

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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confess to a
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EDITORIAL

Forgiveness to what end?

Are we overdosing on forgiveness?

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

The Lutherans have asked us to forgive them for their violent persecution of us in the 16th century, laying to rest, as the Mennonite World Conference reporter, Byron Rempel Burkholder puts it, “500 years of guilt.”

We have asked forgiveness of native Americans for our complicity in the much-publicized abuse scandal of the residential schools during the early to late 20th century here in Canada, even though we were not co-opted by the federal government to “take the Indian out of the Indian” and had only one residential school in operation in the early 1960s—Popular Hill in northern Ontario run by the Northern Light Gospel Mission.

And no one from there has come forth in the current Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings to complain about how students were treated.

It seems to be the era of forgiveness, so much so that one religion writer, in predicting more forgiveness rituals early in 2010, listed at least ten possibilities, among them: “Will hardcore Hindu leaders apologize for persecuting Christians in India?” or “Will right-wing Jewish thinkers apologize for not granting Palestinian Christians and Muslims adequate freedoms in the West Bank and Gaza?”

We should all rejoice that in a world where religious extremism is once again on

the rise, some traditional faith communities, like the Lutherans, and the Canadian government, admitting culpability and error in its attempts to destroy an indigenous culture, have had the humility and grace to confess to an ugly past. And further, to implement rituals and hearings that offer victims redress and closure.

It is all so wonderfully redemptive.

The so-called victims in both of these arenas have graciously accepted these noble overtures, some aboriginals even offering forgiveness to abusers who were not forthcoming during the TRC hearings at The Forks. Our own MWC president Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe, choking with emotion at the Lutheran assembly in Stuttgart, responded with: “Anabaptist-Mennonites do not come [to this confessional moment] with heads held high; we also stand in need of God’s grace.”

But beyond the spiritual cleansing and moving rhetoric of these high moments, where do we go from here?

First, in the ecstasy of these events, it is sometimes difficult to keep history in perspective. As we are learning in our study of the ancient texts of scripture, *there is a need to contextualize*. What appear 500 or 150 years later to be heinous acts of “man’s inhumanity to man” were, at the time, considered to be culturally and religiously appropriate, even dutiful to God and country.

With 20/20 hindsight, we can now say, as James Davidson Hunter writes so eloquently in his recent book *To Change the World* “rather than challenging the principalities and powers, the people of God became united with the powers; rather than proclaiming the peace, the church embraced an ethic of coercion, power, and thus, violence; rather than resisting the state, the church provided divine legitimation for the state, which has invariably led to the hubris of empire, conquest and persecution.”

Which leads to a second outcome of forgiveness: *learning from the mistakes of the past*. Inasmuch as history tends to repeat itself, we as Christ’s followers need to humbly acknowledge that the world has not really changed that much. Violence, in our own culture and in many places around the globe, is still used to control, coerce and conquer.

As citizens of a different “kingdom,” we need today to “gird up our loins” with the garments of compassion, peace and grace that counters nationalistic militarism with its euphemisms for enemies such as “terrorists” or “guerrillas” or closer home, even “government protestors”—all attempts to define the “other” in justifying force to “keep the peace,” however that is nationally defined.

Recently one of our own, Glen D. Lapp, an MCC medical worker in Afghanistan, wearing these garments of peace in a volatile environment, paid the ultimate price with his life when attempting to counter a violent culture with compassion. No less courage and commitment is required of all of us who claim to live by a different set of values.

Jesus, in teaching his disciples (and us) to pray, set a high bar for forgiveness, namely that we are granted God’s forgiveness in the same proportion we offer it to others. That’s where we go from Stuttgart and The Forks.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Leann Sleigh, painfully sharing how three generations of residential school forced family separations, sexual and physical abuse leading to alcoholism and parental abuse, offers her moccasins to a collection of native artifacts “for those who walked before us.” A red cedar box holding artifacts and documents was commissioned by the TRC as a “lasting tribute” to school survivors.

PHOTO: EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

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RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

490 DUTTON DRIVE, UNIT C5

WATERLOO ON N2L 6H7

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

Web site: canadianmennonite.org

Please send all material to be considered for publication to:

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

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Obituaries: lisa.metzger@canadianmennonite.org

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Mission statement: *Canadian Mennonite (CM)* is a bi-weekly Anabaptist/Mennonite-oriented periodical which seeks to promote covenantal relationships within the church (Hebrews 10:23-25). It provides channels for sharing accurate and fair information, faith profiles, inspirational/educational materials, and news and analyses of issues facing the church. In fulfilling its mission, the primary constituency of *CM* is the people and churches of Mennonite Church Canada and its five related area churches. *CM* also welcomes readers from the broader inter-Mennonite and inter-church scene. Editorial freedom is expressed through seeking and speaking the truth in love and by providing a balance of perspectives in news and commentary. *CM* will be a vehicle through which mutual accountability can be exercised within the community of believers; the paper also encourages its readers to have open hearts and minds in the process of discerning God's will.

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:23-25, NRSV).

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Board Chair: Tobi Thiessen, tobi.thiessen@sympatico.ca, 416-622-7850

Head Office Staff:

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

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

Barb Draper, Editorial Assistant, edassist@canadianmennonite.org

Dan Johnson, Graphic Designer, designer@canadianmennonite.org

Lisa Jacky, Circulation/Finance, office@canadianmennonite.org

Advertising: Lisa Metzger, advert@canadianmennonite.org, toll-free voice mail: 1-800-378-2524 ext. 224

Correspondents:

Rachel Bergen, National Correspondent, ca@canadianmennonite.org, 204-885-

2565 ext. 259; **Amy Dueckman,** B.C. Correspondent, bc@canadianmennonite.org,

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

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Correspondent, sk@canadianmennonite.org, 306-933-4209;

Evelyn Rempel Petkau, Manitoba Correspondent, mb@canadianmennonite.org,

204-745-2208; **Dave Rogalsky,** Eastern Canada Correspondent, [ec@](mailto:ec@canadianmennonite.org)

canadianmennonite.org, 519-579-7258 canadianmennonite.org, 519-579-7258

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Growing up "full of hate," he now heads a program in anger management and domestic violence for men and women and a culture camp for kids.



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Memorial services were held Sunday, August 15, for Glen D. Lapp of Lancaster, PA, who was killed in a shooting incident August 6, along with nine others comprising a medical

team of four Afghans, six Americans, one Briton and one German. All worked with International Assistance Mission (AIM), a Mennonite Central Committee partner in providing eye care and medical help in north Afghanistan.



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Reviews of *The Gift of Difference*: **DAVID DRIEDGER**

Abortion: Are we Ready? : **PAUL LOEWEN**

How complicit are Mennonites

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU, MANITOBA CORRESPONDENT
WINNIPEG, Man.

We need to listen deeply and cry with pain at the injustice government policy and racism have caused, says Janet Plenert



In the Learning Tent at The Forks, Jamie Monkman was one of many pouring over photo albums of class pictures from many of the Indian Residential Schools. "I am looking for pictures of my Mom and Granny who went to the Norway House school," she explained. The Learning Tent outlined the history of the Indian Residential Schools with photo displays and historical accounts. At the Interfaith Tent, Presbyterian, United, Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches discussed reconciliation efforts in their faith communities. The Listening Tent provided a place for IRS survivors to speak to church officials.

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners begin their five-year sojourn across Canada to hear the stories of those who suffered under the Indian Residential School (IRS) system, Mennonites may well ask if or how they should be involved in this process.

It was the Roman Catholic, Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches that entered into a formal partnership in the late 1800s with the federal government to operate these residential schools. Mennonites were not part of this partnership with the government.

The IRS system is a painful chapter in Canadian history that has not been fully told. Tens of thousands of aboriginal children, some only five years old, were forcibly torn away from their families and taken to distant Christian schools. There, Sir Duncan Campbell Scott, head of the Indian Affairs department in the 1920s, mandated the schools to "take the Indian out of the Indian."

In recent years as some of the stories have come to light, those churches that partnered with the government have made apologies, are seeking reconciliation and engaging in the process of healing, not just because of the physical and sexual abuses that have come to light but also because of their participation in an effort to destroy a people and a way of life.

In 2007, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement was passed. It was "the largest class action settlement in Canadian history," writes Larry Plenert, a Mennonite and lawyer in B.C. who has been appointed to work as an adjudicator of claims by survivors of serious abuse at IRS. This agreement, he says, includes

in Residential School Abuse?



From left to right, Chuck Strahl, Indian Affairs Minister, Chief Wilton Littlechild, Justice Murray Sinclair, and Marie Wilson, the three commissioners of the TRC sit in the sharing circle. Justice Murray Sinclair opened the first sharing circle on June 16 saying, "I give you my word, if you have come to share your story, you WILL be heard. We will listen to you." Once the sharing circle began it was not to be broken. Water that had been blessed was distributed for drinking with an explanation about its sacredness and how water in the form of tears can cleanse our souls. "All of you outside or inside the circle, pray for those speaking," requested a commissioner. There was a sense that this was a sacred place.

three main programs: a "Common Experience Payment" entitling every aboriginal student to financial compensation for the abusive experiences they suffered at IRS; an Independent Assessment Process that resolves claims of sexual or physical abuse suffered at IRS in an out-of-court, alternative dispute resolution process; and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission mandated "to inform all Canadians about what happened in the

150-year history of the residential schools and inspire a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect."

In June 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized in Parliament on behalf of Canada to IRS survivors, recognizing "that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes, ...from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions... You have been working on recovering from

this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey."

With these provisions in place, some Mennonite voices have joined the sentiments of those expressed in letters to editors and on-line postings: "Enough already, it's time to move on," "The best thing to do now is get over it" and "Stirring the pot means it will never settle down."

Why should Mennonites care? Janet Plenert, executive secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, Christian Witness, says, “We cannot and must not remove ourselves from this tragic and sweeping failure of the church to be the church. We (as Christians) allowed the government to consider Aboriginal Peoples to be second class, and like savages.”

Menno Wiebe, who has worked with the aboriginal community under Mennonite Central Committee and MC Canada for 37 years said, “Sadly, the Indian Residential schools were instituted as part and parcel of the church’s mission, a historic reality from which no church can now dissociate itself.” Mennonite individuals and congregations, within and beyond MC Canada, have been involved in a variety of ways with day schools and children’s homes, observes Plenert. A spokesperson for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission claims that the only Mennonite-run

school that was included in the IRSSA (IRS Settlement Agreement) was the Poplar Hill School in Northwestern Ontario. “It is the Commission’s understanding that the denomination which ran it was no longer in existence in Canada in 2007, which may account for it not being included in the settlement agreement. The Commission has come across reports of other (Mennonite) schools that took in aboriginal students, on either a day or residential basis, but is not in a position to comment on why they are or are not part of the agreement.”

“We were late-comers to the scene,” says Wiebe. In 1948, Mennonites began to work in northern Manitoba aboriginal communities under Mennonite Pioneer Mission, which later became Native Ministries.

Henry and Elna Neufeld were among those early workers. They began their teaching ministry in Moose Lake, in northern Manitoba. “The instructions from the inspector were that we get the

children to speak English at any cost...we soon recognized that pushing English at any cost on these children was beyond our dignity. We strongly encouraged English in the classroom but did not interfere outside. This had been their language for centuries. How could we now insist on them making English their first priority with the ultimate aim of wiping it out, any more than forcing my mother to speak English?”

Whether serving in the school in Little Grand Rapids or starting the school in Pauingassi, Neufeld had many experiences with the authorities that ran counter to his convictions. “I must admit that I tried to comply during the time that any school official was present, but as soon as they were gone I was back to my original vision, to respect the local language in every way possible.” The Neufelds worked hard to become fluent in Sauteaux.

“The many times we had our knuckles rapped back in those days was not a pleasant experience,” says Henry. “However, by God’s grace we were able to stand firm on our position and not let ourselves be taken in with the tide of the time.”

Plenert reflects that “some of our involvements are shining examples of faithful witness and honouring of peoples and cultures created in the image of God. Other activities are now raising questions.”

Wiebe recalls when Mennonites began their involvement in aboriginal ministries, “Mennonites raised some questions—why were they extracting kids from their families and taking them to white teachers?”

“As is our Mennonite tradition, the construction of a central school was always part of the building of any village or community. Strong community and family consciousness was part of our mindset. We heard the laments of the Native parents of Bloodvein and Cross Lake when their children were removed. They trusted us.”

