

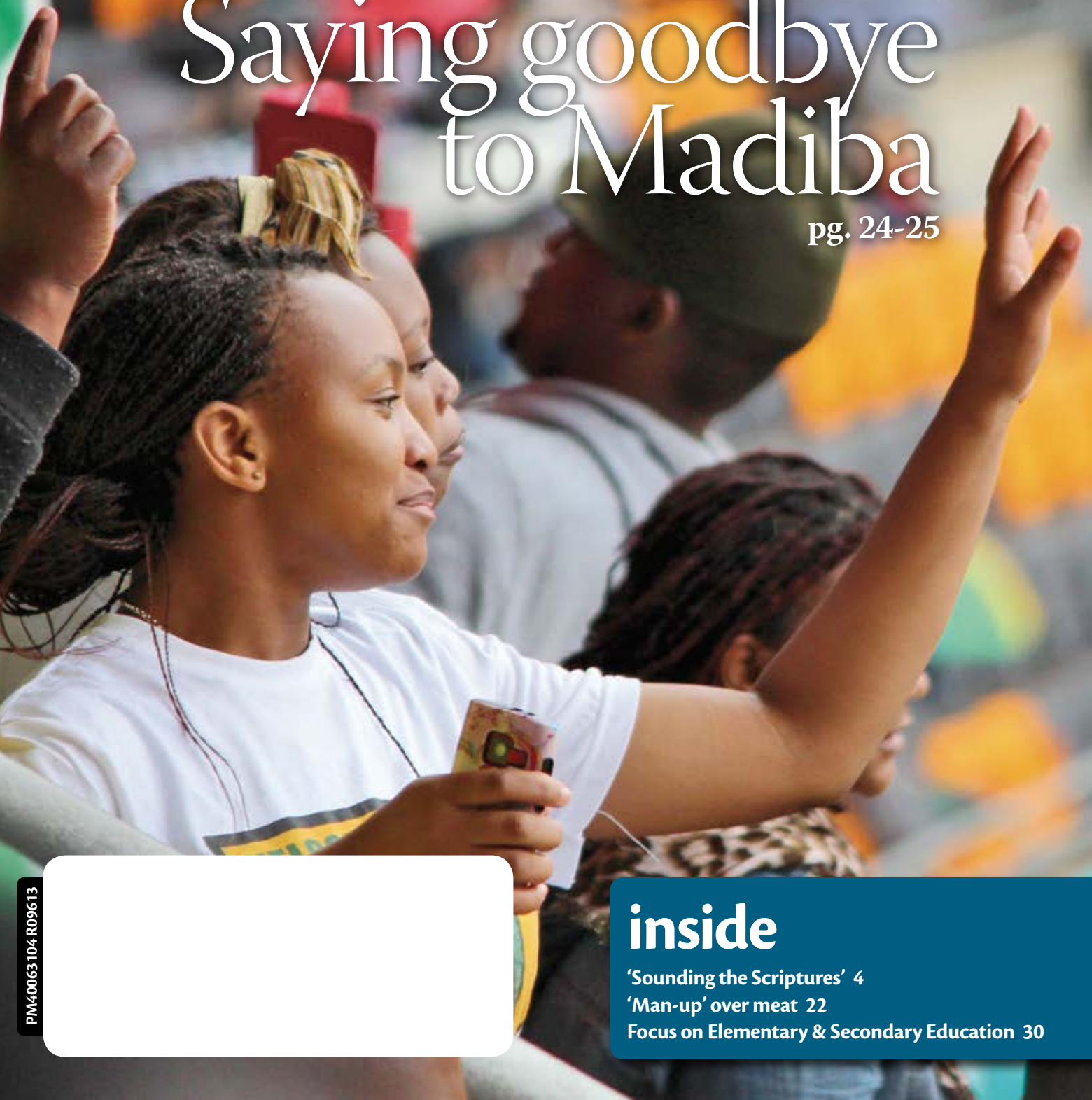
CANADIAN MENNONITE

January 6, 2014

Volume 18 Number 1

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EDITORIAL

Priority issues for 2014

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

What will the issues be for Canadians in 2014, my American friend asked me over the Christmas break. A good but difficult question, I said to myself—a query worth sharing with my faith community for the coming year. So here goes:

New biblical themes and practices will be explored. David Rogalsky has already investigated some new and fresh thinking on the atonement. Next issue, John Rempel challenges our practice of communion, asking us to stretch our imaginations and look at this long-established spiritual ritual. “Is it an inclusive or a covenantal meal?” he asks.

New excitement about the biblical canon itself is already in the works—reading the narrative in storytelling form can breathe new life into this guide for living. “Biblical storytelling is an act of translation,” John Epp tells managing editor Ross W. Muir in an interview beginning on page 4. “It takes the ‘paper Bible’ and returns it to its native medium of speech. The Bible was speech before it became paper.”

Aaron Epp, our Young Voices co-editor, is challenging his peers to a year of reading the biblical text from cover to cover, an admirable discipline that can lead to serious spiritual formation early in life. We commend him for this campaign and ask older adults to join in. “I want to have deep thoughts. I want to

ponder my faith a little bit,” Epp writes in issuing the challenge. “I figure one of the best ways to do that is to immerse myself in the Bible. I’ve never read the Bible from beginning to end and, more importantly, reading my Bible on a regular basis has not become a habit in my life. I’d like it to be.”



A study on human sexuality is on schedule by Mennonite Church Canada, in Stage 5 of Being a Faithful Church, a process underway for congregations for some three years now. This is an important issue to discern as sexuality becomes front and centre in the larger society. Laden with potential controversy, this discussion requires a delicate approach over the next year. The framers of this study have given us some important goalposts, such as:

“We want to be a people confident of our identity as faithful Christians, going about the vocation that is ours, practising the love, forgiveness, burden-bearing, truth-telling, humility, sincerity, trust and nonviolent spirituality that are embedded in our identity, our formal Confession, and our proclamation to others.”

Good advice from Robert J. Suderman, Rudy Baergen and Willard Metzger.

Euthanasia, while not on the church’s official radar, is edging its way to the top of ethical dilemmas facing a modern society in which longer life is bringing its own unique issues to the aging. Whether passive or active, either form of

the right to end one’s life remains illegal in Canada, but a recent British Columbia Supreme Court decision has overturned the section of the Criminal Code banning physician-assisted suicide, which has, in turn, been appealed by the federal government to the Supreme Court of Canada. This will likely hit the pages of *Canadian Mennonite* in the year ahead.

Continuing as important issues will be: how we care for creation; our relationship to our indigenous neighbours; and what we will do as faithful peacemakers in an increasingly militaristic/nationalistic political environment that tests our core belief in peace and justice, and our identity as citizens of God’s kingdom first and our country second.

It goes without saying that the demographics of the global Mennonite family, of which Canada is a vital part, is undergoing rapid change, directly affecting how we relate to each other as sisters and brothers in the faith. It is not too much to declare that the Global South is rising, not only in numbers, but also in shaping our theology and practice. The issues with which we struggle, as a dominant European majority, differ considerably with those of our African, Latin American and Asian contingent.

As first-generation Christians, their issues of personal piety expressed in more charismatic, free-spirited ways take priority over many of the social concerns on the North American scene.

Canadian Mennonite, as announced last issue, will give voice to the leaders and spokespersons of colour and differing ethnicities in 2014, so that with humility and grace we can be more united as we engage in conversation and learning.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Three hours before the memorial service for Nelson Mandela began, people gathered to honour their beloved past-president and peacemaker in a celebratory manner. The gathering included singing, dancing, clapping and shouts of ‘Mandela, you’re my president!’ See reflections by Andrew and Karen Suderman and Will Braun on pages 24-25.

PHOTO: ANDREW SUDERMAN, MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA WITNESS

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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 •

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MELISSA MILLER



Online NOW!

It's not too late to join Aaron Epp in the challenge of reading through the Bible in one year. See his article at youngvoices.canadianmennonite.org/articles/yearreadingbiblicallystartsnow.



Digital CM: If you currently subscribe to the print edition, you can sign up to receive a digital copy at no extra cost. Bonus: it will appear in your e-mail inbox before the paper version arrives. Contact Lisa at office@canadianmennonite.org. More information at canadianmennonite.org/subscriptions/edelivery.

'Sounding the Scriptures'

Managing editor Ross W. Muir was introduced to biblical storytelling when John Epp, a member of the Network of Biblical Storytellers Canada and Toronto United Mennonite Church, visited First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., last spring. Following that encounter, the two chatted in person and online over the summer and into the fall.



John Epp

The word 'performance' doesn't capture the participatory nature of storytelling. In biblical storytelling, the audience can't sit back and be spectators.

ROSS W. MUIR: *What is biblical storytelling?*

JOHN EPP: Biblical storytelling is an act of translation. It takes the "paper Bible" and returns it to its native medium of speech. The Bible was speech before it became paper. The Hebrew God is a speaking God, Jesus is portrayed as a powerful oral communicator in all four gospels, and the Bible in oral culture was understood to be a speaking book. The Bible began as a speech event, and parchment was a way of preserving speech itself, knowing it would be sounded out loud again in the company of God's gathered people. The Bible is a living voice, and biblical storytelling sets that voice free.

Biblical storytelling is an act of interpretation. When I am telling a biblical story, I'm not just giving you the "facts." It is a bold act of interpretation that uses the primal tools of the voice, the imagination, our whole being—body, mind and soul—to exegete the biblical passages.

Biblical storytelling is much more than a performance, it is a communal act of worship where story, storyteller and congregation come together to create a unique opportunity for the Spirit to speak to the church. Tim Reimer, the pastor at Danforth Mennonite Church in Toronto, calls biblical storytelling, "the great exegetical experiment." It is communal exegesis.

It is a prophetic act. It reclaims the prophetic role in the church. Prophets are the keepers of the dream, the vision. Storytellers hold up that vision for all to see.

RWM: *What are some ways biblical storytelling is used in worship: As an alternative to a sermon? As a way to dramatize a sermon or the theme of a particular service?*

JE: Most of my tellings are used as a replacement of the sermon time. However, some of the most exciting uses have been communal tellings, where a group of people tell a larger section of Scripture (Matthew 8 to 10, for example). There are many ways to use biblical storytelling:

(Continued on page 6)

PHOTO BY DOREEN MARTENS



'Our passion for Scripture will only be awakened by the living voice,' says biblical storyteller John Epp of Toronto. 'I think that the Bible only becomes Scripture once it is returned to its native medium of sound via the voice. When people hear the voice of Scripture, it ignites a flame.'

PHOTO BY KEVIN DOONAN



'In biblical storytelling, the audience can't sit back and be spectators,' says John Epp, a member of the Network of Biblical Storytellers Canada. 'The congregation is faced directly, not only by the storyteller, but also by the direct speech of the gospels, or Paul, or the prophets.'

(Continued from page 4)

• SCRIPTURE READING

Scripture reading can sometimes feel like one of the duller moments in our services, but a well-prepared reading is like living bread. The Greek word for “read” is “to re-know” or “to re-live.” Let’s learn to read from the heart, with intelligence and authenticity.

The steps to preparing a good reading are very similar to telling by heart. In fact, the readers on our Scripture Reader Team occasionally find themselves going “off paper” very naturally.

Begin by forming a Scripture reader group at your church. A good resource is *Devote Yourself to the Public Reading of Scripture* by Jeffery D. Arthurs.

• CHILDREN’S STORIES

There are so many short, exquisitely crafted stories in the Bible. These can be learned by heart with a few links to the lives of the children. My wife learned the story of Mary’s Easter encounter with the gardener. She told the story with the big Bible from the communion table on her lap. The story was simple, short and very engaging. Kids go away wondering what else might be in that big mysterious book.

The “Godly Play” movement has it right: Children already have a spiritual life; all they need is a language to express it. Why not tell them the church’s primal stories?

• WORDS OF RITUAL

There are words we use regularly in church life that could be learned by heart. How wonderful it is when a pastor has learned the communion text by heart or the baby dedication. Then they are free to speak directly to the people involved. Speech birthed from the heart has a power that looking down at paper can’t communicate.

RWM: *How did you get involved in biblical storytelling and in the Network of Biblical Storytellers Canada?*

JE: It all began with my disappointment with the Bible. As a young adult, there was great joy in discovering who Jesus was through fellowship, preaching and music, but my early attempts at reading

the Bible on my own were far from joyful. I knew it was a treasure, but apart from a few precious verses I experienced a sense of futility in trying to read it.

I loved how pastors and teachers could draw things out, but I just couldn’t. Bible college and seminary gave me some excellent study tools, but it wasn’t until I began learning the Bible by heart, and speaking it out loud in church, that the true power of the Bible revealed itself to me.

Then the Bible took on an authority and intimacy that was more, much more, than study or reading. Finally, the Bible was linked with the kind of transforming power I knew was always there. It has been a 30-year journey since my original disappointment. Everything has now finally come together: academic study, Scripture and the power of speech.

RWM: *What are your favourite biblical stories? And why?*

JE: Another long journey for me has been to find my voice. I come from a long line of engineers, so I am gifted mechanically, but I was far less confident with my voice, yet there was an ache to speak.

During a course at AMBS [Anabaptist

Mennonite Biblical Seminary] we were required to learn a Bible story by heart. When the hat came round to me, I picked Mark 7:31-37, “the healing of the deaf mute!” I have many favourites, but this one is close to my heart.

Biblical storytelling has been a healing of my voice. I have learned that God hides God’s greatest gifts in our deepest fears. I also feel particularly drawn to Paul’s letters and the Hebrew prophets because of their face-to-face immediacy.

RWM: *How do you find biblical storytelling received in the churches where you are invited to bring your gift, especially Mennonite churches?*

JE: Somewhat mixed in the beginning, just because I was less confident and more dramatic than I am now. But for the most part, it is received very well. But I also wonder whether there is an unnamed ambivalence deep within our Mennonite psyche. I was told once, “We live the Bible. We don’t talk about it. It is arrogant to talk about the Bible.” I wonder if deep within our psyche we are still “the quiet of the land.”

Another factor that explains the hesitation is that many Mennonite churches still live in a deeply literate culture where the Bible is perceived as something to study and read privately, in silence. We have consigned the public voicing of the Bible to the same place we used to consign women! So for various reasons there is some unease about hearing the Bible boldly told out loud and in public.

Yet when we hear it, for a brief moment, it touches something deep. It awakens something. People are delightfully disorientated by what they thought they knew so well! Someone said recently, “It violated my expectations!” For a brief moment the words of the Bible are filled with an unexpected fullness and our expectations are “violated.”

I haven’t actually been hauled out of church to the nearest cliff, so apparently I still have work to do!

RWM: *Is “performance” an accurate description of what you do? Is biblical storytelling different from drama or readers theatre? If so, how?*

JE: People are sometimes taken aback by the direct nature of storytelling: “It gave me no option to tune out.” Or they call it, “in-your-face.” Perhaps you could say storytelling is less sophisticated and more primal, more face-to-face than “performance.”

