

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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MEYERS
GARAGE



Ceremonies of belief

Unsettling Mennonite stories

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EDITORIAL

Change, I welcome you

TOBI THIESSEN
PUBLISHER

Anxiety about change abounds. It is a natural response to uncertainty, but I tire of reading about it. Newly taking up my role as publisher of this magazine, I would like to be bold and announce, "Change, I welcome you." I would also like to praise the staff at *Canadian Mennonite* for taking our new leadership structure in stride, welcoming me in and being open to new ideas and possibilities.

Executive editor Ginny Hostetler introduced herself in the previous editorial with snapshots of the church influences and past experiences that led her to this new calling at *Canadian Mennonite*. Going forward, Ginny will continue to write editorials, and will oversee the print and digital aspects of the magazine. My role as publisher is to strengthen church-wide partnerships during these turbulent times; work on ways to adapt and improve our communications across the church; and be responsible for the financial side of our organization.

Many have asked if this is a new position. No. It's a re-organizing of responsibilities. Formerly, *Canadian Mennonite* had a full-time position called "editor/publisher" and a half-time web editor. Now we have a half-time publisher and a full-time executive editor responsible for print and online media. Our goal is the same as it has been since 1953: to offer Mennonites across Canada a forum in which to connect, inform, inspire one another and dialogue about issues facing Mennonites in Canada.

There are twin forces fuelling anxiety in the communications environment of Mennonites in Canada, but I am resolutely hopeful:

• **FIRST, TO** state the obvious, the print medium is in decline. It is equally obvious that online communications are flourishing. Although print publications have some benefits that will never be recreated online, there are new ways of engaging with each other online that print could never achieve. For a church as spread out geographically as Mennonites are in Canada, we should embrace the new options. Change, I welcome the benefits you will bring to our church in terms of more immediate and more interactive communication with one another.

• **SECOND, AND** more difficult to accept than the decline of print, is the idea that Christianity is in decline. This large societal shift helps explain the context for the five-year Mennonite Church Canada process led by the Future Directions Task Force. One outcome of that process was the recommendation to reorganize our church structure into a network of regional churches. Because there are many uncertainties about what will be lost, and whether the new model will serve our congregations well, there is tremendous anxiety. Recently, I heard a few people call the new model "deconstructionist." But from my perspective, the idea of structural change brings us new opportunities that



the previous model might not have been able to accommodate.

Already, there are signs of renewed hope for the future church. Witness the energy that surfaced spontaneously from students and young church leaders to form the Emerging Voices Initiative. This group is injecting new ideas, critical questions and encouragement to our revisioning process.

Witness the energy of the working groups and reference groups that have been established to further shape the proposed regional church model. By my count, there are nearly 100 church members from across the country, of all ages, bringing their own diverse opinions, experience and theological perspectives to the questions posed by the 11 working and reference groups. These are encouraging signs of engagement in the fundamental questions about who we are as a church family and what we do together.

Witness, further, the spin-off effect that the working groups are having. To fulfill their mandates, they are inviting others to contribute ideas and counsel on the future of our church programs. For example, the International Witness/Relationships Working Group is surveying pastors and congregational leaders to help determine how to make our international ministries most effective. You can find it at futuredirectionsmc.ca, if you would like to add your own voice. Change, I welcome the new engagement that the Future Directions process generated.

Anxiety about change is understandable. At *Canadian Mennonite*, we wrestle with the twin impacts of the decline of print and the challenges to Christendom. Yet amidst the anxiety over all that might be lost, there are signs that much is to be gained through change. Praise God for change that brings renewal.

ABOUT THE COVER:

A 1952 re-enactment of *The Trail of the Conestoga* in front of Meyers Garage in Kitchener, Ont., includes the 'capture' of the Conestoga wagon by 'Indians' of all ages. Read about this and other 'unsettling Mennonite stories' in our page 4 feature, 'Ceremonies of belief.'

PHOTO: DAVID L. HUNSBERGER, MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

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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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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD FEATURE

Ceremonies of belief

Unsettling Mennonite stories

BY ROBERT ZACHARIAS

The 'Indians, [my grandmother] explained, would occasionally take vegetables from the garden without asking, which her exhausted mother found endlessly frustrating. 'But then whenever one of us children fell sick, they would come and heal us,' she noted. 'So I suppose it was all fair in the end.'

Several years ago, my Russian Mennonite grandmother told me a story about her childhood that I think about often. When she was just a young girl living somewhere southeast of Winnipeg, her parents unexpectedly lost their farmland. With no land, no money and no prospects, they packed their few belongings onto the first train out of town.

Some time later, the whole family climbed out at a random stop somewhere in northern Saskatchewan. According to my grandmother, her father swung his axe into the first tree he saw, turned back to the family and said "Welcome home."

She went on to tell me all about what it was like growing up as a pioneer in the 1930s—about impossibly long winters, poor crops and stubborn cows.

"And of course there were the Indians," she added, late in the conversation. "Nobody liked them much." The "Indians," she explained, would occasionally take vegetables from the garden without asking, which her exhausted mother found endlessly frustrating. "But then whenever one of us children fell sick, they would come and heal us," she noted. "So I suppose it was all fair in the end."

Having read plenty of Mennonite literature over the years, I do know her story, if not totally factual, is profoundly true in its larger arc: a sense of injustice towards Mennonites in one place, followed by migration to an unfamiliar land and, finally, the hard work of settlement, leading to new rewards. This is a story we Mennonites have been telling ourselves for a long time.

The stories we tell

Stories matter a great deal. Much more than many of us tend to think. According to the Cherokee author Thomas King, our most foundational beliefs are not simply reflected in the stories we tell, but are constructed by them. "The truth about stories," King insists,

PUBLIC DOMAIN IMAGE



Issued on Aug. 28, 1974, to mark the centenary of Mennonite settlers in Manitoba, this eight-cent stamp recalls almost 8,000 Mennonites who arrived between 1874 and 1980, and settled on two reserves on the east and west sides of the Red River.

“is that that’s all we are.” And that’s why, King suggests, “you have to be careful with the stories you tell.”

Here’s another story. This one was told by Mabel Dunham in 1924 and was published as *The Trail of the Conestoga*. Her tale is about the Swiss Mennonites’ arrival near the Grand River in south-western Ontario following the American Revolutionary War. The historical romance emphasizes the challenges overcome by the Mennonites as they rambled up from Pennsylvania in their sturdy Conestoga wagons.

It’s one of those stories we like to tell ourselves, celebrating the Mennonites’ simple faith, dogged perseverance and indefatigable good cheer. William Lyon Mackenzie King, then the prime minister of Canada, liked it so much he wrote a laudatory preface for the first edition.

As you may have guessed, both Mackenzie King and Dunham forgot to mention that the settlement was on the Haldimand Tract, contested land that had been promised to the Six Nations indigenous community just a few years earlier, to “enjoy forever.” You can look for indigenous people in the book, but you’ll find them only in a few passing references to the settlers’ fears and in their otherwise palpable absence.

Dunham’s story, popular as it was, is rarely discussed by scholars of Mennonite literature. When critics go searching for the first novel of Mennonite literature in Canada, we usually end up finding Rudy Wiebe’s 1962 story, *Peace*

Shall Destroy Many. Wiebe’s story is about Russian Mennonites settling in Saskatchewan, where they are attempting to recreate the colonies they lost in the Russian Revolution. These Mennonites, too, face many challenges, including an impoverished Métis community on the outskirts of their village.

Wiebe’s thoughtful young protagonist sympathizes with the “Indian” community and even reaches out to it through Sunday school lessons, and several tentative Mennonite/Métis relationships emerge over the course of the book.

But *Peace Shall Destroy Many* is a story about the Mennonites’ fraught attempts to separate themselves from the world, and their leaders work hard to frame any contact between the two communities as a form of contamination. This story isn’t quite as happy as Dunham’s account, and Mennonites were not as happy to see it in print.

Now there isn’t space here to recount all the stories we Mennonites have told ourselves about our arrival in Canada, but I do want to tell you a few more, because the stories have changed over the years.

Sandra Birdsell, who is both Mennonite and Métis, likes to tell stories about how her mother’s and father’s communities have gotten along in Manitoba. Her book, *The Russländer*, tells the story of how the surviving members of a Mennonite family fled to Manitoba from what is now Ukraine following the Russian Revolution. Her next book, *The Children*

of the Day, tells the story of how one of those Mennonites marries a local Métis man and the general hilarity—but really mostly the challenges and hardship—that ensues. Read together, the two novels show a broader history underlying that pattern I noted earlier in many Russian-Mennonite stories: of how colonialism informed their violent departure from the old country, how colonialism facilitated their arrival in this new country, and how it has continued to inform their experience. Together, Birdsell’s stories remind us that the story of our arrival has yet to be finished.

The last published story I want to share is another hard one, but it’s also one of my current favourites. *North End Love Songs* is a poetry collection about a Métis woman whose brother goes missing in the “nortend” of Winnipeg. It is a moving portrait of familial devotion in a beautiful place, set against the enduring legacies of Canadian colonialism in a city with the largest concentration of Russian Mennonites in the world. It was told by Katherena Vermette, who, like Birdsell, is of Métis and Mennonite heritage. She has published work in Mennonite literary venues in the past, but in *North End Love Songs* the Mennonites are readable, if at all, only through their absence. Placed beside the other stories we have been telling ourselves about this land over the past century, however, I think this story, too, has a great deal to teach us about who we are, where we live and what we mean by the word “we.”

Stories claim us

Here is one final story. I had a conversation with some childhood friends of mine last fall. The topic of Mennonites came up, and a few of them insisted they weren't Mennonites anymore. One wondered aloud if he ever was. This surprised me, given that we had all grown up together in a small Mennonite community, and I had often attended their Mennonite churches with them and their Mennonite families.

But their claims are not unusual. Many Mennonites across Canada have left their faith behind, and some Mennonite churches have even started to remove the term "Mennonite" from their names. Since I moved to southern Ontario, where more Mennonites retain traditional dress and other distinctive markings—like horse-and-buggies—I am informed with surprising regularity that I can't possibly be a real Mennonite. So the story my friends were telling, it seems, is a common one: Since they have left the faith or the villages of their youth behind, they aren't really Mennonites anymore.

But here's the thing about that story: It's not true. Our past is not that easily dismissed. What's more, it is never simply ours to dismiss. After all, these friends of mine, like me, are in Canada precisely because of our Mennonite identities.

Russian Mennonites were invited to settle in Manitoba a few years after the crushing of the Métis resistance. The generous terms of their arrival were negotiated specifically as Mennonites: land was set aside for them to settle in clusters as Mennonites. Freedom from military service, like the allowance to educate their children in their own language and traditions, was awarded to them as Mennonites.

By the time my friends and I grew up—yes, as Mennonites—on that land in the 1980s and '90s, our town was nearly exclusively Mennonite, and we attended public schools at which German classes were mandatory and the Bible was read over the intercom. We are, inescapably, products of this past. We cannot simply write ourselves out of this story or the responsibilities it entails, especially while

continuing to enjoy all the benefits and privileges it has accorded us. We are made up of stories, it's true, but we don't always get to choose them. Sometimes, the stories claim us.

