

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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EDITORIAL

Speaking with the heart

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

What will be the tenor of the conversation at Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon? Writing this 12 days before more than 500 delegates and denominational leaders gather to consider multiple heavy issues, we can only imagine.

We hope the scriptural theme for the event is a good starting point. The word from Jeremiah can be foundational to the many words that will be spoken: *"This is the covenant. . . I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."*

This is a valuable reminder that, despite our diversity, our differing opinions, our standing, our nationality or ethnicity, we are a "covenant people" committed to each other as the people of God. That is a matter of the heart, not of words.

So what are the dangers of this covenant breaking down post-assembly? In a post-Christendom digital environment, a coarsening dialogue can quickly develop despite our best intentions. Here are four potential dangers that can undermine our "covenant":

- **TALKING PAST** each other. The intense issues on the agenda for resolution, such as sexuality and future directions for Mennonite Church Canada, have already triggered conversations from deeply held beliefs. We can come into these discussions with our guard up; with a resolve not to be swayed by the debate; to speak persuasively and passionately from our point of view, so as to inform those who, in our view, are

less-informed. Unfortunately, that stance only deepens divisions during and after the discussion.

It ignores the diversity of the "people of God." We are no longer a homogeneous group, indeed if we ever were. We come from different backgrounds and have different histories.



We are Russian Mennonites, Swiss-German Mennonites and new Canadians from dozens of countries around the globe. We are academics, factory workers,

entrepreneurs, students, farmers, pastors, parents, computer programmers, oil workers and those working in "green" industries. A better way to go is to listen intently to the words of the "other," to gain a better understanding. That's the style of "covenant people" with the Word of God written on our hearts.

- **THE GAP** between leaders and delegates. It is no secret that there occurs over the life of religious institutions a certain lingo and language by leaders that is understood among fellow-leaders but can amount to generalities and self-preservation to the ears of the laity. The risk is that, as the gap grows, the understanding of the issues can become muddled, resulting in the creation of camps of like-minded persons to react negatively to what they perceive as mostly "spin." It begins to be seen as protection of the establishment and ignoring the "will of the people."

A good example of this is the pushback experienced by the Future Directions Task Force on its final recommendations. With

only a six-month window for discernment among the five area churches and their congregations, there rather quickly arose a critique of doing away with our international mission outreach, a serious question about the vitality of local congregations taking on the work and vision of MC Canada, and wondering how our national identity as Anabaptist Mennonites would be nurtured and maintained.

- **TALKING IN** the parking lot . . . or in the corridors and hallways. Rather than conduct the debate in an open forum, many resort to sharing their innermost thoughts in clusters of the like-minded out of earshot of the larger group, and oftentimes in a grumbling fashion. While that may get things off our chest, it doesn't help the "body" come to productive resolution, so that we can move on in unity, if not total agreement. This may be from the heart, but it doesn't serve well the "covenant."

Delegates should have the courage, both before and after the debates, to express their thoughts in a public way, but with humility in knowing that theirs is one viewpoint among many of those who are also "covenanted in their hearts."

- **TAKING ATTACKS** to social media, this being the worst possible outcome of a debate. While the Internet has opened up greater opportunities for free speech, it is becoming one of the curses of this open-ended communication tool for many. Our sister publication in the U.S.—*The Mennonite*—has just declared a 30-day moratorium on online comments because of their vitriol regarding the sexuality issues tearing at the fabric of that communion.

We, as a covenanted people, are better than this. We are hoping and praying that the conversation during and after Assembly 2016 will be exemplary as a people with the Word of God "written on our hearts."

ABOUT THE COVER:

Seasonal agricultural workers from Mexico weed onions at Kroeker Farms, south of Winkler, Man. Read about their lives, and those of Jamaican workers in southwestern Ontario, in Will Braun's feature 'The lucky struggle' on page 4.

PHOTO: WILL BRAUN, CANADIAN MENNONITE

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RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO CANADIAN MENNONITE,
490 DUTTON DRIVE, UNIT C5,
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Phone: 519-884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 Fax: 519-884-3331

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Facebook.com/Canadian.Mennonite @CanMenno

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Guiding values:

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

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

• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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Board Chair: **Henry Krause**, hakrause@telus.net, 604-838-3192

Head Office Staff:

Dick Benner, Editor/Publisher, editor@canadianmennonite.org

Ross W. Muir, Managing Editor, managinged@canadianmennonite.org

Barb Draper, Editorial Assistant, edassist@canadianmennonite.org

Dan Johnson, Graphic Designer, designer@canadianmennonite.org

Natasha Krahn, Circulation/Finance, office@canadianmennonite.org

Aaron Epp, Young Voices Editor, youngvoices@canadianmennonite.org

Virginia Hostetler, Web Editor, webeditor@canadianmennonite.org

Advertising Manager: D. Michael Hostetler, advert@canadianmennonite.org,
toll-free voice mail: 1-800-378-2524 ext. 224

Correspondents:

Will Braun, Senior Writer, seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org, 204-822-8288;

Amy Dueckman, B.C. Correspondent, bc@canadianmennonite.org,

604-854-3735; **Donita Wiebe-Neufeld**, Alberta Correspondent,

ab@canadianmennonite.org, 780-436-3431; **Donna Schulz**, Saskatchewan

Correspondent, sk@canadianmennonite.org, 306-232-4733; **Beth Downey Sawatzky**,

Manitoba Correspondent, mb@canadianmennonite.org, 204-371-8259; **Dave**

Rogalsky, Eastern Canada Correspondent, ec@canadianmennonite.org, 519-577-9987.

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Award-winning
member of the
Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD FEATURE

The lucky struggle

The life and times of seasonal foreign workers on Mennonite farms

BY WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

PHOTO BY JANE ANDRES



The lucky applicants will work mostly on fruit farms and greenhouse operations under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). They can stay for up to eight months, but their families must stay at home.

Fortune and misfortune can look the same in a world of incomprehensible inequality. Each year, many thousands of Jamaicans apply for coveted temporary jobs on Canadian farms. The lucky applicants will work mostly on fruit farms and greenhouse operations under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). They can stay for up to eight months, but their families must stay at home.

While in Canada, they will work long hours—which they want—and earn minimum wage, which averages about \$11 an hour across the provinces. That’s “pay dirt” compared to minimum wage in Jamaica: about C\$1.60. Indeed, they are the fortunate ones.

As are their employers. Rene Schmitz is blunt about what would happen to his 40.5-hectare fruit and rose operation near Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., without the 12 Jamaicans who work for him. “I would have to grow different crops,” he says. “It’s as simple as that,” because Canadians won’t do the work.

The same is true of Kroeker Farms, the largest potato farm in Manitoba and one of the largest organic vegetable producers in Canada. This year, the Winkler-based farm, owned by a Mennonite family, employs 26 Mexicans through SAWP. They perform manual labour, primarily in the 1,400-hectare organic portion of the farm. The day I visited, they were bent over weeding a large field of onions. According to Wayne Rempel, Kroeker’s chief executive officer, and Ed Klassen, the head of human resources, the company’s organic operation would be forced to scale back without them.

The 26 Mexicans do the work that 130 Canadians struggled to do—with high turnover and recruitment hassles—prior to Kroeker Farms joining SAWP three years ago. “We need them, and they need us,” says Rempel.

Last year, a total of 30,579 SAWP workers came to Canada: 21,279 from Mexico, 7,713 from Jamaica, and the rest from other Caribbean nations. The program is in its 50th year.

Win, win, lucha

In many ways, SAWP is a perfect fit: Ideally suited workers from needy countries fill a seasonal niche labour shortage here. And Canadians get world-class peaches, onions and other products at affordable prices. Win, win, win.

Unless you are the son back home who celebrates his birthday every year without his dad, or the wife who celebrates her

anniversary over the phone. Some workers spend two-thirds of every year in Canada for two or more decades.

For a 2013 report on migrant workers, Jodi Dueck-Read—now an instructor at Menno Simons College in Winnipeg—conducted in-depth interviews with eight Mexican SAWP workers in Manitoba (prior to Kroeker Farms joining the program). Many spoke of their participation in SAWP as a sacrifice they make for the betterment of their families. They spoke

Schmitz says. Kroeker Farms provides Internet access to improve workers' contact with their families.

John Janzen, who ran J.I. Janzen Farms near Niagara-on-the-Lake until retiring in 2014, says of the separation from family: "Obviously that is not an ideal situation, but let's remember that they were not enslaved; it was their choice to come. . . . We were not unsympathetic to their situation."

Janzen Farms had SAWP workers from

proudly serves and promotes local fruit and wine. She regularly visits the 43 farms nearby, many of which are owned by Mennonites. She knows the farmers and she knows hundreds of their Jamaican workers.

It started in 2006 when she was asked to help with the music at an evening church service for the workers. Based on cautionary comments from other locals, she had previously avoided the men when she walked her dog or went to the

PHOTO BY WILL BRAUN



Twenty-six Mexicans do the work that 130 Canadians struggled to do—with high turnover and recruitment hassles—prior to Kroeker Farms joining SAWP three years ago.

with "resignation," referring to *la lucha* (the struggle). One worker said he tells his kids that he suffers in Canada: "You work all day, and if you want to eat, you have to cook for yourself."

The workers said their Canadian experience revolves almost solely around work. "Here, everything is work," one told Dueck-Read. Most want long hours, but it takes its toll. Their indomitable work ethic—praised by employers—is partly a matter of necessity. Loneliness was another theme.

Most said they make these sacrifices for the sake of family, often their children's schooling. "We are a family people," one man said, "and that is why we come." Ironically, the jobs that help them provide for their families also take them away from their families.

Yet they are the lucky ones, with many others lined up to take their place if they could.

'We weren't unsympathetic'

How do the employers feel about their workers being away from family? Schmitz pauses. Rempel hesitates. "That's a tough one," he says. "They pay that price,"

1967, the second year of the program, until 2014, when the farm closed. All employers I spoke with noted, like Janzen, that the workers come voluntarily, often returning year after year. The defence of the program rests on this point.

Dueck-Read puts that point into a broader context. Some of the men she spoke with talked about the dim economic realities in Mexico when discussing their motivation. Jamaican workers I spoke with informally also described their economic prospects at home in dismal terms. To some extent their "choice" is pushed on them by an unfortunate range of options. None of us would freely choose to leave family to do physical labour for 60 hours a week for minimum wage. "They pay a high price no matter how you slice it," Schmitz says.

They pay a high price so we don't have to.

Who's to blame?

"People are quick to blame the farmer," says Jane Andres. "But it's too simple just to blame the farmers."

Andres operates a bed and breakfast near Niagara-on-the-Lake, where she

grocery store, where the workers go in numbers on Thursday and Friday evenings. She thought there were 75 or 100 workers in the area, but she had nothing to do with them. That quickly changed after the evening service in 2006.

She learned there were a couple thousand Jamaicans in the area, many living within walking distance of her home. She and her family learned to know them—men with warm hearts and deep faith. Music prep nights for the services turned into lively times of fellowship at the Andres's home.

During my visit there in March, Andres told me how she fell into the informal roll of "God's gopher" for her seasonal neighbours, a point illustrated when the phone rang with a worker's request for flu medication; then a neighbour stopped by with a bag of tall-sized jeans from the thrift store to be distributed to workers; then, before the phone rang again, she talked about distributing posters to the 43 farms for the upcoming "welcome concert."

Andres wants the SAWP workers—mostly Jamaicans in her area—to feel welcome. She wants them to know more of Canada than just work. She wants

them to share Christian fellowship with Canadians.

