

CANADIAN MAGAZINE

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Volume 17 Number 9

In the House of Friendship

pg.33

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inside

Easter coverage 13, 20, 40

A lesson in language 19

Focus on Books & Resources 26-32

GUEST EDITORIAL

Talking it out . . . in print

CARL DE GURSE

You know you're in a Mennonite home when you walk into the living room and see a copy of *Canadian Mennonite* on the coffee table.

Not just any publication gets to reside in this place of privilege. Advertising flyers and junk mail covet the coffee table as a place of inside access to the family, but they're not allowed. They often go directly from the mailbox to the recycling bin.

An issue of *Canadian Mennonite* is permitted to encamp on the coffee table for two weeks, until a fresh edition arrives. It serves as a symbol of denominational identity, as a quiet witness to living room guests who are not Christians, as a connection to the other 13,393 homes that receive the magazine, and as a forum for information about church issues.

I was asked to write an editorial for this spot while Page 2's usual occupant, Dick Benner, editor and publisher, takes a well-deserved rest. I've decided to aim my opinions at the magazine itself, starting with the cover and flipping through the pages.

There was brief discussion at a recent Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service board meeting about changing the magazine's cover to use glossy paper. Let's not. The plain newsprint of *Canadian Mennonite* fits the Anabaptist virtues of humility and simplicity. I like a church where our pastors don't wear opulent vestments, where our buildings aren't cathedrals of architectural excess, and where most Mennonite women are able to resist

the worldly pressure to dress like Barbie dolls in full make-up and stiletto high heels. Like our church, our magazine's cover shouldn't be glossy and pretentious.

Turning over the wonderfully rough-hewn pages, it's immediately clear this magazine has an unusual order of content. While most publications display news articles prominently and put opinion columns towards the rear, *Canadian Mennonite* reverses that order.



Opinion columns dominate the front pages, a smart decision because the magazine has cultivated a stable of interesting columnists. My must-read favourites are those who write strong opinions and sometimes poke my worldview, such as Aiden Enns, Phil Wagler and Troy Watson. Their voices differ from each other, but most are professional communicators in their day jobs and have the experience to maintain a tone of Mennonite niceness. Even when provocative, they're polite.

By contrast, niceness is not necessary for publication in the letters forum, "Readers write," where readers sometimes get refreshingly frank and twist the trunk of the elephant in the room. The best of the letters are passionate outcries from people in the pews who are moved to pound one home on the Wittenberg door. The only letters I dislike are from people who take Bible verses out of context and fling them as weapons to hurt other people, such as homosexuals.

Going deeper into the magazine, there are news stories about the various area

churches. I always read anything about Mennonite Church Canada and MC Manitoba because they often affect my home congregation in Winnipeg. I usually skim the reports from more-distant area churches, to see if they're doing anything interesting.

My pet peeve is captions that don't include the names of everyone in the picture. I urge everyone submitting pictures to include names, double-checked for accurate spelling, to help readers identify faces. How can we play the Mennonite name game if you don't provide names?

Towards the end of the magazine is a wonderful section added about two years ago. Co-edited by twentysomethings Emily Loewen and Rachel Bergen, Young Voices is a forum by and for Mennos who are coming of age and will, hopefully, shoulder the future of our churches. Many Christian denominations worry that the next generation doesn't care enough about church. Thumbs up to Editor Benner for giving young Mennos ownership of a section to let them connect nationally with other young Mennos.

The connection of Mennonites of all ages is the most valuable function of the magazine you are holding. We're a relatively small denomination of 31,000 baptized believers spread across a country with way too much geography.

A reliable communication vehicle is essential to Mennonites, especially since our face-to-face talk-time was decreased when we reduced national assemblies from every year to every second year. Unlike top-down churches, such as Roman Catholics, Mennonites put a priority on discussion to fine-tune theological interpretation and resolve conflicts.

To work it out, we talk it out. That's our way. And this magazine is our place to talk.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Renaë Regehr gives Jherson a hug at Casa de la Amistad, a Mennonite Central Committee Bolivia program for children who live in prison with their parents. See story and more photographs on page 33.

PHOTO: TYLER REGEHR, MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE BOLIVIA

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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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contents

Wrestling with our identity 4

Using Jacob's wrestling with the angel—or God—as an example, Conrad Grebel University College prof **DEREK SUDERMAN** makes it clear that encounters with the holy in the Bible are risky business for readers, but ultimately life-changing.

A time of mystery and disorientation 15

Senior writer **WILL BRAUN** uncovers the reasons Mennonite Church Canada and its area churches are facing cutbacks in donations. They include building campaigns by Mennonite organizations and evangelical appeals.



'Where oil flows beneath our feet' 20

Manitoba correspondent **EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU** reports on a Holy Saturday service of lament at an Enbridge oil pumping station near Gretna.

Journalist honoured by Muslim community 25

BRENDA SUDERMAN of Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, receives Ihsan Award from the Manitoba Islamic Social Services Association for her journalistic bridge-building in the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Focus on Books & Resources 26-32

Read reviews of *Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels* by **BARB DRAPER**, and three books on indigenous relations from Arbeiter Ring Publishing by **DAVID DRIEDGER**. Plus, the Spring 2013 List of Books and Resources, and more.



Young Voices 33-36

'In the House of Friendship,' our Cover Story by **RACHEL BERGEN**, profiles an MCC program that provides care, schooling for children who live with their parents in prison. Plus, 'When churches plug in' by **REBEKAH KRAHN**, and 'The church as landlord' by **EMILY LOEWEN**.

Regular features:

For discussion **7** Readers write **8** Milestones **14**

Pontius' Puddle **14** Yellow Page **32**

Calendar **37** Classifieds **39**

Talking it out . . . in print 2

CARL DEGURSE

Our own best resource 9

ARLYN FRIESEN EPP

Not as I do 10

DORI ZERBE CORNELSEN

What are you reading? 11

MELISSA MILLER

Online NOW!

at youngvoices.canadianmennonite.org

Blog of the Day—The Femonite: **BRANDI J. THORPE (YOUNG VOICES BLOGGER)**

Wrestling with our identity

BY DEREK SUDERMAN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



The devil offers Jesus several messianic shortcuts: be a social justice miracle-worker, be 'realistic' and seize the reins of power, claim messianic immunity along with your special status. And Jesus rejects them all.

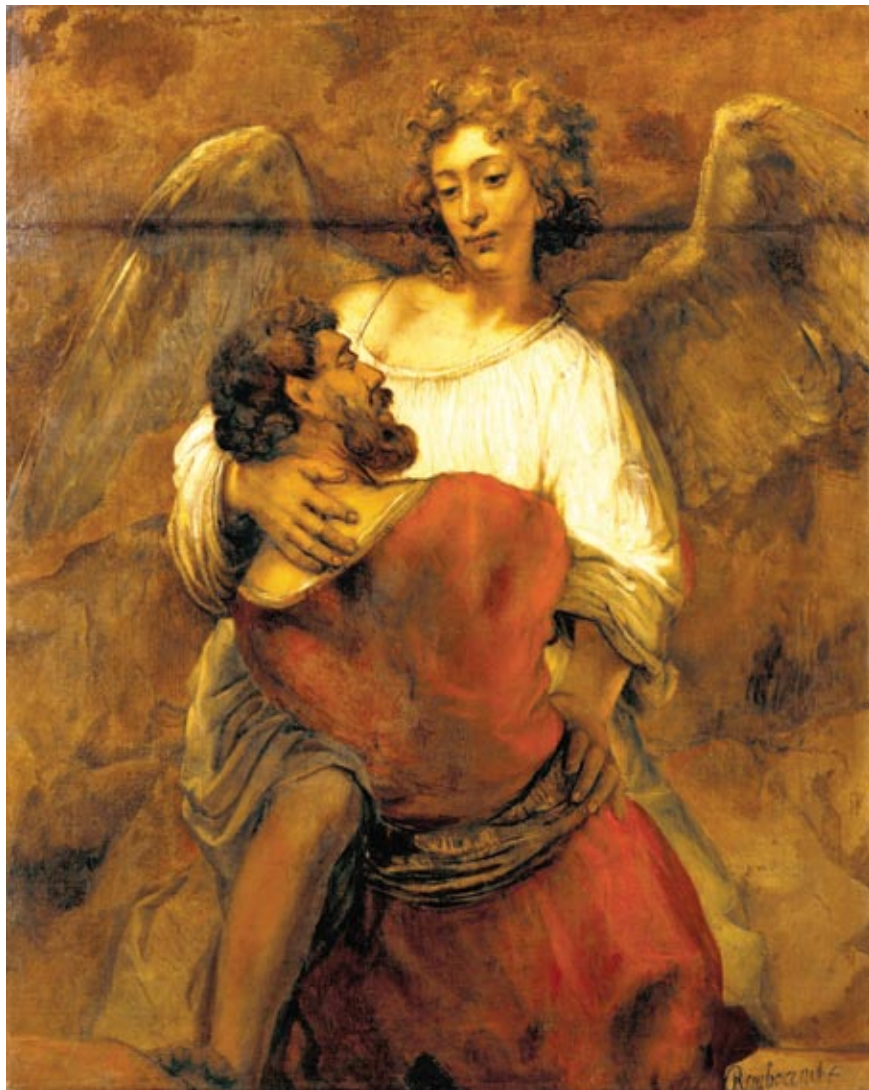
After being called the Son of God at his baptism, the devil immediately challenges Jesus by underscoring the connection between this identity and action: *"If you are the Son of God . . ."*

The tempter initially invites Jesus to turn stones into bread. As John Howard Yoder and others have noted, while we might see this as a personal issue—Jesus is simply hungry—each temptation also has to do with what kind of Messiah Jesus would be. In an age of imperial domination and a world in which many people were hungry, Jesus' first temptation was to become a social justice activist miraculously embodying the "human right to food."

We might ask, how could pursuing social justice be a satanic temptation? For now, it is enough to say that if the possibilities Jesus encounters are not attractive, there would be no temptation. Nonetheless, Jesus rejects turning stones into bread.

The devil tempts Jesus again, this time with the opportunity of power and prestige. The second temptation represents an invitation to adopt a "realistic" perspective, to slip into seeing the world as others do—to concede that seizing the reins of political or even military power is necessary in order to change things. Jesus responds to this offer by insisting that worship and service are due the Lord alone. In so doing, Jesus rejects the very real, and scripturally supportable, possibility of being a domineering Messiah, en route to becoming another pharaoh himself.

The devil again challenges Jesus: *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down,"* and the angels will catch you. Here, Satan invites Jesus to claim special divine protection. As the Messiah,



*'Jacob Wrestling with the Angel,'
by Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn,
circa 1659-60.*

Jesus would be free from pain and experience “messianic immunity.” Although we could also find substantial scriptural backing for such a perspective, Jesus rejects this special, untouchable status as a temptation.

The devil offers Jesus several messianic shortcuts: be a social justice miracle-worker, be “realistic” and seize the reins of power, claim messianic immunity along with your special status. And Jesus rejects them all.

A limp . . . and a new name

But to consider how Jesus responds, let us turn from a rhetorical struggle to a physical one: the account of Jacob wrestling at the Jabok River (Genesis 32:23-32).

After sending everyone and all of his possessions across the river, Jacob is

alone. Encountering a stranger, Jacob struggles all night, then finally prevails and demands a blessing. Refusing to identify himself, the stranger changes Jacob’s name to Israel, explaining that “*you have shown your strength against God and men and have prevailed.*”

There are several intriguing aspects to this story. First of all, although we often think of Jacob wrestling an angel—Google “Jacob wrestling” for many fabulous paintings—the passage simply identifies Jacob’s adversary as “a man.”

Second, while this encounter results in a blessing, it is not automatic, but rather the result of contention and determined effort. Although the struggle takes all night, Jacob refuses to let go until he receives a blessing.

Finally, Jacob does not emerge from

this experience unscathed, but bears a physical wound along with a change in identity. Israel’s encounter proves so intense that he will never be the same again. Every time he picks up his cane he is reminded of this moment. Where Jesus struggles with the devil over his identity, Jacob wrestles a stranger.

Encountering the divine in Scripture

Indebted as I am to Tom Yoder Neufeld among others, I have come to greatly appreciate this passage as a striking analogy for studying Scripture. Like Jacob, we find ourselves confronted with what appears to be a very human wrestling partner. In the Bible we encounter at times elegant language and at others an earthy witness to the divine. Where we might wish for a Bible that seems utterly consistent, answers all of our questions and contains no embarrassing features, this is simply not the Scripture we have. And I, for one, thank God for this. If it were not so, if the Bible were perfect, it would be too unhuman, an alien entity removed from earthly life with little connection to our

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

frustrations and struggles.

At the same time, the church has found from the beginning that we encounter God through this Scripture. Although Jacob wrestles a man, he also experienced a divine encounter and names the place Peniel (“the face of God”). But this happens in retrospect; only after wrestling with “a man” does Jacob recognize that he has encountered God. Just so, grappling with the very human words of Scripture we have the opportunity to look back and recognize our own encounter with the divine.

But wrestling with Scripture is not automatic. Jacob struggled and refused to let go; like a dog with a bone, he persisted until he emerged with a blessing. Likewise, biblical interpretation requires effort, tenacity and persistence. And frankly, some texts or topics present more of a struggle than others to emerge with a blessing. But, like Jacob, our challenge is to refuse to let go—to commit to this struggle—until we emerge with a word of God for our own time.

A risky business

Finally, wrestling with God is risky. In the church we do not ultimately read the Bible as an academic exercise, but to hear a message of God for our lives together. The risk, of course, is that we just might find one! Studying the Bible may profoundly affect and even transform us. And like Jacob, who bore a limp for the rest of his life, we might bear the evidence of this encounter with God long into the future.

Returning to Luke with this analogy in mind, we see that the struggle for Jesus’ identity hinges precisely on finding the word and will of God through the Bible. Three times the tempter confronts Jesus, and three times Jesus answers with Scripture, from Deuteronomy.

While Jesus does not reject “social justice” per se, he does qualify such a concern. The key word here is “alone”: “*One does not live by bread alone.*” Providing physical nourishment is important, but it is not everything.

In our own day it remains a temptation for the church to concentrate solely on

“material need,” to see ourselves as one more amidst a sea of social agencies that “do good things.” Providing food to the hungry is very important, but this is not all the mission of God entails, or all the church is about. Feeding on the “Word” is crucial, and it is this prior commitment that allows Jesus to navigate the temptations he faces.

Even more interesting, the devil himself also quotes Scripture here. While we wouldn’t think twice about using Psalm 91—one of my favourites that we often use as a call to worship—here this passage is employed by the devil.