In his book *If This is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories?* J. Edward Chamberlin suggests that stories are "ceremonies of belief as much as they are chronicles of events." He insists that we are made up of stories, that our beliefs about who we are and where we belong are formed and passed on through the stories we tell. I like Chamberlin's account because it registers something of the relational, spiritual component of stories, of the significance of participating through listening, and of the power of stories to compel us into action.

I wonder what might happen if we Mennonites understood the stories we tell ourselves as our little "ceremonies of belief." Might we ask what, exactly, we have been telling ourselves to believe? Might we work to better locate our stories within the earlier and larger stories told in this land? Might we listen more

closely to these stories and find our beliefs nudged into action? ☸

Robert Zacharias is from Winkler, Man., on Treaty 1 land, and now lives with his family in southern Ontario, where they attend The Meeting House



(Brethren in Christ). He is an assistant professor in the Department of English at York University in Toronto, on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, the Métis and, most recently, of the Mississaugas of the Credit River.

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For discussion

1. What are the stories about arrival in Canada, or other heritage stories, that are told in your family or community? Do these stories become more or less important for succeeding generations? How influential are these stories in shaping who we become? Do these stories play as large a role as Bible stories?
2. In what settings we do tell these stories of origin? In what circumstances do we begin to ask whether these stories are based on accurate historical facts? In what ways do these stories change over time? Does historical accuracy matter?
3. Robert Zacharias says that Mennonite identity is not something that can be dismissed. Do you agree? What is the difference between "Mennonite" as culture or heritage, and "Mennonite" as faith? For how many generations can someone claim to be Mennonite if there is no faith connection?
4. Zacharias suggests that our stories should include more about those who lived on this land before our people did. What questions do you have about early settler/indigenous relations in your community? What stories should we be telling to our children?

—BY BARB DRAPER

See related resources at
www.commonword.ca/go/182

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PHOTO BY BRAD LEITCH



Hereditary chief George Kingfisher, left, and Mennonite landowner Ray Funk chat during a scene from the documentary film, Reserve 107, about land rights in Saskatchewan.

VIEWPOINT

Fraught with possibility

BY WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

Long before the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the celebrated United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), we already had a 4,000-page report with 400 recommendations that were praised by chiefs and church officials alike.

The report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was thorough and daring: “In just 20 years the revitalization of many self-reliant aboriginal nations can be accomplished, and the staggering human and financial cost of supporting communities unable to manage for themselves will end.”

That was 21 years ago.

Cue the dusty shelf cliché. While gains have been made, orchestrated dependence is still the *modus operandi*. Government money finds limited traction. The Indian Act remains. Ninety percent of homes in Pikangikum lack plumbing. Suicide crises regularly fall through the gapping holes in the collective

ability to effect change. And many Canadians question the current course, understandably.

Now we have the new Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women inquiry and a new wave of official optimism emanating from Ottawa. Where do we Mennonites fit into this picture of perennially frustrated hope? What are the highlights and challenges in our indigenous relations work?

With my personal history in these efforts, I recall a time when Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) had service workers in five indigenous communities from coast to coast, as well as numerous office staff and summer gardeners in a dozen or so first nations. Now, despite growing acceptance of indigenous people within society and the church, MCC’s program capacity has shrunk. MCC Canada is down from two full-time positions in the mid-1990s to one. MCC Manitoba is down from as many as four, to one. MCC Ontario is bucking the

trend with two nearly full-time staff.

The gardening program is gone, and while MCC has staff in Timmins, Ont., and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador—areas with large indigenous populations—it no longer places people in first nations themselves. This mirrors international work that leans toward work with local partners instead of sending people.

Similarly, MC Canada has become less involved in specific communities, focusing more on engagement of Mennonite churches while building close ties to various indigenous academics and leaders. MC Manitoba also continues to facilitate Partnership Circles that connect congregations directly with communities in ongoing relationships.

In broad strokes, we as a church are doing less work in first nations and more work among ourselves—learning tours, church presentations, publication of educational materials, MCC’s Myth Perceptions website (mythperceptions.ca), films and the like.

Steve Heinrichs, MC Canada’s indigenous relations director, visits many churches and publishes materials that include input from leading theologians and thinkers. But he also says that if we do not move beyond listening and educating ourselves, these can become “another form of resource extraction.” Educating ourselves is a beginning, not an end.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY
OF LYNDSEY MOLLINS KOENE

Lyndsay Mollins Koene uses the term “listen into action” to express the same idea. As Indigenous Neighbours coordinator for MCC Ontario, she straddles education and action. She shares about an especially meaningful learning tour that resulted in a group of northern elders making a reciprocal visit to the Leamington area. She speaks about sending seed potatoes, instead of gardeners, and responding to a request from the youth council of Attawapiskat to assist in building a youth gathering place.

She also talks about making the water run in Pikangikum, where the absence of water and sewer infrastructure is particularly severe. MCC collaborates with Habitat for Humanity, the Anglican Church, the Assembly of First Nations and a couple of engineers to put plumbing into homes of the most vulnerable people. Ottawa has agreed to match the more than \$400,000 the group has raised.

In Saskatchewan, MCC continues to be instrumental in efforts to seek redress for the Young Chippewyan First Nation, whose reserve land was given to Mennonite settlers in 1898. As documented in the film, *Reserve 107*, this contentious work has yielded deep connections between Young Chippewyan, Mennonite and Lutheran people in the area. In addition to facilitating relationships, MCC did much of the his-



A Sachigo First Nation woman grows tomatoes to provide food security for herself and her family.

relationship with indigenous people is “the most fundamental relationship to heal and get right.”

One step is MCC Ontario’s involvement in a project that will restore the Mohawk Institute Residential School in Brantford to its earlier state, as a reminder for future generations. Mennonite Disaster Service is also involved.

While all of these projects follow

In broad strokes, we as a church are doing less work in first nations and more work among ourselves—learning tours, church presentations, publication of educational materials . . . and the like.

torical research essential to the Young Chippewyan struggle. MCC’s Leonard Doell speaks with much fondness of the partnerships MCC has developed over his 20 years.

Back in Ontario, Rick Cober Bauman—a one-time “native gardening” participant who now heads MCC Ontario—notes that the MCC office, Conrad Grebel University College and numerous Mennonite churches in the Kitchener-Waterloo area sit on disputed land. He says that, for Mennonites, the

MCC’s decades-old practice of responding to indigenous invitations, they still enter the fraught territory of giver-receiver dynamics.

Heinrichs says we should embrace that risk. “We often play it cautiously because we don’t want to mess up,” he says of the fear of slipping into colonial patterns. However, he encourages church groups to carefully discern how to engage within the context of relationships rooted in listening, while recognizing that “it is going to be messy.” But, he adds, “that’s life, and

there’s joy in the mess.”

Another part of the messiness is having constructive discussions with people who question the work. “I’m interested in going to the spaces where there’s all those questions that people have roiling within their hearts,” says Heinrichs. He calls that a “growing edge” for himself, something that requires “a tonne of genuine respect” and a willingness to understand where people are coming from, instead of shutting them down.

As documents, inquiries and governments come and go, Mennonites remain engaged in a wide range of gritty, relationship-based efforts, both with first nations and among ourselves. While we could do much more—the needs are severe and urgent—we have considerably more capacity for this sort of direct engagement than other denominations.

With numerous seasoned staff in place, the confidence of a rich history, a truly rare array of relationships and considerable interest in the pews, Mennonites are well positioned to step up our efforts. Perhaps the challenge now is to learn from some of the best work being done, engage genuinely with the doubters among us, get more people stepping boldly into the messiness of relationship and be prepared to follow the unpredictable paths to action that relationships yield.

The challenge may also include expanding our theology to better allow us to walk and grieve with people when, despite our efforts, society’s actions do not match the stated optimism of the documents we hold up. ☘



Fish is smoked over an open fire during an aski (Cree translation for ‘land’) learning tour.

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. In light of the many recent letters on the topic of sexuality, we will edit any letter on this topic to a paragraph and post the rest online at www.canadianmennonite.org. 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.

✉ 'Apocalyptic threshold' is more than a few degrees

RE: "ARE WE living in the last millennium?" Dec. 12, 2016, page 8,

Phil Wagler's column is a reminder that apocalyptic predictions are still out there after a history of more than 2,500 years. Sadly for the would-be prophets, to date every one of them has been dead wrong.

Now, apocalyptic predictions tend to be environmental in nature. By focussing on dire environmental prophecies, some current trends are ominous. The bad news is that our human exploitation of ecosystems may cause an environmental apocalypse. The good news is that many of us are now trying to find ways to ease generating negative reactions.

Real ecological science teaches us that the environment functions as a set of self-organizing adaptive

(Continued on page 10)

FROM OUR LEADERS

A church in transition

WILLARD METZGER

The times we live in seem to change more rapidly with each passing day. In North America, Europe and elsewhere, protectionist sentiments, growing nationalism and increased border controls are becoming commonplace.

Fifty-four percent of worldwide refugees in 2015 poured out of Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia, according to the United Nations. In response, congregations have continued to do what we do best by faithfully responding to Jesus' call to love our neighbours, no matter where they are from. Across the country, we estimate that up to 40 percent of our congregations are welcoming newcomers to Canada.

Numerous congregations are working hard to understand what it means to reconcile our relationships with indigenous peoples. On April 23, a 600-kilometre Pilgrimage for Indigenous Rights left Kitchener, Ont. for Ottawa, taking

walkers through treaty lands along the way.

As of press time, the eldest participant is 87. The youngest, a nine-month-old baby girl, will travel the route on her mother's back. Kandace Boos, her mother, says, "I am walking for every aboriginal mother without access to solid prenatal care and post-partum support, every foster kid who doesn't believe life will get better and for every baby girl growing up with a depressed mother unable to get help."

The Pilgrimage is a hopeful opportunity to show the rest of Canada and the world that the church is willing to take responsibility for its historically uninformed treatment of indigenous peoples and it is willing to embrace difficult conversations.

In our national church family, congregations are following Jesus as they wrestle with a variety of challenges and opportunities. Some congregations are experiencing decreased energy, while others are enjoying increased vitality. In both cases, many churches have maintained regular

worship patterns and Sunday schools; engaged in Bible study; ministered to youth, families, young adults and seniors; extended community outreach; supported camp workers; engaged with other ministries in their regions; and partnered with Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers overseas.

The Future Directions process among our area churches and national church is the result of such congregational challenge and opportunity, and of dynamic and dramatic cultural shifts in our faith community and society. It emphasizes helping congregations to be at their best as centres of worship and mission together with sister congregations in area churches and across Canada. Can we bring the same generous rigour to this important task as we have brought to the job of resettling refugees and reconciling our relationships with indigenous peoples?

For all of the ways you love your neighbours as yourselves in these tenuous times, I am humbly proud of you. Your actions are a reflection of faith and an inspiration. May we experience an ever-stronger call to serve God as a community together united in worship and mission.

