

# CANADIAN MELONITE

February 18, 2013

Volume 17 Number 4

‘We need more’

MCC urges donations as  
Syrian crisis deepens

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## EDITORIAL

## A hijacked faith?

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

In her “Mennonites have a long history of environmental activism” letter to the editor on page 12, Joanne Moyer questions whether it was fair to hold Menno Simons to account for a lack of concern for climate change and broader concerns of the earth.

“A 16th-century church leader can hardly be expected to comment on a climatic phenomenon that scientists only began to notice several centuries later,” she writes. In an e-mail follow-up conversation with Moyer, I said she reinforced a point that I apparently didn’t develop sufficiently for proper understanding.

So let me try again. In citing Menno’s pietistic language in his famous statement of “true evangelical faith,” I was attempting to say that even though the core of the gospel is enshrined in his oft-quoted passage that formed the basis of our Anabaptist faith, the issues for application change over time. Of course, the scientists of his time had next to no awareness of climate change as we have come to understand it in the 21st century.

Nor were the 16th-century Anabaptists engaged in justice issues of the time. They were too preoccupied with trying to keep alive and out of sight of their religious persecutors when they had the courage to break away from the powerful Catholic church and distinguishing themselves from other Reformers of that time.

But today, Anabaptist Christians are living in a global village where as many as 70 armed conflicts are going on

simultaneously around the world, where poverty, sickness and political turmoil are the daily plight of millions, while we in the western empires of power go about our daily lives safe, quiet and protected, many of us unaware of, or unconcerned about, the complicity of the “powers” in much of this suffering. And with many of our parents being immigrants from Europe and Russia, we should have special sensitivity to the immigrants coming to our shores from these places of distress, rather than aligning ourselves with policies that treat these people as “terrorists.” Both the Mosaic law and Jesus’ extension of “welcoming the stranger” are core beliefs and practices that should guide our actions.

Herein lies the tragedy. Rather than being clear about the core of our Anabaptist beliefs, these issues of creation care, nonviolence, working at justice and peace, and assisting immigrants, have been politicized to the extent of hijacking our scripturally based beliefs to the fear-based causes of militarism, security, law-and-order, and a slavish priority to economic development based on a high level of consumerism to thrive.

If Menno Simons was alive today, he would likely use some different language in delineating his manifesto about “true evangelical faith.” I can’t imagine him being indifferent to the issues with which we grapple today as modern Anabaptists.

Even some of our theological concepts are changing. Our view of atonement,

say our leading theologians, for instance, should be based more on God being “nonviolent” during the history of his people, thereby questioning the traditional view of “substitution” (Jesus’ death on the cross required to satisfy God’s demand to forgive human sins).

“His enemies’ murder of Jesus,” writes Tom Yoder Neufeld, “became God’s love offering. Their murder of God’s messenger and son became God’s own sacrifice on their behalf. This is truly ‘news,’ very good news, *euaggelion*.”

While some of our scriptural understandings may change over time, the verities of our place in society as citizens of God’s kingdom first and country second do not change. “The claims of Caesar (government) are to be measured by whether what he claims is due to him is part of the obligation of love,” wrote John Howard Yoder in *The Politics of Jesus*. “Love in turn is defined (Romans 13:10) by the fact that it does no harm.”

This is the foundational core to our belief in nonviolence and the peace we practise as Anabaptist Christians. Unlike other issues, such as creation care, which change with the aging of our planet, the call of Jesus to love our enemies, rather than kill them, and love our neighbours as ourselves, are foundational for all time and place.

It is these enduring precepts to which we should adhere as a faith community, not the changing winds of political persuasion that dominate our lives through 24-hour media news and the noise of talk radio.

Let us not allow the ubiquity of the news media to hijack the “still small voice of God” as that divine Word of the Lord coming to us in quiet, sometimes mysterious ways.



## ABOUT THE COVER:

**Syrian refugee children take shelter against the cold shortly after arriving in Za’atari Refugee Camp, Jordan, early in the morning of Nov. 26, 2012. Mennonite Central Committee has delivered 900 comforters, 350 relief kits and 3,520 school kits to the camp so far. For story on the worsening crisis in Syria, see page 26.**

PHOTO: B. SOKOL / UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

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**Guiding values:**

*Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom • Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will • Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability*

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**LAUREN MARKOE, RELIGION NEWS SERVICE**

ON THE USE OF SCRIPTURE: PART I OF III

# Imagination, hope and peace

BY BRUCE HIEBERT

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



*If all humans start moving together  
in hope, however irrational, who  
knows what we might do?*

**R**eading the Bible for ethics is no easy task. It means facing an obscure document held as vital by an older generation, but of increasing irrelevance to a changing world. Or does it?

It might be that, in fact, Scripture holds the keys to imagination, hope and how we actually go about evoking a world of peace. This alternative perspective is not one of faith or mysticism, but of the actual operation of the human brain. What neuro-psychology indicates is that the world is far less rational than we might think and that Scripture may be a vital part of how we succeed within it.

One of the central findings of neuro-psychology is that the brain is an association engine. It spends every waking hour running back and forth between incoming stimuli and memory, looking for connections. When “this” is like “that,” even in the most superficial way, the brain goes “aha,” and starts planning a course of action. Decisions are made and lives are changed.

Another central finding of neuro-psychology is that the brain is not rational. We have known since Freud that we are moved in irrational ways by unconscious patterns, but contemporary neuro-psychology goes much further. Not only is the brain not rational, it isn’t even rational when it thinks it is being rational, and the analysis of evidence is a third line of operation running a long way behind sloppy intuition and stereotype. We not only make decisions on the basis of superficialities, but under normal conditions

ISTOCK PHOTO BY KLAAS LINGBEEK-VAN KRANEN



*The John Lennon mosaic, located in New York City's Central Park, asks us to 'imagine' a world without strife, war and conflict.*

we ignore reasoned processes that might interfere with our “gut” reactions.

These findings are not encouraging for those who had hoped we could, through careful processes and the accumulation of evidence, build a world of peace. On the other hand, they do tell us why we desperately need the Bible, as out of touch with our world as it may be—even perhaps in part because it is out of touch with our world and profoundly in touch with the divine world. If the brain is an irrational association engine at heart, then the Bible—not our thinking—is the key to imagining a world of peace, becoming the people who can enact peace and, finally, succeeding in bringing peace to a suffering world.

At the heart of the brain's association engine are schemas or frames of reference. When incoming stimuli appear to match a memory, what the brain drags out of memory is a schema for organizing a lot more information, ideally a schema with a set of decisions already built

into it. Armed with a schema, the brain charts a pathway through the incoming information and undertakes decisions that it expects will maximize personal success. These schemas are a grab-bag of memories taken primarily from personal experience, but also from literature, movies, cultural clichés, and every other source of narrative or story we have ever encountered in our lives.

### **Enter the Bible**

Scripture is the single most powerful collection of schemas in human existence. Adam and Eve in the Garden, Moses and the Red Sea, Ruth staring at a departing Naomi, King David, Isaiah, Nehemiah, Jesus and the disciples, St. Paul, and on and on and on.

And behind every story and character, another character—God—standing at the beginning and end of history, framing every schema with a peculiar structure of meaning and action. Love your neighbour, walk humbly with God, seek peace

and pursue it: meanings and actions that fill and change lives.

This biblical set of schemas has some powerful constants: Being God's people, death is not the end, love even unto death, any group can be a people of global transformation, every individual counts. It is a dangerous set of constants that fundamentally contradict a world of powerful social systems and secular-ity. Nothing stands against the rational organizational schemas of this world like the wild constants of the Bible.

So to imagine peace, to have hope that there can be peace, and to know what kinds of actions create peace, the Bible is the place to turn. Fill your brain with its stories, its poetry, its teachings and its laws, and when you are facing your world of onrushing stimuli, the Bible will be there for your brain to use, providing schemas by the handful, allowing your sloppy intuition and stereotypes to root themselves in the divine truth embedded in the schemas of Scripture.

You won't make better decisions because your brain is more rational, or more filled with good advice or evidence. You will make better decisions because your brain is stuffed with biblical images it can't get rid of. Because the Bible holds image after image of the wild way to God's true peace, you will find yourself facing the world and engaging out of that true peace, like it or not. Your brain will be occupied and your behaviour will follow.

When you doubt this, remember that these are the wild schemas that led people to end slavery, create popular democracy, separate church and state, encourage private property and build a system of public healthcare. None of those made sense without imaginations filled with the Bible.

It doesn't matter if the Bible is factual. It doesn't matter that there was no Adam and Eve, that Abraham might be a composite of many characters, or that Jesus didn't say all the things the Bible says he said.

If you just read the Bible for its life, it won't matter that the Bible is 2,000 years old and came from an agrarian culture. Your brain doesn't care about that on an operational level. Instead, it is empowered by those images, learning the value of the weak, the necessity of impossible journeys and loving those terrible enemies. Your brain is filled by the schemas, not the evidence. It is the imagination that counts, not what you might think on those rare occasions that you actually stop to think.

In undertaking to fill our brains with Scripture, there are some obstacles. The Bible is weird and reading it is weirder, and our superficial decision-making brain hates to be weird. (Did I mention that our brain prefers conformity to original thinking?)

Parts of the Bible are even offensive; they run against our existing schemas that tell us what nice people do to get along. So those bits are not going to be easily appropriated. Getting Bible stuff into the brain is going to be tough at first. The good news is that most of us were doing it in childhood. It is a matter of re-energizing schemas that are already well

laid down in our brain.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to using the Bible for peace is the conflict with other readers of Scripture. If there is one thing that schemas like the Bible produce, it is a multiplicity of ways of reading contemporary stimuli. The Bible is rich with alternative and even competing schemas, and our world is ablaze with competing and contradictory stimuli. Trying to logically match the two is a fool's game, and even thinking there will be agreement on the correct use of Scripture is the utmost in bad thinking. That is not how the brain, Scripture or peace work.

The wild schemas of the Bible themselves suggest an alternative for building a community of Scripture readers, reaching out to each other's need despite the differences. It is the parable of the Good Samaritan, but with a twist. Now, the injury is a psychic injury, the injury of thinking differently. Our job is to care for those who think differently, even differ-

*It doesn't matter if the Bible is factual. It doesn't matter that there was no Adam and Eve, that Abraham might be a composite of many characters, or that Jesus didn't say all the things the Bible says he said.*

ently biblically, with the nurture rooted in our Scripture reading, simply hosting them in their difference and ignoring the fact that they are from the enemy camp. It's about neighbourliness.

Then we can go on our way, knowing that our acts of care, despite the profound differences between us, make all the difference in the world. There isn't going to be any unity in the world of Scripture readers, and that, too, is in keeping with the wild schemas of the Bible. But there might be love.

This method not only works the way our brain works, it solves so many problems with our current attempts to use the Bible in ethics. Schemas drawn from the Bible lead logically to storytelling as our fundamental way of relating Scripture to ethics. When I can't argue, I can tell stories. Stories emphasize what we learn from the application and help us hear the person behind the interpretation.

Gone is the need for complicated and difficult-to-understand methods of interpretation. Gone is the need to listen to highly trained scholars and interpreters. Instead, what comes to the foreground is the people who are trying to live together out of God's truth. That does not mean trained scholars and interpreters might not be helpful, but they are not central. Central is always the way the Bible's schemas change your brain, and from a changed brain lead to a changed engagement with the world.

### **Global warming as an example**

The traditional way of using the Bible in ethics for issues such as global warming is to determine from society the way the issue should be perceived. The Bible says nothing directly about global warming—coming from a different time and culture—so we have to listen to the experts who tell us global warming is about human activity, and industrial and

technological society.

Having listened to the experts, and sorted our way through their disagreements, we then carefully read our Bibles. Since nothing in the Bible clearly relates to this set of concepts, our reading must be very sophisticated, which, in this case, leads to a brand new interpretation of the Genesis creation accounts, somehow finding in those stories the idea that creation is to be cared for, rather than exploited. This isn't easy, since exploiting creation is much more in keeping with the stories themselves. Now with the biblical assurance that care for creation is good, we then listen to the worldly experts and approve their ideas for carbon taxes, consumption reduction and anger with China.

Or we can read our Scriptures wholly, wondering if, like Moses, it is time to lead the people to freedom from a heating planet; or, like Isaiah, to run naked through the streets wailing the oncoming

*Since nothing in the Bible clearly relates to this set of concepts, our reading must be very sophisticated, which, in this case, leads to a brand new interpretation of the Genesis creation accounts, somehow finding in those stories the idea that creation is to be cared for, rather than exploited.*

destruction; or, like John, to celebrate the destruction as a sign of God's impending salvation; or to wonder with Jesus what it means to care for the enemy, those terrible people who build coal-fired power plants.

Or maybe it means starting to lobby for new immigration policies to rescue those strangers in the global lowlands who increasingly suffer as the icecaps melt.

To read the Scriptures wholly is to stand wide-eyed before the Bible and the world, open to myriad possible interactions and decisions. It means trusting that God still works with humanity and that in our openness new revelations will appear that are consistent with Scripture and ultimate redemption. And then we act on the basis of those biblical schemas and see what happens.

Notice how reading Scripture in this way turns global warming into a Christian story! Notice how it opens the world to many possible tactics of Christian action! Notice how it increases the creative possibilities for Christians and defends against despair! Notice how it opens possibilities for community! Notice how it reduces our reliance on outside experts!

It is an end to the despairing nostrums of a David Suzuki or Al Gore. Instead, it raises possibilities of mutual human recognition and suffering together to find the meaning of God in a world in turmoil. Thus it ever was, and into this the Bible is one of the few places to find multiple visions of the way forward.

### **In conclusion**

Last, see what this does to the world as a whole. All around us people are lost and struggling to find the way forward. Global warming is scary. No one knows what it means and how terrible the damage

will be. No one can argue convincingly that we are capable of solving our global warming problems.