This is worth pondering. Some Christians assume that if we can only find a verse that provides a scriptural “answer” to a specific question, then our

job is done. Taken to the extreme, the Bible can function as a glorified game of “Whack-a-mole,” where questions pop up and our job is to smack them down, one by one, with the appropriate verse.

Jesus’ temptation provides a drastic warning for such a view. Here Scripture is not only misused, but used satanically! To be clear, I am not calling this or any other passage of Scripture satanic. But even Scripture itself can be abused in a way that obscures God’s will, rather than reveals it.

Although this passage has three temptations, we face a fourth, one that would not have occurred to Jesus or the early Anabaptists. Where Jesus responds to temptation—in each and every case with an alternative perspective drawn from Scripture—we might be tempted to discern God’s will without interacting with Scripture at all. Or more likely, we may be tempted to arrive at conclusions through other means, and then tag along a few biblical references as “window-dressing” once we have already made up our minds. As my former professor, Gerald Sheppard, would say, “If only God in God’s wisdom had waited for us to write the Bible, think of how much better

it would be!”

Competing temptations

So, where one temptation today lies in assuming that we can cite a favourite verse to stop discussion, the opposite temptation is to give up on interpretation or the Bible itself altogether. “You can make the Bible say anything,” we might say, and then stop reading it. Or we may reference parts of the Bible, but treat it as secondary literature alongside *The Da Vinci Code*, Shelby Spong, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, or even *The Naked Anabaptist*.

But the effect of these two approaches is the same. In both cases people refuse to wrestle with Scripture. Both approaches fundamentally agree on this,

As we seek to follow Jesus, we also need to immerse ourselves and our communities in studying the whole Bible, and not just the New Testament.

and in so doing both step away from the fundamental basis that grounded Jesus’ identity and ministry.

As Jesus’ temptations reflect, quoting Scripture is not the end of a discussion, but the beginning of one. What’s more, this is never a task that is done once and for all: “*the devil departed from him until an opportune time.*” In other words, debate continues, and so does temptation.

The ‘whole’ Scripture

I affirm the historic Mennonite emphasis on seeing Jesus as our example, and am grateful for how this has led to an emphasis on social justice, peace and the importance of community. However, unhitched from a commitment to engage the Bible, concern with “social justice” can soon become pragmatic realism; “peace,” something we advance ourselves; and “community” potlucks among like-minded individuals of a similar social strata. While not bad things, it is less clear how our Christian identity informs them in a meaningful way. Put simply, what makes the church different than the “United Way” or a “Rotary Club” in its pursuit—indeed, its definition—of such things?

Jesus' identity and ability to overcome temptation was rooted in his prior commitment to studying the Bible. As Mennonites, it is also important to recall that Jesus reveals a God of love and leads a life of radical, nonviolent obedience based on what we call the "Old Testament," but for him were the only Scriptures he ever had. As we seek to follow Jesus, we also need to immerse ourselves and our communities in studying the whole Bible, and not just the New Testament.

Never before has the Bible been so accessible, or have we been so literate and educated, or have had so much time away from providing the basic necessities of life. And has there ever been a time in the Mennonite tradition when Scripture has received less attention? How could illiter-

different points as we periodically called back, asking what story she was on now or which was her favourite so far. As we arrived in Waterloo, Ont., she had almost read through the Old Testament section. The next morning she woke up and finished reading her New Testament by noon. Completely unprompted, in two days Zoe read her entire picture Bible—all 437 pages—and enjoyed it!

At St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, Ont., we give children a Bible as they enter Grade 3. When Zoe received hers, I thought about her in the backseat returning from Ithaca. We did not ask her to read; she simply picked up a Bible and thought it was interesting. She had clearly not yet learned that the Bible is boring, out-of-date or irrelevant. How long will

invitation to join a discerning community committed to wrestling with this document, convinced that God's blessing is waiting for us within its pages?

Jesus' temptation challenges us to move beyond "proof texts," not by dropping the Bible and moving elsewhere, but by committing ourselves to wrestle with it. While God's blessing is not automatic, enabled by the Spirit and immersed in Scripture Jesus overcomes his temptations. And we, too, may well find that engaging Scripture together with expectation and openness can be funny, energizing and even life-changing.

Like Jesus, our identity as his followers is closely linked to the Bible. But Scripture is not a Christian version of Aladdin's lamp, which we just pick up and out pops God's will for us. But then again, this is not its purpose. Rather, as Jacob and Jesus demonstrate, perhaps wrestling with God and the divine will for our lives should be a struggle.

The question is: Are we committed to doing so? ❧

Derek Suderman teaches religious studies (Old Testament) at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., and the University of Waterloo. This feature article is based on a sermon preached at Rockway Mennonite Church, Jan. 6, 2013.

[H]as there ever been a time in the Mennonite tradition when Scripture has received less attention?

ate Anabaptists in the 16th century stand before judges and respond to accusations by quoting Scripture? Could we?

Against a new 'magisterium'

I also strongly affirm the idea of a "priesthood of all believers." However, this reflects increased responsibility and commitment on each of us, not less. Where some Christian traditions in the Reformation suggested that biblical interpretation be left "to the experts," this was fundamentally challenged by the Anabaptists. But now we are in danger of creating a new "magisterium," only this time they are university professors, preaching/teaching pastors or Sunday school curriculum writers, that we subcontract to interact with the Bible on our behalf. But can a "priesthood of all believers" model survive such a shift? What about our understanding and commitment to justice, peace and community?

A number of years ago our family visited Ithaca, N.Y., where I wandered into a used book store and found a great illustrated children's Bible. After buying it and putting it in the backseat, we noticed that our six-year-old daughter, Zoe, had picked it up and started to read. For the next five hours we heard her chuckling at

this interest last? Will our family and our church foster or destroy this sense of discovery and enjoyment of Scripture?

As our congregations hand out Bibles to children, what message do we send? Is this a symbol, a thick plaque that will gather dust for years to come? Is it an individualistic "here it is, good luck making any sense of it"? Or does this gift represent an

/// For discussion

1. How important is the Bible in your life? Do you think the church has lost its commitment to the Bible? Is your church presently wrestling with any passages of Scripture? Which ones have you wrestled with in the past? Are there passages that the church simply ignores?
2. Derek Suderman suggests that churches are sometimes tempted to concentrate on social justice or the material needs of the world, rather than struggling to discern the will of God. What is the important thing to learn about Jesus' first temptation?
3. Another temptation for churches is to smack down any questions with definitive Bible verses, says Suderman. Why can this approach be a problem? Is this similar to regarding the Bible as a magic lamp that provides quick answers about God's will?
4. What does it mean to be a "priesthood of all believers"? Do you agree that we are falling into the habit of expecting biblical interpretation to be done only by professors and pastors? Might our high level of literacy and education be contributing to a declining interest in the Bible? If so, how?

—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.

✉ Original CIDA model is dead and buried by Harper government

RE: "OTTAWA GETS more 'strategic' about foreign aid," April 15, page 18.

When the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was conceived in the early 1960s, it was based on a radical untested model anywhere in the world that international assistance could only be delivered by any government if it did so at arms length from that government. In other words, foreign policy should not interfere with international disaster assistance and more sustainable international development.

Where Canada led the way was to untie its aid from foreign policy. Where Canada also led the way was to fund enormous amounts of aid to nongovernmental organizations. Mennonite Central Committee became one of the models for CIDA because it was honest, had people on the ground and delivered what it said it would deliver at a low administrative cost.

During the first half of CIDA's life, many new Canadian NGOs were born. They began to depend on CIDA funds for their budgets. Only MCC limited its take from CIDA because the argument was that CIDA would dictate MCC's direction.

The Harper Conservatives are completely different from the Progressive Conservatives of former prime minister Brian Mulroney's time.

Harper is ideologically driven. He would rather use his own army to deliver aid than give it to UN agencies. Most recently, he cut \$350,000 dollars to drought assistance. Even friendly nations could not believe this.

Harper cannot bear to see Canadian money without his fingerprint on it. It was just a matter of time before

he would place CIDA's \$3 billion budget under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The old CIDA is dead. The new one is emerging and its objective is to provide a link between aid and trade.
JAKE BUHLER, SASKATOON

✉ Was article meant to confront denominational authority?

RE: "A PLACE at God's table," Feb. 18, page 16, about how Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, extended a welcome to the communion table to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer (LGBTQ) community.

I realize that the purpose of this article is telling much more than simply the fact that people got together to have communion. I feel that this article has been published to test the waters on the issue of homosexuality and the reaction within Mennonite Church Canada.

I see this article as the "thin edge of the wedge," which, in a very subtle way, confronts the stated will and authority of MC Canada. If I remember correctly, a few years ago there were certain Mennonite churches that lost their status as members within MC Canada because of their inclusive position and approval of homosexual behaviour.

All churches should be open and hospitable; therefore, I fail to see the purpose of making such a distinction in this article. Is this a challenge to church leaders, daring them to call for the question on their church membership within the area and national churches? It certainly appears to be more than a simple announcement of a church activity.

It is time to either fish or cut bait on this topic.

DAVID SHANTZ, MONTREAL

✉ Prof 'puzzled' by School for Ministers coverage

RE: "VIOLENT VERSES explained," March 18, page 24.

I was surprised and puzzled by *Canadian Mennonite's* article on the recent Mennonite Church Eastern Canada School for Ministers event on studying Joshua.

For instance, the bullet points the article provides were not Matties' suggestions for how to approach Joshua, but an overview of how others have done so. While the article spent significant space on relatively minor points, it passed over Rahab and the Gibeonites, the topics for several hours of presentations, in one sentence.

Most striking, the article did not mention Matties'

key emphases, including the central importance of: “hospitable hermeneutics” (committing to hear and enter into conversation with difficult biblical material); genre (although the book contains descriptions of conquest, it is not itself a “conquest account”); canonical context (relating Joshua as one voice to the rest of the chorus of Scripture); and the “commander of the Lord” passage (Joshua 5:13-15), which Matties identified as an interpretive key to understanding Joshua.

As a seminar participant, as well as Matties’ colleague and friend, I thoroughly enjoyed the event and appreciated his challenge to explore Joshua for the

insight it has to offer. As Christ-followers committed to peace, it is particularly important to provide an alternative reading of this troubling and inspiring book. Matties’ work is helpful here, and I encourage *Canadian Mennonite* readers to refer to the introduction and final essays in his recent Joshua commentary in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series.

Better yet, invite Matties to your congregation or area church to help you wrestle with Joshua and issues of biblical and contemporary violence. As a man of profound faith and scholarly intellect who has studied

(Continued on page 10)

FROM OUR LEADERS

Our own best resource

ARLYN FRIESEN EPP

With its 225 congregations, Mennonite Church Canada has more “franchises” across the country than Future Shop and Best Buy combined, making us our own best resource.

On any given Sunday preachers faithfully deliver sermons, worship leaders direct music and prayer, and teachers guide children, youth and adults in study. In the course of a single year that amounts to 11,000 sermons and services, and more than 50,000 Sunday school classes. That doesn’t include weddings, funerals, small group gatherings, congregational meetings, social events, advocacy initiatives and other occasions when the family of faith gathers to act, study, discern or worship.

Often the creativity behind an event or service is a one-off occasion. Most parishioners don’t ask to hear the same sermon again, but great sermons should be shared with those who have never heard them before! Mennonite Church Canada’s Resource Centre collects and promotes such materials so that more congregations can benefit.

When we recently walked through the dramatic events of Holy Week, we asked our leaders to provide services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday and more. It can be a challenge to approach the season and familiar story each year with freshness, renewed energy and new understandings.

While Google helps, our best resources are often found in the creativity of others within our faith family. Their original materials have been tested and tried within a discerning Mennonite community.



While Google helps, our best resources are often found in the creativity of others within our faith family.

This year, many churches across Canada expressed their delight in finding a particular Good Friday service on the Resource Centre website—resources.mennonitechurch.ca—that was shared with the wider church by one of our congregations. Several pastors admitted that it was a relief to find good material in a timely fashion, and as a full package. I was pleased to thank the writer and inform her that her material had been downloaded 297 times in a very short time span.

The Open Source concept at the Resource Centre is working because of your efforts. Thank you for contributing original material and accessing them regularly. We have more than 2,000 Open Source electronic files in document, video and audio formats that cover a wide range of material from unique worship resources and creative dramas and stories, to intentional congregational processes, workshop and training outlines. Other contributions, including links to dozens of Anabaptist blogs, explore current issues like Idle No More or the Being a Faithful Church process.

Resource materials on worship, formation, leadership and more are downloaded more than 100,000 times each year from people within our church family and beyond. One pastor recently

told me, “I appreciate how well linked and interconnected our Resource Centre is. I think of it as a hub.”

I encourage leadership who use these resources to acknowledge the source of their material. In doing so, we all can thank God that together that we are a blessed people, and sometimes our own best resource.

Arlyn Friesen Epp is director of the Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre in Winnipeg.

(Continued from page 9)

this book for 20-plus years, I am confident you will find him engaging, inspiring and informative.

DEREK SUDERMAN, WATERLOO, ONT.

Derek Suderman is an assistant professor of religious studies at Conrad Grebel University College.

✉ In praise of biblical articles

WHEN I WAS a young teacher at Conrad Grebel College, articles on the Bible like the ones that have appeared in *Canadian Mennonite* over the last months could not have been published. Today, they are markers on the road that indicate how far we have come.

I applaud the authors for their honesty, care and commitment, and *Canadian Mennonite* for publishing them. Religious journalism of this kind is absolutely essential at a time when biblical ignorance among Christians is widespread and frightening.

It occurred to me also in the light of the foregoing to ask why many Mennonite worship services are so Bible-starved? Why not more practiced Bible reading and fewer popular words? How about following the lectionary, a Psalm and readings from the Old Testament, epistles and gospels?

At the service of Tenebrae in Holy Week we gathered to read Scripture for a whole hour! In this reading we knew ourselves to be part of the world-changing story of the suffering God on behalf of the world.

WALTER KLAASSEN, SASKATOON

GOD, MONEY AND ME

Not as a I do

DORI ZERBE CORNELSEN

We can be sure that the children and youth around us are observing our money habits, sometimes in surprising detail. On a shopping trip with my then young children, one of them was pestering me to buy something that they all wanted. After using a lack of cash as an excuse not to buy the item, my child pressed me, saying, “You know you can pay for it. You have that card.”

It was definitely time for me to talk with my children about how credit cards work! I explained to them that whenever I paid for an item with a credit card, I wanted to make sure there was enough money in my account to pay for every purchase.

