

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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EDITORIAL

All 'church' is local

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

“All politics is local,” is one of the enduring lines of political wisdom uttered by the salty, outspoken U.S. congressman from Massachusetts, the late Tip O’Neill, nearly three decades ago—a line that seems to be gaining momentum in the 21st century. And it applies to more than just politics.

The same wisdom seems to be prescient for the religious community as well, our Anabaptist Mennonite one included. With institutional loyalty waning, the role of denominations is rapidly changing. Where they used to issue edicts, and articulate doctrinal or confessional statements that were the guiding lights of the local congregation, they are now setting up “frameworks for discussion and discernment” that defer to the local congregation for decision-making.

Mennonite Church Canada is completing its Being a Faithful Church process that, in a final phase, is focusing on human sexuality. Rather than issue a statement on this matter from the top down, it is gathering reports from congregations who have “discerned” at the local level. This is practising one of our core Anabaptist beliefs which, established when our forefathers broke with the state church in the 16th century, put the authority of the church with the “gathered community of believers,” rather than with some papal authority in distant Rome.

Willard Metzger, executive director of MC Canada, puts it this way: “The

Holy Spirit is dismantling the church as we know it.” If he is referring to the hierarchical structure of the church as we have known it, yes, that is happening as we develop a stronger sense of how our faith is put into daily practice. We would hope the church is not being dismantled—only showing up in a different form. But we do appreciate, and affirm, the spiritual sensibilities of our denominational leader.



The move from central to local is manifesting itself on many different fronts. In our main feature on current developments in Ukraine, writer William E. Yoder reminds us in the West that the response to the crisis there is best made by the local religious parties, such as the All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, rather than by opinions/advice from us so far removed from the scene. Our role is to hold them up in prayer for their “peace-maker role.”

Out of the final hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission held in Edmonton comes the stinging recognition that we need to pay much closer attention to the spirituality and narrative of our indigenous neighbours and fellow church members, rather than continue to believe we, of European Mennonite stock, somehow have a superior faith to offer. We now have the opportunity to embrace them warmly and with a yearning to learn from them, rather than the other way around. We have begun to pay

attention to “local.”

With the population of our worldwide Mennonite communion shifting to the Global South comes the challenge of César García, Mennonite World Conference’s general secretary, for all multicultural mission team members, especially those coming from the more-affluent Global North, to take a “vow of poverty” so they can more readily identify with the poor around the world.

“Some attempts at a cooperative model between North American agencies and South agencies have failed because of huge financial disparities among members of the same team,” he notes. “An Anabaptist emphasis on simplicity as a requirement for each [team] member, regardless of country of origin, could help us to avoid many problems.”

That is paying more attention to “local,” and adjusting our policies accordingly.

And it is happening in the world of communication, especially in social media. In the days before the Internet made us a worldwide community, there were only a few sources of information—major newspapers and broadcast networks—from one to many. Now, paradoxically, we are “many to many,” where information and opinion are not created in major centres of information, but now flow from many sources, some reliable, many not.

But the local—Facebook and Twitter friends, Instagram and Snapchat groups—have taken on far more prominence in our lives than the gathering and socializing around major centres and locations. Even the attraction of the mega-church, so prominent in the late 20th century, is on the wane.

Back to the invitational words of Jesus: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst” (Matthew 18:20). Now, that’s local!

ABOUT THE COVER:

The European Union flag is raised in Lviv, Ukraine, earlier this year during the protest movement known as EuroMaidan. William E. Yoder’s analysis of the political, social and religious implications of the unrest in Ukraine and on its eastern border begins on page 4.

PHOTO: DIXOND (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)

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- Spiritual wrestling in an unknown season (Assembly 2014 speaker)
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UKRAINE COMMENTARY

How to heal a nation divi/ed?

BY WILLIAM E. YODER, PH.D.

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MOSCOW

One could attribute the current crisis in Ukraine to the lack of sympathy for democratic practice. Repeated fistcuffs in Ukraine's Parliament were one indication of that deficit.

And why was it not possible for the protesters in Kyiv's Maidan Square to wait for upcoming elections? They had been set for March 2015, then moved forward to this December. Was one too uneasy regarding the possible outcome?

Former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger noted in his article for the *Washington Post* on March 6, that East- and West-Ukraine had never gotten around to appreciating compromise. Both parties "have not been willing to share power," he wrote. For a while, the Eastern party was on top, then the Western one. Under former president Viktor Yanukovich, the East was on top, but the wave of civil unrest and protests that became known as "EuroMaidan" inverted the power structure once more. So the East responded by splitting off Crimea.

Which brings us to the next crisis: East-Ukraine.

In the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, German ex-chancellor Gerhard Schröder conceded on March 9 that lopping off Crimea from Ukraine had been a clear infraction of international law. He sees it as multiple-layered illegality: The "power grab" in Maidan Square was illegal, as was the resulting independence drive in Crimea. One injustice caused the next.

I believe Russian Christians now celebrating the apparent return of Crimea to the fatherland dare not forget the unfortunate chain of illegalities which caused it.

The West has every cause to beat its own breast. Is it proper to demand that one half of a profoundly divided nation take sides at the expense of the other half? Schröder stated in *Der Spiegel*: "I ask myself if it was correct to force a culturally divided nation like Ukraine to choose between association with the EU [European Union] and a customs union with Russia." It was this either-or alternative that finally capsized the ship.

Kissinger wrote: "Any attempt by one wing of Ukraine to dominate the other would lead eventually to civil war or break up." In early March he was still of the opinion that Ukraine should attempt to fulfil the role of a bridge between East and West.

I believe Russian Christians now celebrating the apparent return of Crimea to the fatherland dare not forget the unfortunate chain of illegalities which caused it.

PHOTO BY MSTYSLAV (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)



Ukrainian Red Cross Society volunteers administer first aid to a wounded EuroMaidan protester.

Only the Eastern military bloc was abolished after 1990. That's at the core of the continuing division between East and West, which has now come home to roost in Ukraine. The West decided to create a European security net against—and not with—Russia. That has had consequences.

