

CANADIAN MENTOR

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Protesting death in Georgia

pg. 22

inside

Building up God's kingdom together 4
Consultation affirms role of Sunday school 19
Haiti: A year after the quake 23-25

EDITORIAL

'Tunnel vision'

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Joe Neufeld puts his finger on an important artificial divide in our congregational care-giving (page 4) when he raises the spectre of perceiving some aspects “sacred”—and thus safe and legitimate—while others are considered “secular”—and thus suspect.

Although his well-articulated case might be overstated at times, it does point to a larger cultural context in which Mennonites are having some difficulty navigating the rapidly shifting values and worldviews of the wider society.

Perceiving ourselves far more sophisticated than our immigrant parents in many cases, with higher-education degrees and professional and business careers, we have developed the right religious language, but at a subconscious level our attitudes and practices have not quite caught up. Still harking back to the shared values of our mostly rural communities, we often still operate as though our neighbours, those we bump into at the grocery store, have familiar names like Yoder, Petkau, Wiebe, Martin and Redekop (as David Martin points out on page 13).

Even some of our new congregations form around the coming together of people of European descent, the disillusioned or alienated from one or another of our many historical Mennonite splinter groups, attempting a kind of insular cultural refuge where the vision centres around new, more progressive or evangelical stripes of the Anabaptist brand.

But our neighbours do not have a

shared history, a similar religious ethos and culture. Canada absorbs more than 100,000 immigrants a year now from all over the globe. They are Muslims, Buddhists, Hindu, Sikhs, although, according to Lethbridge sociologist

Reginald Bibby, fully one-third of these new immigrants “are Christians, many from Korea, the Philippines and Africa, where Pentecostalism is spreading on the winds of revival.” Some have no religion at all. While the mainline

Protestant and Roman Catholic communities are losing numbers, Eastern religions are on the rise.

Our children go to school with their children. We labour side-by-side with their parents and grandparents in the workplace. We compete in sports, act in plays, sing in choirs and play in bands and orchestras with them. They appear on television and in our newspapers as media anchors, pundits and reporters.

And speaking of the media, the “world” as we historically defined it is much more with us, much more in our faces. We spend much less time in church, much more on the Internet, at sports and entertainment events, even at the local restaurant rather than around the dining room table at mealtime. Now our community is our group of Facebook friends, fostering a kind of superficial intimacy that shares more trivia than substantive feelings and values. We know more about them than our fellow congregants.

All of which can lead to a confused

self-identity as a people of God. Sometimes, we get a clearer answer from so-called outsiders, one of whom, author Marci McDonald, writing about the rise of Christian nationalism in Canada, links us with the Calvinists who once fled persecution in Europe. But by the end of her treatise, she describes us, through our association with Kairos, as “left-leaning Mennonites and Quakers.”

So, when we come together for worship on Sunday morning and at other church-sponsored events, we bring vessels filled with disparate elements of our culture, minds that are often distracted, emotions raw with anxiety, sometimes confusion. It is hard to focus on a very necessary “God moment,” where we need a kind of spiritual flush to bring us to a place where faith can fill the gaps, the void, the hunger for something whole, something healing, something nourishing and sustaining.

Every pastor in touch with these realities knows the challenge that this scenario presents.

Likewise, with our behavioural problems. Despite all of our technological advances, all of our applied sciences bringing advanced diagnoses and treatment, personal problems such as depression, marriage breakdown and drug abuse have actually increased. A narrow pietistic approach to these issues in our congregational caregiving will not suffice.

Neufeld calls this “theological tunnel vision” and appeals to congregational leaders to broaden their insights and treatment, and co-opt behavioural and social scientists in addressing the issues that increasingly confront church families. He is right, not because he is a practising psychologist, but because the root causes of these problems arise from a much more complex culture than our historical experience has given us.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Crosses are raised to commemorate the dead at the hands of graduates of the former School of the Americas outside the gates of Fort Benning, Ga., where the school (now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) is located. See story on Page 22.

PHOTO: RICHARD ALBRECHT

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contents



Building up God's kingdom together 4

JOE NEUFELD, a Saskatchewan family counsellor and retired psychology professor, believes that the 'sacred' role of the pastor needs to be integrated with the 'secular' role of the social behavioural sciences to heal the wounds of today's church. Plus, read about case studies and 'steps toward healing' from Mennonite Publishing Network's 'Close to Home' series of pamphlets.

Vietnam Mennonites lose their church centre 17

Government demolishes the property of unregistered church group to make way for urban renewal project.



Protesting death in Georgia 22

Three Waterloo Region Mennonites travel to Georgia to take part in the annual protest against the former School of the Americas training centre still operating under the banner of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

Welcome to the other side of the fence 27

The 50th wedding anniversary celebration for Jake and Margaret Harms turns into a fundraiser for Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry.

Uncovering ancient rhythms of daily prayer 32

Two new Herald Press books—*Day by Day These Things We Pray* and Vol. 2 of *Take Our Moments and Our Days*—invite Mennonites to make regular prayer practices part of their daily routine.

Focus on Finances 35

CEO **TIM WAGLER** provides information about MAX Canada's ministries, including insurance services, and FaithLife Financial encourages Mennonite parents to consider insurance for their children.

Regular features:

For discussion **9** Readers write **10** Pontius' Puddle **10** Milestones **15** Calendar **38** Classifieds **39**

'Tunnel vision' 2

DICK BENNER

New world metaphors 11

PHIL WAGLER

Subverting our bourgeois tendencies 12

AIDEN ENNS

'Mennonite' not eaten here 13

DAVID MARTIN

New blog postings

at canadianmennonite.org/blog/

Beginning the new year with stories: **CHERYL WOELK**

Preaching existentially?: **DAVID DRIEDGER**

Top five books of 2010: **PAUL LOEWEN**

Building up God's kingdom together

Bridging the secular/sacred divide in the social and behavioural sciences

BY JOE NEUFELD

The inclusion of behavioural research studies of the issues facing our congregations could provide an atmosphere of integrating our faith with behavioural and social science findings.

During the course of an evening of socializing with mostly pastors and deacons at some denominational committee meetings, discussion turned to the roles and practices of responding to the needs of members of our congregations who were dealing with issues like depression, marriage breakdown and drug abuse.

While each of us had our viewpoints, I quickly got the message that I was the “secular psychologist” and therefore lacked important insights and sensitivity needed to deal with these behavioural problems.

I was somewhat taken aback when I realized that I was not being validated by the group. Despite having graduated from a Mennonite Bible college and having been heavily involved in the work of the church, as a registered psychologist with a Ph.D. in counselling psychology it became clear to me that there were those in the group that had a “sacred” calling and others possibly a “secular” calling.

What makes a career “secular” or “sacred,” or can we speak about an “integrated calling?”

Those with a sacred calling believe they been called of God to a specific field of work. They see it as being distinctive from a secular calling, in that their faith directly informs their practice.

It seems to me that those with a secular calling assess their aptitudes, abilities, interests and values in the selection of a given career or field of work. There is no particular emphasis on this choice being a “spiritual” or a theological calling.

This does not mean, however, that the divine element is missing for those individuals.



Secular/sacred dynamic

Maybe we in the church need to reverse our thinking about those who are “called to ministry” and those who have a different orientation/introduction to working in the church.

I am reminded of Henry Neufeld’s challenge regarding our views of believing and behaving. In his article, “Believe, behave, belong,” April 27, 2009, page 4, he challenged all of us to reverse our church’s formula in addressing the beliefs and behaviours that we practise. He presented a very strong point that we may need to focus more on what we do than on what we believe. He presented compelling arguments in his references to Alan Kreider’s *The Origins of Christendom in the West*, Jesus’ teachings, and Jewish New Testament writers and rabbis, that what we do has a more profound effect on others than what we believe.

I want to briefly explore this “secular/sacred” dynamic in terms of the church responding to the critical needs and issues emerging in our congregations. Personality disorders, suicide, addiction and family dysfunction are serious concerns, but seem to have taken a back seat to more formal theological concerns such

as baptism, missions and discipleship.

Upon examining the themes of the annual assemblies during the last 10 years, it is obvious that formal “theological issues” have received most of the attention. However, I believe that our congregations need more support and direction in coping with the countless psychological and personal crises they are facing.

It may be that the themes chosen—all bearing scriptural references (like last year’s assembly with its key verses from Colossians 3)—were critical at the time and needed to be emphasized. But meanwhile, critical psycho-social issues facing individuals and families in our churches have not received adequate attention.

I am aware that some congregations in Canada have made creative efforts to cope. My observations tell me that we need to approach more of our competent behavioural and social scientists who are employed across Canada, but who are seldom used in the church. One unfortunate message they sometimes pick up is that their “secular” approach to the psycho/social/spiritual problems evident in our communities is somehow less “sacred.”

Maybe our “theological tunnel vision”

has negated the contributions that the behavioural and social sciences can potentially make in addressing the concerns and issues that confront our church families. Of great concern is a tendency to “theologize” serious behavioural problems without critical diagnosis. Root causes of maladaptive behaviour need to be identified and treated, and this is where the specialized training of psychologists and psychiatrists are needed.

Integrated models

The inclusion of behavioural research studies of the issues facing our congregations could provide an atmosphere of integrating our faith with behavioural and social science findings. Let me briefly introduce some program models integrating the “secular” and “sacred” approaches that could be implemented in our congregations:

- A therapeutic/healing/caring perspective was developed by Dr. Abe Schmitt and his colleagues in Souderton, Pa., 25 years ago. His book *When a Congregation Cares* spells out the details of implementing an integrated program involving theology and psychology that can be adapted to any congregation.

The program includes deacons, pastors, psychologists and nurses in meeting the varying needs of a congregation. When the church community becomes aware that some of its members have been identified as addicts or abusers, for

instance, it is imperative that a behavioural specialist be consulted for treatment, Schmitt believes. However, this does not rule out the value of prayer, the use of Scripture or the provision of emotional support.

Using this model, Grace Mennonite Church of Regina, Sask., where I am a member, introduced a modified version of this program in which a team made use of pastors, deacons and a registered psychologist approximately 10 years ago.

Choosing life

Dealing with bipolar disorder

BY INGRID PETERS FRANSEN

Every morning I look in the mirror and do not know who might be looking back at me. I wonder what the day will hold. Will it be a day of relative calm? Or will it be a day when my voice becomes higher-pitched, and my speech speeds up, gushing out of me in staccato fashion while my mind tries to keep up with the ideas that come rushing in?

Will I balance my chequebook or will I shop until I drop? Will it be a day of tears or a day of rage? Will it be a day when I reread a sentence countless times because I can't remember what I have read or a day of brilliant insight? Will I spend the day napping because exhaustion overtakes me or will I need to go to emerg at 3 a.m. to get drugs to put me to sleep?

Whenever I am overcome by a bottomless abyss of sadness or crazed by a rage that respects no boundaries, I grasp for the message, "Choose life."

I had my first bipolar episode 18 years ago—a mixed episode in which my mood alternated between depression and mania on a daily basis for over a month. I was diagnosed with depression 13 years ago and with bipolar affective disorder seven years ago. After my diagnosis of bipolar, it took me three-and-a-half years to stabilize. Since I was diagnosed and entered treatment, the duration, frequency and severity of the episodes have all decreased.

I miss the intensity of emotion—joy was more intense, sadness was more intense, rage was more intense, the feeling of injustice was more intense. Life now seems muted by comparison, but I choose meds because of the people around me. My children have been the worst casualties of my disorder, but the church has provided them with models of stable families. They have welcomed my children into their homes, Sunday school, summer camp, youth groups and programs.

For me, the church has been somewhat less hospitable. Some members are leery of a person whose mood is so unpredictable and, at times, quite destructive. I understand their apprehension. Perhaps the person most frightened by the tempest of my disorder is me.

Some, however, see me through the lens of my abilities, not my disorder, and have supported and befriended me. My nearest and dearest friend is a model of Christian charity, loving me unconditionally and meeting me weekly regardless of my inclination. My psychiatrist is a Christian who understands the importance of faith in the process of healing. Most importantly, God chooses life for me—blessing me with children and a grandchild. My children also choose life for me—forgiving me my transgressions.

Ingrid Peters Fransen teaches economics at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Man.

Steps toward healing

If you think that you have bipolar disorder, or are developing it, here are some important steps toward managing it:

1. GET PROFESSIONAL HELP IMMEDIATELY.

Bipolar disorder is a serious condition that responds to treatment, so there is no reason why you should wait.

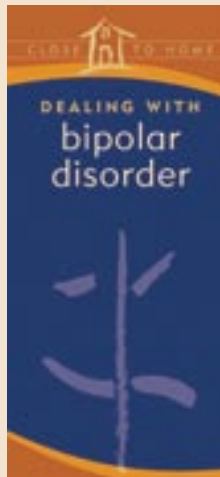
2. EXPECT MEDICATION. Since bipolar disorder has a strong biological component, you will very likely need medication.

3. BE OPEN TO PSYCHOTHERAPY AS PART OF YOUR TREATMENT PLAN. Therapy can help you work with the stress, relationship difficulties, sleep disruption, unhealthy thinking and other factors that can affect the onset, severity and duration of your mood episodes.

4. LEARN ABOUT THE DISORDER. Proper education about the causes and treatment of the disease is important not only for you, but also for your loved ones and your faith community.

5. FOLLOW YOUR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF TREATMENT.

Excerpted from 'Dealing with bipolar disorder,' a pamphlet in the 'Close to Home' series published by Mennonite Publishing Network (mpn.net/closetohome).



• Another well-researched and -practised model is that of Dr. David Burns (*Ten Days to Self-Esteem*, 1993). Burns—a psychologist/therapist with a background in theology and therapy, and a career in

the Anglican priesthood—has developed an holistic approach to dealing with self-esteem, depression and stress. He offers a powerful approach that provides hope, compassion and healing for people

suffering from low self-esteem and unhappiness.

• Based on my many years of professional practice providing therapeutic services to clients in many settings, I have learned

When the pain doesn't go away

Dealing with drug addiction

Jane's nightmares kept her from getting a good night's sleep. "They are just terrifying," she told her doctor. "I wake up almost every night. It's like someone is suffocating me—like a body lying on top of me—I'm holding my breath—just shaking with fear!"

"I think we can help with that," said Dr. Shenk. "Let's try this new sleep medication to see if that helps."

Jane (all names are pseudonyms), married and the mother of two sons, began taking the pills every night. The relaxed feeling they produced reminded her of the way she felt in college after having a couple of drinks.

When her prescription ran out, Jane began to mix vodka into her Diet Coke—a daily ritual. Eventually, though, Jane went to see several doctors, mainly to ask for more sleep medication.

Jane would spend time with her women friends at church. With them, Jane pretended that the sexual abuse she experienced as a teen was "all in the past." She was too ashamed to tell even her best friend. "After all," she reasoned, "it was my own fault and it's time to let bygones be bygones."