Timber Bay Children’s Home, north of Prince Albert in Saskatchewan, was a dormitory for aboriginal students to attend a local public school. The Northern Canadian Evangelical Mission operated



Sonja (center) signs with her hands and holds back tears as an interpreter puts words to her story and as her twin sister, Donna, and a blue-vested support worker offer comfort and support. Both Sonja and Donna were taken to a residential school at a young age. Because Sonja was deaf she and her sister had developed a secret language to communicate, but when the school discovered she was deaf they sent her on to a deaf school. There she was sexually abused “over and over again.” “They told me, ‘you’re Indian, you’re dirty and they would scrub my hands so hard they would bleed.’ She became anorexic and eventually sent home, thinking she was going to die. “I held everything in and didn’t tell anyone for 20 years.” Sonja went on to Washington, D.C. and earned her masters degree in Social Work. Sonja was able to get counselling and eventually acknowledge her story. She spoke of healing and forgiveness.

it until 1968 when the Brethren in Christ Church took over. “From 1973–1990 Mennonite Central Committee had volunteers working at the Timber Bay home,” says Leonard Doell, coordinator of MCC Saskatchewan Aboriginal Neighbours program. This spring MCCA hand delivered a letter with an “invitation to dialogue” to the three communities whose children had lived at Timber Bay. “We want to talk about what that experience has been like,” continues Doell. “Part of the issue for them has been exclusion from the IRSSA. They are looking to be included because their experience at Timber Bay was like that at other residential schools.” Because Timber Bay did not receive federal financial assistance or any government monitoring, it fell through the cracks, explains Doell.

“Our story is very much interconnected and we need to find out more about it,” he says. “During the Second World War, the Mennonite Church and the United Church in Manitoba entered an agreement in which Mennonite conscientious objectors worked as teachers and pastors in United Church-run residential schools while their young men went off to war. We need to find out more about our involvement and encourage our people and churches to participate.”

The MCCA office is involved in a training process for its staff to “develop some listening skills. How do we inform ourselves of the wider IRS story? How can we hear the anger and where do we go from here? How do we prepare to be better neighbours?” are some of the questions that training seeks to address.

As Wiebe continues to be in contact with aboriginal communities across the country, he is aware of the presence of Mennonites in these communities. “Nursing stations and local schools, everywhere I find Mennonites. I know of medical doctors training to go north. Now please, please learn something about the culture,” he pleads.

Since the middle of last century the Mennonite Church has been actively involved with aboriginal communities. While the Mennonite experience has been different from that of the Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and United

Churches, it has contributed to the perpetuation of negative attitudes toward and perceptions of native people. “There is perhaps no more significant, pervasive, broad-based need for reconciliation than there is between the Aboriginal Peoples and those of us who came and claimed their land and legally and officially pronounced them savages in need of saving and civilizing,” confesses Janet Plenert.

Larry Plenert recently wrote that he hopes “my fellow Canadian Mennonites [will] commit themselves to learning the truth about a sad and misguided chapter of our country’s history and...that discernment can occur as to how we best apply principles of justice, restoration and reconciliation in the context of our ongoing relationship with our aboriginal Canadian neighbours.”

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is giving Mennonites that opportunity to be part of a healing process, an opportunity to acknowledge misguided efforts, and an opportunity to learn more about how to be in a just and restorative relationship with aboriginal neighbours.

The Commission’s first public event at The Forks in Winnipeg on June 16-19 drew an estimated 40,000 people. “We come together in the spirit of healing and community, to stand at The Forks, on sacred ground, to acknowledge those who have lived their lives in the shadow of the Indian Residential School System—the students, the staff, their families and the citizens of this country—and to bear witness to their stories,” said Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Commission.

Throughout the four days, stories that took immeasurable courage to tell unfolded. The stories told of pain, betrayal, abuse, forced separation from families and how this painful legacy extends beyond the survivors to their families, communities and successive generations. But the stories also spoke of resilient strength and faith.

Wiebe insists that one of the important steps in our reconciliation is education. “Mennonite learning institutes need to include an upgraded understanding of Aboriginal peoples, culture and societies.

Mennonites might well undertake some leadership in advancing cultural orientations for teachers, social workers, medical staff, economic development and religious workers entering native communities.” He also sees a need for Mennonites to make room for aboriginal art and music.

Larry Plenert hopes that out of the learning and accepting of the truth of this painful chapter, “we will look for ways to eliminate attitudes of colonialism, oppression and inequality that allowed IRS to exist.”

Mennonite Central Committee Canada has created a tool to help us in that process. MCC recently launched a new website www.mythperceptions.ca that debunks the myths, stereotypes and other falsehoods about Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. Sue Eagle, who together with her husband, Harley, directs MCC Canada’s Indigenous Work program, said, “As we hear the stories and unpack the myths, maybe we can begin to build a more accurate understanding of our aboriginal neighbors.”

MC Canada is encouraging active participation in the Truth and Reconciliation events offered by the Commission. There will be six more major events across Canada in the next 5 years. “As Mennonite Church Canada, we would like to have Mennonites active and present at every event,” says Janet Plenert. “Symbolically and practically we will open ourselves to listen deeply, cry at pain and injustice that government policy and racism have caused, and find ways to stand together, pressing onward toward reconciliation and healing. As a church, we can do no less.”

Plans are underway for the next gathering of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be held in Inuvik, NWT in June 2011. “Seven generations of damage cannot be repaired in four days, but the journey we began in Winnipeg has affirmed for us that we have made a good start,” said Marie Wilson, one of the TRC Commissioners. ❧

PERSONAL REFLECTION

A first step towards healing

BY JANET PLENERT

As prayers began, a hush fell over the crowd and numerous people pointed to the sky. The great spirit, the eagle, hovered overhead. Surely it was a clear sign of God's presence and blessing as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) launch in Winnipeg, Man., drew to a close on June 19.

The stories I heard were many: a mix of pain and hope, of betrayal and determination, and, very often, a testimony to the strength of Canada's aboriginals.

"I am a survivor of a survivor," said one young man.

A survivor of a survivor. That hit me like a rock. A man of few words, he concealed the truth of his troubled life beneath baggy clothes and a slouch. He was one of several who had walked 1,400 kilometres from Ontario to participate in the Youth Sharing Circle, and although he had clearly lived a tough life he was on a journey of self-discovery about residential schools, and thus about himself.

Another young man had been taken away from his mother when he was eight days old. Child and Family Services (CFS) raised him, bouncing him from home to home. He never bonded with anyone, never knew love. "They say that IRS (Indian Residential Schools) ended back in the 1980s, but they didn't because CFS is part of the same system," he said. "This is now seven generations, and these seven generations are sitting around this circle today, and the prophecies say that the seven generations will change the world, and that's us," he said, speaking proudly of the strength of his people.

A white high school history teacher spent five days at the sacred gathering listening to stories of pain and abuse. "I learned more about Canada in the past five days than I did in my three-year history degree," she said. "We have to begin teaching our children about all of our history.

The residential school situation has maybe been a single page in a textbook, and not even always." She spoke about the strength of survivors, and how honoured she felt to be a listener.

Mennonites were not excluded from these stories. After a man shared his story of abuse in residential schools, of moving on, of how important family is, and that he loved his wife of 43 years, he said that she went to a Mennonite-run school. It was just as bad as all the others. How come, he asked, aren't the Mennonites here?

I approached him immediately following the session to tell him that we are here, and that we care.

Another survivor described a vivid and horrible incident of being beaten under the careful supervision of the principal and

four staff members at a Mennonite-run school. He wanted to record his story to let people know that abuse happened beyond the schools addressed in the Indian Residential School Settlement—and he wanted Prime Minister Stephen Harper to hear his story: "Two years ago the Prime Minister apologized. Two years ago was a sad day. My son committed suicide on the day of the apology. It was too late for him."

An impish, tiny girl with little-kid overalls and long flaming red hair reminded me of Pippie Longstocking, but she was 18 years old and about to graduate from high school. How does she fit here? I wondered.

Her explanation resonated deeply. "What one part of my heritage—my mother's white side—has done to the other part of my heritage is tearing me apart," she said. "And I won't feel together until the world is made right. I feel shame and anger for what we did. It is wrong. It is inexcusable." Métis and full of fire, she was appalled that she had never learned about this aspect of Canadian history in school.

She could well be speaking for all of us. It is much easier to say "it wasn't us." But it was us. Christians professing Jesus and dedicating their lives to service, somehow—for reasons we will never understand—were given complicit approval to look upon First Nation, Métis and Inuit children as less than people created in the image of God. Blind eyes were turned. Indifference ignored suffering. Sanctioned and even supervised beatings were carried out. Church people took vulnerable boys and girls into their rooms late at night to fondle and sexually abuse. Repeatedly. Persistently. Consistently. And successor staff did likewise.

As these stories connected with other stories from faraway countries, indigna-

Christians professing Jesus and dedicating their lives to service, somehow—for reasons we will never understand—were given complicit approval to look upon First Nation, Métis and Inuit children as less than people created in the image of God.

tion flared, forcing tears to my eyes. I was angry. I am angry. How could people, good people, people like me, do this?

Embroidered black words emblazoned the centre of a quilt formed from Hudson Bay blankets: "Canada has no history of colonization. —Stephen Harper, PM Canada, September 2008." Around it are words of disbelief, indignation and sarcasm: "Then we also have a long history of amnesia. . . . Is this blanket infested too?" and so on. It is a poignant reminder that even a short 15 months after Stephen Harper issued the well-cited formal apology, we still don't understand.

Perhaps a sign of hope on that Saturday afternoon of images were the words

MC CANADA PHOTO BY NEILL VON GUNTEN

of Chief Justice Murray Sinclair and Governor General Michaëlle Jean, both of whom attended the Youth Sharing Circle. Sinclair spoke in a gentle yet direct way to the youths who shared the pain.: “Your aunts are telling us that the impact of the residential schools must stop here.”

He spoke simply and profoundly on the question of identity. “To know who you are, you need to know where you come from, your clan, because your clan tells you your responsibility in the community. You need to know your spirit name. It is only when we know who we are that we have self-respect and mutual respect, both of which are essential in the process of reconciliation.” And then he said, “It was through the educational system that we got into this, and it is through education that we will get out of this.”

Jean took both hands of each participant in the circle and kissed each one on both cheeks. The boy who had been raised in CFS without bonding or knowing love, reached out to her. They wrapped their arms tightly around each other in a long embrace.

“We need to break the walls of indifference,” Jean said. “We are laying a new foundation for this country by confronting together our past.”



Governor General Michaëlle Jean, flanked by Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) commissioner Marie Wilson and Chief Justice Murray Sinclair, are pictured during the grand entry of a traditional pow wow during the opening TRC event in Winnipeg, Man., on June 19.

My emotions are still somewhat raw from that incredibly moving afternoon and the tears come easily. Lord have mercy. Lord, can you forgive us? Thank you for your forgiveness. ☿

Janet Plenert is executive secretary of Mennonite Church Canada Christian Witness.

MC Canada shares the pain of Indian Residential School legacy

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada

Delegates to Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2010 struggled with just how to confess systemic complicity in the Indian Residential School (IRS) survivors issue while not admitting to being directly abusive in non-existent Mennonite residential schools.

Of 139 residential schools identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as participants in the horrific legacy of residential schools, only one institution is generically associated with Mennonites.

The now-closed Poplar Hill Development School located in northwestern Ontario was run by the Northern Gospel Light Mission (now Living Hope Ministries) in Red Lake, Ont.

A resolution first brought to the floor on July 1, was unanimously passed, only to be questioned later by some delegates as not being far-reaching enough in working at reconciliation with survivors, and acknowledging still-existing prejudices toward First Nation people. So a second

draft was brought back on July 2, which, though having more intentional language, was rescinded because it seemed to be contradictory by stating “exoneration of abuse,” while still admitting complicity.

“It seems to me it should say one or the other,” one delegate said.

Other delegates, such as Lydia Harder from Toronto, Ont., and the adoptive parent of a Blackfoot child, said the second

Continued on page 11

Poplar Hill's closure remembered

BY ROSS W. MUIR
Managing Editor

The Poplar Hill (Ont.) Development School—the only Mennonite-affiliated school being officially looked at by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) currently making the rounds of Canadian communities—has been out of the news for more than two decades.

The same can't be said for the two-year period between 1989-91, when the residential school, which opened its doors in 1962, made headlines in the *Mennonite Reporter* a total of seven times. Poplar Hill was a program of the Northern Gospel Light Mission.