Willard Metzger is MC Canada's executive director.



(Continued from page 9)

systems. An adaptive system has built-in processes that adjust to disturbances and eventually return it to near its original state. When disturbance is so severe that a system cannot do that, it may slide into disarray or chaos. But in nature, such a state never lasts, as a variety of potential new system orders then arise spontaneously, of which one eventually dominates, and a

new system order is established.

Some scientists fear that several degrees C of atmospheric warming may occur due to human-caused greenhouse-gas emissions, possibly initiating an unpredictable climate-system state. But such a rise in temperature actually occurred 6,000 years ago, and the result was adaptation and shifting ecosystems, not chaos and loss of system functions.

FAMILY TIES

Party with piecaken

MELISSA MILLER

“This isn’t really working out the way I imagined,” I mused, as my mother slept in her chair while I worked on her birthday dessert. I had just ended a phone call with my son, my consultant on the somewhat complicated-to-assemble treat. He was a relative expert, having made two of them compared to my none. I had imagined that my mother, no slouch in the bakery department, would be at my side adding her helpful advice to the process. But a long morning trip to Walmart (her request) had sapped her energy, so she snoozed quietly as I soaked up advice and fortitude from my son.

The dessert is called a “piecaken,” simply meaning a pie baked into a cake. Some months previously, when my son was making one, I had shared the idea with Mother in some of our many phone calls. She loves novelty, and indicated she would like to try a piecaken sometime. Since I was going to Pennsylvania to be with her for her birthday, I offered to make it happen.

Perhaps I made the process even more complicated than it needed to be.

The dessert began in Manitoba, where I made the pastry and chopped pecans. I transported these by plane to my friend in Ontario, who supplied the remaining ingredients for the pecan pie. The finished pie was carried to Pennsylvania

by car. Not too difficult so far, right?

In my mother’s kitchen, I prepared the applesauce spice cake batter and placed some of it in a spring-form baking pan. Then I flipped the pie upside down into the cake batter carefully, to prevent the piecrust from breaking apart. Are you still with me? After the pie had been nestled into the centre of the pan, the remaining cake batter was spread around the pie, and then baked until done. When the cake/pie cooled, it was removed from the pan, involving another flip so the hidden pie turned right side up. Finally a thick, delectable layer of cream-cheese icing was applied. Voila! Piecaken.

An hour later, my mother woke up and came into the kitchen, surprised to see that the dessert was nearly complete. She made a valuable contribution, recommending chopped pecans for the garnish rather than whole ones (easier to chew

It is a blessing to share many years with one’s parent, enough that one can reciprocate the kindnesses of the past.

for those with dentures!). At the party the next day, she pronounced the piecaken to be “quite good,” and was happy to have tried it. She added that she prefers her pie and cake to be separate.

The whole experience reminded me of the many birthday cakes Mom made for her many children. Each one was created

according to the request of the birthday person, a unique annual event in the blur of a large family, and a tribute to my mother’s phenomenal energy, resourcefulness and love. It is a blessing to share many years with one’s parent, enough that one can reciprocate the kindnesses of the past.

“Honour your mother and your father that your days may be long,” instructs one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12). Jesus repeated it, and so did Paul, who emphasized its promise: “so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:2). While the promises are appealing, I believe that the honouring described in such birthday celebrations is motivated more by the pleasure of keeping traditions, by

empathy and love, by bonding and family ties. And a really good excuse to party with a piecaken.

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



The finished piecaken



The apocalyptic threshold, then, likely is higher than a few degrees rise in temperature. The future can be predicted only statistically, but to many of us it seems better to err on the conservative side than to take needless chances. We need to act, but not in panic.

HENRY EPP, CALGARY

✉ When people 'can't digest what we are serving'

RE: "A NEW recipe for church" feature, Feb. 13, page 4.

Sometimes it helps to have an important concept presented in a refreshing way to stir our imagination.

(Continued on page 12)

GOD, MONEY AND ME

Just imagine

SHERRI GROSZ

Just imagine you are there, sitting on the hillside, listening to Jesus. It's past mealtime and your stomach starts to rumble, but his words mesmerize you and you don't want to leave. You notice the disciples talking together and gesturing to the crowd. Then you see a boy approach and offer a small bundle. You watch Jesus open the bundle, offer a prayer and begin to pass out the food. You know it won't reach all the way to you; it's just a small bundle after all. What a surprise when your neighbour passes some bread and then some fish! Then more comes. Then still more. You eat and pass some along to the people beside you. Before long, the murmur of the crowd rises again, as they had all eaten their fill. Baskets are passed around to gather the leftovers. You recall the small bundle of food the boy had shared. How is it possible that so many baskets of leftovers had been gathered? Truly a miracle!

I love the story of the loaves and fishes found in John 6:1-14, and the boy in the story fascinates me. He is confident and independent enough to approach the disciples and to offer what he has. Is he old enough to realize that what he has isn't enough to feed so many? Are his parents anxious about him giving away their meal? I often wonder where he learned to be generous.

I am privileged to speak with many

people about their charitable giving, both during their lifetime and through their estate. Most say that they learned to give as children. Some came to Canada after the war and, despite not having any extra, their parents still found something to give to those in need. Others recall growing up in comfort and their parents giving generously to those who had less. Many credit the church for teaching them to live simply and to share generously. Some are a bit surprised and perhaps a little embarrassed that they have so much. Others are delighted that they can share generously with their church and other causes that are important.

Whether you have a lot or a little in this world, it can be a challenge to choose



The single most effective tactic to help foster an abundance mentality is to share what you have.

to share beyond your immediate family. Culture tells us that there isn't enough for everyone and that we must hoard what we have accumulated. Unlike the boy who shared his loaves and fishes, we may not take risks because we're afraid to lose what little we have. That type of thinking—a scarcity mentality—is distinguished by anxiety and fear. We wonder if we have enough and we're afraid someone else will take it from us.

Generous people, on the other hand, have a different point of view: An

abundance mentality. As Christians, we know we should not put our faith and hope in money and resources. God owns it all and has more than enough to meet our needs.

The single most effective tactic to help foster an abundance mentality is to share what you have. The boy in John's gospel could have kept his food for himself. Instead, he witnessed a miracle of provision for those in need. Many of us spend much of our lives with a scarcity mentality. It can be challenging to think differently, but making the shift has rich rewards. Indeed, those who think there is enough for all experience more peace and happiness.

At Abundance Canada, we have resources to help start the conversation and to encourage you in your decision to be generous. "Giving Your First Fruits" is a great starting place. "Your Will and Estate Planning Guide" provides prac-

tical information about end-of-life gifts. If you'd like to share your questions, dreams or hopes with someone, ask how we can help.

Sherri Grosz is a gift planning consultant at Abundance Canada serving generous people in Ontario and provinces to the east. For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest Abundance Canada office or visit abundance.ca.

(Continued from page 11)

This can help us to see light where there was darkness, and to focus on one another instead of our differences.

We are all invited to the banquet. So what is the problem?

Carol Penner writes: "But what if the problem is not with the people walking away, but with the people preparing the meal? What if we are continually cooking noodles for the gluten intolerant or meat for vegetarians? What if they just can't digest what we are serving?"

Restaurants and schools are becoming aware of peanuts and other ingredients that are deadly for some, and taking it seriously. What about the church?

There are many who struggle with a variety of issues beyond their control, including mental illness and poverty. Unless we get to know them and truly care about them, we will continue to serve toxic doses of blame and shame.

In Matthew 25, Jesus talks about how our caring for the neglected and rejected reflects on our relationship with him.

ENOS KIPFER, LONDON, ONT.

✉ Women marched 'in the service of justice'

RE: "MARCHING IN the aftermath of inauguration," Feb. 13, page 18, and "Women marchers appropriated church logo" letter, March 13, page 10.

Thank you to the women and men who represented Mennonites at the Women's March on Washington! In the face of violence and prejudice coming from an elected leader who boasts of assaulting women and becoming rich at the expense of others, the marchers joined together in peaceful action, with joy and purpose, in the service of justice.

I was so grateful to the D.C. marchers who carried the Mennonite church logo, who sang hymns and witnessed to their faith by their very presence. They joined their voices with those of other churches and faiths, and people who don't profess faith but work with us. With so many things that divide us, what a joy to find common cause with more than 2.5 million people around the world of all beliefs, races, genders, orientations and political stances.

The threatening letter to the editor in the March 13 issue focussed on rude and violent comments by one celebrity, but made no mention of the long list of speakers calling for love, respect, kindness and justice for all and from all.

Six-year-old D.C. speaker Sophie Cruz represented the march so well, as she stood in front of her brave undocumented parents, saying: "We are here together to make a chain of love to protect our families. Let us

fight with love, faith and courage, so our families will not be destroyed. I also want to tell the children not to be afraid, because we are not alone. There are still many people that have their hearts filled with love. . . . Let's keep together and fight for the rights. God is with us."

KRISTEN MATHIES, WATERLOO, ONT.

✉ Reader sorry to lose Phil Wagler's 'deep insight'

I AM TRULY sorry that Phil Wagler has written his last column for *Canadian Mennonite*. It was a column worth reading, and I never missed reading it.

With a rare and deep insight, he gauged the spiritual temperature of the body of Mennonite Church Canada and he tried to help. In a loving and humble tone, he urged and urged us on to align ourselves with the teachings of the Bible and to stand firm on them.

Reach back a few issues and read again: "Are we missing the mark?" (July 4, 2016); "Learning to follow the Jesus way" (Oct. 10, 2016); "Are we living in the last millennium?" (Dec. 12, 2016); and "Strengthen what remains" (Jan. 16, 2017). This final column is a last lament to us, saying that we have lost what we had in the beginning. "*Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches*" (Revelation 2:29).

Thank you, Phil, for your columns. I will miss them. God bless you.

HELEN REDEKOPP, WINNIPEG

✉ Is the church on the road to extinction?

RE: "WOMEN MARCHERS misappropriated church logo" letter by Steve Hoepfner, March 13, p. 10.

I know I do not share the same Anabaptist values as some, but my hope with this letter is to open a broader conversation about unity in the church, humanity and the environment.

Hoepfner writes, "In the church context, such behaviour should be appropriately disciplined to that prescribed in the New Testament. . . . Will history record that Mennonites proudly lent their name and logo to such things?"

As Anabaptist believers, we affirm our faith in the Trinity: God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They are three distinct aspects of the mystery of God.

Let us remember that God created all of creation. And in that universe, a very small, tiny speck exists, and on that speck we have the Earth with its chemical, mineral, plant and animal complexes. If we fail to see God in all of creation, we limit our vision and scope of God. We

begin to follow shallow interpretations and, in essence, we become blind. We turn our focus to the rules of the Bible, not the relationships that Jesus built with the poor and oppressed, *“the least of my brothers and sisters.”*

Anabaptists are a diverse group of believers, and right now the church is evolving, just as it did 500

years ago. And as the church grows, so does our understanding of our world and our brothers and sisters of different faiths. Dare I bring up evolution? The species that didn't adapt to the changes of their environments, their ecosystems became extinct.