Sleeping pills became her escape from the pain. There was a lot to hide: her drug and alcohol habit, and past sexual abuse. She lived in fear of being found out, especially by her teenage sons, who liked to tease her about being "a little out of it."

Then she experienced a back injury at work, which needed strong painkillers. When those ran out, marijuana became her crutch until she could find a new doctor who would give her yet another prescription.

At 16, Jane's son was arrested for smoking marijuana. Sitting in the police station, all she could do was pray, "Help me, God. Please help me and Jason."

Jason's arrest was a wake-up call to Jane, and it opened some doors to healing. As she sat in drug awareness

groups that she and Jason were court-ordered to attend, she discovered a new world of openness. These people talked about all their problems—even sexual abuse.

One day while visiting with her best friend from church, Jane started talking about the pain and the drug abuse she'd hidden for so long. "I've never shared this with anyone at church. I know Jason and I both have a long journey ahead of us," she said.

Today, Jane belongs to a 12-step addiction recovery group, and she sees a therapist to deal with her emotional pain. Occasionally, she still has the nightmares, but she's chosen a better way of life that includes God and her church friends. Today, Jane continues to build a life

free of denial, one of hope and restoration.

The road of recovery and forgiveness is a life-long journey, but Jane is committed to doing whatever it takes to manage her addiction. Her friends have covenanted to pray for her and she feels the strength of their support.

Steps toward healing

For anyone struggling with a drug addiction, the following are important steps toward recovery:

1. **KNOW THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**
2. **COME INTO THE OPEN.** Acknowledge that you are addicted and that you need help.
3. **SEEK THE RIGHT PROFESSIONAL HELP.** Your physician or your pastor can point you to such people. Look for qualified therapists who will support your spiritual journey as well.
4. **INVITE FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR RECOVERY.**

5. **EDUCATE YOURSELF.** The recovery program you choose depends on factors such as your personality, the kind of drug(s) you have used, the program's concept of spirituality, mental and physical illness that may accompany your addiction, and local availability and affordability.

6. **STAY THE COURSE.** Keep grounded in your walk with God and in a faithful community that helps you stay focused on your healing journey.

Excerpted from 'Dealing with drug addiction,' a pamphlet in the 'Close to Home' series published by Mennonite Publishing Network (mpn.net/closetohome).



that an effective approach is an integrated model that includes constructs from the social and behavioural sciences with an underlying Anabaptist theology.

The framework for any program includes four phases or dimensions:

• **THE BEHAVIOURAL PHASE** includes the behaviours that may need to be modified,

reinforced, forgiven or discontinued. The behaviour is what we, as individuals, families and the church, need to address. There are behaviours such as divorce,

'Hi, my name's Steve* and I'm a porn addict'

Dealing with pornography

My first experience with pornography was at a corner store when I was nine years old. On a dare, I picked up a *Playboy* magazine and found that those glossy pictures aroused feelings of excitement that I had never felt before. They also triggered feelings of shame.

As a teen, I continued to explore the world of pornography. Although I felt ashamed, the insidious power of porn was greater than my ability to resist it. It became my big secret.

All this time I was an active member of a Mennonite church. There, I heard two messages: Pornography is a repulsive sin, and there is no mercy for people caught in it. This condemning culture actually drove my addiction deeper underground, where it thrived in a world of secrecy, shame and isolation.

A few years later, I attended seminary to prepare for pastoral ministry. During that time, my addiction progressed into more deviant and dangerous forms. I began going to peep shows, renting X-rated videos, consuming more and more porn, and masturbating compulsively. I kept pleading with God to release me from this dungeon. Instead, my feelings of despair and isolation only drove me deeper into the addictive cycle.

Grace finally came in an unexpected way. I befriended a young man who was an alcoholic and I began attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings with him. I found a spirit of hope and acceptance that I had never experienced before. Somehow this community of broken people had found a pathway to healing.

That introduction to the 12-step movement led me to Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA). The relief I felt at my first SAA meeting overwhelmed me. Here was a group of men who weren't put off by my story, who were being honest with one another, and who were dealing with their addiction.

I also began seeing a Christian therapist. It was another great relief to share my dark secret with him and to begin untangling the web of deceit and despair in my

life. Above all, he helped me to see the roots of my addiction. Porn had become my drug of choice, something I used to dull my feelings of shame and insecurity.

In the decade since then, I have experienced significant healing. Especially with the easy access of the Internet, I still experience the draw of porn, but the compulsion is almost gone. Sex is now something I celebrate with my wife in a healthy and respectful relationship.

I yearn for the day when I can share my story in my congregation without fearing rejection. But the 12-step recovery movement gives me hope. It is a testimony to the power of God and of a caring community to transform broken people.

* A pseudonym.



Steps toward healing

If you are compulsively attracted to pornography, here are several important steps toward healing:

- 1. ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU NEED HELP.**
- 2. TELL YOUR SPOUSE OR OTHER TRUSTED LOVED ONES.** Ask them to pray for you, remind you of your goals, and encourage you along the way.
- 3. TALK TO YOUR PASTOR OR SPIRITUAL MENTOR.** Ask him or her to put you in touch with a professional counsellor who will help you break the cycle of addiction.
- 4. SEE A COUNSELLOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES TO ESTABLISH NEW PATTERNS OF THOUGHT AND BEHAVIOUR.**
- 5. GIVE YOUR PASTOR OR CHRISTIAN COUNSELLOR PERMISSION** to explore how pornography has affected your relationship with God, discuss what forgiveness might look like in your life, pray with you for God's strength to resist temptation, and study Scripture and other resources on healthy sexuality.
- 6. BEWARE OF PEOPLE WHO TELL YOU THAT CHANGE IS SIMPLY A MATTER OF TURNING TO GOD AND DECIDING NOT TO USE PORNOGRAPHY.**

Excerpted from 'Dealing with pornography,' a pamphlet in the 'Close to Home' series published by Mennonite Publishing Network (mpn.net/closetohome).

premarital sex or drug abuse that the church has partially addressed using theology as a basis. In most cases, unfortunately, the social and behavioural sciences have been downplayed or ignored.

• **THE AFFECTIVE DOMAIN** includes all the feeling and emotions individuals experience in relationship to the behaviours in which they have been, or are, engaged. The emotions may include fear, guilt or anger that trigger the behaviours that cause disruption in our families, churches and communities. There is almost always an incident that triggers positive or negative emotions to which each individual reacts.

• **THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN** is basically the use of the intellect, knowledge and thinking processes that enables individuals to choose behaviours to modify their stress-causing factors. In other words, they choose actions to reduce the debilitating behaviours and choose behaviours that can bring about resolution, reconciliation or healing.

• **THE SPIRITUAL DOMAIN** includes an individual's basic belief systems, theology or orientation to reacting to life situations. The spiritual foundation is basic to what a person chooses to do, feel, believe or imply in his/her actions and decisions.

Towards an integrated approach

For a congregation to implement an effective program of integrated services, it is imperative that the personnel involved have—in addition to being professionally certified—a sound understanding of the meaning of caring, helping or supporting. A few Greek terms expand the meaning of these concepts:

• **PRAEKAEO** means to beseech, exhort, encourage and comfort. The term is used in Romans 12 and 15, and II Corinthians 1, and suggests an interactive style of behaviour.

• **NONTHETEO** means to warm, comfort and admonish. These are all directive verbs used in Romans 14 and 15, and I Corinthians 4:14.

• **PARMUTHEOMALY** is another term essential in understanding appropriate action; it means to encourage and cheer up. This also is an interactive type of behaviour.

There are behaviours such as divorce, premarital sex or drug abuse that the church has partially addressed using theology as a basis. In most cases, unfortunately, the social and behavioural sciences have been downplayed or ignored.

• **ANTECHOMAI** means to hold fast, to take an interest in, to listen to and to pray for.

• **MAKROTH** means to be patient, to listen with love, to comfort or to love. The term is used in Matthew 18 and James 5:7.

These terms, actions or behaviours are helpful concepts that resonate with an Anabaptist theology, and which can be integrated into the behavioural sciences when helping to initiate and motivate behavioural changes.

I encourage our MC Canada leaders and program personnel to give increased attention to the many behavioural crises invading our churches. One practical way would be to begin doing this at our annual assembly sessions. This may require inviting some of the prominent behavioural and social scientists—as well as theologians—to speak to such issues as depression, stress, family dysfunction and

other concerns mentioned in this article.

As believers in our Anabaptist churches, we need to make a concerted effort to involve the contributions that can be made by social and behavioural scientists doing research and therapy in these areas. It is my hope that we bridge the artificial wall of separation that divides us into individuals whose work is “secular” and those whose work is “sacred.” Are we not all called to help build up God's kingdom? ❧



Joe Neufeld of Regina, Sask., is a family counsellor and retired professor of educational and counselling psychology at the University of Regina. He is also the psychologist for his congregation, Grace Mennonite Church.

/// For discussion

1. What has your congregation done to help members dealing with personality disorders, addiction or family dysfunction? How effective has it been? How involved should the congregation or the pastor be in helping people cope with these types of issues?

2. Do you agree with Joe Neufeld that the church has tended to sideline its psychologists and psychiatrists? If so, why might that be? Have we assumed that spirituality dominates over the physical body? How could the church best use the expertise of social and behavioural scientists?

3. Neufeld suggests that the church has been preoccupied with right belief and has neglected right behaviour. Do you agree? How much does our faith influence our behaviour? How concerned should a congregation be about the behaviour of its members?

4. If a church assembly offered seminars led by professional psychologists, what issues should be addressed? Under what conditions would it be appropriate for a social scientist to serve as the main speaker for a Mennonite Church Canada assembly?

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.

✉ Lamenting Richard Holbrooke

RICHARD HOLBROOKE (APRIL 24, 1941 – Dec. 13, 2010) was the U.S. secretary of state who never was. He was perhaps too much the professional diplomat and not enough the politician to get the top job.

He had a fault, though. He was more interested in actually resolving disputes and conflicts than in turning the results into some political advantage. Problem-solving was Holbrooke's thing. Maybe he had memories of his early days when his parents, although Jewish by origin, took him to Quaker meetings.

Perhaps it's time for Anabaptists to stand up and be counted. Not in a timid, hesitant way, like former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, but in a forceful, boisterous—sometimes abrasive—way that comes from strong convictions. I think Holbrooke was like that.

RICHARD PENNER, CALGARY, ALTA.

✉ Wineskins process has been 'confounding and tedious'

THANK YOU FOR taking the time to write about the Wineskins process in the Nov. 29 issue ("MCC centrality questioned" article by Will Braun, page 4, and "Congregations, too, want 'new wineskins'" editorial by Dick Benner).


I had almost forgotten about this important endeavor after having been rebuffed early on in the process by a Wineskins gatekeeper. And in spite of the many Mennonite churches in the Vancouver, B.C., area, no meetings have been held there. The meetings were held in Abbotsford instead.

The reorganization of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is of interest to me for several reasons:

- Our church is currently engaged in an "appreciative inquiry" process.
- I have academic- and work-related interest in the organization.
- I love MCC, having been its Appalachian director many years ago and, more recently, having been involved with two MCC-related para-church organizations (More Than a Roof, and Assets Vancouver, an immigrant business training program).

Although MCC is near and dear to my heart, and I believe that I understand its purpose, the Wineskins process leaves me somewhat frustrated and peripheral. Others may feel the same way; hence, the lack of response and enthusiasm for the process. Plus, the fact that very few of us can be engaged in something this esoteric for four years! It is not that I have nothing to say. Trust me! It's just that the questions are boring and beyond the purview of most MCC supporters.

This MCC supporter is of the view that there are only two questions that are germane and of primary interest to most of us:


Pontius' Puddle


- What is the role and relationship of the par-church—in this case, MCC—to the various conferences?
- Do we support a less imperialistic role and structure for MCC? The Canada/U.S. dichotomy and the role of other regions could then be worked out by MCC and church bureaucrats.

While I am not suggesting that MCC and the Wineskins “enologists” become more cavalier in their efforts, I am suggesting that the very reasons that led to MCC’s creation and its continued success are the reasons why this process is both confounding and tedious.

PETER A DUECK, VANCOUVER, B.C.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

New world metaphors

PHIL WAGLER

Human ingenuity cranks out things that are windows into the heart of the age. Our technological dreamworks become tools of convenience, toys of amusement, gadgets of annoyance, and objects of idolatry. Since Babel, every epoch has had its technological metaphor. The great tower of Genesis 11 betrayed humanity’s cultural self-understanding. We were kings and queens of the castle, then we got confused.

Dash forward and we can trace a fascinating series of tech symbols since the 15th century. Gutenberg’s printing press of 1450 was a technological wonder. His press made culture-quaking ideas capable of spreading like wild fire. It expedited literacy. It empowered the individual to rise from the dust of a feudal cultural grave.

Fast forward a couple of centuries to philosopher Blaise Pascal. This calculating “homme,” who defined the emerging individual rationalism of the Enlightenment with “I think, therefore I am,” was also apparently the first to wear a wristwatch. If individual reason had won the day, why not individual time, too? The clock became the technological metaphor for a new era, one in which time became money, and the dirty second hand, not the rhythms of creation, ruled the roost.



Things ticked along until the “thingamajig extraordinaire” was sprung upon us. The computer hotwired Gutenberg’s press and Pascal’s watch into a plastic tower making power personal and Pacman an icon. With the Internet the world, quite literally, came home. The computer now amuses, aids and controls. The web connects us to a wide world and disconnects us from our family and neighbours. It can save time and waste it. It can liberate and imprison. It can bring order and disseminate chaos. It is the technological metaphor for the world we all know.

But we haven’t stopped there. The technological metaphor of the dawning

[T]he church does not exist to be the virtual spiritual equivalent of your favourite app.

world is the smartphone, which puts a shrinking world in my pocket. It seems to have life and yet has none. It is the perfect metaphor for the entitled culture I find myself swimming in. So much of our lives is dominated by these technologies.

How does this apply to the life of the church? Well, for one thing, everyone in our churches is treading in these cultural waters. Even those determined to stay untainted by “the world,” ironically put the world in their pockets or depend on people who do. Pretending we can

deconstruct what’s been constructed is irrational.

Furthermore, we are conditioned to think very mechanistically and therefore look at our churches in the same way. True to our technological metaphors, we believe we can and should be able to program the ideal church to put in our pockets. But the church does not exist to be the virtual spiritual equivalent of your favourite app; the church exists to give glory to God!

It’s not that we don’t love the church. We do, but perhaps wrongly. We love her so much we want to control her by making a technological widget out of her. However, we are not called to love the church; that’s what God does (Ephesians 5:25). We are called to love God and neighbour, make no graven image, and, confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, be a resurrected people through whom God

reveals his wisdom, not ours, to the powers that be. Without doubt, this requires the creative tools of our technologies, but, even more so, the surrender of our need for programmatic control to the wild, creative and unpredictable breath of the Holy Spirit.

