horns and ring their bells to attract the attention of anyone who may be induced to ride in these motorcycle taxis. While all drivers in Egypt sound their horns as they drive, the dinging of the bells added to the cacophony of the streets around our hotel on the road to Giza and the Great Pyramids. The first addition to the honking hum of the city was the 5:00 a.m. call to prayer that echoed from mosque to mosque between neighborhoods. Then, if I listened closely, I could hear a donkey braying in defiance of an order to pull an overloaded produce cart.

Later in the day, the grumbling belch of a camel as his young driver prodded him to his feet under me was a strong reminder of a way of life now displaced to the margins as tourist entertainment.

As we continued our journey, the honking of horns gave way first to the clunkity-clunk of a train and then to the ubiquitous thrum of a diesel engine underfoot on a Nile River cruise boat. On the sun deck, the quiet of the countryside was more apparent as we glided past villages, farms, and desert stretches of sand and rock.

As we sailed on a felucca around Elephantine Island in Aswan, young boys paddling boards serenaded us with their “Englees” songs—which included an old cowboy song (“Whoopie-ti-yi-yay!”), “Frère Jacques” (French), and “Macarena” (Spanish). The order of songs never varied though they were sung by different boys on different days.

In ancient temples and in public places, sparrows competed noisily for song space and nest room, while wild cats either fought or asked politely for handouts and wild dogs silently watched for a morsel to fall from a café table.

Everywhere the sounds of Egypt crowded my ears. This is a country pressed not to a coastline but to the heart of the land where the Nile runs silently and persistently past temples and tombs thousands of years old. Crowded into the small area on each side of the river wherever water can push back the great deserts to the east and west, more than 82 million Egyptians clamor for the world’s ear.

I will remember the sounds of Egypt even as the sunset call to prayer from 108,000 mosques reminds me to pray for its people. — Naomi Wenger is completing a Master of Arts: Theological Studies with a concentration in Biblical Studies. She is also co-director of *The Hermitage*, a retreat community in Three Rivers, Michigan. ●

**Photos Left: Visiting a Nubian house in Aswan (upper Egypt). Right: Taking a felucca ride on the Nile.**

**Credits: Sara Wenger Shenk and Safwat Marzouk**



# AMBS PANORAMA



## Tour Europe 2017: Reformations Old and New

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## New blog: Mary's Prayers

On Mary's Prayers, Mary H. Schertz, professor of New Testament, offers a brief reflection on a Scripture text and an original prayer. Each post reflects her sustained engagement with the biblical text and her desire to invite others into that deep love for the text and the gracious God to whom it bears witness. Follow along at [amsb.edu/marysprayers](http://amsb.edu/marysprayers)

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Presenter: Reta Halteman Finger

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Thursday, April 14, 2016

2:00–3:30p.m. EDT

Presenters: Greg Boyd and

Mauricio Chenlo

Moderator: David B. Miller, AMBS

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- Engaging John Howard Yoder's Theology Today
- Historia y Teologia de Anabautism
- Understanding and Managing Congregational Conflict
- Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible

For details, visit [amsb.edu/churchleadershipcenter/anabaptist-short-courses](http://amsb.edu/churchleadershipcenter/anabaptist-short-courses) ●

# PRESIDENT'S WINDOW SARA WENGER SHENK



## Encountering Egypt: Moving out of our comfort zones

The diverse group of 37 from Australia, Canada, the US, and Egypt, including five lifelong scholars of the Bible, came together remarkably well.

I knew we would be all right when, after an uncomfortable all night train ride from Cairo to Luxor, people emerged from their cold, cramped cabins laughing and then lit up the morning with song—

an AMBS community of learning on the move.

There were illuminating encounters:

- driving through the “garbage village” of Cairo only to emerge into an expansive canyon of cave churches, cliff “gospel” carvings and stories of Coptic priests whose leadership has been transformative for that marginalized, largely Christian community; or
- learning from Muslim scholars who spoke of their commitment to protect Christian churches in Egypt and to collaborate with Christian leaders, building on common values for religious freedom and peaceful coexistence; or
- learning from church leaders (Protestant and Orthodox) who described hardships since the Arab Spring and yet the renewal of the church, including some 91 new Coptic Evangelical fellowships and 25 new churches; or
- learning from Christian social service organizational leaders about their

human rights-based approach to social transformation, including creating social businesses that both care for people and make a profit.