For 10 years she has helped organize a welcome concert. This past May, 800 people—workers and locals—gathered at Southridge Community Church in St. Catharines for a spirited, faith-filled event.

While churches in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area have been slow to join Andres—with a few notable small-scale exceptions—Southridge has embraced Caribbean workers with both its Mennonite Brethren arms. When the church, which operates the largest homeless shelter in Niagara Region, branched out to Vineland five years ago, members wanted an “anchor cause.” Outreach to workers fit. That outreach includes cricket games, evening services, a health clinic and an outing to Niagara Falls.

While a few church members had previous experience connecting with workers—particularly, local store owner Maryanne Schlabach—the more common response was: “How did I miss this?” Long-time residents had never thought to reach out to the workers. As Andres says, she had trained her eyes not to see.

Tim Arnold, the outreach pastor at Southridge, tells me the church has worked hard to develop relationships with the farmers as well, a few of whom attend the church. His wife’s family owns a farm that employs SAWP workers.

It’s delicate territory because anyone within the sphere of the program knows the stories of mistreatment. As two farmers noted, treatment is better at some farms than others. One referred to a former SAWP employer who “ruled by fear.” Some of the Manitoba workers complained of seldom, if ever, getting a day off, as required by law. In some cases, workers who have served a farm for 20 or 30 years receive not so much as a handshake upon retirement.

Workers are at the mercy of their employers, who can send them home at any time or not invite them back. Many workers fear reporting health issues, raising concerns or talking to reporters lest they be blacklisted. Surely, those fears are not well founded in every case, but there are plenty of stories of workers whose SAWP careers end abruptly. Some employers are compassionate and conscientious, but

While churches in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area have been slow to join Andres—with a few notable small-scale exceptions—Southridge has embraced Caribbean workers with both its Mennonite Brethren arms.

there is limited protection or recourse for the employees of farmers who are not.

What’s the solution?

The theoretical solution to the shortcomings of SAWP is global equality. People should be able to make a dignified living at home.

On a more immediate scale, churches can train their eyes to see, and then reach out as neighbours, as Andres, Southridge and others have done.

Somewhere in between global equity and neighbourliness is the option of providing SAWP workers a pathway to citizenship. In most cases, these workers do not meet the various criteria for citizenship, although Schmitz insists they

are “specialists” and should be afforded the consideration other specialists are. Of course, not all would want to become Canadians, but many advocates believe that if the workers are good enough to do our work, they should be good enough to be our neighbours, permanently.

Rempel has no hesitation in saying he would “love” for his workers to be allowed to stay in Canada: “We need people like that in our country.”

On this point, a federal spokesperson would say only that a parliamentary committee is reviewing the program, and “the government will consider the committee’s report and bring forward its plan later this year to improve and change the program.”

In the meantime, the fortunate few from among the unfortunate many will continue to pick our peaches and weed our onions while their families back home await phone calls, wire transfers and the return of their loved ones. ❧

For more from farmers, workers, Mennonite Central Committee and bureaucrats, visit canadianmennonite.org/sawp-supplement.



/// For discussion

1. What has been your experience with the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) in Canada? Have you personally met seasonal foreign workers or visited a farm that employs them? If you had a fruit farm, would you employ SAWP workers?
2. Will Braun refers to farmers who say they need the temporary seasonal workers because “Canadians won’t do the work.” How do you respond to these comments? If Canadians won’t do the work, what does that say about Canadians? Under what conditions would you weed onions by hand?
3. How would your congregation respond if there were large numbers of SAWP workers in your community? To what extent are those who employ seasonal workers responsible to see that their needs are met? Should seasonal foreign workers have more control over safety and other working conditions? What does the Bible say about foreign workers?
4. Do you think that SAWP workers are being treated fairly in Canada? What changes would you make to the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program?

— BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

✉ 'Testing,' 'nudging' on sexual issues has already occurred

/// Readers write

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

THE BEING A Faithful Church document being presented at the Mennonite Church Canada assembly recognizes that “we differ dramatically in our biblical interpretations,” and that we should “learn to honour those persons with whom we disagree.”

With “unity” and “diversity” in mind, one recommendation being presented is that parts of the body of MC Canada be allowed to “test alternative understandings from those of the larger body to see if they are a prophetic nudging of the Spirit of God.”

Making statements of inclusion, changing the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* or doing nothing at all could result in fracturing of the “body,” as we have already seen.

Will allowing “testing” and “spiritual nudging” help
(Continued on page)

FROM OUR LEADERS

Listen to the Spirit

PETER REMPEL

What direction will Mennonite Church Canada and its area churches be going into the future after the assembly in Saskatoon? Will we become a more faithful church?

Crucial to our future and our faithfulness will be our understanding of, and commitment to, the unity of the church, specifically to the unity of our denomination.

The letters to the seven churches in Asia, as dictated by Jesus in a vision to John and sent to the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 1-3), model the pursuit of unity among Christian churches and may be instructive for us as individuals, congregations, area churches, and MC Canada as a whole.

In the individual letters from Jesus, some churches are lauded and others admonished. Nevertheless, they all share in God's grace and salvation. The same greeting and blessing of peace and grace

from Jesus Christ is extended to all (1:4-5). All are reminded of the one “*who loves us and freed us from our sins, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving God*” (1:5-6). John describes himself as one “*who shares with you in Jesus the persecution, and the kingdom and the patient endurance*” (1:9).

The letters are open letters, accessible to all the other churches whether they are critical or laudatory. The flaws and failings, the strengths and gifts of each are known to Jesus and are disclosed to the other churches. Each church receives a unique encouragement, and each receives a special promise if it conquers in faith.

Finally, every letter concludes with the same challenge: “*Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.*” It's noteworthy that it is the Spirit who is to be heeded—not a text; that what the Spirit is saying—not has said—is to be attended to; and that what the Spirit is saying to the churches—not

only one church—is to be listened for. Are we willing to listen in the same way as we face divisive and complex issues, whether ethical or structural?

What if John would write a letter to MC Canada at this troubled moment in our history. The greeting and blessing could well be the same, we would be reminded of God's saving acts in Jesus Christ, and the messenger would still declare that he shares in the kingdom with us. The letter to our church would be open for all other churches to read.

And what would Jesus tell us that he knows about our church? What admonitions and commendations would he include for us? These are sobering and humbling questions to ponder together.

However, we would also receive a promise conditional upon conquering our sins of disunity and infidelity. Let's claim that promise and strive toward it with love. And let Jesus' letters to the churches of Asia shape our attitudes to one another as a church, and thereby shape our future direction towards becoming a more faithful church.

Peter Rempel is the moderator of Mennonite Church Manitoba.



(Continued from page)

keep “unity?” Could it create “church shopping?” After discernment with “nudging” over “biblical interpretations,” will churches be allowed to make mission statements contrary to the *Confession of Faith* so church shoppers can find like-minded congregants, or will they keep a knowing silence as many do over remarriage of divorced people?

If a pastor feels spiritual nudging and performs a marriage of a same-sex couple, but the church has not felt this “nudging,” is that pastor subject to discipline? Or should the pastor refrain in the guise of honouring those who disagree?

This reminds me of the often-used term in these circumstances: “Who am I to judge?” Although this sentiment is worthy and even scripturally sound, it’s

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Are we missing the mark?

PHIL WAGLER

The team I serve with is blessed by the presence of an 80-year-old saint. He has lived a full life, including serving in high levels of government, so he’s garnered significant insight and healthy scepticism. In the last few years, he says he has realized the power of the Holy Spirit and the centrality of prayer far too late in life.

Recently he celebrated a renewing wind that is blowing through his church and changing lives, something he and a small group of octogenarians have been consistently gathering to pray specifically toward for eight years! For a tenth of his life he has been petitioning God for this. I’m his team leader, but he’s leading me.

Is it a stretch to say that prayer is the missing component of the life of Christians and the churches they populate today? We spend enormous energy debating, writing—says the writer, arguing our positions and even petitioning our governments. But how much energy is spent petitioning heaven?

I am coming to this conviction that the North American church is essentially a prayer-devoid institution, and this is why we have ceased to be a powerful change agent. Before we balk at that statement,



assess your response in proportion to the prayerfulness you have invested in the issues of the day, the state of your church, the welfare of your city and sideroad, or the well-being of your neighbour. It’s not that we’re not busy doing good things or have lots of intelligence, it’s that we pray token blessings over our good ideas, rather than see the kingdom birthed among us out of prayer.

Sin, in the New Testament, is “missing the mark.” It is to miss the standard of God. It is to see the bullseye and be incapable of hitting it. Hitting the mark requires the sight, steadiness and energy of God. In I Timothy 2, the church is exhorted as a first activity to entreaty, prayer and intercession for all people.

And what is the will of God? God's target is for all 'to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth' that has come, and is coming, in Christ (1 Timothy 2:4).

In particular, those who govern and influence are to be prayerfully engaged. Anabaptists—at least in my experience—have embraced this call in light of the next words: “*that we may live a tranquil and quiet life in godliness and dignity, which is pleasing to God*” (I Timothy 2:2-3). Dangerously, this can become about

our own comfort, selfishness masked as prayerful concern for those in authority. This misses the entire point of the call to prayer.

The work of prayerful intercession is to seek the bullseye of heaven on behalf of our world, and this is the work of all God’s people, not just a few die-hard prayer warriors. In intercession, we re-orient ourselves around heaven and seek an intervention led by God in our time and place. And, ultimately, we are aiming for all people to experience the transforming peace of heaven—the will of our good God.

And what is the will of God? God’s target is for all “*to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth*” that has come, and is coming, in Christ (I Timothy 2:4). This bullseye, this end of missing the mark, is what the church is to be praying for. This spiritual aim and intervention is our work. This is the target. This is the only hope for a tranquility and peace that is for all people—not just ourselves—for we are ultimately powerless to move the big stuff that is rooted in human hearts

and cultures. To not engage this is to entirely miss the point of being the church in any age. So let us be truly honest: Are we missing the mark?

Phil Wagler keeps asking Jesus to teach him to pray on target. He and his family live in Surrey, B.C.

missing something. It implies that judgment still needs to come. It lacks compassion, empathy and, most of all, it lacks reconciliation.

Will newly autonomous churches “come out” and state that “spiritual nudging” has occurred and that they have discerned biblical interpretations that use history, modern science, sociology and psychology, along with Christ-like love, compassion, empathy and

inclusion? It’s taken so very long, but “testing” and “nudging” has all ready occurred.

DENNIS WIENS, LEAMINGTON, ONT.

NEW ORDER VOICE

Agonizing over the ‘best’ community?

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

My son will be starting Kindergarten in the fall. Along with feelings of excitement and uncertainty over seeing him go to school, and the adjustment it’ll mean for our family, actually choosing a school has been the hardest part.

Here’s the situation: There’s a public school that’s a five-minute walk away. It has a very diverse pool of students, from new Canadians and refugees, to middle-class white folks like us. The other school we’re considering is in a neighbourhood next to ours. It’s a French immersion school. It draws students from university family housing and the new suburb to the south—all in all, a whiter-but-somewhat-diverse, higher socio-economic demographic.

My dilemma is this: I really like the idea of Leo learning French. I loved learning French in high school and university. But if I believe that living locally and experiencing diversity is best, why wouldn’t I send him to the school just down the street?