The front page of the Nov. 13, 1989, issue featured the headline, "Native mission school shut down over discipline controversy."

"We disagreed with the method of spanking," Rodney Howe, a member of Northern Nishnawbe Education council is quoted as saying. Later in the story, though, Howe—who had been adopted by a Mennonite family in the U.S. and whose father worked at Poplar Hill as a dormitory supervisor—acknowledged that some aboriginal parents "do spank" their children and that "some do a lot worse than that to their children."

"We tried to hear their concerns," said Cello Meekis, the aboriginal chair of the school board that ran Poplar Hill, in the same article. "But rather than giving up biblical principles [that permit spanking], we decided to stay within our guidelines."

In the lead story of Jan. 8, 1990, issue, Margaret Loewen Reimer wrote of clashes by aboriginal groups over the future of the school. "Many parents want to see the school opened again," Merle Schantz stated. He noted that 61 students from the aboriginal community of Osnaburgh in northwestern Ontario were out of class because of Poplar Hill's closure. "Some were shipped to a school in Winnipeg," he said, "but one girl got raped there and the students returned home."

The article also noted that the aboriginal education council had opened an investigation on abuse at Poplar Hill, but that no one had come forward to make a complaint at that point.

The issue of corporal punishment at Poplar Hill caused concern for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada who opposed this type of discipline as a matter of principle. The story quoted MCC volunteers James and Kate Kroeker, who related a story told by a former student at Poplar Hill who recounted being beaten. "Let's not call them spankings," Kroeker said, adding that the girl was "very bitter."

PHOTO COURTESY OF CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



Poplar Hill (Ont.) Residential School is pictured in A Brief History of Northern Light Gospel Mission, 1977, by Mary Horst.

In two April 1990 issues, letters from readers were published, revealing a divide in feelings.

One from 12 former staffers supported the school against all accusations levelled against it. "Native parents entrusted their children to the school, and it was under this 'guardianship' that they were well supervised, loved and made to feel secure in this 'away-from-home' establishment," they wrote, adding that, "[C]orporal punishment, administered in love, often evoked affection from the offender . . ."

However, Martin Cross from Saskatoon, Sask., wrote that the mention of residential schools "immediately brings to mind whippings, kicks, slaps and separation from one's native land." He called on Mennonites to "consider making an apology," and offered his own "personal amends to any native people who are affected by our suppression."

In May 1990, the *Mennonite Reporter* published a joint letter from Northern Light and MCC that attempted to bridge their differences; it also took the newspaper to task for further polarizing opinion, instead of helping readers to "understand each other during difficult times."

The school faded away from the limelight in February 1991, when it was reported that a police investigation into claims of child abuse had ended. "No charges were laid because the students who had been strapped did not want to press charges," the story indicated, adding, "and because a section in the criminal code that protects adults in authority if they used corporal punishment."

The school never re-opened.

Continued from page 9

draft still seemed “too superficial” in its intention, a statement she would not want to “show to her daughter” because she knew it would not be well-received. Another delegate said that related matters—such as settling on aboriginal land—has “us much more complicit” than we want to acknowledge.

In the end, the first resolution from the MC Canada Christian Witness Council stands in its confession of the complicity of Mennonites “in the failing of the Christian church” and its role in the residential school system, and acknowledging “that destructive individual attitudes, such as paternalism, racism, and superiority, are still present among us.”

Neill von Gunten, who co-directs MC Canada Native Ministry with his wife Edith, says that two other Ontario schools—Stirling and Cristal—were not included in the TRC process because they were defined as “day schools,” thus excluding them from the federal government’s criteria for inclusion on the TRC list. The von Guntens believe that some students from distant communities may have boarded there, but at the voluntary request of their parents. The Timber Bay Home at Montreal Lake, Sask., also did not make the TRC list because it, too, operated as a day school.

Neill notes that neither MC Canada nor its predecessor, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, operated any residential schools. The only involvement in schools for aboriginals as a denomination occurred through Mennonite Pioneer Mission (MPM), the forerunner of Native Ministry. Through staff already in place in Pauingassi and Bloodvein, Man., MPM operated two day schools, both of which were established at the request of local community leaders.

Although MC Canada and its predecessor were not involved, the von Guntens say that over the years members of some MC Canada congregations—whether as representatives of those congregations or of their own volition—volunteered or supported these schools. The extent and nature of this involvement is currently unknown, as is the existence of any additional, generic Mennonite connection.

However, Edith notes, “In the eyes of the general public, ‘a Mennonite is a Mennonite,’ and there are no distinctions between geographical locations or

denominational affiliation.” ❧

With files from Canadian Mennonite editor/publisher Dick Benner.

With God, all things are possible

Residential school survivor recalls childhood abuse, but has come to forgive his tormentors

STORY AND PHOTO BY RACHEL BERGEN

National Correspondent
CALGARY, ALTA.

When you pass by aboriginal people lying in the gutters on skid row, do you think that they are just “drunk Indians who need to get a job”?

Participants of the “Do residential schools and good news go together?” workshops at this summer’s Mennonite Church Canada assembly now know what those “drunk Indians” went through to get to that place. What they went through was “a blight on [Canada’s] history,” said Larry Plenert, a workshop speaker and an adjudicator for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The participants heard from Darrell Royal, a Blackfoot member of the Siksika Nation in Alberta, who attended two residential schools—St. Joseph’s (Catholic) in

Cluny, Alta., and Old Sun (Anglican) in Gleichen, Alta.—until Grade 7, and was a self-confessed “drunk Indian” until God intervened, sparing his life, his family and his soul.

He said the days spent at the school were abominable. He was malnourished and fed mostly rotten meat, and suffered physical abuse. “The meat was green, you could smell it,” Royal said, adding, “We were always hungry.”

Hit on the head regularly with a heavy wooden stick resulted in seizures and problems with his eardrums, he said, not to mention the emotional trauma. “I shut down for many years afterwards,” Royal said. “I had a wall and didn’t trust people. . . . I didn’t know that I didn’t have feelings



Neill and Edith von Gunten, Native Ministry workers with Mennonite Church Canada, stand in solidarity with resident school survivor Darrell Royal, who told of his time at a residential school to assembly participants earlier this summer.

for anyone.”

Royal said he was also held in ice cold and extremely hot showers for up to 30 minutes as punishment for speaking his native tongue. “To this day I can’t go in a sauna . . . or take a hot shower,” he told workshop participants. “Every day when I take a shower I remember. . . I can only take warm showers.”

Being so emotionally crippled from his childhood experiences at the residential school, Royal said he grew up full of hate. An alcoholic by age 16, he became involved in a string of crimes, including assaults in bar brawls, domestic violence and attempted murder.

Royal, who now leads programs in anger management for men and women, a culture camp for kids, and a program for domestic violence, spent 20 years of his life behind bars.

Constantly drunk and violent, with his wife on the verge of leaving him, his life was in ruins—until a preacher came to his First Nations community on Sept. 20, 1981. The bad feelings Royal had experienced for so long, vanished. He could feel something other than hate and pain when he accepted Jesus Christ into his heart and life.

In the 30 years since, Royal’s marriage has come back together, he is sober, and has recovered from alcohol-induced cirrhosis of the liver and brain deterioration. He became a police officer in Calgary, attended Bible school, and was pardoned for all of his crimes.

But it wasn’t an overnight transformation. He is still apologizing to his wife for hurting her and still deals with the trauma of his abuse, even decades later.

Royal has come to forgive those people who beat and belittled him, and tried to erase his heritage and culture. It took a long time to get to this place, but that he has been able to is all because of his relationship with God, he said.

He has still not received apologies from any of those who physically harmed him when he was a child, even after meeting with them years later. But he said that “forgiveness is the key to healing. Some of the things that have happened to me, if it wasn’t for the Lord, I wouldn’t have been able to forgive.” ❧

/// Indian Residential School timeline

1857: The Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 led to the formation of residential schools for Métis, Inuit and First Nations children. The Canadian government and churches ran these schools in partnership with one another. The schools operated for about 130 years, and saw more than 150,000 children pass through them.

1970: The Conference of Mennonites in Canada offered a litany of confession at its annual assembly that confessed the significant failing of its own faith community in relating to “Indians,” seeing them as “converts,” but not as children of God; in recognizing them by the “colour of their skin, but not as fellow human beings, friends, and brothers” in Christ.

Early 1990s: Some of the key national churches involved in running residential schools made formal apologies to Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples.

June 2008: Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology on behalf of the government and people of Canada. Since that time, common experience payments have been made to approximately 80,000 living survivors, and private hearings for determining appropriate compensation for those most grievously abused or violated have been offered. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed.

July 2010: Mennonite Church Canada unanimously passed the following resolution: “Be it resolved that MC Canada congregations and individual members recognize and confess our complicity in the failing of the Christian church and its role in the tragic physical, emotional, mental and sexual abuse, denial of culture, language and peoplehood of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. In recognition of this past failing, and in acknowledgement that destructive individual attitudes, such as paternalism, racism and superiority, are still present among us, we as MC Canada congregations and as individuals will seek renewed opportunities to walk with Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, opening our hearts, minds and ears to engage the pain resulting from the legacy of the residential schools, and strive to recognize each other as sisters and brothers created in the image and likeness of one God.”

/// For discussion

1. What have been your experiences or what stories have you heard about Indian residential schools in Canada? Are there also some positive stories? What do you think was the intended purpose of these schools? What role have they played in damaging the family systems, culture and peoplehood of First Nations?

2. Do you think Canadians are ready to hear the stories from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Are Mennonites open to improving relationships with Aboriginal Peoples? How do you respond to the MC Canada resolution of July, 2010 (see above)?

3. Janet Plenert quotes Murray Sinclair as saying, “It was through the educational system that we got into this, and it is through education that we will get out of this.” Do you agree? How can education work at healing the deep wounds? How important is Menno Wiebe’s vision of having Mennonite schools teach a deeper understanding of aboriginal culture?

4. One of the questions being addressed by MCC Saskatchewan is “Where do we go from here?” How would you respond? What would a “just and restorative relationship” with Aboriginal Peoples look like?

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters sent by subscribers intended for publication. Respecting our theology of the priesthood of all believers and of the importance of the faith community discernment process, this section is a largely open forum for the sharing of views. Letters are the opinion of the writer only—publication does not mean endorsement by the magazine or the church. Letters should be brief and address issues rather than individuals.

Please send letters to be considered for publication to letters@canadianmennonite.org or by postal mail or fax, marked "Attn: Readers Write" (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author's contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines.

✉ Imagine thanking God for 'Imagine'

RE: "FROM 'IMAGINE' TO 'Material Girl,'" column by Phil Wagler, July 12, page 11.

As a Mennonite child of the 1960s and '70s, and a huge fan of the boomer hymn, "Imagine", it is very apparent that Wagler was not yet born in 1971, since his interpretation of John Lennon's "Imagine" shows little understanding of the zeitgeist of that era or the message of many of Lennon's songs.

With the prevalence of prejudice, segregation,

/// Corrections:

Erna Neufeldt remains the chair of the Mennonite Women Canada until July, 2011. Incorrect information appeared in the "Women's luncheon provides chance to continue 'a good conversation'" article, Aug. 2, page 13. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

The quilt Dann and Joji Pantoja are shown holding in the Aug. 2 edition (page 6) was designed, created and presented to Pantojas by "the good people of Leamington United Mennonite Church and not by me," writes Norm Dyck, who was erroneously credited for making the quilt. LUMC has been in partnership with the Philippines ministry and Pantojas for several years

Erwin Patkau, father of quilt artist Bev Patkau, is alive and well, not deceased, as was indicated in the caption for the front cover photo of the Aug. 2 edition. Again, *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

assassinations and daily violence in the streets, along with the ongoing hideous Vietnam War, young people at that time were bravely and openly challenging the rigid governing structures and calling for peace. Lennon's life and music often was an appeal to "come together" and "give peace a chance." The very lovely "Imagine" reminds me of another favourite hymn of mine: "In Christ there is no East or West, in him no South or North, but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth."

As for Wagler's reference to the "imprisonment of the here and now," earlier this year, I was hospitalized for two months due to a serious medical crisis. A pastor friend of mine brought me a book by Henri J.M. Nouwen entitled *Here and Now*. Its message was that living in this moment each day brings freedom from regrets of the past and anxiety about what might happen in the future. Each moment in the here and now is already part of our eternal life. What a source of strength and comfort this book was to me.