I find the explanation of a Moscow Baptist helpful. He compared the presentation of Crimea to Ukraine on Feb. 19, 1954, with a modern-day wedding that ignores the need for a marriage contract. In the early going, the groom promises his beloved heaven and earth. But when the time for a divorce rolls around, the man suddenly demands that a portion of his gifts be returned.

Some reports claim the presentation of Crimea to Ukraine was brought about by the self-serving conniving of the late Nikita Khrushchev, the former general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Precisely during that

month, Politburo members were engulfed in a power struggle and he hoped to curry favour among Ukrainians by presenting them with a token gift. Who would have thought that 60 years later a divorce would be imminent?

The political orientation of Protestants

Even the most conciliatory statements from the leadership of Ukraine's largest Baptist union, the All Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Churches, exhibit a clear political preference. A helpful statement on Feb. 24 from Valery Antonyuk, the leading vice-president of this union, reads: "We supported the nation's demand to put an end to the tyranny of the authorities and repressions by the police."

Yet this nation is divided. Kyiv's Protestants speak of "Ukraine," yet usually they are speaking only in terms of West- and Central-Ukraine. Those truly

concerned about national unity would express themselves differently.

Russians have the impression that West-Ukrainians can only think in terms of their own side. Demands out of Kyiv that Russians form forces opposed to President Vladimir Putin reminds me of life in the former East Germany. Westerners would say: "You must raise your voices. You must protest against the misdeeds of your government!" Easterners would respond: "Don't you have a few issues yourselves? Have a look at Hiroshima, Korea, Vietnam, Chile, Nicaragua. Let us take care of matters in East Germany ourselves. We live here and it's our necks that are on the block—not yours."

More than a few Protestant articles in the West are euphoric regarding the naming of Oleksandr Turchynov as acting president of Ukraine. Turchynov occasionally preaches in a Baptist

PHOTO BY SEBASTIAN MEYER / VOA



A man attaches a pro-Russian arm band to a another man joining a 'self-defence' group outside the parliament building in Simferopol, Crimea, on March 3.

congregation in Kyiv. Billy Graham's *Decision* magazine stated on March 6: "God is mightily at work in Ukraine."

Yet Russia's faithful are more sober regarding developments. A Baptist heading a coup-instigated "illegal" government with at least five far-right ministers does not make for great Baptist public relations in Russia. Russia's tiny Baptist flock is worried about the long-term consequences.

But is it really the Baptists and Protestants who are calling the shots in Ukraine? In the British *Globe and Mail* on March 8, Olga Bogomolets, who attained acclaim as a doctor attending to Maidan Square's casualties, explained the reasons for her distance from the Kyiv government. She accused the new government of having brought very few "new faces" into play. Turchynov, of course, belongs to the "old faces." For 20 years, he served as the right-hand man of Yulia Tymoshenko, the oligarch and politician.

Possible moves forward

The Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and Russia's other larger Protestant denominations will not be going to bat for the new Kyiv government at the expense of Putin's administration. And this is not primarily because they fear Putin, but rather because they don't recognize any clear moral superiority on the part of the Kyiv government.

And this is the case even though Russians are clearly in-the-know regarding the local sins and shortcomings of their own government.

A very wordy statement from the Russian Union on March 13 reads in part: God "accepts them all as his children. Let us not claim that God is on our side and against the others! God is above and beyond our petty preferences and loyalties. In the political sphere, God is not for one side at the expense of the other."

In short, despite the unavoidable contradictions in our political assessments, being one in Christ has consequences which express themselves in public life. What could some of these consequences be?

• **THE HEATED** atmosphere at present results in belligerent and unbridled language. In a release from *Christianity Today* on Feb. 24, Turchynov spoke of the "unprecedented cruelty and brutality of the dictatorial regime." But was Yanukovich's administration more despicable than Cambodia's Khmer Rouge? Cries of "fascism" are volleyed to-and-fro.

A prominent Crimean election placard essentially stated: "Nazism or a Free Crimea." But such exaggerations happened on both sides of the barricades and travelled at least as far as Washington. We need linguistic disarmament. Only a cautious and respectful diction can point the way towards peace.

• **PUTIN-BASHING DOES** not sit well on a Christian frame. Kissinger stated it differently: "The demonization of Vladimir Putin is not a policy; it is an alibi for the absence of one." And Schröder has been lambasted for being a friend of Putin.

But should not every Christian have at least a few friends who would not be welcome at most Pentagon parties? That could serve the cause of peace. More than a few contacts could be struck up via the Schröder-Putin connection.

• **THE HOME** page of the Wheaton, Ill.-based Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries appeals for donations for the family of 26-year-old Alexander Khrapachenko. This young Baptist from Rovno was tragically killed during the shootings in Maidan Square. But why should the mission not also start an appeal for the bereaved family of a state-supported policeman? That would underline the non-partisan peacemaking character of the gospel and would allow the ministry to better fulfill the task stated online: "Healing and reconciliation in Ukraine."

This would also demand a significant change in course for the mission. A primary representative of this mission in Ukraine, the young Baptist professor Michail Cherenkov, is struggling mightily in cyberspace for EuroMaidan and against Russia. Is "Russian Ministries" willing to voluntarily abandon its ministry on the ground in Russia for the sake of this? That would be a great pity, for the ministry has done good work in gathering the new, young "evangelical intelligentsia" in the former Soviet Union. Irpen, near Kyiv, has until now functioned as a kind of think tank for the evangelical movement in Russia and beyond. Is that role now over? It is difficult to reconcile myself with such an eventuality.

Yet the political-strategic aspect dare not remain central. More important is the question: "How does God think and what is he expecting from us?" In the interview with *Decision*, Turchynov quoted Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Yet the Russian Union's statement sounds otherwise: God is impartial and finds himself

‘Blessed are the peacemakers’

The following announcement was released by Vyacheslav Nesteruk, president of the All-Ukrainian Union of Associations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, and Aleksey Smirnov, president of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, after they met on April 8:

We representatives of the congregations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Russia and Ukraine have come together to express our common views on issues of major concern to people in our churches and countries. We thereby present a visible sign of support for the possibility of a peaceful dialogue between our churches and nations.