Phil Wagler (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca) typed this on a laptop with a smartphone in his pocket while constantly reminding himself that all he is and does is really in the hands of the Good Shepherd.

✉ Jewish, Muslim perspectives on the Bible important to Mennonites

IT SEEMS TO me that Mennonite Church Eastern Canada pastors are grappling with important issues (“No one size fits all: MC Eastern Canada pastors challenge MC Canada Christian Formation Council over national church education products,” Dec. 20, page 17).

Christian Formation Council chair Lisa Carr-Pries responded by saying that the 2012 MC Canada

assembly will include a focus on how Mennonites read, understand and use the Bible.

In addition, biblical stories could be discerned from Christian Mennonite perspectives from all walks of life, as one pastor requested, but also with reference to Jewish and Muslim understandings of the same stories. If more people did this, our children would gain a richer understanding of God, and develop empathetic relationships with all who share the collective 4,000-year-old faith story.

MYRON STEINMAN, KITCHENER, ONT.

NEW ORDER VOICE

Subverting our bourgeois tendencies

AIDEN ENNS

Many of us like being rich. Moreover, many of us, myself included, like to be seen as being rich. And this, it seems, is contrary to the gospel of Jesus, who preached “woe to the rich,” and “blessed are the poor.” He also warned of leaders in “flowing robes” who liked to sit in places of honour (Luke 20:46).

A few months ago I was getting ready to attend an awards dinner at one of the fanciest hotels in town, ironic because the awards were for outstanding social justice activists. I actually agonized over my wardrobe. In an attempt to look appropriately rich, I kept trying on different outfits. I couldn’t wear jeans. I don’t own a neck tie. I feel too “granola” in my sweaters. And my black pants scream “funeral.” What’s a part-time editor at a non-profit magazine supposed to do?

I regret that I am bourgeois. By this I mean we are middle- or upper-middle-class capitalists that “take for granted the sanctity of property,” as my dictionary says. We prefer to own the means of production—factories, stores and information services—and control or cooperate with the means of coercion. As Mennonites, too often we boast of our

religious relatives engaged in status quo party politics, and welcome police- and military-minded members in spite of our pacifist heritage.

We have several bourgeois markers. We drive cars and consider that normal. We respect university education and even build our own institutions. If we seek to undermine the social stratification that higher education brings, we still don’t abandon that same system. I say this as someone who has his own share of degrees and drags them out when needed.

We use clothes and outward appearances as bourgeois markers. For example, I’ve tried to look less rich than I am. One



We have several bourgeois markers. We drive cars and consider that normal.

day when I was at my office, I met a man who looked at me and thought I was looking for the food bank, as he was. Oddly, I took it as a compliment. But seriously, when I’m on my bike in traffic and look over at a car and see white, middle-class, male police officers, they most likely look back and see one of their own.

Our choice of shelter is also a marker.

As much as I resist—and even resent—my self-identification as middle class, I can’t succumb to the social dislocation of moving down a socio-economic notch. Would we have to sell our house and become renters, or share ownership with others who are poor?

Worship spaces become markers, too. I trust there are still congregations that meet in homes or rental spaces. But I bet that the majority buy property and erect buildings that blend in with consumer-capitalist esthetics by looking like retail centres or performance theatres.

In each of these areas, however, we can sully the bourgeois markers.

For example, we can initiate the formal sharing of cars. We can teach or take courses on poverty alleviation or economic justice. We can be like Gandhi and Jesus, and out of solidarity wear the garments of the masses. When seeking shelter, we can experiment with cohabitation, hospitality and relocation. Instead of following trends and styles, we can risk being outdated and practical.

Even from within our middle-class

privilege, we can do things that show our wealth is a problem. Let’s at least take symbolic steps toward solidarity with the poor.

Aiden Enns is a member of Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man., and the editor of Geez magazine. He can be reached at aiden@geezmagazine.org.

✉ *Messiah* helps reader deal with 'conflicted' Christmas feelings

I REALLY ENJOYED Will Braun's column, "Mourning for a lost Christmas," Dec. 20, page 11. It expressed a lot of what's on my mind and heart about Christmas too. And I've been feeling that way for years and years.

It was refreshing to read his description of what Christmas has become, what it means to him, and what he does about it. So right now, I'm listening to Handel's *Messiah* for the first time this season. Braun's article reminded me that *Messiah's* music is great to get in touch with all those conflicted feelings I have about Christmas.

MARY GERRITSMAN, TORONTO, ONT.

✉ Church grateful for anonymous donation

THE MAIL WE receive at Aberdeen Mennonite Church is usually predictable: bills, requests for funds, and information about conference or study sessions.

But a few weeks ago we had something different. The envelope had no return address. Inside, a folded sheet of paper enclosed five \$100 bills, and neatly typed on the piece of paper were the words, "Jesus saved even me! Please use this donation as mission ministry. Thank you!"

It was with deep emotion that the envelope was passed around the table at the next session of the church board. While all gifts given to God are

FROM OUR LEADERS

'Mennonite' not eaten here

DAVID MARTIN

As I look into the future, I find myself grieving the death of the Mennonite church. My sense is that the Mennonite church as we have known it is dying and that there is nothing that we can do to stop its eventual demise. As Mennonites integrate into the broader society, the close-knit communities that have shared a common Dutch-German or Swiss-German ancestry and cultural experience are beginning to slip away and die. I find a part of me grieving this loss.

What I also grieve is the way that we have sometimes allowed history and culture to become synonymous with the Mennonite faith. I am disturbed when being Mennonite appears to have more to do with a particular lineage, or is associated with a furniture brand or with ethnic foods like shoofly pie or *zwieback*. There is nothing "Mennonite" about the foods we eat.

What I find myself celebrating these days is the way that new adherents to the Mennonite faith are compelling us to re-examine what it truly means to be

"Mennonite." Mennonite Church Eastern Canada is now worshipping in 13 different languages on Sunday mornings, so if you are going to talk about "Mennonite food," you had better start including some of my favourites, like Korean *bul-gogi*, Laotian spring rolls, spicy Amharic dishes, or Hmong *na vah*.

In terms of Mennonite history, our



Let's keep the food Chinese, Hispanic, Ukrainian-German or Pennsylvania Dutch, but not 'Mennonite.'

stories of persecution also need to include the flight from oppression in Colombia, Laos or Sri Lanka, and not just from Russia or Switzerland. When non-westerners make up the majority of Mennonite World Conference, we here in Canada need to come to grips with the changing times and understand that being Mennonite is about embracing a theological and biblical identity, and not a cultural one.

I am encouraged by the popularity of Stuart Murray's book *The Naked Anabaptist*. It represents the hunger

within our congregations for setting aside the family histories and the ethnic associations, and embracing a renewed identity for the Mennonite church that is rooted in Scripture and theology. For the church to thrive and be relevant for a new generation of believers, we need to offer them more than a shared history and cultural experience. Culture and history are wonderfully enriching, but they must never displace the heart of what it means to be an Anabaptist-Mennonite. So please watch your language: Let's keep the food Chinese, Hispanic, Ukrainian-German or Pennsylvania Dutch, but not "Mennonite."

Perhaps we even need to downplay the

culture of our founders in order to make space for the new cultures that are beginning to embrace the Mennonite faith. To use Jesus' words, "... unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). What is it that needs to die in the Mennonite church today so that it can be reborn and revitalized as a multi-ethnic church embracing one faith and one Lord?

David Martin is executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

precious, here was one where forgiveness made the gift especially important. Who gave it? Why was it given? What is the story behind it? We know the answer to none of these, only that Jesus found this person and gratitude prompted the response.

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VERN RATZLAFF, ABERDEEN, SASK.

Vern Ratzlaff is pastor of Aberdeen Mennonite Church.

✉ **Bill C-447 an opportunity for Mennonites to promote peace**

ANABAPTISTS THROUGHOUT HISTORY have recognized the centrality of peace, not just as a theological concept, but, more importantly, as a practical expression of their faith. Mennonite history shows us that we have been prepared to uproot our communities and move from country to country because of our belief that we should not take up arms.

But what does it mean for us to pursue the blessings of Christ's beatitude and remain true to our Anabaptist heritage as peacemakers in 21st-century Canada?

One exciting answer to this question comes to us from an unusual source: Bill C-447, a private member's bill introduced by British Columbia MP Bill Siksay in 2009.

Bill C-447 seeks to establish a Department of Peace with its own minister at the federal level. For now, the specific details of this bill are of less concern than the paradigm shift that the bill proposes, and the potential that our government could take an active role in promoting and fostering conditions for peace domestically as well as internationally.

More surprising than having politicians advocate an initiative for peace is that a piece of legislation that comes so close to the heart of the Mennonite confession has not created a greater interest in our own

circles. Are we afraid of the hard work that will be required to produce a fundamental shift in our society, the apathy or the strong interest groups that will resist our call for peace?

How do we begin to take on the challenge to be peacemakers that this opportunity presents? While a number of Winnipeg churches have dealt with this bill in their Sunday school classes or church papers, Home Street Mennonite Church youths have conducted research on nonviolence, and representatives from Canadian Mennonite University, Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba are planning a public forum around the issue of peace, we need every Mennonite—not just those we perceive as young and idealistic, or educated enough—to engage with this issue.

If Mennonites want to be the followers of the Prince of Peace, we must be prepared to follow an example that led to Calvary. To follow Christ's wholehearted commitment, we need to see pacifism not as a part of Mennonite history, but as a daily commitment. We must talk about peacemaking not just in church, but at the dinner table; not just with each other, but with our neighbours.

We must prepare for the future by writing to our local newspapers and respective MPs to explain the importance of Bill C-447 from our unique perspective. We may experience their apathy or downright hostility, but none of this should deter us because too much hangs in the balance. Given the example we claim to live by, it's the least we can do.

GERHARD NEUFELD, WINNIPEG, MAN.

/// Corrections

- Hans Peters is pastor of the Jane Finch Faith Community, Toronto, Ont. He was incorrectly identified in the photo accompanying the Nov. 1, page 18 article, "When enough is enough."
- Bruce Enns spoke at the Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan annual general meeting last fall. He was incorrectly identified in the "Celebrating restraint" article, Dec. 20, page 31.

Canadian Mennonite regrets the errors.

/// Clarification

- Madeline Janzen took the photograph accompanying the "Encountering God in every sense" article about the Saskatchewan Women in Mission fall retreat on page 26 of the Dec. 20 issue.

Canadian Mennonite regrets the omission.



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/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Billings—Cooper Riley (b. Dec. 20, 2010), to Rochelle and Chris Billings, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Bird Kemper—Charli Emydidiae (b. Nov. 5, 2010), to Connie Bird and Mike Kemper, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

Dyck—Levi Austin (b. June 14, 2010), to Eric and Sandra Dyck, Springstein Mennonite, Man.

Ecker—Sawyer Jacob William (b. Dec. 29, 2010), to Jason and Lindsey Ecker, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Fleming—Avalon Kate (b. Dec. 19, 2010), to Noah and Heather Fleming, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Fredlund—Kathrine Lynn (b. Dec. 28, 2010), to Keith and Yvonne Fredlund, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Garcia—Haydn Alejandro Paetkau (b. Jan. 4, 2011), to Heidi and Jorge Garcia, Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man.

Hock—Elyse Nicole (b. Dec. 21, 2010), to Andy and Cheryl Hock, Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Koslowsky-Wiebe—Lily Hope and Eden Joy (b. July 7, 2010), to Pat and Ursula Koslowsky-Wiebe, Springstein Mennonite, Man.

McCrimmon—Joel Eric (b. Dec. 14, 2010), to Dan and Amanda McCrimmon, Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Reiter—Morgan Elise (b. Dec. 14, 2010), to Brad and Julie Reiter, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Segedin—Brett Robert (b. Jan. 5, 2011), to Richard and Lyndsey Segedin, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Baptisms

Bernhard Neufeld, Martin Dueck—Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Man., Dec. 19, 2010.

John Do, Jamie Nay, Melisa Douangkham, Donna Khouathong—Grace Lao Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., Jan. 2, 2011.

Marriages

Couglan/Ens—Tim Couglan and Stephanie Ens, Springstein Mennonite, Man., Aug. 29, 2010.

Dyck/Rempel—Carlee Dyck and Dan Rempel, Springstein Mennonite, Man., June 12, 2010.

Dyck/Tryon—Carl Dyck and Kimberley Tryon, at Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, Alta., Dec. 30, 2010.

Deaths

Bender—Tracy (nee Patterson), 50 (b. Sept. 8, 1960; d. Dec. 25, 2010), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

Driedger—Henrietta, 87 (b. Jan. 26, 1923; d. Dec. 21, 2010), Carman Mennonite, Man.

Driedger—John Peter, 90 (b. Oct. 24, 1920; d. Dec. 26, 2010), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Dyck—Peter, 97 (b. Dec. 20, 1913; d. Dec. 31, 2010), Springridge Mennonite, Pincher Creek, Alta.

Enns—Herman, 83 (b. March 10, 1927; d. Nov. 23, 2010), Arnaud Mennonite, Man.

Friesen Smith—Nalah Mari, 2 (b. Sept. 17, 2008; d. Dec. 9, 2010), Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

Harder—Susie (nee Neufeld), 97 (b. May 26, 1913; d. Dec. 16, 2010), Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Heidebrecht—Maria (nee Loewen), 89 (b. Sept. 28, 1921; d. Nov. 11, 2010), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Klassen—Helen (nee Dick), 84 (b. May 15, 1926; d. Dec. 7, 2010), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

Leis—Violet, 81 (b. Feb. 28, 1929; d. Nov. 26, 2010), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

Loewen—Ernest, 75 (d. Oct. 9, 2010), Springstein Mennonite, Man.

Nickel—Verna (nee Doell), 75 (b. Jan. 12, 1935; d. Dec. 16, 2010), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Peters—Annie (nee Klassen), 91 (b. Sept. 9, 1919; d. Dec. 17, 2010), Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Peters—Helena, 92 (d. Dec. 23, 2010), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Rempel—Katharina (nee Schroeder), 86 (b. April 25, 1924; d. Nov. 23, 2010), Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Sawatzky—Margareth, 88 (b. April 2, 1922; d. Dec. 11, 2010), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Shim—Dae Seob, 78, (b. Sept. 15, 1932; d. Nov. 4, 2010), Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, B.C.

Shokeir—Mohamed, 72 (d. Oct. 30, 2010), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Thiessen—John, 86 (b. May 21, 1924; d. Dec. 20, 2010), First Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Thiessen—Luella, 82 (b. Dec. 30, 1928; d. Jan. 5, 2011), First Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Wagler—Chris, 88 (b. June 29, 1922; d. Dec. 13, 2010), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Yantzi—Doris (nee Roth), 79 (b. Aug. 27, 1931; d. Dec. 30, 2010), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Zacharias—Evelyn, 80 (b. July 5, 1930; d. Dec. 8, 2010), Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

announcements within four months of the event.

Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to milestones@canadianmennonite.org, including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please include birth date and last name at birth if available.

MENNONITE WOMEN CANADA
—A place to belong—

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH
**‘Virtual’ Ladies Circles
on the horizon**

BY WALTRUDE GORTZEN

“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24).



Much has happened in Women’s Ministry in Mennonite Church British Columbia since my “Preparing the ground for a new season” article in *Canadian Mennonite* last January.

Locally, this included working on a program proposal, mission statement and the formation of a leadership



committee following the agreement at the 2009 MC B.C. annual meeting that Women’s Ministry was a welcome addition to the B.C. area church. This resulted in Cheryl Dyck of Cedar Valley Mennonite Church, Mission, B.C., and Wendy Gulliker of Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack, B.C., joining me on the new Women’s Ministry Committee.

Despite Gulliker’s resignation at our first committee meeting, due to a sense that God was leading her in a different direction, decisions were made based on the three surveys done since 2008. The most important was to continue the annual Inspirational Day in the spring and the women’s retreat weekend in the fall at Camp Squeah. These turned out to be outstanding celebratory gatherings in 2010, attracting many new faces, including 100 percent of the female members of MC B.C.’s newest congregation, Western Hmong Mennonite Church (pictured above) as well as senior ladies and teenagers!

It is the committee’s hope that this intergenerational and multiracial interaction will add more participants in the future, and that we’ll come up with new and inspiring

ideas to keep encouraging all our long-time participants and newcomers to attend.

Nationally, MC B.C.’s Women’s Ministry was officially welcomed back as an area ministry by Mennonite Women Canada last summer at the annual assembly after a two-year absence. We’re very pleased to be connected to the larger body once again, even though many questions still remain regarding how we’ll work together nationally while also rekindling interest in doing that at the area church level.

Based on my own experiences on the MW Canada Task Force—where obstacles like distance, time zones and personal schedules were quickly overcome through our shared faith and life experiences, and, especially, our commitment to women’s ministry—I’m confident that similar “common ground” can also be found among regional women’s ministry groups as they seek to connect at a national level. At the same time, we recognize that ways of relating will be different from those of the past and that the connectivity to the larger body may vary among area ministries while sharing core beliefs.

MC B.C., like some other area churches, has only a few congregations left that still have Ladies Circles (Vereins)! In today’s world, with our busy schedules, family and work responsibilities, being in a Ladies Circle is a very large time commitment, not to mention that to the younger generations Ladies’ Circles may seem outdated. Sewing layettes, crafting and quilting, although still enjoyed by many, are not activities that keeps the majority entertained or involved.

Therefore, as a committee we’re trying hard to think of new, contemporary and innovative ways to reconnect and encourage women to once again find that common ground or purpose while not being part of a Ladies Circle. Can Facebook or a women’s blog be part of this new purpose? Can it be used to start “virtual” Ladies Circles that connect women in their homes, as well as getting information to them?

We believe so and welcome feedback on these ideas, as well as other suggestions. But we also know that there are women who still need to catch this vision and to realize that working together, in whatever way as a larger body, would enable us to do so much more locally, nationally and internationally.

We’re excited and looking forward to what the Lord has in store for 2011 and ask for continued prayers from our sisters across the country as we re-invent ourselves as a Women’s Ministry in B.C. Let us encourage and cheer each other on! ❧



Waltrude Gortzen is MC B.C.’s women’s ministry representative and a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford.

Sewing layettes, crafting and quilting, although still enjoyed by many, are not activities that keeps the majority entertained or involved.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Vietnamese Mennonites lose their church centre

Government demolishes property of unregistered group to make way for urban renewal project

BY LUKE S. MARTIN

Mennonite World Conference

Eleven days before Christmas, local authorities in District Two of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, seized and demolished the home of Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang and his wife, leaders of the unregistered Vietnam Mennonite Church.

Their home also served as a leadership training centre and headquarters for the group of Mennonite congregations that is distinct from the officially registered Hội Thánh Mennonite Việt Nam (Vietnam Mennonite Church).

Using the law of eminent domain, authorities cordoned off the area on Dec. 14 and began dismantling the Quangs' home and a nearby guesthouse for visiting church leaders and students. Quang did not intervene. However, he reportedly was severely beaten when he objected to police taking the Bible school students into custody. Reports said that the students were sent home and told not to return.

Authorities gave Quang the keys to a housing unit in a nearby run-down apartment complex for him, his wife and three children.

For nearly two decades, Ho Chi Minh City has planned to develop a new city complex in Thu Thiem, the heart of District Two, and a 1.4-kilometre, six-lane tunnel under the Saigon River is to be opened by mid-2011.

The Quangs, along with hundreds of other families, are losing their property in the urban redevelopment scheme. The government announced that it would compensate property owners living in this area

prior to 1992 at one rate; those who secured property after that date would be compensated at half that amount. The Quang family was to be compensated at the smaller rate.

Local authorities had already dismantled parts of the Quangs' house several years ago, claiming that he had violated authorized building codes in renovating the property.

Quang did not oppose the current expropriation of their property. However, he had earlier appealed to the city for additional remuneration, claiming that the proposed remuneration was only one-fourth the amount needed to secure a replacement property in the city. He also helped many of his neighbours to file appeals.

The city did not budge. Last September, the authorities launched a public campaign against Quang in the *Saigon Giai Phong* newspaper, accusing him of constantly challenging the government. The articles heaped on him the same accusations they had used in 2003, when he was arrested for interfering in a government investigation.

The *Giai Phong* called him a self-appointed pastor, although he was issued a certificate of ordination by Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference in July 2004. The paper also published statements attributed to members of the officially registered Hội Thánh Mennonite Việt Nam, casting doubts on the legitimacy of the District Two Mennonite group because it does not



Quang

hold membership in Mennonite World Conference (MWC), although both groups have adopted a similar statement of faith.

Asked about this assertion, MWC general secretary Larry Miller said that MWC membership is not a condition for identification as a Mennonite church. "About one-quarter of Anabaptist-Mennonites throughout the world belong to churches that are not members of Mennonite World Conference," he said.

The demolition of the Quangs' property was not unexpected, as reports had been circulating for days. Church leaders have indicated that they would regroup and continue on.

The unregistered Mennonite body associated with the District Two leadership includes 64 congregations with 3,500 active members, organized in five geographical areas. Most of the congregations are registered with local authorities. Quang coordinates an extensive training and mentoring program for young leaders. His wife, Pastor Le Thi Phu Dung, is the church president.

The registered Hội Thánh Mennonite Việt Nam, which had its organizing conference in November 2008, claims around 8,500 members in 90 congregations. There is a limited informal association between some leaders of the two groups. ❧

/// Pastoral transitions

Saskatchewan churches seeking new leadership

A total of three more Mennonite Church Saskatchewan churches are undergoing leadership changes:

- Garth Ewert Fisher has resigned from his duties at Herschel Ebenfeld Mennonite Church and Fiske Mennonite Church.
- Wilmer and Barb Froese have finished four years at Rosthern Mennonite Church.
- Don Unger will be retiring from the Hoffnungsfelder churches this summer, but a job posting has already appeared on the MC Saskatchewan website.

—BY KARIN FEHDERAU

The demolition of the Quangs' property was not unexpected, as reports had been circulating for days.

Ethiopian Mennonite Church reports continued growth

Concern expressed, though, that growth rate has dipped to only 37 percent over the past decade

BY CARL E. HANSEN
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Creating a historic moment in the life of the Meserete Kristos Church, 131 delegates and about 50 guests converged on the Meserete Kristos College campus in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, last October to participate in its 81st general assembly for three days.

The atmosphere was congenial and optimistic, and several important milestones were reached. After several years of processing, important documents—including a revision of the constitution, an updated faith statement, and a human resource/administrative manual—were adopted.

Among the highlights of the annual reports was one on continued growth. The numbers now stand at:

- 205,508 baptized members (17,345 of whom were baptized during the past year);
- 45,818 believers under instruction in preparation for baptism;
- 138,166 not-yet baptized children;
- Making a total faith community of 389,492 who fellowship and worship in 591 congregations and 863 church-planting centres.

The delight in these statistics was tempered with a strong note of sadness when it was reported that the rate of growth has slowed down in recent years. The current decade's growth rate is only 37 percent, while during the previous decade Meserete Kristos Church grew by 43 percent.

Delegates agreed that this trend reflects a decreasing quality in the average church member's commitment and conduct. There seems to be a correlation between persecution and spiritual fervour, and freedom and spiritual cooling. The delegates entered into serious discussion as to how the church can stimulate serious commitment to discipleship and church growth under contemporary conditions. It was

noted that, in spite of the cooling trend, the Ethiopian Evangelical Christian population has now reached 18 million—or 20 percent of the population.

Attention was drawn to the plight of full-time workers who face retirement without any pension benefits. Many of these ministers and their families are left with nothing to eat. It was suggested that the church must help them to get a plot of land to grow food or to start a business to sustain themselves.

A report on the construction of the church head office indicated progress is very slow due to a lack of funding. Currently, offices are crowded into the former Mennonite Guest House, with overflow into makeshift container offices stacked two high. The new building is to stand six floors high, including the basement that will include a partial car park. At this moment, the reinforced concrete



An architect's drawing of the new headquarters for Meserete Kristos Church. A lack of funding has halted work on the building.

skeleton of the basement plus two floors has been poured. The estimated cost to complete the building is around \$1 million. When completed, it will have extra rental space that will generate income to meet administrative expenses.

One of the three days was given over to a peace conference. Kais Gelete, who works as a peace ambassador in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, challenged Meserete Kristos Church delegates to take the "ministry of reconciliation" seriously by getting actively involved as peacemakers in conflict situations in Ethiopian churches and society. ❧

Carl E. Hansen is director of advancement at Meserete Kristos College.

/// Staff change

New program director finally arrives

WINNIPEG, MAN.—Nearly three months after he was expected to assume the position of associate program director for Mennonite Church Manitoba's Camps with Meaning (CwM) program, Aaron Nussbaum has now begun in the role. CwM had announced Nussbaum's appointment in early fall and expected him to begin work in mid-October (as reported in the Sept. 20 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*, page 23). However Nussbaum, who is an American citizen, did not receive a work permit at that time. The federal Temporary Foreign Worker Program required CwM to re-post the position, noting that Nussbaum was permitted to re-apply. After a careful and thorough search process, CwM again named Nussbaum as its top candidate and received a work permit for him on Dec. 13. CwM is pleased to have Nussbaum join its team of 12 other full- and part-time year-round staff at camps Assiniboia, Koinonia and Moose Lake, and its Winnipeg office. He succeeds Kristy Letkeman, who completed her work as interim program director on Oct. 8. Nussbaum is already at work on 2011 summer program plans and staff recruitment.

—Camps with Meaning

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Consultation affirms role of Sunday school

Mennonite Publishing Network

What will Sunday school look like in the future for Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. congregations? That was the question addressed at a consultation organized by Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN) in early November.

The consultation, held in Sturgis, Mich., brought together Christian education leaders and thinkers who agreed that Sunday school still has a future—but some changes need to be made.

“Over the course of our time together, it became clear that we need to consider new approaches to the way we do Sunday school,” said Mary Ann Weber, MPN managing editor for curriculum who organized the event. “The reality is that our cultures and congregations are changing, and we need to pay careful attention to what’s happening.”

Changes identified by participants include the fact that Sunday morning is no



Derek Suderman, centre, assistant professor of religious studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., speaks with Darrel Toews, left, pastor of Breslau Mennonite Church, and Kevin Peters Unrau, pastor of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, at Grebel’s annual pastors breakfast on Nov. 9. Suderman, who spoke to the pastors about the particularity of biblical revelation and the universality of God’s work in the world, pondered how the wisdom of the United Nations’ ‘right to protect’ vulnerable populations oppressed by their own governments—a justice issue—compares with the radical pacifism of Jesus’ teaching, or whether Canadian Mennonites should be ‘counting our blessings’ while participating in the economic domination of others.

longer a sacred time. Congregations compete with sports, work and other activities for worshippers; face declining and irregular attendance patterns; and must deal with urbanization, growing racial and ethnic diversity, changes in family structure, waning

biblical literacy and declining denominational loyalty.

The changes also affect the way publishers like MPN will need to produce curriculum in the future.

“The traditional curriculum format, where one session builds on the other over a whole quarter, has worked for generations, but doesn’t work as well when Sunday school attendance is irregular for an increasing number of children,” said Weber.

There is also a growing expectation on the part of many churches that curriculum will have multi-media components.

“Some congregations are looking for multiple formats, incorporating print, online and video, while others are looking for curriculum that is flexible enough to be used for midweek clubs or other meeting times and places,” she said.

Participants also spoke in favour of more training options for teachers. Weber pointed to social media, which allows people across North America to share teaching ideas and tips with each other online.

Although there are many changes affecting the way faith is passed on to children and youths, participants agreed that

/// Briefly noted

Teachers offer affirmation and counsel for adult Bible curriculum

A recent survey of teachers of Adult Bible Study (ABS)—the quarterly adult Bible curriculum published by Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN)—provided both affirmation of the curriculum and ideas for future direction. “Our biggest question focused on which Bible translation to use for the Scripture text in the student guide,” says ABS editor Sharon K. Williams. “Of those responding, 73 percent reported that students prefer NIV,” she notes, compared to only 21 percent who reported a preference for the NRSV. Starting with the Fall 2011 quarter, ABS will print Scripture texts from the 1984 NIV Bible. Regarding content in the teacher and student versions, Williams says, “Responses have led to a decision to discontinue a worship section previously included in the teachers guide, and to work to maintain a 75:25 percent ratio between discussion questions and activities.” Sixty teachers indicated interest in an ABS blog and 33 in an ABS teachers Facebook group. These possibilities will be given further consideration. Only 10 percent of respondents noted the potential usefulness of a large print teachers guide, so instead of pursuing that option MPN will raise the type size slightly in the teacher’s guide.

—Mennonite Publishing Network

Sunday school is still important.

“Sunday school is an excellent way to teach the biblical story and Anabaptist distinctives, and to help children and youths develop a relationship with God, build relationships with caring adults, develop a moral framework, develop spiritual habits and practices, and allow God to shape every aspect of their lives,” Weber said.

Sunday school in the Mennonite church “still has a future,” she added, “but what it

will look like remains to be seen.”

As part of the consultative process, Weber plans to seek additional input from people involved in Christian education in Canadian and American congregations in 2011.

Canadian participants included Lisa Carr-Pries, chair of the Christian Formation Council of MC Canada; and Elsie Rempel, director of Christian nurture for MC Canada. ❧

originated with a “Mennonite box” of historical documents collected by Lewis J. Burkholder. Housed in the provincial archives for a time, the materials were returned to Mennonite hands in 1941 and placed in the Golden Rule bookstore in Kitchener, Ont. In 1959, this collection was moved to Rockway Mennonite School, also in Kitchener. Five years later, the archives were relocated to the newly completed Conrad Grebel College.