Money is complicated. On top of that, we live in a world saturated with advertising. Ads tell our children and youth that they are what they buy. We need to counter these messages with conversation that we are more than the products in our lives. We certainly don’t want to end up admitting, “Do as

I say, not as I do.”

To encourage money conversations between youth and their adult mentors in church, Mennonite Foundation of Canada offers “Money Matters for Youth,” a free online resource at mennofoundation.ca/mmfy. The hope is that the information and activities included on this site can stimulate conversations about this taboo subject in our churches. From fun facts about Canadian currency to “The Needs vs. Wants Prayer,” each session weaves practical information together with a spiritual connection. Topics include:

- **BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES** on money: Whose money is it anyway?
- **WHAT SPENDING** says about us: Budgeting and understanding debt.
- **LEARNING TO** defer gratification: Saving for future dreams.
- **RAISING OUR** standard of giving: God invites us to share.



We must admit that no matter what our age, we are tempted to impress.

The message throughout is that choices we make with our money can either draw us closer to God’s heart or move us farther away.

In the final session, youth are invited to reflect on the quote, “Credit cards have made it possible to buy things we don’t need, with money we don’t have, to impress people we don’t like.” We must admit that, no matter what our age, we are tempted to impress.

“Money Matters for Youth” doesn’t claim to have all the answers, but we hope it sparks conversations across generations about the mechanics of money and the values that shape our money choices. Perhaps we’ll all learn something, have some fun in the process and avoid the temptation to say, “Do as I say, not as I do.”

Dori Zerbe Cornelsen is a stewardship consultant in the Winnipeg office of Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC). For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit MennoFoundation.ca.

✉ Talking about abuse is not enough

RE: “A HIDDEN darkness” editorial, March 4, page 2.

I appreciate your magazine thinking about abuse of women and children, but talking about it is not enough.

There are ministers who think it is okay to watch pornography. They claim the women aren't real, and

that it's a release for them. It is a sad day indeed when our ministers have to find release in sin, instead of finding release in the Bible or prayer.

Pornography is abuse of women and children at a gut level, but nothing seems to be able to be done about it. Where can ministers go for help?

HELEN UNGER, HAYWOOD, MAN.

FAMILY TIES

What are you reading?

MELISSA MILLER

“**W**hat are you reading?” I'll ask my mother, a friend or colleague. Partly I'm trolling for good titles, and partly I'm inviting them to tell me about their lives, what they are interested in, moved by, curious about or are learning. We read because it helps us navigate life. We draw from the content of the books to mull over and make sense of life in all its mystery, wonder and complexities. And then we talk about what we've found in those books.

As author Nina Sankovitch says, “[T]alking about books allows me to talk about anything with anyone. With family, friends and even with strangers . . . when we discuss what we're reading, what we are really discussing is our own lives.”

Sankovitch, by the way, read a book a day for a whole year as a way to grieve her sister's death and re-engage with life. She records that experience, complete with her book list, in *Tolstoy and the Purple Chair*.

One of the blessings of my current life is spaciousness. Into the space of a quiet home and frequent airplane travel I bring books. In the space of my pastoral work I am required to read and study, a requirement I happily fulfill, for I truly love to read the Bible and books about the Bible. Books offer unlimited possibilities to

fill the spaciousness of life with ideas, inspiration, knowledge and guidance.

In the last month I've travelled with a modern entrepreneur in my work on the MennoMedia board (*The Lean Start-up* by Eric Ries). I polished off a new-to-me Canadian mystery (*Still Life* by Louise Penny). And I allowed the fascinating dialogue between two Jesus scholars, one conservative and one liberal—(*The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* by Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright)—to stretch my understanding of my faith in Jesus and deepen it.



Will fine authors be able to make a living as writers, or will we lose their marvellous words and shining truths?

As one who has loved books for decades, I survey the shifting landscape of the printed word with curiosity and at least a degree of distress:

- **WILL MY** favourite bookstore be able to stay in business selling books, or will its floor space be given over increasingly to kitchenware and baubles?
- **WILL THE** youngsters in my life have the attention span to curl up with me to share the wonder of a beautifully illustrated, profound tale like *God's Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams?
- **WILL FINE** authors be able to make a living as writers, or will we lose their

marvellous words and shining truths?

• **WILL EBOOKS**, which lack the feel and scent of pages, dramatically change how we engage with books? My only foray in this area, *Half-Blood Blues* by Esi Edugyan, was encouraging; I found the book, and the experience of reading it, to be as memorable and compelling as any other great story.

Recently, I've concluded that I don't need to worry. Partly I take heart from the Bible itself, which spans thousands of years, and has only existed in its readily accessible printed form for the last few hundred of those years. The Bible itself

is a compilation of many books, with an array of genres, including poetry, history, wisdom teachings, and straight or metaphorical storytelling. The multi-voiced perspectives of the biblical authors are knit together with a common purpose, that of telling the story of God's love for the world, and God's pursuit of and interaction with humans. In all likelihood, God will continue to find ways to speak the Word into our lives, however books and their readers evolve.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) lives in Winnipeg. She is wrapped in the family ties of daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend and pastor.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Today's church in the 'Age of Spirit'

BY TROY WATSON

For me, the Holy Spirit is the central character and protagonist of the New Testament, especially after Jesus' death and resurrection. As John the Baptist was the forerunner—one who goes or is sent in advance to announce the coming of another—of Jesus, I see Jesus as the forerunner of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the one who introduces his disciples and us to the divine presence who is accessible to us all.



church flowed from their interconnectedness with the Holy Spirit. It was after Pentecost—not Easter—that the disciples were transformed and finally understood who Jesus was, grasping the profound truth of his message about the kingdom of God on earth. Whenever the early church ceased to walk in the Spirit, it resulted in fighting, backbiting, misogyny, abuse of power, false teaching, legalism, elitism, racism and worse. This is why Jesus told his disciples to

Even a gospel of words supported by good deeds—working for peace and justice—may be admirable, but it is not transformative.

In my last article, I wrote about how John the Baptist introduced Jesus as the Messiah the same way in all four gospels: *"He is the one who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

When Jesus appeared to his disciples for the last time after his resurrection, he reminded them of this in Acts 1:4-9: *"Gathering them together, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but told them to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' he said, 'you heard of from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now . . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth.' After he had said these things, he was lifted up."*

This is the last thing Jesus said to his disciples before departing our planet. Jesus seemed to be telling his disciples, "Spirit baptism is what this has all been about, this is what you have been waiting for. My mission is now fulfilled. My work is finally finished."

The contagious vitality of the early

wait until they were filled with the Spirit before doing anything. "Don't do anything. Don't serve, don't start a church, don't initiate any ministries or outreach programs. Just wait until you are filled with the Holy Spirit."

Why?

It is essential that the ministry of the church flows from Spirit consciousness, the state of being filled with the Spirit, or it will inevitably be ego-driven, resulting in "good things" being done that in the end do no real good.

At their worst, ego-driven ministries and programs have a destructive impact on people and communities, but even at their best they are not truly transformative. The ultimate aim of Christian ministry is to live and move attuned to the Divine Spirit. The Spirit must be the source of all of our activity if we are to

bear the fruit of the Spirit, namely, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

In Genesis 1, we read that God's breath, or Spirit, was the life source of humanity. Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1 that God's Spirit will be the life source of the church. The Apostle Paul understood this. He recognized that the life force of the church and the gospel was the Holy Spirit, writing in I Thessalonians 1:5, *"Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit."*

Perhaps the Christian faith is no longer compelling to the majority of Canadians today, including many of our own children and grandchildren, because they have received a gospel in word only. A gospel based on words—Scripture, doctrine, creeds—is not the gospel of Jesus or the early church. Even a gospel of words supported by good deeds—

working for peace and justice—may be admirable, but it is not transformative. It is only the Holy Spirit who awakens the inner light of God's presence within us and reanimates our true essence, the image of God within.

In my next two articles I will be exploring what being filled with the Spirit might mean, but this is only my perspective. What the church needs is not another pastor, theologian or columnist to tell us how to walk in the Spirit. What is needed is for church communities to make the practice of attuning themselves to the Holy Spirit their primary priority.

To be continued.

Troy Watson (troy@questcc.ca) is spiritual life director and pastor of Quest Christian Community, St. Catharines, Ont.

EASTER REFLECTION

‘Like shining from shook foil’

BY JACK DUECK

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

For us, in our postmodern 2013 winter, an intransigent spring has become a spiritual issue. Except for our numbing, apostate passivity and complaints about the day, there seem to be no alternatives.

But the ancients—long before the psalmist celebrated the sun rising as God’s gift—knew something about alternatives. Their participatory faith during dark wintry nights believed that spring, birthing all seasons, would return once again. Faith participation banished passivity and hopelessness. Around bonfire light, they ate, danced, sang and prayed for the sun to rise again. Because they believed, but also feared, that created nature had alternatives, perhaps the Creator had cancelled the sun and everything with it.

What do the ancients, the psalmist, composer Joseph Haydn, poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, physicist Albert Einstein and Russian Mennonites have in common? All celebrated life and a new day as a miraculous gift.

The ancients danced and prayed.

The Hebrew psalmist exulted with *“this is the day which the Lord has made,”* and hands his choirmaster newly minted poetry for a composition: *“The heavens are telling the glory of God. . . . Day to day pours forth speech.”*

In the 18th century, Haydn turned that poetry into exuberant harmonic rhythms in *“Stimmt an die Seiten,”* because “the heavens are telling the glory.”

A century later, Hopkins, an English Jesuit poet, recognized divinity in the sun’s rise “because the Holy Ghost over the bent world broods with warm breast, and with ah, bright wings.”

My Russian Mennonite immigrant

parents lost everything in the dark night of Communist Russia except their children and their faith. Landing penniless on a wind-swept Canadian farm in the midst of the sun-darkened Dust Bowl Depression, they gathered around flickering coal-oil lamps etching their faith with a homily: “This too is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and pray for a faith that rises above all adversities.”

For Einstein, “There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle. I have chosen to live my life as though everything is a miracle.”

In their varied modes, those who followed affirmed the psalmist: *“This is the day that the Lord has made, let us be glad in it.”* In it, not just about it.

In their collective hearts they believed, as expressed in Hopkins’s sonnet “God’s Grandeur”: “The world is charged with the grandeur of God. / It will flame out like shining from shook foil; / It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil / Crushed.”

They too lamented: “Why do men then

now not reck his rod? / Generations have trod, have trod, have trod; / And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil.”

We postmoderns live in extraordinary times. The digital revolution, space exploration, medical discoveries and quantum physics have made our world amazing. Author Robert Louis Stevenson may have had today in mind when he wrote: “The world is so full of a number of things, I’m sure we should all be as happy as kings.” But comedian Louis C. K chides us with, “Everything is amazing right now, but nobody’s happy.”

Where’s the participatory faith—dancing, eating, singing, praying—in our 2013 wintery postmodern darkness? But in spite of our complaint-laced passivity, Hopkins affirmed that, “Nature is never spent. / There lives the dearest, freshness deep down things; / And though the last lights off the black West went / O morning, at the brown brink eastward springs— / Because the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.”

And so in midnight darkness I turn to make Greek Orthodox paska for our Easter gathering at Rockway Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont. I attend to the kneading, as the Greek Orthodox believers practiced, with a liturgy of choral sung prayers.

In time, paska rises to new life. At sunrise we burst into singing, dancing and the breaking of Easter paska! For it is a miracle to be alive, to see another day and to be human in it. ❧

BRUSSELS MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO



Youth from Brussels (Ont.) Mennonite Fellowship rehearse *An Internet Easter* play they presented on Easter Sunday, March 13, under the leadership of their teacher, Elaine Hiller.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Besserer—Seamus River Kingston (b. March 18, 2013), to Jayson and Estelle Besserer, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

Froese—Camryn (b. March 11, 2013), to John and Nancy Froese, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Kelley—Findlay Grace Lauretta (b. March 30, 2013), to Jessica and Stephen Kelley, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Ruediger—Wilhelm Jakob Norman (b. March 26, 2013), to Lorie Ham and Edward Ruediger, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo.

Sawatzky—Jonah (b. March 21, 2013), to Robert and Jocelyne Sawatzky, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Toews—Arianna Chloe (b. Feb. 27, 2013), to Jeff and Amanda Toews, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

Vis—Ava (b. Feb. 28, 2013), to Jason and Elysia Vis, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Wideman—Fiona Faith (b. March 17, 2013), to Eric and Pam Wideman, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Wiebe—Griffin Ronald (b. Feb. 1, 2013), to Trevor and Stacy Wiebe, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Wiebe—Levi Chase (b. March 27, 2013), to Tom and Andrea Wiebe, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Baptisms

Addison Snyder, Dani Morrison, Jonah Boehm, Logan Cressman, Michaela Snyder, Nicole Cressman, Serena Cressman—Bloomingdale Mennonite, Ont., March 31, 2013.

Ben Janzen, Cloie Janzen—Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon, March 31, 2013.

Morgan Willey—Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., April 7, 2013.

Marriages

Andres/Thwaites—Ashley Andres and Corbin Thwaites, both of Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., in Niagara-on-the-Lake, March 30, 2013.

Dyck/Goulet—Sasha Dyck and Dora-Marie Goulet, Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal, Feb. 16, 2013.

Janzen/Weier—Thomas Janzen, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., and Jillian Weier, at Niagara United Mennonite, April 6, 2013.

Deaths

Gerber—Doreen, 79 (b. May 31, 1933; d. March 27, 2013), Poole Mennonite, Milverton, Ont.

Hildebrandt—Peter, 51 (b. Nov. 25, 1961; d. April 4, 2013), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Horst—Fern (nee Dettwiler), 87 (b. Nov. 12, 1925; d. March 8, 2013), Danforth Mennonite, Toronto.

Lichti—Melvin, 92 (b. Dec. 9, 1920; d. March 11, 2013), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Metzger—Daryl, 51 (b. Jan. 12, 1962; d. March 28, 2013), Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont.

Riemland—Victor, 84 (b. Jan. 7, 1929; d. March 28, 2013), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Toews—Willie, 81 (b. Oct. 23, 1931; d. March 30, 2013), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event.

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

Pontius' Puddle



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

A time of mystery and disorientation

Building campaigns by Mennonite organizations, evangelical appeals siphon giving from national, area church coffers

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

While Mennonites in Canada enjoy an era of economic abundance, less and less of that wealth is trickling down to the area and national churches.

Last year, combined donations to Mennonite Church Canada and the five area churches—B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Eastern Canada—were roughly 75 percent of what they were a decade back, calculated in 2012 dollars. Over the same period, the official membership in MC Canada congregations declined from about 34,000 to around 31,000.