But Scripture readers simply embrace the people and situations they encounter, and try to apply any and all appropriate biblical schemas. There is no question that one or more schemas will fit, and one or more will provide a means to hope-filled action.

When we find a schema that brings hope, there is yet better news: Hope is infectious! Literally. Our brains can't help but imitate the strong emotions of others. Even our non-Christian neighbours cannot help but pick up from our hope and carry on. Community expands and imagination is liberated. If all humans start moving together in hope, however irrational, who knows what we might do?

Oops, done that Tower of Babel thing already.

So here is what we need to do to make the world a better place:

- **READ THE Bible.**
- **GO ABOUT** our daily lives haunted by the schemas of the Bible.
- **GET TOGETHER** with other Bible readers and tell stories, and, from that, discover how we are changing the world. Argue if you must, study together if you can.
- **CELEBRATE THE** wildness of God's Scripture and its power to change the world.
- **TEACH THE** next generation to venerate Scripture and, above all else, tell them the stories. ☘

*Bruce Hiebert, M.Div., Ph.D., is a faculty member in business ethics at University Canada West, as well as a lecturer in Mennonite history at the University of the Fraser Valley and an adjunct faculty member in ethics at the Vancouver School of Theology. He is a former Mennonite minister and long-time member at Langley Mennonite Fellowship, to whose members this document was addressed.*

### ☘ For discussion

1. Bruce Hiebert says we will make better ethical decisions if our brains are filled with biblical images. Do you find his arguments convincing? Have we been doing a good job of immersing ourselves in the biblical stories? Have we been filling our minds with too many non-biblical images?
2. Hiebert suggests that it doesn't matter if we don't agree on how to interpret the Bible because it is the ethical lessons of the stories that are important. Does this approach feel liberating or threatening? What could happen to a congregation that tried to operate on his suggestion?
3. Reading Scripture the way Hiebert suggests means letting go of structured interpretation and waiting for God to bring a new revelation for each situation. Following this method, what are some specific things that you might do to care for creation? What would this approach not allow you to do? Is this how Jesus used Scripture in Matthew 12:1-12 or Luke 6:1-9?
4. In his final list of how to make the world a better place, Hiebert writes that we should tell the stories of where God is acting. Can you think of some stories where you have seen God at work? Where does your congregation tell such stories? How could *Canadian Mennonite* magazine play a stronger role in telling these stories?

—BY BARB DRAPER

## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

*We welcome your comments and publish most letters sent by subscribers intended for publication. This section is largely an 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. Keep letters to 400 words or less and address issues rather than individuals. We do not countenance rancour or animosity. Personal attacks are inappropriate and will not see the light of print. 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. Preference will be given to letters from MC Canada congregants.*

## ✉ 'Freedom of speech is hard work'

I AM WRITING to share my thoughts on the relationship *Canadian Mennonite* has developed with the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA).

First some observations.

The history of the Mennonite people has been to avoid confrontation and to be left alone. So to be challenged by the CRA (the government), even if it is only a warning, would be unsettling to many.

Freedom of speech and all that goes with it means a lot to Mennonites. Their history proves that. They have sacrificed a lot to have freedom. Mennonites, maybe more than other churches, understand that with freedom comes responsibility. In a way, the more freedom you have, the riskier it becomes. So from that perspective, freedom of speech is hard work.

It is the CRA's job to make sure that all non-profit organizations follow the laws and regulations that they operate under. Not all non-profit organizations are

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Our empathy needs to be tangible

GEORGE EPP

The Idle No More movement may exhilarate some while perplexing others. What it hopes to gain for aboriginal Canadians is probably clear, at least in broad strokes; what it means for all of us is not so clear.

I tend to want political analysis, but it's the hard edge in me that reveals itself in matters small and large from which I most need to seek relief, an antidote for that which makes me intolerant, suspicious, argumentative or passive and, sometimes, aggressive.

It's this chronic disease that predicts that "what has been will be again, what has been done will be done again," as the preacher in the Book of Ecclesiastes laments. Must it always be thus?

In the case of first nations in Canada, what we see today is not substantially different from what was a century ago. Will

the new attempt to reawaken a sense of justice in Canada take hold this time, or will what has been done simply be done again?



As Mennonites, we are uniquely placed to provide resources to aboriginal Canadians, joining together to forge a new reality that is not the colonial status-quo of the past. We're generally well

educated, are in synch with the Idle No More wish to achieve goals nonviolently, and have been schooled by a legacy of generosity in the name of Christ. Also, we have mastered the art of succeeding in the Canadian economy. The hurdle we most often have to overcome is that hard edge that finds any number of excuses for remaining aloof from our aboriginal neighbours and their legitimate aspirations.

Where there is no relationship, no reconciliation is likely to occur. Here in Saskatchewan, some Mennonites have been working hard to find ways to deepen their understanding of what it's like to walk in aboriginal shoes these days. It's a first step. In practical terms, let me suggest that in the following year we individually do one or more of the following:

- **PARTICIPATE** IN a pow-wow
- **REQUEST** A tour of a reserve at a band office
- **JOIN** IN a round dance
- **WALK WITH** Idle No More protesters
- **ATTEND** A service with aboriginal Christians

If none of these options are available to you, spend time with Roger Epp's *We Are All Treaty People* or read some of Rudy Wiebe's prolific writing on aboriginal reality. The list of Mennonites who care about aboriginal/settler/national relations is quite long by now, but the acts that tangibly demonstrate our Christ-driven empathy still need a lot of work.

*George Epp is moderator of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.*



necessarily altruistic in their operations, and it is important to make sure that the reputation of the CRA remains as high as possible. Mennonites wouldn't want it any other way.

And finally, we could walk away, so to speak. The implications of walking away—losing subscription subsidy—would be very controversial within the Mennonite community.

So how do we come to a successful resolution of the issue?

First of all, we must be sure we are working within the law. We will do that by listening carefully and by making sure that the CRA is satisfied that we are, in fact, doing that. Carl DeGurse confirms that.

Some words create more of a reaction than others. In your editorial entitled "A political lament," the use of the word "militaristic" was a bit strong, in my view. When I read the editorial back in May 2012, my first thought was that you are an American. A Canadian would have chosen something softer. But you are the

## NEW ORDER VOICE

# Resisting the pursuit of more

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

I really like our new phone. It's a cream-coloured touch-tone, the kind with the handset that rests on a cradle. When I use it I have to stay in one room, and I can't walk too far in any direction, so I usually sit and play with the white cord while I talk and listen.

Our cordless phone died a few weeks ago, so we borrowed the touch-tone from our housemates, who hadn't used it for years. At first, I missed the answering machine and call-display features of the cordless, but then I started to marvel at the simplicity of its stand-in: no screen, just the keypad and two black buttons, one to redial and one to hold. It doesn't even need batteries or an outlet.

In a society that's caught up in the pursuit of progress, the touch-tone has me thinking about what is enough.

Over a decade ago, Mary Jo Leddy wrote *Radical Gratitude* (Orbis, 2002) and her simple statement that most of us have enough still rings true today. She describes "the cultural drift of having more and doing more," and how it weakens our capacity for gratitude. I can identify with this drift. For instance, as a young,

educated, middle-class woman, the next steps for me are to get a full-time job, stop renting and buy a house, or buy a car built after 1997. All of these things seem to be acceptable, responsible aspirations. But are they? Or are they fuelled by the pursuit "of having more and doing more"?

I'm not saying that I'll never buy a house or apply for a higher-paying job,



*By sharing possessions and living simply we can realize what is enough.*

but my faith makes me question the reasons behind choices that seem like the logical next step. The next step to what? Comfort, security, happiness? Perhaps all those things. But shouldn't my faith in a God who calls the poor blessed motivate me to resist the pursuit of more with each decision that I make?

When my decisions are informed by a desire to move ahead, to check off the next thing that will proclaim my privilege, my focus quickly turns inward. I forget about others as I seek to strengthen my own power. I am wrapped up in self-interest, and I become closed-hearted,

an attitude that isn't conducive to loving God and my neighbour.

So how can I check this attitude and resist the pursuit of more? It starts with recognizing what is enough. For Leddy, this means "setting some kind of limit, not so much to restrain oneself as to curb the insatiable demands of the consumer culture." For me, this means consciously resisting the urge to upgrade and to own bigger and better things.

For instance, my partner and I sometimes covet a new car. So we ask ourselves if this is a real need. If we can bike or take the bus to the majority of our destinations, then we'll hold off. But if it is a legitimate need, we might ask, "Do we need sole ownership of a car, or is it something we could share with others?" By sharing possessions and living simply, we can realize what is enough. We can

be liberated from the frenzied pursuit for the next best thing, and be nourished by gratitude.

Recognizing what is enough and acting on it are hard to do. They require discernment, grace, creativity and a supportive community. They also require inspiration. As Christians, we don't have to look far for this. We can look to Jesus and to one another. Or, if we're really stuck, our phones.

*Katie Doke Sawatzky (katiesawatzky@gmail.com) attends Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.*

editor and I'm not challenging your work. I enjoy reading your editorials.

So those are my thoughts on the issue. I'm not disheartened. It feels good to step out of our comfort zone once in a while. After all, isn't that what Jesus did in his ministry?

**BOB SIEMENS, ROSETOWN, SASK.**

## ✉ Consumers should support ethical businesses

**RE: "WHY DOES business matter to God?"** by Ethan Heidebrecht, Jan. 7, page 34.

I really appreciate the author's passion for ethical business, and especially for sharing what inspired him

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

# New wine in new beer kegs

PHIL WAGLER

**W**hat would you do if a dead preacher left you \$13,000?

In 1752, Arthur Price, Archbishop of Cashel in Ireland, died and left the equivalent of about \$13,000 to his godson, who shared his first name. This second Arthur, a 27-year-old entrepreneur who had recently experienced a spiritual awakening, wondered what to do with such an unexpected gift.

Those were tough days for the Irish and Arthur's heart was broken at the state of his people. The "Gin Craze" raged as people sought escape in cheap booze from their sorry lives and unsafe water conditions. In the mid-1700s, it was said the average person consumed 45 to 65 litres of gin each year. Arthur was infuriated with this drunkenness and its effects, and began to sense God calling him to "make a drink that will be good for them."

So he combined his broken heart, love for Jesus and entrepreneurial talents to develop a dark stout drink low in alcohol and high in iron, so people felt full before over-consuming, a drink that a 2003 University of Wisconsin study discovered bolsters heart health and is better for a person than coffee or pop. With the archbishop's inheritance he bought an abandoned brewery in Dublin and went to work producing his creation.

Oh, and he famously gave it his last name: Guinness.

That may be surprising enough, but consider further the impact of Arthur Guinness's Jesus-centred life and work. His grandson, Hendry Gratton Guinness, became the Billy Graham of a spiritual awakening in Great Britain in the late 1800s. Other descendants transformed public housing and influenced the implementation of a system aimed at reconciliation based on Matthew 18 to end duelling as a means of resolving conflict.

By the early 1900s, Guinness became one of the best workplaces around. The influence of Arthur and his conscientious family meant 24-hour medical and dental care and an on-site massage therapy for workers. In addition to this, education and funeral expenses were paid, as well as



*Arthur... began to sense God calling him to 'make a drink that will be good for them.'*

a full pension. The company had libraries, reading rooms and athletic facilities.

And today the Guinness Brewing Company has the "Arthur Guinness Fund" that blesses social entrepreneurs in the tradition of Arthur to deliver measurable, transformational change to communities around the world. The fund was

developed in 2009, the 250th anniversary of Arthur investing the archbishop's inheritance, and has invested more than \$5.5 million in social transformation. Everything from community gardens, mental health assistance and adult math classes to jobs for the disabled, to the mentoring of ex-prisoners, empowering those who work in search and rescue, and a program of men's sheds where guys gather to fix bikes for local schools or repair furniture for people, have all been supported by the social entrepreneurship inspired by Arthur Guinness, who put the wine of the kingdom of God into beer kegs.

Now this tale is not told to defend the consumption of alcohol, but rather to make us think again about what a Spirit-inspired imagination can do for God's glory and the good of one's society. Arthur's redemptive creativity was one small part of a new social transformation and produced a legacy of goodness. We, too, have a responsibility for the welfare of our locales (Jeremiah 29:7). Should not our love for God and neighbour awaken such inspired genius still? Ought not

those who know the hope of the kingdom get creative for the common good? What would you do with \$13,000?

*Phil Wagler is inspired by kingdom creativity and seeks to encourage more of it as a pastor in Surrey, B.C. E-mail him at phil\_wagler@yahoo.ca.*

at the Mennonite Economic Development Associates conference.

I have had the privilege of witnessing, and being a part of, ethical businesses throughout my life, as modelled by my father-in-law Jacob Pauls, who owned Lincoln Machine Shop in St. Catharines, Ont., then by my former employers, Ten Thousand Villages U.S. and Canada, and most certainly by my current employer, Jolica Inc.

Yes, ethical, profitable businesses that create jobs, provide services and stimulate economies are possible to create, and a pleasure to support. As consumers, it is important for us to remember that every dollar we spend is a vote for the business practices of the organizations we support with our purchases.

**INGRID HEINRICHS PAULS,  
OAKVILLE, ONT.**

### ✉ **'Attractional' Christianity a hard sell**

**RE:** "CHURCH IN the streets" by David Martin, Jan. 21, page 9.

Martin accurately notes that being an "attractional" congregation in most cases only does church a bit differently than other churches and does little to embody the spirit of Jesus to our secular neighbours.

For a good many years I volunteered on an aboriginal committee in Winnipeg that worked with inner-city gangs and taught them carpentry in order to help them move out of the negative gang structure. I learned a lot:

- **I DON'T** ever remember meeting an aboriginal who was not spiritual. If there are aboriginal atheists, I would like to meet one.
- **THERE WAS** a lot of interest in Christianity, from the head of the gangs to their families.
- **CHURCHES WERE** inaccessible, both distance-wise and culture-wise.