While undergoing a dreaded MRI, I asked God to give me strength to survive it because I am quite claustrophobic. Through the headphones given to help pass the time, came John Lennon singing "Imagine." I thanked God for his help. Imagine that!

LUCILLE REIMER PFEIFER, CAMROSE,
ALTA.

✉ Unlike review, new *Robin Hood* hits the mark

RE: "THE DECLINE and fall of a legend," June 28, page 34.

After reading Vic Thiessen's disappointed review of Ridley Scott's *Robin Hood*, I hesitate to admit that I saw the movie twice. It was thought-provoking.

I own three versions of the Robin Hood stories: Pyle, Stirling and Green. Each is its own telling. But a common thread runs through all. Robin Hood and his men live in anticipation. They wait for a time when the good King Richard the Lionheart will return and all that is wrong in old England will be set right. And, in each, Richard does return.

Scott's telling gives us pause. The king does not return. And he is not good. Before his final battle, King



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Richard looks for an honest man to assure him that God will approve of his crusading in the Middle East. Instead, this man reluctantly notes that when Richard had 2,500 Muslim men, women and children put to the sword, he and his men no longer had a God.

The answer is disconcerting because, even today, crusading in the Middle East is a hard habit to break. And, catch-all labels—the Saracen, the infidel, the insurgent, the Taliban and, God forbid, the Muslim—may well mask the fact that crusading in the Middle East is a morally and spiritually bankrupt enterprise. Richard’s last question, and the answer, suggests that an “In God we trust” moral currency does not have the power to justify and redeem immoral enterprises.

Hollywood commentary on war is not new. An

Internet search using the key words “Hollywood” and “Vietnam” will serve to refresh our memory. Ridley’s version of the Robin Hood legend offers a mirror in which to contemplate our own involvement in the Middle East. One reason I went to see it again was to think more carefully about the possibility that the movie itself is a form of nonviolent protest.

HERB HEPPNER, SELKIRK, MAN.

✉ Church is on downhill skid

Notwithstanding Jack Suderman’s determined effort to be positive regarding the future of the Mennonite Church in Canada (CM editorial “A Leader for These Times” /Aug. 2, 2010), the truth of the matter is that

FROM OUR LEADERS

Listening for church harmony

LORNE EPP, MARGARET EWEN-PETERS AND PATRICK PREHEIM

The Wailin’ Jennys recorded a song on their debut album which included the following lines: “This is the sound of voices three / Singing together in harmony /Surrendering to the mystery / This is the sound of voices three”

This stanza from the song “One Voice” comes to mind not because we have ever been recorded in a studio, asked for autographs or been invited to tour with the Jennys. These lyrics strike a chord with the Vision and Wholeness (VW) Group because they reflect the best of our work in Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

Like the Jennys, VW is a group that has three voices. Commissions, committees and boards abound in sections IX and X of the area church bylaws, but we are the only ones designated a group. And that fits the score because the responsibilities for which we have been tasked are slightly different than your average area church ensemble.

The VW Group consists of three persons appointed to be:

- A listening and ongoing visioning group;



- Keep MC Saskatchewan focused on the vision of being ‘Christ centred and sent’;



- Study and promote the integration of Scripture in practical action and activity;



- Serve as a support group for all parts of MC Saskatchewan in its visioning and goal setting tasks; and
- Assist in the planning of meetings of the leadership assembly.

These observations sometimes lead to deeper attention to a topic and sometimes not.

Like most job descriptions, at any given time we attend to some of the assignments more than others. What does this all mean when VW gets jamming?

Most of our vocalization is rather mundane in nature. It has become the tradition for VW to conclude leadership council meetings and annual delegate sessions with “the last word.” In these moments we are given space to reflect the things we have heard, seen and sensed. We have been able to acknowledge holy and hilarious moments in a

provincial gathering, to name tensions we have perceived or give voice to issues that will require greater discernment over a longer time. These observations sometimes lead to deeper attention to a topic and sometimes not.

Recently, the MC Saskatchewan moderator asked VW to think biblically, historically and theologically on the topic of church membership, as our group had identified membership as a relevant topic among our constituent congregations.

The demographic study of our Saskatchewan churches and subsequent conversation confirmed the fact that we no longer have a clear understanding of baptism, membership requirements or membership expectations. VW’s responsibility was to do some advanced reflection on the topic and share our thoughts to set the stage for the leadership council

discussion. Next steps in the conversation about membership are still being processed, but the sense we get is that our preliminary work will help to facilitate the conversation throughout the province.

We are three voices attending to discord and harmony. We listen for the mysteries of God in community. This is the sound of voices three.

Lorne Epp, Margaret Ewen-Peters and Patrick Preheim make up the Vision and Wholeness Group of MC Saskatchewan.

our church is on a downhill skid. Rather than ignore the truth, let's face it and do something about it.

Church growth is all about leadership.

Our youth who are capable and gifted in leadership avoid the opportunity. Why? Firstly, as parents we have taught them to be something less than respectful of leadership. Our pastors are servants, not leaders, we have said.

Secondly, I agree with Darryl Barg that we really don't want real leaders. "We want someone to lead us where we want to go." We are afraid of strong leaders; persons who can and will lead become discouraged and move on to other things.

The future of the Mennonite Church should be our

first priority. God has given Mennonites in Canada a great opportunity to tell our story, our history and our theology. Our people were rescued for a purpose. Will we be faithful?

PETER DERKSEN, SWIFT CURRENT, SK

✉ History needs re-examination

I appreciate my friend and colleague Abe Dueck's letter (July 12, p.10) in response to my article interpreting Mennonite Brethren history to a Mennonite Church audience. It is important that this history receive further attention, because its interpretation affects the present-day identity of both the Mennonite Brethren

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Elders Trump Pastors

BY PHIL WAGLER

Pastor or elder? Which is more important to the long-term health of a local church?

Scads of cash is invested every year developing current and future pastors. This is important in so far as it shapes leaders and not managers, prophets and not puppets. Well-formed Kingdom servants rooted in an evangelical faith that cannot lie sleeping and smitten by the person of Jesus, his church, and the power of his resurrection are needed.

However, money for degree-centered pastoral formation is increasingly sparse and the model itself is undergoing seismic-shifts in a post-Christian cultural climate. Many pastors now come to church ministry second career—which is wonderful—but this presents new challenges in regards to family and finances. And, it also begs a question: if so many pastors are coming to vocational ministry later in life, why can't the local church see its eldership as the workshop of pastoral apprenticeship? Why do we assume the distant ivory tower rather than the local coffee shop is the most realistic locale for developing leaders for Jesus' church? What if every local church saw it as a divine responsibility to develop leading elders with Christ-like character, theological depth, and vocational ministry capability?

And, perhaps even more outrageous, what if training institutions saw it as their unique call to partner with local churches and their elders and not just be that far-off place a few struggle to get to?

So, again, which is most important: pastor or elder?

Many say the pastor of course! Pastors come with resumes chocked full of reasons why they are the greatest thing since Simons, Spurgeon, or sliced bread. Three cheers for the certificates on my wall! But. Yes, we must face this big "but." In the life of the vast majority of congregations it is elders who outlive



Any church I have been part of is as healthy as her elders.

pastors. If a congregation finds itself in a pickle, a deadlock, or facing new realities, who is most likely to leave or be asked to leave? Very, very seldom will it be an elder. Elders trump pastors. Read 'em and weep.

Fully understood, pastors are first elders in character and only secondly those called to live out a particular gift-mix in a unique way. A "pastor" is essentially an elder with benefits in that they are those of elder quality called and freed to focus their time on the health of the local body.

Paul did not instruct Titus to appoint pastors on Crete, but elders (Titus 1:5). He says, in essence, that the whole Jesus movement depends on these people. I concur. Any church I have been part of is as healthy as her elders. In fact, good elders can save a church from a bad pastor, but a good pastor can rarely save a church from the debilitating affects of bad eldership. The future of the church is helped, but does not hinge upon what is produced in colleges and seminaries

What trumps all is the elders we disciple in our churches—of whom only a small minority will ever end up with a nicely matted piece of paper to hang in their office.

So, what might happen if pastors—those with elder quality well equipped through the strengths training institutions have to offer—would spend more of their time making disciples of elder quality in-

stead of running themselves ragged doing tasks that look good on a year-end report?

My hunch is we'd have oodles of elders capable of enormously solid spiritual oversight and so many pastors we'd need to start more churches to give them all something to do. Now, there's a crazy thought!

Phil Wagler thanks God for a pastor who invested in him as an elder. He now seeks to do the same as a pastor because he is keenly aware that elders trump pastors (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca).

and the Mennonite churches from which the MB Church separated.

Abe is right in noting that my article was not comprehensive in detail. That kind of an article would require much more space. It ought to be written, though, because one of the issues in retelling this story is which details should be included in the narrative.

It is, however, also necessary to re-examine the interpretation of the details of the story of the MB beginnings. This is what my article was trying to express.

Interpretations in the past have been one-sided, and have portrayed one side as the hero and the other as the villain. The interpretations need to be re-examined so that the story becomes more balanced, more comprehensive, more contextual, and allows the strengths and weaknesses of both groups to be included.

I hope that my article, and Abe's response, can contribute to this goal of reinterpretation.

JOHN J. FRIESEN, EMERITUS PROFESSOR, CMU

NEW ORDER VOICE

Mennonite treaty rights

BY WILL BRAUN

To attend church in Winnipeg is a right that arises directly from Treaty 1. The signatures of Aboriginal leaders and Crown representatives on that 139-year-old document give me, a non-Aboriginal person, the right to sit in the pew.

This will sound to some like a provocative, ideologically driven overstatement, but I want to make the case that it is a basic legal reality and a rich spiritual truth.

The treaties are admittedly tricky. Many interpretations exist. A common understanding among non-Aboriginal people is that treaty rights were a sort of consolation prize bestowed long ago upon Aboriginal people—a set of goodwill concessions after which everyone proceeded on the course of history. Done deal.

So the mention of treaties and treaty rights today is viewed with suspicion or contempt by some. These responses, which also exist in our churches, are understandable. People may feel that treaty claims will be expensive for tax-payers or could even cut into Mennonite-held lands. Some people feel that treaty dealings were done long ago and any past misdeeds are not our responsibility. For non-Aboriginal people, the easiest thing would be to relegate treaties to museums.

This would be to miss the nature of a treaty. According to the written version

of Treaty 1, it gave the Crown the right to settle specified lands in southern Manitoba without interference, and it gave Aboriginal signatories reserve lands, promises of annual payments, and a school on each reserve. (In some treaties, Aboriginal signatories also received farming supplies, hunting equipment, and the right to fish and hunt on “ceded” lands.)

The treaties were based on the Euro-Canadian legal understanding that colonial powers could not simply take over lands from indigenous people without making some sort of legal arrangement with them. The eleven Numbered Treaties—signed between 1871 and 1921—fulfilled that requirement for lands covering the Prairies, northeastern B.C., northern Ontario, and

elder and former head of the United Church. He warned against a strictly legal understanding of treaties, suggesting the language of covenant is more in keeping with Aboriginal and Christian worldviews. Treaties, one could then say, are lasting covenants in which two peoples agree to live together respectfully and share land equitably.

On a building near my home is a banner showing Lloyd Axworthy—former Minister of International Affairs and now president of the University of Winnipeg—shaking hands with an Aboriginal man. The banner reads: “We are all treaty people.” I emailed Axworthy's office to ask about the statement.

“Dr. Axworthy,” the reply read, “recognizes that the University is a Treaty 1 university situated on Treaty 1 land.” For him, a foundational part of the mandate of the university is to fulfill the “educational learning components within the treaty.”

What would happen if our church bodies incorporated treaties into their



What would happen if our church bodies incorporated treaties into their foundational documents and basic self-understanding?

parts of the territories. And they continue to fulfill that requirement.

Without Treaty 1, I would be an illegal squatter. In regions covered by the treaties, our homes, fields, and churches sit on lands to which we would have no right without the treaties. We are all treaty people.

I recently moderated a panel discussion with that exact title. It was part of the inaugural national event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (set up to deal with the residential school legacy). On the panel was Stan McKay, a Cree

foundational documents and basic self-understanding? What would happen if we sat down with Aboriginal people already in our churches and those connected to the good work of Mennonite agencies to discuss which specific pieces of the treaties to incorporate into our organizational mandates? What might we discover about grace, truth, and God's love?