PETER TIESSEN, NIVERVILLE, MAN.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Funk—Olivia Rae (b. Feb. 1, 2017), to Derek and Krista Funk, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Roth—Scottie Mierau (b. March 5, 2017), to Kyle and Meghan Roth, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Marriages

Neufeld/Suer—Baily Neufeld (Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.) and Ryan Suer, at Knox United, Saskatoon, Feb. 4, 2017.

Deaths

Bueckert—Katie, 87 (b. July 21, 1929; d. Feb. 24, 2017), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Giesbrecht—Tina, 89 (b. Aug. 25, 1926; d. March 22, 2017), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Goerzen—Martin, 84 (b. April 24, 1932; d. March 20, 2017), First United, Salmon Arm, B.C., formerly of First Mennonite, Kelowna, B.C.

Kennel—Anson, 93 (b. Jan. 18, 1924; d. March 20, 2017), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Nikkel—Margaret, 98 (b. April 9, 1918; d. March 21, 2017), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

Rempel—Albert, 88 (b. Nov. 20, 1928; d. March 9, 2017), Eden Mennonite, Chilliwack, B.C.

Wideman—Murray Allan, 81 (b. Dec. 23, 1935; d. March 21, 2017), Breslau 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.

/// Corrections

• **THE LETTER** Pastor Moses Falco read at the Mennonite Church Manitoba assembly contained his personal views, and not those of his congregation, Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg. Incorrect information appeared in “Being like a family,” March 27, page 16.

• **HAROLD AND** Pauline Reesor served in Joliette, Que., from 1959 to 1963, and Mario Marchand pastors Église Mennonite Ichtus in Quebec City. Incorrect information appeared in “Evangelistic work still paying dividends today,” March 27, pages 22-23.

Canadian Mennonite regrets the errors.

A moment from yesterday



Firefighting in British Columbia was one of the tasks assigned to Canadian conscientious objectors (COs) during the Second World War. They were ‘the best firefighters we ever had,’ according to Jim Pedly from the forestry service. From spring 1942 to spring 1944, the COs spent 4,875 days training and on standby, and 8,470 days fighting 234 forest fires. Fighting fires in the B.C. forests with simple equipment such as that pictured must have been hot, dirty and tiring work. The men came away from their CO experiences with many new friends and with a new appreciation for service and country.

Text: Conrad Stoesz / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies

Photo: Katie Funk Wiebe Photograph Collection /

Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies



archives.mhsc.ca

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Wisdom, where art thou? (Pt. 7)

TROY WATSON

So how does one enrol as an apprentice in the School of Divine Wisdom? The Bible tells us there are a few prerequisites.

The first one is found in Proverbs 4:7: *“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.”*

The first time I really paid attention to this verse, I thought, “Are you serious? Thanks for the detailed map to wisdom you’ve drawn for us there, Solomon!”

But I have finally come to understand the brilliance of this succinct piece of advice. Solomon is saying that if you want to find wisdom, you have to want her. Really want her.

The pursuit of wisdom begins with recognizing and appreciating her true value. Wisdom is far more valuable than gold, silver, diamonds and pearls. Getting wisdom is better than winning the lottery. Nothing you desire can compare with her, Solomon says. When you finally behold her incredible beauty and worth, you will seek her no matter the cost.

If wisdom is someone you are kind of interested in and seek in your spare time—as long as it’s not too inconvenient, expensive or demanding—you will not find her. To be frank, you don’t deserve her. However, if you truly desire wisdom, you will get her! Because you will do whatever it takes to find her: Use



however much time and energy are required, make whatever sacrifices are necessary, be willing to chase dead ends and fail a thousand times along the way. You will chase wisdom like Thomas Edison chased his dream of creating the first practical incandescent light bulb, which he later

described as “1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.”

Why would anyone pursue wisdom the way Edison pursued the light bulb? Or the way NHL players chase the Stanley Cup? Why? Because she is worth it. She is worth far more than gaining a reputation as one of the greatest inventors in history or winning the most stunning sports trophy the human eye has ever seen.

The way we pursue wisdom must reflect her true worth. When it does, we will find her. This is the first step on the path towards wisdom.

A second prerequisite is found in the Book of James. It is faith.

James 1:5-6 says: *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”*

James tells us that if we need wisdom all we have to do is ask God for her. Of

course, this means we need to pray. We need to connect, converse and commune with God, who is the source of all wisdom. Prayer is absolutely essential.

However, what is most interesting to me in this passage is that James clarifies what is not a prerequisite for receiving wisdom. He says, *“God who gives generously to all without finding fault.”* You don’t need to have your stuff together before you ask God for wisdom. Wisdom is not given to people who deserve her or earn her. God does not give you wisdom because of who you are. God gives you wisdom because of who God is, namely, generous to all.

The truth is, God wants to give you wisdom. One reason for this is because God knows it is only by gaining wisdom that we will be able to make better choices that in turn make the world a better place for ourselves, others and the rest of creation. God knows we need wisdom to figure out how to walk in freedom from the seductive tyranny of sin and selfishness. It is only by wisdom that we can understand which of our faults we need to work on and which of our faults we must simply accept.

Our faults don’t disqualify us from receiving wisdom. They are why we need it!

James continues: *“But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.”*

So it is not our shortcomings, our sinfulness or our messed-up lives that prevent God from giving us wisdom. It is our doubt.

To be continued . . .

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

Why would anyone pursue wisdom the way Edison pursued the light bulb? Or the way NHL players chase the Stanley Cup? Why? Because she is worth it. She is worth far more than gaining a reputation as one of the greatest inventors in history or winning the most stunning sports trophy the human eye has ever seen.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

An idea worth sharing

MC Canada short-term workers offer 'a modest proposal for world peace'

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada

Peace is rooted in building relationships, and that means creating space to get to know one another. With that thought in mind, Karl and Marla Langelotz of Winnipeg addressed an audience at Zurich International School in Switzerland on March 18 for a TEDx talk they entitled "A modest proposal for world peace."

TEDx is a localized version of the popular TED Talk conferences whose mission is sharing "ideas worth spreading."

"Once we have known and are truly known by someone," Karl told the audience, "it is impossible to create an 'other.' There is only 'we.' I know it sounds clichéd, but this is actually pretty deep. Only by creating an 'other' are we able to hurt, kill and exclude. How can we hurt 'we' without hurting 'me'?"

The Langelotzes drew from their experience as Mennonite Church Canada short-term workers connecting with refugees at Friedenshaus (Peace House) in Ludwigshafen, Germany. While Canada welcomed 40,000 refugees between November 2015 and January of this year, Germany welcomed about 32 times that many in a similar time period.

Friedenshaus helps refugees learn the German language, adjust to life in a new country and form relationships with the local community. Those efforts promote understanding, tolerance and acceptance—all vital to peace, say Gregory Rabus and Jennifer Otto, the long-term Witness workers who established the ministry.

The invitation to speak at TEDx came from Zurich International School students, initiated through a long-time relationship with Rob Friesen, one of the school's teachers who was inspired by a visit to Friedenshaus last October.

Taking chances and making time

for others, listening deeply, expressing curiosity and braving vulnerability are key to helping newcomers settle in, the Langelotzes said in a Skype interview. As they connect with refugees, the couple are learning about politics beyond the West, and the resiliency, faith and courage it takes to leave one's life-long home and start anew.

Karl and Marla personally took chances too, although they are quick to point out that those chances were far less risky than those that refugees take. They stepped forward in faith by foregoing Karl's salary as a teacher and Marla's as a pastor, in order to serve at Friedenshaus, leaving family and friends behind for nine months. Venturing into an unfamiliar setting allowed them to encounter some of the newness and ensuing vulnerability that refugees experience.

For Marla, a pastor at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, this was particularly evident in challenges surrounding language. Although she could understand some German, she could not speak it, and had to take lessons as well. "I had to embrace that vulnerability of giving up control, of not being able to communicate well," she said.

"The other students seemed to notice and appreciate that," said Karl, who taught several classes at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, including German. He pointed out that vulnerability was an important part of Jesus' ministry. "I understand his life to be one focussed on relationships with and for those on the fringes: the powerless, the hungry, the homeless. But the key to these relationships is this aspect of vulnerability."

During classroom hours the day prior to TEDx, and during the time between TEDx sessions with other speakers, the

PHOTO COURTESY OF MC CANADA



Karl, left, and Marla Langelotz, Mennonite Church Canada short-term workers serving at Friedenshaus in Ludwigshafen, Germany, address the audience at a TEDx event at the Zurich International School in Switzerland on March 18.

Langelotzes had plenty of time to connect with the Zurich students. Marla recalled a particular conversation with two Grade 11 students who approached them shyly. One said, "I really like what you said about Jesus. My family no longer goes to church, but when I was young we went and I just remember church being about rules. I've been thinking that maybe I should go back."

The Langelotzes complete their short-term ministry assignment in June. A link to their TEDx presentation is not yet available. ❧

PHOTO BY BARB HEIDEBRECHT



On March 26, Bergthol Mennonite Church in Didsbury, Alta., displayed 106 quilts made at the church over the last three weeks; 136 more were made at members' homes throughout the year. A prayer of blessing was offered during the morning service for the quilts that were all donated to Mennonite Central Committee.

'A beautiful way to make peace'

RJC students welcome Syrian newcomers to their classroom

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

ROSTHERN, SASK.

The best way to learn about a new culture is to experience it first-hand. Rosthern Junior College (RJC) Grade 10 students recently had the opportunity to learn a little about Middle Eastern culture when two Syrian couples, who came to Rosthern as refugees in 2016, shared with the students about their culture and their Islamic faith.

Dana Krushel and Evangeline Patkau of Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan's migration and resettlement program, facilitated the April 5 culture-sharing workshop, entitled "Encountering new Canadians." With the help of an interpreter, Mohamad Au Ibrahim and Mariam Al Mahmoud, and Yusuf Mlahefje and Israa Alsalo spoke about what it was like

growing up and going to school in Syria.

They talked about the Arabic language and demonstrated how it is written from right to left. Students were encouraged to try their hand at writing in Arabic, first by copying the Arabic greeting Mahmoud wrote on the blackboard, then by writing their own names on coloured pieces of paper.

Students enjoyed a taste of Syrian culture in the form of a special tea prepared by Mahmoud. Sweetened and flavoured with cinnamon, the tea is poured over walnuts. Ibrahim and Mahmoud recently celebrated the birth of a son, and this special tea is traditionally served when a new baby arrives.

The Syrian newcomers also spoke about



David Epp, a Grade 10 teacher at Rosthern Junior College, attempts to write in Arabic as Syrian newcomer Israa Alsalo, holding her daughter, Yemen, watches.

their Islamic faith. Students learned that, while the Qur'an is translated into many languages, Muslim prayers are only uttered in Arabic. Muslims see prayer as a means of drawing close to God, and prayers are recited five times a day. During Ramadan, Muslims fast between sunrise and sunset in order to remember what life is like for the poor and hungry.