The word “performance” doesn’t capture the participatory nature of storytelling. In biblical storytelling, the audience can’t sit back and be spectators. The congregation is faced directly, not only by the storyteller, but also by the direct speech of the gospels, or Paul, or the prophets.

And in turn this face-to-face speech calls forth our deep human need to respond with speech, and herein lies one of the big differences. On one occasion I was delightfully caught off guard in the middle of telling Ephesians Chapter 2 when a lady sitting in the congregation piped up and said, “You go, Paul!”

On another occasion in an Anglican church one woman said, “We need to respond! We can’t be expected to just sit there in silence, with Paul just doing his thing, and going to the next place!”

So storytelling provokes and invites a playful back and forth where the “script” is in flux, even to the point of being composed during the telling. We are all on stage with storytelling. I build in formal responses like sung refrains, confessions and open prayers, but folks also need permission for spontaneous interaction. I am always surprised at how much congregations love and need participation. Our forbears called this the “Amen bench.”

RWM: *Dennis Dewey writes, “Biblical storytelling takes many forms: from paraphrase to first-person monologue, to midrashic expansion, to contemporization.” Which of these methods have you used and with which biblical texts?*

JE: Dennis Dewey is well known in the biblical storytelling world as both teller and teacher. He would see these various forms as one step removed from the intimacy and intensity of the Bible’s language.

I once did a first-person monologue of Matthew’s encounter of the risen Christ and it was a whole lot of fun, but they got more John Epp than the power of

Matthew’s Gospel! I want people to have a more direct encounter with the living voice of Scripture.

I wonder if there is an assumption behind these forms that the Bible all by itself is dull and needs to be spiced up with drama. On one occasion, a very urbane, unchurched young man from my workplace came to hear me tell Corinthians. Afterwards he said, “Hey, if that’s what’s in the Bible, I might be interested!”

The voiced Bible is a captivating experience, and mastering its sophisticated oral artistry is both a rewarding and demanding art form in and of itself.

RWM: *Are there any biblical passages*

Scripture reading can sometimes feel like one of the dullest moments in our services, but storytelling can make it come alive. Let’s learn to read from the heart, with intelligence and authenticity.

—like the Books of the Law, for example—that don’t work as biblical storytelling?

JE: All Scripture was meant to be interpreted with the human voice, including the Law. In ancient Israel, the Law was read out loud and echoed between two mountains (Deuteronomy 27:12-13). That must have had a profound effect on people.

When I tell Matthew’s genealogy, for instance, it has a “wow factor,” but people hear much more than they expected. People experience the genealogy for the first time as a vision of God at work in history through the oddest and most surprising people. To study or read the genealogy in silence will not have the same effect. All Scripture was meant to be interpreted with voice; that’s why I prefer the term, “sounding the Scriptures.”

RWM: *Biblical storytelling is often described as a spiritual discipline. What does that entail?*

JE: Story learning is a discipline that entails the work of imagining down-to-earth people interacting with each other, something Walter Brueggemann calls, “the scandal of the concrete.”

Moving from the conceptual to the

slow and cumbersome world of story is a discipline. It requires time and intentionality, the same thing as prayer. While I am working on a story, there is sometimes the niggling voice, “You’re wasting your time.” But I know that the precious time I pour out on this work becomes “pure nard” when spoken out loud in community. When my mind is full of troubling thoughts I go through a story and feel deeply centred again; that too is “pure nard.”

RWM: *Growing up in the 1960s, I was taught Bible stories long before I knew or understood anything about theology. As I grew older—and hopefully more*

mature—and theology was introduced in Sunday school, having a grounding in the stories made theology somehow easier to grasp. Today, biblical literacy—especially of the narrative flow from Genesis to Revelation—seems to be on the wane in many churches. What, if anything, can biblical storytelling do to address this apparent problem?

JE: How odd that I didn’t begin to grasp the long, heart-breaking, ultimately joy-filled journey of the whole biblical narrative until I began storytelling. And note, that was after Bible college and a seminary degree!

The fact that the Bible even has an overall “narrative flow” is not conscious for many of us who are used to approaching the Bible either devotionally, liturgically or, for that matter, in a scholarly way. All of us need to be awakened to the great narrative arc in the Bible, and it can begin by hearing a single story or passage told out loud. Once the living speech of Scripture breaks into our consciousness, that small narrative experience will naturally lead us to the deep overall flow of the biblical narrative. Narrative leads to narrative.

My recent project is called “The Hebrew

Odyssey: God's journey into the human heart." It seeks to capture the great narrative arc that shows how God, creation, Israel, Jesus and the church all move together as one story, all in one 90-minute telling. One young woman who heard it recently said, "That's better than a movie!"

Our passion for Scripture will only be

I still come across people who will open their Bibles to see how close my telling is to the words on the paper. That is a deeply literate response!

awakened by the living voice. I think that the Bible only becomes Scripture once it is returned to its native medium of sound via the voice. When people hear the voice of Scripture, it ignites a flame.

RWM: Dewey talks about three cultures—oral, where everybody knows each other and holds common biological origins; literate, where culture is oriented around shared beliefs; and post-literate, where culture transcends political, tribal and national boundaries—and suggests that biblical storytellers “live and move and have their being” in the latter. How does that work when you go into churches that “live and move and have their being” in one or both of the first two cultures?

JE: Marshall McLuhan has taught us that the electronic age has radically transformed every culture that has come in contact with it. Electronic culture has ushered in what scholars call a “second orality.” The power of literate left-brain thinking has been broken at a popular level, so even congregations steeped in their books are open to the oral art of Scripture-telling.

However, I still come across people who will open their Bibles to see how close my telling is to the words on the paper. That is a deeply literate response! Others have said, “Hmm, I don’t know if I trust this. It seems manipulative to me.”

For some, there is a deep mistrust of the emotional response to the story. They would rather not share how the telling affected them personally, so they ask questions like, “How long did it take to learn that?” or, “What translation did you use?” All these are typical literate responses.

On the other hand, when I am telling in churches that have more of an oral core, they tend to open their ears and inner imagination, and to see and feel the story on a personal level. After one telling of Ephesians we had a Q&A, and the people poured out their fears and pains. They spoke openly about their faith journeys.

Their honesty touched me deeply. One young man said, “We have heard from the Spirit today and from this day on we must make some changes.” So he spoke in a deeply communal sense. These are typical oral responses.

But things are never clear-cut. We all “live and move and have our being” in all three cultures: oral, literate and electronic. The lines are not well defined. The electronic revolution has broken down the supremacy of literate culture and returned the whole globe to a more face-to-face tribal society that has re-awoken the art of storytelling.

RWM: Anything else you’d like to address that we haven’t already covered?

JE: Someone recently said to me, “This is deep fun. This liberates our Bible, and once the Bible is liberated, so are God’s people.” The benefits for congregational life are enormous. Wouldn’t it be great if every congregation had its own resident storyteller, someone who is supported and trained to explore and develop this calling in the congregation? How we would set the transforming power of Scripture free!

I would say, “Come and see!” Every fall, the Canadian Festival of Biblical Storytelling puts on a great event. Come and hear master storytellers, take home a few tools and enter the deep narrative of the Bible. ❧

Visit www.biblicalstorytellingcan.ca for more information about the Network of Biblical Storytellers Canada and its biblical storytelling festival.



Ross W. Muir is managing editor of Canadian Mennonite.

/// For discussion

1. In what setting have you heard someone “sound the Scripture,” telling a Bible story without reading it? How is re-telling a story different from reading it or repeating it from memory? What makes an effective biblical children’s story?
2. John Epp says his early attempts to read the Bible on his own were “far from joyful.” Do you find the words more powerful if they are spoken or if you read them quietly? What role does eye contact play in storytelling? How is a story told in community different from one read in solitude?
3. “Sounding the Scripture” is not simply repeating the words found in the Bible. Does it bother you that a storyteller is also interpreting the story? Does it make you want to check exactly what your translation says? Are we too tied to the text?
4. Do you agree with Epp that, “there is some unease about hearing the Bible boldly told out loud and in public”? Why is a bold new interpretation apt to make us uncomfortable? Is storytelling less controlled than reading? How would you like to see biblical storytelling used in your church?

— 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.

✉ Daughter of Pembina Place resident disputes 'quality of care' comment

RE: "BETHANIA GROUP dismisses CEO," Oct. 14, 2013, page 23.

I read with interest the article outlining steps Bethania and Pembina Place personal care homes will be taking to remedy the Ray Koop incident.

My father was placed in Pembina Place two years ago due to declining health related to Alzheimer's disease. After researching a fair number of places, my mother and the children thought we had found a place with quality care which included adequate supervision needed for someone living with Alzheimer's.

Unfortunately, our experience proved otherwise. This is why I was puzzled to read in *Canadian Mennonite* the statement, "Throughout this difficult time the quality of care was never in question."

(Continued on page 10)

FROM OUR LEADERS

Everything we need

DAVE BERGEN

"Pay now . . . or really pay later." This recent *Winnipeg Free Press* headline pointed to the close relationship between investing in education and healthcare for the very young, and the lifelong costs of healthcare, crime prevention and social support required by those who fall through the cracks. The article's message was clear: If you want to solve almost every intractable social problem we have, put your money and your energy into quality early-life programs.



This thesis is the outcome of significant recent brain science research. It turns out that the googly-eyed behaviour of new parents who coo and engage their baby's every squeak and squawk is actually laying the foundation for life-long brain development. But the article noted, in spite of this strong scientific evidence, we continue to have a shortage of daycare spaces, and early childhood educators are scarce and underpaid. Too often these things are first on the chopping block

when public budgets face reductions. The results of undervaluing early childhood development come home to roost later, and at a much higher cost.

Communities of faith have long recognized the wisdom and exponential value of investing in childhood spiritual formation. The people of Israel enshrined this understanding in Hebrew Scripture and spiritual practice: "Hear, O Israel: . . . keep these words that I am commanding you. . . . Recite them to your children and talk about them" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). In the New Testament, Luke notes how the child Jesus "increased in wisdom and in years" (Luke 2:52). And Paul notes the significance of Timothy's spiritual formation from an early age, through "a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice" (I Timothy 2:5).

Unfortunately, paying lip service to this wisdom often fails to translate into deliberate action. We balk at the resources required to offer sound Christian formation curriculum for the children in our congregational care. We question why we

should enrol our children in Mennonite schools where faith nurture is deepened and broadened. And then in the next breath we bemoan the biblical illiteracy of young people and their loss of connection to the church and its ministry!

The good news is that we have all the tools we need to change this picture if we behave proactively. Our publisher, MennoMedia, produces the best children's curriculum in the market. "Shine," a new curriculum for age three to Grade 8, launches later this year. Our Mennonite church schools offer a hospitable environment for tough faith questions, study of the Bible and deep engagement of faith with daily life.

When we take advantage of these resources, our homes can again nurture early faith development as they were meant to do. In addition, we have opportunities to collaborate on ministry for children and youth with the wider church with conferences like "Faith Forward" in Nashville, Tenn., from May 19 to 22 (www.faith-forward.net).

Change can happen. Transformation is possible. We have everything we need to get started!

Dave Bergen is executive minister of Mennonite Church Canada Christian Formation.

(Continued from page 9)

In fact, our family met a number of times with Pembina Place management, which at one point included Koop, to express concerns over inadequate staffing. Funding seemed to be the issue, to the point that during night shifts one nurse was assigned to both floors of Pembina Place with some 60-plus residents.

Lack of adequate supervision at night meant my

father would fall when wandering or would end up in the rooms of other residents unheeded. My mother made daily trips to Pembina Place to ensure Dad was fed and his daily needs attended to.

The staff, for the most part, were diligent, caring and compassionate, but due to inadequate staff numbers—although we were told government standards were adhered to—it was obvious this facility was offering

FAMILY TIES

The gene pool cards

MELISSA MILLER

“In your 50s, you find out what ‘cards’ you got in the gene pool,” I’ve heard it said. In the past year, this truism took on personal meaning. Unusual chest pains sent me to my doctor. The results of an EKG and a subsequent stress test—which I “failed”—revealed that my heart bears an unsurprising family resemblance to the hearts of both my father and my mother.

With the diagnosis, which is “serious but not necessarily life-threatening,” came a host of questions and feelings. Feelings like surprise and shock, confusion, sadness and fear. Questions like, “Do I have a decade of life remaining, as did my father, who died of heart disease at age 69?” If that’s the case, what stays the same in my life, and what needs to change? Or will my path be more like that of my mother’s, who, with intervention, has happily entered her 80s?

And how do we navigate our way through myriad complex and confusing medical options? What answers do we get from western medicine and what kinds of alternative medicines do we explore? I have enjoyed exceptionally good health; partly for that reason, I am reluctant to take medication.

My husband calls this reluctance “stubbornness.” He says my judgment is skewed by not having had enough practice being sick.



How do we decide what advice to follow, and what is unhelpful? And down the road, how do we decide what measures to take to prolong life, and when do we yield to the aging process that leads to death? Who do we talk to about these matters, with their physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions?

An article by Jonathan Rauch in *The Atlantic* (“How not to die,” April 24, 2013) describes the need for such questions to be addressed, particularly when individuals are frail and facing the end of life. He highlights the work of Dr. Angelo Volandes, who “disrupts” and slows down the typical doctor-patient hospital communication. Volandes’s goal is to ensure that patients or their family members have accurate, clearly explained information, and the space to ask questions, to help them with healthcare decisions. Volandes has also created a series of

How do we navigate our way through myriad complex and confusing medical options?

videos to facilitate such communication. Seems like this could be a good starting point.

In my case, what became clear was that I needed space to process this news about my heart, to research ways to care for it and to make lifestyle changes. It meant talking with a counsellor, who helped me slow down the questions

and sort through possible answers. It meant examining the stresses in my life, assessing which of those were necessary, or life-giving, and which needed to be reworked. It meant resigning from a demanding volunteer position that I enjoyed. It meant deep conversations with family and friends, re-visiting my father’s death, and affirming loving bonds and the precious gift of life.

As a final thought, we can draw on our Christian faith and highlight the biblical and ethical principles that guide our health-related decisions. The God who created the world in beauty and diversity, who sent Jesus to bring salvation and abundant life, and who dreams of a world where shalom reigns, has given us the means to navigate the complexities of 21st-century medical care. I invite you to identify these faith principles, share them with your family and church, and even with me, if you wish. We can pool our wisdom.

Here’s a starting point from Paul, a paraphrase of I Corinthians 10:31: “So, whether you take medication or herbal

remedies, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” May we be grounded in our trusting faith in God’s good providence.

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

inadequate care based on minimal standards, and not the high-quality resident care claimed in the article.

What makes this more painful is the high salary Koop was receiving plus the bonus/rehire scenario. It calls into question the viability of a board that agreed to such an arrangement and then resisted the necessary government-mandated investigation. It also calls into question our integrity as Mennonites offering institutional care, when articles referencing such situations continue to defend a system that was flawed and clearly not delivering on promises.