MC Manitoba and MC B.C. fared worst, collecting only 60 percent last year of what came in a decade ago. MC Alberta did the best, bringing in 40 percent more than 10 years ago, although still less than five years ago.

Albertans gave the most per capita, more than \$350 per member to the area church and national church combined. MC Manitoba gave the least, at about \$175 per capita.

Looking only at amounts congregations allocated to MC Canada, Albertans again were the most generous per capita, while MC B.C. and MC Eastern Canada gave the least.

Overall, the reality is one of slow and steady shrinkage. MC Canada suffered a \$237,000 giving shortfall last year. It's an old story by now.

Willard Metzger, executive director of MC Canada, says his colleagues in other denominations are dealing with the same thing. Five other denominations have struck committees similar to the Future Directions Task Force of MC Canada and the area churches. Their job is to figure out

how to adapt to the new realities.

Several factors are contributing to the decline. Metzger says congregations are focusing more on activities in their local context.

Also, in our post-Christendom era church as a whole simply does not enjoy the sort of societal prominence it once did, nor the almost automatic loyalty it once garnered.

Competition for donor dollars also contributes to the shrinkage. Between Canadian Mennonite University, Conrad Grebel University College and Mennonite Central Committee offices in Ontario and B.C., the Mennonite donor pool is being asked for nearly \$50 million for new buildings.

Metzger says this is a “significant” factor for MC Canada. Some large individual donors have indicated that their substantial contributions to these projects mean they will give less to MC Canada.

Although Metzger did not mention it, competition also comes from countless non-Mennonite organizations, such as World Vision and the American evangelical organizations that have been featured prominently on local radio in southern Manitoba's Mennonite belt for decades, and which are not shy about asking for money.

Given this context, MC Canada spent \$450,000 on fundraising in the past five



Metzger

years, hesitantly joining the growing micro-industry that seeks to cozy up to Mennonite money. Inevitably that means people with money have increased direct access to church leaders. It does not necessarily mean, though, that this is balanced out with increased connection to “the least of these.”

Metzger says he tracks his time carefully, giving attention to youth, young adults, congregations and multicultural segments of the church, as well as the business sector.

The area churches themselves continue to spend relatively small amounts on fundraising.

Despite MC Canada's move into the realm of open competition for funds, when it comes to money and church institutions, Metzger's message is markedly different than that of the organizations engaged in capital projects.

By nature, people “accumulate and build,” he says, “and you get to a point at which you have too much. . . . Perhaps God is inviting the church in North America to a time of disencumberment.”

The cultural shift is drawing the church into the “wilderness” and you can't take everything with you on that journey, according to Metzger, who says, “All the programs we have and all the structures we have” may not be necessary. He acknowledges, though, that this process is “very painful” for church staff, whose jobs are on the line.

He sees this not as a matter of punishment or judgment, but of grace. “Because of God's mercy, we are forced to do what we know is good for us.” This prevents us from getting “crushed” under the weight of all we have built up.

Metzger is not sure what the church's adaptation to the new reality will look like. The only certainties are that the new way of doing things will have to be simpler and it will not come quickly. Metzger expects it will be 20 years before we “really see what this new paradigm will look like.”

Part of the task now is to “equip ourselves,” as Metzger says, “for a time of mystery and disorientation.” ☛

Can we be too positive?

Negative feedback in pastoral reviews also deemed important

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

Pastoral reviews in the past seemed to look only for problems. But, according to current thinking, if you do that, “you’ll find what you’re looking for.”

So, over the past five or six years, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada has looked for what’s working in pastor-church relations using Appreciative Inquiry (AI). However, from the beginning, concerns were raised that the reviews were “cake walks,” and did not look for problems before they grew insurmountable.

According to AI Rempel, MC Eastern Canada regional minister, the AI process was tweaked three years ago to include room for questions about areas where growth was needed. As well, pastors were excluded from focus groups during the review process, giving room for congregants who felt intimidated sharing negative comments to their pastor’s face.

Negative feedback in pastoral reviews was just one focus of the April 13 seminar for pastors and pastoral-congregational relationship committees (PCRCs). The others included supervision of the pastor, and the differences between three different kinds of reviews: professional development of the pastor; continuing the pastoral/congregational relationship; and testing “congregational efficacy around the vision we have for ourselves.”

Questions pastors can ask that address the need for critique include, “What am I doing that you would like me to do more of?” “What am I doing that you would like me to do less of?” and, “What would you like me to start doing?”

Rempel suggested that such questions focused on the pastor’s work and professional development should not be tied to a review and vote for continuing the pastoral/congregational relationship, and be separate from congregational reviews.

Using “family systems” thinking that focuses on people becoming emotionally

mature, being their best selves and dealing with anxiety in the system, Rempel discussed the area of pastoral supervision.

PCRCs address the relationship between

congregations and pastors. If the committee has supervisory responsibility over the pastors, the danger is that they will not trust the committee to have their best interests in mind. Trust is needed, Rempel said, so that PCRCs can address the relationship, neither trying to “save” the pastor from the congregation, nor minutely overseeing the pastor for the congregation.

While reviews are important, Rempel concluded that it is “candid, ongoing conversations” that are key to a healthy pastor/congregational relationship. ❧



Karl Dick, Pastor Nancy Mann, John Harder and John Enns, all from Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, discuss issues raised at the “Pastoral Reviews and Negative Feedback” seminar offered by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada on April 13.

❧ Briefly noted

Credit union receives award for charitable achievement

KITCHENER, ONT.—Mennonite Savings and Credit Union (MSCU) was recognized with the 2013 Corporate Award for Outstanding Charitable Achievement from the Ontario Credit Union Charitable Foundation on April 11. The award is presented annually to an Ontario credit union or company within the co-operative financial system in recognition of its community contribution considered to be above average or beyond normal expectations. MSCU was recognized for the growth of its Stewardship in Action program over the last four years. Benjamin Janzen, Stewardship in Action advisor, accepted the award, noting that the amount of money flowing into the community has grown by 22 percent annually over the last four years. More than 200 churches and charitable organizations now receive support each year. The program has also fostered three significant partnerships during this time: a \$500,000 commitment to Mennonite Central Committee Ontario to build a new home for several Anabaptist organizations; a \$1 million gift to establish the Mennonite Savings and Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement at Conrad Grebel University College; and a new partnership with MEDA to support international development through its Farmer to Farmer program.

—Mennonite Savings and Credit Union

'Get a grip'

Junior youths learn about loving God, neighbour, self

BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent

Eighty-six middle schoolers filled Camp Squeah with energy and enthusiasm over the weekend of April 12 to 14 for the annual Impact retreat for junior youth, whose theme this year was "Get a grip."

With Squeah situated on the Fraser River, the theme was particularly appropriate, as the young people learned about how to "grab onto a rock" as they are swept along on the river of life.

Associate or youth pastors from three Mennonite Church B.C. congregations led the sessions, each with a different theme. Reece Friesen of Eben-Ezer Mennonite and Chris Lenshyn of Emmanuel Mennonite, both in Abbotsford, led sessions on "Loving God" and "Loving neighbour," respectively,

while Mike Wilson of Bethel Mennonite in Langley talked about "Loving self."

"If people are made in the image of God, there's no one we can ignore," Friesen tried to stress to his audience. God, neighbour and self are all connected. "We want to be open to all people centred in Christ."

There was also plenty of time for outdoor activities, including floor hockey, archery, "wide games" on the Squeah field, and crafts such as T-shirt making. In addition, Friesen, who is an artist specializing in graphic novels, led a session on drawing, and with the middle schoolers created a pair of "superheroes" unique to Camp Squeah: Veritas and Forest Cloak. ❧

DRAWINGS COURTESY OF REECE FRIESEN



'Google translate' is now available on Mennonite Church Canada's website. About 60 congregations—almost 25 percent of the MC Canada family—offer worship services or ministries in languages other than English. To help meet the growing demand for multilingual resources, the national church has implemented 'Google translate' across its new website at home.mennonitechurch.ca. By clicking on 'Select Language' at the centre bottom, viewers can choose from 65 languages in which to read web content. Other resources from MC Canada are available in 21 languages at mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1924.

Graphic novelist/pastor Reece Friesen worked with participants at this year's MC B.C. Impact retreat for junior youth to create the fictional characters Veritas (Latin for 'truth'), top, and Forest Cloak, both of who sport the Camp Squeah raindrop symbol.

Ministry across generations brings applause

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

When Rudy and Sharon Dirks introduced their son Nathan and his wife Taryn to Spiritual Healing Church in Gaborone, Botswana, they were met with an audible gasp and applause.

Spiritual Healing Church was home to the Dirks family during Nathan's teen years, when Rudy and Sharon served the community through Mennonite Church Canada. Nathan and Taryn are following in their footsteps in a three-year assignment serving the African-Initiated Church (AIC) leaders and Kgologano College. As MC Canada Witness workers, they will help develop leaders among the youth and young adults, and teach Bible courses with local AIC congregations.

"It's been 10 years since we finished our

seven-year term in Botswana," says Rudy, who is currently chair of the MC Canada Witness Council and pastor of Niagara United Mennonite Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont. "Sharon and I visited last February to connect with church leaders we had previously worked with, and to pass the baton on to Nate and Taryn."

Rudy says he was caught off guard by the applause. He later asked church leaders what prompted such an enthusiastic reception. He learned that the event held significance not only because the baton of service was handed from one generation to the next, but because Nathan had returned with his wife.

While Rudy and Sharon worked with senior leaders, the younger Dirks couple

will work with young adults. In doing so, they will model a committed Christian marriage. Mission workers as young as Nate and Taryn are unusual in Botswana, Rudy adds. That gives them the opportunity to make a unique connection with the younger generation.

Nathan and Taryn Dirks' commitment to serve in Botswana is "a real affirmation of the decades of Mennonite workers," Rudy says. "The family continuity is a significant sign of long-term partnership."

International mission is a bit of a tradition in the Dirks family. Rudy, a son of mission workers himself, spent part of his childhood in Congo, where his parents Henry and Tina served from 1964-96. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

'Faithprint' allows travel with a purpose

TourMagination, a Christian travel company based in Waterloo, Ont., and Lancaster, Pa., is launching "Faithprint" to offer travellers the opportunity to serve, give and exchange wisdom as they tour destinations around the world. Volunteer service will include things like helping to harvest olives at a living history museum called Nazareth Village in Israel. Charitable projects might involve gathering clothes and books to bring to Ukraine, donating towards the roof of a church in Tanzania, or giving a financial gift to church leaders in Vietnam. TourMagination will work with host countries to ensure that charitable gifts and volunteer service are useful and wanted. Wisdom exchanges will allow travellers and locals to swap personal and cultural knowledge. On a trip to China this fall, tour members will make two-minute presentations in English to university students at Anqing Teachers' College; in exchange, students will show travellers their city from a local perspective.

—TourMagination

PHOTO COURTESY OF NATHAN AND TARYN DIRKS



Nathan, left, and Taryn Dirks, right, meet with Pastor Moshweshwe, a close friend of the Dirks family. Nathan and Taryn are serving a three-year term in Botswana as Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers with African-Initiated Church (AIC) leaders and the Kgologano College faculty team in Gaborone.

PHOTO BY NORM DYCK



On a busy urban street in Burkina Faso, people may not extend the same effusive greeting that is common in a less crowded setting, but it is still considered impolite to ignore others.

A lesson in language

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada

Nancy Frey and Bruce Yoder don't expect to become fluent in Mòoré (pronounced "more-ay"), but they are taking language lessons to learn more about the culture and the people among whom they live and serve in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

French is the country's official tongue, but where Frey and Yoder reside Mòoré is the "heart language" of the people.

Frey and Yoder are in Burkina Faso with their children, Deborah and Jeremiah, as Mennonite Church Canada partners through Mennonite Mission Network. They work with the leadership of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso and relate to the Mennonite university student hostel in Ouagadougou. They also lead Mennonite-related leadership training seminars at the Benin Bible Institute

in Benin.

"Each language has its own logic," Frey wrote on the couple's blog. "The logic is different from language to language, but every people group has its way of seeing the world, which is conveyed in the way the language is structured and in its vocabulary."

As Frey and Yoder grow their Mòoré vocabulary, the importance of relationships in Burkina Faso becomes clearer. Take greetings, for example. In rural settings, people greet everyone they cross paths with whether they know them or not. In the crowded hustle and bustle of urban settings, it is less likely that people will greet everyone, but it is considered impolite to ignore people or pretend they aren't there, as North Americans sometimes do on their own busy streets.

Others are customarily greeted with more than a simple "Hello, how are you?" Instead, they are presented with queries about family members, work, events of the day, and whether or not one has *laafi* (the peace, health and general well-being associated with shalom).

"We trust that a society that values *laafi* so much can model peaceful living for other peoples as well," Frey wrote.

In turn, bidding someone farewell involves bestowing a blessing like, "God grant us a next time," or, "God make you arrive home in safety."

Family relationships are so important that Frey and Yoder spent several weeks learning the associated vocabulary. In Mòoré, there are different words to express whether an aunt or uncle is maternal or paternal. One's paternal uncles have the same status as one's own father. There is no word for "cousin," since cousins have the same status as siblings.

Although Frey and Yoder say they rarely need to use Mòoré, their language lessons have been eye-opening. ☺

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

'Where oil flows beneath our feet'

Holy Saturday service laments the West's need and greed for oil

STORY AND PHOTOS BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

GRETNA, MAN.

A cross in the ditch is a common marker for tragic events, so on Holy Saturday, March 30, a wooden cross is planted in the snowy ditch just outside the chain-link fence of the Enbridge oil pumping station

near Gretna.

Erica Young, one of the organizers, welcomes the group of about 60, mostly from Mennonite congregations, to a service of lament, saying, "This is . . . a day between

anguish and redemption, a space between loss and hope, a holy space, and on this day in this place we stand here where oil flows beneath our feet."

As roughly 80,000 barrels of oil course silently through the earth beneath them, those in attendance reflect on how this place connects them to people and places across the continent, to the indigenous people and their lands in northern B.C. that are threatened by the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline, and to a similar group gathering at the same time approximately 1,500 kilometres further along the same pipeline system at The Hermitage near Three Rivers, Mich.

The Hermitage, a Mennonite-run retreat centre, "is lamenting the fact that the pipeline corridor through their woods will



A crowd of about 60 people of various ages, almost all from Mennonite congregations, gathers outside the chain-link fence of the Enbridge pumping station near Gretna, Man., for a service of lament on Holy Saturday.