I remember taking the leader of one of the gangs to a church service. He got very antsy and wanted to leave early. "I want to live like a Christian, but I can't handle that structure," he said. "It is so cold."

More of the gang members and families went to the local downtown mission, where they felt at home, so I asked the guys about church. Most wanted their kids and female partners to be able to go to church, but inadequate bus service on a Sunday morning and the cost if you had several children made it almost impossible for them to attend.

When I asked what they would like to attend, it was almost unanimous: small house churches—my term—in neighbourhood groups of 15 to 30 people in

a congenial space with lots of coffee.

For a time I tried to get something going, but no one from my congregation wanted to miss their church and be part of such groupings. It became clear that we talk a brave attractional Christianity, but in the end we want it to happen our way, never taking into account how difficult that may be for the very people we wish to worship with.

**KEN REDDIG, PINAWA, MAN.**

### ✉ **Salvation more important than CRA or CO2**

**I AM AMAZED** over the massive response to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) reminder (Dec. 17, 2012, pages 8 to 10), and the nil response to Jake Heinrich's letter, "Let's not hide sin under new names," Nov. 26, 2012, page 8. I totally agree with him.

Sure, be concerned about CRA, but be alarmed at what's happening in Christianity. To the new names, Heinrichs mentioned, add Harmony (sounds so nice, but, in fact, so contrary to Scripture), the emerging church and new-age morality.

Cults deny the deity of Jesus. People are indifferent to the non-negotiable doctrines in the Bible and to the claims of Christ, that he is the Son of God, the light of the world, the only way to heaven.

Even Rex Murphy, commenting on modern society ("Hollowing out the Christian consensus," Dec. 17, 2012, page 29), notes how Christianity has changed. It's now off-centre and out of the spotlight; with secularization and trivializations of foundational issues, faith is pushed aside. The 2,000-year-old anchors are too rigid and authoritarian for today's society. New names and organizations have taken their place: gay marriage, human rights, the environment.

Jesus was serious, not indifferent, about the depravity of mankind, our lost and hopeless condition held hostage by Satan. He came from heaven to reveal the love of God, to suffer and die on the cross for our sins past, present and future, to satisfy the wrath and punishment of God, and to restore fellowship and hope with God for eternity. Repentance and faith in Jesus is our passport to heaven. God's kingdom is portrayed as a wedding banquet. Don't miss it.

This good news of salvation is to be proclaimed to all nations until Jesus returns. It is more important than CRA or CO2.

I am passionate about the Christian/Anabaptist faith. May we strive to remain on the one foundation (I Corinthians 3:11). I am passionate about the Mennonite heritage and tradition; may we keep striving for peace and holiness, for "*without holiness, no one will see the Lord*" (Hebrews 12:14), and "*without faith, it is*

*impossible to please God*" (Hebrews 11:6). Every generation makes choices with eternity on the horizon.

C. NEIL KLASSEN, ROSEMARY, ALTA.

## ✉ Objections to the peace tax option raised

RE: "ARE YOU paying for peace or war?" Jan. 21, page 12.

Each tax season we are encouraged to hold back the portion of our taxes that would go to the military, as a form of conscientious objection. I have two objections to this practice:

- **WHEN JESUS** was asked if the Jews should pay their taxes to Rome, we are familiar with the response to notice Caesar's face on the coin and to "give unto Caesar what is Caesar's." I do not think Jesus was endorsing his followers to blindly and eagerly support one of the most militaristic societies the earth has ever seen. In a more subtle way, though, I think Jesus was suggesting that it might be just a little hypocritical for his followers to willingly and gainfully participate in the economic system of "the world" and then avoid their responsibilities to that system.

- **IT HAS** been suggested that we push for legislation that would overturn our responsibility to pay the military portion of our tax, and turn it into a right to redirect those funds to peaceful purposes. It seems that the logical extension of this strategy would be a new section of the tax form that lists each major line item in the government budget so taxpayers can distribute their taxes the way they see fit. In such a system it would not surprise me if Canada would end up with a larger military budget, and I fear some social safety net programs may fare even worse than they already do. So, philosophically, is this really what we should be pushing for?

It seems to me that a more effective and morally consistent approach to witnessing to our peace stance would be to put our full share of taxes in the big pot and then speak with our politicians directly to influence how the pot is distributed.

ANDREW CRESSMAN,  
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

## ✉ Mennonites have a long history of environmental activism

I WOULD LIKE to commend *Canadian Mennonite* for featuring environmental issues in its Jan. 21 issue. Will Braun's article, "Crossing the (pipe) line," page 4, was particularly thoughtful. I feel compelled, however, to

comment on several items in Dick Benner's editorial, "Confessing our fossil fuel sins," page 2.

First, an issue of accuracy. It is true that both environmental issues and the organizations that work to address them, like the Mennonite Creation Care Network, suffer from lack of visibility. The network, however, was actually formed in 2006, not 2008.

Furthermore, our churches have been active on these issues for longer. The network's predecessor, the Mennonite Environmental Task Force, served Mennonite churches in Canada and the U.S. from 1991 until 2001, working to promote creation care within the church. The fact that I was not aware of the task force until shortly before its demise speaks to its invisibility in the broader constituency, but this should not negate the committed work of its volunteers for 10 years. This history is described in more detail online at [mennocreationcare.org](http://mennocreationcare.org).

Second, I question the fairness of raising Menno Simons' lack of concern for climate change and broader concerns of the earth. A 16th-century church leader can hardly be expected to comment on a climatic phenomenon that scientists only began to notice several centuries later.

One might wish that he had more to say about our relationship with the earth in general, but the engagement of our church, its leaders and its members today is, to me, a more important question. Now that we know these problems exist and are hurting our fellow creatures, human and otherwise, across the planet, are we being leaders, or followers, or obstacles in the search for solutions?

JOANNE MOYER, TORONTO

## ✉ 'Wise family planning' as an antidote to climate change

RE: "MENNONITES AND climate" letter by Henry Epp, Jan. 7, page 8.

Epp's comments are well taken. Needless to say, factors influencing climate are very complicated. One thing is for sure, climate has fluctuated widely both before and after the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries.

It seems to me that human cooperation would be more forthcoming on this issue if we focused more on responsible use of natural resources and less on assigning "pollution" blame to this or that. For example, it's interesting how soon "good things" happen when we responsibly log the forests, replant and then leave for a while. This responsibility should start with wise family planning in the developing world, so that consumption is kept within the scope of resources available.

RICHARD PENNER, CALGARY

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Ellison**—Blake Andrew (b. Nov. 16, 2012), to Chuck and Lisa Ellison, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

**Friesen**—Burke Allan (b. July 15, 2012), to Wade and Raechel Friesen, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

**Funk**—Christopher Joseph Abram Schlosser (b. Nov. 27, 2012), to Wayne Funk and Jeanette Schlosser, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

**Harder**—Emmett Noam (b. Dec. 24, 2012), to Marvin Harder and Natanya Nerenberg, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., in Montreal.

**Inrig**—Dieunith (Dieunie) Jesula (b. Feb. 26, 2009), adopted by Taucha Inrig, Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont., October 2012.

**Kerfoot**—Theodore Jackson Roy (b. Jan. 16, 2013), to Alyssa and Dave Kerfoot, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

**Pedersen**—Elliot Baergen (b. Aug. 17, 2012), to Jonathan Pedersen and Dionne Baergen, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

**Schulz**—Cason Timothy (b. Jan. 29, 2013), to Tim and Kaitlin Schulz, Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

**Toews**—Tristan Myles (b. Nov. 16, 2012), to Fabian and Lucy Toews, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Wiens**—Samuel John (b. Feb. 28, 2012), to Jonathan and Allison Wiens, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

### Baptisms

**Ryung Shim**—Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, Jan. 27, 2013.

### Deaths

**Claassen**—Kaetie, 87 (b. June 10, 1925; d. Jan. 24, 2013), First Mennonite, Calgary.

**Dyck**—Herta, 82 (b. Oct. 18, 1930; d. Dec. 20, 2012), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Friesen**—Peter, 85 (b. March 8, 1927; d. Jan. 20, 2013), Carman Mennonite, Man. Funk—Ernest, 80 (b. Aug. 2, 1932; d. Dec. 14, 2012), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Huebner**—Margaret, 98 (b. Nov. 15, 1914; d. Jan. 12, 2013), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Kroeger**—Henry, 87 (b. Nov. 21, 1925; d. Jan. 16, 2013), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Kroeker**—Peter, 84 (b. Dec. 24, 1927; d. Dec. 23, 2012), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Martens**—Gunter, 67 (b. Dec. 12, 1945; d. Jan. 9, 2013), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont., in Köln, Germany.

**Martin**—Mary Yvonne (nee Snider), 65 (b. July 22, 1947; d. Jan. 15, 2013), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

**Penner**—Catherina (nee Gerbrandt), 99 (b. May 27, 1913; d. Nov. 29, 2012), Carrot River Mennonite, Sask.

**Schapansky**—Edward, 75 (b. Dec. 20, 1936; d. Nov. 15, 2012), Carrot River Mennonite, Sask.

**Schapansky**—Tina (nee Schellenberg), 100 (b. Jan. 3, 1912; d. Dec. 31, 2012), Carrot River Mennonite, Sask.

**Wagler**—Jacob, 82 (b. July 18, 1930; d. Jan. 24, 2013), Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

**Wiebe**—Henry, 97 (b. Feb. 4, 1915; d. Jan. 15, 2013), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

### Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

*announcements within four months of the event.*

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

## Pontius' Puddle



## VIEWPOINT

## A fourth way

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

EASTERN CANADA CORRESPONDENT

Throughout the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) materials from Mennonite Church Canada, we are reminded that, at the end of the many-year process to which we have committed ourselves as a denomination, we can do one of three things:

- **THE CHURCH** can repeat again what it has said before.
- **THE CHURCH** can modify what it has said before, given some new spiritual understandings. This would normally mean that it can move further in the same direction that it has moved before.
- **THE CHURCH** can change what it has said before because new perspectives have become apparent and compelling, and shifting the relative authority of canonical voices has been discerned to be necessary.

But there is a fourth way, one which we use regularly in- and outside the church, which deserves our attention as well. The church can decide to agree to disagree, to hold more than one view on a given subject at the same time.

The blessing of the modern era has been the search for truth on all subjects, but its bane has been that it believed we could find the truth on all subjects efficiently and quickly. The rise of postmodernity has been fuelled by the realization that this is not possible, and might not even be desirable. There might not even be “the truth” to find on some subjects.

As a denomination, we already agree to disagree on many things. In church



polity, we have some congregations with a “bench” of ordained pastors, others with a single pastor and deacons, others with elders, some with pastoral care committees, some with a lead minister and associates, while others have pastoral teams. In membership, we have some congregations that have yearly covenanting for all members and some which have given up on having membership roles altogether, and others with many shades in between.

In regards to the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, we have some congregations that treat it as a creed,

while others use it as a guideline, and still others never crack it open.

In regards to marriage, we have congregations where cohabitation must include marriage, while others desire marriage to accompany cohabitation, and others see cohabitation without a wedding as a new form of marriage.

In regards to peace, mission and evangelism, we are all over the map. Some believe mission means peace; others, evangelism; and some, a mixture of the two. Some see peace as an extra that we can only sometimes afford.

The end result of the BFC process has a good chance to either please those who affirm homosexuality as a God-given

orientation (See “A place at God’s table,” page 16), or, conversely, those who believe such an orientation—or lifestyle—is wrong (See “Salvation more important than CRA or CO2” letter, page 11).

I suspect that if the denomination decides that one or the other is the interpretation of Scripture that it will uphold, there will be some who will strongly disagree.

Can we agree to disagree, even as we do on many other subjects? Or is this somehow a larger issue than our divergent beliefs on peace/evangelism, social conservatism/socialism, or our witness to the state/obedience to the state? Are not those who disagree with us on the topic of homosexuality our Christian sisters and brothers, for whom Christ died and whom Christ calls on us to love?

I am not so naïve as not to see that practical issues would be where the rubber hits the road: How would a denominational minister who is against the inclusion of practising homosexuals minister to congregations that include them? How would an inclusive minister deal with a homosexual applicant to a pastoral position in a congregation that does not?

*Don't get me wrong, I believe the effort we are making to discover our various ways of understanding the Bible, and to edge towards each other on the use of the Bible, are important.*

Don't get me wrong, I believe the effort we are making to discover our various ways of understanding the Bible, and to edge towards each other on the use of the Bible, are important.

As a preacher, teacher and biblical scholar, I continue to believe that the Bible has much to teach us and guide us. In the New Testament church, deep divisions—on the inclusion or exclusion of gentiles; the celebration of worship on the Sabbath (the seventh day of the week) or on the Lord’s day (the first day of the week); the eating or not eating of food offered to idols; obedience to or witness to the government—did not stop the church from being one church. ☞

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

## On thankfulness

BY JACK DUECK

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Being thankful and giving thanks are key ingredients for spiritual, moral, psychological, physical and communal health. In the biblical context, thankfulness is a dominant, unbroken theme. As with worship, thankfulness is remembering, being mindful.

There's a biblical story of Jesus healing 10 persons afflicted with an incurable and terminal illness. The 10 depart rejoicing in the gift of healing, but only one returns to give thanks. A restaurant owner gifted new baptismal candidates in her church with a dining gift for two with the note: "This certificate entitles you to invite someone who has been significant in your life to dine with you." To the question, "What was the response?" she said, "They all used it, but the ratio of returning thanks was about what it was in the Jesus story."