Soon after, the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario was founded, with a goal of preserving Mennonite historical materials in the archives. Subsequent agreements with Mennonite Central Committee Ontario and the Mennonite Conference of Ontario (now Mennonite Church Eastern Canada) established the archives as the depository for their records and encouraged congregations to avail themselves of the archives’ facility and professional services.

In 1976, the archives were moved into the new academic building at Conrad Grebel. This facility has not been upgraded or expanded since, resulting in cramped quarters for the archives’ treasures and restrictions on the number of researchers and programs it can accommodate.

In its 2006 strategic plan, Conrad Grebel

Partners support capital expansion of Ontario archives

Story and Photo by Mennonite Archives of Ontario
WATERLOO, ONT.

Partner organizations of the Mennonite Archives of Ontario signed a memo of understanding early last month renewing their commitment to the important role the archives play in the Mennonite community and endorsing Conrad Grebel University College’s stewardship of this unique collection.

“Archives are about harnessing the

potential of the past to enrich our lives and help us discern for the future,” says archivist Lauren Harder-Gissing. “This memo is a sign of affirmation as we plan for an expansion that increases our ability to preserve history in all its recorded formats and provides a welcoming environment for researchers.”

The Mennonite Archives of Ontario

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO BY DEBORAH FROESE



During the Mennonite Church Canada fall leadership assembly held at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask., in November, Willard Metzger, the new general secretary, struck up a lively conversation with the young adults about the church, social networking and the excitement of being a part of something much larger than a single congregation. Pictured clockwise from Metzger are: Aleta Martens, Stephanie Siemens, Nick Wiens, Ian Epp, Curtis Wiens and Jennifer Regier.



Laureen Harder-Gissing, archivist-librarian, standing, watches as a memo of understanding regarding the Mennonite Archives of Ontario that are housed at Conrad Grebel University College is signed on Dec. 2. From left to right, the signatories are: Marlene Epp, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario secretary; David Martin, executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada; Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario; and Henry Paetkau, president of Conrad Grebel University College.

University College identified space needs for the archives and its library as a high priority. The college's board and administration are now investigating construction options to address these needs, as well as others within the academic program.

According to the memo of understanding, the partner organizations are "prepared to work with [Conrad Grebel] in support of this capital expansion to meet the needs of the shared archive facility." ❧

New curriculum helps young children learn about God

MPN's Wee Wonder 'age appropriate' for two-year-olds

Mennonite Publishing Network

Can two year-olds learn about God? Yes, says Linda Martin, who has worked in the field of early childhood education for 38 years. "It's a known fact that very young children know things no one has told them," says Martin, who served as a consultant for Wee Wonder: Sharing God's Love With Twos, a new resource from Faith & Life Resources, the congregational resources imprint of Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN).

"Toddlers can hear the words, 'God loves you,' and understand the meaning of it by the way in which it is said and displayed to

them," she says.

Helping two- and three-year-olds learn about God's love is the goal of Wee Wonder, says Eleanor Snyder, former director of Faith & Life Resources. "The premise for Wee Wonder is to provide an environment of wonder and awe that will nurture that relationship, and help them draw closer to God," she says.

Through play, Bible stories, prayers, songs and other activities, very young children are encouraged to explore God's world, Snyder adds, noting that churches can use the curriculum to "nurture young

children in a loving relationship with God."

At the same time, Wee Wonder aims to "foster a sense of belonging to a faith community," she says. "Two-year-olds are just beginning to expand their world beyond home and family. The experience in a Wee Wonder setting helps them know that they are part of a larger world where God's love can be found."

But Wee Wonder isn't just for church, she notes. "It can also be used in Christian day cares, or any place where people want to communicate about God with small children."

Snyder hopes that Wee Wonder can "help young children explore God's wonderful and awesome world within a safe environment of a Christian community. How we teach the biblical story to our very young children has a strong impact on their future spiritual growth and formation."

For Martin, who attends Salford Mennonite Church, Pa., the new curriculum is exciting because "it is user-friendly and very age appropriate. . . . In order for the children to grow up to create a better world for the future, it is vital for them to start learning about God's love for themselves and others at an early age, at the very beginning of their church experience." ❧



GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

COVER STORY

Protesting death in Georgia

Waterloo Region Mennonites take part in annual School of the Americas pilgrimage

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

EASTERN CANADA CORRESPONDENT

Fort Benning, Georgia—the home of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, formerly the School of the Americas—is also the home of annual peace protests each November.

Three Waterloo Region Mennonites—Nathan Gorvett, Josie Winterfeld and Richard Albrecht—took part in the 2010 protest, which stretched over a three-day weekend.

A highlight for Albrecht was the “die-in.” While the names of victims of those trained at the institute/school were read, the protesters marched in front of Fort Benning’s gates. Some protesters, dressed in black and carrying coffins, “died” in front of the

gates. The fact that it took over an hour to read all of the victims’ names astounded Albrecht.

The whole experience of being at the protests felt risky to him. He was outside his usual middle-class comfort zone. In Waterloo, Ont., the police are there to defend him and make things safe for him. But at the protest he was seen by the police as someone on the other side of the line, outside accepted practice and belief.

He felt solidarity with the poor, those on the wrong side of power imbalances, and at risk of arrest, as happened to a Russian news film crew and others who were picked up by police while following

orders to disperse.

Albrecht found it ironic that the police were “defending” a U.S. army base from pacifists, whose leaders encouraged the protesters to remember that the police, as well as the trainers and students at the institute, were also human beings worthy of respect.

Nov. 16 is the anniversary of the murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter by the Salvadoran military on the campus of the University of Central America in San Salvador, El Salvador, in 1989; the six had been labelled as subversives by the government. A United Nations panel concluded that 19 of the 27 soldiers were graduates of the School of the Americas.

Heavily criticized even within the U.S. government, the name change to the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation was, for many, a smokescreen. U.S. Army Maj. Joe Blair, a former director of instruction at the school, was quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle*: “There are no substantive changes besides the name. They teach the identical courses that I taught, and changed the course names and use the same manuals.” ❧

PHOTO BY RICHARD ALBRECHT



Josie Winterfeld, missions, peace and justice worker at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., participates in the ‘die-in’ during the annual peace protest outside of the former School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Ga., in commemoration of those killed by graduates of the military training centre.

HAITI: A YEAR AFTER THE QUAKE

Roadblocks both literal and figurative hinder Haitian rebuilding efforts

BY LINDA ESPENSHADE
Mennonite Central Committee

Rebuilding houses in post-earthquake Haiti seems like it should be a simple, straightforward task: Clear away the rubble and build houses that do a better job of protecting lives from future disasters. In a country where more than a million people are still homeless after an earthquake devastated the capital city of Port-au-Prince on Jan. 12, 2010, and in a country that is regularly battered by hurricanes, the concept is only logical.

The techniques for building earthquake- and hurricane-resistant houses are not difficult to learn, says James Mwangi, an engineering professor from California Polytechnic State University, who is spending his 2010-11 sabbatical working with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in

Haiti. Some Haitian masons, contractors and architects already know the techniques and others quickly absorb the information that Mwangi gives in seminars and on job sites, he says.

But that's where the simplicity stops and the complexity begins. The obstacles that stand in the way of rebuilding—from escalating prices to accessibility—keep people living in tent camps, instead of moving into permanent housing.

One reason Haiti has been hampered in its overall efforts to build houses is because only about one-third of the \$10.2 billion promised by the international community has been delivered, and, of that amount, only 10 percent has been spent, says Alexis Erkert Depp, advocacy coordinator for

MCC Haiti.

Land ownership is another major issue hampering reconstruction efforts, she says. Many people do not have proof of ownership of their homes or properties, either because they were never officially titled or because records were lost or destroyed during the earthquake. Donor organizations have to choose whether to invest money in repairing houses with questionable ownership.

For MCC, this issue has not been a barrier. Instead, accessibility has been a primary obstacle, says Susanne Brown, MCC Haiti's disaster coordinator. "For me, the most difficult thing about repair of homes in Haiti is the inaccessibility of the home sites, the lack of transportation to deliver building materials, the lack of security for materials once delivered, and the continuing rising costs of building materials," she says.

Even before building can begin, rubble must be cleared. In July, a team of 20 people worked six full days to clear the property belonging to MCC staff members Adral and Marie Sylvain. Only then could the Sylvains begin to rebuild.

Large-scale rubble removal by the Haitian government has not happened because of a variety of issues, including a lack of equipment and, especially, coordination, according to news reports. As of last September, only about 2 percent of the rubble had been removed, says Erkert Depp, citing a statistic often used by international media outlets. "It's hard to build homes when there's no place to build them," she says.

Building homes is also difficult when the price of construction supplies can double from one day to the next, Mwangi notes. As the demand for stone and cement increases, prices are going up, making it difficult to complete projects within budget and to estimate the overall cost of a large

MCC PHOTO BY SILAS CREWS



Structural engineer James Mwangi, a Mennonite Central Committee worker, seated, and a team of Haitian engineers and masons pause while inspecting a building used both as a home and a school that was later repaired. The building is part of a project that includes home repair for 200 people living with disabilities.

HAITI: A YEAR AFTER THE QUAKE

project.

Location is another issue, says Mwangi. Before the earthquake, some houses were built on unsafe sites. Although he recognizes that people built there because they had no other options, building again in these areas is unwise. Even acceptable areas to build or rebuild can be inaccessible to trucks delivering supplies, forcing workers to carry concrete blocks, bags of cement and water to the site, he explains.

Haiti has no national building code, Mwangi points out, so the quality of the construction and the subsequent safety of the homes depend on the knowledge and ethics of the masons and contractors. When Mwangi conducts training for the tradesmen, he emphasizes their personal responsibility. "We saw what happened here; 220,000 people died," Mwangi tells the builders. "They are still around here; their bodies are still in all of these buildings."

When he talks that way, Mwangi says the builders understand the importance of rebuilding better: "They don't need a manual. They can see it with their eyes."

Mwangi is currently working with Haitian masons who are repairing homes for families of 200 people who are living with disabilities. The project, done in cooperation with several partners, is estimated to cost \$400,000, with MCC paying for half of it.

Before starting the project, Mwangi instructed the masons about how to make repairs as they worked on one house for a week. As they continued to use those techniques with other houses, Mwangi continued to teach them as he inspected their work.

The completion of the first 30 homes of this project has been gratifying, Mwangi says. Almost every completed house became home not only for the family that lives there, but also for neighbours who lived beside them at the tent camp. From one home that was repaired, a woman who is a nursing assistant during the day gives simple medical care to people who live in a nearby tent camp in the evening.

In spite of the difficulties in this and other construction projects, MCC has committed funds for the repair and construction of 516 homes. More are expected to be funded in the future. ❧

Worldwide MCC family embraces Haiti

Connections between 'givers' and 'receivers' build up everyone's dignity as God's children

BY LINDA ESPENSHADE

Mennonite Central Committee

From Paraguay, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, people volunteered through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to work side by side with Haitians, cleaning up rubble left by the devastating earthquake that hit the island nation a year ago on Jan. 12, 2010.

In addition, people in 39 countries, including Canada and the United States, gave MCC money for Haiti, such as gifts from the Brethren in Christ Church in economically troubled Zimbabwe and a Muslim partner organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although volunteers, finances and

material resources came predominantly from Canada and the U.S., the immensity of this disaster brought people of faith from all over the globe together, giving \$14 million through MCC to support the people of Haiti in their recovery.

"That's the vision for the future that we are trying to get to—multiple different countries all helping, sending resources in multiple directions to help people in need in multiple countries," says Arli Klassen, executive director of MCC Binational. In the Haiti disaster, even churches in places of significant need, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe, are able

MCC PHOTO BY BEN DEPP



Herbert Funk, left, and fellow members of a Work and Learn Team from Paraguay clear away the rubble of Adral and Marie Sylvain's house in Port-au-Prince, which collapsed during the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake. Clearing the property made it possible for the Sylvains, who work with MCC and have four children, to build a wood and tin-roof home.

HAITI: A YEAR AFTER THE QUAKE

to help, Klassen notes.

Mennonites in the Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, were among the first to offer assistance, helping to direct material resources and house volunteers on their way to Haiti. Since the port in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, was closed in the initial months, most supplies were directed through Santo Domingo.

"As soon as the Mennonite community in the Dominican Republic heard about this emergency, they were ready to help," says Aura Moreno, MCC Haiti's Connecting People facilitator during that time. "They brought rice, cornmeal, buckets, water, tarps, bleach, beans and oil. That was awesome." The supplies were given to the Croix-des-Bouquet congregation of Assemblée de la Grace, a conference of Mennonite churches.

Dr. Miqueas Ramirez, an eye doctor who is one of three pastors of Iglesia Evangelica Menonita Luz y Vida, accompanied the truckload of supplies delivered about a week after the earthquake. "We have wanted that they feel our love, that we are part of God's nation, without looking at where we come from or what race we belong to," says Ramirez.

He and Pastor Lesly Bertrand, overseer of Assemblée de la Grace, valued the connection as a starting point in cooperation between Mennonite churches in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, two countries that have a history of racial, political and cultural separation.

MCC Haiti alumni from Canada and the U.S. who are fluent in Creole took turns going to Haiti during the first three months to assist MCC workers and to explore health care needs. While 15 volunteer structural engineers evaluated buildings in Haiti for soundness, others in Canada and the U.S. offered assistance by giving material resources, including 34,072 relief kits and 26,712 comforters, writing cheques or planning fundraisers.

In July, nine Paraguayan Mennonites offered their muscle and sweat to help with rubble removal. The Work and Learn Team left with a new understanding of the challenges facing their brothers and sisters in Haiti. They worked for six long days, side by side with nine Haitians, just to clear one

property by hand.

"I have learned through these people who have lost almost everything that they did not lose hope that God would send help," says John Schroeder, a member of the Paraguayan team. "I learned that we must have more trust in God and also be more grateful for what we have."

Personal connections between Work and Learn Team members of Paraguay, Guatemala and Costa Rica helped to break down stereotypes and misconceptions, says Moreno. "Haiti is more than a dot in the Caribbean now. It's a country," Moreno says of the team members. After volunteering, they can say, "I have a friend there now."

One team from Canada worked on a reforestation project in August, and in October a team from the U.S. built a ramp to make it more feasible for people living with disabilities to get around. Like the teams before them, they shared their new understandings about Haiti with people at home.

Other people from around the world gave money to support MCC's work in

Haiti. Danisa Ndlovu, who oversees the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe, asked that an offering collected at his consecration service for another term as bishop be given to Haiti. The church gave \$2,300. "I think it was easy for people to understand," says Ndlovu, who also is president of Mennonite World Conference. "When disaster hits other places, it's not a question of how much, it's a matter of the heart."