JOANNA BERGEN, WINNIPEG

✉ **God desires to help Rob Ford**

RE: “THE WONDER of scandalous grace,” Nov. 11, 2013, page 11.

This article really hit home with me. In the face of the continuing political scandal that is rocking Toronto over the mayor’s involvement with drugs and gangs, I have been thinking more and more of Philippians 4:8, where Paul instructs believers to focus their thoughts on the things that are lovely, pure, true, worthy of praise and of good report.

How sad is it to see ugly situations such as this generate distasteful gossip? While I agree that it is true our mayor needs help—and God desires to help him if he would but turn to him—this writing from Paul is a continual reminder that this world was created beautiful. A little verse I learned as a child comes to mind: “Come and see the works of God, for he has made everything beautiful!”

ROBERT JUST (ONLINE SUBMISSION)

✉ **Reader bothered by Mennonite ‘blood songs’**

RE “ATONEMENT: CAN our salvation be reduced to a single theory or is it a many splendoured mystery that defies an easy answer?” Nov. 11, 2013, page 4.

Ever since I was baptized as a young teenager during the early 1970s, I have been bothered by the “blood songs” as taught by my Mennonite peace church. In this I have much in common with J. Denny Weaver’s metaphor of atonement as summarized in Dave Rogalsky’s feature.

During my stay in residence at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., I was drawn to the Mennonite emphasis on community. I believe we make a mistake if we do not recognize the contribution of Jesus’ mother in the salvation story. An angel is recorded in the New Testament as having spoken directly with Mary, who is recorded as being a witness

at the cross during the death of Jesus. As a mother, Mary must have had an influence on Jesus as a boy and young man.

Although Mary is not recorded as being a leader in the early church, I agree with a suggestion by Idrisa Pandit, a Muslim scholar at Renison University College, Waterloo, that Mary could be considered a prophet of God. We who call ourselves Christians do not respect our nonviolent Mennonite traditions when we fail to celebrate Jesus’ life during the Easter season.

MYRON STEINMAN, KITCHENER, ONT.

✉ **Canadian Mennonite enjoyed in the bath**

I ENJOY READING while relaxing in a nice warm bath. It was here that I first opened the pages of the Nov. 11, 2013, issue of *Canadian Mennonite* and what a delightful experience it was.

I began with the “Atonement” feature article by Dave Rogalsky. The atonement and its varied models have intrigued me for some years, especially when a fine friend of mine, the local United Church minister, each year around Easter time loudly and clearly states that “Jesus never died for my sins.” By most, he is taken as a heretic, but really he is simply asking some of the same questions of the atonement asked by Rogalsky, and has come to reject the commonly held Satisfaction Atonement, especially in its cheapest form.

Not mentioned in the article was the work of Rene Girard, who has also significantly contributed to the debate. I was happy to hear the conclusions of some of our scholars that it is okay to accept a degree of unknown and mystery in the redeeming work of God.

That was followed by Aiden Enns’s New Order Voice column, “Eight points for a great sermon.” Some would argue that Enns speaks from the fringes, but I continually hear from him what it means to live out the core of what it means to follow Jesus. I can also relate to the inconsistencies and tensions of being relatively rich, white and a property owner, and yet take Jesus seriously. (My understanding of atonement becomes important here).

Finally, there was Ryan Dueck’s “10 things I really like about my church” reflection. I especially like the notion of being a church without a lot of schemes and programs to entice outsiders in, but rather simply being a loving accepting, neighbourly community of grace where people feel welcome. I think he outlines 10 points we could all score our churches on to see how well we are doing.

I got no further than that. The water was cold and I had to get out, dried and dressed. But I do look forward to my next bath!

LINDEN WILLMS, PINCHER CREEK, ALTA.

✉ 'Never underestimate the power of music'

RE: "MUSIC AT work," Nov. 11, 2013, page 35.

Continue with your musical talents encouraging others, Erin Koop and Lori Schroeder!

I'm not a music major or a music therapist. Nor do I have clients. But I see very clearly the powerful benefits of music as I visit senior residents. Often there'll be a cluster of people waiting for the next event to commence: a craft, a game or a meal. Sometimes the wait can be 45 minutes or longer, so I'll take the liberty to play a few tunes on the keyboard nearby.

They hear the first measures of "You Are My Sunshine" or "*Gott ist die Liebe*," and the waiting time becomes a little more meaningful. Residents, who a few minutes ago were starting to nod off and perhaps even wonder what to do next, start humming, singing, smiling or toe-tapping. Many of these folks are often dealing with dementia.

It's very revealing in this particular setting to experience the change that a few musical numbers can offer. So let's never underestimate the power of music. I've witnessed its deep effect on hurting bodies and diseased minds.

How I thank God time and time again for his gift of music to us.

TRUDY ENNS, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

✉ Reader appreciative of recent climate change, food articles

THANK YOU FOR addressing issues of climate change and food. They are the emerging peace-discipleship issues that will require much of us as followers of Jesus Christ concerned with our personal discipleship, global humanity and our creation home.

In "A bloody satisfying hassle," Nov. 11, 2013, page 27, Will Braun addresses the goodness of self-sufficiency. In "A three-course meal of words," Nov. 11, page 26, we learn that we can, as a community of faith, speak with one another and find enough common ground to move forward together. In "Thinking in a different way," Nov. 11, 2013, page 28, we learn that

hospitality and learning new skills that will benefit others are things many of us can share in. And on page 7 of the Nov. 25, 2013, issue, Willard Metzger says climate change is "really a peace and justice issue."

The heavy lifting yet to be done is to understand the vulnerability we have as producers and consumers to corporate interests that control so much of our food production, processing and retailing. What is our response as a faith community in times of plenty and want?

Our educational institutions have a responsibility to help us reflect theologically on genetically modified foods and food security, as two corporations control the genetics for meat chickens in North America, and to help us live as self-sufficient citizens of creation, rather than solely as dependent consumers.

It seems also that our Amish brothers and sisters may have some things to teach us about not being dependent on corporate or government structures that compromise our witness.

I note with sadness that David Suzuki expresses a sense of futility in a recent issue of *Maclean's* magazine, in his life work in the environmental movement. Can we as a people of God explore creative ways, old and new, that are life-giving, dignifying and hopeful, and ways of making a living upon the earth that are gentle, productive, neighbourly? I believe we can.

Canadian Mennonite has ushered us into that conversation. May God guide and encourage us as we seek solutions in faithfulness.

In closing, "May all who gather at your table for sustenance, find grace, hope and love, abiding there with you." May it be so for all of us.

WALTER BERGEN, CHILLIWACK, B.C.

✉ Focus on Jesus' teaching rather than his death

I APPLAUD *Canadian Mennonite* for aspiring to function as glue at a "yeasty time," as Sarah Wenger Shenk quoted a *Washington Post* columnist.

On page 4 of the Nov. 11, 2013, issue, Dave Rogalsky's review of interpretations in relation to Satisfaction Atonement—as expressed in American societal response to criminal activity—is a cogent reflection on the inconsistencies in Canadian and American societies. Troy Watson, in "Attunement: Part 2," Nov. 25, page 13, reminds me of Madeleine L'Engle when she reflects on atonement as "at-one-ment."

The yeast, it seems, may be in whether the emphasis is on Jesus' life and teaching or on the theories of the meaning of his death. The genius of the Anabaptists, it seems to me, is that they focused mainly on Jesus' teaching.

RAYMOND BRUBAKER, ST. ALBERT, ALTA.

/// Correction

Annemarie Rogalsky took the photo of Matthew Isert Bender during a tour of the Six Nations territory last fall. The photographer was incorrectly identified on the back cover of the Nov. 25, 2013, issue. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

✉ **Canadian Mennonite triggers wartime reflections**

Helmut Lemke's reflections were triggered by his Remembrance Day reading of the Oct. 28, 2013, issue of Canadian Mennonite, which featured "Let nobody judge them."



Helmut Lemke in his Second World War uniform.

WHEN I WAS 17, a young Mennonite living in a small community in West Prussia, Germany, I received a draft notice to serve in the German army. I was not courageous enough to risk my life to resist it. If all men who followed the draft had been shunned, the church benches in our community would have been filled with children and women only. During the last year of the Second World War, I was sent to the Eastern Front to defend the area of my home village against the approaching Russian army. I was wounded and awaited the end of the war in a military hospital.

Sixty-five years later, I responded to a request from Historica Canada's Memory Project asking me if I would be willing to share my experiences with high school students. Three schools invited me.

I told the students that I have some difficulty to think on Remembrance Day of Canadian soldiers only as patriots or heroes. I wanted the students to relive with me a day on the battlefield to find out the reality of war and the tragic "side effects" of it.

We soldiers were trained to kill and some could do this better than others. For many of us, the whiff of adventure and patriotism, or the assurance "that we could do it," soon dissipated when the action on the frontlines began and bullets were hitting. Many of us were afraid of being killed or maimed by enemy fire.

Soldiers who had not been desensitized by propaganda about the "bad guys on the other side" went through agony being ordered to kill other human beings like themselves: husbands whose wives would become widows, fathers whose children would grow up as orphans, and sons whose parents would be deprived of their caregivers.

I saw fellow soldiers being killed or wounded and dying under great pain on the battlefield or in a military hospital. Having been wounded myself, I saw young soldiers who had lost their arms or legs, or who had their face deformed or lungs punctured by shrapnel, who would have to live the rest of their lives with these handicaps.

I had a sister who had to work for an air force unit. She disappeared during the last weeks of the war. We never found out her whereabouts or what happened to her. My uncle and cousins did not return from the war, and their wives had to bring up their children without fathers. One cousin suffered depression from traumatic war experiences, having been wounded in the terrible Battle of Stalingrad.

A young cousin saw his mother die of starvation. My grandparents and aunt were burned alive in their home, which Russian soldiers set on fire one night in January 1945.

Some of my civilian relatives were captured by the Russians and taken to Siberia, where they were subjected to hard labour. Some of them died there, while others were released after several years because of sickness.

I closed my talks with the words of General Sherman: "War is hell."

Many students shook my hand and thanked me when they left the room. One even gave me a hug.
HELMUT LEMKE, BURNABY, B.C.

✉ **Reader feels headline left Leamington out**

RE: "ROCKWAY COLLEGIATE gets \$150,000 'challenge' gift," Nov. 25, 2013, page 23.

Just wondering why this article has the title it does, instead of something like "MC Eastern Canada provides \$150,000 'challenge' gifts to Mennonite high schools." If one reads the entire article, UMEI Christian High School in Leamington, Ont., is mentioned over half-way through, but some people only skim headlines, so the fact that UMEI also received \$150,000 might never be read by some.

Perhaps the editor has a valid reason for choosing the title he did. However, from the point of view of people living "way down here" in Leamington, the title seems less than inclusive.

VICTOR HUEBERT, LEAMINGTON, ONT.

✉ **MC Canada can learn from Nelson Mandela**

AS MENNONITES, I think we have something to learn from this great leader, Nelson Mandela.

Not the idea of peace and reconciliation, which we already have in our Anabaptist heritage, but the fortitude and thoroughness of this conviction that seemed to permeate every living breath he took. This man has taken "our idea" and run with it, with results that have drawn together the largest and most diverse group of

world leaders ever.

I think Mandela considered himself a Christian; his denomination doesn't really matter. The main thing is that his words and actions showed that he respected all races and religions. The result is a power that transcends all the military machinery this world can muster.

Our Mennonite Church Canada leadership is

currently reviewing the structure of our church to ensure that it remains relevant to our times. Let's hope we don't dilute the core of the belief system we have inherited, but will create a structure that's open and creative enough to translate these convictions into deeds, as Mandela has so ably demonstrated.

RICHARD PENNER, CALGARY

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Just a bush that's on fire

RIC DRIEDIGER

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

When I was in my early 20s, I had the same two big questions every teenager has: Whom should I marry? What should I do with my life?

I was lying in bed one night struggling with the first question, praying, "Oh God, why don't you just tell me?" Then this name popped into my head: "Charlotte." I only knew one Charlotte and she was my best friend's sister. I thought about it for a while and thanked God for telling me. I thought she could be really great. I rather liked her already. The problem was, she lived in Vancouver, while I lived in Drake, Sask.

Not a big problem. I moved out to near Vancouver, and her family invited me over numerous times. They suggested their home should be my home away from home while I lived in B.C. I started having long conversations with Charlotte, and we got along great. I would put my arm around her while in these conversations. We started holding hands when no one was looking. One night we kissed. Then she stopped.

"Ric I can't do this," she said. "I really like you. I am very sorry I led you along. But I love Sam. I am going to marry him. Next month I'm moving to Winnipeg to be with him. Please don't be mad at me. Please keep visiting my parents. They really like you."

That was quite a shock!

About two years later I was at a Winter Wilderness Learning Seminar in Wisconsin. We lived in a tent and spent six weeks travelling by snowshoes and skis. Another person taking the course was a gorgeous girl named Charlotte.

My conclusion is that sometimes a burning bush is just a bush that's on fire. Sometimes the voices we hear in our head are just voices we hear in our head.

She played guitar and sang perfectly. We spent lots of time talking and hit it off pretty well. I was this mysterious boy from Canada, while she was this amazing city girl from Columbus, Ohio. At the end of the seminar she had written this incredible goodbye song for me, and when we were alone together she sang it to me. We both cried. I invited her to come to Saskatchewan. I wrote her many letters, but I never heard back from her.

Since then, no other Charlottes have come into my life. My conclusion is that sometimes a burning bush is just a bush that's on fire. Sometimes the voices we hear in our head are just voices we hear in our head.

But God does work in our lives, usually very subtly.

One evening when I was in my middle teens, I had this strong urge to call my

cousin Vic and invite him to go out for a motorcycle ride. We met at our old swimming hole and I suspect, given our age, we mostly talked about girls. But Vic said one thing I will never forget: "You know, Ric, we really ought to go on a canoe trip." That statement triggered a chain of events that brought me into my career of being a wilderness guide. God did some nudging and I am in the most incredible career I could ever imagine.

When I was in my mid 20s, I was driving a group up north to go on a canoe trip. One of my tires was a bit low so we

stopped at a service station. The station did not have a tire gauge, but a gorgeous 19-year-old girl in the group dug into her purse and came up with one. I was blown away! I married her within two years, and now more than three decades later I'm still rather taken by this woman who carries a tire gauge in her purse.

It seems most often God works by nudges and hints, and not with big burning bushes. We need to pay attention to those little pushes and hints. We need to pay attention to God.

Ric Driediger has been a wilderness canoe guide in northern Saskatchewan for more than 40 years. He wrote this reflection in response to a Bible study he led with Rosthern Junior College students who questioned how God speaks to people today.

VIEWPOINT

Unlearning the Bible to welcome homosexuals

GERHARD NEUFELD

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Mennonite Church Canada is encouraging its constituent congregations to engage the topic of sexual orientation in the hope that a consensus can be reached in the future. I commend the national church leadership for that. Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg is engaging this challenging issue as well.