If I choose a school that’s farther away, it feels like a betrayal of my values. It also feels like such a middle-class thing to do. Arguments that people give me about

how language-learning develops the mind, how it’ll open up “opportunities”—by which they mean better employment—for Leo down the road, all make French immersion sound like one more tool in the toolbox for upward mobility.

There’s something larger at work here, too. The impulse to figure out the best thing for my kid is every parent’s plight, right? Every decision is weighty. What I do now will affect him for the rest of his life.

But what is the “best” thing? A shorter walk to school, a more diverse set of

friends, intellectual challenges, a smaller class size, a more experienced teacher? I don’t know. All of them? What bothers me the most about agonizing over all these things is, well, that I’m agonizing over these things. Wanting the best for your kid seems natural, but it’s also a mark of privilege. Some kids don’t go to school, and many parents don’t have the luxury of choosing from different schools.

We’ve decided to start Leo in French immersion because Glenn and I both

value language-learning. And as much as I still go back and forth, second-guessing, wondering if closer is better, I can stand by this decision.

Maybe what’s so different about school is that it’s a forced community. You don’t have any say in regards to who attends and who teaches. The students are just expected to make friends and grow up with each other. As a parent who is conscious about building community where I am, it’s frustrating to encounter a system where I have little control over who makes up that community, where it is or what it offers. Especially when my kid is going to be part of it.

Although it’s a little different, it reminds me of how I felt when my family and I were looking for a church after we moved back to Regina last summer. We chose the closest Mennonite church despite some uncertainty about it being an older congregation. In fact, there’s a lot of uncertainty when you join a new

church community. But you just slowly plug in where you can, and try to be open-hearted and willing to meet new faces and form new relationships.

And so I will prepare to plug into Leo’s new school community in the ways I can, even though it won’t be the school just down the street.

Katie Doke Sawatzky writes and edits from Regina, on Treaty 4 Territory. She can be reached at katiesawatzky@gmail.com.



What bothers me the most about agonizing over all these things is, well, that I'm agonizing over these things.

✉ 'Little to fear' about same-sex inclusion in the church

RE: "RECOMMENDATION OF same-sex inclusion will lead to exodus" letter, June 6, page 7.

It has been our privilege over the years to include in our friendship circle friends from the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer community. It has enriched our lives.

It is with sorrow and dismay, then, that we read about folk wanting to "run" from Mennonite Church Canada or to suggest an "exodus" when we talk about same-sex inclusion. In our experience, there is little to fear about inclusion. The church has an opportunity to love "our neighbours," an opportunity we should approach with kindness and compassion. Running away from complex issues is not the answer.

We need each other to work at our various perspectives, and we need time.

WALTER AND MABEL PAETKAU, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

✉ Work together on sexuality differences, don't run away

RE: "RECOMMENDATION OF same-sex inclusion will lead to exodus" letter, June 6, page 7.

I am disturbed by the letters calling for—or at least predicting—the "mass exodus" of members and congregations if the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) recommendation to "create space/leave room within our body for alternative understandings [of same sex issues]" passes at the July assembly in Saskatoon.

Many of us in Mennonite Church Canada have long been opposed to Article 19 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. We want to see parts of it removed, and have long hoped for a clear statement of affirmation of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) members in our denomination.

The BFC resolution proposes neither. Yet we have remained—and plan to remain—as members of a denomination we love, even though it discriminates against a particular group of people. We have given of our time, financial resources and our hearts, even though in many ways to do so is in violation of our conscience. Now, on the eve of this resolution, at the first hint of compromise, some threaten to "run."

Letter writer Rudy Kasdorf points out that some

churches have already left MC Canada because they are opposed to even the possibility of a more-inclusive church. I wonder if he knows or cares that many LGBTQ members and their friends have also left the Mennonite church, or just avoided joining. Is there any concern for them, or for those who haven't run despite feeling deeply conflicted? We must work together for a way forward, avoiding threats and ultimatums.

JAN SCHROEDER, OTTAWA

✉ Canadian Mennonite lauded for publishing review and ensuing critique

RE: "INTENT OF *Star Wars* review is to criticize culture of violence" letter, May 23, page 11.

I appreciated Vic Thiessen's kind response and explanation to Bev Hunsberger's letter to the editor ("*Star Wars* review promotes violence against women," April 11, page 11) regarding his review ("Hollywood feminism and the decline of cinema," Feb. 29, page 21). I've seen the film and share Thiessen's views. As a male and former soldier, I know what soldiers are expected to do.

When I read Hunsberger's response, I was somewhat surprised that she thought it "promotes violence against women." I tried to follow her train of thought in order to understand what she had drawn out of the review, and I could not come to the same conclusion.

I contemplated her somewhat strong response and wondered if we are super-sensitive and easily offended if someone speaks or writes what is on his or her mind without the intent to offend anyone, especially if the statement is excerpted from its context. Are women and men confident enough with a healthy self-esteem that we can accept, perhaps even respect, someone else's opinion even if it differs from our views?

To request that someone apologize, as Hunsberger suggested to Thiessen and Dick Benner, *Canadian Mennonite's* editor, would require that they recognize their fault and repent; otherwise, the apology is only a formality and does not solve much. Instead of reprimanding Benner for publishing Thiessen's review, I commend him for publishing Hunsberger's sharp criticism of him.

I hope *Canadian Mennonite* will continue to publish what readers think and feel, even if articles are sometimes controversial.

HELMUT LEMKE, VANCOUVER

✉ Where are the non-white MC Canada pastors who need to be heard?

RE: "PRAYER OF preparation for Assembly 2016," June 6, page 5.

I said a loud and sincere "Amen" to your prayer,

/// Correction

The photo with the 'A hedge of protection' article on page 19 of the June 20 issue was of Virginia Froese. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

especially the portion: “Together we confess that some of us hold power over others—implicitly or explicitly—due to race, gender, orientation or economic means. We lament the stories left unheard and absent in our gatherings. We forget that we are all part of your collective body that knows no borders or division.”

But then I noticed that you all are white young

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Beare—Hunter Garnet John (b. April 19, 2016), to Graham and Corinne Beare, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Neufeld—Emily Anne (b. May 11, 2016), to Scott and Sarah Neufeld, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Van Den Tempel—Ryker Willem (b. March 21, 2016), to David and Lauren Van Den Tempel, Poole Mennonite, Ont.

Baptisms

Roan Dawson, Skylar Shore—Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, Ont., June 5, 2016.

Tessa Dueck, Kay Hildebrand, Jon Strempler, Nikita Wiebe, Mykenna Seymour, Noelle Bergen—Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, June 5, 2016.

Laurens Thiessen van Esch—Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg, May 1, 2016.

Leah Bauman, Max Bender, Ashley Brubacher, Maya Morton—St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont., June 5, 2016.

Micah Roth—St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont., June 12, 2016.

Andrea Friesen, Corny Friesen, Adrian Giesbrecht,

Mennonite Church Canada pastors. Where is the voice of the young Chinese Mennonite pastor or leader, the Korean Mennonite pastor or leader, the first nation Mennonite church pastor or leader, and other important segments of our church whose voices need to be heard?

DANIEL PANTOJA (ONLINE COMMENT)

Beanco Giesbrecht, Maikel Giesbrecht, Domenila Harder, Tony Harder, Sabine Neufeld, Stefan Neufeld, Joel Neufeldt, Jessica Schroeder—Steinbach Mennonite, Man., June 5, 2016.

Marriages

Jantzi/Wagler—Krista Jantzi and William Wagler, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont., June 11, 2016.

Deaths

Baechler—Arvilla (nee Litwiller), 85 (b. Jan. 28, 1931; d. June 1, 2016), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Weber—Cheryl Jean (Reeve) (nee Brenneman), 53 (b. July 2, 1962; d. March 25, 2016), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

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

A moment from yesterday



Irene Klassen is pictured touring a sawmill at LaCrete, Alta., in September 2003, when the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta meeting was held in the northern Alberta town. The trip was almost a thousand kilometres, so it took a long day to get there. Participants were provided with a tour of the LaCrete Mennonite Heritage Village, the Heimstaed Lodge for seniors, and the sawmill. Klassen was a long-term volunteer for the historical society for many years; it would not have survived had it not been for her determination. She is still contributing by donating her collection of photos to be posted on the Mennonite Archival Image Database.

Text: Alice Unrau

Photo: John Klassen / Mennonite Archives of Alberta



archives.mhsc.ca

VIEWPOINT

Becoming Aryan

BEN GOOSSEN

MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE PHOTO
(ALBER PHOTO COLLECTION)

High-profile Nazi officials toured the Mennonite colonies in occupied Ukraine. During his 1942 visit to Molotschna, Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS and an architect of the Holocaust, exchanged greetings with Mennonite surgeon Johann Klassen.

When Susanna Toews arrived in Litzmannstadt, Poland, in 1944, she was already a member of the Nazi racial elite. Her native village in Ukraine had come under German occupation in 1941 with Adolf Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. During the intervening two-and-a-half years, the young Mennonite woman became a beneficiary of racial warfare.

While German forces deliberately starved Russian and Ukrainian speakers, or shipped them to the Reich for forced labour, so-called "ethnic Germans" like Toews and her family received generous rations. In the same months that SS death squads murdered nearly all of Ukraine's 1.2 million Jews, Nazi "welfare commandos"—also run by the SS—distributed aid to local Mennonites.

What can explain the general interest, even enthusiasm, among high-ranking Nazi officials for Eastern Europe's Mennonite inhabitants? The short answer is that Mennonites—unlike Ukrainians, Russians, Poles and certainly Jews—were Aryan. At least Nazi war makers thought they were Aryan. In Hitler's Third Reich, this was a catch-all category denoting racial privilege. It was associated with fair skin and hair, as well as a high degree of "blood purity." One group of Mennonite refugees from the U.S.S.R., for example, scored a German bloodline "heredity quotient" of 98.8 percent.

Mennonites themselves often facilitated racial testing, providing their bodies and congregational record books for "scientific" research. In at least one case, members met to fill out racial papers together as a formal church event.

Achieving Aryan status generated substantial benefits. These included citizenship, legal protections and career prospects, all of which were unavailable, or severely curtailed, for Jews and other alleged non-Aryans.

But who to count as "Aryan" versus

"non-Aryan" was not always clear, so officials created a multi-tiered racial matrix, known as the "German Racial List," which specialists used to categorize persons with muddled or uncertain ancestry. While millions in the newly conquered areas were sorted into the list's lower categories, most of the approximately 9,000 Mennonites in occupied Poland and the neighbouring Danzig area would have been awarded top slots.

They were not the only—or even the largest—group to be categorized in this way, however, being dwarfed by the 35,000 Mennonites in Ukraine who came under German rule two years later. Despite decades of starvation, emigration, persecution and deportation under Bolshevik rule, Ukraine remained home to Europe's largest group of German-speaking Mennonites, and generally welcomed the invading Nazi forces, hailing them as liberators who had come to end Stalin's tyranny.

It was during these years that Toews and other local Mennonites first learned

to think of themselves as Aryan. But tens of thousands of Jews in and around the settlements met a different fate. Toews recalled with horror in her post-war memoir how one SS officer shot a Jewish girl, about her age, on the village outskirts. Every dignity denied to Jews and Slavs was extended to Mennonites, some of whom received clothes and housing taken from Holocaust victims.

Even in 1943, as Hitler's soldiers suffered massive losses on the Eastern Front, Germany's retreating forces continued to assist Ukraine's Mennonites. Nearly all, in fact, chose to accompany the Wehrmacht on its trek back to occupied Poland. There, in large processing centres like Litzmannstadt, evacuees experienced new bouts of racial testing.