All of our congregations pray continually for peace between our peoples, as well as for those who have suffered during the course of the recent political stand-off. We pray for the maintenance of lasting peace and understanding between the citizens of our countries independent of their national and confessional affiliations.

- **WE EXPRESS** our sincere willingness to pray and support deeds of fraternal dialogue and the promotion of peace in Russian and Ukrainian societies.
- **WE APPEAL** to all who are responsible for the future of our countries to hold firmly to the principles of freedom of conscience and confession, as well as the non-interference of the state and political forces in the internal life of religious organizations.

- **WE CONDEMN** all acts of violence and brutality against persons, as well as the resolution of political problems by military means.
- **WE APPEAL** to all members of the various religious groups to contribute to the process of forgiveness and agreement between our peoples.
- **WE MOURN** those killed in mass clashes on both sides of the conflict, both among the public and combatants.
- **WE CALL** on our brothers and sisters in the churches of Russia and Ukraine to pray for a peaceful resolution of the political confrontation between our two countries.
- **WE CALL** on our peoples to make every effort to avoid any provocations, to retain in their hearts love for the neighbour, to respect his human dignity and religious beliefs.
- **WE ARE** ready, regardless of our circumstances, to cooperate further in proclaiming the gospel in our own countries and throughout the world.

For Willard Metzger's responses to both of these church unions, visit canadianmennonite.org/blessed-peacemakers.



beyond the battle. He does not struggle for West-Ukraine against East-Ukraine or vice-versa.

Of course, as acting president, Turchynov is in need of our prayers! Can he at least keep the remainder of the country—without Crimea—in one piece? Can he defend moderate forces against the onslaught of the radical right? His task is not an enviable one. ❧



William Yoder grew up in the Mennonite church in Sarasota, Fla.; he graduated from Eastern Mennonite College in 1973 and received

a Ph.D. in political science from the Free University of Berlin (West) in 1991. His dissertation was on the role of the evangelical church in East Germany from 1945-61.

/// For discussion

1. William Yoder suggests that democracy requires compromise and a sharing of power. Have you had experiences in public, church or family life where compromising or sharing power was difficult? Why is power so hard to share? What role do emotions play in these situations?
2. What is hampering relationships between Christians in Russia and Ukraine? How much should Christians be influenced by the policies of the country in which they live? What is the appropriate role for Christians in the politics of the state?
3. Why did Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. organize themselves by country 15 years ago? Did state politics play a role in that decision?
4. Yoder writes that, “despite unavoidable contradictions in our political assessments, being one in Christ has consequences which express themselves in public life.” He then points out some unhelpful actions by western Christians. Can you think of other situations where Christians have ignored the unity of the church because of political differences? Why is it so hard to work for peace in these situations?
5. What role should the Mennonite church play in the Ukrainian situation?

—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.

✉ **Writer claims argument against Al Najd based on 'factual error'**

RE: "MCC SHOULD consider new partner in Gaza" letter, March 17, page 8.

Andrew Pinnell's letter contains a factual error that negates the argument. Despite Uri Schor, a spokesman for Israel's Water Authority quoted in the *Christian Post*, the evidence is clear that Israel's Wadi Sofa Dam is one of a number that diverts water from the HaBesor stream originating in the Hebron Hills and the Negev Desert from flowing into Wadi Gaza, that was opened causing flooding in a part of Gaza. Pinnell bases his criticism of Mennonite Central Committee and its Gaza partner, Al Najd Development Forum, on an ill-informed source. I have gained an appreciation for the humanitarian work Al Najd does and applaud MCC for its partnership.

JOHANN FUNK, PENTICTON, B.C.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Redefining success

GARRY JANZEN

How do we measure success? When I served as a mission worker in Botswana, an African leader shared with me that their definition of success is "good relationships." By this he meant that all our economic success, status and all the letters behind our names mean nothing if we have sacrificed relationships in order to achieve these. When I shared this with an indigenous leader here in Canada, he could not have agreed more.



As a missional people, is our focus to be on measuring? Are we to regularly sit down with a measuring stick and assess how far forward we have moved? People committing their lives to following Jesus and connecting with the church does our hearts good. Having the number of people who are participating in our small groups and worship services grow is encouraging. We are thankful for new people getting involved as leaders in our churches or

serving in our ministries. Seeing ministry projects be completed gives us a sense of accomplishment. These are all good outcomes of faithful ministry.

I play early-morning drop-in hockey three mornings a week. A guy named Mark has been coming for the last couple of months. In our chats in the dressing room before and after hockey, I have discovered that Mark has connections to the church, but is not involved. I also found out that he is related to the new pastor at Living Hope Christian Fellowship in Surrey.

I invited Mark to the installation service on April 27 for the new pastor and told him I would be giving leadership there. He said he might come. After the service, I was mingling and this woman came up to me to ask if I was the one who plays hockey. She said that her son-in-law, Mark, has really appreciated his relationship with me and the conversations we have had at hockey.

Neither of us had seen Mark at the

installation service, but she just wanted to encourage me to continue my witness with her son-in-law at hockey. How do you measure that? God is at work, and when we align ourselves with what he is doing, our witness to his love flows through us to the worlds in which we find ourselves.

If we are actively witnessing to the love of Jesus in our neighbourhoods, yet our churches are declining in numbers in the pews, how will they survive? I certainly haven't seen the fullness of the answer to this question. Is our ministry about trying to figure out ways to fill our buildings? What God is doing as a result of these relationships is yet to be revealed, so we keep on actively loving our neighbours. How is the activity of our missional God measured? It's hard to tell, but we get glimpses such as a mother-in-law's note of appreciation.

If "good relationships" are the definition of success, this kind of success is clearly harder to measure than numbers and completed projects. Yet aligning with what God is doing in our neighbourhoods seems to be what God is asking of us, and it is definitely rewarding (and fun).

Garry Janzen is MC B.C.'s executive minister.