Central to our discussion is our use or misuse of the Bible. This is of critical importance. We need to look much deeper than how we interpret a given biblical text or passage.

Revered and very famous theologians and philosophers of the past have sent the “Christian train” on the wrong track because they interpreted the Bible in such a way that allowed the church not only to participate in—but also perpetuate—unspeakable violence itself. This has, in no small way, contributed to the fact that we now live in a post-Christendom era. “If Christians, who profess to serve a God of love, can be so violent, who wants anything to do with such a God?” the world asks.

“What is the Bible?” The short answer that people spout off unthinkingly is, “It is God’s Word.” And yet we do not take every command in the Bible literally. We comfortably ignore the dietary and dress instructions in Leviticus, not to mention the explicit instructions to annihilate Israel’s enemies. We need to ask ourselves how and by whom is it decided which passage of Scripture is appropriate as “the Word of God” that requires no interpretation?

It sounds very pious and good. But it’s a very problematic proposition, in my opinion, because it fosters an attitude and understanding that when a particular

verse is a quote from God, then there is no way to question it because who can take issue with God? It gives me the feeling that if I believe this verse, then God is on my side. This strikes me as an exceedingly dangerous proposition. This is exactly what people often do when they talk about sexual orientation.

So what is the Bible? It is what people at a particular point in history, in a particular culture and in a particular geographic location, wrote down what they heard God say. It was the chal-

‘What is the Bible?’ The short answer that people spout off unthinkingly is, ‘It is God’s Word.’

lenge of those people to ascertain if what they heard was God speaking. This has remained the challenge for all people throughout history, and is ours today.

Even if we could be sure that the people at the time the Bible was written had interpreted God’s word correctly, we cannot photocopy God’s will at that time and apply it directly to our situation, because we have to apply it to our culture, time and place, not theirs.

As for myself, I have to look at what my basic assumptions are as to who God is and who it is that is speaking to me. I cannot prove my assumptions. Nobody can prove or disprove the existence of God. But I live for and by these assumptions, and hopefully would be willing to die for them if need be. Here they are:

- **GOD IS.**
- **GOD CREATES.**
- **GOD IS** love, which is more than “God loves.”
- **CHRIST IS**, through his life, death and

teaching, God’s revelation as to who God is and how we ought to live.

I believe that these tenets are biblical. If anything, including a passage of Scripture, contradicts any one of these tenets, then we should not construe them to be God speaking. If we did this, we would soon discover that our faith would be radically changed. The challenge of sexual orientation would pale in comparison to the other changes that we would need to come to terms with.

But we are addressing sexual orientation today. We assume that God is in the equation. It is God who creates at God’s discretion. God created most human beings with a heterosexual orientation. Does that preclude the creation of any other orientation? Can I construe my personal preference or a society’s norm to be God’s?

There is strong scientific and indisputable anecdotal evidence that some people are born with a homosexual disposition. So if it is God who creates, and if this God is, at the core, love, showing us through Christ that we should build each other up, who am I or who are we to deny homosexuals the dignity and respect that we want for ourselves? It is insufficient to say we love “the sinner but not the sin.” To do so is to condemn another for having the feelings of love we cherish and celebrate in our own lives.

Our society and, in many cases, the church make life for homosexuals and often their families very difficult. This suffering is clear when one learns how frequently homosexual individuals consider or commit suicide out of despair. Such treatment can never square with the four principles outlined above.

I hope that we can all agree up to this point. We now have the difficult task to unlearn what we have been taught in the past. ☸

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Spirit attunement

Part 4 of a series

TROY WATSON



In my last article, I explained that *baptizo* (the Greek word for “baptize”) means to merge or saturate something to the point of transforming its essence. One of the oldest documented uses of *baptizo* is found in an ancient pickling recipe. Although the phrase “pickled in the Holy Spirit” sounds silly, and is unlikely to catch on, the imagery it evokes

gives a helpful perspective on what Spirit baptism actually is. To be baptized by the Holy Spirit is to have our consciousness soaked in the presence of God so that our beings take on the flavour of God.

The question I want to focus on in this article is, “What is this Sacred Spirit we are pickled in like?”

Jesus’ most important and detailed teachings about the Holy Spirit occur in the Gospel of John, where the most common word or name that Jesus uses for the Holy Spirit is “paraclete,” which is interpreted in a number of ways. Some of the most common interpretations are: one who consoles or comforts; encourages or uplifts; teaches or instructs; is a companion or helper; and defends or intercedes on our behalf as an advocate in court.

I believe Jesus’ ultimate goal was to permeate or merge human consciousness with the presence of this sacred paraclete. So what does this mean?

I believe we all have numerous “voices” communicating in our consciousness. Stay with me. What I mean is that we all have different modes of self-talk occurring in our conscious and subconscious minds, such as our inner critic, our inner victim, our inner warrior, etc. The

nature of our various modes of self-talk is extremely complicated. But in part they are the result of messages we have repeatedly received throughout our lives that we have, over time, internalized. After a while we are no longer able to distinguish between the original sources of these “voices” from our beliefs about ourselves.

For example, if a parent repeatedly tells a child she is stupid, that child will more often than not internalize that message as part of her identity. The voice in her head telling her she is stupid slowly morphs from an echo of an abusive parent into her own inner voice. The internal message becomes “I am stupid” and is now an unquestioned part of her self-concept.

The paraclete defends us against our own negative self-talk, our own limiting beliefs and self-condemnation.

We all have numerous “voices” or modes of self-talk in our conscious and subconscious minds that significantly shape our beliefs, self-concept and behaviour, even though we are often not aware of their presence. One of the results of Spirit baptism is the introduction of—or more accurately—a tuning in to a new “voice” in our consciousness. The paraclete becomes our inner companion, a “voice” that consoles and comforts us, encourages and uplifts us, teaches and instructs us, and defends us.

The role of defender is a particularly interesting aspect of the paraclete’s presence in our consciousness. You might be

wondering who or what she defends us against? The answer: Primarily the other voices in our conscious and subconscious minds. As the cliché goes, “We are our own worst critics.” We are hardest on ourselves. The paraclete defends us against our own negative self-talk, our own limiting beliefs and self-condemnation. The paraclete continues to point to the image of God within us, and over time, if we continue to tune in to the Divine Spirit’s counsel, we start to believe this about ourselves. And we eventually become what we believe to be true about ourselves.

What I’m talking about here is the still small voice of God, something most Christians claim to believe in. I believe that when Jesus promises to baptize people with the Spirit of God he means, in part, making the still small voice of God resonate with more volume and clarity in our consciousness. It should be noted that the still small voice of God communicates in many ways, such as intuition, feelings or dreams, and not just with words.

I used to think I knew what the still small voice of God sounded like. It turned out to be the judgmental voices of some angry religious authorities from

my childhood that I had internalized. I have come to realize that the still small voice of God is the paraclete that Jesus talked about. Instead of judging me, the paraclete comforts, encourages, uplifts and defends me. Always.

My favourite mystic, Meister Eckhart, wrote, “Any talk of God that does not comfort you, is a lie.” When I first read these words I thought they were too good to be true. Now I know that when it comes to God, if it’s not too good, then it’s simply not true. ❧

Troy Watson (troy@questcc.ca) is pastor of Quest in St. Catharines, Ont.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Brubacher—Benjamin Henry Hall (b. Nov. 20, 2013), to Mark and Allison Brubacher, Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont.

Fast—Charlise Isabel (b. Dec. 2, 2013), to Anne Whitford Fast and Reynold Fast, Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Froese—Sadie Annalee (b. Nov. 9, 2013), to Marlin and Becky Froese, Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

Heidebrecht—Elias George (b. Nov. 22, 2013), to Steven and Rita Heidebrecht, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

Kroeker—Charlie August (b. Dec. 10, 2013), to Daniel and Megan Kroeker, Morden Mennonite, Man.

Kuepfer—Koen Matthew (b. Dec. 3, 2013), to Matthew and Carolyn Kuepfer, Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Miles—Audrey Ruth Ens (b. Sept. 5, 2013), to Matt and Christine Ens, Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Nganga—David (b. Nov. 13, 2013), to Christien and Jeane Nganga, Ottawa Mennonite, Ont.

Towns—Spencer Alexander (b. Nov. 11, 2013), to Mike and Jeanette Towns, Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Marriages

Borzychowski/Lowden—Angela Borzychowski and Adrian Lowden, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., Oct. 26, 2013.

Neufeldt/Pawliuk—David J. Neufeldt and Kathlyn Pawliuk, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., near the North Saskatchewan River, Aug. 20, 2013.

Deaths

Aberhardt—Betty (nee Block) 86 (b. Oct. 1, 1927; d. Dec. 4, 2013), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Braun—John, 73 (b. April 8, 1940; d. Nov. 10, 2013), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Erb—R. Gordon, 87 (b. Jan. 11, 1926; d. Dec. 4, 2013), Wanner Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

Hildebrand—Olga, 92 (b. July 19, 1921; d. Nov. 2, 2013), Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Hildebrandt—Susan (Susie) (nee Zacharias), 87 (b. April 19, 1926; d. Nov. 25, 2013), Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

Martin—Valina, 95 (b. July 24, 1918; d. Aug. 15, 2013), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Metzger—Aaron, 75 (b. Sept. 28, 1938; d. Nov. 13, 2013), Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont.

Neufeldt—Liesbeth (nee Staess), 98 (b. April 15, 1915; d. Nov. 10, 2013), Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

Peters—Katrina (Kathy) (nee Kehler), 89 (b. June 28, 1924; d. Oct. 5, 2013), Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

Ramer—Elvin, 87 (b. May 20, 1926; d. Nov. 6, 2013), Wideman Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Roth—Lorraine, 83 (b. Feb. 25, 1930; d. Dec. 11, 2013), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

Schwindt—Homer, 94 (b. March 4, 1919; d. Oct. 22, 2013), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Steingart—Helmut “Chip,” 90 (b. April 15, 1923; d. Nov. 17, 2013), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Toews—Florence Clemence, 79 (b. Sept. 22, 1934; d. Oct. 28, 2013), Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite, Mayfair, Sask.

Voth—Helene, 94 (b. Oct. 14, 1919; d. Dec. 7, 2013), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

announcements within four months of the event.

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

Pontius' Puddle



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Efforts continue to reunite Old Order families

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

The annual Christmas concert at the rural Manitoba school where Old Order Mennonites normally send their children had to be cancelled last month as the building has sat empty for nearly a year. The school closure followed the removal of the community's children after a number of adults were charged with assaulting them.

Two families had their children returned to them over a month ago. The father of four of those children tempers his relief and joy at having his children back by saying, "I only wish the same for all the other families, parents and children."

"There was a lot less transition than I expected," he said of getting his children back. "I'd been warned quite a bit and I even expected there would be challenges. I don't think a day has passed that all four of them haven't said they are glad to be home. They continually express regret and wonder why the others haven't been returned. Some of those questions are hard to explain. I don't know the answers. I don't think I am more fit than the other parents."

For the other families whose children were removed last June, the father said, "there have been visits with the families. CFS [Child and Family Services] are still saying they will be returned. . . . They say there are huge issues, but they don't really say what the huge issues are. They talk about the process."

Weekly visits have been extended to two hours from one hour, but visits over Christmas were to be cancelled due to CFS staff shortages over the holiday season. Allowances have been made so that everyone in the community can attend church services and parenting courses, but there has been no movement on any of the charges that have been laid.

The community has been introduced to

the Hollow Water First Nation Community Holistic Circle healing program, a restorative justice initiative. The community, which can't be named to protect the children's identities, is very interested in learning about and adapting this model to its situation.

"Restoration is what we are hoping for," said an elder. "The only concept we have seen here is to destroy our community, but this program fits into our hope for healing and improving, rather than destroying."

Recently, Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario, and Ron Janzen, executive director of MCC Manitoba, visited the community and met with leaders, spouses and several parents. The relationship between the Ontario Old Order group, from which the Manitoba group broke away, has

been strained.

According to Peter Rempel, former MCC Manitoba executive director who has assisted the community during this crisis, "The [Manitoba group] members and leaders expressed their certain conviction that the adamant support the Ontario churches have for CFS's position is a major factor to CFS prolonging its apprehension of the children. At this point, the community would only ask that the Ontario leaders acknowledge that the situation is complex and that the [Manitoba community] might have some justification for its views on some points even as it revises its views on others."

Rempel has written to ministers at various levels of government, feeling the efforts of this community to restore its families have been repeatedly frustrated. "Pondering these developments and the inadequate response from the ministers, I am struck by the irony, or even injustice, that government, which claims to support restorative justice [RJ] in general and has supported specific RJ ventures in first nation communities, is withholding or obstructing a restorative justice approach for a community within the Mennonite constituency which pioneered restorative justice for Canadian society and provides training and personnel for it." ❧

PHOTO BY ELO WIDEMAN



Sherri Martin-Carman, centre, of Elmira, Ont., was ordained to ministry on Oct. 27. Currently serving in chaplaincy ministry in several long-term care homes, she was blessed in the call for ordination by her congregation, Hawkesville Mennonite Church, and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. During the service, Martin-Carman was presented with a prayer shawl by Anna Brubacher, right, which was created by Lorna Martin, left; the shawl is inscribed with blessings and prayers from friends and family.

Tackling tough texts means being in it 'for the long haul'

Conrad Grebel University College, MC Eastern Canada sponsor lunch conversations on difficult biblical passages

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

When Gordon Zerbe sparked conversation at the annual School for Ministers at Conrad Grebel University College in February, the Canadian Mennonite University biblical and theological studies professor probably had no idea that the conversation would still be going on as winter approached.

A group of pastors from Rouge Valley, Danforth and Toronto United Mennonite churches gathered to read through and discuss the Book of Joshua, which Zerbe used as the basis for his talks. This spawned a sermon series as Pieter Niemeyer, Tim Reimer, Marilyn Zehr and Michelle Rizzoli took turns presenting their ideas to both their own and the other congregations in and around Toronto.

Then during the first two weeks of last November, Grebel, together with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, held two lunch discussions on "Tackling tough texts."

Derek Suderman, associate professor of religious and theological studies, guided the more than a dozen pastors and church leaders in looking at Joshua, as well as difficult passages like Psalm 139:19-22, that is left out of Reading 823 in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. Active discussion was to be found at both lunches, with conversation continuing after each 2 p.m. cut-off.

Suderman spoke passionately for keeping congregants engaged in Scripture. Like others, he is finding that Mennonites aren't the only Christians either using the Bible literally or giving up on it altogether. The conclusion drawn by participants and Suderman at the end of the four hours of conversation was that all passages need to be understood in the context of the whole Bible. In order for congregants to have such an understanding, though, participants

learned that it will take years of dedicated preaching and teaching by pastors and Bible teachers in congregations.