Given that Alsalo wore a hijab while Mahmoud wore a niqab, students were curious about the difference between the two forms of head covering. Alsalo told students that both forms were acceptable, and that the choice to wear one or the other has more to do with "what area you are from" than with faith. Young girls typically begin wearing the hijab around age 10.

Teacher David Epp asked the Syrians what it was like for them coming to Rosthern. They admitted it has been "very hard." Not only was the cross-Atlantic journey a first flight for them, but everything, even the food, was unfamiliar. It was a "very scary" experience, they said.

Krushel expressed appreciation for the culture-sharing experience. "Here we have come together to know and respect each other's culture and religion," she told students. "This is a beautiful way to make peace." ❧



Mariam Al Mahmoud, right, writes an Arabic greeting on the blackboard for Grade 10 students at Rosthern Junior College. Afterwards, Dana Krushel, left, Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan's migration and resettlement coordinator, invited students to try their hand at writing the greeting.

Mushrooming dreams in South Africa

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Spiritual food is important, but so is physical food. By growing edible mushrooms and teaching others how to grow them, Miriam Maenhout Tshimanga and her husband Hippolyto are helping feed both body and spirit.

In 2016, the couple moved from Winnipeg to Bloemfontein, South Africa, as Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers. They came in response to an invitation from Grace Community Church, a community of five congregations, to assist with Bible training and leadership development. They also planned to provide entrepreneurship training for members who struggle to earn a living wage.

Mushrooms are more than just a nutritious food. They are a marketable product that can be grown in readily available, cellulose-containing organic waste to help create a sustainable, additional income. When people earn a living wage, they are more likely to contribute back to their church and community, helping to create a sustainable church.

Last November, Chido Govera, a renowned mushroom farmer and motivational speaker from Zimbabwe, presented a mushroom production workshop. Participants mixed different kinds of straw to create a substrate (material on or from which an organism lives, grows or obtains its nourishment) that was soaked in water overnight and pasteurized inside a heated drum. The pasteurized substrate was then compressed into smaller plastic bags and layered with mushroom spawn.

While the inoculated bags “colonized” in the Tshimangas’ garage, participants learned about harvesting by gathering the couple’s previous crop. The remaining substrate was watered for a new batch of mushrooms. Because not all participants had tasted mushrooms before, Govera also demonstrated a variety of ways to prepare them.

During the workshop, Dolly Pula spoke with tears in her eyes: “I wish my late

mother were still here to witness to this kind of workshop taking place in our church.”

For Nelisiwe Gayiya, the workshop inspired big dreams. “I am going to ask everybody—my mom, dad and sibling—to help me with this. I am going to put them to work,” she said.

Nicoline Van Niekerk determined that she, too, was going to work on mushroom growing.

Several months later, Miriam reports in an email that all three participants are growing their own mushrooms and dreaming of turning their endeavours into a small business.

Developing those businesses is a work-in-progress, Miriam says, one that requires walking by faith and trusting that God will provide. In the meantime, these budding mushroom growers are looking out for ways to sell their product to restaurants, in small markets or through shop-owners.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MC CANADA



Dolly Pula proudly displays mushrooms she grew after attending a workshop on mushroom growing in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

Miriam says that more mushroom-growing workshops are planned following the annual church assembly at Easter. “We hope to do it closer to the women, in their communities, instead of Bloemfontein,” she says. “I hope to do it together with the women of the first workshop, so that the trained women become trainers themselves.” ❧

❧ Briefly noted

Bite-sized donors help combat hunger

This spring marks the third year that Grant Dyck and his family of Artel Farms in Niverville, Man., have dedicated a section of their land to raise sponsored crops for overseas relief. Planting has not yet begun, but, with plenty of summer yet ahead, 175 shares and counting have been purchased in the Grow Hope project that is overseen in the province by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba. That is already more than last year’s final count. Through Grace Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, caring contributors of all ages are reminding Canadians that a little can go a long way towards helping those in need. Every Lent, the church organizes a donation project its littlest members can get behind; this year it’s a coin drive. Children’s church participants collect coins throughout the week in a jar labelled just for them, and bring them along on Sundays to pool with those of the other children. Grace Mennonite’s goal is ambitious: 1,500 jangling, spare-change loonies by Easter. After government matching, that would be more than \$12,000 worth of sponsored land.

—BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY

MCC PHOTO BY BETHANY DAMAN



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

God's love trumps politics and policies: Franklin Graham

Mennonites join response to American evangelist's confrontational ways

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

In the lead-up to the Festival of Hope, an evangelistic event headlined by Franklin Graham last month in Vancouver, church leaders representing more than 60 percent of the million Christians in the metro Vancouver area issued a public statement expressing concern about Graham's "contentious and confrontational political and social rhetoric," while also saying they love and respect the event organizers and were praying that the city would experience God's love in "new and profound ways" through the March 3 to 5 event.

Among the 34 signatories of the Feb. 24 letter were Garry Janzen, executive minister of Mennonite Church B.C.; Lydia Cruttwell of First United Mennonite Church in Vancouver; David Chow of Killarney Park Mennonite Brethren Church; and Tim Kuepfer, who has pastored both Mennonite and Baptist congregations.

When contacted, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of Canada said 327 churches supported the event, although a spokesperson declined to provide a list. The pastors of two MB churches were members of the organizing group. Norm Funk, one of them, did not respond to a request for comment.

In a Feb. 20 statement, Graham said politics and policies are important, but the Vancouver event would "focus on the most important thing of all: God's love for each and every one of us."

The letter from church leaders summarized concerns about Graham by noting he has said in the past: "All Muslims should be banned from the United States because Islam is a 'very evil and wicked religion' at war with the Christian West; LGBTQ persons should not be allowed



to enter churches or even enter as guests into Christian homes, because 'the Enemy [Satan] wants to devour our homes'; [and] the outcome of the recent U.S. presidential election was due to 'the hand of God,' giving the impression that the Christian church as an institution is partisanly aligned with an administration and its policies."

Graham responded directly and in a "gracious" fashion to the letter writers but did not retract his controversial comments.

Shortly after the 9/11 attacks in 2001,

Graham called for the use of "every hellish weapon in our inventory . . . weapons of mass destruction" against the perpetrators, which were presumed at that point to be the Taliban in Afghanistan.

In 2010, the U.S. army rescinded an invitation for Graham to participate in a Pentagon prayer event due to his comments about Islam, although in January Graham read Scripture at Trump's inauguration.

While the group behind the letter failed in its efforts to have event organizers bring in a different speaker—efforts that began months before the event—or to have Graham retract certain comments, they write that their intention was "not to vilify the festival's organizing committee."

Judy Toronchuk—a long-time MB and a retired professor at Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C.—first became troubled by Graham when he questioned President Barack Obama's faith. The American-born Toronchuk was concerned that the effectiveness of the Vancouver festival would be compromised by the reputation of the speaker, especially his possible lack of "credibility" among non-Christian millennials. She supported the letter and said she felt the event's objectives, including that of bringing area churches together, would have been better served by choosing a "less-divisive" speaker. ☞

Canoes and kayaks for a cause

Paddlers raise \$48,000 for Camp Squeah bursaries

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
FORT LANGLEY, B.C.

A boisterous and enthusiastic crowd greeted 36 paddlers who came ashore in Fort Langley late in the afternoon of April 9, completing the annual two-day paddle-a-thon in support of Camp Squeah.

The participants set out on the Fraser

River from Hope on Saturday morning, battling wet, windy and cold weather, but didn't let the conditions dampen their spirits. As usual, a hardworking ground crew fed the group at the evening stop near Chilliwack the night before and at Mission



Scott Alexander of Sherbrooke Mennonite Church in Vancouver has participated in all but one Camp Squeah paddle-a-thon since 2002. He says he takes part in the annual event because 'it's a great group of people, with lots of food and friendship'. Alexander had won the first-prize canoe in 2014, and this year decided to donate it back to the camp.

on April 9 for lunch. Conditions turned sunnier on the final day, with clear skies and calm waters.

This marked the 19th annual paddle-a-thon, raising funds for the camp's summer bursary program for summer staff who return to post-secondary studies in the fall. Money raised this year was just shy of \$48,000. Since its beginning in 1999, the paddle-a-thon has raised \$840,000, 10 percent of which has gone into an endowment fund that annually pays out interest to support the bursary program, reports Squeah's executive director, Rob Thiessen.

Top fundraiser this year was John Tetzl, youth pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, who was awarded a canoe. Other MC B.C. churches represented included Sherbrooke and First United Mennonite in Vancouver, Crossroads in Chilliwack, Level Ground and Emmanuel in Abbotsford, and Cedar Valley in Mission.

Data from a GPS system attached to one kayak revealed that the total journey was 107 kilometres, with an average speed of 10 km per hour from start to finish.

"We're so grateful for the many paddlers and volunteer ground crew who came out in support, and for the many people who

financially supported their efforts," says Thiessen. "Camp Squeah recognizes how critical this important fundraising event is toward the goal of attracting, recruiting and ultimately supporting the high-quality staff vital to our summer camp ministry." ❧

A vision of Healing and Hope for MC Canada

Future Directions transition meetings provide opportunities for congregational questions

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

In an interview with *Canadian Mennonite*, Keith Regehr, the Future Directions transition coordinator, believes that "re-energizing ourselves around the Healing and Hope vision statement from 1995 would take us a long way."

He made this statement in response to questions that had been asked at many of the seven Mennonite Church Eastern Canada transition meetings held over the past month and ones he heard across Canada wondering whether the Future Directions process is about money or vision.

If the meeting held at Waterloo North Mennonite Church on March 29 was any indication, attendance was good, with 14 congregations represented. Discussion centred around four major points of concern:

- **THE ONGOING** work of Mennonite Church Canada Witness.
- **RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS** the country if there are no regular delegate sessions.
- **THE PLACE** of *Canadian Mennonite* in the new communications strategy.
- **THE NATURE** of the local congregation as the primary centre of church life and ministry. (Regehr, who wasn't at the March 29 meeting, noted that he uses the image of a grove of aspen trees as a metaphor for the various levels of church. Many trees with one root system are like many



Ron Rempel, left, chair of the Communications Working Group, discusses Future Directions ideas with David Martin, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's executive minister, at a cluster meeting at Waterloo North Mennonite Church on March 29.

congregations, all part of one area church; several area churches are all part of one national church; and many national churches are all part of one worldwide fellowship of national Mennonite churches known as Mennonite World Conference.) ❧

The Vision: Healing and Hope statement is available online at home.mennonitechurch.ca/1995-vision.



'Diversity as a blessing'

Pastors Week participants explore dimensions of intercultural leadership

STORY AND PHOTO BY ANNETTE BRILL BERGSTRESSER

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
ELKHART, IND.

A Brian Leander, Ph.D., recalled the waters of the Demerara River in his native Guyana as he called Pastors Week participants at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary to trust in God's vision of all nations streaming to the mountain of the Lord's temple (Isaiah 2:2-3).