"In order to become German citizens, we were interviewed many times," Toews later remembered. "Samples of blood were taken from us. . . . Twice we were X-rayed. Then we were given our German citizenship papers with all German rights."

The process of becoming Aryan, as described by Toews, tracks with the experiences of tens of thousands of Mennonites in Nazi-occupied Europe. Today, a majority of Mennonites in Europe and the Americas—including many direct relatives of those who profited from Nazism—continue to live rich, privileged lives.

What responsibility do we, as Christians and as members of a peace church, have for the victims of a system that benefited our co-religionists and, in many cases, our own families? After more than 70 years, it is time to respond. ❧

Ben Goossen is a scholar of global religious history at Harvard University. He is the author of Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era, forthcoming in 2017 from Princeton University Press. This Viewpoint piece is adapted from a longer article entitled 'Measuring Mennonitism: Racial categorization in Nazi Germany and beyond,' published in the 2016 issue of the Journal of Mennonite Studies.

Visit canadianmennonite.org/becoming-aryan for more photos.



VIEWPOINT

Today we gave up our car

RANDELL NEUDORF

As a family we have been talking for a while about giving up our mini-van and switching to our bikes and public transit. June 1 was the momentous day when that finally happened.

We are a family of five, with our kids' ages ranging from 3 to 13, so this was no small decision for us. We have tried over the last couple years to use our bikes more and more, and our car less and less.

We know biking is good for our health and the environment, and it saves money. Lots of times we have done well with leaving our car at home and lots of times we have found excuses why we needed to use the car. The straw that broke the camel's back—or the mini-van's axles—was that all our savings were going into keeping our car on the road. It seemed like every time we put some money in the bank, our vehicle knew just how much was there and would then need a repair that would clean out the account. This happened over and over again, so we decided that we just needed to get rid of our vehicle and make a drastic change.

I had a minor panic attack yesterday as I was driving around my old mini-van for the last time, with so many frantic thoughts rolling around in my brain:

- **WHAT ARE** we doing?
- **ARE WE** crazy?
- **ARE WE** ready?
- **WE DON'T** own rain gear! Stupid me, for not going to buy some rain gear while I had the car.
- **WILL MY** kids get tired of this?
- **CAN MY** family actually bike as far as I need them to?
- **WHEN I** need a car, where do I rent one from?

Today I still have random thoughts of panic, but I also have some feelings of hopefulness. I hope:

- **WE WILL** be healthier and stronger. Every time we go somewhere we will be sneaking in some exercise.
- **WE WILL** be less consumeristic. Everything we buy will now cost us something to bring it home: either a delivery charge or our effort.
- **LIFE WILL** slow down a little.
- **THIS WILL** be the first step in making even more environmental changes that are good for our planet.
- **WE WILL** be more connected to our neighbourhood and city. A bike has no walls, and conversations can happen at any stop sign.
- **WE WILL** be in solidarity with people who would like to have a car but can't afford one.
- **THIS WILL** be an important step in following Jesus. I hope my kids can see that this is really about trying to make radical decisions and life choices that push us towards living more like Jesus, by being present in the moment, taking care of the environment, and storing up treasure in heaven instead of on earth.

Now I'm not saying we will never own

a vehicle again. We might decide to buy one some day, just not a gas-guzzling van. I'm also not saying everyone should ditch their cars, since I may need to borrow one from a friend in the near future. But I do think we need to always be prepared to make drastic changes to the way we live our lives.

When something like getting rid of your car, moving into a smaller house or giving up a well-paying job that you hate for a job you will love even though it pays less, becomes a total fantasy, that is a sad and dangerous day indeed. That is the day a little bit of our soul dies on the inside.

On the other hand, God is creative, and when the Holy Spirit whispers a plan to you over and over again, it might sound a little crazy and far-fetched but that is when things just might get exciting. If you step out in faith, following the crazy path God has put in front of you will bring your soul back to life. The greatest and most freeing moments of my life have always been when I have been brave enough to do something drastic. Here's hoping this is another one of those moments. ☸

Randell Neudorf is pastor of the Commons, a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada church plant in downtown Hamilton, Ont.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RANDELL NEUDORF



Randell Neudorf of Hamilton has traded his family mini-van in for a bicycle.

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Passing on the faith by example

BY EV BUHR

As parents, you hope that you have done all that you can to nurture and encourage your children on their faith journey, and yet there is that inner voice telling you that you might not have done quite enough. Maybe you could have read more Bible stories when

PHOTO BY PATRICK BUHR



Co-pastor Donita Wiebe-Neufeld of First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, baptizes Tom Buhr.

We didn't want to pressure him into baptism, knowing that he had to come to that decision for himself. We saw it as a good opportunity for him to learn more about what it means to be a member of Christ's body of believers. This also led to some good discussion of our own baptism experiences.

I attended Rosthern Junior College (RJC) in

they were children. Maybe you should have prayed together more as a family. Maybe you should have had more in-depth discussions on being a part of the church.

This spring, when the faith exploration classes at our church were announced for any interested youth, my husband Patrick and I asked our son Tom, in Grade 11, if he wanted to be part of this group. There was some interest, but also hesitation. Would any of his friends be taking the class as well? Would he have to be baptized?

We didn't know the answer to the first question, but we assured him that he could take the class this year and then decide if he was ready for baptism.

Saskatchewan for grades 11 and 12, and participated in church catechism classes both of those years—in Grade 11 at Rosthern Mennonite Church, and in Grade 12 at Eigenheim (Sask.) Mennonite Church, as well as my home church, Hanley (Sask.) Mennonite, whenever I was home for a weekend. Add to that the Christian ethics and Mennonite history classes at RJC, and I think I had a pretty well-rounded understanding of what it meant to be a Mennonite Christian. However, underlying all of that was the unspoken expectation that when you were in Grade 12 you took the catechism class as part of Sunday school and then you were baptized.

Was this expectation real or had I imposed it on myself? At my home church, all four of us in Grade 12 were baptized that year. We had all participated in the catechism classes that were part of our Sunday school curriculum. Perhaps this wasn't the best route to an adult believer's baptism, but it did give everyone a chance to be a part of the discussion.

Every year I hear about how difficult it is to get youth together for the faith exploration class: their schedules are so full and their time so limited. If this is such a struggle, why don't we still do this during the Sunday school hour? If everyone takes the class, will there be too much peer pressure for all to be baptized? Is choosing to join the faith exploration class the first step in choosing to be baptized? How do we best pass our faith on to our children?

I don't really have answers to these questions, but have read some articles that show how we have changed our approach to catechism or faith exploration over the years, as the "choosing to take the class" approach has superseded the mandated "everyone takes the class" approach of my youth. Perhaps there's a place for a bit of both, with an emphasis on Mennonite beliefs and practices in Sunday school and an opportunity to explore this further within the faith exploration sessions. Or maybe the best way to pass on our faith is by example, trusting that the way we live our lives as we seek to we follow in Christ's footsteps testifies to what we believe.

When Tom chose to be baptized at Pentecost after attending the faith exploration classes, he stated that his faith journey had begun on the day he was born, and that his parents had taken him to church that first Sunday after and every Sunday since then.

Maybe we did enough after all. ☸

Ev Buhr is president of Alberta Women in Mission and the office administrator at First Mennonite Church, Edmonton.



GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Voices in the wilderness

English language proficiency No. 1 barrier to successful resettlement for refugees: MCC

BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Raising awareness and funds for the ongoing demands of the global refugee crisis was the goal of a “ration meal” lunch hosted by Canadian Foodgrains Bank at Sam’s Place in Winnipeg on June 20 to honour World Refugee Day.

Ahmad Khattab, a former refugee from Syria who is now settled in Winnipeg, was a keynote speaker at the event. His sharing centred mostly around his previous work in Syria as an English teacher, his hope of working in his own field again some day, and his excitement for the progress his family has made since coming to Canada.

“My wife is now taking EAL [English as an Additional Language] classes, and our two children are attending school,” he said. “Our oldest is seven and doing very well, especially in math, so says his teacher. The younger one is five. He likes to draw. And he loves to dance, which you may know in Middle Eastern culture is unusual. But I am very encouraging of him and his dancing, and I hope that one day he will become a dancer!”

It was clear that this family had seen dark times, but even the solstice sun couldn’t compete with the pride and joy shining in Khattab’s face.

English was a major theme in his speech. The power that English proficiency has given him was obvious, as was the importance he places on his wife’s learning. Still, it may not be obvious to the average Canadian just how pivotal English skills really are for incoming refugees.

Arsinel Mesidor, coordinator of Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba’s Provincial Migration and Resettlement Program, said that English proficiency is by far the No. 1 barrier to refugees’ successful resettlement: “Regularly we visit

families and we ask them, what are their main challenges, and again and again it is always ‘learning English.’” He emphasized that access to quality EAL instruction is essential to achieving positive outcomes for refugees in Canada.

Mesidor explained that many obstacles inhibit refugees seeking to learn. “What is required, first of all, is more funding for the provincial EAL program, which is generally where refugees go first,” he said. “Right now, the system is overwhelmed, the classrooms are full and the wait times can be very long.” He noted that access to childcare is a major barrier for mothers, which quickly creates a Catch-22 situation.

Andrew Micklefield, a member of

Manitoba’s legislative assembly for Rossmere, attended the lunch on behalf of Premier Brian Pallister, to voice the government’s ongoing support and mindfulness of refugee needs.

Regarding the specific local needs Mesidor highlighted, Micklefield responded in ready agreement. “I think, by far, language is the biggest problem [for refugees],” he said. “And the government of Manitoba wants very much to offer support [by backing current local initiatives and developing new solutions]. That said, this really is an all-hands-on-deck situation. It’s not just government groups that are needed, but church groups, mom’s groups, school groups, apartment groups. The nuts and bolts of this situation come down to all Canadians, ordinary people, doing what they can to address basic problems in simple ways.”

As headlines continue to feature boats full of people overturned in the Mediterranean, the phrase “any port in a storm” rings with greater and greater urgency. Nevertheless, Mesidor urged that, while new solutions are necessary, quality EAL teaching for refugees is critical now. ❧

CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK PHOTO BY AMANDA THORSTEINSSON



Andrew Micklefield, a member of Manitoba’s legislative assembly for Rossmere, attended the Canadian Foodgrains Bank’s ‘ration meal’ lunch on behalf of Premier Brian Pallister, to voice the government’s ongoing support and mindfulness of refugee needs.



Jeff Gundy, professor of English at Bluffton University in Ohio and a poet, discusses the piece “A tribe called Mennonite” with the painter Lisa Schirch at the Global Peacebuilders Conference and Festival, held from June 9 to 12 at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont. The piece, made up of buttons, and hooks and eyes, looks at how Mennonites have set themselves apart from the world through their dress codes.

Art, theology and peace come together at global festival

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

Take almost 200 mostly Mennonite peacebuilders from around the world, bring them together for four days in June at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, liberally mix in keynote speakers, 30-plus workshops, warm sunshine, a concert and original play on conscientious objectors, and you have the making of a fabulous four days of building peace in the world—a world where there is none, or where it is in too-short supply, or where there is peace but it can be grown bigger—all nonviolently but passionately, and with painful honesty and humility.

Originally conceived of a conference to coincide with the 2015 Mennonite World Conference assembly, the event became not just a conference—but a festival that approached peacebuilding from other angles, including music, storytelling, drama and art.