Giving thanks is incarnational; it is a visitation between the self and a reality outside the self. Sartre, the existential philosopher, claimed that hell is other people. But it's a self-fulfilling hell. Philosopher Martin Buber holds the opposite understanding. His I-Thou relationship emphasizes the spiritual power for the self in encountering and cultivating relationships with the "not self," realities beyond the mere subjective self.

Someone called. "May I invite you to join me at the Waterloo County Teachers Choir concert at Luther Village?"

"Sure, why not!" May as well pass the time hearing the same songs, the Christmas clichés; there might even be tea and cookies following. But the opening choral phrases jolted my catatonic spirit. Suddenly I saw some hundred teachers voluntarily and freely gift-giving. And the gift was exquisitely wrapped.



Through the formidable gifts and training of conductor Jane Janzen, the choir truly connected the notes in one harmonic flow, blending them into full, elastic phrases in a rhythmic flow of poetic, coloured harmonies.

Suddenly, and quite involuntarily, gratitude stirred

unbidden; here was a gift passionately, artistically fashioned into a vibrant Advent. And we were in the very midst of incarnation. Words, music notes and song connecting into a living gift: Glory . . . and all flesh—even tired thankless hearts—seeing it together.

As with worship, thankfulness is remembering, being mindful. The incarnational wonder of the choral gifting prodded my mindfulness to the I-Thou, inviting release from the prison of the isolated, subjective self, entwining my living self in unbreakable connections: the angel's glorious song, the miracle of life itself, the canopy of stars above, love of and for others, friends, believers, faith, solidarity.

On my journal pages over the next days emerged the many to whom I owe thanks for making living manageable: police, firemen, the thousands of volunteers in Waterloo Region, city planners, road and utility custodians, medical personnel, the manifold arts, neighbours, social-service agencies, and scores of what the ancients called "hewers of wood and drawers of water"—all in a productive I-Thou vital contribution. The ingrown and heedless self stands powerfully confronted, beckoned into healing thankfulness.

In this sense, involvement with Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Economic Development Associates, Habitat for Humanity, House of Friendship, welcome centres for refugees, residences for abused women,

tutoring teens—the list goes on and on—are all giving thanks. Anything other makes these a mere chore, an obligated burden. The New Testament underlines that ethical living and doing good works are essentially a thank you for grace received.

One man, owner of a small successful business, claimed he built the working atmosphere on one template: giving thanks. Always begin the employee reviews thankfully, noting some contribution the employee made to the company; focus the middle part on identifying areas for necessary improvement; always end the interview with giving thanks to the employee for giving time and work to the team.

Little surprise that the business was recognized as the best place to work. At a breakfast for businesspeople he spoke about what it means to be an entrepreneur. He noted that entrepreneurs are often unduly credited and applauded for individually creating and developing a successful business. Not so, he suggested: "In my business I'm thankful for the economic policies, available capital, natural resources at my disposal, marketing networks in this country, and, above all, people who have given their services and large blocks of time in producing our product. I am indebted to the achievement of my business family."

The garbage truck driver, up and down, in and out, picking up curbside garbage—frequently delayed at length picking up loose garbage strewn by careless residents—has rendered his regular service to me over the last 52 weeks. A box of chocolates with "Merry Christmas! Thank you for doing me the favour of these pick-ups these past 52 weeks," triggered a mildly shocked expression. Then the face came alive: "Well, I'll be. . . Nobody has ever thanked me before."

Few people who serve us receive thanks. Are we really an urban community of heart-dead solitudes? All "I," no "Thou"?

Alex Haley, a descendant of slaves and the author of *Roots*, wrote: "Find the good, then praise it." "And all flesh shall see it together." ❧

## STORIES OF INCLUSION

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# 'A place at God's table'

*Hope Mennonite Church extends communion to LGBTQ community*

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

**T**he welcome offered at the communion table on Jan. 20 at Hope Mennonite Church signalled the congregation's arrival at a significant milestone on what has been a long, winding and sometimes painful journey.

"We celebrate because God is at work," said pastor Lynell Bergen. "When God is at work, sometimes the tables have to be turned over. We celebrate our commitment

to the Jesus story, the story of welcoming all God's people, the broken ones, the ones full of laughter and singing, and all those of us in between. . . . Welcome to this holy table."

In particular, the church welcomed the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered/queer (LGBTQ) Christian community, along with a number of visitors from other Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations.

"We needed to go on this journey together," said Eric Stutzman, chair of Hope's Steering Committee. "We didn't start out knowing where it would lead us."

Since its inception in 1988, the congregation has wrestled with welcoming those on the margins of society. A more intentional process of dialogue, education and discernment began in 2005 because of a growing discomfort in the congregation.

"We had wonderful people who were part of our church leave because they could not be fully themselves or fully affirmed," explained Stutzman.

At the same time, there were those who had concerns about how this might impact the congregation's relationship with the larger Mennonite church. "To be so tentative was perhaps convenient for the congregation, but it was less than fully supportive of LGBTQ people, even hurtful," reads the Hope Mennonite Church Statement of Consensus on LGBTQ Welcome and Affirmation, passed by the congregation on Nov. 11, 2012.

The journey involved a series of consensus-building sessions, including education about LGBTQ terminology, exploring how LGBTQ Christians experience the church, understanding Scripture and many opportunities to process this in small- and large-group settings. Throughout, the Bible was foundational in congregational discussions.

"For us, it is clear that Scripture passages which refer to LGBTQ issues must be understood within the context in which they were written," states the consensus document. "In doing so, we follow the example of Jesus, who consistently challenged the traditional holiness and purity codes . . . just as the prophets had previously challenged traditional understandings.

"Hope Mennonite Church desires to follow Jesus' example of welcoming all people to God's table. In our context, this includes welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people and affirming their full participation in the life of our church."

"We want to express honestly who we are and we do not want to draw lines in the sand," said Stutzman. "We see ourselves as a multi-faceted congregation struggling with all kinds of issues. This is only one



*Bernie Wiebe and pastor Lynell Bergen break bread during Hope Mennonite Church's communion service officially welcoming the LGBTQ community in its midst. The special cloth draped over the communion table had been created for the event.*



## STORIES OF INCLUSION

important part of who we are. We want to be honest and open and transparent.”

“Hope Mennonite has been gracious and candid with their processes and conversations,” said Ken Warkentin, executive director of MC Manitoba. “We are deeply grateful for their transparency and their humility. Obviously, there is some tension between our official position in the *Confession of Faith from a Mennonite Perspective* and Hope’s current position.

“Our board will maintain Being the Faithful Church (BFC) as the primary tool to discern God’s will in many matters including ones of sexuality,” he added. “We will continue in this conversation that Mennonite Church Canada started a few years ago with the understanding that at some point we will address specifically the biblical passages regarding human sexuality in the context of the political and social

climate we find ourselves in now.”

Hope Mennonite is not the only congregation in MC Manitoba that is having conversations around this issue, according to Warkentin.

“Our hope and intention is to remain a part of MC Manitoba. We see ourselves in ‘substantial agreement’ with the *Confession of Faith*,” said Stutzman. “We very clearly see ourselves rooted in the Anabaptist Mennonite perspective and theology, and feel we are probably in as much ‘substantial agreement’ as any congregation, for example, with the practice of open communion.”

“I’m not sure much is going to be different now,” said Stutzman after the service, “but we can truly say to LGBTQ Christians, you are welcome here. You have a place at God’s table.” ❧

and pastor, will share his journey through pain and joy as the father of two sons with disabilities. On the final night of the conference, Doerksen and his band will perform a worship concert.

• **BARBARA NEWMAN**, a church and school consultant for the Christian Learning Centre Network, has authored many books and written curriculum to educate and support inclusive communities.

Workshops will include stories and lessons from family members about whether they felt included or not, practical hands-on tools for inclusion, learning about specific disabilities such as autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and providing resources for church leadership.

“This conference is for anyone who is interested in supporting meaningful inclusion for people with disabilities in a church setting,” explains Shellie Powers, director of Hope Centre. “This is a great opportunity for professional development for pastors and leaders. It also provides training opportunity for volunteers; children’s ministry teams, teachers and group leaders; and family members.”

Mennonite Church Manitoba is one of the endorsing denominations. Ken Warkentin, executive director of MC Manitoba, says, “Inclusiveness of all people has always been very important to MC Manitoba. It is one of the things we have always worked very hard at, particularly in our camping ministry. In fact, we are probably in the forefront in that particular area of inclusion of kids and staff with disabilities. There are some camps that specialize in serving special needs, but our focus is on inclusion.

“We actually have quite a few congregations doing neat things in this particular area, often without a whole lot of fanfare,” Warkentin says. “One congregation, for example, provides the one-on-one care that one individual requires, so that her family can participate in the rest of Sunday school and worship in ways that are meaningful to them, and they also provide respite twice a week for the parents.”

To register or learn more, visit the conference website at [in2013.org](http://in2013.org). ❧

# Enabling the disabled

*Upcoming conference for churches that want to grow in the understanding of inclusion*

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

“One third of families who have a child with a disability leave their church . . . one third of those families leave their faith.”

These statistics found on Hope Centre Ministries’ website are staggering. The Winnipeg-based organization has been working for 40 years to make churches and other ministries more inclusive.

On April 26 and 27, it is hosting its first multi-denominational conference, “In 2013: Include invite, inform, inspire,” at McIvor Mennonite Brethren Church, Winnipeg. Its aim is to provide resources and support for churches and other ministries that want to learn more about including individuals who live with disabilities.

Hope Centre’s website says the organization strives “to celebrate the gifts and uniqueness of individuals who live with disabilities and support them in their walk with God and their faith community.”



“We would like our churches to know more about resources that can educate and equip them in integrating people with disabilities,” says Lynell Bergen, associate director of spiritual care for Hope Centre and pastor of Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

Two keynote speakers have been invited to share their stories:

• **BRIAN DOERKSEN**, a Canadian recording artist, songwriter, creative visionary



*A church play describing the beginnings of Niagara United Mennonite Church featured George Pauls, Peter Janzen and Thomas Janzen discussing the need for a new church building after Sunday 'fasha,' while Kaethe Tiessen, Janice Janzen and Evelyn Finlay clean up in the kitchen. The play was performed at the congregation's 75th anniversary celebration on Jan. 20.*

## Called to be servants of Christ

*Niagara United Mennonite Church celebrates 75 years*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONT.

**“W**omen to the right, please. Men to the left.” As Niagara United Mennonite Church congregants gathered to celebrate 75 years of worship on Jan. 20, they were ushered back to a time when seating was segregated and bulletins were in German.

In the 1930s, the group freshly come from southern Russia (now Ukraine), mostly via western Canada, began by worshipping in houses and then barns. After many “brotherhood” meetings, a roofed-in basement became their meeting place in the fall of 1937, accommodating the many who had found life on the Prairies during the Great Depression too difficult and who had come east to join family and friends in Niagara.

The basement had a main floor built in 1938 and the congregation used the building for about a decade before building the church's current red-brick structure. With a building, the congregation formally began with membership, a committee structure, bylaws and a pastor, Peter Kroeker, who started filing annual reports in 1939.

The Jan. 20 celebration began in the

Sunday school hour with a play based on the minutes of those early brotherhood meetings, where the men struggled with practicalities like money and the faith needed to ground a new church.

Through the years, the congregation has seen successive waves of immigrants. John Boldt's life story of coming out of Soviet oppression in the 1930s was read, and Udo Woelke shared in the afternoon service about coming from Uruguay in the 1960s, an example of the many who came from South America.

Megan Zavitz, not an ethnic Mennonite, reflected on how the church has played a part in her spiritual journey, as she began coming with her boyfriend as a proper thing to do while visiting him, but without any desire to be there. The young women's Bible study group drew her in and the ministry of current associate pastor Sharon Dirks helped in her inner healing, to the place where being at church on Sunday became a priority for her.

The afternoon service followed the traditional potluck, with room for 288, and the

morning service that included communion. Historical displays, a new choral anthem by David Sawatzky sung by the choir, and an invitation to contribute recipes and stories for a cook book being organized by a young adult, Ellery Penner, rounded out the day.

The presence of Zavitz and Penner in the afternoon service are part of the hopefulness that church leaders express. Youth pastor Stephen Cox has made the young adults of the congregation his social group, connecting, fellowshiping, and struggling with and engaging them where they are in life and faith.

John Tiessen, spiritual council chair, noted that the development of Bethany Mennonite in nearby Virgil in the early 1960s moved most baby boomers out of the congregation, leaving a gap. But hopeful signs include a healthy group of seniors as well as younger adults and children to keep on building the congregation. Unlike the past, though, the congregation can no longer depend on immigrants to swell their numbers.

While the congregation has played a “numbers game” in the past (Kroeker's 1938 report notes “87 members”), Tiessen and pastor Rudy Dirks believe that something of substance is growing in the congregation, even though as the older generation passes on the numbers may drop. The church plans to remain faithful to Jesus and believes that, as it does, God will do amazing things among and through it. ☞

# Churches connect through pulpit exchange

*Different perspectives prove valuable*

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

For years, pastors of the three Vancouver area Mennonite Church B.C. congregations had organized a pulpit exchange in January. This year, they decided to widen the exchange east into the Fraser Valley.

James Wittenberg, lead pastor of Vancouver's Sherbrooke congregation, participated in a three-way exchange on Jan. 20, speaking at Level Ground Mennonite in Abbotsford. Level Ground pastor Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen spoke at Crossroads Community Church in Chilliwack, while Crossroads pastor Rob Ayer gave the message at Sherbrooke. Each spoke on a

Scripture passage of their choosing.

Three other congregations tried a different approach, with pastors preparing one message each and speaking at their own and the other two congregations over three Sundays in January. Tim Kuepfer of Peace Mennonite, April Yamasaki of Emmanuel Mennonite in Abbotsford, and Rob Brown of Eden Mennonite in Chilliwack all focused on the book of Philemon, with each emphasizing one major theme of that book: partnership, reconciliation or hospitality.