Will Braun attends Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. He can be reached at wbraun@inbox.com.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Broadbent—Leven Peter Brown (b. July 8, 2010), to Amanda Brown and Gavin Broadbent, Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Chartier—Noah Florian (b. March 17, 2010), to Luc and Cathy (nee Lankin) Chartier, Windsor Mennonite, Ont.

Enns—Tanner Cole (b. July 12, 2010), to Stacie and Travis Enns, Carman Mennonite, Man.

Fehderau—Jeremiah Joel (b. June 24, 2010) to Arnie and Karin Fehderau, First Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask. Correction.

Guenther—Jayden Gregory (b. July 8, 2010), to Adrianna and Greg Guenther, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Lebold—Adam Hugh (b. July 15, 2010), to Chris and Wendy Lebold, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Martens—Dylan Parker (b. July 16, 2010), to Michelle McKinnell and Karl Martens, Hagerman Mennonite, Ont. and Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Musselman—River Samuel (b. June 29, 2010), to Peter and Heather (nee Burkholder) Musselman, Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Mutala—Aubrey Shae (b. July 11, 2010) to Marcy (Koethler) and Brandon Mutala, Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask. In Prince George, B.C.

Peters—Nathaniel Bruce (June 20, 2010), to Kris and Vic Peters, Glenlea Mennonite, Man.

Sawatsky—Ryan Mitchell (b. June 18, 2010), to George and Vicky (Peters) Sawatsky, Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Baptisms

Renae Friesen—Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man., May 16, 2010.

Samantha Quick, Caitlin Thiessen—Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., June 6, 2010.

Monique Brubacher, Jamie Rozema, Shanna Rozema,

Brock Shoemaker—Floradale Mennonite, Ont., May 2.

Lauren Wiens—Glenlea Mennonite, Man., May 23, 2010.

Christina Vis—Grace Mennonite, Prince Albert, Sask., May 16, 2010.

Jenny Doerksen, Heiko Giesbrecht, Resi Giesbrecht, Rowan Giesbrecht, Federic Hiebert, Peter Schiller, Samantha Thiessen—Steinbach Mennonite, Man., May 16, 2010.

Megan Boyd, Alanna Dueck, Susan Duncan, Rebecca Epp, Julianne Janzen, Loren Janzen, Michelle Koop—Vineland United Mennonite, Ont., May 30, 2010.

Amanda Snyder, Nicholas Penner, Jeffrey Marsh—Waterloo North Mennonite, Ont., June 27, 2010.

Anndee Hoover, Gregory Lehming—Wideman Mennonite, Ont., June 6, 2010.

Marriages

Crealock/Marsh—Martha Crealock and Jeffrey Marsh, Waterloo North Mennonite, Ont., July 10, 2010.

Friesen/Hutchison—Courtney Friesen and Sandy Hutchison, Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man., in Winnipeg, May 22, 2010.

Friesen/Marquardt—Ryan Friesen and Staci Marquardt, Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man. at Lake Metigoshe, North Dakota, May 15, 2010.

Kruithof/Rigg—Melissa Jan Kruithof and Bryon Albert Rigg, Hunta Mennonite Church, Ont., July 24, 2010.

Spaling/Zmudczynski—Nicole Spaling and Steve Zmudczynski, Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont., July 3, 2010.

Deaths

Bender—Emilee, 32 (b. March 24, 1978; d. June 27, 2010), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Braun—Harold, 52 (b. Nov. 8, 1957; d. July 11, 2010), First Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

Dick—Olga (Ollie), 92 (b. Aug. 14, 1917; d. June 29, 2010), Carman Mennonite, Man.

Pontius' Puddle



GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

MCC, MEDA collaborate to help Haiti's homeless

BY WALLY KROEKER

MCC/MEDA Joint Release

Haitians left homeless by January's earthquake are getting construction help from a collaborative venture of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA).

MCC contributed \$1.43 million to rebuild and repair about 775 homes of microfinance clients of Fonkoze, the country's leading microfinance provider, most of whom are women. MEDA will administer and monitor the 18-month project, expected to be completed by the end of November next year. Fonkoze has been a long-term partner of MCC and MEDA.

The earthquake not only claimed more than 200,000 lives (including five Fonkoze staff members), it destroyed an estimated 105,000 homes and damaged more than 200,000 others. Nearly 3,000 Fonkoze clients reported not being able to stay in their houses due to destruction or severe damage.

"Most of Fonkoze's clients cannot afford a loan to build a house," said Julie Redfern, MEDA's vice-president of financial services and a member of the Fonkoze board.

Fonkoze will coordinate the training of community teams of masons and carpenters in techniques for building and repairing homes that will be earthquake- and hurricane-resistant. Those teams will predominantly do the building and repair in their home communities, north and south of Port-au-Prince.

All recipients of the construction assistance, plus about 400 more people, will receive training in home ownership and maintenance. Home repairs are estimated to cost \$600, and rebuilding will average \$3,000.

MEDA began its microfinance work in



Homes that will be built through the collaboration of MCC, MEDA and Fonkoze will be similar to this one repaired for Isaac, Viola, and Estania Auguste, left to right, of Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti. The Augustes were one of 10 families who received construction support from MCC through a congregation of Assemblée de la Grace, a conference of 24 Anabaptist churches.

Haiti in 1986 and in 2004 turned it over to the rapidly growing Fonkoze so its clients could access a wider range of financial services. It remains an investor and active partner of Fonkoze, providing governance as a board member and through advisory services for microfinance.

"Fonkoze is a well-known, well-

recognized partner," said William Reimer, MCC's director of food, disaster and material resources. "This is a great opportunity for MCC and MEDA to collaborate and work together with Fonkoze. It gives us a chance to build on our combined experience and extend our reach in responding to a very urgent situation." ❧

❧ MCC grieves worker killed in Afghanistan

AKRON, Pa.—Some 900 persons attended a memorial service Sunday, August 15, at the Bright Side Baptist Church, Lancaster, Pa. for Glen D. Lapp, a Mennonite Central Committee medical worker killed August 6 in a shooting incident in northeastern Afghanistan. Lapp was travelling with a medical team of four Afghans, six Americans, one Briton and one German. All, including Lapp, worked with International Assistance Mission (IAM), an MCC partner organization providing eye care and medical help in Afghanistan. Local police found 10 bodies on Friday next to abandoned vehicles. One Afghan team member travelled home via another route and is safe. Another Afghan survived the attack and is being questioned by police who said robbery might have been the motive. The Taliban has said it is behind the attack. While Lapp, 40, was trained as a nurse, his work in Afghanistan was not as a medic. In his two years there, he served as executive assistant at IAM and manager of the provincial ophthalmic care program. In his report to MCC, Lapp concluded, "MCC is very much involved in Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and my hope is that MCC can continue along that vein and continue to help this country work towards peace on many different social, ethnic, and economic levels."

—Mennonite Central Committee release by Cheryl Zehr Walker



Lapp

Taking Congo out of 'the heart of darkness'

BY MELISSA GRAYBILL

Mama Makeka House of Hope Release
DENVER, COL.

After speaking at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., earlier this year, about his dreams for the revitalization of his hometown of Kajiji, Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakisa Tshimika assembled a "dream team" in Denver in May, in an effort to put flesh and bones on those dreams.

The dream team included members of the board of Mama Makeka House of Hope, which Tshimika founded, along with health and education professionals, former missionaries to Congo and several Congolese people, who explored a variety of ways in which the organization might positively impact life in the Congo.

"We live in a moment of opportunity for Congo," said Dr. Dalton Reimer, board chair, via a video clip. "And if we so choose, we can be part of that moment. We cannot and should not do for the Congolese what they must do for themselves, but we can walk alongside them as they walk into the future."

Mama Makeka House of Hope is a non-profit, non-governmental organization whose purpose is promoting, advocating and providing financial and technical support for initiatives related to health, education and community empowerment for underserved communities in Africa and Central San Joaquin Valley, Calif. Currently, the organization focuses on the Kajiji region in southwestern Congo and Maluku, a suburb of the capital, Kinshasa.

At a time when the international community is growing in the Congo, with the Chinese rebuilding infrastructure and Jewish, European, American, Canadian and South African communities making their presence felt, MMH Hope feels that

it is time for its presence to be felt as well.

Tshimika shared his dream of a new Congo, focusing on his hometown and the Maluku Center for Professional Resourcing, which is intended to provide resources for health and education professionals, and community peacebuilding agents that allow them to best serve their communities.

Dr. Franklin Baer, a consultant and international health specialist, gave the feature presentation, explaining the development of Congo's health zones and the role that Kajiji played in that process. He focused his presentation on ways MMH Hope could use the health zone system as the framework for development efforts in the Kajiji region. He also noted that even when many Congolese infrastructures exploded during the 1990s, the health zone system remained one of the few quasi-national systems that continued to function.

After the event, Tshimika observed, "I was very satisfied with the results of this meeting. Participants affirmed the direction we are taking for the Congo. Furthermore, I was moved by the level

of commitment shown by everyone. Our time together also confirmed that the future is bright for the Congo in general and for Kajiji in particular . . . We are committed to develop strategies that will promote better education for Kajiji children, [provide] access to health care for everyone, and promote economic development for the region."

The discussion of the weekend took place against the backdrop of *King Leopold's Ghost*, a video documentary based on the book by the same name depicting the brutality that the Congolese people have endured over the centuries. This powerful documentary made all the participants stop and think about a country that is so potentially rich in human and natural resources and yet its people are still among the poorest in the world due to both internal and external conflicts.

"How can we change this image of the Congo from always being known as the heart of darkness?" was the question Tshimika kept on asking the team at the end of the movie and during the whole weekend. ☿



/// Briefly noted

MC Canada congregants begin MCC assignments

AKRON, PA.—Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) commissioned 22 new workers—including four present or former Mennonite Church Canada congregants—for service after they participated in an orientation at MCC offices in Akron this spring. They include:

- Emily Dueck of Toronto, Ont., who is serving as a coordinator with Toronto Ontario Opportunity for Learning and Service (TOOLS) and as a street pastor with Lazarus Rising, a Toronto organization addressing homelessness. Dueck obtained a bachelor's degrees from Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Man., and a master's degree from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. Dueck attends Toronto United Mennonite Church.

- Carmen Epp of Saskatoon, Sask., who is serving as an assistant accountant with MCC Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. Epp graduated from Saskatoon Business College. She attends Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

- Heather Gallian of Baden, Ont., who is serving as general manager of the Waterloo Generations Thrift Shop. Gallian obtained a bachelor's degree from Trent University, Peterborough, Ont. She attended Rouge Valley Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.

- Masako Moriyama of Abbotsford, B.C., who is serving as an administrative assistant with MCC B.C. Moriyama obtained a degree from Marie Tomko Career College, Vancouver, B.C. She attends Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford.

—Mennonite Central Committee Release



Neighbours Claudia Almanzo and Norha Muralles stand in the devastated area of Guatemala City, Guatemala, where they used to live before their homes were destroyed by mudslides in late May. Mennonite Central Committee, through the Mennonite Church of Guatemala, will support them, along with 40 other families, through construction of temporary housing and with humanitarian aid, including two shipping containers of meat, blankets, dried soup mix, relief kits and health kits.

/// Briefly noted

\$5.5 million spent on Haiti earthquake recovery in first six months

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has approved \$3.4 million in projects in the first six months of its five-year response to the January earthquake that struck Haiti; on top of this, MCC has sent some \$2.1 million worth of material aid to Haiti, including food, water, relief kits, comforters, tents and medical supplies. Another \$2.8 million worth of projects will likely be approved in the next few months. Donors in Canada and the U.S. have given MCC more than \$13 million for its earthquake response, and potential contributions from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and other sources could boost that figure to \$20 million. In partnership with Haitian agencies, MCC is planning and implementing a five-year response that is focusing on housing, soil conservation, reforestation, food security, education, rebuilding schools, health, peace, justice and local advocacy. "Recovery and long-term rebuilding efforts will take time," says Willie Reimer, director of MCC's food, disaster and material aid work. "Our staff and partners are responding energetically to the needs of the people and working vigorously in a context that is challenging."

—Mennonite Central Committee Release

MCC joins efforts to minimize election violence in Burundi

By CHAD UMBLE

Mennonite Central Committee Release

In the African country of Burundi, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and its local partners are supporting efforts to monitor voting and election conflicts, hoping to minimize violence during an already tense series of elections this summer.