At the end of the service of lament, participants are invited to place pieces of sackcloth on the wooden cross. Neill Von Gunten, former Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry co-director, places his strip along side the others as a symbol of lament.

'I've got this sinking feeling about Enbridge.'

soon be expanded and widened, requiring the clearing of more trees, the loss of beauty and stillness," says co-organizer Will Braun, explaining that Enbridge plans to widen its corridor there in order to increase its capacity from 240,000 barrels a day to 500,000.

At the Gretna Enbridge pumping station, six buried pipelines form part of "the largest single conduit of oil into the U.S.," according to the company's website.

"We stand here humbly, before the complicated reality of oil," says Young, who leads the group in worship. "Today, we take a step back from our need to fix and solve. We put aside forced optimism. We will not look on the bright side. We will name the darkness. We will walk in the valley of the shadow."

The lament continues with young and old alike receiving the sign of the cross marked in ashes on their foreheads and strips of sackcloth tied around their arms.

Participants call on God "to stay with us in this space between loss and hope. Our anguish at the intrusion of these pipelines and our enchantment with all the comforts that oil brings, these, too, we hold in tension. . . . We long to have these problems solved and know 'what next?' but for now we sit with the discomfort and resist the need for answers."

For Braun, "it seemed right to stand in the presence of pipes and pumps to lament. It seemed right to draw on religious tradition, not as backing for a fight, but as a path into the depth of the issue, a depth from which the creative power of change can rise."

As the children and adults return home for their Easter gatherings tomorrow, they leave behind the cross, strewn with strips of sackcloth waving in the wind, with the hope "that something creative and new will emerge from this place and this time together." ❧



Will Braun, one of the organizers of the Holy Saturday service, offers words of lament for the oil beneath his feet.



Rosthern Junior College (RJC) is a Christian high school providing a quality grade 10-12 program within a Mennonite school community

for students of any faith or culture.

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Jim Epp, Principal
Rosthern Junior College
P.O. Box 5020
Rosthern, SK S0K3R0
Email: jimepp@rjc.sk.ca

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MCC SASKATCHEWAN PHOTO



Stephane Ngongo and Leonie Lwamba are pictured at the MCC Saskatchewan Centre in Saskatoon. Lwamba and her husband were refugees from Zaire brought over with the help of Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, in partnership with MCC Saskatchewan.

Refugee rights a concern for Saskatchewan churches

BY KARIN FEHDERAU
Saskatchewan Correspondent

When Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan and the Saskatoon Refugee Coalition held an information meeting on recent changes to refugee legislation in late March, few Mennonites were in attendance. Nevertheless, two hours worth of very important information was put forth for the brave few who came out on the stormy night.

Concern for the future of refugee care in Canada was uppermost on the minds of the coalition members.

To inform the public, they arranged for Michael Cassasola, the resettlement officer for the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, to speak by phone from Ottawa about the current worldwide refugee situation.

Refugees can be divided into three separate categories, he said. There are:

- **INTERNALLY DISPLACED** persons, who are living in their country of origin but can't return to their homes.
- **ASYLUM SEEKERS**, who have come to another country and are waiting for their claim to be decided.
- **STATELESS REFUGEES**, who have migrated to a different country and don't have the protection of their government anymore.

There are certain countries that have signed on to the UN Refugee Convention, which makes them legally obligated to care for the refugees who come to their borders, said Cassasola. But many refugees end up in countries that have not signed the convention. Those refugees are still vulnerable because they may not be able to work or have access to the education system, and may not be treated as full citizens.

Other issues feed into the overall sense

of urgency:

- **TOO MANY** refugees and not enough spaces.
- **LIMITED RESOURCES** to help set up and run resettlement programs.
- **TOO MANY** emergencies.

For Canada, recent changes to legislation have organizations like MCC Saskatchewan and the Refugee Coalition concerned about the number of refugees who will actually receive help.

After the Interim Federal Health Program was cut last June for all refugees, public protest resulted in benefits being reinstated for government-sponsored refugees, but not for privately sponsored refugees. Now, according to the program, there are different rules and regulations to follow for different kinds of refugees, so that they do not get more health funding than an average low-income Canadian would.

In the last six years, Hope Mennonite Fellowship in North Battleford has helped to bring three refugee families to Canada. In light of the changes to the federal health program, Pastor Gerhard Luitjens said he is not sure what to think. "There seem to be very few answers at this point," he noted. "Where do we go from here? We're in a holding pattern right now. We don't know what this whole thing truly looks like."

Luitjens believes the church will want to sponsor another family at some point, but said the price tag is daunting. "We'd have to raise \$18,000," he pointed out.

Vicki Neufeldt, a member of the refugee committee at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, attended the meeting and had concerns for what this could mean for the future. "The [increased] bureaucracy seems a part of everything," she said. "I would hope that it would not stop us from trying to help refugees."

"The perception, as private sponsors, is that the government is committed to land more people," said Elaine Harder, refugee program coordinator for MCC Saskatchewan. "It hasn't turned out for 2012. . . . We were only able to bring in 29 people for all five provinces last year."

"Hopefully, 2013 will look better," she said. ☸



Fred, left, and Shirley Redekop, Vanh Kolong and Hannah Redekop are pictured at the second of two fundraisers for Christian Peacemaker Teams at Kolong's Mai Thai Restaurant in Uptown Waterloo, Ont.

Paying it forward

Former refugee supports CPT fundraiser

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

Vanh Kolong was in a refugee camp in Thailand in 1983 when Fred and Shirley Redekop were working there as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) refugee resettlement workers.

Kolong's ability to speak English made her useful to Shirley as she taught those destined for Canada about their new home that included snow and elevators. Kolong's mother babysat Lucas, the Redekops' oldest son, during this time.

Kolong and her family spent five years in the camp, unable to come to Canada due to chronic sickness in the family. The Redekops managed to have a letter written to then prime minister Brian Mulroney, asking for an exemption for the family. It was granted and they came to Hamilton, Ont., only an hour's drive from where the Redekops settled in Floradale, where Fred pastors Floradale Mennonite Church.

The families kept in touch through the years.

Fast-forward to 2013 and Hannah

Redekop, the Redekops' daughter, is about to leave for Colombia with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT).

Kolong sponsored two nights of meals at Mai Thai Restaurant in Uptown Waterloo, one of five restaurants she now owns. Having had to promise to not access Employment Insurance or welfare for 10 years after coming to Canada, she got an education and then went into business in 2001. Half the proceeds from the March 19 and 25 evenings went to CPT, Kolong's usual division for the many charities she has supported over the years.

More than 90 people came to the two evenings in support of Hannah, who will be accompanying Colombian union leaders under pressure from both paramilitaries and guerrillas, and documenting the effects of the herbicide spraying of cacao, the source of cocaine. This spraying, relatively ineffective on the cacao, wipes out food crops and poisons those living in the area.

/// Briefly noted

Moyer to study faith-based environmental work at U of T

Joanne Moyer of Winnipeg has been invited by the University of Toronto for a two-year study of faith-based organizations doing environmental work in Canada and the U.S. Her work is funded by a grant from the Social



Moyer

Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Under the supervision of Prof. Stephen Scharper of the department of anthropology at the U of T Mississauga campus and the School of Environment, she will explore the role of faith-based organizations in the environmental movement and ways in which learning for sustainability is transferred through the organizations to their target audiences. Her study ends December 2014. Moyer recently completed a Ph.D. degree in natural resource and environmental management at the University of Manitoba, for which she explored faith-based organizations engaged in environmental and development work in Kenya. She has worked as an environmental consultant for various research and writing projects, including Mennonite Central Committee's 7 Days website, which was later published as *Earth Trek: Celebrating and Sustaining God's Creation* (Herald Press, 2004). She also serves on the Mennonite Creation Care Network Council and the Peace Advisory Committee for Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba.

—University of Toronto

CPT also works with people who are pushed off their land by multinational companies; even though they have lived in areas for time out of mind, they have no title to the land.

Hannah admits that her parents are both supportive and anxious about her calling. ///

Patience pays off for Tanzanian farmer

Conservation agriculture transforms hunger into prosperity

By EMILY CAIN

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

“You don’t have to rush things,” says Richard Kipara, a small-scale farmer in the Arusha district of Tanzania, of the patience needed to successfully practise conservation agriculture.

Kipara has seen his family go from not having enough food to selling surplus grain, paying school fees, building a more comfortable home, and acquiring more land through the no-till farming method that conserves moisture and adds nutrients to the soil.

“The first year you don’t get much, but every year after, your yield increases,” says Kipara of the method that is being promoted in Tanzania by Canadian Foodgrains Bank member Mennonite Central Committee through its partner, Global Service Corp.

Kipara first learned about conservation agriculture a decade ago, when the Tanzanian government was training some farmers in the next village. Instead of waiting for the training to come to his village, he made the trek and joined the training session without an invitation.

“I just keep trying everything and, if I succeed, I am happy,” he says of his willingness to adopt new ways of doing things.

Later, when Global Service Corp was giving training on conservation agriculture, Kipara also participated and refined his use of the method. That open attitude has seen him go from farming two hectares of land to five, and his experimentation is not over. He recently planted some banana trees in the maize field, something that has never been done in the area. And this year he began harvesting the fruit.

At the same time, he has gone from being a participant in the training to promoting conservation agriculture in his own community.

Water scarcity

According to Kipara, water scarcity is on the rise in the region. Nearby rivers he remembers swimming in as a boy are now totally dried up. The lack of water has also interrupted the normal planting cycle that farmers in the area have been relying on for thousands of years, affecting their yields.

“It used to start raining at the same time in October every year,” he says. “But now they might not start until November or December. We don’t even know when to do our planting in our own farms anymore.”

For Kipara, one way of dealing with this change in weather patterns was to turn to conservation agriculture. “If people have the right knowledge and the right equipment, even with very little rain you can get enough food,” he says.

And although very successful now, Kipara well remembers a time when he and his family did not have enough to eat. He was relying on traditional methods of farming and they were not getting the rain they needed to grow enough food.

“I felt really bad when there wasn’t enough food for the children, or enough money to pay for clothes or medical services when they were needed,” he says.

Water ingenuity

Much of Kipara’s success can be traced back to his ingenuity in conserving water.

His fields, like most in the area, are always in need of water. Then he noticed that when it rained, water would rush down a nearby hill and pour down the road that ran beside his home and field. So last year—despite his neighbours thinking he was crazy—Kipara built ridges in the road and reinforced them with sandbags to divert the water to his maize field.

Next, he dug large holes beside his banana trees to capture water and hold it

CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK PHOTOS



Richard Kipara and his youngest son, Joshua, stand in their maize field, where they are now also successfully growing bananas.

next to the trunks.

He is also harvesting rain water for his family from the corrugated steel roof he installed on his new cement home. As he can afford it, he adds additional cement holding tanks that are filled when it rains.

So far, Kipara can store enough water to last the family for six months—something that saves a lot of time and energy, particularly for his wife Rose and their children, who would otherwise have to walk and fetch water at the local tap. ☘

GOD AT WORK IN US

Journalist honoured by Muslim community

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU
Manitoba Correspondent

Brenda Suderman, a member of Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, was one of two *Winnipeg Free Press* journalists to be honoured by the Islamic Social Services Association with its Ihsan Award recently.

Ihsan is an Arabic word that conveys “excellence and perfection in a matter of taking one’s inner faith and showing it in both faith and action,” explained Shahina Siddiqui, the association executive director, at the awards ceremony on April 11 in Winnipeg. She estimates there are about 10,000 Muslims living in Manitoba.

Suderman, who has been writing a weekly feature for the Faith Page since October 2006, said the award was “totally unexpected. I see this as an affirmation of the path I’ve taken in covering stories for the Faith Page. . . . It’s nice to hear they appreciate my work enough to recognize me publicly.”

“Brenda was honoured for her contributions and efforts towards building bridges of understanding between Muslims and their fellow Manitobans,” Siddiqui said. “She has been a trailblazer when it comes to connecting various faith communities in Manitoba and offering them the opportunity to tell their stories.”

This is only the second time the Islamic association has offered the Ihsan Award. “We don’t give it out that often,” explained Siddiqui. “We have to see consistent contributions and somebody with a vision. Brenda has been fair in covering faith perspectives in Manitoba. She went beyond the call of her job when she arranged for trips to different places of worship, encouraging dialogue and doing more than merely reporting on stories.”

In 2008, Suderman did a series called “Faith in the City” for the *Free Press*. She asked different faith groups to invite her as a reporter to their houses of worship and

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS PHOTO BY DAVID LIPNOWSKI



Shahina Siddiqui, executive director of the Islamic Social Services Association, left, presents Brenda Suderman, Faith Page reporter for the Winnipeg Free Press, with the Ihsan Award for her journalistic bridge-building efforts.

she asked readers to come with her. The series ran for approximately four months and Suderman visited 20 different worship services or meetings.

“Some people literally came with me to the events and worshipped along side whatever group we were with, and others followed

along with the blog that we set up for this in the paper,” said Suderman. “It was like going into other people’s houses. You get a better understanding of who they are.”

“It’s interesting how denominational we get,” Suderman said of the experience. “A lot of people don’t move out of their own denomination. I had the opportunity to do that and it’s been fabulous.”

Suderman, who prior to being a Faith Page writer was the *Free Press*’s Child’s Play columnist for six years, is completing her master of theology degree this spring at the University of Winnipeg.

“I’ve had two theological educations,” she said. “One in the city of Winnipeg, where people have been willing to educate me, explain their traditions, invite me in and see beautiful buildings, and meet people who are doing interesting things, and one is through the university.”

Suderman, who has an honours degree in journalism from Carleton University, Ottawa, said she has made a point of writing stories “that have a universal quality. When the *Free Press* asked me to do faith writing, I decided I wouldn’t cover strictly denominational stories, but cover stories that would be interesting to people no matter what their faith tradition was.”

Of her recent award, Suderman said, “I’m grateful for the honour and the openness shown to me by members of the Muslim community.”

Also receiving the award was Carol Sanders, the *Free Press*’s diversity reporter. ❧

/// Briefly noted

Erb named ‘citizen of the year’

KITCHENER-WATERLOO, ONT.—Jim Erb, a local funeral director and “compassionate community leader,” was named the 2012 Citizen of the Year by the local Lions Club, an honour he said he accepts with “humility and some embarrassment,” according to the March 25 *Waterloo Region Record*. Erb, 65, and a member of Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, was a founding member 37 years ago of the Wellesley Apple Butter Festival, a Waterloo city councillor from 1980-88, chair of the Kitchener-Conestoga Rotary Club’s annual Christmas turkey drive, and past-chair of the Rotary Club’s Dream Home project. His volunteer work dates back to his 20s, when he became a Big Brother to a boy who is now part of Erb’s family.