Palmer Becker, a member at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, and an internationally known Mennonite

teacher and writer, noted that with worship, Sunday school and mid-week studies in his youth, it was expected to take 10 years to give members the equivalent of a seminary education. With decreased attendance in church formation hours and worship, and with few mid-week programs, he suggested that it might take 40 now.

Pastors were encouraged to stick with it for the long haul. ☞

Suderman... is finding that Mennonites aren't the only Christians either using the Bible literally or giving up on it altogether.

/// Staff changes

New pastors for three B.C. congregations

Pastoral changes have been announced in the following congregations:

- **STEPHEN SWIRES** will begin a six-month position as pastor of First Mennonite Church, Burns Lake.
- **DAN LOEWEN**, who has been serving as worship pastor at Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, completed that position in December. Taking over as interim worship pastor from January to June is Kendra Giesbrecht, a member of the congregation. Robin Mauthe, who has been serving at Level Ground as worship and family pastor, will become the new youth pastor in July.
- **GERRY BINNEMA**, who has been interim pastor at Living Hope Christian Fellowship, Surrey, left that post to take the half-time lead pastor position at Black Creek United Mennonite Church as of Jan. 1.

—AMY DUECKMAN

Carrot River Mennonite Church calls new pastor

Daniel Janzen probably didn't plan to be a pastor in Saskatchewan back when he studied business and economics at Brock University, yet this is where he finds himself these days as pastor of Carrot River Mennonite Church. Janzen, originally from Virgil, Ont., began his new role last October. This is his first pastorate. Janzen received his training for the ministry at Tyndale University College and Seminary and Wycliffe College, both in Toronto. He served with Mennonite Central Committee in Sarajevo, Bosnia, from 2010-12. Although still getting acquainted with his new congregation, Janzen describes it as "welcoming, supportive and encouraging," with an average Sunday morning attendance of about 100, including many young families who are relatively new to the church. Together with the United and Roman Catholic congregations, Carrot River Mennonite participates in the local ministerial, which sponsors three outreach events annually. At Carol Fest, their most recent event, members collected donations toward food hampers for needy families in the community. Like many other agriculture-based Prairie churches, Carrot River Mennonite is also a strong supporter of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

PHOTO BY DONALD TAVES



The Essex Kent Mennonite Historical Society's Festival of Celebration at Leamington United Mennonite Church on Nov. 10, 2013, celebrated the safe arrival of Mennonite immigrants to Canada in the years after the Second World War. Those in attendance remembered God's faithfulness during times which were so difficult the memories brought tears more than six decades later.

Tears give way to smiles

Gathering of Mennonites who immigrated to Canada after the Second World War remember the pain of separation and the determination to survive in a new land

BY BARRY BERGEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
LEAMINGTON, ONT.

The Essex Kent Mennonite Historical Society's Festival of Celebration at Leamington United Mennonite Church on Nov. 10, 2013, was an event laden with memories that first brought tears and eventually smiles.

The event celebrated the safe arrival of Mennonite immigrants to Canada in the years after the Second World War. Those in attendance remembered God's faithfulness during times which were so difficult the memories brought tears more than six decades later.

The program consisted of several people who had lived through this immigration sharing their stories and poems, many of them in German in which they had been originally written. The stories documented the incredible sadness of lives being torn apart and of families with members never being heard from again, and each portraying a determination to somehow survive. Although the stories were difficult and the memories hard, a mood of thankfulness to God for his mercy prevailed over the event.

Although the stories were difficult and the memories hard, a mood of thankfulness to God for his mercy prevailed over the event.

Several hymns were sung from the *Gesangbuch*, both by the gathered congregation and the Heritage Choir. One song that captured the mood of the event was *Hab oft im Kreise der Lieben*, which is translated as follows:

"Often in circles of love / I've rested in fragrant grasses / And sang a little song to myself / And all, all was beautiful and good.

"Alone and withdrawn / In fearful dark moods / But then I came again into singing / And all, all was good again.

"And some things I've experienced / I've swallowed in quiet rage / And came I to singing again / And all, all was good again.

"Let us not complain too long / Over all that brings us hurt / Sing with fresh energy again / And all, all will be good again."

People from the community helped prepare a poster board with pictures and memorabilia documenting their post-Second World War immigration story, which was on display in the church's dining area where the event wound up with plenty of coffee and *platz* (fruit squares) for everyone. ☸

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUISE TAVES



Newly arrived Mennonite refugees are pictured in the Niagara Region in 1951.

OBITUARY

Community loses innovative leader

*Dean William Tiessen,
b. Oct. 20, 1967; d. Dec. 7, 2013*

BY BARRY BERGEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
LEAMINGTON, ONT.

Dean Tiessen was a husband, father, farmer, businessman and a forward-looking member of the Leamington community. His violent death at the hands of carjackers outside of Sao Paulo, Brazil, late last year has left a community in shock.

Tiessen, 46, was in Brazil on business at the time of his death.

He leaves behind his wife Jennifer; children Julianne, Rachelle, Josh and Cian; and parents William and Janet Tiessen.

Tiessen was president of New Energy Farms and Pyramid Farms. In the last number of years he pioneered growing perennial grass, which he used to heat his family's tomato greenhouse. In 2011, this venture garnered him the provincial Agri-future Innovation Excellence Award.

Tiessen was also an active member of



Dean Tiessen

Leamington United Mennonite Church and a supporter of the Southwestern Ontario Gleaners, a local organization that dehydrates produce for those in need.

The tragedy of death at any time was pointed out by Tiessen's friend and pastor, David Dyck, during the funeral service. But this kind of senseless death also creates a lot of anger. Dyck pointed out that Christ comes in the midst of all the senseless violence in the world, saying, "Christ is present with us even now."

Dyck also said of his friend: "What always stood out for me above all was his love for his family, his four dear children, his wife Jennifer. That's what came through in his prayers—his faith, his family—because Dean seemed to know deep in his soul what was truly valuable in life." ❧



Dean Tiessen was on business for New Energy Farms in Brazil when he was killed by carjackers.

FACEBOOK PHOTO

Staff change

Korey Dyck named to Heritage Centre

WINNIPEG—Korey Dyck has been named the new director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) in Winnipeg, succeeding Alf Redekopp, who served in that role for the past 13 years. Dyck will continue the ministry of building the archives that tells of God's work within the Mennonite community by collecting, preserving and making accessible the many church documents and family stories that comprise this narrative over the centuries. Calling himself a "blue-collar academic," Dyck holds bachelor's degrees in theology and the arts, has completed a master's degree in peace studies and has done additional graduate work in Dublin, Ireland. "I look forward to strengthening the already strong relationships with all the various Mennonite denominations, congregations and groups that relate to the centre," he says. "There is room for everyone's stories at the MHC."

—BY DICK BENNER



Korey Dyck

Staff change

CMU announces new academic vice-president

WINNIPEG—Gordon Zerbe, Ph.D., has been named the new academic vice-president of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), effective this June. Zerbe replaces Earl Davey, who retires in June following six years of service in



Gordon Zerbe

this role. In his new position, Zerbe will be responsible for advancing CMU's mission as a thriving liberal arts university in the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition through its undergraduate and grad programs at the Shaftesbury campus as well as its two programs at Menno Simons College. "I think CMU has a great future, and I'm excited about the prospect of working with CMU's engaged faculty and committed administrators, as we move into the next phase of its life, matching creative and relevant programming with the interests of our dynamic and diverse student body," says Zerbe, who served a term as vice-president and academic dean for CMU's Shaftesbury campus from 2004-07. A professor at CMU since 1990, he has taught a wide range of subjects, including biblical studies, early Christianity, Greco-Roman history, world religions and peace studies. He holds a Ph.D. in New Testament from Princeton Theological Seminary.

—Canadian Mennonite University

PERSONAL REFLECTION

‘Man-up’ over meat

MATTHEW TIESSEN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Given our “always on,” “digitally distracted,” and all too often nature-deprived everyday lives, Silver Lake Mennonite Camp’s new off-season programming initiatives like September’s three-day Men’s Meat Retreat couldn’t have come at a better time. It provided the opportunity to break free of the electronic tether and get outdoors in ways that were mentally restorative, spiritually uplifting and physically invigorating.

The first annual Men’s Meat Retreat—a theologically and carnivorously rich tour de force—involved a multi-generational group of 20 men participating in:

- **GROUP-BUILDING “INITIATIVE”** games and nature hikes.
- **WORSHIPFUL SHARING** experiences focused on the themes of male “identity” and “calling.”
- **A CULINARY** and worshipful context created by chef David Lobe, a former Silver Lake staff member, and framed by spiritual director Chip Bender.

But be not afraid, the weekend did not simply consist of sensory, savoury pleasure. Bender led all of us on a spiritual journey following the theme of “Man up!” His meditations on Sept. 21 were group-focused and discussion-oriented. He began by encouraging us to reflect on male identity in the contemporary world: How can we integrate our spiritual, work and familial/community lives in an “always on” capital-driven world? This meditation was followed by group activities and discussions about spiritual and social “calling.”

The next morning the ‘meat retreaters’ regrouped down at the shores of Silver Lake to worship around a crackling campfire. The service was hymn-filled

and Bender led a meditation that encouraged us to reflect on our roles as Christians in today’s world.

We left Silver Lake for our respective communities feeling at once mentally restored, spiritually uplifted and physically invigorated. Till next year! ❧

Matthew Tiessen was a participant at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp’s first annual Men’s Meat Retreat in September.



Participants at the first annual Men’s Meat Retreat prepare to catch a team member in the ‘trust fall’ element of Silver Lake Mennonite Camp’s team-building course.

❧ Briefly noted

Saskatchewan youth celebrate ‘extravagant’ weekend

SASKATOON—The Mount Royal Mennonite Church gym came to life on Nov. 16, 2013, with more than 50 youth running around and having a great time at Youth Extravaganza, an event presented by the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization (SMYO). Youth from more than 10 congregations enjoyed games of dodge ball and Giant Dutch Blitz. After a time of worship led by a team from the host church, Kirsten Hamm, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s youth minister, engaged the group in Bible study on the importance of getting to know their teachers, especially the “Great Teacher,” in order to learn and understand better, even outside of school. The following morning, the SMYO Committee led a worship service exploring the theme, “Devour God’s Word,” at Wildwood Mennonite Church. Reflections on devouring Scripture and the sustenance needed for spiritual health made for a nourishing morning after the previous evening’s fun. The SMYO’s next event is the annual senior-high retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim, at the end of January. The theme will be “Zombie apocalypse: Questions about life, death and life after death,” with speakers Claire and Garth Ewert Fisher from Saskatoon.

—Mennonite Church Saskatchewan



Saskatchewan youth enjoy a high-energy game of dodge ball as part of Youth Extravaganza activities.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Will you sign up to be a 'FossilFreeMenno'?

Open-letter initiative hopes to encourage MC Canada to divest itself of gas and oil investments

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD
Alberta Correspondent

Early last month an open letter to the leadership of Mennonite Church Canada was posted on a website called FossilFreeMenno.org, asking individuals to sign it, identify their home congregation and write a short sentence about why they signed.

However, when contacted by *Canadian Mennonite* for comment, including why the organizers themselves choose to remain anonymous, the response was: "It would be inaccurate to portray a few people as instigators or leaders, as this arises from a much broader context, inspired by many people

'I think divestment is a good option we should explore, but people should not feel limited by this choice.'
(Joanne Moyer)

over many years. Individual people come with baggage and organizational affiliations that can complicate things. It is a wee experiment in a different way of operating, in which the impetus and responsibility is located in the overall group, not at the top."

The open letter cites climate change as a critical and time-sensitive issue for the church. While commending MC Canada for its involvement in the issue thus far, especially executive director Willard Metzger's

work, it calls for further steps to be taken.

The "fossil-free" movement taking hold in many institutions around the world encourages divestment from companies at the heart of the oil and gas industries. The FossilFreeMenno letter asks leaders to "commission a study that would provide specific options—based in part on what others have done—for fossil fuel divestment. These options should be geared to MC Canada itself as well as other investing entities within the MC Canada family (schools, NGOs, etc.) and individual church members. Results of the study would be

presented at Assembly 2014 in July."

"The initiative is one manifestation of broader discussions and actions about climate change within MC Canada circles in recent years," states the unsigned FossilFreeMenno e-mail. "The goal is to collectively raise awareness and inspire action in relation to the ecological crisis facing us all. Responding, we pray, to the move of the Spirit, our hope is to gently and courageously encourage discernment

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Doug Amstutz, left, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario volunteer, looks on as Omayma Mohammad and Jan Kadar of Shamrose (Rose of Syria) for Syrian Culture serve food at a joint Shamrose/MCC fundraiser for Syrian relief at 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, on Dec. 6, 2013. Food was donated by Kitchener's Arabesque Restaurant as well as by members of the local Syrian community.

about these matters within the MC Canada faith community?"

Metzger says he is interested in the initiative. "My response is not one of rejection, but that we would need to do further exploration," he says. "Certainly we would want to consult with the Creation Care Network and work closely with them."

MC Canada's financial and staffing limitations pose some problems, he says. "The call for a study would take funding. We're not able to initiate that quickly."

Joanne Moyer, a council member on the Mennonite Creation Care Network, a binational Christian organization affiliated with MC Canada and MC U.S.A., has signed the open letter, but hastens to say she has done this personally, and not on behalf of the network, which has not discussed it yet. "I think divestment is a good option we should explore, but people should not feel limited by this choice," Moyer says.

She is interested in engaging in discussion between the network and MC Canada, but says, "We have very little capacity [funds and leadership availability]. That would be our major limitation." ❧



COVER STORY REFLECTION

Saying goodbye to Madiba

ANDREW AND KAREN SUDERMAN

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

After a lifetime spent struggling for the emancipation and equality of all, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela can finally rest, his long walk at an end. “Madiba,” as he is affectionately known, passed away on Dec. 5, 2013.

Five days later, a memorial service was held in Soweto to honour him. Madiba’s is a story of tragedy and triumph. Indeed, his story and the story of South Africa are inextricably intertwined. Now the world could say goodbye. His immense contribution to the birth of the new South Africa and the powerful example he set for the world were remembered and honoured.

Despite relentless rain, people from all backgrounds and from around the world attended the service. As we splashed through the puddles towards the stadium with our two children, the sound of thousands of voices singing drifted through the air. This was a full three hours before the service started.

The atmosphere was celebratory. Old struggle songs rang out. People draped themselves in flags, feet danced and hands clapped. As one, the immense crowd sang, “Mandela, you’re my president!”

Those three hours were the memorial of the people. This was their final goodbye, paying homage to a man who inspired a

nation, and indeed the world, with his selfless pursuit of a just society for all.

When the formal service began, dignitaries and leaders from around the world gathered to add their voices in paying respect to Madiba.

Awe was repeatedly expressed at his ability to emerge from 27 years in prison without seeking revenge on his oppressors. Somehow his crucible of suffering

*Somehow (Mandela’s)
crucible of suffering
encouraged a
reconciliatory spirit.*

encouraged a reconciliatory spirit. He sought forgiveness and reconciliation with everyone, even with those who enacted and enforced the apartheid system.