✉ Christians must continue to call all sins 'sin'

WE HERE AT Hague Mennonite Church have been observing what is going on in our denomination, and it saddens us to see the devaluation of the Word of God that is taking place.

It seems that there is an effort being made to make

peace with the world. Jesus clearly states that if we want to be friends with the world, we become enemies of God (James 4:4). We have noticed a great effort to bring peace between Christians and non-Christians by the churches and leadership. That in itself seems noble, but in reality it is extremely dangerous.

As Christians, we should not be so afraid of being

(Continued on page 10)

OUTSIDE THE BOX

The shape of things to come?

PHIL WAGLER

In April, voters in *la belle province* rejected a political party that had drafted a charter of values that would have treated the overtly religious as unfit for public service. The Parti Québécois (PQ) secular charter intended to make publicly funded spaces free from the intrusion of “conspicuous” religious attire and symbols like hijabs and crosses.

The word “conspicuous” is key. Hold your private religious conviction, but don’t let it show. The most secular part of Canada seemed the most likely place for this to find traction, but in one fell swoop Québécois said “no” and kicked the PQ to the sidelines.

Meanwhile, in British Columbia, Trinity Western University (TWU) is trying to convince Canadian law societies to accept graduates from a law school that has yet to launch. Although TWU has been given the thumbs-up by the Federation of Law Societies of Canada to open a law school, provincial jurisdictions in Ontario and Nova Scotia have thus far barred any future TWU law graduates from approaching the bar in those provinces. Why?

The *Globe and Mail* has given TWU an A-plus for quality of education every year since 2005. Surely a school like this

couldn’t hurt the reputation of lawyers that badly. So why all the hullabaloo? Because, as a private Christian university, TWU asks students—who voluntarily attend the school—to abide by a community covenant that asks them, among other things, to abstain from “sexual intimacy that violates the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman.”

This, specifically, is what shocked law societies are calling “abhorrent and objectionable.” As George Jonas, who is neither a Christian nor a defender of evangelical values, wrote in the *National Post*, “We’re no more tolerant than we

unrelated events is what the PQ was unashamed to name: the conspicuousness of religious conviction. The problem with Muslims in Québec is that they don’t just keep their religion in the closet. The problem with Christian students in British Columbia is that they take their religion into their bedrooms.

Both are way too conspicuous for this age, and this will increasingly be problematic for followers of Jesus in this country. It’s fine to be spiritual or religious, it just can’t really have anything to do with your life. Otherwise, you are backwards and unfit for service.

Your ethics cannot be different than the prevailing mood or you will suffer. This is the shape of things to come. H.G.



... Canadian law societies are rejecting future lawyers because they have religious values.

were 50 years ago; we’ve just reversed what we’re intolerant about.”

It would seem tolerance is shaped by those whose idea has power.

So let’s get this straight. Québec voters rejected a government that would have discriminated against religious values, while Canadian law societies are rejecting future lawyers because they have religious values. Welcome to the ironic paradoxes of the world you live in.

What is the shape of things to come?

At the heart of these seemingly

Wells’s 1933 book of that name predicted a world where organized religion needed to be abolished so the modern state could monopolize education and shape future generations. Seems he saw something. Can we?

Phil Wagler lives 15 minutes from Trinity Western University and serves as pastor of a number of great Christian lawyers who serve all people as those made in the image of God and worthy of a mediator, just as God himself has given us one.

(Continued from page 9)

persecuted as we presently show that we are by simply accepting the culture that is being pressed on us by the world. Because of our apparent “need” to be politically correct, we are compromising our convictions.

The Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process is in discussion about this whole sex issue: what to do with homosexuality and the lesbian/gay/bisexual/

transgendered/queer (LGBTQ) community. Should we not do what Jesus did: be loving, not condemning, and then tell people to sin no more? Judgment and punishment in hell will still come to all those who will not repent, will it not?

Assuming we do not want to change the Word of God, why for heaven’s sake do we have to dialogue about things that are crystal clear and obvious to

NEW ORDER VOICE

Celebrating Eastertide

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

I botched Lent this year. I didn’t fast from anything tasty or techno, or set aside time to meditate and pray.

To be honest, I think my lack of motivation stems from the lack of inspiration I draw from the Easter story, at least as I’ve known it so far. The story of Christ’s victory over death, the sacrifice of a Saviour who guarantees eternal life, is stale. I’m aware of the oppression and injustice that this story has wrought over time, both locally and globally: the domination of vulnerable peoples, the industrialization of the land, the exploitation of marginalized groups. With this knowledge, how can I celebrate Easter and be inspired to act justly?

Just a couple weeks before Holy Week, I took a moment to stop by a small shelf of abandoned books in the lobby of our housing complex. We live on the University of British Columbia campus close to several theology schools, so it’s usually a mix of old churchy cast-offs and undergrad business texts. That day there was a book with the hot-pink-coloured title: *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*. I started reading it that night and was pleasantly surprised to find the Easter inspiration I’d been missing.

Turns out the book is a collection of essays co-edited by Joanne Carlson Brown, the first gay or lesbian person to be ordained by the United Methodist

Church. Definitely dated—1989, a year after I was born—it theologically handles the question of whether feminists can be Christians and vice versa.

It was the third essay by Rita Nakashima Brock that freshened things up for me. Her essay, “And a little child will lead us,” speaks to how classical elements of Christianity, like patriarchy and the Father/Son paternalism within Christology, neglect the vulnerable and, at worst, result in child abuse. Heavy stuff. But what’s neat is Brock’s recounting of the resurrection from the perspective of the vulnerable and wounded people Jesus connected with, particularly the women.

She starts with the hemorrhaging woman in Mark 5, who is healed after touching Jesus’ clothes as he walks through the crowd. Jesus turns around and asks who touched him. She confesses, only to hear that her “faith has made [her]



It’s a radical interpretation of the Easter story, but it inspires me because it empowers the weak and the marginalized.

well.” Brock writes, “Her faith and courage re-establish her wholeness. Her courage comes from knowing vulnerability and, despite her fear, reaching out for healing. . . . She represents the brokenness of our human connections and her courage restores the flow of connectedness.”