—*Canadian Mennonite*



Erb

FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

BOOK REVIEW

Romance novels by and for evangelicals

Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels.

By Valerie Weaver-Zercher. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, 318 pages.

REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

Amish romance novels are big business, with the top authors selling millions of copies. From the 1990s to 2004, one or two Amish novels were published each year. By 2008, there were 12 new titles published annually, and by 2012 the yearly output was 85. Puzzled by this phenomenal growth, Valerie Weaver-Zercher researched the novels, the writers, the readers and the Amish themselves in order to understand who is reading these books and why.

The popularity of this genre has been puzzling to me because I find Amish fiction almost impossible to read, even



though I enjoy the occasional old-fashioned romance. Weaver-Zercher's analysis helped me to understand that part of my problem is that I know too much about traditional Old Order culture. I can't get into the story because the lack of authenticity is distracting and I keep saying to myself, "No Amish person would think like that!"

Weaver-Zercher does not take a position on accuracy and recognizes that there is sharp disagreement over whether or not the authors portray true Amish culture. Those who enjoy the novels obviously find the plots and settings

convincing. Some readers find the rural, family-based settings particularly attractive. Weaver-Zercher concludes that whether or not you enjoy reading this type of novel depends on individual taste. She is ambivalent herself, but implies that millions of readers can't be wrong.

Perhaps the most profound insight offered by Weaver-Zercher is that these are novels written by evangelical Christians to be read by evangelical Christians. Not only do they provide a chaste alternative to the risqué literature of our modern culture, the spiritual themes offer a kind of devotional reading. While earlier novels often emphasized the idea of a born-again personal conversion, more recent stories find the protagonist struggling with her own faith in some way. Weaver-Zercher writes, "Evangelicals are reading about the Amish to learn how to be better evangelicals." She points out that most of the literary agents, publishers and marketers are also evangelical Christians.

While there is evidence that some Amish people read these romance novels, Weaver-Zercher found that most of the Amish had little good to say about the novels, and "approached the topic with a mixture of resignation, bemusement and exasperation." It seems that many of the Amish also find the novels lacking authenticity, except for the stories written by Linda Byler, the one writer who is Amish.

The title, *Thrill of the Chaste*, refers to Weaver-Zercher's theory that the appeal of these books is a reaction to the hyper-modernity and hyper-sexualization of modern culture. The old-fashioned values of purity and simplicity found in an Amish setting are appealing to those who are looking for a simple and wholesome reading experience.

Thrill of the Chaste helped me to see that Amish romance novels are designed for a specific audience that isn't really interested in whether or not the portrayal of Amish culture is accurate. Although I don't find the characters and settings convincing, I shouldn't look down on those who enjoy this type of reading experience. After all, millions of readers can't be wrong. Can they? ❧

/// Briefly noted

MB Herald goes digital

WINNIPEG—Some four years in the making, the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies recently released a searchable digital collection of 51 years of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. Archivist Conrad Stoesz came up with the idea of digitizing the collection in order to respond better to the research queries that were coming to the centre. "The digitizing project harnessed the contribution of volunteer scanners and the technical assistance of others in the church office to bring about what may be the first collection of this kind," Stoesz says. All 1,292 issues of the magazine from 1962 to 2012 are digitized as PDF files, and are indexed by software, enabling searches by names, topics, biblical passages and so on. According to Richard Thiessen, managing editor of the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO), "The *MB Herald* USB drive is a phenomenal resource for anyone who has an interest in Canadian MB history." The whole collection, with searchable index, resides on an eight-gigabyte USB drive and is available by e-mailing Jon Isaak at jisaak@mbconf.ca or calling him toll-free at 1-888-669-6575.

—Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies



BOOK REVIEW

Learning from the indigenous among us

Lighting the Eighth Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence and Protection of Indigenous Nations.

Leanne Simpson, ed. Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008, 232 pages.

Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence.

By Leanne Simpson. Arbeiter Ring Publishing 2011, 198 pages.

Aboriginal Rights are not Human Rights: Essays on Law, Politics and Culture.

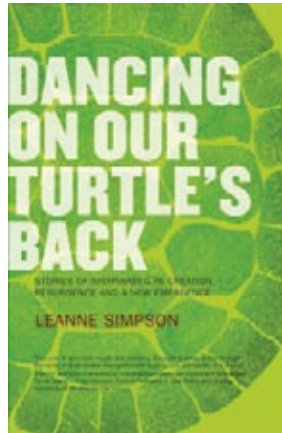
Peter Kulchyski. Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2013, 158 pages.

REVIEWED BY DAVID DRIEDGER
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

More information does not mean we will make the right choices, but less information insures an impoverished understanding. As the initial wave of media attention over Idle No More wanes, it is now important for Mennonite Church Canada to continue to listen to and learn from indigenous communities in Canada. To encourage this practice, I want to highlight three recent publications from Winnipeg-based Arbeiter Ring Publishing.

I consider myself a relatively invested person in these issues, but found myself a little taken aback by my own impoverished understanding of indigenous thought and issues. Because of my ignorance, I tended to consider these people and their experiences in narrow and limiting categories.

Peter Kulchyski's *Aboriginal Rights are*



not Human Rights (2013) outlines the differences between a European-based concept of human rights and an indigenous-based understanding of aboriginal rights. Important to this conversation is how expressions of human rights—the rights of each individual—can actually work against the aboriginal rights—the rights of a people in relationship to the land. One expression is abstract and universal, the other is concrete and particular. We do not all have recourse to aboriginal rights, according to Kulchyski, and we need to be careful if we assume that human rights will always serve indigenous groups.

Lighting the Eighth Fire (2008), edited by Leanne Simpson, is a collection of essays that bring into relief the different historical experiences of indigenous and settler cultures. If you can only commit to reading one of these books, this is the

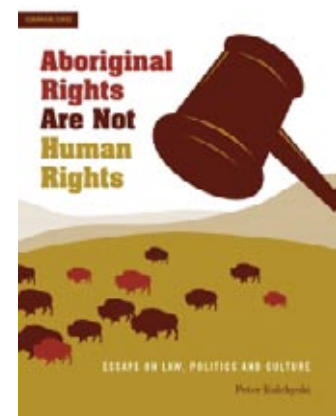
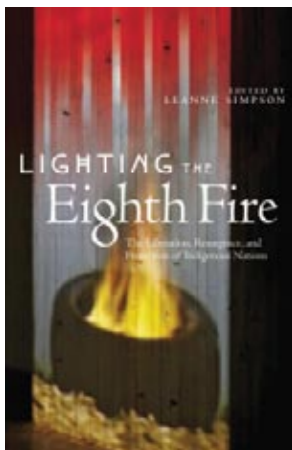
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Many of these essays outline the pre-existing notions of sovereignty of first-contact indigenous people and how these stories can help shape present practices. One of the most powerful contributions is by Brock Pitawanakwat, who deals with urban indigenous realities, primarily as they relate to people of “mixed-blood,” and how they fit among other expressions striving for a more “pure” notion of what it is to be indigenous.

Simpson's own *Dancing on our Turtle's Back* (2012) is an excellent example of what can be done as “post-colonial” thought (thinking and acting outside the parameters of Western/European models). Simpson is aware of the criticisms that can and should be levelled against unjust structures, but one of the strengths of her work is that she does not become crippled or embittered by them. Rather, she draws on the creative resources of her tradition to envision what is possible for a community emerging from the shadows of oppression.

Idle No More did not emerge on a whim. It is another expression of a long and deep history of working against the grain of a dominant culture. And if this particular movement loses its media appeal, you can be sure that it will emerge in other forms and in other places. Take the time to learn and, to paraphrase Jeremiah, “seek the welfare of this land and its people, for in their welfare you will find your own welfare.” ☿

David Driedger is associate minister of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.



FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

New Anabaptist Sunday school curriculum coming fall 2014

MennoMedia/Brethren Press

Development of a new Sunday school curriculum called Shine is underway by publishers MennoMedia and Brethren Press. Writers are beginning this month on the first quarter of Shine: Living in God's Light, which will be available for use in fall 2014.

The two publishing houses began more than 18 months ago to prepare a successor to their current Sunday school curriculum, Gather 'Round: Hearing and Sharing God's Good News. For congregations using Gather 'Round, the transition to Shine will be seamless. Gather 'Round was designed to run for eight years, with summer 2014 as the final quarter.

"We're very excited about Shine's emphasis on God's light shining through us," says project director Rose Stutzman. "As you read the Bible, you notice that the



theme of light is pervasive. God's light shines through the darkness—for God's people both then and now."

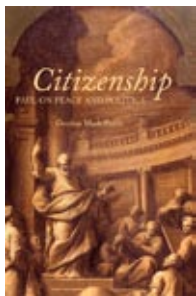
Shine's foundational Scriptures include Isaiah 9:2 and Matthew 5:14-16. "Jesus told us, 'You are the light of the world,'" says project developer Rebecca Seiling. "Shine's

materials take this seriously. They serve to inspire children and their families to be that light in the world around them."

Designed for children aged 3 through Grade 8, Shine will incorporate the latest understandings of the ways children learn. The material is based on a three-year overview of the Bible, with a separate Bible outline for early childhood (aged 3 to 5). Sessions include an emphasis on teaching prayer and other spiritual practices, and will also highlight peace themes in the Scriptures.

Primary and middle school children will read from a hardcover Bible storybook for use at church and at home. Junior youth will read the stories directly from the Bible. The flexible multi-age resource serves congregations with a small number of children of different ages.

"We dream of raising a generation of children who are inspired to shine God's light in the world around them," says Amy Gingerich, director of media for MennoMedia. "The products and guides we create will help children do just that." ✻



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-Thomas Yoder Neufeld, Conrad Grebel University College

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On the Zwieback Trail: A Russian Mennonite Alphabet of Stories, Recipes and Historic Events,
by Lisa Weaver, Julie Kauffman, and Judith Rempel Smucker

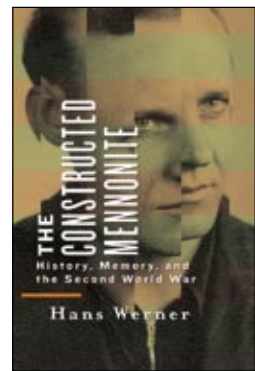


The Gift of Difference: Radical Orthodoxy, Radical Reformation,
Chris Huebner and Tripp York, eds.



Peace and Justice: Essays from the Fourth Shi'i Muslim Mennonite Christian Dialogue,
Harry Huebner and Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen, eds.

CMU PRESS



The Constructed Mennonite
History, Memory, and
the Second World War
by Hans Werner

One man, four identities, and a son's quest to reconcile the public and private lives of his Mennonite father in WWII.

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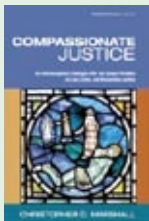
uofmpress.ca

/// Briefly noted

Marshall introduces book on compassionate justice

Chris Marshall, biblical scholar and authority on restorative justice, introduced his newest book, *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime and Restorative Justice*, during a presentation at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., on March 12. “The book’s overriding concern is to return again and again to the stories, metaphors and parables that Jesus told in Luke 10 and 15, to find guidance on the meaning of justice and the need for compassion,” he said. The two parables cover the main parties in the justice system. The story of the Good Samaritan addresses issues of victims and trauma, while the story of the Prodigal Son deals with reintegration of an offender into the community, he noted. Marshall’s book uses the term “compassionate justice” and defines “compassion” as “a positive response to caring for individual instances of suffering and pain.” Issues of victims’ needs are complex, and must be approached with integrity and understanding. “Forgiveness can be a way of short-circuiting the needs of the victims,” he said. “But what people don’t reckon on is that forgiveness is as much for the sake of the victim as for the offender.” Restorative justice is not a doctrine of forgiveness, he explained. But by placing the healing of hurts, the renewal of relationships and the re-creation of community at its centre, restorative justice paves the way for forgiveness to occur.”

—AMBS



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 Herald Press

Spring 2013 List of Books & Resources



Theology/Spirituality

Citizenship: Paul on Peace and Politics.

Gordon Mark Zerbe. Canadian Mennonite University Press, 2012, 276 pages.

Gordon Zerbe, professor of New Testament at Canadian Mennonite University, takes a fresh look at Paul's letters in the political and social context of his day. He believes that new understandings about the meaning of citizenship in the ancient Roman world give new insight into Paul's writings.

For a Church to Come: Experiments in Postmodern Theory and Anabaptist Thought.

Peter C. Blum. Herald Press, 2013, 178 pages.

In this collection of essays, Blum explores some philosophical ideas of postmodernism and compares them to the Anabaptist theology of John Howard Yoder.



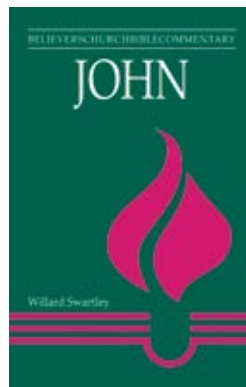
Jesus on Justice: Living Lives of Compassion and Conviction.

Don Posterski. World Vision Canada, 2013, 193 pages.

Using biblical stories, Posterski explores how Jesus serves as an advocate for justice for the oppressed, the outsider and those without power. Each of the 12 chapters includes current challenges and prayers of response, and each of the four sections includes suggestions for group discussion or self-reflection.

John. Willard M. Swartley. Herald Press, 2013, 593 pages.

In this recent Believers Church Bible Commentary, Swartley provides detailed information about the stories and themes of the fourth gospel. Like other commentaries in the series, each section of *John* also includes an analysis of the text in biblical context and in the life of the church.



Management and the Gospel: Luke's Radical Message for the First and Twenty-First Centuries.

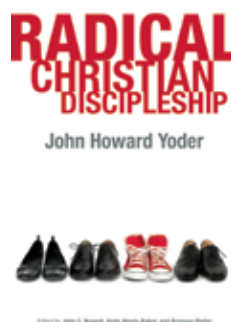
Bruno Dyck. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 320 pages.

Bruno Dyck explores what the gospel of Luke has to say about wealth management. He explains the meaning of Jesus' parables in the first century, when relationships were ultra-important, and how they should be understood in today's individualized culture.

Radical Christian Discipleship.

John Howard Yoder, edited by John C. Nugent, Andy Alexis-Baker and Branson Parler. Herald Press, 2012, 184 pages.