Mandela’s ability to bring together unlikely people because of this reconciliatory spirit continues even in his death. The service included prayers by several South African religious leaders: one Jewish, one Hindu, one Muslim and one Christian. U.S. President Barack Obama shared the podium with Raul Castro, president of Cuba, a long-time American adversary. Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, rivals for leadership of the African National Congress, also shared the stage. In addition, the stadium was packed full of people representing South Africa’s rainbow nationhood of people, those who once were separated now united in their desire to say goodbye.


While Madiba’s walk has come to an end, he initiated a new journey of unity in diversity. This journey towards true justice, true peace and true reconciliation is far from over. The challenge was set to live up to his tireless example and to walk this road together.

Lala ngoxolo Tata Madiba. Sleep peacefully, Father Madiba. ☿



PHOTO BY THE WITNESS (WITNESS.CO.ZA) / USED BY PERMISSION

Andrew Suderman, left, director of the Anabaptist Network in South Africa, and his daughter Samantha attend a memorial service for Nelson Mandela on Dec. 10, 2013, at the First National Bank Stadium in Soweto, near Johannesburg. Seated next to them, from left to right, are: Suderman’s brother, Bryan Moyer Suderman, his son Matthew and wife Julie. The memorial service had a celebratory tone, displaying affection and admiration for a man whose commitment to peace and nonviolence has had worldwide impact.

 (For more coverage of Nelson Mandela’s funeral and his enduring legacy, visit canadianmennonite.org.)

VIEWPOINT

Dealing with difference

Mandela's story is our story

WILL BRAUN

SENIOR WRITER

I was on Chapter 10 of Alan Paton's defining South African novel, *Cry the Beloved Country*, when Nelson Mandela died. The story of the man and the story in the book—published in 1948, the year apartheid became official policy—are versions of the same story.

That story has captivated the world. The novel sold 15 million copies worldwide by the time Paton, a white man, died in 1988, and, of course, Mandela's death created an astonishing global moment. For good reason.

South Africa is not just another country. It symbolizes humanity's struggle to deal with a phenomenon that profoundly changed the complexion of history.

Several centuries back, when Europeans spread around the world setting up camp in other peoples' homelands, humanity changed. The beginning of a global consciousness arose. People came face to face as they never had before, sometimes in goodwill, often not. Humanity was on its way to becoming a global community, one marked by difference.

The story of Mandela and his country is the story of dealing with difference, both in the political sphere and the spiritual. The colonial legacy has often brought out the worst in the human spirit. Along with power imbalances and economic disparity have come fear, strife and oppression.

Much of the human story in recent centuries has been about differences rooted at least partly in colonialism: Indian Residential Schools, making poverty history, the United Nations, numerous wars, our own guilt about global hunger, our national discomfort with the dismal state of indigenous peoples.

Africa occupies a unique place in this 500-year narrative. It is the biggest loser, the archetypal "Dark Continent," the poorest place on earth, the least like Europe, the most other of the others.

The fact, then, that Africa—symbolized by the country in which difference had become most blatant—could overcome its differences made us feel like history could be healed.

That South Africa could wrestle its demons to the ground made the rest of us feel on some level like we could too. Humanity would be okay. Courage could overcome fear. The terrible awkwardness of apartheid was over. Humanity's collective moral stock had risen as its net guilt eased. Mandela's forgiveness extended in some sense to the entire white race. Reconciliation was at hand. We could all be equals.

At least for a while.

Mandela's story is one of triumph. *Cry the Beloved Country* is not. It is about fear—white fear of black vengeance; black fear that history's impossibly deep wounds would never be healed; everyone's fear of the other; everyone's fear, perhaps, that what is best in us will not prevail.

The novel is about an older black priest, Stephen Kumalo, who travels from his village to Johannesburg to find his younger sister and his teenage son. The latter two went to the big city for the same reasons poor people have flocked to the world's cities for decades. Both had stopped writing home some time before, fuelling fear back home. The reality turns out to be worse even than the fears, tragic by-products of a people crushed and humiliated by white overlords.

The book ends with Kumalo standing in his village at dawn. He is home, but

PHOTO © WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
(WWW.WEFORUM.ORG)



Frederik de Klerk, left, and Nelson Mandela shake hands at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland, in January 1992.

changed by tragedy. In holy weakness he stands facing Johannesburg and prays as the tender daybreak from on high visits him. Then Paton concludes: "But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear, why, that is a secret."

There is no triumph, only the sun rising again over a beautiful valley and the quiet endurance of that which is best in humanity.

In the stadium in Soweto, U.S. President Barack Obama said Nelson Mandela spoke to "what's best inside us."

Of course, South Africa, like Stephen Kumalo, still finds itself caught between darkness and dawn. Apartheid is over—thanks be to God—but poverty, despair and shocking rates of sexual violence persist. Mandela's successors squandered the moral authority they inherited. Many white South Africans have left, many driven by fear. Many blacks undoubtedly fear that Mandela's dream will not arrive before their children are lost to the big city.

"Have no doubt it is fear in the land," wrote Paton.

We all continue to deal with difference. Our task is to be drawn by stories of triumph and tragedy, courage and humility, to nurture that which is best within ourselves and, moreover, seek out the best that God has gently placed in others. ❧

'We know how to wait'

Murder conviction in the killing of Candace Derksen overturned; decision to be appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

Since the Manitoba's Court of Appeal overturned Mark Edward Grant's second-degree murder conviction for the 1984 killing of Candace Derksen, Cliff and Wilma Derksen's 13-year old daughter, on Oct. 30 of last year—citing a legal error in the lengthy trial that ended in February 2011 with Grant's conviction—the Derksens have been dealing with a rollercoaster of emotions.

"We're fighting disappointment in the appeal," said Wilma. "We, as a family, are not in doubt about the [February 2011] decision of the court. . . . A conviction didn't come easily, but the trial really convinced us. It's the debate that is unsettling."

With the conviction overturned, the Crown was faced with three options. It could determine whether there should be another trial, whether to apply to the Supreme Court to have the Appeal Court's decision overturned, or whether to drop the charges and not proceed.

A month before Christmas, the Crown decided on Option 2, to appeal the ruling of Manitoba's Court of Appeal to Canada's highest court.

"The Crown must now prove they have a case to make to the Supreme Court by arguing the Manitoba court decision to order a new trial was wrong in law," the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that day. "The court must first grant leave to the Crown, deeming the case to be of 'national importance' and worthy of being heard by a full nine-member court panel. If it does, it will open the door to a full hearing, which likely won't take place for some time."

"I am tired of the debate," Wilma said. "It seems we are always part of a debate: Whether she was a runaway or not, who did it and why, and then is he guilty or not, and now, was the trial successful? It's the constant public debate that is so tiring. The elephant in the room is getting bigger."

Before the most recent ruling, life was

becoming more settled for her family, she said, "after we were caught up in the whirlwind" of a long and complex trial. . . . The trial was a real changing point for me," she said, expressing frustration with last fall's surprising developments. "I know who did it and I know the story, but I don't know what is going to happen. I thought the jury came down with the best decision and that's where this breaks down for me.

"We're waiting now and we know how to wait," Wilma said, describing a new and creative energy that each of the family members has revived. "I believe that forgiveness is the only way to survive this. I am almost becoming evangelical in my belief. Now I have to forgive the Appeal Court."

Candace was abducted in 1984. It wasn't until 2007 that Grant was charged, and then another four years before his conviction. Over all those years and since, Wilma has worked long and hard for victims' rights and has become a nationally recognized advocate for victims.

Her latest initiative is an entirely new approach. Candace House, a soon-to-be-established home near the downtown court house named after the Derksens' daughter, is to become a place where families can escape the emotional volatility of trials and police investigations, and get support from people who understand their suffering. It will also be a place where victims and their families can get an honest and frank explanation of how the justice system works and what role they will play in the outcome. ❧

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Sandra Campbell, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario's community outreach worker in downtown Toronto, speaks during the 'Breaking bread over story' seminar at MCC Ontario's fall conference, held at Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, on Nov. 9, 2013. The day focussed on relations with indigenous neighbours during the morning and on Syria, Lebanon and Egypt in the afternoon. The morning included a moving monologue by Ben Wert telling the story of the first Mennonite settlers in Waterloo Region and their indigenous neighbours, while a presentation by Sarah Adams, the recently returned MCC country representative in Lebanon, and a Skype conversation between Don Peters, MCC Canada executive director, and Abuna Youseff, a Coptic Orthodox priest in Egypt, rounded out the afternoon.

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ARTBEAT

FILM REVIEW

Catching Fire turns up the heat

The Hunger Games: Catching Fire.

Directed by Frances Lawrence. Written by Simon Beaufoy and Michael deBruyn (screenplay); Suzanne Collins (novel). Starring Jennifer Lawrence, Liam Hemsworth, Woody Harrelson and Donald Sutherland. A Color Force/Lionsgate Entertainment release, 2013. Rated PG.

REVIEWED BY VIC THIESSEN

Last year's first instalment of the blockbuster four-film *Hunger Games* series was a relatively weak film, with under-developed characters and plot, and the wasted potential for a thought-provoking message. *Catching Fire* fares better in every way, especially in its potential to inspire younger viewers. But will those viewers get the message?

The story is set in a post-apocalyptic North America, which has a governing Capitol surrounded by 12 districts. To one extent or another, these districts struggle daily to survive while the Capitol is a place of leisure and wealth acquired at the expense of the poorer districts.

Every year, the districts are reminded of their attempt at revolution against the Capitol by annual games that require a teenage girl and boy chosen randomly from each district to fight until there is only one survivor. In the first film, depicting the 74th games, Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) and Katniss (Jennifer Lawrence) were chosen from District 12 and were the final two survivors. Directly defying the powers-that-be, they were prepared to sacrifice both of their lives, rather than fight each other to the death. Fearing an unpopular backlash, President Snow (Donald Sutherland) allowed them both to live and share the victory.

We learn early on in *Catching Fire* that the way Katniss stood up to the powers at the end of the 74th games has inspired people in the districts, giving them hope that things can change, that they too can

make a stand against oppression and injustice. Needless to say, Snow is not impressed. He and his Head Gamemaker (Philip Seymour Hoffman) devise a special 75th games that will require Katniss to fight again. This time they will ensure that Katniss does not survive, thus ending any threat of revolt from the masses who adore her.

But as the 75th games begin, we soon realize that mysterious elements are at play of which neither Katniss nor Snow are aware. This adds a level of intrigue to the games that make them more entertaining this time around, although I remain disturbed by the idea that we are meant to enjoy this violent spectacle along with the massive TV audience in the film itself. How can a satirization of "violence-as-entertainment" be effective when we are meant to be entertained by the same violence?

While every aspect of the filmmaking is superior in this second film, what makes *Catching Fire* special is its clear message that the wealthy Capitol's exploitation of the developing world should not be tolerated. That exploitation includes military occupation and using the labour of the poor to keep the wealthy living in luxury. Thanks to the inspiring hope provided by Katniss (the Mockingjay), the poor people in the districts, when faced once again with the injustice of the games, raise their arms in united defiance, even if it means their deaths. To this point in the series, that



defiance has been nonviolent. We'll have to wait and see how that plays out in the final two instalments.

As I consider the way the wealthy nations of our time exploit the poorer nations, making the rich always richer and the poor always poorer, I wonder whether *Catching Fire* will light a fire under the millions of young viewers who hopefully understand that the film is an allegory of our present situation. Will they be inspired by the example of Katniss to stand up against corporate capitalism and military endeavours that are destroying our world, following on from the demonstrations begun in the Occupy Movement and Idle No More?

What about the young film viewers in our congregations? Will they recognize in this parable of the future that Jesus lived in a similar time of military occupation and labour exploitation, and defiantly—although nonviolently—challenged that domination system around him? Jesus, too, inspires us to a "wild hope" for a better world, the theme, incidentally, of this year's Mennonite Church Canada assembly. ✚

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

Disclaimer to be included in John Howard Yoder books

MennoMedia

The board and staff of MennoMedia, the publishing agency for Mennonite Church U.S.A. and MC Canada, has issued a statement regarding the continued publication of John Howard Yoder books in light of ongoing discussion of Yoder's long-term sexual harassment and abuse.

The statement approved by the board of directors reads:

"John Howard Yoder (1927–97) was perhaps the most well-known Mennonite theologian in the 20th century. While his work on Christian ethics helped define Anabaptism to an audience far outside the Mennonite church, he is also remembered for his long-term sexual harassment and abuse of women.

"This book is published with the hope

that those studying Yoder's writings will not dismiss the complexity of these issues and will instead wrestle with, evaluate and learn from Yoder's work in the full context of his personal, scholarly and churchly legacy."

When renewed controversy regarding Yoder's past history surfaced, MennoMedia staff and board discussed issuing a statement, but decided to wait until denominational leaders of MC U.S.A. had a discernment group in place to guide a process towards healing.

"We discussed that the process of healing and reconciliation is incomplete for many of Yoder's victims," says Russ Eanes, director of MennoMedia. "Some have asked that we cease publication of his books entirely; others have suggested that

we simply go on as before and say nothing. We are opting to continue to make his work available, but are placing a statement from the publisher in the front of all John Howard Yoder books published by Herald Press."

"John Howard Yoder's legacy remains painful and complex," says editorial director Amy Gingerich. "Many have found Anabaptism because of his writings. At the same time, we cannot gloss over his continued abuse of power. By including this statement in our books we are signaling that Herald Press wants to be about reconciliation and healing, not masking abuses of power."

"At Herald Press we recognize the complex tensions involved in presenting work by someone who called Christians to reconciliation and yet used his position of power to abuse others," Gingerich says. "We believe that Yoder and those who write about his work deserve to be heard; we also believe readers should know that Yoder engaged in abusive behaviour." ❧

'Welcome!' theme chosen as 2014 VBS theme

MennoMedia

Keith Sundberg, an associate pastor at Wayside Presbyterian Church, Erie, Pa., is an enthusiastic user of MennoMedia's Vacation Bible School (VBS) materials. Given the strong recommendation of the teachers at his church, he knows they will again use the newest curriculum from MennoMedia.

"Welcome! Give and receive God's great love" is the new MennoMedia VBS material for 2014. It features five Bible stories that focus on hospitality, including Abraham and Sarah, and the people on the island of Malta who helped Luke and Paul when they were shipwrecked. The stories illustrate how children can also reflect God's love by showing hospitality.

Sundberg appreciates how the curriculum writers assume children are able to think and interpret Bible stories. "The design of the plays for worship are fabulous," he says. "They engage the children and

adults." Even the lessons about the snacks are appreciated by Wayside's VBS teachers, he says. Sundberg also says they appreciate that MennoMedia seems to be "trying to enable a church to afford the materials . . . There is a real sensitivity to where churches are at financially."