Theology, sociology and art were intermingled from the beginning. On June 10, Fernando Enns, director of the Institute of Peace Church Theology at the

University of Hamburg, Germany, looked at how Mennonites have both influenced and been influenced by ecumenical engagement, especially through the World Council of Churches. He was followed



From left to right: Ilona Paganoni, a Swiss peacebuilder working for MCC; Kyong Jung Kim, former executive director of the Korea Anabaptist Center; John David Ashworth, a mediator and conflict management specialist from Toronto; and Paul Heidebrecht, director of the MSCU Centre for Peace Advancement at Grebel, partake in one of the Conversation Café’s at the Global Peacebuilders Conference and Festival.

by Paulus Widjaja, director of the Centre for the Study and Promotion of Peace at Duta Wacana Christian University in Jogjakarta, Indonesia, whose talk focussed on the social construction of violence and how to work at change depending on where a community finds itself in relation to other faiths. Then Lisa Schirch, a research professor at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., described a series of eight paintings she created to promote peacebuilding in various situations, like the current discussion about inclusion of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer members in Mennonite Church U.S.A., under the title “Tongue screws on Pink Mennos.”

Other arts components included a concert featuring Gamelan, an Indonesian ensemble of percussive instruments directed by Masie Sum, an assistant professor of music at Grebel, which came together with the University of Waterloo Choir and the Factory Arts String Quartet to premiere “Earth Peace” by Carol Ann Weaver on June 9. Two nights later, Theatre of the Beat premiered its new play, *Yellow Bellies*, that explores the experiences of conscientious objectors in Canada during the Second World War through first-person narratives, letters and the media of the day. Live music was provided for the play by No Discernible Key, a local blues, folk and rock band.



Andrew Suderman, left, an MC Canada Witness worker and director of the South African Anabaptist Centre, visits with Fidele Lumeya, a member of the Congolese American Council for Peace and Development and a long-time MCC co-country director in Congo, during one of the breaks at the Global Peacebuilders Conference and Festival.

June 10 and 11 began with “Stories for peace.” Dann Pantoja, a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker in the Philippines, shared about bringing evangelical Christian leaders together with Muslim rebels for conversation and peacebuilding. With news of Canadians being killed by hostage-takers in the Philippines, Pantoja was asked about the danger in his work. “It’s just as dangerous,” he said, “as driving your car down the 401 [highway] to Toronto from Waterloo.”

Following the June 10 banquet, keynote speakers Steve Heinrichs, Mennonite Church Canada’s director of indigenous relations, and Leah Gazan, a member of Wood Mountain Lakota Nation, located in Treaty 4 Territory in Saskatchewan, spoke on “Giving up privilege, pursuing decolonization.” In order to make sense of this, the international visitors needed to be brought up to speed on Indian Residential Schools, the ‘60s scoop and current conditions in first nation communities in Canada.

The workshops wrestled with questions like, “What for you defines Mennonite peacebuilding?” and, “Were the early Christians pacifist? Does it matter?”

Jennifer Otto, who co-leads an urban church plant in southern Germany in partnership with the Verband Deutscher

and the Deutsches Mennonitisches Missionskomitee, answered the second question, saying they weren’t as pacifistic as some scholars have argued, and it doesn’t really matter as Anabaptists continue to apply the Bible today.

One workshop hit close to home with a study of the “Doctrine of discovery,” a belief that lands without Christian princes were empty and ripe for Christian conquering, while another looked at “white privilege” in Mennonite justice institutions like Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

While one participant wondered about the low level of theological and biblical underpinnings for peace, others found the conference inspiring for the practical nature of many of the workshops in which the foundations of peacemaking were referenced.

Participants included a Kurdish man married to a Dutch pastor, and a Muslim peacemaker from Asia who declined to be identified. MCC worked at bringing many peacebuilders from around the world to the conference, but even it could not

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PHOTO



Ben Wert and Johnny Wideman (front in white shirts) play two weary conscientious objectors (COs) arriving at the Montreal River Camp during Theatre of the Beat’s premiere of Yellow Bellies during the Global Peacebuilding Conference and Festival. Surrounding them are members of No Discernable Key, who provided live music for the play and in this scene played COs already at the camp.

overcome the denial of visas to 10, mostly African, peacebuilders. ☹

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COURTESY OF MENNONITE ARCHIVAL IMAGE DATABASE



The first Ontario Mennonite Relief Sale committee consisted of, from left to right, seated: Ed Wiens, Margaret Brubacher, Ward Shantz, Pauline Bauman and Oscar Snyder; and standing: J.W. Fretz, Elven Shantz, Karl Enns of Waterloo, Ont., and Irvine Cober.

Fifty years of funding relief

New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale has given every penny to MCC

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

The way Ross Shantz remembers it, his father Ward contacted his buddies from the Second World War conscientious objector camp at Montreal River and they began the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale in 1967.

It is more complicated than that, though, as these buddies and their spouses came from many different Mennonite and Anabaptist groups, including Brethren in

Christ, the “Swiss” Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec, “Amish” Western Ontario Mennonites, and the “Russian” United Mennonite Conference of Ontario.

Following the example of a sale that had begun a decade earlier in Pennsylvania, the New Hamburg group raised funds to cover expenses so that every dollar earned at the sale went to relief. While some balked at the idea of needing to get something in



Volunteer auctioneer Robert Beer shows off the Peter Etril Snyder painting “Going once, going twice” just before selling it for \$5,000 at the 50th New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale in late May.

order to give, the encouragement among these frugal Mennonites was to spend more than a thing was worth because it was giving to a good cause.

Over the next 50 years, the sale raised more than \$12 million. While not part of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario, the Relief Sale and its sister Heifer Sale have given every dollar to MCC for relief work around the world—so far. John Reimer, the current Relief Sale chair, says that the committee has never had to dip into sale proceeds to cover expenses, but he can see the day when that might be necessary. And funds aren’t the only concern for the future.

At the North American Relief Sale Board’s gathering that took place at Conrad Grebel University College the week before this year’s May 27 and 28 sale, many of the boards noted increased difficulty in finding volunteers. Volunteers are getting older, and younger people do not seem as interested as they were in the past.

Reimer says that the sale has become technologically savvy, but needs to become more so in the future. This makes handing jobs on difficult, as it is not just what the past volunteer knew that is important, but how to implement that

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knowledge in a new time. That said, though, the new feature this year was a crokinole room staffed by young adults who enjoy playing games.

Another new item this year was a focussed fundraising effort specifically for Syrian humanitarian relief. Shantz convinced the group to try to raise \$50,000 for this project; over the two days, cash donations for Syria totalled nearly \$4,000.

In total, about \$310,000 was raised at this year's Relief Sale, with about half of that coming from the quilt auction alone.

Fiftieth-anniversary events included the planting of two trees at the New Hamburg Fair Grounds and the placing of a park bench. At the sale itself, old quilts were displayed and a 50th anniversary tent had memorabilia and photos from years past on display.

As usual, there was a feature quilt among the 230 that were auctioned, and Peter Etril Snyder, a local painter originally from Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont., painted a work specifically for this 50th-anniversary event, incorporating material from photos and newspapers. The painting was auctioned off for \$5,000; it was bought by Snyder's brother-in-law who says he just "wanted to keep it in the family."

When thinking about the sale, Reimer says the committee has increased its efforts to show the connection between faith, churches and the sale. Colourful signs at each booth named the congregation doing the selling.

In the 50 years since the sale began, society has changed and visitors do not necessarily understand the connection between Mennonite Christian faith and service to others. That and a continuation of the inter-Mennonite nature of the sale, with Old Colony Mennonites from around Aylmer, Ont., selling traditional Russian Mennonite and Mexican food, and new Mennonites like the Lao and Hmong churches of Kitchener selling spring and egg rolls.

"Different groups working together to help those less fortunate," Reimer says of their efforts.

At this year's sale, Muslim volunteers worked alongside Mennonites in thankfulness for the work MCC has done in helping Muslim refugees. ❧



Christina Edmiston, left, a pastor at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., her husband Greg and their daughter Evangeline, pose with Mohamad Alasad in front of a tent focussed on raising \$50,000 specifically for Syrian humanitarian relief at this year's New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale. Alasad is a Syrian refugee sponsored by First Mennonite Church.

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MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ALBERTA PHOTO



This year's MCC Relief Sale in Coaldale, Alta., raised more than \$218,000 for MCC's ongoing international ministries.

RELIEF SALE REFLECTION

Moments to remember

ROSE KLASSEN

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ALBERTA

The auction began. Among the crowds in Coaldale for the annual Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta Relief Sale on June 10 and 11, stood two Syrian men whose families had recently been assisted by MCC and sponsored by Mennonite churches to re-settle in Canada. To their surprise, a loaf of bread was auctioned off for \$200!

A sapling oak tree was next to go. The price climbed and climbed. Enthusiasm filled the room. As the two Syrian men watched the bids rise, they began laughing and hugging each other. Now they were beginning to understand some of the unique ways MCC gathers funds so people like them have been able to receive vital support during difficult times. This small tree sold for \$2,500. And so did the next one.

Three more trees sold, each bringing in between \$2,200 and \$2,500. All of these trees were grown from acorns that fell from the giant old oak tree in the Chortitza area of Ukraine, that is famous in Mennonite historical memory.

Rowis, a participant from Egypt in the International Volunteer Exchange Program, ran for an hour and 45 minutes on a treadmill, while calling out to passersby, "You donate! I'll run for you!" The donation basket was full after his run

was complete.

As part of the My Coins Count effort, young children pulled a small wagon with a yellow cardboard school bus mounted on top. As they journeyed through the venue with lights flashing on the bus, people dropped coins into the wagon to support Edupaz, an education project in Colombia. My Coins Count raised more than \$23,000.

Some favourite Mennonite dishes were enjoyed by long lines of hungry people, with all food prepared and served by volunteers.

Many beautiful quilts were auctioned off, in all shapes, sizes and colours.

The effort and energy that goes into a relief sale is huge. The dividends are huge, too. More than \$218,000 was raised to support MCC's ongoing international ministries. In the end, volunteers and those who attend support a cause that reaches beyond their own families, countries and faith groups, as Christ's followers working for God's kingdom. ✎

To view Rowis's treadmill experience, visit youtu.be/4Gyy_fmnpY0.



PHOTO BY LEONA LORTIE



This year's Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan Relief Sale and Auction, held in Saskatoon on June 10 and 11, started with bidding on a piece of bannock, instead of a traditional loaf of bread. The bannock sold for \$1,550 to Allan Klassen of Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. Pictured, Rachel Eyahpaise of Bannock Express hands the bannock over to the successful bidder.



Walk of hope in support of refugees

Celebrating newcomers, raising awareness

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

The rain that fell on the morning of June 18 didn't stop a group of walkers from making a three-kilometre trek in support of the upcoming World Refugee Day.

Starting out from the Abbotsford Pentecostal Assembly church, the group—including adults and children, the able-bodied and those in wheelchairs, long-time community residents and newly settled refugees—ended up 40 minutes later at the MCC Centre on Abbotsford's Gladys Avenue. The Refugee Hope Walk was sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C. in observance of World Refugee Day on June 20, a day to commemorate the hope, resilience and strength of the 60-plus million refugees around the world.

"The Refugee Hope Walk aims to celebrate the hospitality of our community and the stories of those who have safely arrived here, while continuing to inspire hope for those still waiting—both the refugees and

the sponsors awaiting their arrival," said MCC spokesperson Julia Buckingham.