This book is a collection of



previously unpublished lectures, articles and sermons by Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, primarily from the 1950s and '60s. It is the first of a three-volume series of Yoder's writings geared for non-academics.

Sacred Pauses: Spiritual Practices for Personal Renewal. April Yamasaki. Herald Press, 2013, 190 pages.

Using stories from everyday living, April Yamasaki reflects on what it means to make time and space in the midst of a hectic life to reflect and connect with God. She offers a variety of practical ways to find these sacred pauses. For those who enjoy journaling, she provides occasional journal prompts with suggestions of what to write.

Things Hold Together: John Howard Yoder's Trinitarian Theology of Culture.

Branson L. Parler. Herald Press, 2012, 264 pages.

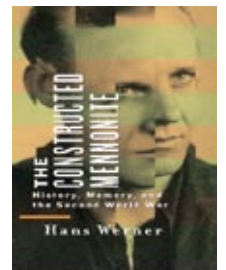
John Howard Yoder has been criticized for having a problematic Christology that denies the Trinity, separates nature from grace, and rejects the goodness of creation. Parler, who works in the Reformed tradition, argues that those criticisms are unfair and explains how things hold together in Yoder's theology.

History

The Constructed Mennonite:

History, Memory and the Second World War. Hans Werner. University of Manitoba Press, 2013, 190 pages.

Hans Werner collected his father's stories of growing up in a Mennonite community in Siberia and his many difficult experiences during the Second World War. Werner compared the stories to documented histories of the events and discovered that his father's memories are profoundly shaped by self-perception and community context.



The Jesus Tribe: Grace Stories from Congo's Mennonites, 1912-2012. Rod Hollinger-Janzen, Nancy J. Myers and Jim Bertsche, eds. Institute of Mennonite Studies, Elkhart, Ind., 2012, 273 pages.

To celebrate the centennial of Mennonite witness in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission compiled these 88 stories of Congolese Mennonite Christians. The short stories provide glimpses of how Mennonite churches took root there and flourished through the 20th century. Many stories have accompanying photos.

Jubilee: Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church Celebrates 50 Years, 1962-2012. Lendrum Mennonite Church, Edmonton, 2012, 255 pages.

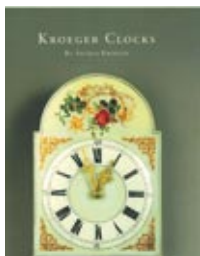
The various chapters of this large hardcover book examine many aspects of the past 50 years of the congregation with contributions from a wide variety of members. As well as descriptions of the programs and activities, there are reflections and sermon excerpts. The many colour photos enhance the story of this congregation.

Kroeger Clocks.

Arthur Kroeger. Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, Man., 2012, 175 pages.

Using his personal experience as part of the clock-making Kroeger family,

Arthur Kroeger describes the history of these clocks and what they meant to the Mennonites who carefully transported them to South and North America. The glossy pages carry many large photos of various clocks that have survived.



Manufacturing Mennonites: Work and Religion in Post-War Manitoba. Janis Thiessen. University of Toronto Press, 2013, 249 pages.

Thiessen presents an in-depth analysis of the relationship between Mennonite labourers, their employers and their churches, especially those employed by Friesen Printers, Loewen Windows and Palliser Furniture. She conducted many

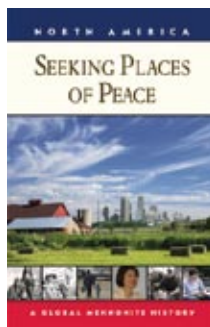
personal interviews with workers and managers of the three firms.

A Mennonite Estate Family in Southern Ukraine (1904-1924). Nicholas J. Fehderau, translated by Margaret Harder and Elenore Fehderau Fast. Pandora Press, 2013, 340 pages.

Fehderau describes his early life in Ukraine before emigrating to Canada in 1924. This translated memoir, written in the German language many years ago, has been condensed and edited by Anne Konrad. It includes an introduction by John B. Toews.

Seeking Places of Peace—Global Mennonite History Series: North America. Royden Loewen and Steven M. Nolt. Good Books and Pandora Press, 2012, 400 pages.

This fifth and final book in the Global Mennonite History Series provides an overview of 300 years of Mennonite history in North America. Rather than looking at individual Mennonite groups, Loewen and Nolt give a composite picture, emphasizing broad themes and showing changing attitudes over time.



Other Books

Making Friends Among the Taliban: A Peacemaker's Journey in Afghanistan. Jonathan P. Larson. Herald Press, 2012, 130 pages.

In 2010, a team of medical workers was ambushed and killed while travelling in Afghanistan. This book tells the story of Dan Terry, one of the team leaders, who had lived and worked in Afghanistan for many years. He was a humanitarian aid worker who devoted his life to making peace in this war-torn country.

Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels. Valerie Weaver-Zercher. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, 315

pages.

To understand why Amish romance novels have been selling so well in recent years, Valerie Weaver-Zercher researched the novels, the writers, the readers and the Amish themselves. While she herself is ambivalent about this genre, she recognizes that these chaste stories, set in an idyllic countryside, are attractive to many people.

Resources

Breathe It In: God Gives Life.

MennoMedia, 2013, boxed set, five-day curriculum.

The 2013 Vacation Bible School material is based on Bible stories from both the Old and New Testaments relating to breath and wind. The curriculum is designed for children from early childhood to Grade 5, and includes worship, drama, singing and activities. The five daily themes can be adapted to 12 shorter sessions.



CDs/DVDs

Weaving Life: A Documentary on the Life and Death of Peacemaker Dan Terry.

Eastern Mennonite University and MennoMedia, 2012, 58 minutes.

Dan Terry, a humanitarian aid worker in Afghanistan for many years, was killed there in 2010. Students from Eastern Mennonite University used interviews with family and friends, and some of Terry's own photographs, to tell the story of his commitment to peacemaking in war-torn Afghanistan. A discussion guide is available at mennomedia.org.

—Compiled by Barb Draper,
Books & Resources Editor



FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

/// Briefly noted

Bestselling authors serve up a second course in *Celebrations*

When *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* was released in 2011, the authors had no idea that there would be such an outpouring of support from their faithful blog readers, or that the book would become a Canadian bestseller. With readers around the world ready for a second course, Herald Press announces the May 2013 release of *Celebrations*. Each of the 118 recipes included in *Celebrations* are traditional

family favourites made in honour of a specific celebration, like baby showers and weddings. The book is filled from cover to cover not only with recipes and beautiful photos, but also with personal stories and devotional reflections entitled "Bread for the Journey." "We did not expect that God would use the simple idea of sharing family recipes to speak of his great love," says Lovella Schellenberg, one of 10 authors

of *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* and *Celebrations*.


"Our stories, devotionals and faith journeys interwoven through our recipe pages has allowed our book, often given as a gift, to not only feed the body, but offer food for the soul as well." While it's clear that these Mennonite girls sure can cook, it is also clear that their gifts extend far beyond the kitchen, and into readers' hearts.

—Herald Press



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COVER STORY

In the House of Friendship

MCC program provides care, schooling for children who live with their parents in prison

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor

Casa de la Amistad—House of Friendship—is a welcome change for about 140 Bolivian children aged 4 to 18. They are happy to participate in a program that offers them two meals a day, lessons and time to play with other kids in a safe environment.

“Bolivia is one of the only countries in the world where the kids live in the jails,” explains Renae Regehr. Renae and her husband Tyler are service workers with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Bolivia doing social work in the prisons in and around Cochabamba in conjunction with MCC’s partner organization, Obades

such as soap, clothes or books.

Bolivian prisons are also very overcrowded, according to Renae. At San Sebastian Mujers, 500 women and children live in a facility meant for 300 people and the men’s prison there is no better.

In the Bolivian criminal justice system people will sometimes spend years in prison just waiting for their trial. Some of the people incarcerated are falsely accused or they are facing charges for nonviolent crimes committed in an effort to provide for their families.

Although the Regehrs believe there are some benefits to keeping the families

Although the Regehrs believe there are some benefits to keeping the families together, the children are often in very unsafe environments

(Baptist Development Organization), a Bolivian nongovernmental organization.

Bolivia doesn’t have the social safety net that many western countries do, so children must either live with their parents in prison, where the parents are expected to provide for them, or live on the street if there are no family members for them to stay with.

The Regehrs work with children coming from the San Sebastian Varones and San Antonio men’s prisons, and San Sebastian Mujers women’s prison. The prisons in Bolivia are very different than those in Canada, Renae says. In the prison courtyards, inmates sell various wares and food, and do laundry to supplement the 80 cents a day they are given, which goes to the prison administration for meals or additional needs

together, the children are often in very unsafe environments, as prisoners—who can range from drug traffickers to rapists and murderers—can sometimes be violent. “I’ve seen kids come in with nasty looking scars on their bodies,” Renae says.

And when these children come to Casa de la Amistad, their attitudes can reflect the chaotic environment they live in. “There are no rules in the prisons,” Renae says. “Kids can do whatever they want. Working with these kids, that’s the biggest thing I’ve noticed.”

This is why the services at Casa de la Amistad are needed, she says. “Education is so important. These children need a safe place to grow, to have fun, and to feel

(Continued on page 34)

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RENAE AND TYLER REGEHR



Tyler Regehr gets a hug from Carlita at Casa de la Amistad.



At Casa de la Amistad, Tyler Regehr helps Flavio, who lives with his parents in a Bolivian prison.



Renae Regehr helps Joel with his homework.

(Continued from page 33)

secure. There's no security in the jail." She also notes that educational opportunities and social development opportunities improve the children's quality of life. With better opportunities, they are able to make better life decisions; some have become bakers, vegetable sellers, teachers, doctors and lawyers.

When the children return to their parents in prison, that's the strangest part of Tyler's day, he says in an MCC B.C. press release. "I guess seeing young children with their little backpacks on, saying hi to prison guards who all know their names, is a reality that is extremely foreign to people like us coming from a Canadian perspective."

The Regehrs also help with the Jireh

program that provides assistance for children who are at risk because their families are poor. They sometimes also face violence and alcoholism in the home, or they are forced to work on the streets.

Originally from Abbotsford, B.C., Renae spent time at Canadian Mennonite University before attending the University of the Fraser Valley with Tyler. They are both graduates of Mennonite Educational Institute and attend South Abbotsford Mennonite Brethren Church.

They are both planning on going back to university after returning to Canada, Renae to get a master of counselling degree and Tyler to get a teaching degree. After that, they hope to do more international aid work. ✎

VIEWPOINT

When churches plug in

BY REBEKAH KRAHN

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES



Krahn

The blue hymnal is nestled in the pew rack, its binding loose from having its spine cracked and pages flipped too many times to count. Now, as technology drives the culture, more and more Mennonite churches are shelving *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and rolling down screens.

In Altona (Man.) Mennonite Church,

Sing the Story. "Holding and reading music from a book symbolizes a person's identity," she says. "The screen is a tool which is, first, convenient, and has the greatest benefit of being ecological to some degree. The screen is a product of our technological age, creating instant accessibility to words and images."

Why this trend of churches to lay down

I had left an 'unplugged' culture and entered a sanctuary that relied on electricity to produce community.

where I grew up, the church has firmly stuck to traditional hymns, with the song leader conducting the congregation in four-part harmony from the blue hymnal. It is a rich experience to be immersed in voices around you knitting together to express inspiring words.

Singing from a hymnal is a communal action, says Marilyn Houser Hamm, a contributor to the *Hymnal: A Worship Book* supplements, *Sing the Journey* and

their hymnals and pull down screens instead? What does the shift mean to church identity? Is there a place where both the book and the screen can engage all ages?

My curiosity to answer these questions increased one Sunday morning when I attended a friend's baptism and discovered the church used a screen for lyrics and a band that played electric instruments. No song leader. I had left an "unplugged" culture and entered a sanctuary that relied

on electricity to produce community.

The pristine screen hung over the worship band with bold words and serene nature scenes displayed while the congregation sang, mouths moving to the voices of the band. Meanwhile, the blue hymnals collect dust in the pews, replaced by a modern medium more accessible to the masses. I was reminded of those televised sing-a-longs that follow the Mickey Mouse head bouncing onto each word that needs to be sung.

I was lost in how easy it was to gaze up at a screen and regurgitate the lyrics sung by the band. While other worshippers were swaying and feeling the music, I was stuck mumbling the words. With no book in hand, or conductor for guidance, I felt disconnected from the music being amplified.

Darryl Neustadter Barg, Mennonite Church Manitoba's associate director of communications, believes the wide variety of musical styles emerging in the church today calls for respect and understanding. As one actively involved in music ministry, Barg is passionate about engaging those who have not grown up singing four-part harmony in the blue-hymnal generation.

"Worship is a communications event," he says. Whether people are

communicating through a screen or through a hymnal, they are still communicating and essentially fostering a community of believers. People shouldn't simply dismiss chorus or hymn-sing music because they are unfamiliar with the format, he says.

With new musical variations emerging, it's important that people used to different styles be more gracious than ever. "There is a lot of baggage that is being put into the worship bag," says Barg, who fears that styles of music are becoming less about expressing a relationship with God and more about personal preference.

The danger is that worship music can become idolatrous. Church attendance can depend more on the external presentation of music and less on the internal integrity of worship. As different genres of music grow within the church, Barg hopes for greater respect and a mature approach to musical language.

Whether you belong with a book in your hands, or a screen to look at, what matters is the connections that you are creating. ❧

Rebekah Krahn is a communications student at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg.

The church as landlord

Providing affordable housing for students may keep young people connected to the church

BY EMILY LOEWEN

Young Voices Co-editor

In an age when many Mennonite churches worry about losing young people, David Epp has a solution: the church should become their landlord. At Rosthern Mennonite Church's semi-annual meeting late last summer, he proposed that the congregation purchase a house in Saskatoon to provide a community living space with affordable rent for Mennonite students in the city.

"I mean, these are people, young people who are at a crossroads, and this is a period

of time when lots of people struggle to continue going to church, for whatever reason," he says. "So in the case of Rosthern, buying a house in Saskatoon would enable young adults who are living away from their home congregation, you know, to have points of contact with their home congregation."

Craig Neufeld, pastor of Rosthern Mennonite where Epp is a member, was intrigued by the proposal. Although no formal steps have been taken, Neufeld

(Continued on page 36)

PHOTO BY MATTHEW RYAN PHOTOGRAPHY



David Epp proposed that his congregation in Rosthern, Sask., purchase a house in Saskatoon to provide affordable and community-oriented housing for Mennonite students.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAM DUECKMAN



Menno Simons Centre residents are pictured after a Monday Night Swim Club outing at Locarno Beach, Vancouver. From left to right: Sam Dueckman, Aaron Bohmer, Eryn Derksen, Mike Currie, Maria Krause and Erik de Jong.