Here, one of the most vulnerable people in society is empowered by the

connection created between her own action and divine love. Brock goes on to say that “[d]ivine presence as love, as connectedness, had come to the community through the wounded.”

Jesus’ death, then, was a final act of connection with the vulnerable. “In being bound with the vulnerable who accompany him to his death, Jesus is exposed as one among them, too wounded to suffer alone.”

“The women return to his grave to claim him. When the stricken Jesus leaves them, they bring back his presence as a part of themselves, as a vision. . . . In claiming life for themselves, the community transforms Jesus Christ into Christa/Community.”

It’s a radical interpretation of the Easter story, but it inspires me because it empowers the weak and the marginalized. Jesus’ followers are transformed into a loving community, one that’s experienced justice and will continue to work for it. The resurrection becomes not just an event proclaiming the dominion of One, but life shared by many parts of a connected whole.

So this Eastertide I’m inspired to look for new life that comes from the

transformative stories of vulnerable and wounded people claiming life for themselves. It’s definitely something to celebrate and keep in mind when we say, “Christ is risen!” Because maybe he’s not the only one.

Katie Doke Sawatzky (katiesawatzky@gmail.com) lives in Vancouver.

begin with in the Word? Why do we not have the courage to believe the Word? Why do we have to start accepting worldly culture into our churches? Why should we now accept sexual immorality—what God calls “abomination”—as not being sin anymore? Could someone explain that to me, please?

The difference with homosexual sin is that it doesn't want to be called “sin,” and that is the problem. In fact, it is reason enough many churches have left and will leave Mennonite Church Canada. Unless the leadership repents and starts calling sin what is according to the Word of God, evil will creep into the churches and they will die!

ARTUR ESAU, HAGUE, SASK.

Artur Esau is pastor of Hague Mennonite Church.

✉ U.S. pastoral controversy about gay marriage, not sexual identity

IN MARCH, I was visiting some Mennonite communities in the U.S. Midwest and heard about the decision of Mountain States Conference to license as Pastor Theda Good, a woman in a same-sex relationship. I talked to my hosts and read up on the controversy.

I noticed how frequently it was framed as “licensing a lesbian pastor.” This troubled me. The same phrase was used in the April 14 editorial of *Canadian Mennonite*, “Of genitals and gender.” To my knowledge, there is no procedural call to block lesbians from ministry. At issue is not the fact that Good is a lesbian, but that she is married to a woman.

The difference might seem minor, but it is very significant that so many writers have been unable to articulate the difference between actions and identity. This wording targets her personally as “the problem,” not the conference's definition of marriage. The difficulty is that her marriage seems to contradict Christian teaching.

To make an imperfect analogy, let us pretend that an individual from the Middle East professing Islam had been appointed pastor. If this were reported as “licensing an Arab pastor,” I hope we would recognize imprecise and misleading terminology. There is nothing to stop an Arab being a pastor, but we might ask how a Muslim individual can pastor a Christian congregation. Beyond misleading, this terminology is dangerous, feeding dominant-culture Islamophobia that conflates “Muslim” and “Arab” as a threat, just as defining an individual's sexual identity as a problem to the church feeds homophobia.

This is why I think accuracy is so important. Queer people already face a struggle for acceptance in the church and the world, even when they stay closeted or

celibate. Naming them as the problem exacerbates the challenge. I know that if God had called me to be both a husband and a pastor, I would not want to have to choose between these blessings.

PETER HARESNAPE, TORONTO

Peter Haresnape is a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams and Toronto United Mennonite Church.

✉ LGBTQ, aboriginals both unaccepted by the church

RE: “GENITALS AND gender” editorial, and “A cry for equality” column, April 14, pages 2 and 10, respectively.

Regarding the editorial, we are all made in God's image and are his children. What would you do and how would you feel if this was you or your child, and the church was not accepting of you as a person? Lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered/queer pastors like the one mentioned are as committed to the Creator and the church as anyone else, maybe more so because of what they have gone through. In my opinion, sexual orientation should not matter if your heart is right and true. Sexuality is part of what you are, not who you are. I know there will be many that disagree, but put yourself in their/our shoes. Feel their/our heart.

Brander McDonald's column brought up many good points. Some of our first peoples have their issues, we can all agree on that, but that is a stereotype. There are many who have gone to university or stepped up and are doing very well. Some of us are learning the old teachings and it has strengthened our faith. My smudge pot reminds me that I need to give thanks to the Creator, who gives us our path to walk, and to Mother Earth, who gives sustenance. There is much to learn from our native sons and daughters!

Why are these two sets of people neither truly accepted or trusted by the larger church body? Why are we so afraid of someone who is “different”? In reality, we are all different. We need to learn to trust each other!

God made each of us this way for a reason. Let us embrace and accept each other for who we are, warts and all. While praying and smudging for a more open church, I, for one, will keep learning and respecting those around me.

MIM HARDER, UXBRIDGE, ONT.

✉ Reader feels magazine is ‘going down the very wrong path’

THIS LETTER HAS been quite a long time coming,

but finally I just have to say how I truly feel. I feel that *Canadian Mennonite* has been going down the very wrong path for some time, and under the new editor this sense has increased greatly in the past year . . . until I can bear it no longer.

I find that after having read an issue typically I feel both irritated and alienated. There are still some good articles in it, but overall the sorts of articles and the editorial slant that I see has changed the balance for me and the magazine now really turns me off.

I actually pay for *The Mennonite* from Mennonite Church U.S.A. because it is worth it. The perspective typical of the U.S. *Mennonite* is far more in keeping with my views. Wish I could be more positive, but then I would be dishonest.

**HEATHER WHITEHOUSE,
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONT.**

✉ Reader feels MC Saskatchewan misled delegates

WE HAVE HEARD in our church, Fiske Mennonite, and read numerous articles in *Canadian Mennonite* that sexuality was, and needs to be, discussed within churches under the guise of the Mennonite Church Canada Being a Faithful Church process. We have also been informed that there is no predetermined outcome of these discussions. Yet it seems we are being manipulated and ill informed of decisions being made to obtain desired results.