A church planter, researcher and educator, Leander was the featured speaker for this year's event, whose theme was "Cultivating intercultural leadership for diversity-oriented churches." More than 150 people from 15 U.S. states and Canadian provinces participated.

As a child crossing the river on his way to and from school, Leander would watch the colours of the water change as the river met the Atlantic Ocean. "At times there would be a dividing line between them, and then you would see a swirl as the waters intermixed—like watching coffee with milk mix with black coffee," he said. "That was the vision I saw: A powerful stream of people like you and me, interacting and intersecting at a particular point that could only be created by the power of God. I solidly believe that we, together, have been called to a time such as this."

A ministry of reconciliation

During the opening worship session, Leander focussed on Ephesians 2:11-21, emphasizing that Jesus' ministry of reconciliation accomplished two "otherwise impossible objectives": reconciliation between humankind and God, and between humans and each other.

Leander offered seven distinguishing features of ministries of reconciliation:

- 1. LEADERSHIP THAT** promotes a vision that empowers all people to foster higher-than-normal levels of commitment towards being multicultural.
- 2. A LEADERSHIP** team that reflects the



Rebecca Rieck of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., reports to the larger group after small group discussion during Pastors Week at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

demographics of the church membership and the community.

- 3. ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES** that are clearly articulated and supported by decisive action when inequalities and conflict in the church and in the community need to be addressed.

- 4. A LEADERSHIP** development plan that is predicated upon the recruitment, training and professional development of future generations of leaders.

- 5. A FORMAL** plan to focus leadership with respect to organizational change.

- 6. POLICIES AND** procedures for conflict resolution and reconciliation at all levels of the organization and in the community.

- 7. LEADERS WHO** define, legitimize and reproduce the organization's vision, mission, values and practices across generations.

Where are the apostles and prophets?

During worship on Jan. 25, Brian Bauman, mission minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, focussed his preaching on Ephesians 3:5. He noted that Paul didn't say how God revealed the mystery that Christ came to reconcile all people to God, except

that this message was given to the apostles and prophets.

"Which for me begs the question . . . where are the apostles and prophets today?" he asked. "Somewhere in our history as a Mennonite people, we have silenced the apostles and prophets. We've dismissed them or sent them off to work in the marketplace or in other denominations, and they've succeeded there. But what if Mennonite Church Canada and [MC] U.S.A. need to be hearing from the apostles and prophets now, because God is speaking to them now, because we've never been in this situation before, and we need to desperately have an Anabaptist radical reformation that begins to give shape to and walk into this diversity-oriented church?"

Launching a 'ministry to ministries'

Inspired by Bauman's message, Leander changed his morning teaching session to begin with a focus on apostleship, sharing about his own journey in ministry. After he and his wife were called back to the U.S. from Guyana to serve in a pastoral role, they were subsequently terminated. They ended up following God's call to move to Lilburn, Ga., where they became part of a church of around 150 older white people that they happened to drive by one day.

From that church, Leander said God launched him into a "a ministry to ministries." The congregation asked him to help them with strategic planning since he had business experience in this area. This led to a consulting engagement with one of the oldest churches in the Atlanta area, which had a history of racism and was located in an interracial community.

Noé Gonzalía, a former pastor and now a lay leader at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., said his congregation has embraced a multicultural vision and has been integrating it gradually into life together there. The makeup of the congregation—which sent nine participants to Pastors Week—reflects parts of the wider Kitchener community, including people from Latin American countries and South Sudan. Gonzalía describes the diversity as a blessing.

"The biggest learning and encouragement is to see how the Holy Spirit is guiding us

and challenging us to move forward in bringing God's church to the world around us," he said. ☞

For a longer version of this story, visit canadianmennonite.org/amb-2017-pastors-week.



Ministry on a human scale

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

"Ring the bells (ring the bells) that still can ring / Forget your perfect offering / There is a crack in everything (there is a crack in everything) / That's how the light gets in."

These words from Leonard Cohen's 1992 song, "Anthem," framed the theme of this year's annual Mennonite Church Eastern Canada annual School for Ministers. Mandy Smith, an Australian national pastoring University Christian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, spoke on the theme of "Ministry on a human scale" to the 60-plus pastors who gathered at Conrad Grebel University College in late February.

In three sessions, she moved from the pastor's personal attitude of humanness; to cultivating such an attitude among fellow leaders, lay and paid; and then to how this affects all the ministry done in the church, including preaching, teaching and evangelism.

Exposing her own humanness and needs to the gathered pastors, she encouraged them to stop trying to be superheroes and to be the limited people they are. Ministry in this mode is collaborative, she said.

Smith told the story of giving up being invincible for Lent and instituting a 10-minute break for herself every lunch hour. In so doing, she both cared for herself and taught this to fellow staff and the congregation. One danger she saw in naming herself as weak, especially as the only woman pastor in a large denomination, was to be simply seen as weak and not able. She said she was afraid to be seen as "too female, too disorganized, too foreign, too emotional."

Leading the group in an exercise in which they could name their "too" or "not enough" feelings, she reminded the pastors that Satan challenged Jesus in just that way in the desert. Was he powerful enough to create bread or would he depend on God?

"Where do we go to take away the shame



Mandy Smith leads Mennonite Church Eastern Canada pastors in an exercise delving into their fear and shame of not being enough to truly serve God at the annual School for Ministers on Feb. 22.

of being normal human beings?" she asked. "God knew who we are when God called us," she said. God knew each person's weaknesses and called them anyway.

Smith's presentations were surrounded by worship, including an anointing service at which pastors could name their brokenness and receive prayer as well as anointing, and communion. This was led by a group of Ethiopian pastors from Toronto.

Afternoons included workshops for both intellectual, emotional and creative aspects of humanness.

Lydia and Gary Harder's "Naming our struggle with power as Mennonite leaders" workshop drew the largest crowd. Reflecting on their own experiences with the theology championed by John Howard Yoder, they told stories about coming to terms with their own power and vulnerability. Pastors, most of whom had studied Yoder's *Politics of Jesus*, with its radical

☞ Staff change

Accomplished musician joins Grebel faculty

WATERLOO, ONT.—Karen Sunabacka will be Conrad Grebel University College's new associate professor of music at the University of Waterloo. Beginning July 1, she will teach music theory and composition, and



Karen Sunabacka

continue her active work as a composer, performer and scholar. She is currently associate professor in music theory and composition at Providence University College in Otterburne, Man. "She brings to her new position nearly 10 years of teaching experience in music theory and composition, and a familiarity with a community-focussed music program," says Marlene Epp, Grebel's dean. "Her scholarship as a recognized and innovative composer on themes of women's voices, landscape and place, and indigenous histories, will make a significant contribution to Conrad Grebel, the University of Waterloo, and the broader community." Sunabacka's music has been performed in Canada, the U.S., Brazil and the United Kingdom. Originally from Winnipeg, she graduated from the University of California, Davis, with a PhD in music theory and composition. In addition to her teaching and composing, Sunabacka is the founder of the Providence Performing Arts School. —Conrad Grebel University College

submission and the near denial of any leadership or pastoral power, spoke of the re-evaluation of Yoder as refreshing. While sharing power with lay people in church councils, worship committees and shared preaching—all outcomes of Yoder's theology—the need for leadership was highlighted. ☞

GOD AT WORK IN US

Catalysing mission

Bernard Sejour supports mission and ministry in Ottawa and Quebec

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

Chemistry uses the concept of a catalyst to describe a substance that, when added to another substance, promotes a reaction without being used up itself. Bernard Sejour is Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's mission catalyst in Ottawa and the province of Quebec or, as he puts it, area church mission minister "Brian Bauman's representative."

Sejour was born in Haiti. Having lost his mother, he was "the hope" of his father. His illiterate father gave him a Bible when he was 13, telling him, "This is something that can help you." He needed help. His father had remarried and Sejour says his step-mother "persecuted" him, twice trying to end his life—once through the practice of voodoo and once by food poisoning.

By the grace of God, others helped him get back to school. There he "met the Lord" and came to love the church. He studied law and worked for the Haitian government and a human rights organization.

He was persecuted again, this time for



Bernard Sejour, left, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's mission catalyst in Ottawa and Quebec, toasts the 10th anniversary of Refuge of Peace Mennonite Church in Sherbrooke, Que., with Pastor Lucy Roca and area church minister Henry Paetkau last fall.



his work, and he left Haiti for the United States. But he sees suffering as a gift from God. "God's grace is sufficient," he says, quoting Paul from II Corinthians 12:9.

In Haiti, he had known Anna Versluis, a Mennonite Central Committee worker, so he checked out Mennonites to see if they were like her. He said he "found

'The church is a family and a community, committed to serving the Lord by serving each other and loving without discrimination.'
(Bernard Sejour)

Mennonites to be a loving community." While at Hesston College in Kansas, he attended an Argentinian Mennonite church and "learned what the church is all about."

His first church plant was actually in West Palm Beach, Fla., a Salvation Army church that is still going. "The church is a family and a community, committed to serving the Lord by serving each other and loving without discrimination," he says.

In 2014, he came to Canada to serve with MC Eastern Canada. Because of immigration laws, his family is still in Philadelphia, Pa., and he travels there often. His wife cannot work or go to school in Canada, so they Skype often.

His role in the area church is to look for leaders, including those with no Mennonite background, whom he evaluates and then coaches. Creating a network among these leaders and the congregations

they are planting is to invite others to practise the same faith and same baptism.

He believes a denomination needs to be cohesive, have the same theological language and see through the same lens. But MC Eastern Canada feels far away from Quebec and it is seen basically as an Anglophone group. For the past decade, there has been no one to gather, coach, lead or include these churches and their leaders. This is his role: to lead those who are on the edge and need someone to help them move into the middle.

"Jesus started his movement on the edge," Sejour says. "If the centre is empty, we need to move inside, not to replace the mainline churches but to do what needs to be done. There is much to be done there."

Currently, Sejour is also the interim pastor at the Village International Mennonite Church in Ottawa that was started by Stefan Cherry, who has since moved on to work with an evangelical para-church organization. Sejour is working with the congregation to form a more lay-based leadership style that is not dependent on

one person to run. This means taking these charismatic leaders and discipling them just as Jesus called his disciples and formed them into leaders.

Sejour is the catalyst, expecting that he will set the congregation free to find its own way this year. Starting with a core of three to five people, he is helping them to develop a vision to implement in the group. Prayer, Bible study, discussion and sharing times are his preferred methods. With natural leaders like those in some of the congregations he helps guide, the core of three to five leaders can be shaped in three to four months to implement a vision together through prayer, study and worship. But leaders should not pretend to be in control, driving the church in one direction, he says.

He asks for prayer for Haiti and for his family to be able to join him in Ottawa. ❧

ARTBEAT



Jan Fretz explains 'Unveiling Misogyny' to a group of friends on April 5 in the University of Waterloo's East Campus Hall main art gallery.

Jan Fretz wins two U. of W. art awards

STORY AND PHOTO
BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

Jan Fretz has been working at her honours four-year fine arts degree at the University of Waterloo for a long time. But the incubation period has paid dividends.