"Disasters can bring out the best in people as they try to show God's love for those who have experienced tragedy through no fault of their own," says Daryl Yoder-Bontrager, MCC area director for Latin America and the Caribbean. "When people get close to those who lived through disaster, however, they quickly learn that true giving is a two-way street and that they get as much as they give. When everyone realizes that both the 'receiver' as well as the 'giver' have much to offer each other, then the most exciting, meaningful connections can be made across countries and cultures that build up everyone's dignity as God's children." ❧

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Vision for inner-city ministry takes shape

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

WINNIPEG, MAN.

Little Flowers Community, a church plant of Mennonite Church Manitoba in West End Winnipeg, is blooming with new energy this winter.

When Pastor Jamie Arpin-Ricci, a leader with Youth With a Mission (YWAM) Urban Ministries Winnipeg, opened a used bookstore more than two years ago to provide a safe and comfortable place for people to gather and have coffee, he was looking for a denomination that shared his vision for inner-city ministry to partner with him. The Anabaptist vision of MC Manitoba and his vision for intentional community with an active presence in the neighbourhood seemed a good match.

Norm Voth, director of evangelism and service ministries for MC Manitoba, has been working closely with Arpin-Ricci over the past two years and, although the bookstore closed due to a lack of volunteers, a church, Little Flowers, was planted.

Arpin-Ricci and his wife Kim own a duplex in the West End neighbourhood. Their family lives on one side, while the other larger side houses Urban Ministries Winnipeg staff and is where Little Flowers meets for worship. Between 25 and 45 people, mostly from the neighbourhood, attend.

"At Sunday worship we share a potluck

meal together," Arpin-Ricci explains. "Prayer, musical worship and study of the Word follow. It is much more dialogical than a traditional service."

"When the bookstore closed, one of the things we lost was the ability to connect more naturally with our neighbours," he says. "We wanted to reopen some public space in the community."

Although MC Manitoba has no budget to help Little Flowers financially, Voth has been building connections and developing some partnerships to support this new church plant. "We don't have a formal structured relationship," Voth says, but as awareness grows he hopes those relationships will develop.

Some significant connections have already been made.

"We put our vision out there and some Mennonite Church Manitoba constituents, some businessmen, heard about our vision and offered to form a non-profit to raise the funds to buy and renovate a building on behalf of Little Flowers, in order to make that dream of ministry possible," says Arpin-Ricci.

In recent months, this non-profit ownership group, which does not want to be publicly identified, purchased a boarded-up

PHOTO BY JANIE ARPIN-RICCI



Chiara House at 490 Maryland St., Winnipeg, is a century-old apartment building that needs significant renovation to "turn it into affordable housing that includes relationships in the community," says Jamie Arpin-Ricci, pastor of Little Flowers Community, a church plant of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

three-storey apartment building in the neighbourhood for \$240,000.

The new project, named Chiara House, will "nurture intentional Christian community in the neighbourhood," says Arpin-Ricci.

People who will live there will share their lives with one another and others in need in the neighbourhood. Two of the three suites on each floor will provide affordable housing. The bachelor suites at the back of the building will be renovated into space for shared meals and larger gatherings. At least one suite will be available for transitional housing for new Canadians or others needing temporary shelter.

Chiara House will not be where the worshipping community gathers, according to Arpin-Ricci, but "it will be a community ministry centre. It will be a group of people living out their lives together, practising radical hospitality, loving God and others in the context of neighbourhood," he says.

"One of my hopes," says Voth, "is that as we develop this property, congregations, groups and individuals will get involved as a service project. There are many opportunities for partnering, whether financially or with skilled or unskilled labour." ❧

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GOD AT WORK IN US

Welcome on the other side of the fence

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

A deep love for aboriginal communities in Manitoba inspired Jake and Margaret Harms to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this past summer by honouring others. In lieu of gifts, they invited friends and family to contribute to Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry.

“Our first love has always been the North and our brothers and sisters there,” Jake says. He remembers clearly the moment at age 11 when he realized he wanted to serve in the North at the same time he committed himself to God.

“It was interesting that even before we met, we both had a burden for native people,” Margaret adds.

The couple met by chance at Jake’s sister’s wedding. He was invited to serve as the best man at her wedding, but he had no idea who the maid of honour was. It turned out to be Margaret.

“That was the day that I met her and from that day on I knew I was going to capture her heart, whether she wanted me to or not,” Jake recalls with a twinkle in his eye.

Two and a half years later, on July 24, 1960, they were married in Lowe Farm (Man.) Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

The years the Harms spent living and working in the North strengthened their commitment to Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples. From 1962-63, the couple lived in Norway House. While Margaret taught Grades 1 to 8, Jake studied to earn his high school diploma, as he had left school at the end of Grade 7 to work as a farm hand and help support his family.

After completing Grade 10 in 1963, Jake was granted a special permit to teach in Loon Straits, a tiny community about 50 kilometres north of Manigotagan.

Margaret became a stay-at-home mother.

Eventually they found themselves back in Winnipeg with two young daughters, aged five and one, but their passion for aboriginals continued to call them north. Through an ad in *The Canadian Mennonite* (a periodical published from 1953-71), they learned that the only store in Pauingassi, a small, isolated community 280 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg, was in need of a trading post manager.

“We applied and never heard from them for weeks,” Jake says.

Margaret remembers vividly the moment they resigned themselves to not getting the job. It was 11:30 at night. “We told ourselves that if God doesn’t want us back in the North, we’re okay staying in Winnipeg,” she recalls.

“And then with that, the phone rang. ‘Do you want the job?’”

They landed in Pauingassi on the shore of Fishing Lake, a tributary of the Berens River, in 1969, with daughters and suitcases in tow and a limited ability to communicate with the local residents. Broken English was spoken by only a couple of villagers and the Harms family knew no Ojibwa.

In addition to their official roles managing the post office and trading post, the couple assumed responsibility for medicine and local ham radio connections during periods when there was no mission staff. Margaret became

deeply involved with mothers and children, and taught the English language to men. Through these activities, the couple supported vital connections between the isolated community and the outside world. They nurtured friendships among their aboriginal neighbours with the help of mission workers, including Henry and Elna Neufeld from Native Ministry, and an interpreter, Albert Pascal. They gradually acquired a basic Ojibwa vocabulary.

When the Harms family left Pauingassi in 1972, their neighbour Charlie came to say farewell through Pascal. “He wanted to make sure I understood what he said,” Jake says. Charlie pointed to the fence surrounding the small residence and lean-to store. He told Jake that his children were always welcome on the other side of the fence, stressing, “We knew you loved us.”

Since leaving Pauingassi, the couple has retained strong ties with native communities through ongoing friendships, the organization Christian Investors in Education (under whom they served at Pauingassi), and Partnership Circle Meetings with MC Canada Native Ministry. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HARMS FAMILY



The Harms’ golden wedding anniversary celebration took place on June 19, 2010, at the Lowe Farm Community Centre, Man.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

God walked with me

BY JOHN BOEHM

I was born in 1934 in a village in Hungary, a 400-year-old German settlement about 110 kilometres from Budapest. My mother died of childbed fever when I was two. My stillborn brother was laid in her arms and they were buried together. Shortly after that my father left for Budapest to work.

Raised in the Catholic faith by my maternal grandmother, I longed to know my mother and father. My grandmother and aunts worked hard to maintain the vineyards while my uncles served in World War II.

Our village was on the frontline of battles during the war. It changed hands between the Russians and Germans seven times. Many times the soldiers forced us to do things against our will and those memories are not pleasant.

On May 26, 1946, about 600 of us with German background were loaded onto boxcars to be shipped to Germany with only what we could carry. We lived in an old army barracks for two years, where our food was rationed and scarce. I will never

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN BOEHM



Leah Martin and John Boehm's engagement photo.

forget going from one village to the next to beg for potatoes.

In 1948, my grandmother and I prepared to come to Canada at the invitation of my uncle. After a physical examination at the Bremen seaport, we were told I could not continue to Canada because I had a spot on my lung. That night my grandmother and I knelt by our bed and prayed. The next morning my grandmother insisted

The next morning my grandmother insisted that my X-ray be retaken, and, after seeing the new X-ray, the physician allowed me to continue my journey.

that my X-ray be retaken, and, after seeing the new X-ray, the physician allowed me to continue my journey. We thanked God for intervening on my behalf.

When we arrived in St. Jacobs, Ont., I was 14 years old and had no idea what the English language sounded like. Since my uncle was not going to church at this time, I wandered the streets of St. Jacobs on Sundays for lack of anything else to do.

Young Floyd Buehler and his sister Verda invited me to their home for dinner and to Sunday school. Their father bought me a pair of skates so I could skate with the other young people. I made a decision to follow Christ and was baptized at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

In the spring of 1949, I started to work for my room and board on Nelson and Vera Snyder's farm. Vera spoke only English to help me grasp the language faster. I also worked for Orville and Mabel Snyder, and have lifelong memories of things I learned at Oak Shade Farm.

Orville and his family came to my graduation from Ontario Mennonite Bible Institute in 1955. They visited me in Voluntary Service in Brandon, Man., in 1955, and they came to my graduation from Eastern Mennonite College with a junior Bible certificate in Harrisonburg, Va., in 1960.

I met Leah Martin when involved in youth activities at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church. We joke about having met in the potato patch, a Mennonite Youth Fellowship project at the time. A year after our marriage, Leah and I took my long-anticipated trip to my birthplace. For the first time, I met my father as an adult as well as my two sisters and stepmother. We spent many nights talking until well past midnight.

We visited my grandmother, who had returned to Germany in 1952. It was refreshing to look at my past from an adult viewpoint. When an aunt confronted me about leaving the Catholic Church, my grandmother said, "Leave him alone. Those

are good people with a faith as strong as ours." She talked about her respect for the Mennonite community and took both of Leah's hands into hers and stated, "I am so glad John has found a good wife and a family to which he can belong. Now I can rest in peace." She died in Germany in 1979 at the age of 93.

In 1969, we bought our farm property—a barn but no house—and began raising weanling pigs. A few years later, we built a house and began breeding purebred Landrace pigs, developing our herd and choosing the best breeding stock we could afford. We won the honour of having the highest station-tested boar in Canada three different times. During this time our three children, Ruth, Ray and Maria, were born.

Major health issues touched me in 2005. Although recovery was slow, I am thankful to be alive to enjoy my family, especially our five precious grandchildren.

When I look back on my 76 years, I know God has walked with me. ☞

Originally published in a longer format in the December 2009 St. Jacobs Mennonite Church newsletter, Life Together.

'Lord, I'm back' ... on the open road



BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
CARMAN, MAN.

Jack Reimer sat at his kitchen table about 20 years ago and gazed forlornly out the window at his fleet of trucks and trailers lined up for sale on his lawn. "I looked at what I had thought was going to be my career," he says. "It was a sad moment."

Reimer, of Carman, first fell in love with the road when he was 13, and travelled into the States with his father during summer months to do custom harvesting. The big, beautiful, fancy rigs that he saw on American highways lured him. As soon as he was old enough to get his Class 1 driver's licence he left school and his father's custom harvesting business, and set out on his own.

Early trucking jobs were stepping-stones to becoming the independent trucker that he dreamed of. Driving gas-run trucks without sleepers or air conditioners, and with brakes that didn't work were things he endured for the short term, always looking for the break that would launch him on his own independent career path.

"It was all part of working my way through," he says. "There was no question I wanted the semi and I wanted to get out there on the road."

Enforcement of trucking laws was more relaxed in those days, Reimer notes. "The manufacturing company I was working for then was growing, but still just hauling with the one truck. I was doing enough drugs at that time to keep me awake for the better part of the day. Today, keeping an up-to-date log book is the No. 1 issue for truckers. But in those days we didn't even carry log books."

Exhausted, Reimer went back to work for his father who had by this time established a small trucking business.

Eventually, though, he says, "I heard there were trucks hauling fertilizer from Alberta. I was more interested in long-distance hauling and so there was a subtle parting of the ways with my father. I went more big time. I really got involved with

this business."

In 1981, Reimer married Lois Kunzelman. Their daughter Naomi was born a few years later.

"The business was becoming all-consuming," says Reimer, as credit card debt was mounting and his time with his family was being squeezed out by his business concerns.

"My priorities had to change," he says. "I needed to let go of the dream of being my own boss. I wanted to be a strong family man and a man of God, and so I put my equipment up for sale. Cut up the credit cards."

At age 37, his dream, his identity and his business stood out on the front lawn waiting to be sold.

"There was a lot of thought and pain that went into this," he says, "but I also believed that if we put God first he will grant us the desires of our hearts as long as they are in line with his will."

For the past 11 years Reimer has been a company driver.

"I don't own any equipment, not even my own truck," he says. "When I come home, I don't have trucking on my mind."

He is living his dream of doing the long haul, but with time left over for church involvement and his family. He regularly leads music during worship at Carman Mennonite Church, and is excited about his daughter's wedding this summer.

He also has—or rather, makes—time for prayer. "Prayer is a huge part of my day," he says. "Once I'm out on the open road I usually begin with the Lord's Prayer."

He prays for those mentioned during sharing time at church, for the prayer requests that are texted or e-mailed to him, for his family, for what he hears on the news, and for what he sees on the road. "As I go down the road it is an unfolding prayer," he says. "It's the least I can do with all this time I have . . . without being encumbered by financial or business concerns that took up so much of my time before."

Reimer spends up to 11 days at a time on the road and then is home for three or four. He is concerned about what will happen when he retires, "because when I'm at home my prayer life gets off track." He loves the balance in his life now. "Lord, I'm back," he says as he swings out on the open road. ☸

PHOTO COURTESY OF JACK REIMER



Jack Reimer stands in front of the company truck. 'Lord, I'm back,' he says each time he climbs into the rig, readying himself to drive and pray. 'That's why I have this decal [inset photo] on my truck,' he says. 'It's just a little child, which is all that I am, and he's kneeling at the cross, and that's me.'

Remembering Glen Lapp

Family members attend memorial service for MCC worker in Afghanistan

BY MARLA PIERSON LESTER
Mennonite Central Committee

Two months after Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker Glen Lapp was killed in rural Afghanistan along with nine other aid workers, Lapp's father Marvin, brother Jerry and cousin Joe were welcomed in the guesthouse in Kabul where he had lived.

They took part in an Oct. 1 memorial service for the 10 who died Aug. 5, 2010. But they also were able to visit the office where Lapp helped to arrange logistics for rural eye camps and contacted village leaders to work out permissions and details. Following his example, they carried a banana and toffee pie to four friends who lived nearby.

And through each encounter, Marvin, Jerry and Joe Lapp got a closer feel for Lapp's efforts in Afghanistan, for how he was cherished by Afghan and expatriate friends, and for the ways in which his adventurous spirit, conscientious attention and compassion shone through in both work and play.