Imagine my surprise after the MC Saskatchewan assembly was over to read in *Canadian Mennonite* that a safe church policy had been adopted (March 31, page 18). Part of that document read, "No person will be granted a position on the basis of age, gender, cultural background, physical appearance or sexual orientation."

I then went back to our church and read the delegate booklet. Nowhere could I see information that anything controversial would be coming up at the meeting. Was this an omission? Or a deliberate attempt to hide this from our church and possibly the

delegates we might have sent?

I wonder if the delegates who attended would have been the same ones representing their churches if the churches had known there was a controversial subject to be discussed and voted on.

Trust and integrity, I feel, are two main character ingredients for people and organizations. The question begs to be answered, "Can we trust the leaders of MC Saskatchewan when they are not upfront with even meeting agendas?"

Now, with this statement as part of MC Saskatchewan church policy, are we gullible enough to think this will not be brought forward as an example as this sexuality debate goes forward?

I am a regular church attendee and I have watched with interest to see how MC Canada would deal with this issue. I am disappointed to see the church follow the norm of many other churches: talk about it, delay and then talk about it some more.

I can see how this issue is hurting many people in the faith community. But do our faith values and the role of Scripture change just because we are uncomfortable? Or do we compromise until there is nothing left, or wait until people die, give in, or vote with their feet and walk away?

RAY MUTLOW, ROSETOWN, SASK.

✉ Disclaimers for all writers would be 'gratifying'

RE: "DISCLAIMER TO be included in John Howard Yoder books," Jan. 6, page 28.

I am waiting for more disclaimers from MennoMedia and likeminded persons. Surely, to be consistent and fair, other authors should be subject to the same scrutiny and judgment as Yoder. Diligent research of writers' lives, past and present, should, I believe, provide a veritable series of disclaimers.

How gratifying this could be.

AUDREY MUSSELMAN, WATERLOO, ONT.

✉ Swearing not necessary to be funny . . . or dramatic

IN "THE 100 percent clean comedian," March 17, page 4, Matt Falk demonstrates a principle that is oft forgotten by Mennonite and other "Christian" entertainers: Drama can be expressive without the use of profanities. Comedian Ted Swartz does this as well.

IVAN UNGER, CAMBRIDGE, ONT.

/// Correction

The amendment proposed by John Bartel, as reported in the "MC Saskatchewan adopts safe church policy," March 31, page 18, was incomplete. The amendment defining "discrimination" reads in full: "treating people differently through prejudice; unfair treatment of one person or group, usually because of prejudice about race, ethnic group, age group, religion, gender, sexual orientation or gender identification." *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error of omission.

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

A pilgrim people on the margins

STORY AND PHOTO

BY MELODY NEUFELD-ROCHELEAU



Mennonite
Women
Canada

Five loaves and two fish. The story of the feeding of the five thousand illustrates how Jesus uses the small amounts we bring to him. In this story, a crowd has been with Jesus all day. As sunset approaches, the disciples tell Jesus to send these people away, but he tells them to feed the crowd first. They have no idea how to do this, so Jesus takes the pitiful bit of food that the disciples give him, adds his gracious blessing and it becomes all that is necessary to accomplish his will.

This is our normal situation too. Confronted with some large and unexpected challenge, we may have no idea how to respond creatively on our own. But Jesus, who is all about love, nurturing and protecting life, invites us to join him in faithfulness, and gives us his blessing again and again.

That was the experience at Breath of Life Mennonite Church, a house church in Saskatoon (2006-13), where I had the privilege of being in leadership. During our seven-year journey together, this small group of pilgrim people brought their five loaves and two fishes to Jesus. And he blessed our meagre fare repeatedly.

Our beginnings were not those of a church plant. We came together to seek Jesus as a centre for healing and hope, trusting that Jesus was calling us to open ourselves to people on the margins. For six months, we had the vital assistance of Steven Farsaci, an experienced pastor. We became intentional in our worship, used the lectionary for Bible readings, developed a covenant together, named the gods we experience every day, and began the process of becoming a part of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

During this time, individual gifts were uncovered: speaking, worship leading, hospitality, spontaneity, humor, creativity, coordination and encouragement. Together, we became witnesses of God's truth, freedom, love and vitality to each other. We became better listeners to the call of Jesus to share the light of his truth, the warmth of his love and the strength of his vitality with those we encountered in our daily lives.

Were these things particular to us as a house church? Of course, the answer is no. It matters not to Jesus what the church body is called or the numbers that participate. What matters is the faithfulness of the members.

For me, the "difference" in being involved in a house church had to do with the sense of pilgrimage and mission we shared in this smaller, more intimate and

intentional group.

According to an essay by Martin Robinson in *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage*, pilgrimage and mission are closely and crucially related, and are vitally important for the church in this post-Christendom period.

Also, the imagination of the church is best engaged when pilgrimage, or journey, lies near its centre.

Being on this journey together as the body of Christ involves "breathing in" God's transforming love. It

[T]he imagination of the church is best engaged when pilgrimage, or journey, lies near its centre.

involves movement and discovery, paying attention, being open to surprises, flexibility, not taking oneself too seriously, letting go and keeping your eyes on the goal.

"Breathing out," our mission is to share God's love in the world joyfully, no longer in step with the surrounding society, travelling lightly with limited baggage. This is not without risk for those who are faithful. Yet we eagerly go to the margins of society to listen, learn, share and receive Jesus' love and life. It is this calling that causes followers of Jesus to have no real home and results in being permanently on a journey.

Today, we're invited to envelop the notion of becoming a pilgrim people, open to the creative, sustaining work of the Holy Spirit already working in the margins. Let's do that with gusto! Then watch as Jesus blesses and multiplies our loaves and fishes! ☸



Melody Neufeld-Rocheleau is employed as a client care coordinator with the Saskatchewan Health Region and is working towards a Graduate Certificate of Christian Ministry through Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Peter and Rachel's story

ANDREW REESOR-MCDOWELL

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

This is a story about the efforts that one father has made to help his teenage daughter have a Christian faith of her own and a church to embrace.