There were few tourists compared to the crowds that were normal at Egyptian antiquities sites before the 2011 revolution. Often we observed the desperation of those without work and the rubbish-strewn river and weary land. And yet, there were also lush banana and palm groves, colorful birds, and the sparkling humor of countless persons whom God has blessed with resilience, gracious hospitality, and enterprising creativity. As an AMBS learning community on the move, we are indebted to our amazing guides and gracious hosts who blessed us by taking us to uncomfortable places, sparking breakthrough moments of illumination. Thanks be! — Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president ●

**Photos Sara Wenger Shenk and Gerald Shenk at The Pyramids of Giza in Cairo, Egypt. Credit: Phil Wenger**

# Climbing toward a greater unknown

*Rock band Oh Village looks to the mountains for inspiration on new album*

BY AARON EPP  
Young Voices Editor

Spending time with his band mates is one of the first things Oh Village singer/pianist Scott Currie mentions when asked about the best part of making *Ocris*, the band's second full-length album.

"My favourite part of the week was Friday mornings," the 21-year-old says. "Every Friday morning we would get together and just talk and hang out. Sometimes we would have breakfast and chat and discuss things not related to music, and just get to know each other as people. . . . Since the album's [been] finished, that's kind of one of the main things I miss."

The members of the Abbotsford, B.C.-based band, which is rounded out by guitarist Matthew Jake Janzen, bassist David Dueckman and drummer Stephen Dahl, have forged their friendships through music after getting to know each other at Emmanuel Mennonite Church.

The band, whose members range in age



*Ocris is Oh Village's third release, following 2012's Far Side of the Sea and 2014's To Rely.*

writing and creating," Currie says.

The band recorded the 14-song album at Afterlife Studios in Vancouver with re-

*Taking its name from a Latin word meaning 'rugged mountain,' Ocris is a concept album that explores the struggle of trying to make sense of the world.*

from 21 to 23, began conceptualizing *Ocris* in the spring of 2014. By fall, the band was holding eight-hour practices four times a week to flesh out the musical motifs Currie came up with into fully-realized songs.

"We basically worked non-stop from September 2014 until the day we went into the studio in June 2015, so it was over a full school-year's-worth of just non-stop

recording engineer John Raham. For Currie, it was a great experience.

"I just love being in the studio. That's my favourite thing at this point. I love recording," he says, adding that the options available to musicians in the studio appeals to him. "You can just kind of play around all you want."

At its core, Oh Village's music is  
*(Continued on page 28)*

PHOTOS BY ABBYE DAHL



*David Dueckman, left, Scott Currie, Stephen Dahl and Matthew Jake Janzen are Oh Village.*



*The members of Oh Village began working on Ocris two years ago.*



*Spending so much time working on the album allowed the band's members to get to know each other better.*



*Scott Currie is using Oh Village's hiatus to work on solo material.*

*(Continued from page 27)*

piano-driven rock with a heavy emphasis on melody and hooks. The band members, all accomplished musicians in their own right, augment that core sound with a variety of instruments, including timpani, vibraphone, trumpet, euphonium, cello, viola and violin.

There is a lot going on throughout *Ocris*, both musically and lyrically. Taking its name from a Latin word meaning “rugged mountain,” *Ocris* is a concept album that explores the struggle of trying to make sense of the world.

“We are always working towards a summit we think we need to reach, but often if and when we get there, all we see is a greater height we wish to conquer,” the band explains on its Bandcamp site. “*Ocris* is about climbing one of these mountains, the constant questioning of why and how, and how those questions impact the journey itself. When the questions finally produce answers, they inevitably also produce more questions, creating an endless hike up. There is always going to be some greater unknown, which means there really is no true summit to *Ocris*, only an acceptance of where we are and of the questions we still have, and a desire to keep moving forward.”

Currie and his band mates came up with the concept and exact flow of the album before writing a single note of music, an

unorthodox writing style that nonetheless yielded positive results.

The band released the album this past January. With a brand new album to promote, one would think Oh Village is preparing to tour this spring and summer, but that’s not the case.

“Our online activity and our performance activity is at an all-time low, which, from a business standpoint, is the stupidest thing to do following the release of your album,” Currie says with a chuckle. “We’re on an indefinite hiatus at this moment.”

Dahl is working at a ski hill in Invermere, B.C.; Dueckman is studying biology at the University of the Fraser Valley; Janzen is studying music at Kwantlen Polytechnic University; and Currie is employed at a nursery in Abbotsford and working on solo material.

Currie says all four band members want to keep the possibility of future performances open. In the meantime, people can enjoy *Ocris*.