Pastors say they appreciate the opportunity to speak in a congregation other



*Tim Kuepfer, pastor of Peace Mennonite Church, chats with Norma Bergen following his sermon at Emmanuel Mennonite Church on Jan. 20, part of a three-way pulpit exchange.*

than their own, and congregations benefit, too, as they become acquainted with, and hear from, fellow Mennonite Church B.C. pastors. "It was great. Maybe we'll do it again next year," commented Kuepfer of the exchange. ☼

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# 'You are building your church'

*Edmonton South Sudanese Mennonite Church officially opens*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent  
EDMONTON

**O**n a bright Sunday afternoon amidst South Sudanese Mennonite Church praises to God, Scripture reading celebrated its first autonomous worship and fellowship, a newly forming Edmonton service.



*A group of women from the Edmonton South Sudanese Mennonite Church sing at the opening worship service for their church.*

## /// Briefly noted

### **Being a Faithful Church: Preparing for the next steps**

WINNIPEG—The Being a Faithful Church (BFC) Task Force met on Jan. 8 in Winnipeg to plan and prepare for the next steps and a timeline in the BFC process. Co-chair Rudy Baergen said that taskforce members have “acknowledged feedback received thus far, which indicates a desire to hold up two different core values that sometimes live in tension with one another: The need for the church to be faithfully obedient, and the desire to be redemptive as we move forward.” The BFC process is designed to help congregations study and discern Scripture for their time. It looks at both helpful and unhelpful ways Christians interpret the Bible. Seventeen congregations responded to the latest step by the Jan. 31 deadline. Others are presently engaging the process and expect to forward their findings in the coming months. The tool for the current step—Exercising our interpretive muscles: Testing our interpretive framework—is available at [www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1824](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1824).  
—Mennonite Church Canada

A diverse crowd, including a Sudanese group from Calgary, a Filipino worship band, members of Edmonton First Mennonite, Holyrood, and Tofield Mennonite churches, and members of Emmanuel Community Church (Dutch Reformed), gathered in Emmanuel’s building for the Jan. 27 event. A letter of greeting from Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, was read to much appreciation.

The bilingual worship service, in Nuer and English, was led by members of the South Sudanese community, while a “bi-edible” potluck featuring African and Canadian dishes rounded out the afternoon.

Rueben Tut, one of the church leaders, welcomed those in attendance, saying, “[We have] come to be a Mennonite congregation. In 2012, we began to worship at First Mennonite Church on 91st Street. It is very far from where we come from.”

For almost a year, some members of the group drove across the city to attend First Mennonite, often making multiple trips to bring those who wished to come. The Emmanuel church, from whom the Sudanese congregation now rents space, is in the city’s north end, more accessible to the community.

Tut’s comment, however, referred to more than distances within the city of Edmonton. While many of the Nuer people have been in Edmonton for 10 years or more, their home country of Sudan and the plight of its people are ever-present for them. Decades of civil war in Sudan have devastated families and cultures, and widely scattered the people. “We are everywhere today because we are God’s people,” Tut said.

Another speaker mentioned that there are now more than 8,000 Sudanese refugees in Edmonton.

During the service, First Mennonite Church was thanked several times for its welcome and help. However, before offering a benediction, co-pastor Tim Wiebe-Neufeld responded: “You give us credit, but with God’s help you are building your church. Thank you for bringing us along!”

The Sudanese church is in the process of applying for charitable status and a formal welcome into Mennonite Church Alberta may be explored in the future. //



*Jan Steckley, pastor of Hillcrest Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont., leads worship at the Jan. 19 Mennonite Church Eastern Canada 'A good farewell' event held at Floradale Mennonite Church.*

## A good farewell

*Pastors, chaplains, church leaders develop faithful practices for the hour of death*

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

**F**uneral music played in the appropriately apportioned foyer of Floradale Mennonite Church on Jan. 19, where a casket, greeters in dark suits and hushed conversation greeted the pastors, chaplains and congregational leaders as they met for their yearly gathering.

As the “congregation” met in the church hall for the annual event put on by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Gary Harder, one of the presenters, invited participants to stand as the casket was wheeled in by Jim Erb of Erb and Good Funeral Home, Waterloo, along with Floradale pastor Fred Redekop. Worship focused on the story of Lazarus in John 11, recited by Michael Turman, a master of theological studies student at Conrad Grebel University College.

Erb spoke of the changes he has seen in his many years as a funeral director:

• **MORE THAN** 60 percent of funerals now

lead to cremation

• **MOST FUNERAL** services take place outside churches, including the funeral home chapel

• **OFFICIANTS ARE** no longer exclusively clergy

Presenters Kevin Durksen and Wendy Janzen, pastors at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, took the place of the scheduled Mark Diller Harder, who was, appropriately, officiating at a funeral. They described the usual pattern of funerals at their church, a congregation with predominantly European roots, while Chinda Kommala, one of the pastors of Lao Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church, Toronto, described working with Thai and Lao people in conducting funerals.

The second session got participants thinking about the balance between eulogy and references to the deceased in the service and sermon, compared with the

### /// Briefly noted

#### CMU congratulates Order of Canada appointees

WINNIPEG—On Dec. 30, 2012, Governor General David Johnston announced 91 new appointments to the Order of Canada, including three members of the Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) family:

• **ELMER HILDEBRAND** of Manitoba, for his contributions to the development of community-service radio in western Canada and to various charitable causes. He serves as chair of CMU’s Connect campaign.

• **JANICE FILMON** of Manitoba, for her tireless commitment to a variety of charitable causes, ranging from cancer research and treatment, to youth and human rights. She serves as a member of the Connect campaign.

• **ARNOLD BOLDT** of Saskatchewan, for his achievements in sport and for his contributions as a role model for people with disabilities. Boldt, a paralympian, is a 1981 graduate of Canadian Mennonite Bible College, a founding college of CMU, and is a legendary athlete and role model in Canada’s athletic community.

“We take particular pleasure in seeing fine Canadian citizens such as these receiving recognition for all that they do for their communities through the many civic causes to which they lend their leadership and efforts,” says CMU president Cheryl Pauls.

—Canadian Mennonite University

story of Christian faith and hope as told through the Bible and community.

In one of the final sessions, Harder, a now retired pastor, noted that his first two funerals were of those lost to suicide. A lively discussion ensued around the funeral as a place of truth-speaking, as participants shared stories of being asked to “gild the lily” in the funeral or omit important details, such as the cause of death. //

PHOTO BY DEBORAH FROESE



*Canadian Mennonite University students enjoy sweet grass tea and bannock while chatting with Mennonite Church Canada's Winnipeg staff about short-term service opportunities and building better relationships with Canada's indigenous peoples, on Jan. 29. The annual 'meet and greet' is hosted by MC Canada to raise awareness of national church work.*

# God at work in the Church Snapshots

ARCHITECT'S RENDERING BY FRIESEN TOKAR (FT3) ARCHITECTS



*With \$8.4 million in gifts and pledges as of the beginning of the year, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, is moving ahead with plans to construct its new library, learning commons and bridge this year. The goal is to have the project architects complete final drawings by March 1, and then seek City of Winnipeg permits before putting the project out to tender through the builder, Concord Projects Ltd. The university hopes to begin construction on the \$12.6-million project by early summer.*

PHOTO BY RYAN ROTH BARTEL



*Titus and Karen Guenther began a short-term ministry assignment as resource workers in Chile in January. For six months, they will visit about 18 Chilean Anabaptist churches across the country and teach Anabaptism to church leaders and congregations. Now retired from his position as professor of theology and missions at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Titus has been involved in a number of prior teaching assignments to South America with Mennonite Church Canada. He and Karen have previously served the church in Chile together.*

PHOTO BY RYAN ROTH BARTEL



*Robert (Jack) and Irene Suderman are in South America for a short-term assignment with Mennonite Church Canada. Their service began in Chile, where Jack served as a keynote speaker for Cono Sur, a gathering of 200 church leaders and other delegates from Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia and Argentina. They will then travel to Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil and Colombia to teach courses on the biblical roots of peace theology. Jack is a retired general secretary—now called executive director—of MC Canada. Irene offers her gifts in music, hospitality and compassion. The Sudermans complete their assignment on March 18.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF MC CANADA



*Ben and Patti Wiebe of Beamsville, Ont., are serving as resource workers at Union Biblical Seminary in Pune, India, from January through March. At the seminary's invitation, Ben is teaching intensive New Testament courses, while Patti is assisting in the library and in the women's program as she is able. The Wiebes are members of Stony Creek Church, and are receiving support for their service in India from St. Catharines United Mennonite Church and Brussels Mennonite Church.*

# Baptism the focus of trilateral dialogue

*Mennonites, Catholics and Lutherans gather in Rome for talks on 'baptism and incorporation in the body of Christ'*

Mennonite World Conference

**B**uilding on years of separate bilateral dialogues between Mennonites and their Catholic and Lutheran counterparts, the three denominations began trilateral talks on the issue of baptism in Rome late last year.

According to a joint release issued after the Rome meeting, "This innovative trilateral forum will allow the dialogue to take up questions surrounding the theology and practice of baptism in the respective communions."

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and the Catholic Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity held conversations from 1998-2003. This resulted in a report entitled "Called together to be peacemakers." Understandings and practices of baptism were among the divergences identified for further study. Mennonites practise adult baptism and Catholics infant baptism, as do Lutherans.

MWC and the Lutheran World Federation participated in a joint study commission from 2005-08, which resulted in a final report entitled "Healing of memories: Reconciling in Christ." During these talks, Mennonites and Lutherans agreed that two areas of difference that existed in the 16th century still exist today, namely the relation of Christians to the socio-political order and baptism.

The trilateral meeting in Rome, with five representatives from each communion, included summary presentations on past dialogues on baptism. Alfred Neufeld of Paraguay chaired the MWC team that also included Fernando Enns of Germany, John Rempel of Canada, Rebecca Osiro of Kenya and Larry Miller of France.

Neufeld reflected that "almost 500 years have passed since that memorable day in Zurich, January 1525, when a group of

young radical Bible readers and potential reformers broke with the common baptismal tradition of their time and initiated believers or adult rebaptism. They also stopped applying the baptism ritual to their infants.

"Split and conflict became inevitable and caused much hurt on all sides," he said, noting, "At that time, both actions—rebaptism and avoiding infant baptism—were serious offences to European imperial law. Changing the mode of baptism had

*'It has been very encouraging to see the diversity within each denominational team.'*  
(Fernando Enns)

far-reaching consequences not only in the political sense, but also with new approaches to salvation, the nature of the church, Christian ethics and missions.

"Today, much has changed," he continued. "In most countries, state churches don't exist anymore. The importance and possibility of personal choices, as well as religious liberty, is generally assumed. And all three church communions face the question today: How to re-evangelize society, and be a prophetic and pastoral presence in the world?"

Enns added his own comments. "It has been very encouraging to see the diversity within each denominational team," he said. "We usually assume that there is one single interpretation of baptism in the other traditions. That does not seem to be the case. If we are able to create a mood of trust, we will also be able to share the questions and challenges within our own communities on this key difference of baptism. That is my hope."

The group plans to convene for its second round of conversations in January 2014, to study "Baptism: God's grace in Christ and human sin." Future topics in following years will include "Baptism: Communicating grace and faith," and "Living out baptism." ❧

## /// Briefly noted

### **Mennonite Foundation of Canada celebrates \$100 million milestone**

Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) is reporting another record-setting year. In 2012, MFC distributed more than \$13.2 million to more than 700 charitable organizations. These totals push MFC to another milestone. Since its charter in 1973, MFC has now distributed more than \$100 million to charities. "These numbers are staggering and very humbling," says executive director Darren Pries-Klassen. "We are fortunate to work with donors all across Canada who are putting their money where their faith is. Our clients consistently demonstrate their compassion and commitment. They truly understand that a life of generosity benefits both the giver and receiver." According to preliminary year-end accounting results, MFC reached \$155 million in assets under management. This is an increase from \$140 million in 2011 and \$133 million in 2010. MFC is a charitable public foundation that encourages all Canadians to experience the joys of living generously. Dedicated to the biblical principles of stewardship and socially responsible investing, MFC offers estate and will planning, charitable gift planning, fund management for charities and stewardship resources.

—Mennonite Foundation of Canada



EDMONTON CHINESE MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO BY KEN TSE



With an informal open house on Jan. 13 to celebrate the new year, a new home—at 10759 96th Street—and a new beginning, Edmonton Chinese Mennonite Church celebrated a new chapter of ministry opportunities with area church staff and representatives from various Mennonite churches in the area. Watching a performance by fan dancer Kwan Yung are Mel Huizinga and Tena Wiebe. The event also included songs performed by the church's computer class and Northern Alberta Institute of Technology students, as well as food and fellowship. The church chose to remain in the downtown area to continue its current ministries and is looking forward to recruiting a full-time English-speaking pastor to reach out to young adults.

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## COVER STORY

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARCHBISHOP MATTA ROHAM



*Firewood collection is destroying a forest of old trees in northeast Syria as people facing poverty and conflict struggle to cope with harsh winter conditions.*

## 'We need more'

*MCC urges donations as Syrian crisis deepens*

BY WILL BRAUN  
Senior Writer

**T**he crisis in Syria is rapidly spinning out of control.

Nearly two years into the conflict, the numbers of dead and displaced have risen sharply in recent months. According to UN estimates, 60,000 Syrians are now dead, 700,000 have fled the country, two million are displaced within Syria and another two million need humanitarian assistance.

The crisis remains the top-priority disaster response for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), as it has been for a year. The situation in Syria is "worsening dramatically," says Bruce Guenther, head of disaster response for MCC.