But first, a little background about the setting for the story. Markham (Ont.) Chinese Mennonite Church and Hagerman Mennonite Church are partner congregations worshipping at the same

time each Sunday morning in different parts of a shared building. We have a joint Sunday school program for children and youth, a shared coffee time after worship, and several times each year we have a joint worship service followed by a meal.

About two years ago, during a shared meal, I met Peter Luk, who was visiting with his daughter Rachel. He told me an

PHOTO BY ANDREW REESOR-MCDOWELL



Peter Luk with daughter Rachel at Hagerman Mennonite Church, Markham, Ont.

interesting story: Rachel had been unhappy in the church that the family had

In her own words

This is the faith story that Rachel Luk shared at Hagerman Mennonite Church, Markham, Ont., on Jan 5.

“I grew up in a Christian family and we went to church every Sunday. I listened and accepted all the lessons and Bible stories I heard. It all became so common that God’s offer of salvation did not seem like anything extraordinary. For 12 years, I lived a life without any significant gains or losses. To me, there was never any reason to thank God or ask him for help other than the prayers before meals, which had become a routine.

“I started to feel pressure from my old church, but wasn’t really close enough to anyone to feel comfortable talking with them about my doubts.

“One summer, just before school started, one of the only people I was close to passed away. I was so angry with God. I didn’t understand why he had to take him away so early. In Grade 9, I was bitter to people around me and to God as well. I barely gave God another thought throughout the entire year and generally tried to ignore it. I started to dread going to church and sitting through Sunday school. I began to think that all Christians were unrelenting and strict.

“The following summer was my last year at a Christian camp that I’d been going to for seven years. I had always experienced spiritual highs after each summer spent there, but that summer was unexpectedly different. The group of friends I was surrounded by were the first Christian friends I’d had.

“Throughout that summer, I was continuously

surprised by how much these people loved God and I realized that that was what I wanted for myself. Up until then, I considered myself to be a Christian, but I realized it was all knowledge and a label, not something I chose to be.

“That week, I asked forgiveness for my sins, asked God to be my Saviour and asked him to show me what he wanted. When I left camp, I felt a need to leave my old church because I didn’t feel like I was getting any support and my new-found faith was not growing.

“At the beginning of Grade 10, I came here, sceptical at first because I had been at one church my entire life and I didn’t like it. However, within the first 10 minutes of being here, I was left with a first impression that was completely different than what I was expecting.

“The first people I met were Jay Reesor and Michelle Poon. Just like everyone here, they were really nice, open and accepting. As I kept coming, I met more and more of the church members and it made me realize that being a Christian does not define your personality.

“In hindsight, it shocks me that I didn’t accept and love God earlier. I don’t understand how I was okay with somebody voluntarily dying for me so I could live, when I had done absolutely nothing good in return. It’s shocking to me how I could be so ungrateful for a free pass to live, and all I had to do was accept it.

“Although I may not understand God’s reasoning behind everything that happens, I believe he put me through hard times to make me realize I need his guidance and to push me to find my own faith, instead of accepting someone else’s. Today, I am being baptized to let people know of my faith, and I ask for your prayer and support in my future endeavours.”

been attending all her life. Peter said that he loved his congregation, but felt it was most important to find a new congregation with Rachel, so that his daughter's faith could continue to develop. Peter and Rachel were visiting churches together, looking for a new church where she could grow in faith.

This was a new idea for me. I immediately realized how hard it would be for me to do this. I was saddened that Peter was leaving a congregation he loved and was deeply moved that he was so committed to helping Rachel find a congregation that met her needs.

I often spoke with Peter after worship, as I was very interested in how this unfolded. Rachel attended the youth Sunday school class and English worship, while

Peter attended the Chinese adult Sunday school class and Chinese worship. I would ask how he thought Rachel was experiencing the congregation. I would also pay special attention to how Rachel was relating to others, especially the youth. She was always sitting with other teenaged girls and I admired the way the youth included her. Yet she seemed to relate well to all ages in the congregation.

Rachel began to participate by reading Scripture, joined in dramatic presentations and youth singing during worship. Comments she made to me and comments from Peter assured me that she was integrating well and that she appreciated her involvement in the congregation. Over a period of 18 months, Peter let me know that he was making the right decision to


attend with his daughter, as she was finding a congregation of her own.

Our pastor, Roberson Mbayamvula, announced that he was leading a baptism preparation class and Rachel decided she wanted to join. When the class was finished, Rachel made the decision that she wanted to be baptized, and with her parents looking on, she was baptized at Hagerman Mennonite Church on Jan. 5.

About that time, Peter felt that he was able to return to worshipping in his former congregation, where his wife still attended. He was very pleased that Rachel had found a new faith community. I have been greatly moved by Peter's commitment to encouraging Christian faith in his daughter and our congregation has been blessed by learning to know Rachel. ☺

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/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bennett-Friesen—Anneka Teresa (b. April 10, 2014), to Rachael and Chris Bennett-Friessen, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

Erb—Jack Ross Stephen (b. April 22, 2014), to Kyle and Vanessa Erb, Crosshill Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Gerber—Isaac Joel (b. April 13, 2014), to Joel and Heather Gerber, Toronto United Mennonite.

Willms—Felix Joshua Erik (b. March 16, 2014), to Jeremy and Karin Willms, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Baptisms

Jennifer Regier—Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, April 20, 2014.

Marriages

Kropf/Williams—Jennifer Kropf and Clyde Williams, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont., April 5, 2014.

Deaths

Acheson—Isabelle, 86 (b. Feb. 28, 1928; d. March 30, 2014), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Albrecht—Aganeta (nee Thiessen), 94 (b. Dec. 20, 1919; d. March 10, 2014), First Mennonite, Winnipeg. (Incorrect information appeared in the April 14 Milestones.)