(Continued from page 35)

knows there is some support in the congregation. “The benefit I see, at least, is a continued fostering of spiritual life and a way for them to remain connected with the larger Mennonite church,” he says.

Another benefit, according to Epp, is that providing a home with affordable rent is a way the church can affirm the gifts and choices of Mennonite students who do not attend one of the Mennonite-affiliated colleges or universities, since young adults who choose non-Mennonite schools often aren’t eligible for church scholarships or bursaries.

Epp, 22, is graduating from Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg this spring, and has received regular financial support from his congregation. However, his two brothers who are studying engineering and pharmacy, disciplines he says that can be of service to the church,

“The consistent message we get from the alumni is they don’t care that they have a small room, they don’t care that the building is old, they just are most interested in having that community-living aspect where they get to know their roommates and form new friendships and learn from each other,” says Kevin Hiebert, the centre’s vice-president.

Of course, living in community can come with its own challenges, as people have different communication styles and understandings of how clean a communal space should be.

But for Sam Dueckman, who lived at Menno Simons for a year while studying geography at UBC, the centre provided a Mennonite alternative to his academic community. “My university experience was not explicitly anti-Christian, but it was definitely secular, and it was refreshing to have a living environment where faith was dis-

Of course, living in community can come with its own challenges, as people have different . . . understandings of how clean a communal space should be.

are not eligible for the same scholarships. “If we’re blessed with different gifts and the church is made up of different parts of a body, in my mind at least, it didn’t make a kind of sense for my brothers to not necessarily receive the same amount of support from a congregation,” he says.

Although new to his congregation, Epp’s idea isn’t without precedent. In New York, Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship runs Menno House, which provides affordable community-style housing for young Anabaptists. In Vancouver, the Pacific Centre for Discipleship Association operates Menno Simons Centre, a residence for Mennonite students attending the University of British Columbia (UBC) and Regent College.

Based in a former convent, the Vancouver centre houses 22 students each year; students can stay for a two-year term. The board tries to select students from a variety of locations and disciplines, although the majority come from Christian backgrounds. Aside from providing an affordable place to live, the centre is an important way for students to make new friends and feel part of a community.

cussed and reinforced,” he says via e-mail.

He also found that living in community with people his own age with similar beliefs made it easier to build friendships. “The single best thing about living at Menno was definitely the fun we could have as a group on short notice,” Dueckman says. “We started a swim club that went and jumped in the ocean almost every Monday night of my first semester there, into December,” he says. “Because everybody was just down the hall from each other, you could almost always find something to do.”

While the idea is only in the discussion phase in Rosthern, Epp hopes that it will become a reality, so that students at non-Mennonite schools can experience the community he had while studying at Rosthern Junior College (RJC) and CMU. “You know people who have gone to [Canadian Mennonite Bible College], CMU, RJC, [Mennonite Collegiate Institute] will recognize that probably the apex of our experience is living with our friends and living with another, and learning what it means to live as disciples amidst a community.” ❧



Friends from the Menno Simons Centre take the ferry to the Gulf Islands. Pictured clockwise from top left: Mike Curry, Sam Dueckman, Eryn Derksen and Ann Wang.

Calendar

British Columbia

May 25: MCC World Relief Fair, Black Creek.

June 6: Columbia Bible College open golf tournament at Redwoods Golf Course.

June 8: MCC fundraising lunch, at Garden Park Tower, Abbotsford.

Jun 21-22: Brian Derksen concert to celebrate the 40th-anniversary of MCC B.C. thrift shops, at Central Heights Mennonite Brethren Church, Abbotsford.

June 22: MCC B.C. annual general meeting at Central Heights Mennonite Brethren Church, Abbotsford, and

groundbreaking for new MCC centre in Abbotsford.

June 22-23: Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church 50th-anniversary celebration.

July 2-15: Columbia Bible College Anabaptist heritage tour.

Sept. 6-7: MCC Festival for World Relief, at the Abbotsford Tradex.

Sept. 18-22: Truth and Reconciliation Commission gathering, in Vancouver.

Sept. 28: Mennonite Fall Fair, in Prince George.

Alberta

May 11: Spring work day at Camp Valaqua. For more information, or to volunteer, call the camp office at 403-637-2510.

May 24-26: "Designed in God's Image" women's retreat at Sunnyside Christian Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake. Speaker: Michelle Copithorne of Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary. For more information, contact Ev Buhr at 780-436-3431.

June 5: Annual heritage retreat for seniors at Camp Valaqua, beginning at 10 a.m. Speaker: Will Loewen of Trinity Mennonite Church, DeWinton, Alta. Closing concert by Corpus Christi Male Choir. For more information, call Kurt Janz at 403-271-7477.

June 15: Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon. Registered hikers receive a free T-shirt and hot dog lunch. For more information, or to register, call the camp office at 403-637-2510. All proceeds support the camp.

Saskatchewan

May 11: RJC open campus day.

May 11: RJC spring choir concert, 7 p.m.

May 25: RJC golf tournament at Valley Regional Park.

June 21-22: RJC year-end musical performances.

Manitoba

May 10-11: Work-a-thon at Camp Moose Lake. For more information, e-mail camps@mennochurch.mb.ca.

May 12: Mother's Day fundraiser at Camp Assiniboia. For more

information, e-mail camps@mennochurch.mb.ca.

May 24-26: Birding retreat at Camp Moose Lake. For more information, e-mail camps@mennochurch.mb.ca.

May 29: Westgate Collegiate spring concert (Grades 7, 8, 9) at Bethel Mennonite Church, 7 p.m.

May 30: Westgate Collegiate spring concert (Grades 10, 11, 12) at Bethel Mennonite Church, 7 p.m.

June 9: MCI Saengerfest, worship 10:30 a.m., concert, 2 p.m.

June 11: CMU President's Golf Classic.

June 15: Golf tournament fundraiser for Camp Koinonia. For more information, e-mail camps@mennochurch.mb.ca.

June 17-28: Canadian School of Peacebuilding at CMU.

June 23-25: Wilderness challenge fundraiser for Camp Koinonia. For more information, e-mail camps@mennochurch.mb.ca.

July 29-Aug. 2: MC Canada youth assembly at Camp Assiniboia, Man.

Aug. 27: Westgate Collegiate annual golf tournament at Bridges Golf Club.

Ontario

May 3: MCC and Theatre of the Beat present the *Forgiven/Forgotten* Tour, a play and conversation about restorative justice and a Christian response to crime, at Nineteen on the

(Continued on page 38)

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UpComing

Calling all hymn writers

The Great Canadian Hymn Competition II, sponsored by Toronto's Pax Christi Chorale, invites composers to submit original hymns by June 1. The competition reaches out to composers across all denominations without restriction on text or content. It also provides a rare opportunity for new hymns to be promoted and performed to a broad audience. Winning entries will be announced in mid-September and performed in concert on Oct. 6 at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto. First prize is \$350, second prize is \$150 and third prize is \$50. The original Great Canadian Hymn Competition in 2009 attracted more than 60 diverse entries, with a cappella, organ and instrumental arrangements, and English, Japanese, Latin and Spanish texts. For more information, contact Jennifer Collins at 416-786-2509 or gm.paxchristichorale@gmail.com.

—Pax Christi Chorale

(Continued from page 37)

Park, Stouffville, at 8 p.m. For more information, visit forgivenforgotten.wordpress.com.

May 3,5: Elaine Pearce and friends present "Dynamic Duos," a benefit concert for MCC work in Haiti, featuring music by Rodgers and Hammerstein and other composers/lyricists. (3) Victoria Jubilee Hall, Walkerton, at 7:30 p.m. (5) St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Southampton, at 2:30 p.m.

May 4: MCC and Theatre of the Beat present the *Forgiven/Forgotten* Tour, a play and conversation about restorative justice and a Christian response to crime, at the Berkeley Theatre, Toronto, at 8 p.m. For more information, visit forgivenforgotten.wordpress.com.

May 4,5: The Soli Deo Gloria Singers present their spring concert, "Faith Tapestry"; (4) at UMEI, at 7:30 p.m., and (5) at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. Advance tickets are available at MSCU branches and Ten Thousand Villages, or by calling UMEI at 519-326-7448.

May 5: The Inter-Mennonite Children's

Choir presents "We Will Sing," featuring the music of Jim Papoulis, at Breslau Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m.

May 5: MCC and Theatre of the Beat present the *Forgiven/Forgotten* Tour, a play and conversation about restorative justice and a Christian response to crime, at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, Orillia, at 8 p.m. For more information, visit forgivenforgotten.wordpress.com.

May 5: Second annual Male Chorus Sing at the Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Leader: Bob Shantz. For more information, call Will Stoltz at 519-696-2805.

May 11: The 75th anniversary committee of Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, is hosting a garden sale, bake sale, barbecue, silent auction and café, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This year's silent auction theme is "Experiencing life together"; instead of items, donors are asked to offer such things as an evening in your backyard, a boat or motorcycle ride.

May 11: Hidden Acres' 18th annual road hockey tournament, for ages 18

and up. Register by May 6 by e-mail at roadhockey@gmail.com.

May 11: Fifth annual Paddle the Grand fundraiser for Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. For more information, visit slmc.ca.

May 11: The Essex Kent Mennonite Historical Association presents award-winning Mennonite author Rudy Wiebe, at UMEI, Leamington, at 7:30 p.m. Topic: "Writing a lifetime: 58 years of living with words." Book-signing and dessert to follow. For tickets, call Walt Koop at 519-326-9791.

May 11: Menno Singers concert with the Menno Youth Singers, gospel with jazz combo, at Floradale Mennonite Church, at 8 p.m. For ticket information, visit mennosingers.com.

May 17-20: W(alk), W(itness), W(orship) youth retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp. For more information, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

May 21-24: St. Jacobs Mennonite Church quilt show, part of the Waterloo Region's Quilt & Fibre Art Festival. For more information, visit www.stjacobs.com/quilt-fibre-festival.

May 26: Silver Lake Mennonite Camp

annual general meeting, at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, Waterloo, from 3 to 4 p.m.

May 31-June 2: Mennonite Church Eastern Canada "Make a Difference" youth retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp.

June 2: Seventh annual Harmonia Sacra solfa shaped-note singing event, at the Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Leader: Laurence Martin. For more information, call Will Stoltz at 519-696-2805.

June 11: Fundraising chicken barbecue and pie auction for Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, at the camp, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. To reserve a ticket (required), call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

June 21-23: Hanover Mennonite Church 50th-anniversary celebration. For more information about the June 21 Mennonite Youth Fellowship reunion at Riverstone Retreat, or activities on June 22 and 23, contact the church at 519-364-4309 or hmc@wightman.ca.

June 23: Poetry reading by Cheryl Denise (from her book *Leaving Eden*) at

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the Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Music led by Fred Martin and No Discernable Key. For more information, call Will Stoltz at 519-696-2805.

July 25-28: The Bridgefolk (Mennonite-Catholic) conference, Reconciliation: A Way to Peace, at Conrad Grebel University College. Keynote speakers: John Rempel of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre and Christian McConnell of St. Michael's College at U of T. For more information, or to register, visit bridgefolk.net.

Aug. 24: 10th annual Central Ontario all-day Sacred Harp fasola shaped-note singing with midday dinner on the grounds of the Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville; from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information, e-mail Gillian Inksetter at gillian@inksetter.com.

To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by e-mail to calendar@canadianmennonite.org.

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Please direct resumes and/ or inquiries to
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LENDRUM MB CHURCH invites applications for **TWO PASTORAL ROLES**. Lendrum is a well-established church in Edmonton, Alberta with an average attendance of 150 people. We are a diverse intergenerational congregation. We are looking for pastors who

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- have a seminary and/or university education
- support the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith and the Mennonite Brethren church polity
- welcome dialogue reflecting a diversity of opinions

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For further information, or to apply, please call (780.434.4268) or e-mail to Pastoral Search Committee lbcc@compusmart.ab.ca. All communication and applications will be handled confidentially.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - MENNOHOMES INC.

Due to the retirement of our current Executive Director, MennoHomes inc. invites applications for the position of Executive Director of the organization. We are searching for a committed individual who will offer gifts of leadership, compassion and an understanding of issues of poverty and homelessness. The individual will work effectively with a volunteer board, donors, funding agencies and government services to find solutions to these issues. The Executive Director will be required to use excellent inter-personal and communication skills to lead the organization towards a common vision.

The ideal candidate will have at least 5 years of senior management experience, relevant post-secondary education, a good knowledge of the Anabaptist constituency in Waterloo Region and an understanding of affordable housing issues, resources and challenges. The Executive Director represents MennoHomes to various church, community and government constituencies. The position includes generating the financial resources required to respond to affordable housing needs.

This is a 60% full-time equivalent position beginning in Sept 2013 in Kitchener, ON. Please send your resume to MennoHomes Inc., 1420 King St. E., Suite 100, Kitchener, ON N2G 4Z8 or by e-mail to mennohomescw1@sympatico.ca by May 30. More information about MennoHomes Inc. can be found at www.mennohomes.com.

Employment Opportunities

MUSIC COORDINATOR POSITION

NUTANA PARK MENNONITE CHURCH in Saskatoon is looking for a Music Coordinator to serve as choral director and work with a music committee to develop and enhance the role of music in our congregation. This is a part-time position. Please send all inquiries and/or resumes to: Selection Committee, Nutana Park Mennonite Church, 1701 Ruth Street, Saskatoon, SK S7J 0L7; or email: npmc@npmc.net. The deadline for applications is May 24, 2013.

Easter in Pinawa

PHOTOS BY LAMONT REDDIG / TEXT BY KEN REDDIG



While the Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Alliance congregations in Pinawa, Man., had their separate services on Easter Sunday, a number joined the Pinawa Christian Fellowship (a shared ministry of the Anglican, United, Presbyterian and Mennonite Church Manitoba denominations) for its unique Easter sunrise service at the local suspension bridge. A fire was built in a container and the service began with singing and a reading from John 21 by Pastor Rob Murray. The hardy congregants then ate fish and bannock that had been fried during the service and drank wine from a Manitoba winery. Chantel Zwiep of Morden, Man., was in town to visit family and brought her two children to the service. 'My children . . . felt it was an adventure in worship that they will never forget,' she said.



All four congregations in Pinawa, Man., jointly participated in a Good Friday procession of the Way of the Cross through the town. The procession began and ended at St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church. Marchers carried the cross from station to station, where readings and prayers were offered.