She loves to work in colour, so her faculty advisors encouraged her to work in black and white. And they challenged the painter and printer at heart to work sculpturally.

Fretz had two pieces in the university's 43rd annual senior undergraduate exhibition and came away with two awards and their accompanying cash prizes.

"Unveiling Misogyny" won the 2017 Mayor of Waterloo Award; the artwork will hang at city hall for the next year. The piece consists of three flowers painted sculpturally in white. For Fretz, this represents cut flowers that die. Women, like flowers, are thought of as fragile, but are full of meaning and sexuality, like Georgia O'Keefe's monumental flowers.

The other piece, "Patriarchy," is a light box with three large mason jars, each containing a Mennonite prayer covering or bonnet. Lit from beneath, they glow in the dark. As in Celtic spirituality, there is one

for the young girl just baptized; one for the adult woman with her own household and garden; and one for the woman, now a widow or menopausal, no longer having children. But they each connect the woman's meaning to men—baptized by men, married to men, no longer available to men—pointing at the basic patriarchy at

work in the conservative Mennonite circles that are part of Fretz's own heritage.

For this work, Fretz won the 2017 Elizabeth (Liz) Edwards Award.

As part of a celebration, Fretz invited a group of women to view the art and hear a short presentation about her art and practice on April 5. ❧



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Reading the Bible with 'the other'

A Dutch professor who helped pioneer a project on intercultural reading of the Bible gave lectures at AMBS stressing the importance "a hermeneutic of hospitality and dependence."
canadianmennonite.org/intercultural-bible



Reclaiming dignity after leaving sex work

Hundreds of women are moving out of sex work by learning skills for new jobs, thanks to an MCC partner in Mymensingh, Bangladesh.

canadianmennonite.org/reclaiming-dignity



Mennonites, Lutherans, Catholics discuss baptism

Mennonite representatives joined Catholics and Lutherans in the fifth gathering of the Trilateral Dialogue Commission on Baptism, hosted by Mennonite World Conference.
canadianmennonite.org/dialogue-baptism



Senator urges friendship and solidarity

The first Muslim senator in Canada spoke about Islamophobia in Canada in her presentation at MCC Canada's annual student seminar.

canadianmennonite.org/senator-islamophobia



MENNO SINGERS PHOTO



Madeline Weber of St. Jacobs, Ont., is the recipient of the \$4,000 Abner Martin Music Scholarship for 2016/17. A graduate of Elmira District Secondary School in 2014, Weber is in the second year of the piano performance program in the Schulich School of Music at McGill University in Montreal. A member of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, she has regularly participated in music activities there since age 12 as piano accompanist for choirs and congregational singing, in worship ensemble collaborations, and as a participant in two benefit concerts for the Benin Bible Institute.

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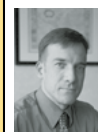


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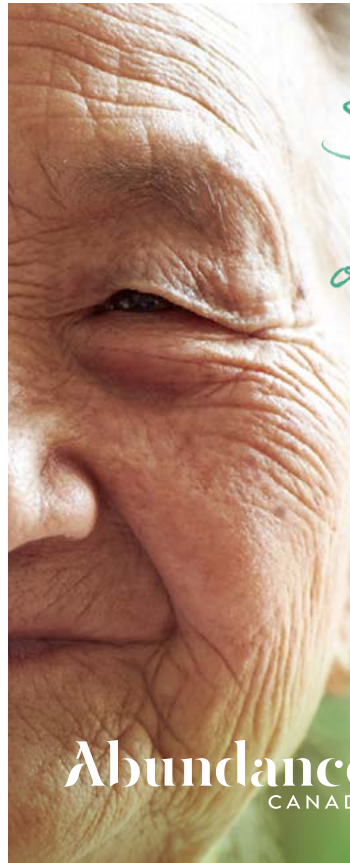
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PERSONAL REFLECTION

Walking forward changed

Reflections on a peace and justice pilgrimage in Nigeria

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRANDI FRIESEN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

For the last two years in February, I have been on a pilgrim journey to different regions of the world in need of peace and justice, and I will be doing the same for the next several years. This year, I made my way to the hot, complex and beautiful country of Nigeria.

These journeys are a part of the work I am pursuing with the World Council of Churches (WCC) program called the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. I serve on the reference group for this program as a representative of the World Student Christian Federation. Every year, we meet in a different region of the world

This pilgrimage is taken to invite “Christians and all persons of good will to join together in building justice and peace,” the website goes on to say, and is a way to create solidarity between churches across the world.

In Nigeria, pursuing justice and peace is complex. The realities of inter-religious conflict, with intersections of tribalism, extremism, violence, oppression of women, political corruption, poverty and environmental degradation, have had massive human impacts. Christians and Muslims have both experienced violence at the hands of the other. Churches have

Christians and Muslims have both experienced violence at the hands of the other. Churches have been burned, girls have been kidnapped and lives have been brutally lost.

and shape the focus of pilgrimage for the global constituency of the WCC.

To shape a pilgrimage for others, we ourselves must be shaped by the pilgrimage. It is why we journey from across the world to come together in places experiencing violence and injustice. This is how we can answer the call of Christ to, as the WCC’s website states, “lift the poor and the oppressed, and to turn away from those structures and habits that bring darkness rather than light.”

been burned, girls have been kidnapped and lives have been brutally lost.

Meeting this year with WCC staff and church leaders from around the world, we ventured to meet people and hear experiences from both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, and to encounter their voices and hearts in these realities.

While I met many people and heard many stories, there are some that have stayed closer to my heart. One hot

(Continued on page 28)



Brandi Friesen, second from left, stands with some of the people she travelled through Nigeria with as part of a World Council of Churches program called the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.



A woman leads Sunday School at First Baptist Church in Gbagyi Villa, Kaduna, Nigeria.



Women take their children home after church.



'As I return home, I carry with me the pain and suffering of those I have met,' Brandi Friesen says.

(Continued from page 27)

Sunday, I journeyed to visit my friend, Pastor Musa, and his congregation at First Baptist Church in Gbagyi Villa, Kaduna.

Pastor Musa shared earlier with me that in order to remain safe from surrounding violence in the north, his church members were forced to migrate south to Kaduna. As such, they needed to rebuild their church, which presented a challenge.

Less than 5 percent of his congregation is employed now due to displacement. Additionally, there are many more women than men in the congregation, as many of the women are recent widows due to the violence. Despite the lack of resources available, this church is tenacious and was able to scrape together enough from their meagre resources to rebuild. However, shortly after rebuilding, torrential downpours destroyed the roof, and the church has again found itself in need.

While First Baptist's current temporary structure may only be made of a thin wood frame and tin, it is undeniable that what exists within the congregation is an unbelievable resilience and capacity for joy. The leaders and congregants remain hopeful that this is a year of greatness and were very encouraged by the visit by the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

As it should be with pilgrimages, I walk

forward changed. Places and relational encounters have been integrated into my way of knowing and seeing. I have found that the deeper the connections and the more one takes a moment to listen deeply and commune with those encountered, the greater the impact the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace has.

As I return home, I carry with me the pain and suffering of those I have met. Just as importantly, I walk forward knowing the ways hope and resilience are carried by those who faithfully know it much more deeply than I.

A deep solidarity is found in this type of transformational faith pilgrimage. I encourage anyone who has the opportunity: Make your own pilgrimage to visit churches in places where injustice rules. Go and meet the people and see their faith. Encourage them, seek justice and peace with them, and learn for yourself what it means to have faith that perseveres in hope and resilience when there are so many reasons not to. ✎

Brandi Friesen attends Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. She is a graduate student at the University of Manitoba and sits on the board of the World Student Christian Federation. Learn more about the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace at wccpilgrimage.org/en.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CRYSTAL LAU



Originally from Hong Kong, Crystal Lau graduated from Rosthern (Sask.) Junior College in 2013.

With a little help from her friends

Young Saskatoon woman making a difference on campus thanks to those who helped her

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

If it were not for the time she spent studying at Rosthern (Sask.) Junior College (RJC), Crystal Lau might not be making a difference on campus at the University of Saskatchewan (U. of S.) the way she is now.

Lau, 22, spent the past year working

as the coordinator at the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union Help Centre, which provides a variety of services meant to assist students. She credits her experience at RJC, a private Mennonite high school located 40 minutes north of

Saskatoon, with instilling in her a desire to give back. She grew up in Hong Kong and arrived at RJC alone at the age of 15.

“I knew no one, so I had to start from the ground up to make connections,” she says. “The teachers at RJC had faith in me when I wasn’t at my best. They gave me opportunities and chances, and showed me channels and options to succeed.”

She appreciated the tightknit community at RJC, as well as the opportunities to try a variety of different things, including making art and participating in dramas and musicals. She says she learned life lessons outside the classroom that helped shape her as a person. “[I learned] how to take care of myself, and how to reach out and ask for help when I need help. Everybody needs help at some point, so I shouldn’t be ashamed [when I need it].”

That lesson proved to be especially useful a few months after Lau graduated in 2013 and she began her studies at U. of S. The difference between high school and university was almost like experiencing culture shock again, she says, and she felt lost. “I was not doing so well academically or mentally or even physically,” she says. “I wasn’t really taking care of myself.”

A friend suggested that she see a doctor

presentations to a variety of groups on campus, letting them know that the centre exists and that it is there to help.

Lau is currently wrapping up her time as coordinator at the centre. In a Student Union election held in March, she was elected vice-president of student affairs, a role she assumes at the beginning of May. For her, it’s another opportunity to help her fellow students.

“My goal going into university was to get good grades, get that expensive piece of paper, get out and get a job,” she says. “Now it’s [about] way more than that.”

Jim Epp, RJC’s principal, describes Lau as enthusiastic, energetic, outgoing and friendly. He adds that she has been very keen to find ways to give back to RJC. She has volunteered at events and spoken in chapels.

“Our mandate as a Christian school is to teach the importance of being in community with each other, offering gifts and talents God’s given us in whatever place he’s placed us, and Crystal is one example of many of our students who learn that lesson and then try to put that into practice in their lives by reaching out and being of help to others, and seeking the help of the community, too. It’s a reciprocal thing,”

“[I learned] how to take care of myself, and how to reach out and ask for help when I need help. Everybody needs help at some point, so I shouldn’t be ashamed [when I need it].”

and a counsellor. By doing that, Lau learned more about herself and how to take care of her mental health. When she was feeling better, she got involved with the peer mentorship program on campus.

She ended up working with the program for three years. She has also been involved with about a dozen other student and community groups both on and off campus, including assisting international students, helping at a food bank and raising awareness about homelessness in Saskatoon.

As coordinator of the Help Centre this past year, Lau was responsible for overseeing the work of 40 volunteers. She oversaw the variety of services that the centre offers, including peer support, and she gave

Epp says, adding, “She’s a shining example of learning about service and discipleship, and loving your neighbour.”