Some publishers of VBS materials provide many different products to promote and encourage participation, such as T-shirts or other tools. But Sundberg says of MennoMedia's less-is-more approach, "Some of the things you don't provide make us be more creative. We appreciate designing our own T-shirt, rather than buying one. They have become our most popular T-shirts."

The VBS 2014 curriculum was written by a group of educators in Goshen, Ind., coordinated by managing editor Mary Ann Weber. Writing rotates among various Mennonite communities across the



U.S. and Canada, and varies by year.

"Welcome! Give and receive God's great love" may be ordered in an all-in-one box set, including everything needed for planning and preparation, or items may be ordered separately. For more information, visit www.mennomedia.org/vbs. ❧


PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

John Ruth, seated, signs his book *Branch: A Memoir in Pictures* for Sam Steiner, left, retired Conrad Grebel University College librarian and archivist, while Wilmer Martin, co-owner of TourMagination, looks on. Ruth was on a reading tour, which stopped at Grebel on Nov. 28, 2013, to celebrate his book and TourMagination's 45th anniversary. Ruth has been involved with TourMagination tours since the beginning, focussing on European and Mennonite history. To order *Branch*, call toll-free 1-800-565-0451.



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FOCUS ON ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Students say YESS! to creation care

*Rosthern Junior College hosts neighbouring schools
in a day of exploring environmental issues*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

ROSTHERN, SASK.

They had only 20 minutes to create a skit based on a Bible text and a box of props. It was “creation care” up close and personal for the students and staff at Rosthern Junior College (RJC), who took time from their academic schedules to examine their attitudes and habits affecting the environment.

Nov. 28, 2013, began with an examination of biblical and theological foundations for creation care. Organized by the school’s Faith and Life Committee under the guidance of teacher Ryan Wood, the event was dubbed the Youth Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability (YESS!) Summit.

Student leadership teams from Rosthern High School and Constable Robin Cameron Education Complex, Beardy’s and Okemasis First Nation, joined the RJC students for part of the day.

“Isolationism is what’s gotten us into trouble,” Wood said in his introduction of the day’s theme to their guests, stressing the importance of reaching out and connecting with one another. Wood had participants find someone they did not know and identify three things they had in common with each other.

Students chose from 11 workshops with topics ranging from “No waste Wednesdays” and “Natural building options” to “Climate solutions: Achieving local sustainability.” Some students opted to tour the local recycling facility or the Rosthern Waterworks. Others learned about making “Fair trade and earth-friendly Christmas gifts” with Carol Reimer-Wiebe, manager of the Ten Thousand

Villages store in Saskatoon.

Still others participated in a student-led discussion forum entitled “Why should I care?” The “Living in rhythm with the earth: A drumming workshop” featured the talents of the Vincent Massey Community School Drumming Group from Saskatoon.

After the final workshop, students began to process what they learned in small-group brainstorming sessions. The day culminated when the large group reassembled and students shared their responses to two questions:

- **WHAT ARE** we already doing well?
- **WHAT COULD** we do better?

The students’ written responses became part of a large wall mural. At the close of their time together, students were asked to sign their names on the mural beside

one of the responses, thus committing to making one small personal change.

Satisfied that he had accomplished his goal for the day, Wood said it is easy to think of stealing, for example, as sinful. While over-consuming is not always seen as sinful, he called it “a rot that has gotten away on us.”

The Faith and Life Committee chose the word “stewardship” intentionally as part of the event’s title. Although not part of most teenagers’ vocabulary, the word is used in biblical texts pertaining to caring for the earth and is a word that carries with it the idea of moral responsibility.

“RJC is a Christian school,” said Wood. “That is our brand and we can’t shy away from it.” He said the school is “unapologetically Anabaptist” in its approach to creation care.

As to whether the event will result in changes on campus in the weeks ahead, Wood said he anticipates lots of discussion and that students will be more critical and more vocal in challenging inconsistencies that they see around them, adding that experiences such as this often bear fruit much later in an individual’s life.

What would he like to see the students take with them at the end of the day? In a word: “hope.” “God is continually renewing the church, nature and the world,” he said, hoping himself that students will come to believe that it’s not too late to make changes. “We have to be a people of hope.” ❧



More photos and video with the online story at canadianmennonite.org/yess.



Vincent Massey Community School Drumming Group from Saskatoon, led by principal Ian Wilson, right, were featured in a workshop entitled ‘Living in rhythm with the earth.’

PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNONITE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE



Jimmy Juma, centre, coordinator of the African Peacebuilding Institute in South Africa, talks with Mennonite Collegiate Institute students Rebecca Giesbrecht, Karina Letkeman, Renee Peters and Sam Schellenberg during MCC Day at the school on Nov. 21, 2013.

MCC is more than thrift stores to MCI students

Global issues are brought into the local classroom

BY SHANDA HOCHSTETLER AND PETER EPP

Mennonite Collegiate Institute
GRETNA, MAN.

Taking learning beyond the regular classroom, Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) invited Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) on Nov. 21, 2013, as guest speakers engaged students in interactive workshops on interfaith dialogue, material resources, an introduction to MCC's work, and peace in an African context.

"It is important to connect students to MCC's work around the world, its efforts to aid in development, relieve human suffering, and be peacemakers where war disrupts and destroys," said principal Darryl Loewen. "These experiences draw students into the life with MCC, planting seeds of ownership and involvement in its ministries."

The day began with chapel, during which Steve Plenert, MCC Manitoba's peace coordinator, shared an historical account

of travelling Mennonites being hosted by a Muslim community. While he suggested that western media usually link the word "Muslim" with terrorist, he said that Mennonite history invites Mennonites to associate Muslims with kindness and gen-

'In war, everybody always loses. But there is always a creative way to avoid it.'
(Jimmy Juma)

erosity. These kinds of stories, he said, call Mennonites to creatively think about how they engage in peace work.

To explore more of those stories, and to hear more details about what that peace work can look like, students spent the rest of the day cycling through four interactive workshops.

A school staff member pointed out that students discovered, "Yes, MCC is thrift stores, but it's so much more." Even still, one of the most remarkable moments for staff and students was the discovery that more than \$6 million of MCC Manitoba's budget is covered by the province's thrift store sales.

An even bigger highlight for students was Jimmy Juma, coordinator of the African Peacebuilding Institute in South Africa, who specializes in peacebuilding, trauma and reconciliation. Juma completed his doctoral studies on the reintegration of combatants into their home communities, specifically looking at child soldiers and their experiences.

In his workshop, "Peace in an African context," Juma divided students into two teams, asking them to choose letter combinations that could win or lose them up to 20 points. At the end of five rounds, he grinned at both groups and asked, "Who won?" When the team with the most points started to celebrate, his grin spread as he asked, "Really? But you lost 10 points in the first round. What if your 29 points is just 29 chickens, but your 10 lost points are family members?"

"In war," he said, "everybody always loses. But there is always a creative way to avoid it." Indeed, had students chosen their letter combinations with both teams' scores in mind, both teams could have increased their scores in each round.

Through memorable lessons like this, MCC Day helped students look thoughtfully below the surface: An enemy might actually be a host. A win-lose conflict can have a win-win solution. MCC can be so much more than a thrift store. And

"Mennonite" can be so much bigger than just one school.

Teacher Daniel Tessmann summed up the day, saying, "Students got a broader perspective of the Mennonite community and the world today. They were asked: 'What does it mean that we are Mennonite outside this building.'" ❧

PERSONAL REFLECTION

'A dream which became true'

FINN KLEBE

ROCKWAY MENNONITE COLLEGIATE

The staff, students and teachers at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont., had the privilege to welcome Jacob Deng, one of the "Lost Boys of Sudan," to speak to us in chapel and in class this fall.

He spoke about his work to help people in South Sudan through Wadeng Wings of Hope. He said that the difference between his small nongovernmental organization and the big ones is that Wadeng works among the people in the rural areas, and is committed to staying for the long-term.

"Wadeng" means to strive toward a

brighter future, and it became the motto of the young Sudanese man who learned early in his life that hope for a better future can be the key to survival when he had to flee his village during an attack which killed every member of his family but one nephew. He fled first to Ethiopia and then to Kenya, where, after a long period of time in a refugee camp, he got the chance to come to Canada.

He could escape from the suffering and the hard life into a new life, which he described as "a dream which became true." In his new life with lots of new possibilities, he never lost his focus on the people



PHOTO BY CHUCK KRUGER

Finn Klebe, a Grade 11 student from Germany studying at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, is pictured with Jacob Deng of Wadeng Wings of Hope, an organization committed to helping the rural people of South Sudan.

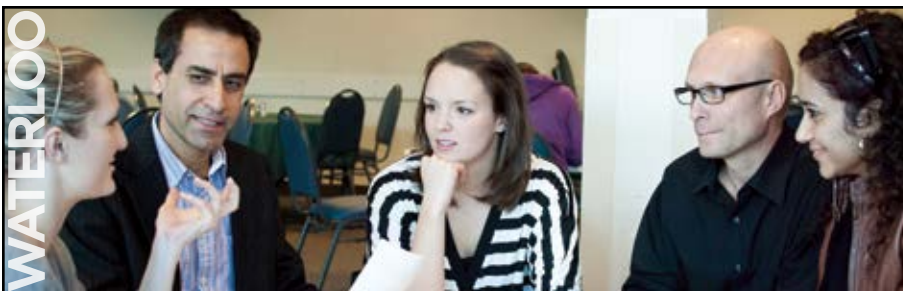
in his village, who are still suffering. His foundation is raising money for the people in South Sudan and Deng has travelled there to help direct the building of a vocational school, the drilling of a well and other projects.

For me, personally, it is just incredible how this man never forgets the people in South Sudan, which means he has to deal with his painful past every day. I am not the only person impressed by him and the evidence is visible at school already, through different fundraising events.

It was a great opportunity to have him at Rockway twice and we all learned from him how you can be optimistic in life, even in bad situations, and that we should never forget people who don't have it as easy as we do.

Being compassionate and responsible are two of the main "pillars" of our learning and acting at Rockway, every day, and he shows both of those characteristics. ✎

Finn Klebe is a Grade 11 student from Germany studying at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont.



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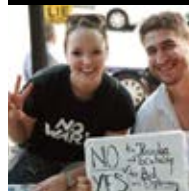
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VIEWPOINT

Remembering Yoder honestly

SUSIE GUENTHER LOEWEN
SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

How do we reconcile leading Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder's theological brilliance with his sexual harassment of a number of his female students?

It's something I've been struggling with for some time, ever since I first learned about his abusiveness when I was an undergraduate. I remember being impressed that he had submitted to a disciplinary/reconciliation process, and took that as a sign that the issue had been dealt with. But since then, I've come to believe that this issue is much more complicated.

I don't think Yoderians have been sufficiently conscientious about acknowledging and naming his abusiveness and its ongoing ramifications.

I don't believe we should—or can—boycott Yoder's work entirely because of the abuse he inflicted. His articulations of the Mennonite tradition and of radical Christian pacifism have been enormously influential in both the church and the academy. He provided me with compelling reasons to embrace absolute pacifism/peacemaking, influenced my conception of Jesus' life and ministry, and inspired me to continue on the path toward becoming a Mennonite theologian.

He was an academic pioneer, prompting many to identify as "Yoderian" thinkers. Although I don't identify as one of them, I believe that God speaks through

Yoder's work, despite his significant failures.

However—and this is a major however—I don't think Yoderians have been sufficiently conscientious about acknowledging and naming his abusiveness and its ongoing ramifications.

• **FIRST**, I don't buy the argument that his personal life had no effect on his theological thought and writing. Ted Grimsrud, professor at Eastern Mennonite University, argues along these lines in a 2010 article on his blog, ThinkingPacifism.net, asking, "If

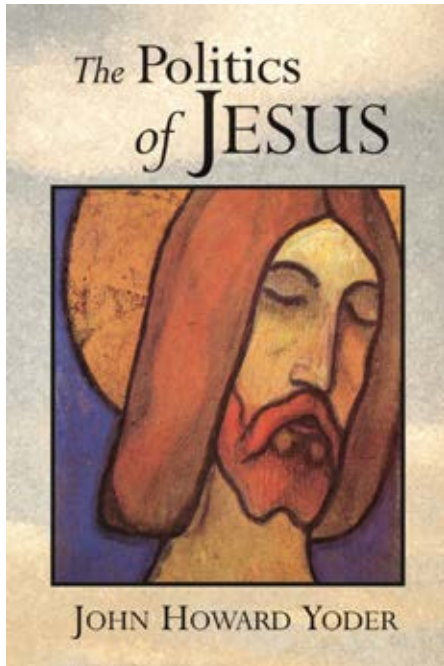
we didn't know he was a serial sexual harasser, would we be able to find hints in his published theology that might make us suspect that he could be?" and responding, "At this point, I just don't see anything."

I beg to differ. Yoder's argument for "revolutionary subordination" in *The Politics of Jesus* never did sit right with me, as it presented an abstract, contextless gender equality without sufficiently analyzing the deep-seated power imbalances that presently exist between men and women. To ask men or those in power to practise submission can be

(Continued on page 34)



Susie Guenther Loewen



(Continued from page 33)

revolutionary; for most women, however, it's anything but. Instead, such an ethic re-inscribes the harmful self-effacing tendencies that many women are socialized to adopt, including, clearly, the students whom Yoder harmed. On this basis, I've come to think that his work on gender and sexuality cannot be authoritative for Mennonites—or others—in any way. It's severely compromised by his harmful actions.

• **SECOND, YODER'S** actions have affected the Mennonite theological landscape more generally, ensuring that there is a generation of female academic theologians missing. It's striking to notice the gender imbalance at most Mennonite post-secondary institutions, where women make up a minority of the faculty, especially in biblical studies and theology. This translates into fewer theological publications by Mennonite women and fewer female mentors influencing the next generation of scholars (although, thank God, not fewer pastors who are women in the Mennonite church).

And it's partly Yoder's fault. As Tim Nafziger pointed out in a September blog post for *TheMennonite.org*, "Yoder systematically sought out dozens of these emerging [female] leaders, grooming them with compliments about their work and asking them to read his articles, leading them to believe they had a special mentor-protégée relationship with him. . . . Then he harassed and abused them."

"Is it any surprise, then," Nafziger wonders, "that most leading Yoder scholars are men? That the leading voices in movements influenced by Yoder are also men?" And most poignantly, he asks, "How can we as a church begin to heal from the loss of these women's voices and leadership?" It's a devastating loss, and it's going largely unnoticed.

• **THIRD, AS** Nafziger argues, the church discipline process which Yoder underwent—reluctantly, by several accounts—didn't hold him sufficiently accountable. According to Nafziger, it was a highly closed and therefore secretive process, and didn't actually involve the abused

women themselves.

"A promised public statement of apology did not materialize, and [according to Ruth Krall,] 'no visible efforts were made by him or by the institutional church to heal the deeply wounded relationships between him and the women he victimized.'"

Not only that, but it's unclear whether the process actually addressed Yoder's actions as abuse, instead of as consensual extra-marital affairs.