“Buy the album. Look on Spotify, we’re there,” Currie says, adding with a smile, “Tell your mom. Tell your Oma. Mainly [tell] your Oma. My Oma likes it, so . . .”

Yours might, too. ☺

Visit the Oh Village website at [ohvillage.com](http://ohvillage.com).



## Outside his comfort zone

*Moses Falco reflects on his faith journey and first six months of pastoral ministry*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor



*Moses Falco is pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg.*

Six months into his first pastoral job, Moses Falco feels very inadequate. “Am I really cut out for this?” and “Do I have the skills to be in this position?” are questions he has discussed with members of the church council and deacons.

Although he feels inadequate, Falco—who is the sole pastor at Sterling Mennonite Church, a Mennonite Church Manitoba congregation in Winnipeg with a membership of about 140—is confident



that God, as well as his brothers and sisters in the church, will help him along.

“Something I’ve learned is that God takes us out of our comfort zone and puts us in places where we have lots of room to grow,” says Falco, 25. “I trust that God has put me in this position for a reason, and I will learn and I will grow.”

A Toronto native, Falco always thought about becoming a pastor. He is the third of five children, all sons, born to a German mother and a Filipino father who worked as a church planter and pastor. Whether it was people in the congregation he grew up in at Heron Park Baptist Church, or members of his extended family, Falco was surrounded by people who told him he should go into ministry,

“I felt that call was always there,” he says.

After graduating from high school, Falco studied for six months at Bodenseehof Bible School, a Capernwray school in Germany. Afterwards, he stayed another six months doing an internship at the school. During this first year, he met and fell in love with his now-wife, a Mennonite named Jessica. After the internship, Falco spent a year volunteering at a church in southeast Germany.

He describes his time in Germany as formational, as it allowed him to learn and ask questions. “I think I have most of my stories of personal encounter with God, and with understanding my faith, that took place during those two years,” he says.

He recalls a period when he was feeling burned out and depressed while volunteering at the church. Here he was in Germany, giving his time and doing service for God, and yet he felt down. Falco couldn’t understand why he wasn’t feeling God’s love.

One day, he walked to a nearby park to pray and look for answers. But when he prayed, he got something instead of answers: The words “I love you” looped through his head over and over.

“He didn’t really answer my question and I think that wasn’t even really the point,” Falco says. “Maybe God was telling me, ‘You’re not going to know right now, I’m not going to explain it all to you.’ And that was enough for me to just rest in. It really changed things for me in terms of how I was feeling and it gave me new energy and new life in that moment.”

Falco moved back to Toronto for a year, got engaged to Jessica and moved to her home city, Winnipeg, when they got married. He began attending Sterling Mennonite Church and enrolled at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU).

While studying at CMU, Falco was hired to work as a graphic designer in

*‘Maybe God was telling me, “You’re not going to know right now, I’m not going to explain it all to you.” And that was enough for me to just rest in.’  
(Moses Falco)*

the communications department of Mennonite Church Canada. Discussing matters of faith with co-workers stretched Falco’s thinking on topics like the church’s response to lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer people, Israel-Palestine and indigenous-settler relations. “It opened my eyes to different interpretations . . . of Christian faithfulness,” he says. “I see faith and the world in a very different way than I did before.”

Last year, when Sterling Mennonite was looking for a new pastor, someone from the congregation asked Falco to apply. He did, and eventually got the job. While he’s still new to the role, Falco says he most enjoys studying the Bible, preaching and visiting with the church’s members.

“Those are the times when I get to know people on a deeper level and hear their story,” Falco says. “I’ve learned so much hearing the stories of the people at Sterling.”

He adds that he is thankful for the people in the church. “I can’t say enough good things about our church and the level of support they’ve given me,” he says. From the beginning, both Falco and the church acknowledged that he is young, just finished school and new to ministry. “In their commitment to me, it was a realization that we’re going to grow together in this, which not every church is willing to do. In that sense, I’m really grateful for what they’ve done.”

That kind of support, as well as relying on God’s grace, helps Falco when he’s feeling inadequate. “When we ourselves are weak and feel we can’t do it, those are the moments when we allow God to work in our lives,” Falco says. “I trust that God is working through me and working through Sterling. . . . It’s God working through us that gives us that hope.” ❧



*Moses Falco grew up in Toronto and spent two years living and studying in Germany before eventually moving to Winnipeg.*



*‘I can’t say enough good things about our church,’ new pastor Moses Falco says.*

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**May 12:** "Relationships with integrity" seminar, at MC B.C.'s office, Abbotsford, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; for pastors and ministry workers. For more information, or to register, e-mail [admin@mcbc.ca](mailto:admin@mcbc.ca).