Each participant carried a square of



Participants on the Refugee Hope Walk in Abbotsford, B.C., on June 18, add their squares to the refugee quilt at the MCC Centre. The patchwork of colourful materials symbolizes the beauty of many different people from a variety of ethnicities coming together as single entity.

Helping raise awareness of World Refugee Day, walkers in Abbotsford, B.C., make the trek to the MCC Centre on June 18.

fabric, which they fastened to a quilt on a wall in the MCC Centre lobby upon arrival. The patchwork of colourful materials was intended to symbolize the patchwork of a society with many different peoples.

"When you put [these things] together, you make something even more beautiful," said Wayne Bremner, MCC's executive director.

Abbotsford Mayor Henry Braun, himself a product of a Mennonite refugee family following the Second World War, extended a welcome to all newcomers on behalf of the city and its council, saying, "Together you represent hope for the future. There is a whole community of support to support each one of you. I am living proof that, by making a difference in the life of just one refugee, you're making a difference in generations to come."

Several former refugees and current sponsors also spoke, encouraging the community to continue to be welcoming to newcomers.

"MCC believes refugees deserve our best efforts," said Jennifer Mpungu, MCC B.C.'s newcomer program coordinator, as she encouraged individuals and churches to consider sponsoring refugees. ❧

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Becoming the people of God is a messy business

Arli Klassen addresses annual Grebel fundraising dinner

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

WATERLOO, ONT.

The 2016 Ralph and Eileen Lebold Fundraising Dinner, held on June 2 at Conrad Grebel University College, featured Arli Klassen, chief development officer for Mennonite World Conference (MWC), who spoke on the “Messiness of becoming the people of God.”

She began by telling the story of her shift in identity when she, a Christian woman from North America, went to Lesotho, South Africa, where she was a white mother. Culture forms people’s identity, she said, noting that her missionary aunt told her years earlier that “you can’t really know yourself until you live in or interact with a different culture—and only then we can begin to see how we are shaped by our own culture.”

Walking through a series of Bible stories—from the tower of Babel to the glorious cross-cultural worship in Revelation 6 and 7—she noted that the biblical vision of the people of God is not sameness, but diversity, with no one people being all that God’s people could be.

But, she said, this is not easy to do. At First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., where she attends, the congregants keep on asking whether they are two congregations in one building—one Anglo and one Hispanic—or whether they are one intercultural congregation that speaks two languages.

She told the story of MWC general secretary César García working at this with the organization’s 14-member Executive Committee. He suggested that they go out to a restaurant and eat frog together. There was deep disagreement around the table, with some expressing an “ick” factor, while another objected to eating frog for faith reasons.

Klassen, referring to the Pluralism Project at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., suggested strategies for living together in the church, including:

- **ENERGETIC ENGAGEMENT** in diversity;
- **ACTIVE SEEKING** of understanding over differences, not just tolerance; and

Staff change

MCC Saskatchewan hires new program director

Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan has hired Gil Dueck as its new program director, effective June 15. Dueck most recently served as academic dean and instructor at Bethany



Gil Dueck

College in Hepburn, Sask. An announcement from MCC states that Dueck “is deeply invested in conversations and initiatives across the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches and is finishing doctoral work focussing on faith formation among young adults.” He assumes the role from Eileen Klassen Hamm, who was recently appointed to the executive director’s position.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

- **TAKING TIME** to dialogue, give and take, speak and listen.

Klassen took traditional liberal multicultural tolerance and pushed it into a faith-based intercultural goal. Christians don’t just tolerate each other, but learn to live together while holding deep differences because of their deep unity in Christ in an Anabaptist perspective.

She concluded: “As César García said at the MWC meeting, it is not easy to be together, but it is special. I believe that it really is through our diverse cultures that we can learn to know the depth and height and breadth and width of the love of God, and that we can be strong enough together to withstand persecution.”

Originally established to build an endowment to fund a position in pastoral leadership training at Grebel, the dinner currently raises funds for the new Anabaptist Learning Workshop, a non-academic program that hopes to train lay and pastoral leaders in longstanding and new Mennonite congregations. This year’s dinner raised \$15,200. ☸



Fred Redekop, left, pastor of Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church, visits with Arli Klassen, chief development officer of Mennonite World Conference and keynote speaker at this year’s Ralph and Eileen Lebold Fundraising Dinner, a joint project of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Conrad Grebel University College.

'Imagine' a bright beginning

Rosthern Junior College launches new learning program

By DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

"This is our first kick at the cat," quips Rosthern Junior College (RJC) principal Jim Epp.

Nevertheless, he is confident his school's new integrated learning program will be "a dynamic learning experience" for Grade 10 students. "Recognizing that pedagogy and student learning styles are different than they were, we're offering an educational opportunity that's different but still very consistent with the mission of our school," he says.

The program, dubbed Imagine, will involve up to 26 students engaging in a multi-disciplinary learning program.

David Epp, Jim's son, has been hired as the Grade 10 home room teacher, who will provide instruction in English, Spanish, history and Christian ethics. David says his most deeply meaningful learning experiences have been those in which theories and ideas have been tested with hands-on experience, such as learning both history and biology while gardening with his grandparents. He hopes to create an environment in which his students can enjoy similarly memorable learning opportunities.

To illustrate how this might work, David suggests that a history lecture on the French Revolution might lead to reading poems about equality and freedom, "while also seeing what it means to be the covenant people [of] a liberating God" through a study of the Israelite Exodus from slavery in Egypt.

Jim says most days will probably look like typical school days, with students attending classes and collaborating on projects in the school building. But, as David points out, a significant component of Imagine will



David Epp

take students out of the classroom for day and even overnight trips to sites where theories can be put to the test with experience. Although details have yet to be finalized, David says trips to local organizations, such as Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, as well as sites that are further afield, like the Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg, will give depth to students' learning.

Imagine will be in place for Grade 10 students in the 2016-17 school year, but throughout the year RJC's board and staff plan to explore how the program might be extended to accommodate Grade 11. The following year, they will look at ways to extend the guided experiential learning program to include Grade 12. Epp says that as students prepare for post-secondary education, their course loads become more individualized and they no longer move from class to class as a group. For this reason, it will take time to work out what the program will look like for the upper grades.

Imagine fulfills the third broad goal of the RJC board's Do More Be More campaign, unveiled in November 2014, which is to enhance student programming. With the new program in place, Epp hopes that the campaign's first goal—to grow student enrolment—will also be realized. And so far, interest in Imagine is promising, with enquiries coming from as far away as Toronto and Florida.

The campaign's second goal—to develop and enhance the RJC facility—is also becoming a reality. Currently, the school's chemistry lab and biology classroom and lab are being renovated and upgraded into state-of-the-art learning spaces, says Jim.



He expects the renovation will be completed in time for the coming school year. He also notes that funds were in place for the \$200,000 to \$250,000 project before work began earlier this year. Future dreams include:

- **MOVING THE** second-floor administrative offices to the main floor and relocating a refurbished library to the second floor.
- **RENOVATING THE** 1976 residence building.

These projects will be tackled as funds become available.

In addition to David, the school has hired two other new teachers and two new residence deans. Allison Schmidt will teach math, replacing her father Lloyd, who is retiring. Jill Olfert Wiens will teach senior English and Christian ethics, taking Emily Dueck's place. Scott Feick, who has been a part-time men's dean since February, will assume full-time responsibilities in September. Hugo Malan will join Feick as men's dean, replacing Scott Kim. Andrea Enns-Gooding will work alongside Michaela Pries-Klassen as women's dean. Enns-Gooding fills the role vacated by Lisa Isaak.

Significantly, five of these six new staff members are alumni of the school, who know "what RJC is all about," says Jim. He expects they will bring "enthusiasm and fresh perspectives on education," adding, "It's going to be exciting around our staff table to see what their views are all about." David echoes his father's sentiment: "It's a bright beginning for September. I can't wait for it to start." ❧

To read more about RJC's Do More Be More campaign, visit bit.ly/rjc-envisions.



GOD AT WORK IN US

On the path to wellness

Hutterite man finds healing on his bike

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

Popular wisdom suggests the way to deal with mental health issues is to talk them through. Pete McAdams, an uncomplicated, 43-year-old, Hutterite long-distance cyclist, has discovered a quieter path.

While he prefers to focus on biking, rather than himself, his decidedly atypical Hutterite last name begs explanation. Having grown up on the “fringes” of a Bruderhof community in Pennsylvania—a group associated with Hutterites—McAdams’ parents went to Crystal Spring Hutterite Colony near Niverville, Man., to assist with translation work after McAdams had left home. When he visited his parents, he liked what he saw of colony life. His parents ended up staying at Crystal Spring and, in 1995, he joined the colony, too. It is no utopia, nor an attempt at utopia, he says, but it is “the best lifestyle I have seen for living out the commands of Jesus.”

McAdams emphasizes the non-rigid nature of the community. I ask how he would respond to the stereotype that would suggest otherwise? “Look at what I do,” he says with a chuckle, sitting at a picnic table in my yard with his cycling gear on.

What he does is ride his bike. About 300 kilometres a week. Maybe half that in winter. In good Hutterite fashion, he makes his own recumbent bikes.

“I’m not an athlete,” he tells me. This is not false humility; it is part of his message. Although he pedals a lot of kilometres, he is not particularly fast. He has never won a race. “I’m not competitive,” he says. And until five years ago, he says he was “significantly overweight.” Nothing he says sounds like an athlete’s words.

The story keeps coming back to the bike as a means of healing. As a teenager, McAdams’ temperament—more

PHOTO BY HAL LOEWEN



Pete McAdams rests beside the road during a long-distance bike excursion in southern Manitoba.

specifically, his temper—ruled out team sports. He also struggled with depression. Biking helped.

“I always sort of knew that a good ride cleared my head,” he says. “If I spent time on the bike, [the anger and depression] went away.” He did see counsellors a couple times, and while he does not discount the value of therapists for some people, he says “they weren’t of much help” in his case.

Biking was. And it continues to be. What exactly is it about biking that helps? “It’s not going to heal everything,” he says, “but there’s a power that is healing in riding.”

The bike is also a great way to connect with others. James Friesen was riding the

highways of southern Manitoba in 2002 when he saw a “mirage.” A guy was riding a recumbent bike down the highway, Friesen recalls, with a bunch of kids behind him. Dresses fluttered in the wind and the closest thing to spandex were suspenders.

It was McAdams on a charity ride with other Hutterites. The meeting was particularly fortuitous, as Friesen is the head of Eden Health Care Services, a Mennonite-based mental health organization in southern Manitoba. The two men continued to bump into each other at biking events over the years. Now, Crystal Spring Colony is a big part of Eden’s annual “Head for the hills” cycling fundraiser. Last September, Jonathan Kleinsasser, a colony member in his 70s, was the top fundraiser.

This year, McAdams is taking the connection between biking and mental health a step further. In conjunction with the attempt by Arvid Loewen, an ultra-long distance cyclist, to break the Guinness Record for biking across Canada, McAdams plans a parallel ride—Guinness rules require Loewen to bike alone—from Regina to Winnipeg, 583 kilometres, a distance he hopes to cover in 24 hours. He says Loewen put out the challenge and he accepted it. McAdams hopes to arrive in Winnipeg on the evening of July 5 for a joint rally with Loewen at the Manitoba legislature. Friesen and others plan to ride into the city with him.