All of this leads me to seriously question our ways of dealing with this kind of issue as a Mennonite church. It seems we still have a lot to learn about how to practise restorative justice, especially when it comes to sexual violence. Too often we cry, "*Peace, peace; when there is no peace*" (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11), using restorative justice as a way of letting the offender off the hook through quick "forgiveness," instead of doing the slow and difficult work of true reconciliation.

Recognizing that the legal justice system offers no room for forgiveness, we champion restorative justice as a simple inversion of punitive justice, but end up neglecting the victims just as much as the courts do.

Canadian Mennonite feminist theologian Lydia Neufeld Harder talks about how the Mennonite church tends to sacrifice individuals for the sake of the community, and that often those individuals are women.

We need to be careful how we proceed when it comes to Yoder. I for one will be mentioning his abusiveness when I use his books in my own theological work.

That's my way of remembering him honestly: by holding his brilliance and his brokenness together. ☿

Susie Guenther Loewen is a doctoral student in theology, specializing in themes of gender, suffering and the cross. She and her husband Kris live in Toronto with their baby son, Simon, where they attend Toronto United Mennonite Church.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RACHEL BERGEN



Rachel Bergen on her family's farm near Chilliwack, B.C., with a calf named Swarley.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Missing the city . . . in the country

BY RACHEL BERGEN

YOUNG VOICES CO-EDITOR

When my family moved to a rural community in southwestern British Columbia, I didn't realize how much life and my faith would be challenged.

I was born and raised in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, but moved to Winnipeg to attend Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) for my undergraduate degree. Before moving back to B.C.

to help out on the family farm during a tumultuous time, I had been on CMU's urban campus for six years, where I lived in dorms and on-campus apartments. There, I had a faith community, mentors, friends who inspired me, and easy access to all of the perks of living in a city.

Although my family moved to a farming community outside of Chilliwack

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Most of Rachel Bergen's time on the family farm was spent tending to friendly, playful calves like these two.

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five years ago, I only moved back in the spring of 2012. We lived in a small farm house on the property and farmed chickens, pigs and a few cows and sheep. There were a lot of great things about being home, most of all being near my family and helping out wherever I could. I also loved working with the animals, learning about food production and knowing exactly where my food came from.

But I missed a lot of the things Winnipeg, CMU and even my previous hometown of Abbotsford had to offer. And it's not because I'm a city girl.

When we lived in Abbotsford, getting to church, a friend's house or a meeting with a pastor or mentor wasn't a big deal. It was more walkable and easier to meet in the middle. I felt less badly asking for rides. In Chilliwack, it was a different

If so, do I need to feed the animals and do chores? How long will chores take so I can estimate when I can leave? If dad isn't going, can I take the van?"

All this to meet up with someone I respect for coffee for an hour!

If I was still living in Winnipeg, I could have walked for five minutes to meet up with a mentor on campus. I had built a faith community there and it was difficult to forget what I had and leave it behind.

This is not to say that living in small rural communities can't offer a great deal. I'm sure people who have grown up in one build their support networks over the years and can benefit from them, but having moved around so much, I wasn't able to do that. Although I learned so much about farming, in my experience rural living couldn't offer the same access to support that urban living could.

I'm sure people who have grown up in [small rural communities] build their support networks over the years and can benefit from them, but having moved around so much, I wasn't able to do that.



Rachel Bergen is pictured near the Menno Simons Centre in Vancouver, where she is living while studying journalism at the University of British Columbia.

story.

Every day I'd work hard on the farm, and after a day of work, when I would have liked to have spent time with friends, I wasn't able to. Most of the people I grew up with going to church and youth group lived more than an hour away in Vancouver, and I didn't have a car. I could borrow my parents' or my sister's vehicles, but being relatively far away it never seemed to work out. Taking public transportation was so time-consuming it wasn't even an option.

Meeting with the associate pastor from my home church, Emmanuel Mennonite in Abbotsford, for instance, required quite a bit of planning. One time we had arranged to meet halfway between the church and my house, which was still about a 40-minute drive.

My internal dilemma went something like this:

"Is Lara going to work on Wednesday? Can I take her car? Will she maybe drop me off at the Starbucks?"

"Is dad doing farm deliveries that day?"

Currently I'm living in Vancouver attending the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of British Columbia. I've been living at the Menno Simons Centre—a dormitory-style building focused on Christian community—for the past year-and-a-half. Here I can walk down the hall and talk to the residence coordinators, or walk up the stairs and find the love and support I need from friends. The efficient public transportation system here also makes "church shopping" and meeting up with mentors easier.

But I still wonder, are there other rural dwellers out there who need love, support and access to community like I did? What can we do to better support our brothers and sisters who don't have access like we urbanites do? ❧

Calendar

British Columbia

- Feb. 7-9:** Young adult retreat at Camp Squeah, Hope.
- Feb. 15:** Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, hosts it Bearcat Brunch, with speaker Martine Rennie, former head coach of the Vancouver Whitecaps. For more information, visit columbiabcc.edu or call 604-853-3358.
- Feb. 21:** MC B.C. Leaders, Elders and Deacons (LEAD) conference at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack. Speaker: Rick Faw of A Rocha. Topic: "Creation care."
- Feb. 22:** MC B.C. annual general meeting, at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack.
- March 8:** LifeBridge Ministries fundraising concert. Location TBA.

Alberta

- Jan. 24:** An evening of storytelling with Richard Wagamese, celebrating and exploring aboriginal identity and culture in light of the residential schools, will

be held at St. David's United Church, Calgary, at 7 p.m. Tickets are available at the MCC Alberta office. For more information, e-mail office@mccab.org.

March 27-30: Truth and Reconciliation national event in Edmonton. For more information, visit trc.ca.

Saskatchewan

- Jan. 17-18:** RJC's theatre arts class presents four short plays and an excerpt from Matilda: The Musical. To reserve tickets, call the school at 306-232-4222 or e-mail office@rjc.sk.ca.
- Jan. 31-Feb. 2:** SMYO senior high retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim. Speakers: Claire and Garth Ewert Fisher. Theme: "Zombie apocalypse: Questions about life, death and life after death."
- March 2:** RJC Guys and Pies concert fundraiser.
- March 7:** Spring pastors gathering at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim, at 1 p.m. Theme: "Church leaders in a post-Christendom world."
- March 7-9:** Prairie Winds worship

(Continued on page 38)



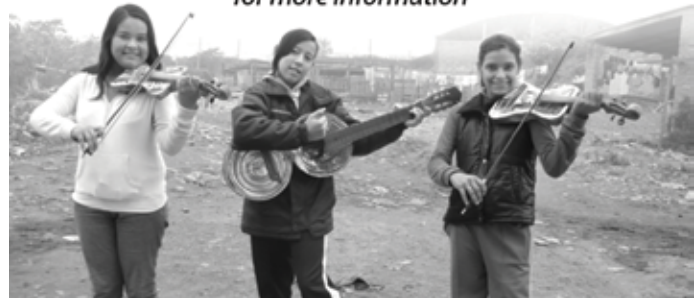
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retreat, at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim. Keynote speaker: John Bell. Theme: "Why do God's people... pray, sing, read Scripture and worship together?" For more information, visit mcsask@mcsask.ca or call 306-249-4844.

March 14-15: MC Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions at Parliament Community Church, Regina.

March 16: RJC/CMU concert, at RJC.

Manitoba

Jan. 23: IDS Esau Public Lecture Series, with Nettie Wiebe, at Menno Simons College. For more information, visit mscollege.ca/esau.

Jan. 24-25: CMU opera workshop, in the Laudamus Auditorium, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit cmu.ca/programs/music.html.

Jan. 24: New Songs for Worship workshop, in Winkler, led by CMU

prof Christine Longhurst. For more information, or to register, call 204-487-3300 or e-mail clonghurst@cmu.ca.

Jan. 30: CMU Face 2 Face | On Campus. Topic: "The universe is expanding, just like our minds: Beyond quantum physics and what it all means." For more information, visit cmu.ca/face2face.

Jan. 30-31: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate presents three one-act plays by its junior-high students, at the Franco-Manitoban Centre.

Feb. 5: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate open house, at 7 p.m.

Feb. 7: "I call you friend" CMU dessert fundraiser, at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler, at 7 p.m. To attend, e-mail development@cmu.ca.

Feb. 13: "Another look at love" CMU celebration fundraising dinner, at Victoria Inn, Winnipeg, at 6 p.m. To attend, e-mail development@cmu.ca.

Feb 27: Face 2 Face | On Campus: Topic: "The European debt crisis and

other wonders hiding in the global economy." For more information, visit cmu.ca/face2face.

Feb. 27: IDS Esau Public Lecture Series, with Hannah Wittman, at Menno Simons College. For more information, visit mscollege.ca/esau.

March 7: CMU dessert fundraising evening, in Winkler, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit cmu.ca/events.html.

March 20: CMU Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition finals, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit cmu.ca/programs/music.html.

March 20: IDS Esau Public Lecture Series, with Jules Pretty, at Menno Simons College. For more information, visit mscollege.ca/esau.

March 23: Mennonite Community Orchestra and CMU Singers, Women's Chorus and Men's Chorus perform *Missa Pax* by Timothy Corlis. With

guest artist: Catherine Richard, piano.

Ontario

Jan. 17: Launch of Rewriting the Break Event: Mennonites and Migration in Canadian Literature by Rob Zacharias in Room 1301 at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, at 12:30 p.m.

Jan. 17-19: Fathers and kids retreat, at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. For more information, or to register, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

Jan. 18: MC Eastern Canada pastors, chaplains and congregation leaders event, "The Lord's Supper and the 21st-century Mennonite church," at Rouge Valley Mennonite Church, Markham.

Feb. 7: Carol Ann Muller, the Rod and Lorna Sawatsky Visiting Scholar, speaks at Conrad Grebel University College,

UpComing**Krahn Contest gives long-running essay competition new lease on life**

NORTH NEWTON, KAN.—A long-running essay contest for students has undergone a remake, name change and a move to Bethel College. When the Mennonite Church U.S.A. Historical Committee ended the John Horsch Mennonite History Essay Contest last year, the editorial board of *Mennonite Life*, Bethel's annual online historical journal, decided to take responsibility for the competition, with major changes. The new Cornelius Krahn Mennonite Multi-Media Contest for High Schoolers, which has now launched its first competition, will consider entries only from secondary school students in the United States or Canada, and will award prizes of \$200, \$150 and \$100. The work may take the form of an essay, creative writing, multimedia (e.g., film, web) or original pieces of art or music on topics related to Mennonite and Anabaptist history, identity or theology. All works must be created during the 2013-14 academic year. Award winners will be published in the 2014 edition of *Mennonite Life*. The submission deadline is April 14. Submissions must be made electronically to Mennonite-life@bethelks.edu. In 2012, the children of Cornelius and Hilda Krahn established a Mennonite Life Endowment Fund in honour of their parents; the fund will provide the contest prize money.

—Bethel College

UpComing**MCC aims to 'tap' memories of Teachers Abroad Program**

AKRON, PA.—Forty years have passed since former Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker Nancy Heisey first stood in front of a classroom in Zaire, now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo. Heisey, now a professor in Eastern Mennonite University's Bible and Religion Department, was one of more than 1,000 Teachers Abroad Program (TAP) participants who taught in 10 African countries, Jamaica and Bolivia from 1962 to the mid-'80s. To preserve stories about TAP, MCC invites all former participants to contribute letters and reports that were sent home, as well as photos and artifacts from their experiences, to MCC's newly established memory bank. This centralized collection of information about TAP will be available to the public once it is collated. Ron Mathies, a TAP alumnus who taught in Malawi from 1964-67 and from 1970-73, is one of the creative forces behind the memory bank project. "Our letters and reports home to family, friends and church communities now provide fascinating glimpses into the new contexts we were encountering, and thus provide not only rich personal memories but also primary historical documentation," said Mathies, who lives in Waterloo, Ont. For guidelines on how Canadians can submit material, call Kaitlin Miller at 1-877-684-1181 or e-mail KaitlinMiller@mcc.org.

—Mennonite Central Committee



Ron Mathies in Malawi in 1965.

in the Chapel, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit grebel.ca/sawatsky.

Feb. 7-9: MC Eastern Canada youth winter retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach.

Feb. 13: Conrad Grebel University College presents "An evening with Bruce Cockburn," in the University of Waterloo Humanities Theatre; at 8 p.m. For more information, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/cockburn.

Feb. 17: Family Day open house at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg; from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. RSVP required. Call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

Feb. 19-21: MC Eastern Canada School for Ministers, "Will you come and follow me?" with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

Feb. 26: Irish singer-songwriter Steafan

Hanvy performs in the Chapel at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo; at 7 p.m.

Feb. 28-March 2: Women's retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite, Camp, Sauble Beach. Resource person: Tanya Dyck Steinmann. For more information, or to register, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

March 6-7: Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo; at 7:30 p.m. each evening. Speakers: Steve Nolt and Royden Loewen.

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

Classifieds

Travel

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way with Mennonite Heritage Tours! Small group Hotel Tours focusing on Mennonite/ Anabaptist heritage in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Poland and Ukraine. www.mennonite-heritagetours.eu

Employment Opportunities

Lead Pastor

Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church seeks a full time lead pastor, seeking to fulfill the Great Commission found in Matthew 28. Contact by email - search.bergie@gmail.com

Brussels Mennonite Fellowship is seeking a 1/2 to 3/4 time pastor. Start date: Fall 2014. For more details please go to www.bmfchurch.com

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Please submit inquiries, resumes and references by February 15, 2014 to:

Henry Paetkau, Area Church Minister,
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
#201 - 50 Kent Ave.,
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1
Tel: 226-476-2500 *704 or 855-476-2500
Email: hpaetkau@mcec.ca



Mennonite Church Canada invites applications for the position of Partnership Development Facilitator, Eastern Canada

Mennonite Church Canada is a dynamic work environment with an enthusiastic team of staff who strive to put faith into practice. This .40 time position, located in Eastern Canada, participates in the mandate given to Church Engagement to inspire, invite, and resource the church in its journey of transformation as disciples of Jesus Christ in a broken world.

The Partnership Development Facilitator will encourage and maintain the development of partnerships between congregations and Mennonite Church Canada mission workers and projects, and to nurture financial support for Mennonite Church Canada programs, ministries and mission.

Regular travel in Canada, primarily within Ontario, is required.

All staff are expected to exhibit a personal faith commitment to Christ as Saviour and Lord, uphold the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, and the vision of Mennonite Church Canada as a missional church. For a list of qualifications and responsibilities for this position, see the job description posted at:

<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/getinvolved/jobs/>.

A letter of intent and a resume, or any inquiries or nominations can be directed to Kirsten Schroeder, Director, Human Resources at kschroeder@mennonitechurch.ca, Mennonite Church Canada, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg MB R3P 0M4 (ph. 204-888-6781; toll-free 1-866-888-6785). Application processing will begin January 23rd.



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