"I frequently imagined how Glen must have done this or that thing, how he interacted with people, how he was able to do what needed to be done," Marvin says. "It was a very good experience to be there."

Lapp, 40, and other members of a team formed by MCC partner International Assistance Mission, which provides eye care and medical treatment in Afghanistan, were returning from an eye camp in a rural area when they were killed in Afghanistan's Badakhshan Province.

Even though he only began his work in Afghanistan—one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world—in 2008, Lapp quickly became known as a person who reached out to other expats living in the midst of these tensions. He led a Monday morning exercise group, took time to play with fellow workers' children, and he and a colleague, also among the dead, helped

organize volleyball tournaments.

And when security allowed, he and others would go into nearby hills for hikes. Hiking and biking were such passions for Lapp that those who attended his memorial service in Lancaster, Pa., were invited to bike there. But hiking with someone in Afghanistan requires a far different level of trust than outdoor excursions in a more secure setting, and colleagues chose to place their trust in him.

For all his sense of adventure, Lapp didn't take the prospect of serving in Afghanistan lightly. He had long wanted to serve abroad, but he had been busy working as a nurse and realtor, travelling, climbing mountains in South America and trekking in Nepal.

When the assignment opened in Afghanistan, he and his parents, Marvin and Mary Lapp, talked not only about the opportunities in going, but also with each other and with MCC about the risks, violence and insecurity of the setting.

"It wasn't always easy thinking about Glen being there, but it was a choice we had made," Mary says.

The assignment drew on skills and qualities he had honed over the years. Through e-mail and Skype, his parents could sense how much he liked the process of spending time with village leaders to work out the details of eye camps.

"It was clear he was well suited for the job he was doing," Joe says, noting his son's love of adventure and travel, patience with people and ability to weather physical hardships.

Dark-haired, Lapp grew a beard and often dressed in traditional Afghan garb. During the October visit, one of his Afghan co-workers told Marvin, Jerry and Joe how he had taken him to a local park to play volleyball. He worried Lapp would feel uncomfortable because so much attention would be paid to him as a foreigner.

But he showed up in a *shalwar kameez*, a traditional outfit of loose-fitting pants and shirt, and played volleyball and "nobody ever realized he was a foreigner," Joe says.

Lapp's term was scheduled to end last October. In an end-of-term report submitted to MCC in July 2010, he wrote that, "Where I was [meaning Afghanistan], the main thing that expats can do is to be a presence in the country. Treating people with respect and with love, and trying to be a little bit of Christ in this part of the world.

"MCC is very much involved in peace-building 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," he wrote.

He was eager to come home, though. In part, his parents say, to rekindle relationships with the nieces and nephew he treasured so much.

But, according to his cousin Joe, Lapp also was strongly drawn to reach out to meet the needs of people around the world. "Frankly, I don't think he would have been home for long," Joe notes. "I think the pull of life in Afghanistan, or, if not there, some other similarly need-rich location, would have taken him back to a place where he could daily use his skills to directly improve the lives of people in need." ❧

MCC PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON



MCC worker Glen Lapp, of Lancaster, Pa., was killed Aug. 5, 2010, in rural Afghanistan. This photo was taken in Kabul, Afghanistan, a month earlier.

2010 A. James Reimer Award winner announced

By JENNIFER KONKLE

Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

Sarah Freeman's academic achievement, her zeal for preaching and her enthusiastic participation at the Toronto (Ont.) Mennonite Theological Centre (TMTC) earned her Conrad Grebel University College's highest valued academic award: The A. James Reimer Award at the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre.

The \$8,000 award will allow Freeman, a doctor of theology student at the University of Toronto, to continue studying full-time to achieve her dream of teaching homiletics.



Freeman

"The award is also important," Freeman explains, "because it recognizes the importance of financial support for doctoral education. Doctoral studies have not played a large role in the history of the Mennonite church, but this award recognizes the need to support students who are pursuing doctoral studies in service

of the church."

The award was established in recognition of A. James Reimer and the program he founded in advanced degree/doctoral theological studies at TMTC in conjunction with the Toronto School of Theology.

It is awarded to active TMTC students who have demonstrated commitment to the life of the Mennonite church and its institutions, and who demonstrate solid academic ability. Established with an initial gift from Al Armstrong and Marlys Neufeldt, matching funds and donor contributions have taken this endowed award over its goal to a book value of \$268,000.

The award has more emotional impact due to Reimer's death last August. Freeman counts herself lucky to have taken a few courses with him over the years, appreciating how he actively engaged in his students' work and continued discussions begun on paper. She remembers how he was "always ready to critically, thoughtfully and seriously explore topics of faith and church practice."

Freeman earned a bachelor of arts degree at the University of Waterloo, Ont., in English and history, prior to pursuing a master of theological studies degree in New Testament at Grebel.

She is a former youth pastor of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont. ☿

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ARTBEAT

Uncovering ancient rhythms of daily prayer

Author of new book wants to help people see how regular prayer can renew their spiritual lives and enrich the life of the church

Herald Press

When he was a young adult, Arthur Boers' 17 year-old sister died of leukemia. Torn by grief, and unable to understand how God could allow such a

terrible thing, he found himself unable to pray.

"At times I had nothing to say to God or did not know how to voice my prayers," says Boers, author of the new Herald Press book, *Day by Day These Things We Pray: Uncovering Ancient Rhythms of Prayer*. "Sometimes I could think of things that I wanted to tell God, but was not sure whether they were legitimate or blasphemous. So I clamped my mouth and my mind shut when thoughts



An interview with Arthur Boers on daily prayer

Author of the new Herald Press book, Day by Day These Things We Pray: Uncovering Ancient Rhythms of Prayer, chats about the practice of daily prayer

Herald Press: What is daily prayer?

Boers: Common daily prayer is the practice—or discipline—of praying every morning and evening, using a set of prayers being used by other Christians around the world. In the more liturgical traditions, this practice is variously called the “daily office,” “divine office,” “common prayer,” “liturgy of the hours,” “morning and evening prayer,” and even “fixed-hour prayer.”



Boers

Herald Press: Why is it important for Christians to set aside some time every day to pray?

Boers: We live in an era when our notion of time has shifted pretty dramatically. Today, time is almost meaningless; we can shop or work anytime we want. This is good in some ways, since we are no longer tethered to a clock. But it's also a burden. Now we are tethered to our work. This way of praying teaches us to reclaim a rhythm of engaging with God, and releasing things to God on a regular schedule.

With all the busyness in our lives, it is easy to get off balance and forget our relationship with God. By making a commitment to pray at certain times, we can keep our spiritual balance and remind ourselves that God is central to our daily activity.

Herald Press: How can praying written prayers like this help Christians with their prayer and devotional lives?

Boers: Written prayers can help you focus, direct your attention, and expand your imagination for what you pray about and whom you pray for. It can challenge us to pray beyond our comfort zones—to pray for more than

only ourselves, or our family and friends.

It also helps when we find it hard to pray, or don't feel like praying. During times of crisis, or when you can't pray, it's an anchor. When you don't know what to say, the prayers help you verbalize the thoughts and ideas that might be hard to express.

There's also something powerful about knowing that you are joining others around the world in praying the same prayers or for the same things. It's a way of expressing solidarity with the wider church, and also of not feeling alone.

Herald Press: What is your goal with this book?

Boers: The way I like to describe it is to say that I want to help people uncover the practice of common daily morning and evening prayer. It has never really been lost, of course; lots of Christians still practise it. But many others have misplaced it, perhaps even buried it. Distortions, misdirected emphases, misguided priorities and even good intentions went wrong. These have gradually covered up and reworked the original genius of morning and evening prayer.

Yet it remains there in the roots of Christianity, even within Protestant traditions. What is required, then, is not to find, invent or discover something new. Rather, we have the gift and opportunity to encounter what is already there and to claim it as a potential legacy for all Christians. It is part of our heritage, and it can still be a great blessing.

My hope is that readers will join me in exploring what happened to such prayer, and then see its potential for renewing our spiritual lives, and enriching the life of the wider church.

turned toward God.”

Then a friend introduced him to the practice of using a prayer book for daily prayers.

“I was comforted because that volume gave me words to pray,” he says. “It helped me voice laments and also encouraged me to put my situation into a wider context. Slowly I learned to pray again.”

Now Boers wants to help others who are struggling with prayer find ways to connect with God though the use of set prayers and prayer books.

“Daily prayer is the practice—or discipline—of praying every morning and evening, using a set of prayers being used by other Christians around the world,” Boers explains, noting that the practice goes back to the Old Testament, when Jews prayed two to three times a day. The early Christians also gathered daily to pray in the temple and in their homes, he says.

The early Anabaptists also used set prayers. The Schleithem Confession, one of the earliest Anabaptist documents, refers to praying the Psalms regularly, and Dutch Anabaptists began making prayer books in the 17th century.

“The Anabaptists’ main devotional book was the Bible, but they also used stories of martyrs, along with hymns, sermons and devotional books to guide their devotional times,” says Boers.

Why don’t more Protestants use prayer books for daily prayer? Part of the blame can be laid on the Reformation, during which time the practice of daily prayer was associated with the old, corrupt church that was overthrown. As well, he says, “some Evangelicals and other Protestants don’t do it because it has been associated with Catholicism,” while other Christians believe that “extemporaneous prayers are more authentic than written prayers.”

Boers thinks that’s a shame.

“Written prayers can help you focus, direct your attention and expand your imagination for what you pray about and who you pray for,” he says. “It can challenge us to pray beyond our comfort zones—to pray for more than only ourselves, or our family and friends.”

Prayer books also help “when we find it hard to pray, or don’t feel like praying,” he adds. “When you don’t know what to say,

the prayers help you verbalize the thoughts and ideas that might be hard to express.”

Setting aside time to pray also helps people regain balance in life, Boers suggests. “With all the busyness in our lives, it is easy to get off balance and forget our relationship with God,” he says. “By making a commitment to pray at certain times, we can keep our spiritual balance, and remind ourselves that God is central to our daily activity.”

His goal for *Day By Day These Things We Pray* is to help Christians “uncover the practice of daily morning and evening

prayer. . . . My hope is that readers will join me in exploring what happened to such prayer, and then see its potential for renewing our spiritual lives, and enriching the life of the wider church.”

Arthur Boers holds the R. J. Bernardo Family Chair of Leadership at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, Ont. He previously taught pastoral theology at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. He has written or co-written six books, including in *Take Our Moments and Our Days*, Vols. 1 and 2 (see below). ☞

Prayer books help people feel connected to God

Second volume of Take Our Moments and Our Days released

Herald Press

For Carrie Martens, a student at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., using a prayer book like *Take Our Moments and Our Days* helps her feel “connected to God, to Scripture and the greater Christian community. . . . It has helped me pray in ways that are meaningful and with words that express my faith journey,” she says gratefully.

David Vroege, pastor of All Nations Christian Reformed Church in Halifax, N.S., says the prayer book is “healthy for my spiritual life. . . . I like how it helps me memorize certain portions of Scripture.”

“I have used it in our peace prayers group, in small groups, in a group retreat, and mostly in my daily prayers as an individual,” says Tina Mast Burnett of Akron, Pa. “Every time I have opened the book, I have loved it.”

“The structure of the intercessions reminds me to broaden my prayers from just the nearest or most urgent,” adds Brenda Meyer, pastor of Benton Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Comments like those are gratifying for Eleanor Kreider, one of the compilers of *Take Our Moments and Our Days*, a two-volume set from Herald Press. “The impulse behind these two volumes was

to help people to pray through Scripture, and to deepen their walk of faith,” says Kreider, who helped create the book along with Barbara Nelson Gingerich, John D. Rempel, Mary H. Schertz and Arthur Boers, who holds the R. J. Bernardo Family Chair of Leadership at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, Ont.

The second volume, which was released last November, is for the seasons of Advent through Pentecost. The first volume is for the period between Pentecost and Advent. Both volumes follow the classic three-fold structure of Christian daily prayer: praise and thanksgiving; listening to Scripture; and petition and blessing.

“This ages-old pattern is familiar to Christians in every deep prayer tradition,” Kreider says, noting that what makes the Herald Press releases different from other prayer books is “a distinctive Anabaptist flavour.”

And what makes them Anabaptist?

“It’s the prominence of the voice of Jesus, and also the inclusion of Anabaptist perspectives on the themes of the liturgical seasons,” Kreider says, adding that “the

(Continued on page 34)



An interview with Eleanor Kreider on praying with an Anabaptist voice

Herald Press: *What is the purpose of this book?*

Kreider: The impulse behind these two volumes is to help people to pray through Scripture, and to deepen their walk of faith.

Herald Press: *Some people might say that prayer, to be truly authentic, should be spontaneous—not read from a book. How do you respond to that?*

Kreider: Mennonites are part of what I call a “free worship” tradition. That is, many people resist fixed forms of prayer and are suspicious of repetition. Yet many also desire prayers that are deeper and more reflective than what someone can think up on the spot. That’s where something like *Take Our Moments and Our Days* comes in. In this book, the lines that bid people to come to prayer and worship are all Scripture phrases. In each service there is one short prayer that is newly written, and its words evoke the themes that are already present in the Scripture readings of the service.

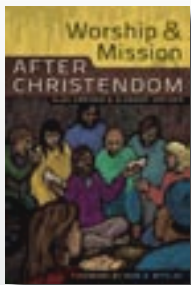
These prayers are not meant to be slavishly followed. We encourage people to shorten or lengthen the format. But it is important to keep the three-fold shape of praise,

listening and petition with blessing. The prayer services are guides to help us praise God, hear what God is saying and respond to God’s call in our lives.

Herald Press: *Can this book also be used by groups? If so, how?*

Kreider: Absolutely. It is already, and we hope more will use it that way. It’s set up so that groups can begin with praise of God through Psalm prayer, personal thanksgiving and song. Songs in the first section address God with our praise and thanksgiving. Songs included in the book can be found in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story*, but people can substitute songs from other hymnals or songbooks.

What follows is a call to listen to the voice of Jesus, through readings from the gospels. It’s a way to express our desire to follow in his way. These readings stimulate reflection, praise and application to life. The service ends with a response to what has been heard, in the form of intercessory prayer for ourselves, our friends and family, our community, for the church, for the world, and for other concerns.



Worship and Mission After Christendom

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—Walter Brueggemann, Columbia Theological Seminary

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Herald Press is the book imprint of Mennonite Publishing Network.

(Continued from page 33)

Scripture readings selected for the book emphasize Anabaptist values of peace, forgiveness, service, justice and community.”

Although created for Anabaptists, Kreider hopes others will also find the books useful. “Although we prepared it for an Anabaptist audience, we offer it to anyone who values community, forgiveness, peace, service and justice,” she says. “We know that many others have found [the first volume] to be valuable, and that it is being used widely in other denominations.”

What advice would she give to someone who wants to use these books for their prayers?

“The first thing I would say is to try to set a regular time for prayer,” Kreider says. “Few of us find time for sustained prayer both morning and evening, so I would suggest that people adopt either pattern.”