The country's election season started in late May and will continue through September, with at least five elections scheduled during those months. These elections are the first since all rebel groups laid down their weapons in 2008, officially ending Burundi's 15-year civil war.

Conflict and violence already have affected the first half of the elections. Twelve major political parties—who used to be rebel groups during the civil war—contested the results of the May elections, which gave 64 percent of the vote to the ruling party, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy: Forces for the Defense of Democracy.

As a result, these 12 parties boycotted the June 28 presidential election, urging their supporters to stay home. About 60 grenade attacks were reported, killing eight people and wounding more than 50 before the presidential election on June 28. The ruling party and the former rebels have been blamed for the attacks.

Nevertheless, election monitors reported a relatively peaceful election in which incumbent Pierre Nkurunziza was re-elected to the National Election Commission.

In spite of the stated distrust of the May election results, Rebecca Mosley, an MCC representative in Burundi, said election observers remain hopeful that their ongoing work will ultimately help all political groups accept the results.

Before the elections began, MCC and its partners joined with other historic peace church organizations to form the Quaker Peace Network, which recruited and

trained more than 200 election observers to work at polling stations on the election days.

"The presence of election observers may actually discourage incidents of election fraud," Mosley says, noting that election fraud could spark renewed conflicts.

In addition, the peace network has joined Amatora mu Mahora (Elections in Peace), a large national ecumenical network that recruited and trained election-period monitors. Taking a broader view of election monitoring, Amatora's monitors map any incidents of violence and note positive signs of peace.

MCC Burundi is a small program, but it has been able to connect local grassroots

peace activists—from university peace commissions to elders of village reconciliation councils—with the national efforts of Amatora mu Mahora.

"In this way, the national network has access to reliable local information and people of integrity in remote corners of the country," Mosley says, "and local peace-builders are empowered to play a role in the national effort to solidify peace in their country."

MCC Burundi also is advocating, through Amatora mu Mahora, for the National Election Commission to intervene in situations where violence has escalated. The peace network is offering to provide mediators.

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GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Tiefengrund Mennonite Church celebrates 100 years

STORY AND PHOTOS

BY HENRY PATKAU

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
LAIRD, SASK.

Many people with ties to the Tiefengrund Mennonite Church near Carlton, Sask., came to relive the past, rejoice in the present and anticipate the future of this church community on July 24 and 25.

The celebration started on Saturday at Horse Lake Mennonite Church, the original Tiefengrund Mennonite Church building that was moved to Horse Lake in 1958 when Tiefengrund built a new church building. Walter Janzen, the pastor of Horse Lake Mennonite Church, led the service of remembrance and thanksgiving. During the time of joyful singing and praise, the song, "There's a church in the valley by the wildwood" was well suited the occasion and setting.

From Horse Lake Mennonite Church the people went to Tiefengrund Mennonite Church where guests were warmly welcomed. After registration, guests viewed a DVD depicting the church's history, events and people. The cemetery on church grounds was another site of reminiscing.

A delicious supper was served just before the evening program. Verner Friesen, a former pastor, sparked a spirit of thankfulness with an opening prayer which was

followed by a time of community singing, group songs and music.

Allan Friesen, posing as a news media reporter, interviewed people of the congregation bringing to light information about the congregation. Wilmer and Barb Froese used a dialogue to review its history.

The elements which have shaped Tiefengrund Mennonite Church were presented as foundation stones of the church and community. These are: fortitude exemplified by perseverance and courage; pioneer-hood; freedom for love and hard work; families; fun; and foundation in Jesus Christ. The foundation in Christ was, and remains, the bedrock of the Tiefengrund congregation; it is the key for the future. The challenge is to dig deeper. Saturday concluded with campfire singing led by Russ Regier.

The weather was ideal for the Sunday worship service held in a large tent erected in the church yard for this 100th anniversary. Lorne Epp, present pastor, led the worship service. The Tiefengrund church and community loves to sing and the worship service was graced by melodious singing by congregation and choirs. Waldemar Regier, who grew up in the community

but served as pastor in other places, came home for this occasion to bring the message. Using Luke 11:27-28, he reflected on how the Word of God had influenced the people of Tiefengrund church to spread all over the world. He quoted C.J. Dyck as saying, "The Tiefengrund community and congregation is visible evidence of God's love and mercy and part of his plan for getting kingdom work done in honour."

The celebration concluded with a noon meal followed by socializing and farewells. Indeed, it was a celebration of grace and blessing! ❧

❧ Briefly noted

Edwin Epp retires after 43 years of ministry

WINNIPEG, MAN.— Sargent Avenue Mennonite church gathered on June 27 to celebrate 43 years of ministry by Pastor Edwin Epp. The centrality of God was emphasized in his ministry that began at Hope Mennonite Fellowship, North Battleford, Sask., in 1967. In 1972, after three years of study at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., the family moved to Hague, Sask., where he served the congregation there for nine years. In 1981, the Epps moved again, this time to Faith Mennonite Church, Leamington, Ont. In 1997, after a sabbatical leave, Epp accepted the call to pastor Sargent Avenue Mennonite, where he served until his retirement on June 30 of this year. Ruth Epp, his wife of 43 years, shared in his pastoral life extensively, at times as a co-worker and as a very active participant in the life of the congregations in which they were involved. A punctual and precise man, Epp's own records show that, since 1967, he preached 2,053 sermons, and performed 157 baptisms, 137 funerals and 89 weddings. He is being succeeded by Marla Langelotz as Sargent Avenue's lead pastor.

—Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church Release

HORSE LAKE MENNONITE CHURCH



TIEFENGRUND MENNONITE CHURCH TODAY



B.C. churches to host IMPaCT visitors

Five pastors from Asia on learning tour to province

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Five Mennonite pastors from four Asian countries will visit British Columbia Sept. 23 to Oct. 7, part of the IMPaCT (International Mennonite Pastors Coming Together) program of Mennonite Church Canada.

Coming from China (2), Philippines, Macau and Vietnam, the pastors will spend two weeks in B.C., hosted by Cedar Valley, Eben-Ezer, Emmanuel, Langley Mennonite Fellowship and Yarrow United Mennonite churches. They will spend time individually in their host congregations and together as a group, learning about the history of Mennonites in B.C. and touring the province's lower mainland, home to a number of Mennonite congregations.

IMPaCT will provide opportunity for the visitors to learn about the relatively

recent history of Mennonites in B.C. and compare it to their own country's church experience. "What MC B.C. churches have always been about is seeing a need in the community and finding a way to meet the need," says Linda Matties of the MC B.C. church health committee planning the learning time. The group will visit institutions of education, mental health and addiction treatment that MC B.C. churches have supported. "We also want to take [the pastors] to the Vancouver area as we note the density of the Asian population there," says Matties.

The guests will conclude their two weeks in B.C. by taking part in the MC B.C. pastor-spouse retreat Oct. 4-6.

A program of Mennonite Church Canada Witness and an Area Church, IMPaCT is a global partnership program to help pastors get to know pastors and churches in other parts of the world. ❧

/// Briefly noted

Late Goshen College president leaves long legacy

GOSHEN, IND.—Goshen College president emeritus J. Lawrence Burkholder, an influential figure in the Mennonite church, passed away on June 24. Burkholder, 92, played many significant roles throughout the 20th century as a pastor, professor, pilot, philosopher, civil rights activist, war-time relief worker and college president. Burkholder graduated from Goshen College in 1939, and after a decade of service overseas became a professor in Goshen College's Bible, Religion and Philosophy Department. In 1961, Burkholder was called to serve as a professor at Harvard Divinity School, where he was a part of the faculty until 1971. Then, in 1971 Burkholder left the Ivy League, returning to Goshen College to serve as its 11th president with the conviction that "Mennonites had something to contribute to the world, and I wanted to be part of it." Burkholder, who served as president until 1984, began his presidency with a simple religious service and the planting of 138 trees around campus. "I wanted to bring beauty to a campus that seemed somewhat barren," he said. "And I hoped to soften and humanize the image of the place in the process."

—Goshen College Release



Burkholder

/// Briefly noted

Emerging churches receive grant funds

An intercultural urban church in Ottawa, Ont., and a Sherbrooke, Que., church started by a Colombian refugee are the 2010 recipients of "venture capital" grants from the Wilfred Schlegel Memorial Fund. The Village International Mennonite Church is an emerging community in the Vanier area of Ottawa. Pastor Stefan Cherry says the church will use the \$3,400 grant to purchase audiovisual equipment for use in Sunday services, neighbourhood parties and outreach activities. Refugio de Paz ("Refuge of Peace") Sherbrooke began three years ago as a house church. Its leader, Lucy Roca, came to Canada as a Colombian refugee and has been reaching the Colombian community in Sherbrooke since she arrived. Refugio de Paz now has additional house churches in Ville Quebec and Montreal. A grant of \$12,600 will permit the church to purchase needed audiovisual equipment and encourage young people to lead worship. The Schlegel Fund was established in memory of the late Wilfred Schlegel, a visionary minister and leader in the Western Ontario Mennonite Church conference (now part of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada).

—Wilfred Schlegel Memorial Fund Committee Release

Ten Thousand Villages CEO

NEW HAMBURG, Ont. -- Don Epp, a financial advisor with Investors Group Financial Services, has been named the new chief executive officer



Epp

for Ten Thousand Villages Canada. He began his new assignment Monday, August 9. Epp, who grew up as part of a Russian Mennonite farming family in the Leamington area, developed a career in the retail and food industry with the Campbell Soup Co. Ltd. He has worked for Investors since 2008.

Chilean Mennonites rebuilding houses and lives five months after earthquake

BY BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER

Mennonite World Conference Release

Nearly a half-year after the Feb. 27 earthquake that devastated their country, Mennonite churches in Chile have been involved in mutual aid among members and in witness to their communities.

One of the worst-hit congregations was Lota Mennonite Church, about 500 kilometres south of the capital Santiago on the Pacific coast. The region near the city of Concepción in central Chile, was also hard hit. More than 400 people died in the 8.8 magnitude quake, although no Mennonite members were among them.

According to Roberto Saez, Lota's pastor,

the church is rebuilding the homes of four families of the congregation who lived on a hillside full of flimsy wooden houses. They are receiving some municipal help and possibly some aid from Mennonite Central Committee. The congregation is also repairing its meetinghouse, which suffered damage. Some church buildings in the town were "totally destroyed," Saez reported,

In Concepción itself, many members of the Puerta del Rebaño church were away on vacation at the time of the quake. Some returned and helped with local emergency

PHOTO BY TITUS GUENTHER



Lota pastor Roberto Saez, left, and Boris Fuentealba survey the property where Fuentealba's house once stood.

medical care, while others facilitated aid efforts from where they were at the time the quake struck, being unable to return home.

Reconstruction work for the Puerta del Rebaño church went beyond houses and church buildings. One member, Felipe Elgueta, reported that the church's "spontaneous theatre" troupe performed in four communities devastated by the quake. "The theatre became a place of encounter," Elgueta said, "not in order to escape from what happened, but to share experiences in a place of trust." Besides drama, the troupe offered healing activities of drawing, story telling and lament."

In the weeks that followed the quake, Elgueta also noted that "new forms of aid developed." One Puerta del Rebaño member worked with a local child advocacy organization to put young offenders to work providing recreational activities for children affected by the quake.

"The one thing we ask from the global Anabaptist church, is to pray for Chile," wrote Samuel Tripainao, a pastor and general secretary of the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Chile (of which the Lota church is a member), in an e-mail to Mennonite World Conference staff. "We believe that after all the shaking and rocking of the earth, God will visit our nation in new ways. With Job, we say, 'I know that my redeemer lives, and at last he will stand on the earth' (Job 19:25)." ❧



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Bumper crop of green beans donated to House of Friendship

BY BARB DRAPER
FLORADALE, ONT.

In spite of some groaning in the bean patch each year, Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church has donated thousands of pounds of freshly picked and frozen green beans and corn for the House of Friendship in Kitchener over the past 25 years. Because picking beans is not anyone's favourite task, organizers planted fewer beans this year, but there was a bumper crop this summer and the total number of beans was about the same. Two pickings in July netted a total of 51 bushels of beans.

"Having our new church has given us a new way of doing it," said Florence Jantzi who helps to organize the project. "It's so much easier with the steamer in the church kitchen." Before Floradale built its new facilities in 2006, all the beans were blanched on camp stoves, outdoors near the bean patch. It is much more convenient to use the commercial vegetable steamer in the church kitchen.