McAdams’ goal is simple: Share the message that biking can bring wellness and to bring attention to the good work of Eden Health Care Services. Both McAdams and Friesen see value in formal, as well as informal, approaches to mental wellness. Friesen says research shows that often it is in the unstructured downtime of people’s lives—time in the bush, splitting wood, riding a bike—that their brains make the connections essential for well-being.

That is certainly true for McAdams. “I found something on the bike,” he says, “and I want to share it.” For those who can’t bike, he suggests finding a similar activity. His dad, in his late 70s, walks. McAdams’ story is not about athletic heroics or even an ordinary person doing extraordinary things. It is about ordinary people doing ordinary things on the path to wellness. ❧

ARTBEAT

New song collection project director announced

Bradley Kauffman brings passion for Anabaptist theology, music and worship

MennoMedia

Bradley Kauffman of Cincinnati, Ohio, has been named project director for the new song collection for Mennonite Church U.S.A. and MC Canada. The print version is slated for release in 2020. He will perform work on a contract basis before assuming a full-time staff position on July 5.

Kauffman earned a bachelor's degree in music education at Goshen College in 1996 and completed a master's degree in choral conducting at the University of Iowa in 2002.

"Bradley's passion for the church and his keen interest in the formative role of music in our collective worship made him a very good fit for this position," said Terry Shue, director of leadership development for MC



Bradley Kauffman

U.S.A. and a member of the song collection steering committee.

Kauffman has taught music in three Mennonite schools. From 2007-15, he was a choral and instrumental music instructor at Hesston (Kan.) College. From 2005-07, he directed instrumental music at Bethany Christian Schools, Goshen, Ind. At Iowa Mennonite School in Kalona, he was vocal and instrumental music instructor from 1997-2005.

He has led Music Week at the Laurelville (Pa.) Mennonite Church Center, and across the church has been active in congregational musical life. He has held roles in professional and community choirs, singing and conducting. He studied under Timothy Stalter at the University of Iowa and also composer/conductor Alice

Parker. At Goshen, he studied conducting and church music with Doyle Preheim. Kauffman also has experience arranging, composing and writing, and plays guitar and hand drums.

"My faith and professional life are each deeply formed by Mennonite hymnody," Kauffman said. He used the 1992 *Hymnal: A Worship Book* as a textbook in conducting classes at Hesston, and noted that it has served the denomination well. "Yet I resonate with the movement to renew and expand the denominational canon for the 21st-century church," he stated.

The project director is responsible for managing all aspects of the project, and will oversee a part-time project assistant and various committees. Kauffman will be responsible to a six-member steering committee: Russ Eanes and Amy Gingerich from MennoMedia; Terry Shue and Nicole Francisco Bailey from MC U.S.A.; and Karen Martens Zimmerly and Irma Fast Dueck from MC Canada.

Kauffman said he brings "passion for preserving and expanding a denominational canon in ways that are theologically and artistically nourishing. I have done a lot of thinking, leading and writing around the topic, and am energized by the prospect of leading this incredible project." ☞

Five Canadians selected for song committee

MennoMedia

Five Canadians have been chosen to serve on the 12-member committee for the new song collection for Mennonite churches planned for release in 2020. They include:

- **SARAH KATHLEEN JOHNSON**, a graduate of Conrad Grebel University College who formerly pastored in Ottawa, has been named as worship resources editor. She is currently a Ph.D. student in liturgical studies at Notre Dame University, South Bend, Ind.
- **DARRYL NEUSTAEDTER BARG** of Winnipeg. He works for Mennonite Church Manitoba, with wide experience in worship music and recording/videography. He is a member of Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

- **PAUL DUECK** of Cartier, Man. Originally from Ontario, Dueck is a recently retired music educator and past graduate of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Winnipeg, who taught at Swift Current (Sask.) Bible School.
- **MIKE ERB** of New Hamburg, Ont. He is the music director at Hillcrest Mennonite Church in New Hamburg and is actively involved in MC Eastern Canada, Mennofolk and a recording studio.
- **ANNELI LOEPP THIESSEN** of Winnipeg. Originally from Ontario, she just finished a third year of studies in piano and worship at CMU. She is part of the Gathering Church in Kitchener, Ont.

The last four will sit as committee members.

BOOK REVIEW

An evening with Harold F. Miller

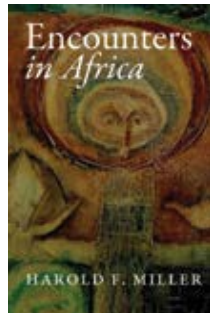
Encounters in Africa.

Harold F. Miller. Manqa Books, 2015, 228 pages.

BY RICHARD MACBRIDE

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

On a recent April evening, our book group enjoyed an evening with Harold F. Miller. Although not literally present, Miller was there through his book *Encounters in Africa*, a collection of articles, speeches and personal experiences spanning more than 50 years of living in East Africa.



When Bishop Zedekiah Kisare, the first African bishop of the Tanzanian Mennonite Church, died, Miller and his wife were among the hundreds of mourners who waited patiently for retired president Julius Nyerere to arrive so the funeral service could begin. When Nyerere finally arrived, he humbly paid his respects as an ordi-

nary mourner, not as a former president expectant of applause and adoration. At this funeral Annetta, who was born in Tanzania to Mennonite mission workers, was embraced by a giggling and hand-slapping group of respectable middle-aged women who had been her childhood friends and who just could not contain their joy despite the solemnity of the occasion.

Miller describes the African concept of eldership, and how one is called to be an elder after having been observed for years as being a good husband, father and respected member of the community. An elder (*mzee* in Swahili) is one who has the ability “to listen, keep secrets, and make decisions on behalf of the people in a manner reflecting consensus and serving the well-being of all.” On occasion Miller has been addressed as *mzee*.

East Africa has grassroots development projects inspired and owned by rural communities. Miller sums up the achievements of the Utooni Development Organization, which over a 30-year time span, built 750 sand dams in dry areas of Kenya—all of which still function.

Miller stays away from the darker political and corrupt aspects of East Africa’s recent history; however, he does weigh in

Seconded by the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to four East African ecumenical agencies, he worked in rural development and peacemaking. Harold and Annetta (nee Wenger) Miller now live in retirement in Nairobi, Kenya.

The five members of our fledgling book group all worked in Africa through MCC and have known Miller for his wisdom and wit. We chuckled at some of his “slice of life” stories that add a touch of whimsy and lighten the tone, such as losing his wallet, finding himself in jail awaiting trial and a fine for a minor driving indiscretion, and the mysterious six seeds he brought back from Ethiopia. His experiences drew out many African encounters of our own.

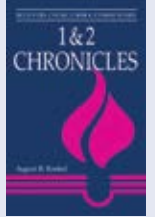
Miller recounts a visit Annetta and he made to Madagascar. He describes the Festival of Dry Bones during which family members exhume their departed loved ones every five to seven years to rewrap their bones in new burial shrouds. After much dancing and feasting the bones are reinterred in the family crypt. While this ritual may seem morbid to westerners, Miller seems to be making the point that throughout sub-Saharan Africa ancestors are remembered, respected and honoured.

/// Briefly noted

Chronicles commentary speaks of books’ hope

Readers might skip over the two books of Chronicles on their way to better-known biblical books. If they do, August H. Konkel thinks they are making a mistake. The professor of Old Testament at McMaster Divinity School in Hamilton, Ont., is the author of *1 & 2 Chronicles*, the 30th volume of the Believers Church Bible Commentary series. Chronicles offers a lot to today’s church, Konkel believes. “The main theme of Chronicles is hope,” he says. “If we are faithful to our calling, then the hope God gave to David and his people is realized.” Writing at the time of the Persian Empire, after Israel’s return from Babylonian exile, Chronicles offers encouragement to the people of his small nation. The writer has “a vision of the nation that is apart from the state,” says Konkel. He notes that the Chronicler four times uses the term “the kingdom of God.” Chronicles provides a starting place to understand the New Testament meaning of the kingdom of God, the commentary author says, adding that this understanding of the kingdom is elaborated by Jesus and Paul in the New Testament. The Believers Church Bible Commentary series is a cooperative project of the Brethren in Christ Church, Brethren Church, Church of the Brethren, Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A.

—MennoMedia



on Kenya’s December 2007 post-election violence and peace efforts. Kenyan peace groups, joined by retired archbishop Desmond Tutu and former UN secretary general Kofi Annan, were able to prevent Kenya from going down a dark hole of civil unrest and carnage, demonstrating that Africans have the ability to solve many of their own challenges. ///

Exploring alternative ways of living

A 22-year-old reflects on living with his 97-year-old grandfather

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

Jonas Cornelsen jokes that, at the age of 22, he's retired.

While most of his peers are looking to start their careers, the Winnipeg native and recent university graduate moved to Vancouver last month to live with, and care for, his 97-year-old grandfather, Erwin Cornelsen.

Although he is as healthy as a 97-year-old can be, Erwin and his family decided that having Jonas live with him and help

Formerly the pastor of Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Erwin lives in the same house he bought in 1957, a year after emigrating from Germany to Canada.

When Jonas thinks about the four months he spent with Erwin in 2013, the biggest thing that sticks out for him was observing the ways in which his grandfather's faith sustains him. "[He] delights in walking through each day and naming where God is at work," Jonas says.

'That's so exciting because there's just so much ... he can teach and express in terms of his life story and what he's reflected on, and his own personal faith journey is very interesting.'
(Jonas Cornelsen, on living with his grandfather for a year)

him with his daily routine and chores around the house would be beneficial.

"He has a very sharp memory, he speaks well, and he's very aware of what's going on," Jonas says. "That's so exciting because there's just so much ... he can teach and express in terms of his life story and what he's reflected on, and his own personal faith journey is very interesting. It benefits me to know those stories."

Jonas lived with Erwin for four months in 2013 while Jonas was working at Erwin's church, Sherbrooke Mennonite. "He was my roommate, my landlord and my grandfather, and that wacky combination of things really worked out well for us," Jonas says.

Erwin's day always begins and ends with Bible study and prayer, and when he goes to church each Sunday he circulates around the room during coffee hour, checking in with people to see how they are doing.

"Seeing the way that he's lived for so long, and lived well, really was inspiring to me," Jonas says. "Interacting with people from other generations really helps us get to know different perspectives on meaning and values and all those things. It's as good for me as it is for him in a lot of ways."

Erwin says that he is very happy to have Jonas living with him. "He is a very intelligent person, and very friendly and helpful,"

(Continued on page 28)

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JONAS CORNELSEN



Erwin Cornelsen, left, and Jonas Cornelsen, pictured in 2013, are looking forward to spending time together now that they live together.

(Continued from page 27)

Erwin says. “I couldn’t ask for any better grandson.”

Jonas graduated from Canadian Mennonite University in April with a bachelor of arts degree with double majors in political studies as well as communications and media. He wrote an honours thesis exploring the political theology of A. James Reimer and capped off an impressive undergraduate career by being named class valedictorian as well as being awarded the President’s Medal, given annually to two graduating students in recognition of their qualities of scholarship, leadership and service.

“Living with a guy like my Opa can continue to teach me [those values],” Jonas says. “I’ll have what I need. I’ll even earn a modest wage and all that. But, for me, the importance of doing it is a lot more in trying to walk the talk of caring for each other and expressing alternative ways of living to what

we often consider success or a career track.”

Jonas has committed to living with his grandfather for at least a year, after which he, Erwin and their family will decide if a longer stay is warranted.