She also recommends that people “should also find or create a physical setting that is conducive to praying.” This could include having “a visual focus, such as an open Bible, a cross, candle, symbol or picture.” ☼

FOCUS ON FINANCES

Financial ministry 'a question of fair balance'

BY TIM WAGLER
MAX Canada

The mission of MAX (MutualAid eXchange)—creating and sustaining wholeness through preserving and restoring property, lives and communities—was very much in action during 2010, both in terms of MAX Canada's Mutual Aid Ministry programs and its insurance operations.

Supported by insurance operational tithes and charitable donations, Mutual Aid offers ministry programs in partnership

[W]e celebrate that we were able to fulfill our mission and restore wholeness to members who experienced insured losses, while maintaining a healthy balance sheet.

with constituent congregations:

- **BURDEN BEARING MINISTRY** ensures spiritual and emotional support is provided during times of significant loss or trauma. Most frequently, this support is provided in consultation with and by the local faith community. Mutual Aid staff were involved in 41 opportunities in 2010, 17 of which resulted in financial grants from the MAX Canada Share Fund, a registered Canadian charity. Grants amounted to a record \$23,366, with congregations partially or fully matching the Share Fund grant support.

- **SUPPORT NETWORK MINISTRY** provides a monthly e-mail sent to more than 6,100 recipients across North America. Its motto is, *"The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know"* (I Timothy 1:1, The

Message). These e-mails highlight prayer concerns and requests brought to ministry staff through insurance operations, congregations or MAX members and supporters. During 2010, 50 prayer requests, as well as 15 celebratory stories of thanksgiving, were shared with readers.

- **PROPERTY AND CASUALTY INSURANCE** is primarily about restoring losses. A total of 224 insured loss claims were reported in 2010. Extreme and erratic weather patterns across Canada last year contributed to many storm damage, sewer backup and water loss claims. Added to this were 10 major home fires.

Claims severity in 2010 means that MAX Canada did not have a profitable year. Nevertheless, we celebrate that we were able to fulfill our mission and restore wholeness to members who experienced



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insured losses, while maintaining a healthy balance sheet. Insurance, after all, involves using the premiums of the many to provide funds for the losses of the few who unfortunately experience them.

The \$1.14 million in new business premiums during 2010 set a record. This growth resulted in year-end in-force premiums totalling \$7.5 million from 7,190 insured members from Ontario to British Columbia.

The words of the Apostle Paul always resonate with us at MAX Canada: *"I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance"* (I Corinthians 8: 13-14). ❧



Tim Wagler is president and chief executive officer of MAX Canada.

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Children change everything

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BY LYNETTE TAYLOR

FaithLife Financial
WATERLOO, ONT.

There is nothing like a new addition to the family to get parents and grandparents looking ahead to the future. Much of what lies ahead is unknown, but there are things like life insurance that can help secure your child's financial future. In

addition to having life insurance on each parent, in many cases insuring the life of a child can make sense by offering many long-term benefits for your child and the whole family.

• **GUARANTEED INSURANCE FOR LIFE.** Children that are healthy today are insurable today. Insuring children at a young age guarantees that they have insurance now and have the ability to get more insurance down the road, even if they develop health problems in the future. And most policies provide the opportunity to add a Guaranteed Purchase Option (GPO), which allows children to upgrade their insurance in the future without proof of good health.

• **FINANCIAL SAFETY-NET FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.** Children who eventually have families of their own may have developed health issues as they grew up, and as a result are not able to obtain new insurance; or a new policy may have a large premium due to health issues.

• **CASH VALUES MAKE IT A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING.** Permanent policies can also give the child's future family added financial flexibility; the cash value that accumulates in the policy can be used towards a down payment on a new home or as collateral for a loan to start up a business venture. Permanent policies also allow your child to lock in at very affordable rates and can be paid up in a limited number of years.

• **ALL GROWN UP. NOW WHAT?** Are your children now independent adults? It may be time to turn their life insurance policies—and the accompanying premiums—over to them. This is a great opportunity to have a conversation with your adult children about life insurance and why you purchased policies for them in the first place.

• **GIVE THEM SOMETHING THAT REALLY MATTERS.** Do your little ones really need more toys? Why not add up what you expect to spend this year on gifts, but, instead of wrapping up toys, consider putting the money to work in a whole life juvenile policy. A reputable life insurance representative can help explain the ins and outs of the policy and, if there are guaranteed purchase options, how they work. ☺



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Calendar

British Columbia

Feb. 18, 19: MCC fundraising banquets: (18) South Langley MB Church, Langley; (19) Sardis Community Church.

Feb. 19: The Mennonite Historical

Society of B.C. presents a public lecture by Brian Froese of CMU: "A sin-hardened paradise: Mennonite missions and spiritual conflict in postwar B.C."; at the Garden Park Tower, Abbotsford, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 25: LEAD conference, Living Hope Christian Fellowship, Surrey.

Feb. 26: MC B.C. annual general meeting, Living Hope Christian Fellowship, Surrey.

April 8-10: Junior youth "Impact" retreat, Camp Squeah.

April 16-17: Camp Squeah paddle-athon fundraiser.

April 23: Columbia Bible College commencement.

Alberta

Feb. 12: Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton, hosts Chautauqua, an event including singing, humorous lectures, original stories, poetry, puppets and refreshments; at 6:45 p.m. For more information, call Ike Glick at 780-434-3037.

Feb. 25-27: Senior high snow camp at Camp Valaqua. For more information, call 780-637-2510.

March 11-12: MC Alberta annual general meeting, at Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton.

May 14: Camp Valaqua spring work day. Chop wood, clear trails, ready the facilities for campers. For more information, call 780-637-2510.

June 11: Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon. Location TBA. For more information, call 780-637-2510.

July 8-9: MCC Alberta Relief Sale, at Sherwood Park, Edmonton.

Saskatchewan

Feb. 25-26: Songfest, at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

March 18-19: MC Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions, in North Battleford.

Manitoba

Feb. 10-11: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate junior high students perform three one-act plays, at Franco-Manitoban Centre, Winnipeg.

Feb. 11-13: Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization senior youth retreat at Camp Moose Lake.

Feb. 21-23: Manitoba Mennonite Young Adults winter retreat at Camp Koinonia.

Feb. 25-26: MC Manitoba annual delegates gathering, at MCI, Gretna.

March 11-13: Peace It Together Conference returns to CMU after a yearlong sabbatical, featuring drama by Ted Swartz and keynote speakers Jarem

Sawatsky, Dan Epp-Tiessen and Adelia Neufeld Wiens. For more information, e-mail info@cmu.ca.

March 17: Verna Mae Janzen Music Scholarship performances, at CMU's Laudamus Auditorium, at 7:30 p.m.

March 20: Mennonite Community Orchestra performs at the CMU chapel, at 3 p.m.

March 21: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate fundraising banquet at the Marlborough Hotel, Winnipeg, at 6 p.m.

March 26, 27: CMU 10th anniversary choral concerts: (26) at Westminster United Church, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m.; (27) at Buhler Hall, Gretna, at 3 p.m.

April 4: Jazz at CMU, in the Great Hall, at 7:30 p.m.

April 16: CMU spring concert, at the Loewen Athletic Centre.

Ontario

Feb. 11: Rod and Lorna Sawatsky Visiting Scholar Lecture, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. Speaker: Donald Kraybill. Topic: The tragic shooting of 10 girls in an Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pa., the unique features of Amish forgiveness, and the meaning and relevance of Christian forgiveness in a contentious world.

Feb. 12, 25: February Potato Blitz events for House of Friendship. (12) Drop your spuds off at local participating supermarkets, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (25) Community potato lunch at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kitchener, noon to 1 p.m.

Feb. 12: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents the premiere of John Burge's "Declaration" with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, at Centre in the Square, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m. For more information, or to purchase tickets, call toll-free 1-800-265-8977.

Feb. 21: Family Day open house at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Indoor and outdoor activities. Light lunch provided at noon. For more information, or to register, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

Feb. 22-24: MC Eastern Canada School for Ministers, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. Speaker: Irma Fast Dueck. Topic: "Why worship?" Open to the public.

UpComing

MC B.C. conference, AGM set for late February

Mennonite Church B.C.'s Leaders, Elders and Deacons (LEAD) Conference and annual general meeting are scheduled for Feb. 25 and 26 at Living Hope Christian Fellowship, Surrey. Lois Barrett is the keynote speaker for the LEAD Conference, whose theme is, "Being a Peace Church: From across the street to around the world." Barrett, of Newton, Kan., is director of Great Plains Seminary and co-author of *The Missional Church*. Although the LEAD sessions are of particular interest to church leaders, MC B.C. emphasizes that anyone is welcome to attend. Delegate sessions will take place on Feb. 26. This year, all business will take place in the morning, with the afternoon left for delegates to attend two of four possible workshops planned by the various MC B.C. committees. For more information on either session, contact the MC B.C. office online at mcbc.ca or by phone at 604 850-6658.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN

Donald Kraybill to speak on 'how forgiveness transcended tragedy'

WATERLOO, ONT.—The 2006 shooting of 10 girls—five fatally—in an Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pa., shocked the world. Donald Kraybill, Distinguished College Professor and Senior Fellow in the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College, Pa., has studied this heartbreaking event and is co-author of *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*.

He will give the 2011 Sawatsky Lecture at Conrad Grebel University College on Feb. 11 at 7:30 p.m. In his address, entitled "Forgiveness in the face of tragedy: Amish grace at Nickel Mines," he will tell the tragic story, describe the unique features of Amish forgiveness, and explore the meaning and relevance of Christian forgiveness in a contentious world. Kraybill has received numerous awards, including the National Religious Book Award for *The Upside Down Kingdom*. He has authored or co-authored numerous books on Amish life, including *The Riddle of Amish Culture*.

—Conrad Grebel University College



Kraybill

March 5,6: DaCapo Chamber Choir presents "Chiaroscuro: Music for choir and two harps," at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, Kitchener; 8 p.m. (5), 3 p.m. (6). For more information, or for tickets,

call 519-725-7549 or visit www.dacapochoir.ca.

March 18-19: Living Water Fellowship, New Hamburg, hosts a communications workshop for engaged or newly married couples.

UpComing

Exhibition of *Martyrs Mirror* artist's work part of Dutch anniversary celebrations

HAARLEM, THE NETHERLANDS—As part of their year of anniversaries, Dutch Mennonites are presenting an exhibit of drawings and etchings by Jan Luyken (1649-1712), most famous for his etchings in *Martyrs Mirror*. The exhibition,



which runs until April 17 at the Teylers Museum in Haarlem, includes around 90 prints and drawings by Luyken, who was more than a successful illustrator; as a very respected and deeply religious member, he meant a lot to the Mennonite faith community. Luyken was born on April 16, 1649, in Amsterdam, the fifth child of Mennonite schoolmaster Casper Luyken. During his lifetime, he gained wide acclaim for his drawings, prints and poems, often inspired by events and scenes from daily life. He is still regarded today as one of the most important book illustrators of his time. For more information, e-mail pers@teylersmuseum.nl.

—Teylers Museum

New understandings of biblical Mary the goal of AMBS conference

ELKHART, IND.—Mary, the mother of Jesus, shows up on Christmas Eve and Good Friday and she never says anything, several women told Marlene Kropf, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) professor, when she asked them what they thought about Mary. "And yet she sings the most powerful, prophetic words in the New Testament," Kropf pointed out. This lack of awareness and understanding of the biblical Mary has prompted a conference at AMBS from March 24 to 26. The conference, coordinated by the Institute of Mennonite Studies, will bring together pastors, scholars, church members, artists and church leaders who are Mennonite or from other Christian traditions. The goal is to have conversations about Mary on many different levels: biblical, theological, pastoral and practical. The conference will explore "how we embrace Mary and how she fits into our theology," says Kay Bontrager-Singer, pastor of Faith Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. "We hope to create an Anabaptist perspective on Mary." For more information, visit ambs.edu/maryconference.

—Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary

For more information, contact Denise Bender at 519-656-2005 or denise_bender@yahoo.com.

March 26: Menno Singers present "Choral Mystics," at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 8 p.m.

April 9: Pax Christi Chorale presents Verdi's "Requiem" at P.C. Ho Theatre, Scarborough, with guest conductor Norman Reintamm, the Cathedral Bluffs Symphony and the Peterborough Singers.

April 10: Menno Singers joins with five other choirs to perform Ernest Bloch's "Sacred Service" in its original Hebrew, at Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto.

April 17: Pax Christi Chorale presents

Prayer for Peace and CD release of Great Canadian Hymns with guest conductor Ints Teterovskis, 3 p.m. Also featuring Pax Christi Youth Choir.

April 22: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents J.S. Bach's St. John Passion, at Centre in the Square, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m. For more information, or to purchase tickets, call toll-free 1-800-265-8977.

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.

Classifieds

Wanted—a Marketing & Sales Director with a passion for promoting Anabaptist resources for the life and witness of the Mennonite church and beyond. For further information on this Mennonite Publishing Network job opening, see www.mpn.net/about/openings.html.

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Employment Opportunities

AREA MINISTER

Mennonite Church Alberta invites applications for the position of Area Minister (three-quarter time), starting July 2011.

The Area Minister is a pastor to the pastors and spiritual leaders within Mennonite Church Alberta (MCA). She/he gives primary attention to the pastoral care and leadership development of the pastors of MCA congregations, and MCA staff and contract employees. She/he completes administrative duties related to assisting congregations in pastoral searches, pastoral reviews, the ordination and commissioning of pastors, and she/he provides spiritual oversight to the work and ministry of the Area Church.

Mennonite Church Alberta is a community of 16 Anabaptist-Mennonite congregations in Alberta; worshipping the Triune God; unified in Jesus Christ; guided by the Holy Spirit; living a biblical faith; growing as communities of grace, joy and peace, and together presenting Jesus Christ to the world; and is affiliated with Mennonite Church Canada.

To express your interest, or to get more information about this position, please contact:

Hélène Wirzba, Personnel Committee, Mennonite Church Alberta
E-mail: wirzbah@telus.net or Phone: 403-330-4524.

From a spear . . .

PHOTO COURTESY OF HELMUT ISAAK



Helmut Isaak of Burns Lake, B.C., left, poses with Jonoine, chief of the Ayoreo people of the Paraguayan Chaco, in 2010. The pruning hook they are both holding was transformed from the spear that Jonoine—who had killed Isaak's brother Kornelius in defence of his people's land in 1958—had presented to Isaak at the 2009 Mennonite World Conference assembly in Paraguay; doing the transforming was Kornelius's son, Corney, a blacksmith. The spear is to be placed at the Peace and Anabaptist Theology Study Centre in Asunción, Paraguay. Says Helmut, "Jonoine sent me greetings for Christmas. An invitation to visit him and his family came along with the greeting."

to a pruning hook