For many years the beans and corn have been planted at Orval Martin's farm. Volunteers from the congregation pick the beans in the evening and the following morning the beans are cut and prepared for freezing at the church. Another advantage of using the church is that many people who live next door at Parkview Manors, a seniors complex, come over to help with cutting the beans. The congregation really appreciates the help of these community volunteers.

As the volunteers sit in the shade with bowls of beans on their laps, they chat with friends and neighbours and catch up on the news. Often the men are assigned to tipping and tailing while the women deftly cut the beans into bite-sized pieces. By noon most of the work is completed and the bulk of the volunteers head home for lunch.

"It's nice to get out and do some work for the needy," says Annie Bauman, a volunteer from Parkview Manors.

When all the beans are packaged they are delivered to House of Friendship which provides emergency food and shelter and other programs for low-income persons. And when the corn is ready to harvest, the call will go out again for volunteers. ❧

PHOTO BY ROY DRAPER



Mahlon Martin, Orval Martin and Jane Hesselink load the last of the beans into the pick-up truck that will transport them to Floradale Mennonite Church for processing. In the background are Ross Weber and Barb Draper.

❧ Briefly noted

'Taterware' instead of Styrofoam

SASKATOON, Sask.—Going green for the Elective Class of First Mennonite Church here means they are taking the harmful effects of making and recycling Styrofoam seriously. So much so that they convinced the planners of the 2010 Mennonite Central Committee's Relief Sale to use an alternate product called "Taterware" to serve up the food.

From a two-month study in 2008, reports Melita Penner, the class learned that when Styrofoam is manufactured, CPC's (chlorofluorocarbons) escape into the earth's atmosphere, depleting the ozone layer. Accordingly, Relief Sale coordinators Ethel and Menno Classen found a warehouse outlet, after much searching, called "Enviroway" and their store "Envirowise." Their "Taterware" is made from potatoes and will biodegrade when composted. "The cost is one-third more than paper tableware and twice as much as Styrofoam, but the committee wanted to be a forerunner in this regard," says Penner. The extra cost was absorbed in the food prices.

On the day of the sale, diners were asked to discard their leftovers into separate barrels: tableware into compost barrels and leftover food into the garbage barrels. Some didn't understand the process. Young people manning the barrels tried to explain. At the end of the day, a farmer took the load of biodegradable items to his farm, covering them with soil and claiming it will disintegrate in six months.

—First Mennonite Church Saskatoon release

Kelowna Gospel Fellowship 50th Jubilee

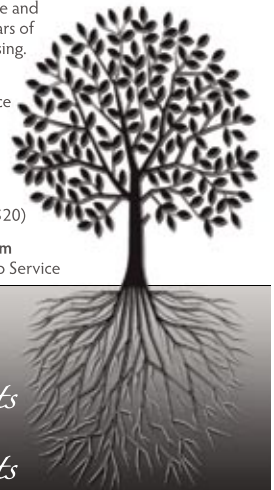
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Rockway Student wins Peace in Action award

MENNONITE SAVINGS AND CREDIT UNION RELEASE
KITCHENER, ONT.

Emily Brubaker-Zehr, a grade 11 student at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, is the recipient of Mennonite Savings and Credit Union's (MSCU) first annual Peace in Action Essay Award.

Entitled "The Power of Education,"

Brubaker-Zehr's essay illustrates how the simple act of foregoing a new banquet dress meant that 12 girls in a Kenyan refugee camp would receive solar lamps to study at night. Because of her experience, Brubaker-Zehr's views on cross cultural connections, and the value of education for girls around the world, changed



Brubaker-Zehr

dramatically. John Siebert, executive director of Project Ploughshares, says, "Emily showed how she moved from personal awareness of an opportunity to contribute, to engaging her teacher and fellow students, to leveraging the local donations with matching funds."

The award is part of MSCU's new Stewardship in Action program which focuses on advancing peace, social justice and mutual aid. The panel of judges for the award consists of one member each from Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO), Project Ploughshares, Conrad Grebel University College (CGUC) and Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) and is chaired by Benjamin Janzen, Stewardship in Action Advisor with MSCU. To read Brubaker-Zehr's and other essays, or to learn more about MSCU's Stewardship in Action program, visit www.mscu.com and click on 'Our Community'.

BETHANY MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO



Heather Whitehouse, centre was installed as a "community chaplain" by Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil, Ont., during a recent special service of blessing. Whitehouse is flanked by Bethany pastor Randy Klaassen, left, and Al Rempel, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada regional minister. In her role, Whitehouse serves as a volunteer through visitation, pastoral care, worship and preaching with seniors of the Niagara-on-the-Lake community, particularly at the Chateau Gardens, Upper Canada Lodge and Pleasant Manor seniors homes. As a support resource for pastors of the community, she is also involved as a spiritual care provider at Niagara area hospitals.

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/// New Pastor at Black Creek

BLACK CREEK, B.C.—Gordon Carter has begun a two-year term as interim pastor at United Mennonite Church, Black Creek. Carter, a long-time member of the church, was called to the lay



Carter

ministry in 1992. He received a diploma in the Master of Christian studies program at Regent College, Vancouver. He served as social worker at St. Joseph's Hospital in Comox, B.C., and most recently as chaplain there since 2000. Carter is excited to serve in his new position, especially as it relates to being called from within his own congregation. He encourages other congregations to "remember to look within the church and encourage people who have gifts in pastoral ministry."

—BY AMY DUECKMAN

GOD AT WORK IN US

Volunteer sees harm and good of Canada

BY GLADYS TERICHOW

Mennonite Central Committee Release
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Juan Raul Junay, 25, never tires of explaining how Canadian mining companies are affecting farming communities in his home country of Guatemala.

"Mines give people jobs, but there is long-term environmental destruction," explains Junay, who is from Guatemala City but has been working at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in Winnipeg since last August as part of Mennonite Central Committee's International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP).

As one of the speakers in Foodgrains Bank's People-to-People program, Junay

has spoken at more than 60 public gatherings in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

Junay is one of 58 young people from 23 countries participating in the IVEP program this year. He is returning to Guatemala this month with treasured memories of farming communities in Canada. A month after starting his placement, he participated in the harvest of a Foodgrains Bank community growing project in Niverville, a short drive southeast of Winnipeg. "It was the first time I saw such large combines and so many combines on one field," he says.

Other treasured memories include seeing bison farms, an elk, frozen rivers, snow and the wide open spaces of the Canadian Prairies.

Junay says he will return to Guatemala with vivid memories of his overnight visit to the small southwestern Manitoba town of Strathclair in early February—his first road trip on icy and snow-covered roads. "It was the first time I saw houses so far

PHOTO COURTESY OF JUAN RAUL JUNAY



Juan Raul Junay of Guatemala City, Guatemala, poses for a photograph in a field of golden Manitoba wheat.

apart," he exclaims.

When they reached Strathclair, he experienced the warmth of small-town hospitality and the serene silence of a winter's night in a rural community. "Strathclair is only three hours from Winnipeg, but it is so different," he says. "I knew I would remember this forever." ❧



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ARTBEAT

To Africa and back, again

Elsie Cressman movie documents a woman who is more than 'just a nurse'

STORY AND PHOTO

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

On June 27, the Princess Twin Cinema in uptown Waterloo had to open up a second room to view the 2010 movie, *Return to Africa: The Story of Elsie Cressman*, with Cressman, now 87, in attendance.

Cressman was only in her 20s when she went to Africa in 1953. Although she was "just a nurse," she was called on to set up an

/// New release

New CD a Canada-Kenya collaboration

Take Your Place, a CD featuring vocalist Kim Thiessen of Calgary, Alta., and Darryl Neustaedter Barg of Winnipeg, Man., has been released. On the 18-track CD, Thiessen sings about people finding their way in the world, changing it and looking forward to a better one. Three traditional Maasai songs, performed by Maasai choirs, are also included. Proceeds from the CD will benefit the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Generations program, which supports people living with HIV and AIDS. Accompanying the CD is a bonus DVD with footage of MCC's HIV and AIDS projects and other programs in Kenya. It is being released by MCC Alberta in partnership with Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary. This is the fourth benefit CD recorded by Thiessen, who works with the Generations program for MCC Alberta. To order, visit takeyourplace.mcc.org/.

—Mennonite Central Committee Release



entire hospital, together with living accommodations for patients and staff. The leprous hospital eventually served nearly 400 patients. She stayed in Africa for 23 years.

From a more conservative Mennonite group, she was known for not necessarily sticking to the rules. When she returned from Africa in 1976, Cressman was struck by the lack of midwifery services in Ontario. It was then against the law for births to happen at home, or without an attending physician, but she had delivered hundreds of babies in Africa. By the time her campaign was complete, together with her delivering many babies, Ontario had legalized midwifery.

It was this contact that led to the making of the movie. Karen Stainton and her husband Bruce Payne heard that Cressman—who had delivered their children—wanted to go back to Africa to visit in Shirati, Tanzania, and Rusinga Island, Kenya, where she had worked. Fundraising took

place to make the trip possible, and filmmakers got interested.

Paul and Paula Campsall of MetaMedia Productions, and Paul Francescutti of CKCO, the Kitchener CTV station, followed Cressman to Africa and back, interviewing former patients and present administrators.

Poignant stories included Stephen Owaja, who worked with Cressman and went on to teach for many years; Samson Ogola, teacher, ophthalmologist and administrator, who now runs a nursing school in Shirati; and that of Sylvia and Steven Scott.

Sylvia, from Kenya, was working in a Kitchener, Ont., hospital when she met Cressman, who had recently returned from Africa. She was amazed that Cressman asked her about her African ethnic group, not whether she was from Jamaica. But it was Cressman's question, "When are you going back to Africa?" that moved her, with her husband, to return with her skills and training to work among her own people, where they founded the Matangwe Community Health and Development Program in Kenya.

The 46 minute movie, suitable for congregational viewing, is available from www.metamedia.ca. //



Elsie Cressman, foreground, the subject of the new documentary, Return to Africa: The Story of Elsie Cressman, is pictured with filmmakers Paul Francescutti, and Paula and Paul Campsall, at a screening in Waterloo, Ont., this summer.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Finding a church home through art

BY TITUS GUENTHER

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

For Lucy Riquelme, a Mennonite painter from Concepcion, Chile, the reading of the article “Walking with God through canvas and steel” (*Canadian Mennonite*, May 17, page 24) connected her, in spirit and in art form, to her Canadian counterparts in southern Manitoba.

Riquelme is a member of Puerta del Rebaño (Gate of the Sheepfold) Anabaptist Mennonite Church in Concepción. Ray Dirks, curator of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, had included two of Riquelme’s paintings in the gallery’s “Just Food” exhibit, which were purchased by Mennonite art lover Harry Wiens on the exhibit’s first tour stop in Steinbach.

“When this morning I read the article about the [Buffalo Creek] artists you sent me, I felt incredibly close to them; I’d love to meet them some day,” she wrote in a June 9 e-mail.

I believe she identified intimately with the Manitoba artists when they confessed that their art forms—sculpting, painting, pottery—serve as avenues for experiencing God.

Riquelme’s is an incredible story of suffering and hope:

In September 1996, she separated from

her husband, an experience she calls “one of the greatest tragedies of my life.”

In December, though, she completed her university art studies following a lengthy interruption due to the military dictatorship in Chile.

“Finally, after a year of bureaucratic wrangling, I was able to reintegrate myself into academic life, one of my great aspirations,” she says. “I was working and studying, and my marriage was going from bad to worse. But the separation at that time from my children Gabriela and Pablo, whom I love above everything, was the hardest part. I couldn’t take them with me because I couldn’t provide food and a roof for them.

“I came to Puerta del Rebaño on Jan. 19, 1997, in a truly extraordinary way,” she relates. I was accompanying my cousin Nilza, as she brought her daughter Violeta to her first youth retreat. Violeta was only 12 then and had never gone anywhere without her mom. I encouraged her, saying, ‘You have to start letting her go, and here she’ll be in the care of the best people, Carlos and Mónica [the pastor couple]. Do it now!’

“The only thing was, I didn’t know anyone and had never been there before. To

make matters worse, I considered myself a completely agnostic person at the time. Did I come to the church with Nilza that day so that Violeta could go to her youth camp, or so that I could find the best of all refuges—God?