“Part of what really intrigues me about this opportunity is it isn’t governed by contracts and rules, but it’s genuinely about how we find our security in a relationship and how both of us benefit from this arrangement—economically, physically [and] spiritually,” Jonas says.

Leaving his friends and family in Winnipeg behind has been challenging, but Jonas knows those relationships will be there when he comes out of “retirement.”

“This is something I can associate with vocation or calling, in the sense that what I’m doing is something I strongly believe in, and is something I can do differently than anyone else could,” he says. “I have plans to take this moment and do everything I can with it, and that’s all I want.” ❧



‘[He] delights in walking through each day and naming where God is at work,’ Jonas Cornelsen, right, says of his Opa Erwin.

VIEWPOINT

Follow the money

Anabaptist convictions of justice and nonviolence ought to be applied to economics

ANDREW BROWN

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

PHOTO BY THOMAS COLDWELL



The Uprooted learning tour includes a stop at Cafe Justo, a cooperative in Mexico that allows poor coffee farmers to remain independent.

What is the real cost of the things we buy?

That’s the question I asked myself during Uprooted, a three-week learning tour for young adults through Mexico, Guatemala and Arizona that took place in May. Organized by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta and MCC Saskatchewan, the tour looked at issues surrounding migration in Central America and peacebuilding projects in the region. Our first week was in southern Mexico and Guatemala, our second week was spent in and around Mexico City, and our last week along the Mexico-U.S. border.

Throughout our journey, we followed the general path of the migrants who

make their way from Central America, through Mexico and into the U.S. We visited migrant shelters, listened to the stories of these people and tried to grasp the complexities of what was going on. These people’s stories will stay with me for a long time.

Many of these people are fleeing injustice and violence in their home countries. I’ve always been vaguely aware that this was going on, but I never realized how the violence and injustice these people experience is driven by economics, and how much Canadian and American economic interests have to do with it.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is an agreement between Mexico, the U.S. and Canada.

Canadians either hate it or embrace it, but it has helped our economy to reach new markets throughout North America. In Mexico, it has had a much more dramatic effect.

A major part of NAFTA is that it allows Canadian and American companies to move to Mexico and use cheap Mexican labour to reduce production costs. The factories, or *maquilas*, pay an average of between \$400 and 500 pesos, or C\$30 to C\$35, a week for a 60-hour work week. When we were in Mexico, we lived one day on a *maquila* salary. We ate cheap bologna sandwiches and still went over our money limit for the day. While these *maquilas* offer many jobs, they do not provide living wages.

When we were in Mexico, we heard the story of NAFTA's impact on Mexican corn farmers. To make competition in the corn market "fair," Mexico had to lower its import tariffs on American corn. Subsidized and mass-produced American corn began to flood the Mexican market, being sold for much less than Mexican corn. The Mexican corn farmers cannot compete.

In Guatemala, we visited Marlin Mine, a gold mine operated by Goldcorp, a Canadian company. We heard stories about how the mine has negatively affected the community of San Miguel. The mine uses cyanide to separate gold from the rock and uses massive amounts of water to wash it out, effectively poisoning the drinking water. This hit me at a personal level. I have received Goldcorp stock shares from my grandfather in the past, as a means of getting me interested in the stock market. I have benefited from the company, and it from my investment.

This bothers me. After seeing all of this economic violence and injustice, it makes me question my own Anabaptist convictions: What does it mean to be economically just or nonviolent? What does it look like to work for peace economically?

It is easy to get lost in the vast depths of economic injustice around the world—from the production of the clothes we wear and the food we eat, to our electronics—but it is important to do what we can to counter this injustice.

I compare it to the physical violence that we see around the world, and how I respond to it. Just as I stand against violence, or try to learn more about different conflicts in the world and try to work for peace, I try to learn where the money I spend goes and the effect of my purchases.

But how can we become, in language familiar to our Anabaptist experience, "economic peacemakers," "conscientious objectors to economic injustice" and "just consumers"?

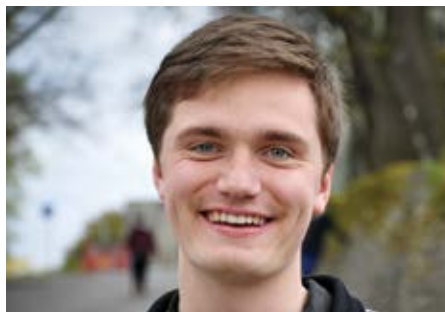
When we were in Mexico, we visited Cafe Justo, a coffee cooperative that allows poor farmers to remain independent by selling their coffee directly to the United States, rather than joining major coffee corporations. This sort of direct or fair-trade system works well and the fair-trade coffee market has really taken off recently.

While such products are not always available, they can help us become just consumers. Where the products we buy are not sold through fair trade, organizing fair-trade markets can be the work of economic peacemakers. Finally, refusing to buy from major department stores can help us to become conscientious objectors to economic injustice.

The next time I buy something, I'll be sure to think about where it came from, where my money is going and whether it is a just transaction. ☿

Andrew Brown, 23, lives in Winnipeg, where he is a member of Charleswood Mennonite Church.

PHOTO BY JAMES CHRISTIAN IMAGERY



Andrew Brown

PHOTO COURTESY OF THOMAS COLDWELL



Participants in MCC's 2016 Uprooted learning tour include, clockwise from top left: Thomas Coldwell (MCC Alberta), Andrew Brown, Alannah DeJong, Allison Goerzen (MCC Alberta), Jana Klassen, Carol McNaughton and Maria Alejandra Toro.

PHOTOS BELOW BY CAROL MCNAUGHTON



Locals cross the river between Guatemala and Mexico. Uprooted looked at issues surrounding migration in Central America and peacebuilding projects in the region.




Uprooted participants were told that the Goldcorp Marlin Mine in San Miguel, Guatemala, has negatively affected the community.

Promotional Supplement

Schools Directory featuring MCI

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New leadership team formed

Mennonite Collegiate Institute

The Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) board is pleased to announce the formation of a leadership team for the 2016-17 school year. The team will consist of Cheryl Braun, Conley Kehler and Harold Schlegel.

Braun has accepted the board's invitation to the role of interim principal for the 2016-17 school year. She has served the school for the past 22 years as a teacher and guidance counsellor, and has been a proven leader as vice-principal at MCI for the past 11 years.

Kehler will continue his duties as business manager and donor development, with additional roles in campus management and services. His 33 years of business experience, including the last three as the business manager




The 2016-17 leadership team at MCI will consist of Conley Kehler, left, Cheryl Braun and Harold Schlegel.

at MCI, have been a true blessing to MCI.

The board of the Greyton, Man., school is also pleased to announce the development of a new school role: director of student life. Schlegel will be filling the newly created

(Continued on page 31)

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Promotional Supplement

(Continued from page 31)

position. The position has a specific focus on enrichment of residence life and programming. MCI is excited to see some strong leadership in Student Christian Life as it pertains to the complete student body. Schlegel has been active as a pastor for 30-plus years, most recently at Lowe

Farm Mennonite Church, Morden Mennonite Church and Gretna Mennonite Church, all in Manitoba.

We are thankful that God has called this creative team to work in the lives of students, staff, families, and the many alumni connected to MCI.

Calendar

British Columbia

Oct. 14-16: Women's retreat, "Piecing together our identity," at Camp Squeah, Hope, with speaker Song Yang Her. Register at mcbc.ca/womens-ministry.

Nov. 18-20: MC B.C. "Impact" youth retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope.

Saskatchewan

Aug. 6: Seventh annual Spruce River Folk Festival, at Spruce Home, 20 kilometres north of Prince Albert on Highway 2. Pipe ceremony at 10 a.m. Music from 1 to 8 p.m. For more information, or to volunteer, call Heather Driedger at 306-763-6224.

Manitoba

July 29-Aug. 1: Pioneer Days at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach. Activities include steam-powered threshing, music and food.

July 30: Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, hosts a public reception for artists Parvin Shere of Winnipeg and Rhonda Harder Epp of Edmonton, at 7:30 p.m. Their works are on display until Sept. 3.

Aug. 8-12: Pioneer Day Camp at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, for children aged 9 to 12.

Aug. 10: Heritage Classic Golf Tournament fundraiser for Mennonite Heritage Village, at Quarry Oaks Golf Course. Spaces are limited.

Sept. 18: "Supper from the field," at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, at 5:30 p.m. Held in conjunction with Open Farm Day.

Ontario

Until Dec. 26: New exhibit at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo: "Conchies speak: Ontario Mennonites in Alternative Service."

Until Aug. 13: "Stories in Art from Iraqi Kurdistan," at Conrad Grebel University College Gallery, Waterloo.

July 23-24: Wideman Mennonite Church 200th-anniversary main event, Markham, Ont. (23) barbecue at 5 p.m. (RVSP to widemanchurch@gmail.com), followed by hymn sing at 7 p.m. (24) worship service at 10 a.m., followed by a noon potluck lunch, and stories and music at 2 p.m.

July 31: Vineland United Mennonite Church 80th anniversary celebration. Worship service at 10:30 a.m. with lunch and program to follow. Please RSVP at 905-562-4422.

Aug. 4-7: The Sherk/Shirk/Schürch reunion, in Waterloo. Activities include bus tours, seminars, a children's program, auction and banquet. For more information, e-mail schurch.gathering@gmail.com.

Sept. 9-11: "Building community" retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Theme: "Gifting our community." Speakers: Catherine Gitzel and Matthew Arguin. For more information, call 519-625-8602.

Sept. 26 or 27: Fall seniors retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Theme: "Our houses, our hearts, our faith." Speaker: Ingrid Loepp Thiessen. For more information, call 519-625-8602.

U.S.

July 28-31: The 15th-annual Bridgefolk



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Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
Aug. 15	July 29 (early deadline because of Civic Holiday)
Aug. 29	Aug. 15
Sept. 12	Aug. 29
Sept. 26	Sept. 12
Oct. 10	Sept. 26
<i>Focus on Education</i>	
Oct. 24	Oct. 7 (early deadline because of Thanksgiving)
<i>Focus on Books & Resources</i>	
Nov. 7	Oct. 24

conference for sacramentally minded Mennonites and peace-minded Catholics takes place at St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn. Theme: "I desire mercy: Practising the works of mercy." For registration information, visit bridgefolk.net.

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



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN /
BY KRISTIN FLORY OF THE BRETHREN SERVICE EUROPE OFFICE



Ephraim Kadala of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria and Hussaini Shuaibu of the Christian and Muslim Peace Initiative receive the Michael Sattler Peace Award from the German Mennonite Peace Committee on behalf of their respective organizations on May 20. The two Nigerian men travelled to Germany to receive the award. The German Mennonite Peace Committee bestows the award to people or groups whose work is committed to nonviolent Christian witness, reconciliation between enemies, and promotion of interfaith dialogue. The award is named after Michael Sattler, the martyred 16th-century Christian Anabaptist, and is bestowed in Rottenburg am Neckar on the anniversary of his execution. See more online.



MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE PHOTO BY ALISON RALPH



God at work in the World Snapshots

Quilt show volunteer Marge Giesbrecht buys some plants at the 2016 Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba SpringFest, held from May 27 to 29 in Winnipeg. Through the combined revenues of plant sales, barbecue lunches and a quilt show boasting 120 works of art, this year's SpringFest raised \$29,000 for the organization's work with the ECS Mother's Union Developing Project in South Sudan, which empowers women by providing workshops and training focussed on life-skills, sewing, small business skills and healthy family nutrition.