A particularly harsh winter is compounding the suffering. "People are cold," Guenther says.

In a graphic reminder of the realities of war, he also says partner organizations are asking for more diapers, as kids pee their pants more when bombs drop around them.

Amid the violence and suffering, MCC is scrambling to provide food, blankets and other resources—including diapers purchased in the region—to a dozen partner

organizations, mostly churches and peace groups with which MCC has long-standing ties. These partners are working desperately to provide the basics of life to people in some of the hardest hit areas of the country—including Homs and Aleppo—as well as to refugees in neighbouring Jordan and Lebanon.

MCC's message to donors is simple: "Thank you for what you have done so far," says Guenther. "We need more."

Guenther says MCC is spending money as it comes in, but it is hard to say no to partner requests when resources fall short. To date, MCC has received \$778,000 in cash donations—\$400,000 of that from Canadians—as well as significant in-kind donations. The total value of MCC's response to date, which draws on designated funds as well as general donations, is \$3.5 million.

The international response to the Syrian

crisis has been limited. Until the international community pledged \$1.5 billion in aid last month, the UN had received only 3 percent of the funding it had requested. Analysts warn that countries do not always honour pledges and, when they do, the process can be slow.

The other key issue is access to areas of intense need within Syria. Guenther emphasizes that, while MCC does not have its own personnel stationed within Syria, it is privileged to work with Syrian organizations that not only operate with courage and integrity, but do so in some of the areas where access is most difficult.

One such organization is the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch.

In an e-mail message to MCC, Archbishop Matta Roham says that firewood collection is now destroying the forest of old trees in the national park in Hasaake in northeast Syria. "I asked those who were cutting and carrying the wood why they do this," says Roham, who visited the park on Jan. 15. "The answer came: 'We are poor and we have nothing to live [on]. The weather is very cold and we need to warm our houses and make our living.'"

Even as the humanitarian needs continue to increase, MCC country representative Sarah Adams says that MCC partners are already looking at helping people heal from the trauma and psychological damage resulting from this prolonged conflict.

Syrian Orthodox bishop Jean Kawak says of the situation, "The impact of the crisis will not be limited to the absence of food or shelter. Neither will it be limited to the physical damages of today. . . . The bigger impact will be the psychological one. The current generations are being taught that the language of weapons and power prevail. It will take years to reduce the psychological damage this crisis has caused to our children." ❧

*With files from Gladys Terichow, MCC Canada.*

*In a graphic reminder of the realities of war . . . partner organizations are asking for more diapers, as kids pee their pants more when bombs drop around them.*

# MCC urges governments to respect treaty relationship

By Gladys Terichow  
Mennonite Central Committee

The Idle No More movement and the now-ended hunger strike by Attawapiskat First Nation chief Theresa Spence have brought global attention to unresolved treaty issues and a broken relationship between Indigenous Peoples and many Canadians.

"I firmly believe this is an exciting time for all Canadians," says Harley Eagle, a coordinator of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada's work with Indigenous Peoples. "It is about resetting and redefining relationships. It is about starting over again."

The catalyst for the demonstrations and protests is criticism that changes to government legislation affecting land, water and natural resources were developed without appropriate consultation with first nations.

In a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, dated Jan. 9, MCC Canada executive director Don Peters, urged all levels of government and the Crown to build appropriate nation-to-nation relationships and to meet treaty obligations. "Respectful relationships that recognize the right to self-determination and allow communities to flourish according to their own practices should undergird the government's response both to daily concerns on first nations' reserves, as well as long-term issues, such as upholding treaty rights," stated the letter.

Eagle encourages non-indigenous Canadians to be part of the process. He would especially like to see congregations and people of faith become more aware of the root causes of injustices faced by Indigenous Peoples. "The Idle No More movement is inviting other Canadians, beyond first nations, to ask the Canadian government why conditions are so deplorable for many first nation communities," says Eagle. "And why isn't the nation-to-nation relationship that was agreed upon in the treaties upheld?"

Participants in this grassroots movement, he says, are saying, "We won't be idle anymore. We want to be heard."

MCC, he says, has not been idle. Through its national and provincial programs, MCC is working with indigenous and non-indigenous communities to support activities that promote reconciliation and respectful understanding.

In Northern Ontario, MCC has been working alongside Spence's impoverished Attawapiskat First Nation community for more than 30 years. To honour this relationship and show their respect for Spence, MCC Ontario executive director Rick Cober Bauman and Lyndsay Mollins Koene, coordinator of MCC's Aboriginal

PHOTO BY LOUISE COBER BAUMAN



*Rick Cober Bauman, Mennonite Central Committee Ontario executive director, greets Attawapiskat First Nation chief Theresa Spence on the 24th day of her hunger strike last month.*

Neighbours program in Ontario, visited Spence on Jan. 5, the 24th day of her hunger strike.

To learn more, visit [mythperceptions.ca](http://mythperceptions.ca), a website developed by MCC Canada's Indigenous Work program. To learn more about MCC's provincial and national work, visit [mcccanada.ca](http://mcccanada.ca) and follow the "What we do" link to "Canada programs." ❧

PHOTO BY RONALD DUEÑAS, FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS / TEXT BY WILL BRAUN



**Last month Canada eased its ban on the sale of assault-style weapons to Colombia. Even though fully automatic weapons with high-capacity magazines are illegal in Canada, gun makers here can now sell them to Colombia, a country notorious for civil strife, drugs and human rights abuses. Canadian officials say any export permits would be assessed on a case-by-case basis, including a review of any human rights concerns, and that such sales are made primarily to governments, not individuals. "We do not need any more weapons in this country," said Ricardo Esquivá, a Colombian Mennonite human rights lawyer and founder of the Justa Paz peace organization, in response to the announcement. "I think this whole arms market is a disgrace to the people of Colombia," he said via e-mail. Project Ploughshares also expressed concern about the policy change, saying in a statement: "Currently in Colombia there are substantial risks that imported automatic firearms will be used in human rights violations or diverted to illegal use." (The photo shows armed Colombian security forces on parade.)**

## God at work in the World

# Snapshots

MCC PHOTO BY DONNA MARTENS



*In Lusaka, Zambia, Kathy Fast of Winnipeg, who serves as Mennonite Central Committee country representative for Zambia with her spouse Eric, contacts partner organizations by cell phone about distributing a newly arrived shipment of material resources, while taking a break from unloading such items as AIDS caregiver kits, comforters, linens and mattress covers.*

ROSTHERN JUNIOR COLLEGE PHOTO

*On Feb. 1 Rosthern Junior College students Nicole Brockman and Meghan Wiens (pictured) got pied to raise funds for the annual school faith and life fundraiser. Their efforts, along with other students and staff events, combined to raise \$2,681.45, with \$421 worth of groceries delivered to the Rosthern Food Bank and the remainder designated for Mennonite Central Committee Guatemala. 'It's all for a good cause,' said Brockman, adding that pies in the face were 'worth it.'*



## THE LEFT, THE RIGHT AND THE RIGHTEOUS: PART II

# Leaving the liberal-conservative rut

BY WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

**A**s a quiet first-year college student, I took a long, nervous walk down the dorm hallway, across a dimly lit ideological divide and into the room of the second-year student who had lumped me in with the non-intellectual, conservative evangelicals (not the camp I get pegged in these days). It was part of a mini-drama that had played out on the “Wittenburg Door,” a bulletin board at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now Canadian Mennonite University), where ideas and occasional barbs were exchanged.

A note posted by this student had offended me and I intended to set him straight. Instead, I learned a lesson that completely changed my view of “liberals” like him. What I learned in the course of the conversation was that he was not a spiritually inert person out to undermine the church, as I had assumed all liberals were. He was a person seeking God.

He was indeed reacting negatively to some expressions of faith, but not because he was an unhealthy person or an enemy of faith, just because they did not line up with his experience. He was seeking God in his own authentic, legitimate way.

Janet Schmidt says that Christians too often jump to thoughts like “how stupid can that person be?” when dealing with opposing views. Schmidt, who has worked in the conflict-resolution field for 25 years, including in many Mennonite settings, says we tend to see people with differing views as “less Christian,” or we “question their salvation entirely.”

That had certainly been my attitude as I headed down the hall to Mr. Liberal’s dorm room.

How can we Mennonites prevent such



attitudes from turning the diversity among us into polarization? How can we deal constructively with differing views?

“We are a diverse community,” says Hilda Hildebrand, moderator of Mennonite Church Canada. “It’s very important that we all hear one another.”

She recalls participating in a talking circle with aboriginal people at a conference in the 1990s. As participants around the circle each took their turn, what impressed Hildebrand was that they “spoke

*‘It is nearly impossible to worry about being liberal or conservative when you hear stories . . . of relentless suffering.’  
(Abe Janzen, MCC Alberta)*

their truth” and “not once did anyone diminish the other person’s experience.” People felt safe.

She says that is something we can learn from. Hildebrand urges us to stay away from the liberal-conservative, left-right way of framing things. That dualistic way of thinking is itself part of the problem, she says, leading to simplistic “I am right and you are wrong” thinking.

“Alternatively,” Hildebrand says, “when we frame a concern in such a way that engages respectful dialogue from a range of perspectives, our field of vision can more easily expand to see another’s point of view. This broadening perspective frees us to modify or clarify our understanding, and strengthens our collective lens in the process.”

“No one is all right or all wrong,” she adds. Humility is critical. And the most

critical thing, she says, is that “we profess that the life and teachings of Jesus are central.”

Abe Janzen also points to truths that transcend the liberal-conservative mindset. He is director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta. He responded to my questions about Mennonite polarization via e-mail from Central America, where he was part of an MCC tour. “If there is one thing that would help that polarization,” he says, it would be for all parties to connect with the biblical least of these around the world.

“It is nearly impossible to worry about being liberal or conservative when you hear stories . . . of relentless suffering,” he says. Referring to the passage in which Jesus said that what first-century believers do for the least of these, they do for him, Janzen says, “Matthew 25 says the same thing to all of us.”

Can we Mennonites, with our widely ranging views and backgrounds, avoid being sucked into the left-right dualism that would pit us against each other?

Can we listen humbly and respectfully to those whose views we find most difficult?

I could claim no such noble motivations when I went to confront my fellow college student years ago, but I gained a new understanding just the same. That’s not to say it was easy. Authentic exchange across differing views is awkward and intense.

It is easier to simply paint others as wrong. That’s the easiest way to re-inforce our own sense of being right. I had concluded my fellow student was essentially an adversary of the faith. I was wrong. That was a difficult and freeing realization.

Listening to him showed me, as Hildebrand says, that the truth that any one of us has “is only partial.”

Today I do not think of my one-time adversary as liberal or conservative, but as a brother in the faith. ❧

## GOD AT WORK IN US

# 'A good journey... a labour of love'

*Paul Zehr completes 25 years heading Believers Church Bible Commentary series*

MennoMedia

**P**aul M. Zehr is retiring after serving as chair of the editorial council of the Believers Church Bible Commentary (BCBC) series for more than 25 years. "While it's been a labour of love," says Zehr, a retired bishop and seminary instructor, "it is time for someone else to take over."



**Zehr**

Zehr will work with a co-chair Gordon Matties, professor of biblical studies at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, until the November 2013 meeting of the council, at which point Matties will become chair.

Zehr was appointed to the council by the Mennonite Church in 1987 and has been involved with 24 of the 26 volumes published so far. Zehr's own volume, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, was published in 2010.

The commentaries include "good scholarship using up-to-date biblical studies," Zehr says of the series, whose goal is to facilitate Bible study for all, and to aid in understanding the original message of Scripture and its meaning for today.

The idea for the commentary series emerged in the mid-1970s when Ben Cutrell, then publisher of Mennonite Publishing House, tested the idea with the various denominations involved—the predecessors of Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A.; Brethren in Christ; Church of the Brethren; Mennonite Brethren; and Brethren Church—and with seminary and Bible college faculties. Cutrell set up the structure and by 1981 had begun to appoint editors; by 1986, the first volume had been published.

While at one point Zehr was hoping to stay on the editorial council until all of the

New Testament had been covered, he feels now is a good time to let others take over.

Amy Gingerich, director of media for MennoMedia and Herald Press, says, "Paul is an astute leader with a true gift for leading meetings." She says he never loses sight of the commen-

tary's intended audience—pastors and church leaders—and what is readable for that audience. "At the same time," she adds, "Paul is deeply committed to the highest level of academic scholarship. He has such a wonderful passion for bringing these elements together."

*The commentaries include 'good scholarship using up-to-date biblical studies.'*  
(Paul Zehr)

Zehr says that his time on the council has been marked by good working relationships among all on the editorial council, with one person appointed by each of the six denominations. Members don't always agree on theological or biblical interpretation, but the group has worked by consensus. Zehr remembers only one or two non-unanimous votes in terms of whether to go ahead with a particular biblical interpretation or not.

"I've enjoyed the good relationships with the editors and writers," says Zehr. "It has been very meaningful personally and professionally to work with the content of the Bible in this way. It's been a good journey."

"I have valued the way Paul makes space

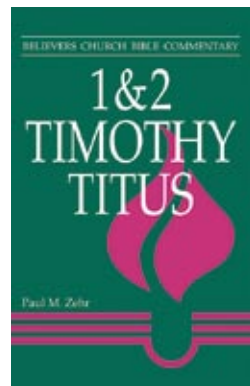
in the editorial meetings for each committee member to voice praises and critiques on a given commentary, and then helps the committee come together to make a decision," Gingerich responds.

Levi Miller, an editor at Mennonite Publishing House for a number of years, says of Zehr's leadership, "Paul Zehr brought together a Lancaster bishop and a Princeton scholar, a happy combination for the Believers Church Bible Commentary leadership."