### Alberta

**May 16-18:** "(Trans)formation in Christian discipleship," an MC Alberta faith studies event, at Lethbridge Mennonite Church. Speaker: Gil Dueck, former academic dean of Bethany College. For more information and to register, visit [mennonitechurch.ab.ca](http://mennonitechurch.ab.ca). (16,17) Public evening sessions also available.

**May 20-22:** MC Alberta women's retreat at Sunnyside Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake. Speaker: Carol Penner. Theme: "(re)make: making and remaking our stories." For more information, visit [mcaawomen.com](http://mcaawomen.com).

**June 4:** Heritage retreat for those 50 and over at Camp Valaqua, Water

Valley, from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Theme: "Refugees/in search of a homeland." For more information, call Hugo Neufeld at 403-201-4358 or e-mail [hdneuf@shaw.ca](mailto:hdneuf@shaw.ca).

### Saskatchewan

**May 13:** RJC spring choir concert, at 7 p.m.

### Manitoba

**Until May 14:** Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, hosts "Stories in art from Iraqi Kurdistan," collected by Kathy Moorhead Thiessen of Christian Peacemaker Teams.

**May 9:** Westgate bursary fundraising banquet.

**May 11-14:** Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies presents the "Freedom of movement: A path from armed conflict, persecution, and forced migration to conflict resolution, human rights and development" conference at Menno Simons College and the University of Winnipeg. For more information, visit [carfms.org](http://carfms.org).

**May 12:** Manitoba Day at Mennonite

Heritage Village, Steinbach. Ceremony at the steamer shelter. Made-in-Manitoba craft sale in the auditorium.

**May 13-14:** Sister Care seminar hosted by Mennonite Women Manitoba at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. For more information, or to register, visit [mennonchurch.mb.ca/events](http://mennonchurch.mb.ca/events).

**May 15:** Faith and Life Women's Chorus 20th-anniversary concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 3 p.m.

### Ontario

**May 7:** "Paddle the Grand" annual fundraising event for Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. New shorter route, with free barbecue to follow. For more information, visit [slmc.ca](http://slmc.ca).

**May 9:** Low German Networking Conference in Aylmer.

**May 11:** Low German Networking Conference in Leamington.

**May 13:** Theatre of the Beat presents "This Will Lead to Dancing," a play about wholeness, belonging and LGBTQ inclusion, at Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit

[theatreofthebeat.ca](http://theatreofthebeat.ca).

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



## Classifieds

### Shared Living


Will you be attending a Winnipeg university or college in the fall or know someone that will? Finding the right place to live is important! Located in the heart of Winnipeg, Emmaus House is a place where students can find support academically, spiritually, in lives of service, healthy living and relationship. If you are interested in exploring what it means to live in intentional Christian community with other students, check us out at: [emmaushousewinnipeg.ca](http://emmaushousewinnipeg.ca)

## (re)make 2016


Making and Remaking our Stories  
with Carol Penner

**May 20.21.22**

**Women's Retreat**  
Sylvan Lake, AB



[www.mcaawomen.com](http://www.mcaawomen.com)





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## Travel

**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](http://mennoniteheritagetours.eu)

## Advertising Information

Contact  
D. Michael Hostetler  
1-800-378-2524 x.224  
advert@  
[canadianmennonite.org](http://canadianmennonite.org)

## Travel

**FRIENDS OF SABEL HOLY LAND WITNESS TRIP**  
You are invited to join us for a rich and meaningful trip to the Holy Land: worship with Palestinian Christians, visit holy places, experience Palestinian life under Israeli occupation, meet with courageous Palestinian and Israeli peacemakers, and consider what is needed for a just peace. Led by Rev. Naim Ateek, founder of the Sabeel Center ([www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org)) with Kathy Bergen [bergenkathy@gmail.com](mailto:bergenkathy@gmail.com) and Joy Lapp [lappj@earthlink.net](mailto:lappj@earthlink.net), May 10-22, 2016.

## Employment Opportunities

### EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Springstein Mennonite Church seeks a lead pastor (0.8 time) for our small, rural congregation located 20km west of Winnipeg. SMC's multi-generational congregation seeks a spiritual leader to feed and equip its members to live Godly lives and show God's love to its neighbours. Submission deadline June 1. Start date early fall. Please make inquiries with Rick Neufeld: [rneufeld@mennochurch.mb.ca](mailto:rneufeld@mennochurch.mb.ca)

## Executive Director

**Silver Lake Mennonite Camp** seeks a passionate, inspirational and committed individual to lead the camp's important mission, beginning September 2016.