For Lau, who holds a BA in linguistics and is currently taking additional courses in psychology, giving back just makes sense. “I know that I received a lot when I was at RJC,” she says. “I couldn’t have done it without that community; not just students and staff and teachers, but alumni and my friends’ parents. . . . Now it’s time for me to give back and help out the people who are in the position I was in when I was lost.” ❧



Crystal Lau, right, has been involved with a dozen student and community groups on and off campus. She is pictured, from left to right, with Nickole Alejandra, Robbie Mohrbutter and Jazmin Evers.



Crystal Lau, back row right, is looking forward to her new role as vice-president of student affairs for the University of Saskatchewan Students’ Union.

Calendar

British Columbia

May 6: Women's Inspirational Day; speaker: Marlene Kropf; theme: "Who am I now? Trusting God in life's transitions"; at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Sept. 15-16: MCC B.C. Festival and Auction, at the Tradex in Abbotsford.

Oct. 13-15: Women's retreat, at Camp Squeah

Alberta

May 6: Camp Valaqua work day, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call 403-637-2510 to indicate how many are coming, so lunch can be provided.

May 15-17: MC Alberta annual faith studies event, "Called to peacemaking with all creation," at Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton. Speaker: Randy Haluza-DeLay of King's University. (15, 7 p.m.) Public lecture: "When Christianity seems to be the problem." (16) Public lecture:

"When things get polarized." For more information, visit mennonitechurch.ab.ca.

May 17: Menno Simons Christian School spring concert, in Calgary, at 7 p.m.

May 26-27: MCC Alberta Summerfest and Relief Auction, in Sherwood Park. For more information, visit mccreliefsale.com.

June 5-23: Poverty Studies Summer Institute, sponsored by the Canadian Poverty Institute, at Ambrose University. For more information, visit bit.ly/2mfV7Ya.

June 9-11: MC Alberta women's retreat at Sylvan Lake. Speaker: Sara Wenger Shenk. Theme: "Wisdom 2017: Our legacy." To register, visit mcawomen.com.

Saskatchewan

May 6: Shekinah Retreat Centre fundraising banquet, at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon. To reserve tickets, call 306-945-4929.

May 27: RJC fundraiser golf tournament.

May 26-28: Junior-high retreat, for youths in grades 6 to 9, at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim.

June 9-10: MCC Saskatchewan Relief Sale, in Saskatoon.

Aug. 12: Spruce River Folk Festival.

Manitoba

May 5: Opening of "160 acres: The Geography of home," a multimedia exhibition by Darlene Derksen, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg. Runs until June 17.

May 8: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate bursary banquet, at the Canad Inns Polo Park, Winnipeg.

May 17: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate work day, Winnipeg.

May 31: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate presents its Grade 7-9 spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

June 1: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate presents its Grade 10-12 spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

June 4: Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, hosts the Heritage Classic Car Show featuring the Dave Nickel Memorial Soap Box Derby and Swap Meet, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

June 12-16 and 19-23: "School of Peacebuilding," at CMU, Winnipeg. Week-long courses available for professional and personal development. For more information, visit csop.cmu.ca.

June 20: CMU Golf Classic. For more information, visit cmu.ca/golf.

Aug. 22: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's 13th-annual golf tournament, at Bridges Golf Course, Winnipeg.

Ontario

April 29,30: Pax Christi Chorale presents Elgar's "The Apostles," at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto; (29) at 7:30 p.m.; (30) at 3 p.m.

May 1,2: Seniors spring retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Theme: "Dancing in the wind: The vocation of the church in society." Speakers: Jack and Irene Suderman. Same program each day. For more information, call 519-625-8602.

May 6,7: Soli Deo Gloria Singers present "Faith alone, grace alone," a spring choral concert: (6) UMEI, north of Leamington, at 7:30 p.m.; (7) Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m.)

May 6,7: InterMennonite Children's Choir 50th-anniversary weekend: (6) alumni choir rehearsal, dinner and evening entertainment, at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, beginning at 3:30 p.m. (for more information, visit <http://bit.ly/imcc-50th-anniversary>); (7) anniversary concert, at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, at 3 p.m.

May 7: Homecoming Sunday at Hawkesville Mennonite Church; fellowship at 10 a.m., worship at 11 a.m.

May 13: Menno Singers present Honegger's "King David," and a world premiere of a new work by Colin Labadie, at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener.

June 13: Annual chicken barbecue at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Advance tickets required. For more information, call 519-625-8602.

June 16, 17: Theatre of the Beat and musical group No Discernable Key present "Yellow Bellies," a play about conscientious objectors during the Second World War: (16), at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, at 7:30 p.m.; (17) at Floradale Mennonite Church, at 2 and 7 p.m.

June 17: MennoHomes' "Out-spok'n for affordable housing" bike-a-thon, at Elmira Mennonite Church. Options for cyclists, hikers and motorcyclists. Contact Dan Driedger at 226-476-2535 for more details.

June 30-July 2: Annual camping weekend at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. For more information, call 519-625-8602.

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.



UpComing

Bethel College to host conference on Mennonites and the Holocaust in 2018

NORTH NEWTON, KAN.—A call for papers has been issued for an international academic conference on Mennonites and the Holocaust, to be hosted by Bethel College a year from now, March 16-17, 2018. Paper topics are welcomed from a variety of perspectives, such as social, economic, political, cultural, theological, religious, historical and gender analysis. Interested parties should submit a one-page proposal that includes a title, a description of the proposed paper and a short explanation of the stage of research (work-in-progress, new paper, previously published), and a one- to two-page CV, by Sept. 1, to co-organizer John Thiesen, archivist for the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel, at jthiesen@bethelks.edu. The conference aims to document, publicize and analyze Mennonite attitudes, environments and interactions with others in Europe during the 1930s and '40s that shaped their responses to, and engagement with, Nazi ideology and the events of the Holocaust. The keynote speaker will be Doris Bergen, who holds the Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Chair in Holocaust Studies at the University of Toronto.

—Bethel College

/// Classifieds

Announcement



Jutzi Reunion

Descendants of Joseph and Marie (Bender) Jutzi, are invited to a reunion on Sunday, June 4, 2017 at the Shakespeare Community Centre, Shakespeare, Ontario. Potluck lunch at 1 p.m. Please bring your own dishes and cutlery. Contact 519-662-6798.

Employment Opportunities



Employment opportunity

LEZHA ACADEMIC CENTER (LAC), an affiliate Mennonite School located in Lezhe, Albania, is seeking applicants for the principal of school. LAC is a Grade 1-12 school with 120 students. Desired candidate has a master's degree or higher with educational experience. The candidate is expected to lead from an Anabaptist perspective. The position is salaried for a 12-month contract.

Contact Don Steiner <rdsteiner@gmail.com>



**Employment opportunity
Lead Pastor**

Steinbach Mennonite Church (SMC), a congregation of about 220 people in southeastern Manitoba, is seeking a lead pastor with a deep Christian faith and strong Anabaptist theology to lead us as we strive to develop our relationship with Christ, each other and our community. We invite applications from candidates with:

- strong interpersonal skills
- a willingness to assist SMC in visioning for the future
- experience in a church leadership position.

Send resumes to:
Rick Neufeld – Director of Leadership Ministries
200-600 Shaftesbury Blvd, Winnipeg MB, R3P 2J1
Tel. 204.896.1616, Fax. 204.832.7804
rneufeld@mennochurch.mb.ca

or

Ed Peters – SMC Personnel Committee Chair
Tel. 204-326-7917
edwin@henervic.ca



Employment opportunity

LEZHA ACADEMIC CENTER (LAC), an growing affiliate Mennonite School located in Lezhe, Albania seeks teachers in English (grades 9-12); math (algebra, geometry, pre calculus); science (physics, chemistry, earth science, and biology.

Contact Don Steiner <rdsteiner@gmail.com>



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Mennonite Central Committee

Executive Director - MCC Alberta

The Executive Director provides overall leadership to the work of MCC in Alberta. This position bears responsibility for upholding and implementing the vision, purpose, and values of MCC. The Executive Director guides the work of MCC in Alberta as set by the MCC Alberta Board of Directors.

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

Candidates must be legally eligible to work in Canada to apply. Application deadline May 31, 2017. To view the complete job description and apply visit www.bit.ly/MCC-AB



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

**First Mennonite Church
Edmonton**

First Mennonite Church Edmonton is a multi-generational, urban church, of approximately 180. God has called us to be an inclusive, affirming, Christian community. This congregation is seeking an Intentional Interim Pastor for a term of approximately one year to commence summer/fall of 2017.

We are looking for someone with the following qualifications and abilities:

- Anabaptist/Mennonite training
- experience in the field of interim ministry
- ability to teach through example and preaching
- ability to develop plans of care, plans to build relationships, and offer visits as needed
- ability to assess the congregation's needs in looking for a new permanent pastor

Please contact Adela Wedler, Chair Pastoral Search Committee, at mwedler@shaw.ca for further information or to submit a resume. A Congregation Information Form is also available from Mennonite Church Canada.

<https://sites.google.com/site/edmontonfirstmennonite/>

Foodgrains Bank responding to Somali hunger crisis

BY AMANDA THORSTEINSSON
Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is responding to the hunger crisis in Somalia, where immediate emergency assistance is needed to help prevent a hunger catastrophe.

“At the back of our minds is the 2011 Somalia famine, where a quarter-of-a-million people died of hunger,” says Barbara Macdonald, Foodgrains Bank international programs director. “There is no way that should be allowed to happen again.”

The current hunger emergency is the result of two consecutive seasons of drought. Many Somalis are pastoralists who depend on being able to buy and sell livestock for their livelihoods. The drought has resulted in a lack of water and food for the animals. Many have died, and those left are in such poor condition they are beyond selling.

In some areas, including communities where the Foodgrains Bank is responding, water is at a premium and is being trucked in and sold at great expense.

“While a famine in Somalia has yet to be declared, there are still over six million people in Somalia in need of humanitarian assistance,” says Macdonald, noting that many of those who are most affected by the hunger crisis are children. “The declaration of a famine means that we’re too late—people are already dying. And

the situation right now in Somalia—on the verge of a famine—is still a terrible place for people to be,” she adds.

Through its member agency, Emergency Relief & Development Overseas (ERDO), the Foodgrains Bank is providing 850 of the most vulnerable households across six villages in northern Somalia with five monthly cash transfers they can use to purchase locally available food.

In the southwest state of Somalia, Foodgrains Bank member Adventist Development and Relief Agency Canada is providing a thousand households with four monthly emergency vouchers redeemable at approved local shops for a set amount of rice, beans, sorghum and other household staples. Part of the voucher is also redeemable for food items chosen at the recipient’s discretion, to allow families to better choose products that suit their needs.

The projects, valued at \$1 million in total, are being undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

The Foodgrains Bank is paying close attention to the ongoing Somali crisis and is seeking the advice of its members and their local partners as the crisis continues. ❧

CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK FILE PHOTO BY FRANK SPANGLER



During the last major Somali drought in 2011, thousands of people left their nomadic life—no longer able to survive on the land as nomadic herders, with all of their animals dead—and built small shelters on the outskirts of villages. Right now, as drought ravages Somalia, the risk is another famine if help does not come soon.