Zehr sees the commentaries helping the church over the next 50 years, since commentaries have a much longer shelf life than other books. And he says that as Bible scholars outside of the Anabaptist tradition review the commentaries, they sometimes comment on the "Anabaptist hermeneutic" that comes through in the books. "This means that the larger scholarly world is becoming aware of a believers church perspective on the Bible," says Zehr.

Some volumes are produced in about five years from assignment to published book, especially when a writer is able to utilize a sabbatical from other work for dedicated study and writing. Other volumes take 15 to 20 years to write, edit and publish. Most reviews of the commentaries have been very positive, only disagreeing with minor points.

When the *John* commentary is published later this month, there will be 26 volumes in print, with 11 more volumes covering Old Testament books in process, and six more in writing or development stages from the New Testament. Some volumes cover several books of the Bible; there will be 44 volumes in all when the series is complete, now projected for 2020. ☞



## ARTBEAT

PHOTO © SONY PICTURES DIGITAL INC.



Joseph Gordon-Levitt, as the young Joe, in *Looper*, a film that challenges the myth of redemptive violence.

## FILM REVIEW

# Like a punch in the gut

*Looper*.

Written and directed by Rian Johnson. Starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Bruce Willis, Emily Blunt. Released on DVD, 2012, by Sony Pictures Digital Inc.  
Rated "R" for strong violence, sexuality, nudity and drug content.

REVIEWED BY VIC THIESSEN

**L**ooper is an independent, critically acclaimed, futuristic, neo-noir, time-travel thriller. By itself, this is a unique set of characteristics guaranteed to attract viewers like me.

Ironically, the graphic nature of the film's violence is one reason why it is better than most action films. *Looper* hits you like a punch in the gut; its violence is not there to be enjoyed, but to make you feel uncomfortable, which is what violence should do.

*Looper* takes place in Kansas in 2044 and 2074. Time travel is invented in 2074, but immediately outlawed. For the mob bosses in 2074, however, time travel becomes a convenient method of executing and disposing of enemies at a time when it has become otherwise difficult to do so. So they send their enemies back to 2044, where a looper is waiting to execute them and dispose of their bodies. Joseph Gordon-Levitt stars as Joe, one of those loopers.

One of the drawbacks for Joe is that he is required to kill his future self, who is 30 years older than him, after which he will be well paid and can retire to enjoy his remaining 30 years. But Joe's future self, played by Bruce Willis, outsmarts him and gets away, setting in motion two desperate chases: Joe hunting for the older Joe, and the older Joe hunting for a child who will grow up to become the dreaded Rainmaker.

Gordon-Levitt's performance is so outstanding, that we are drawn to Joe in spite of his many character flaws. In fact, all of the key actors are outstanding, as are the screenplay, score and cinematography, which immerse us completely in *Looper*'s dystopian future.

But *Looper*'s best feature ventures into a philosophical/theological realm rarely glimpsed in films today; it is one of those rare ultra-violent films that actually challenges the myth of redemptive violence, the idea that violence is frequently

necessary to overcome evil and save the world.

## Spoiler alert

In order to explore this realm, it is necessary to discuss the ending of the film. Do not read further if you are planning to watch this film.

When the young Joe first kills off his future self and lives the 30 years of his retirement, he becomes a cold, self-absorbed, violent man who wastes his life until he falls in love with a woman who saves him from what he has become. That woman is killed by the Rainmaker's men, which is why the older Joe is determined to return to the past and kill the child before he can grow up to become the Rainmaker.

Making Joe's task more difficult is that he can only narrow his target to one of three children and may thus have to kill two innocents before he finds the right one. His motive for these killings primarily seems to be the saving of his beloved's life, but it may include the hope that he is ridding the future world of a Hitler-like figure.

So if we could go back in time and kill the young Hitler, should we do it? I think most people would not hesitate to say yes, but *Looper* suggests that such an action would only perpetuate the cycle of violence and that the only way to end that cycle is to change the conditions which created Hitler, not kill the young Hitler.

I was absolutely amazed when, following a life-transforming experience, the young Joe realizes what his older self has become, what the older Joe's actions will lead to, how violence only begets more violence, and how the only life he has the right to alter is his own. Rejecting the path of violence, Joe chooses the path of compassion and self-sacrifice to save the world, thereby becoming a Christ-figure; until then, he had been portrayed as a Judas-figure.

This is filmmaking at its most insightful. While *Looper* is certainly not for everyone, I think it was one of the best films of 2012. ♫

*Vic Thiessen is Mennonite Church Canada's chief administrative officer and Canadian Mennonite's regular film reviewer.*

# Choirs sing to the world's heartbeat

STORY AND PHOTO BY JESSICA BUHLER

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

SASKATOON

**T**hey are here to tell you that the church has a future and it sings beautifully.”

These hopeful words were spoken by Jim Epp at the Festival of Choirs that took place on Feb. 3 at Third Avenue United Church in Saskatoon. Presenters spoke to the importance of music in Christian education and in the identity students hold as part of the Mennonite community. “Who they are, and what they do, matters,” Epp concluded.

The event brought together choirs from Rosthern Junior College (RJC), Sask., Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Winnipeg, and two independent Saskatoon choirs: A Buncha Guys and Sonrisa. The concert was a fundraiser and promotion

for RJC and CMU, and every pew was full.

“Music is what makes the world sound; it turns noise into beauty that rings true,” declared Cheryl Pauls, CMU president. “And that music forms the world’s pulse, connecting the heartbeat of the earth’s bubbling joy with our own heartbeats and with the heart of God.”

The songs varied from the traditional “Ave Maria” to an African tune, “O Sifuni Mungu,” and a bouncy rendition of “Skip to My Lou.”

RJC principal Ryan Wood described the combination of all choirs singing in harmony as a “transcendental” experience. ❧



*The Festival of Choirs, held in Saskatoon on Feb. 3, featured singers from Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Funds raised from the sold-out show go to Rosthern Junior College and Canadian Mennonite University.*

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## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Human rights

*A response to a biblical call*

BY ELLEN PAULLEY

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

*“The states, parties to the present covenant, recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”*

(Article 11, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)

It is their stories I hope to never forget — stories of systemic injustice, daily struggles and how life has changed since they found out they have a right to food. I am visiting with a number of *mahadalits*, members of the Hindu system’s lowest caste, who live in Bihar, India’s poorest state.

Relegated to the outskirts of these communities, these individuals share stories of the struggles they face in feeding their families, obtaining basic education and finding work. They live

My understanding of the right to food is not that people are simply given food; rather, it means that policies, actions and agreements made across all levels of society do not prevent people from providing adequate food for themselves and their families.

Olivier de Schutter, UN special rapporteur on the right to food, writes that, while “states are under an obligation to provide food . . . the right to food is not primarily about being fed. It is about being guaranteed the right to feed oneself,

*It is for these villagers struggling to simply survive, and for everyone like them all around the world, that I believe in universal human rights.*

hours away from the nearest city and far away from the hearts of politicians who could improve the quality of their lives by sharing India’s legislation on the human right to food.

Drawing on the concept of human rights is one way that I can respond to the biblical call to action. Proverbs 31:8-9 calls us to “*speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute,*” and to “*defend the rights of the poor and needy.*” Advocating for human rights, including the right to food, is one way I can respond as a Christian.

which requires not only that food is available, but also that . . . each household either has the means to produce its own food or has sufficient purchasing power to buy the food it needs.”

One challenge to realizing the right to food in India is that these villagers, being so far removed from centres of political action, are not even aware that they have the right to food established in India’s legislation. Only recently, through the work of the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief, did they find

**(Continued on page 34)**

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELLEN PAULLEY



Paulley

**(Continued from, page 33)**

out that they are entitled to adequate and appropriate food simply because they are human.

Another challenge is inaction by government representatives who choose not to share this information with those in their districts for a variety of reasons.

So what is to be done? For the Evangelical Fellowship, one solution is to work at empowering the villagers: teaching them about their rights, informing them about what they deserve, and encouraging them to create committees and groups that can advocate on their behalf at the community, state and national levels. Kitchen gardens and farming activities are also underway. Villagers are being connected with state-operated programs that provide guaranteed employment for a portion of the year and programs that will provide meals to children in school.

It is for these villagers struggling to simply survive, and for everyone like

them all around the world, that I believe in universal human rights.

Human rights is not by any means a perfect or infallible way to work towards a better future. But as I watch small children peer at this group of foreigners from behind the protection of the trees nearby, I think that what I have learned in this village is a great example of how human rights can make a difference. Rights can help ensure that people obtain enough to eat both for themselves and for their children. We have to try. Because it is quite possible that the next Mahatma Gandhi is pointing and giggling at me from behind a branch right now. ❧

*Ellen Paulley is studying international development at the University of Winnipeg. She attends FaithWorks Church, and recently completed an internship with MCC in Latin America. This article is based on her experiences during a Canadian Foodgrains Bank food study tour to India in 2010.*

PHOTO BY JAMES KORNELSEN



*Children in Pidari, Bihar, India, try to figure out why the group of strangers in their village look and act the way they do.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Peacebuilding through song

*How making music can also sow the seeds for peace*

BY MEGAN ENNS

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MEGAN ENNS



*Bryan Chin, an Amar Choir member, and author Megan Enns talk during a recording break.*

**“E**ven in the smallest places can a garden grow.”

This line from Noah Gunderson’s song, “Garden,” captures the essence of a CD recording tour with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta in Guatemala and El Salvador.

In tiny rural villages, places that have seen dark violent pasts, in very small ways peace is growing. I was fortunate enough to witness this while travelling with MCC staff and friends for 13 days in January. Throughout our trip peace

was found in the simple acts of showing up, listening to people and making music together.

MCC Alberta was invited by MCC in Guatemala and El Salvador to visit both countries and record a fifth fundraising CD with recording artists Kim Thiessen, Darryl Neustaedter Barg and Jon Guenter. The past four CDs have raised more than \$750,000 for MCC’s work with HIV/AIDS; this one will support both AIDS and peace work.

One thing that really struck me was

*The Canadian musicians related with them, including their ideas and providing space for real collaboration, validating their skills*

the way everyone responded to Kim, Darryl and Jon's performances. They were wowed, perceiving them as "professionals." Some were intimidated at first, but after a few days of recording and collaborating, the local musicians began to own their own talent in a new way. The Canadian musicians related with them, including their ideas and providing space for real collaboration, validating their skills.

The Amar Choir was one of these groups. Amar is a program working to make music in the most violent of Guatemala City's barrios. Its mission is to help people realize their strengths and gifts through music. While recording on the last day, one of the members of the choir said that we "came to show [them their] gifts." We didn't give anything, but were simply present for people who are often ignored and marginalized by their government and social structures all the time.

Antony Sanchez, the Guatemalan MCC representative, said, "The project raises money, but the act of coming to Guatemala is a great gift of peace and justice by being here and creating the opportunity for people to take part."

Staying with these people, eating with them and then working on such a unique project, broke down barriers and gave recognition and affirmation to the

groups.

I learned first-hand that music is a powerful tool for growing peace. The music project gave me a way to connect with the individuals while we were there and communicate with them beyond my terribly limited Spanish. Singing gave us something to make facial expressions about: rolling our eyes when it was taking forever for many musicians to agree, smiling at each other, and laughing at myself trying to sing in Spanish.

Two choir members corrected me numerous times on my pronunciation of "Y al reir, halar o solo escuchar," and "Que asi me llamas." They're like tongue twisters and you have to sing them!

Music can transcend language, culture and differences to unite people. This was a small group of musicians in a little church, recording a few songs, but it had a big impact. Gustavo Ramirez, a very bright, exuberant singer from Perquin, El Salvador, said, "For every person playing music, there is one less person carrying a gun." I would add, too, that there's one more person with a way to work through trauma, or one less person standing alone. ☺

*Megan Enns is youth and peace program coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Alberta. She is a member of Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary.*



*MCC Alberta staffer Trish Elgersma, left, Rachel Nafziger, MCC Serving and Learning Together participant in Perquin, El Salvador, and Ena Catalina Chica, a Perquin Choir member, practise the English line to 'Lord you have come to the Lakeshore.'*



*Gustavo Ramirez from Perquin, El Salvador, records a solo line for 'With Kindness.'*



*Kim Thiessen, centre in blue shirt, and Darryl Neustaedter Barg, right, record with locals in Guatemala City, Guatemala.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Come to prayer, come to well-being

*How a one-month experiment helped me  
rededicate myself to my faith*

BY AARON EPP

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY DYCK



Epp

“I want to talk to God, but I’m afraid ‘cause we ain’t spoke in so long.”

(Kanye West, “Jesus Walks”)

“Please talk to me / Won’t you please talk to me? / We can unlock this misery / Come on, come talk to me.”

(Peter Gabriel, “Come Talk to Me”)

I’m kneeling in my living room with my head bowed and touching the ground, tears streaming down my face, telling God that I’m sorry. It’s the first day—and first prayer—of my month-long prayer experiment, and so far, things aren’t going so well.

I’m 28 years old and I grew up in the Mennonite church. I attended Sunday school and youth group, and I was baptized in Grade 12. During my first and second years of university, where I took English literature as well as biblical and theological studies, I preached the occasional sermon at my church.

But the best word to describe my faith life over the past four years is stagnant. My church attendance has been sporadic, and I haven’t regularly practised any spiritual disciplines. I’ve always considered myself to be a Christian, and I’ve always tried to be a good person, but I have not been growing very much in my faith.

Last year, the word “integrity” haunted me. If I say I’m a Christian and yet I’m not working on my relationship with Jesus Christ, am I living with integrity? In an effort to grow in my faith, and inspired by the Muslim faith tradition, I decided I would dedicate myself to praying five times a day throughout all of January.

I did not follow the exact prayer times Muslims adhere to, and I did not wash

my face, arms, hands and feet the way they do either. However, I did go through the 11 prayer postures that Muslims go through as they pray, and I said the same things they say, substituting “God” for “Allah.” During the last position, I would pray whatever was on my mind and then end with the Lord’s Prayer.