“Some people were living at the church. I thought, ‘It must be enjoyable to paint in a place that is also a church because there must be peace there.’ I talked to Carlos and Mónica about it. We reached an agreement and I moved in with my bed, canvas and paintbrushes, to live at the church. This was one of the most heart-warming experiences of my life. In a very short time, I became integrated into the church’s activities. I almost didn’t notice my change from being an agnostic to a Christian believer.

“Besides being the co-pastors of La Puerta, Carlos and Mónica are my best friends and, together, we have lived through the different stages of our church’s life. It has not been an easy journey, but today we see that it has been worthwhile, that we are getting a closer glimpse of the light, and this fills us with joy.”

Art is a significant life force in Riquelme’s congregation. Her painting is not the only art form practiced in La Puerta, though. Besides its music band playing folk music and songs with Christian themes, drama and dance are also cultivated and used in worship. Perhaps this is not surprising, since the church’s founder, Carlos Salazar, was professor of fine arts at Concepción’s main university as well as being an accomplished painter himself. Valentina Elgueta is a professional dance instructor and uses dance in worship and in the church’s work with women’s groups in the community.

Many have experienced music as a wonderful means for cross-cultural communication that serves to unify diverse peoples. Due to a century of cross-cultural missions, Mennonites are increasingly aware that other art forms also play a vital role in worship and serve a unifying function between cultures. ❧

Titus Guenther is associate professor of theology and missions at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Man.



Chile 1



Chile 2

Calendar

British Columbia

Sept. 10-11: MCC B.C. Festival and Relief Sale at the Tradex, Abbotsford. For more information, call 604-850-6639 or 1-888-622-6337.

Sept. 11: Pedalling for Hope fundraiser for MCC's sand dam projects in Kenya.

Sept. 23-Oct. 7: MC Canada IMPACT hosted by MC B.C. churches.

Sept. 25: MCC Fall Fair in Prince George.

Oct. 2: LifeBridge Ministries Fundraising Concert at Level Ground Mennonite Church.

Oct. 2-3: Thanksgiving Vespers with Abendmusik Choir at 8 p.m. at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford (2) and Knox United Church, Vancouver (3). Donations to Menno Simons Centre.

Oct. 4-6: Pastor/Spouse Retreat at Camp Squeah

Oct. 15-17: MC B.C. Women's Retreat at Camp Squeah

Nov. 19-21: Senior Youth Impact Retreat at Camp Squeah

Alberta

Nov. 4-7: Business as a Calling: Unleashing Entrepreneurship, MEDA's annual convention, Calgary. Go to businessasacalling.org or call 1-800-665-7026 for more information.

Saskatchewan

Sept. 17-19: Junior youth retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre. Theme: Weaving our Web; Speaker: Ryan Roth Bartel.

Oct. 15-16: Sask Women in Mission fall retreat at Shekinah. Theme: Worshipping God using our senses.

Oct. 23: Equipping Day, Osler Mennonite Church.

Manitoba

Until Sept. 18: "In the Spirit of Humanity" art exhibit at Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg; featuring the art of Ray Dirks, gallery curator, Manju Lodha, Isam About, and M.K. Sharma of Jaipur, India. For more information, e-mail rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca

Oct. 2: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate fundraising cyclathon.

Nov. 1: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate annual general meeting, at Westgate, 7 p.m.

Oct. 15-17: Manitoba Mennonite and Brethren Marriage Encounter weekend, in Winnipeg. For more information, visit marriageencounter.org. To apply, call Peter and Rose Dick at 204-757-4705 or e-mail mmme@mts.net.

Nov. 18: Evening of the Arts at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, at 7 p.m.

Dec. 6: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Christmas concert, at Westminster United Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Ontario

Sept. 10-12: Annual "Building Community" retreat for people with disabilities and their supporters at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Theme: "Looking on the bright side." Speaker: Susan Minns. For more information, or to register, e-mail professor_flatbread@yahoo.ca.

Sept. 11: Annual Corn Festival at Wanner Mennonite Church, Cambridge; starts at 5:30 p.m. Meal includes local corn, sausage/hot dog, beverage and dessert. Followed by a campfire.

Sept. 12: Reunion for descendants of George Albrecht at the KW Khaki Club, Wellesley at 1 p.m. For information call 519-885-0266 or contact bonniegingrich@sympatico.ca.

Oct. 17: Christian/Veronica Steinman(n) reunion, at Shakespeare Optimist Hall; potluck at 1 p.m.

Refreshments provided, but bring your own plates, cutlery and cups. Memorabilia welcome.

Oct. 21-24: Ten Thousand Villages Fair trade sale at Hamilton Mennonite Church. 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. (21 and 22), 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (23). For more information, call 905-627-4132.

Oct. 24: Pax Christi Chorale presents Fauré Requiem & S.S. Wesley Anniversary with guest conductor Stéphane Potvin at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto at 3 p.m.

Until Nov. 10: "Willow, Ash and Rye: Traditional Basketry Revisited" exhibit, at Joseph Schneider Haus museum, Kitchener, featuring the work of folk artist-in-residence Wendy Durfey. For more information, call Susan Burke at 519-742-7752.

Nov. 20: Annual handicraft sale at Fairview Mennonite Home auditorium, Cambridge. Crafts, decorations, gifts, quilts, woodworking, and much more. Tea room and lunch available. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Dec. 4,5: Pax Christi Chorale presents Bach Christmas Oratorio I, VI & Cantata 140, "Wachet Auf", Carols and Motets with guest conductor Howard Dyck at 7:30 (4) and 3 p.m. (5).

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.

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Upcoming

'Pink' weekend for women's retreat

Women's health issues, with a focus on breast cancer, will be the focus for the Mennonite Church B.C. Women's Retreat weekend Oct. 15-17 at Camp Squeah. Featured guest speaker will be Feather Janz, two-time breast cancer survivor. Saturday night will feature a concert by recording artist Lisa Adrienne, who lost her mother to breast cancer. In keeping with the theme of pink for breast cancer awareness, Friday night will be a pink manicure night, and Saturday night participants are encouraged to wear something pink for dinner. The service project will be donation of bras for the Fraser Valley Crisis Pregnancy Centre. Deadline for registration is Oct. 4. For more information, contact: Cheryl Dyck 604-826-9107, Rita Siebert 604-274-5517, or Waltrude Gortzen 604-756-0707.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN

Classifieds

Travel

TRAVEL: Visit Europe the Mennonite Way! See website for the 2011 Hotel and Youth Hostel Heritage Tours, including Holland, Germany, Poland, France and Switzerland. www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu.

For Rent

For Rent: Sleepy Hollow Cottage. All-season, 3-bedroom home in a peaceful wooded valley in the heart of the Niagara region. Small retreat centre or family accommodations. Bruce Trail. Shaw Festival, Wine tours. Phone: 416-534-6047 or e-mail: shcottage@sympatico.ca for complete brochure.

Employment Opportunities



Winnipeg Mennonite Seniors Care Inc.

WMSCI, a faith-based organization that provides a spectrum of service in a continuum of care for seniors, is seeking an

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reporting to the Board, the Executive Director is responsible for all departments and services for our residents in our Assisted Living and Life Lease facilities. The successful candidate will be a caring and committed person with: experience or knowledge related to seniors, a working knowledge of finances, supervisory skills, and an overall understanding of present and future needs of seniors in group living. A background in the social services field and/or social work would be beneficial.

If you are excited about being part of a caring, close-knit team of service providers in faith-based facilities and have energy and vision, please forward your resume and cover letter to: **Bert Friesen, Board Chair, at 475 Lindenwood Dr., Winnipeg, MB R3P 2P3, or by e-mail to albertfriesen@compuserve.com.**

LEAD PASTOR

Home Street Mennonite Church, located close to downtown Winnipeg, is looking for a full-time Lead Pastor who is committed to Mennonite/Anabaptist theology. We seek a person who is able to give leadership in a collaborative setting, so that spiritual nurture and care is provided to our congregation of 170 members.

Please send letters of interest to Michelle Montsion at funkmontsion@mts.net by August 30. In addition, we request that you contact the Mennonite Church Manitoba Conference Minister and complete their process.



Rooted in faith, **Tri-County Mennonite Homes (TCMH)** provides leadership in service to seniors and developmentally disabled individuals by dedicated staff and volunteers.

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The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a dynamic, values-based, visionary person who will lead and direct TCMH, including its three divisions, and provide advice and support to the Board of Directors. We are looking for a well-rounded person with an aptitude for business, vision for the future, an understanding of the past, a well-grounded faith, a love for people and the ability to leverage the abilities of the people around him/her to achieve the goals of the organization.

If you have:

- Post-secondary education, preferably in Business Administration, with 10+ years of experience as a CEO/Senior Leader in the not-for-profit sector
- Familiarity with the provincial funding mechanisms and Acts that relate to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), Ministry of Labour (MOL) and the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs)
- Proven ability to lead and motivate individuals and teams to produce quality service within tight time frames and manage multiple projects

Please respond with a cover letter and resume by September 17, 2010 to Glenn Zehr, Board Chair at megzehr@sympatico.ca.

www.tcmhomes.com

PASTOR

Tofield Mennonite Church is searching for a pastor who is fearless and passionate for God, and is gifted in the areas of community outreach, preaching and teaching. We are an Anabaptist congregation of about 70 members in a growing town of about 2,000 people, with many acreage and farm families living in the surrounding area. Edmonton is only about 45 km northwest of us. Blessed with a newer sanctuary and fellowship hall, we look forward to working together with a pastor who has an outgoing personality and is eager to help our church bring Jesus to our community. The opportunity is great. Is God calling you?

Please direct resumes to:

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or e-mail: bgoerzen@hotmail.com

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Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date Ads Due

Oct. 4 Sept. 21

Oct. 18 Oct. 5

PHOTO BY LIESA UNGER



In a worship service following the Lutherans asking forgiveness for persecuting Anabaptists and expressions of forgiveness by Mennonites, worshippers pass bowls of oil from the Holy Land to anoint each other with the words, "God gives you a new heart and a new spirit." On the platform MWC president Danisa Ndlovu anointed LWF general secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko (left), after Ndlovu received oil from LWF president Bishop Mark Hanson (right).

Lutherans and Anabaptists reconcile in service of repentance and forgiveness

BY BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER

Stuttgart, Germany

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE RELEASE

Almost 500 years of guilt were formally laid to rest July 22 as representatives of 70 million Lutherans around the world asked forgiveness for the violent persecution of Anabaptists in the 16th century and for the way negative portrayals of Anabaptists and Mennonites have been allowed to continue. Representing the Anabaptist-Mennonite family, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) acknowledged their request and granted forgiveness.

The landmark action came on the third day of the eleventh Lutheran World Federation (LWF) assembly, held in Stuttgart. Some 480 delegates from around the world acknowledged "the harm that our forebears in the sixteenth century committed to Anabaptists, for forgetting or ignoring this persecution in the intervening centuries, and for all inappropriate, misleading and hurtful portraits of Anabaptists and Mennonites made by Lutheran authors, in both popular and scholarly forms, to the present day."

The action was the culmination of four years of work by the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission of the LWF and the Mennonite World Conference. On hand to witness the resolution were official representatives of Mennonite World Conference along with other Mennonite guests from Germany, France, Switzerland and Netherlands..

During the discussion time, the motion was given heartfelt affirmations from Argentinean, Nigerian and Canadian delegates. Following a time of prayer, LWF president, Bishop Mark S. Hanson called on delegates to vote by standing or kneeling. The action passed unanimously with a number of delegates, dropping to their knees.

In the MWC response to the vote, MWC president, Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe faltered with emotion as he told the assembly that Anabaptist-Mennonites cannot come to this table with "our heads held high; we also stand in need of God's grace." The response named the action as a fulfillment of the "rule of Christ," binding and loosing according to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18.

"We believe that today God has heard your confession and is granting your appeal for forgiveness. We joyfully and humbly join with God in giving forgiveness. In the spirit of the rule of Christ, we believe that what we are doing together here today God also is doing in heaven."

Recalling the practice of foot-washing in some Anabaptist-Mennonite churches, Ndlovu, assisted by Janet Plenert of Canada, presented Hanson with a wooden foot-washing tub and a towel. Ndlovu said the tub was "a sign of our commitment to a future when the distinguishing mark of Lutheran and Anabaptist-Mennonite relationships is boundless love and unflinching service. We will learn to seek one another's good from a posture of vulnerability and mutual submission."