As the chosen candidate, you are an energetic and entrepreneurial leader with a desire to build Christian community, a genuine interest in working with young people, a love for the outdoors and the environment, and proven capacity for inspiring others to embrace these commitments.

As Executive Director you offer vision and leadership to camp, and adeptly manage its business and programs.

If you'd like to explore the opportunity to make an impact with Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, please send your resume and cover letter by May 13 to: Ron Rempel, [ronwempel@gmail.com](mailto:ronwempel@gmail.com)  
For further information, go to [www.slmc.ca](http://www.slmc.ca)



### EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Guelph Bible Conference Centre is looking for a qualified individual to join our staff serving as Food Service Manager. Job description is available at [www.guelphbiblecc.com](http://www.guelphbiblecc.com)

Resumes will be accepted until June 30, 2016.



**Hesston College** seeks candidates for **President**. The ideal candidate for Hesston College's next president will be an Anabaptist Christian committed to joining a local MCUSA congregation upon appointment. He/She will also hold a terminal degree (Ph.D.; Ed.D.; J.D.; D.Min.; etc.) and have leadership experience at a higher education institution.

**Strengths** The president must be an imaginative innovator in higher education who seeks solutions from unusual places and voices, positioning Hesston as an attractive option for prospective students and potential faculty and staff. The president must be a collaborative leader who supports, inspires and empowers administrators, faculty and staff through thoughtful decision making processes. The president must possess an astute financial mindset, generating resources including fundraising for Hesston's fiscal future while making tough decisions within the complex economic terrain of higher education.

**Fit** The president must authentically engage a diverse body of communities with skillful, culturally-aware communication, increasing financial support, developing new partnerships and discovering new opportunities for campus engagement. The president must come to understand the challenges faced by a Midwestern Christian two-year college in order to guide Hesston through difficult economic, social and political terrain. The president must be an accessible "pastoral presence" as a committed Anabaptist Christian, for students, faculty and staff.

**Motivation** The president feels called by God and a sense of purpose to fulfill this position. The president is energized by the relational, Christ-centered community of Hesston College and is inspired to further its mission and values. The president prioritizes student learning and development, nurturing interpersonal relationships in order to strengthen the Hesston College Experience.

**Search Process** Nominations and/or letters of application with CV or resume may be submitted to Hesston College Presidential Search Committee at [HC\\_SearchCom@MennoniteEducation.org](mailto:HC_SearchCom@MennoniteEducation.org); or through postal mail to: Hesston College Presidential Search Committee, Mennonite Education Agency, 3145 Benham Avenue, Suite #2, Elkhart, IN 46517. Candidates from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply. Hesston College is an equal opportunity employer.

## PHOTO ESSAY

# The animals of MCC

COMPILED BY EMILY LOEWEN  
MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

*Around the world, MCC supports projects that help families make a better living, helping them pay for food or school for their children. Sometimes those projects involve animals—getting loans to buy them or training and new techniques to raise them. Here's a glimpse of some of the MCC animals and how they are at work across the globe. For more photos, visit [canadianmennonite.org/mcc-animals](http://canadianmennonite.org/mcc-animals).*



MCC PHOTO BY JOSH STECKLEY

MCC PHOTOS THIS COLUMN  
BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY



**HAITI:** Claude Dimanche, 22, is learning techniques of animal husbandry at a technical school in Desarmes, as well as skills to start plant nurseries and harvest seeds. MCC partner Desarmes Professional School operates a technical school that offers vocational training to help people start again after the 2010 earthquake.



**VIETNAM:** This cow belongs to Phùng Thi Tuyet, who cares for her disabled son, Tran Minh Sôn, who has suffered severe disabilities since birth due to his family's exposure to dioxin-contaminated Agent Orange. The family received the cow from MCC partner Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin, to help boost income and financial security.

MCC PHOTO BY SILAS CREWS



**CHAD:** This goat belongs to Denenadji Josephine, who was trained with other women of her village to raise healthier goats, chickens and ducks by MCC partner Baobab. Training on how to use vaccines helps people in the village maintain healthy animals, which earn more money when they're sold at market.



**ZIMBABWE:** At the Sandra Jones vocational training program in Bulawayo, Zimbabwean girls are trained to raise rabbits.