I cried during that first prayer on that first day because I felt ashamed of myself. I repeated “I’m sorry” over and over. For some reason, I thought that God was upset with me, like he might be asking, “Why haven’t you spent more time with me over the last few years?” If you asked me to picture him at that moment, I’d describe a man standing over me with his arms crossed, a disapproving look on his face.

Still, I continued my prayer experiment, using the time to request God’s help in my life and the lives of my family and friends, confess sins, and also listen in silence for what God might have to say to me.

The lead pastor at the church I attend put me at ease a few days into my experiment when I met with him to discuss some things. I told him about the experiment, and he said, “God is always thrilled when we want to spend more time with him. It brings joy to God’s heart.”

Suddenly, the image of God that I had from that first prayer changed, and I was

**Schools directory**

reminded of the parable of the Prodigal Son. I pictured God with his arms outstretched, wanting to embrace me, happy to have me back.

Some things I learned over the course of the month are:

**1. GOING THROUGH** the Muslim prayer postures caused me to pray in positions I wouldn't have otherwise. For example, kneeling with my face and palms upturned, or with my head bowed and touching the ground.

When I would pray before, I would often just fold my hands and bow my head—and it's fine to do that—but trying out these different positions forced me out of my comfort zone, and also made me more reverent and respectful, conscious of the fact that I was coming before the One who created me and everything else.


**2. AT FIRST**, I was unsure about what I would pray about five times a day, but then I realized I could pray about anything. I especially enjoyed praying for other people because it's one way I can help and support them when I'm unsure about what else to do.

Also, when my prayer experiment started, my father was waiting to have surgery to have a benign brain tumor removed. Prayer was a great comfort at this time because it felt like I was doing something for him. It helped me not to worry about my father's situation because I was praying about it, giving it to God and trusting that everything would work out according to God's will.

**3. BECAUSE I** was spending more time with God, I started to talk about God more with family and friends. This led to some interesting conversations about faith and prayer.

In many ways, my experiment was a return to faith, and it's not really over. I'm excited to keep moving forward in my faith journey and excited to keep spending time with God. ☞

**Elementary/Secondary**



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**RJC** Rosthern Junior College  
**Christian Day & Boarding HIGH SCHOOL** (Grade 10-12)



Traveling Open House  
Grace Mennonite,  
Regina.  
Friday, November 30th  
6:30 - 9:30 PM


*Founded in Faith,  
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[www.rjc.sk.ca](http://www.rjc.sk.ca) or Call us at (306) 232-4222  
To Schedule a Visit or Tour email

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TRAIN UP A CHILD...Proverbs 22:6  
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## Calendar

### British Columbia

**March 10:** Installation of Bryan Born as president of Columbia Bible College, at Ross Road Community Church, Abbotsford, at 3 p.m.

**March 14,28:** Columbia Bible College

campus view days.

**March 23,24:** Lenten vespers with Abendmusik Choir at 8 p.m.; (23) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (24) Knox United Church, Vancouver. Offering for Menno Simons Centre.

**Apr. 12-14:** Youth Jr. Impact retreat at Camp Squeeah.

## UpComing

### Eben-Ezer plans 50th anniversary celebration

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church is planning to celebrate its 50th anniversary from June 21-23. The church began on Jan. 24, 1963, with 52 charter members from West Abbotsford Mennonite Church. While other local Mennonite congregations were acculturating to the English language, from the beginning Eben-Ezer ministered to German-speaking Mennonites in the area. It was named Eben-Ezer—“stone of help” from I Samuel 7:12. Today, the church ministers in both German and English, and has a membership of more than 300. Tentative plans for the weekend include an evening program on June 21, activities all day on the 22nd, and a concluding worship and fellowship meal on the 23rd. “The Jubilee Committee is extending an invitation to former members and friends to join us as we give thanks for God’s continued blessings through 50 years,” says Helga Rempel. “Eben-Ezer continues to be a dynamic, bilingual church in the truest and literal sense of the word, looking back, but, more so, marching forward.” For more information, call Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church at 604-850-8422 or e-mail eemc@telus.net.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN

### Notice

42nd Annual General Meeting  
Saturday, March 16, 2013  
6 p.m.

Lethbridge Mennonite Church  
4303 - 3rd Ave. S., Lethbridge, AB T1J 4B3

### Banquet to follow

Tickets to the banquet are free of charge but must be ordered in advance from the church office by phone at 403-329-8557 or by e-mail at lethmenn@telusplanet.net.

A call for donations will be made at the end of the evening.

Open to members of  
Mennonite Church Canada congregations.

CANADIAN  
MENNONITE

### Alberta

**March 22-23:** Mennonite Church Alberta AGM at Menno Simons School, Calgary. Guest speaker: Cheryl Pauls, CMU president.

### Saskatchewan

**March 17:** RJC Guys & Pies fundraising event.

**April 13:** A Buncha Guys spring concert, at Mayfair United Church, Saskatoon, at 7:30 p.m.

### Manitoba

**Feb. 28:** Mennonite Collegiate Institute open house. Includes tour of the school, information package and admission to the opening night performance of *Fiddler on the Roof*, the school’s annual musical. To book seats, call 204-327-5891.

**Feb. 28-March 1:** MCI musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, at Buhler Hall, Gretna. (Revised dates.)

**March 3:** CMU Choral Connections.

**March 4:** CMU hosts author Stuart Murray, speaking on “Anabaptism as a missional movement.” For more information, visit cmu.ca.

**March 15:** CMU campus visit day.

**March 21:** CMU hosts the Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition.

**April 4:** CMU spring banquet and

fundraiser.

**April 7:** Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church adult choir presents Parts II and III of *The Messiah*, at 7 p.m.

**April 8:** Jazz@CMU.

**April 18-20:** Westgate Collegiate senior high musical.

### Ontario

**March 11,12:** Grandparent and Grandchild Days at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, for children in Grades 1 to 6. “You can shine,” with Julie and Bryan Moyer Suderman. For more information, or to register, visit hiddenacres.ca or call 519-625-8602.

**March 14-15:** Bechtel Lectures at Conrad Grebel University College chapel. “Violence, victimhood and recovery: Insights from the parables of Jesus,” with Chris Marshall.

**March 15-16:** Engaged Workshop, for engaged or newly married couples, at Living Water Fellowship, New Hamburg. For more information or to register, call Denise Bender at 519-656-2005.

**March 23:** Elmira meat canning fundraising breakfast buffet, at Calvary United Church, St. Jacobs, at 8 a.m. Speaker: Ron Mathies, MCC executive director emeritus. For advance tickets, call MCC Ontario at 519-745-8458.

**March 23:** Menno Singers concert, featuring works by Bach and Zelenka,

## Employment Opportunities



**ROSTERN JUNIOR COLLEGE**, a vibrant Christian high school is seeking a half-time **DEVELOPMENT OFFICER** to assist in the planning and implementation of immediate and longterm fund development.

The ideal candidate will:

Be a passionate ambassador for a faith based high school that prepares students to be responsible, globally minded, compassionate and reflective learners.

Be able to communicate the school’s vision to alumni, parents, donors, churches, and the broader community.

Know the culture, history and context of the school.

Have strong social skills.

Have technological competence including familiarity with databases and various social media.

Interested applicants should visit [www.rjc.sk.ca](http://www.rjc.sk.ca) for more information about the school.

Duties will commence March 1, 2013.

Salary commensurate with experience.

Applications should be sent to Geraldine Balzer, board chair at [balzer.g@gmail.com](mailto:balzer.g@gmail.com)

at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, at 8 p.m. Ticket information at mennosingers.com.

**April 5-7:** Marriage Encounter weekend at Jericho House, Port Colborne. For more information, visit marriageencounterec.com or call Marjorie Roth at 519-669-8667.

**April 9:** Mennonite Savings and Credit Union's 49th annual meeting, "Stories of social justice," at Steinmann

Mennonite Church, Baden. Registration at 6:30 p.m.; meeting at 7 p.m. An excerpt from Theatre of the Beat's newest production will be featured.

**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.**



**ROSTHERN JUNIOR COLLEGE**, a vibrant Christian high school invites applicants for the position of **PRINCIPAL**.

The successful candidate will:

Be a passionate ambassador for a faith based high school that prepares students to be responsible, globally minded, compassionate and reflective learners.

Be grounded and articulate in the Anabaptist faith tradition and be able to engage students from a wide spectrum of faiths and cultures.

Be able to communicate the school's vision to students, parents, staff, and the broader church community.

Be a collaborative leader who empowers others

Have teaching and administrative experience

Interested applicants should visit [www.rjc.sk.ca](http://www.rjc.sk.ca) for more information about the school.

Duties will commence September 1, 2013

Applications should be sent to Geraldine Balzer, board chair at [balzer.g@gmail.com](mailto:balzer.g@gmail.com)



**MUSIC DEPARTMENT HEAD  
ROCKWAY MENNONITE COLLEGIATE**

**Forming Faith.....Building Character**

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, a dynamic Christian school (300 students in grades 7-12) with a long-standing tradition of music-making (sacred and secular choral music, winds, strings and musicals) invites applicants for the position of Music Department Head.

The successful candidate will:

- Be a passionate music educator who has an understanding and appreciation for Anabaptist church music, Music of the Masters and Contemporary Music.

- Be a collaborative and visionary leader who has the ability to organize and administer musical events at the school and the broader community.

- Be proficient in the area of choral and instrumental (strings) music.

The ideal candidate will have:

- Minimum undergraduate Bachelor degree in related field and Bachelor of Education (or equivalent)

- Bachelor of Church Music

- Ontario College of Teachers Certification (or equivalent) with Intermediate or Senior Qualifications

This is a .70 FTE (includes some admin time) with the possibility of full-time with additional teaching areas.

Please submit a cover letter and up-to-date resumé to [principal@rockway.ca](mailto:principal@rockway.ca) by Friday, March 8, 2013.

**NORTH LEAMINGTON UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH** in Leamington, Ontario is inviting applications for a full time **PASTOR**. The pastor will be someone who has a passion for ministry, possesses visionary leadership and values building relationships.

The pastor will work as part of a pastoral team ministering to all age groups. Involvements will include worship and preaching, relationship building, developing and growing lay leaders, congregational visitation and missional outreach.

The pastor will be committed to Anabaptist theology and practises and have received post secondary training from an Anabaptist seminary or university or have pastoral experience in an Anabaptist congregation.

Inquiries, resumes, and letters of interest may be directed to:

Henry Paetkau, Area Church Minister  
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada  
4489 King St. E.  
Kitchener ON N2P 2G2  
Phone: 519-650-3806  
Fax: 519-650-3947  
E-mail: [hpaetkau@mcec.ca](mailto:hpaetkau@mcec.ca)

**WINKLER MENNONITE CHURCH** with a congregation of approximately 400, is actively searching for a **SENIOR PASTOR** whom God has chosen to lead our church into the future.

The Church is located in Southern Manitoba within the city of Winkler. The Winkler Mennonite Church is a non-affiliated, independent church. We are seeking a Senior Pastor who has demonstrated faithful, proven pastoral capabilities (1st Timothy 3:1-3, and Titus 1:7-9). We are seeking someone able to serve with an engaging communication style.

It is essential the successful candidate is able to provide strong leadership for the church, to devote time to focus on issues facing the church, devote time to ensure functional structures are in place so that all the church is functioning within the stated vision of the church, and is able to provide pastoral care and visits and ensure needs of people are being met.

We ask that all interested candidates complete and submit a confidential copy of their resume to:

Winkler Mennonite Church  
c/o Pastoral Search Committee  
31 Willowdale Crescent  
Winkler, MB, R6W 1 G7

or email to: [pastoralsearch@wmchurch.ca](mailto:pastoralsearch@wmchurch.ca)

## Classifieds

### Announcement

Canadian Word Guild  
AWARDS

**MYSTERIES OF GRACE  
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For special awards sale see:

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

### Travel

**Visit Europe  
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[www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu](http://www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu)



*With a food pack over his shoulder, a typhoon survivor knows that he can feed his family for five days.*

*In the wake of Typhoon Bopha in the Mindanao region of the Philippines, Daniel and Joji Pantoja's staff loaned one month of their salaries to purchase food aid for 650 families, prompting smiles of gratitude from young recipients.*



# Digging deep

*Ministry staff help feed hungry in the Philippines*

BY DEBORAH FROESE  
Mennonite Church Canada

A typhoon, five million hungry people and no available funds for relief operations. When Peacebuilders Community Inc. (PBCI) faced that scenario late last year, staff rose to the challenge by digging deep into their own pockets.

Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers Daniel and Joji Pantoja lead PBCI peacebuilding teams in the Mindanao region of the Philippines. Their staff unanimously agreed to loan their next month's salaries to purchase relief food packs. About \$2,400 was collected to help feed 650 families for five days. A week later, Philippine Business for Social Progress joined in to feed the hungry, and others followed. With help from partners, the effort targeted hard-to-reach geographical areas.

Called a "super storm" in the media and nicknamed

"Pablo" in the Philippines, Typhoon Bopha unleashed its fury on the Philippine island of Mindanao on Dec. 4, 2012. More than a thousand people were killed. Hundreds of thousands of families were left homeless and millions lost their sources of livelihood.

Although the Pantojas are clear that PBCI does not normally operate as a relief distribution centre, it is guided by a theology that embraces harmony with God, self, others and creation. Like Jesus, their ministry seeks to feed the hungry, heal the sick and comfort those who mourn, regardless of their faith or background.

As of Jan. 19, nearly 14,000 family packs were distributed in 32 sites across five towns. Relief also included canned goods, blankets, bed sheets, dried pineapple, noodles and toiletries. ❧