Bergen—Ben, 78 (b. Jan. 7, 1936; d. April 15, 2014), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Bowman—Dorothy, 89 (b. Nov. 8, 1924; d. April 10, 2014), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Burkhart—Eunice (nee Cressman), 77 (b. Nov. 1, 1936; d. April 13, 2014), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Burkholder—Paul Herbert, 87 (b. July 25, 1926; d. March 29, 2014), Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Dyck—Elma, 94 (b. Jan. 4, 1920; d. April 5, 2014), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Enns—Paul Jeffrey, 47 (b. Jan. 15, 1967; d. April 2, 2014), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Gimbel—Carol (nee Snider), 93 (b. Dec. 25, 1920; d. April 18, 2014), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Gingerich—Edith (nee Smith), 95 (b. April 6, 1919; d. April 9, 2014), Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite, Ont.

Klassen—Peter, 90 (b. Sept. 3, 1923; d. March 21, 2014), Eben-Ezer Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Kroeker—Anna, 83 (b. Aug. 2, 1930; d. April 11, 2014), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Kuepfer—Andrew, 94 (b. Oct. 25, 1919; d. April 13, 2014), Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Loewen—Helena (nee Friesen), 94 (b. June 13, 1919; d. April 17, 2014), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Reimer—Elsie (nee Sawatzky), 69 (b. Sept. 19, 1944; April 22, 2014), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Susgin—Helga (Lori), 55 (b. Dec. 4, 1958; d. April 13, 2014), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Voth—Heinrich, 87 (b. May 8, 1926; d. April 9, 2014), St. Catharines United Mennonite, 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 WORLD

'In the name of Christ'

MCC work in Ukraine continues through current uncertainty

Mennonite Central Committee

As the world watches the situation in Ukraine change almost daily, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) affirms its commitment to its current work in the country. It also offers continued support and prayers to its partners and the people of Ukraine in this time of uncertainty and turmoil.

"We remain concerned that the situation could lead to escalating conflict in the region, and we continue to hope for a peaceful resolution, where all voices are heard," say Ruth Plett and Krystan Pawlikowski, MCC's co-representatives for Eastern Europe.

In Crimea—which has been annexed by Russia—MCC continues to work with a long-term partner organization on multiple projects.

One project involves volunteer medical staff, including doctors and nurses, who run mobile clinics in villages or areas not currently receiving reliable healthcare. This assistance includes free medication for low-income people.

MCC is also working with this partner in Crimea on an HIV/AIDS project. Volunteers such as trained psychologists visit centres where young people await trial. The volunteers lecture on healthy lifestyle choices and HIV prevention, and offer one-on-one counselling if requested. The name of the partner is withheld to protect the organization's privacy during this difficult time.

Outside Crimea, MCC is working with several other partner organizations in places such as Nikopol, Zaporozhye and Kirovograd. Much of the work is focused on HIV/AIDS, including education programs in schools, supporting people with HIV/AIDS in prisons, and providing residential options for released inmates.

Through its partners, MCC purchases milk or milk powder for vulnerable children and families, and supports skills

training for orphans. Since last October two shipments of material resources have been distributed in Ukraine. This includes canned meat, blankets, and hygiene and school kits.

"This work with our many partners in Ukraine will continue, and we are thankful for your prayers and thoughts

in these uncertain times," say Plett and Pawlikowski.

The Mennonite presence in Crimea dates back to the 1850s, and Ukraine has been a part of MCC's history since its formation in 1920. As a result of discussions during that first year, essential items such as food, used clothing and tractors were sent to Ukraine in 1922.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, MCC relocated its office from Moscow to Ukraine with the help and support of a partner in Zaporozhye.

MCC has not yet received requests from its partners in Ukraine for additional support during this time of upheaval, but will respond with compassion to requests for further assistance. ☸

/// Briefly noted

Saskatchewan youth take time out to honour the earth

Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization celebrated Earth Day 2014 with a two-day event that explored how they can honour the earth with their food, worship and hands. At Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, they learned about the different messages they get about food in their day-to-day lives and they made seed bombs consisting of seeds, soil and clay (pictured below), which they later distributed in downtown Saskatoon. Afterwards, they took part in a scavenger hunt that involved only having \$2 each to purchase supper. They spent the evening in worship and games at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, where they marked Earth Hour by turning off all of the lights in the building, spending time debriefing from the day by candlelight, making a collage with glow-in-the-dark chalk and playing a few rounds of Sardines. The next day, the youth went to Rosthern Junior College to jump-start spring-cleaning on campus. After diligently picking up garbage and fallen branches, raking leaves and chopping wood, they were treated to a lunch of locally produced or purchased farmer's sausage, buns, vegetables, chips and salsa. The youth learned there are many different ways to honour the earth, and that it might even be possible to have fun while doing it.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY KIRSTEN HAMM



Truth and reconciliation is 'sacred work'

Justice Murray Sinclair addresses Mennonite church on what must come next if indigenous people are to be treated as equals

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Justice Murray Sinclair proudly and lovingly put his arm around Sarah, his granddaughter. "Tomorrow is one of the most important days in my life, the birthday of my granddaughter," he said of the eight-year-old. "Many of the children taken from families and placed in residential schools were even younger than this. Whenever I do my work, I think about her. We must ensure when we go forward that it will never happen again for little people like this."

Sinclair, who has completed the last of seven Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) national events, was back in Winnipeg, where it all started five years ago, to talk to the Mennonite church community about what comes next in the journey towards reconciliation.

Invited by Mennonite Church Canada and MC Manitoba for their annual Building Bridges event, Sinclair spoke articulately and candidly to his Mennonite audience at the Circle of Life Thunderbird

House on April 25, where he presented them with some difficult challenges. He received a standing ovation, but not because he left his listeners with a "feel good" message.

Sinclair was appointed as chair to the TRC in 2009, the independent body whose mandate was to study and report on the history and legacy of the Indian Residential School system in Canada and discern a process for reconciliation. For five years, he and two other commissioners listened to 7,000 residential school survivors relate their experiences. They are now required to write a report telling the full and complete story of residential schools in Canada, educate the public and engage in a dialogue about reconciliation with government, churches and survivors.

It is a daunting task that has already taken its toll. The three commissioners have all faced medical challenges over the past five years, "and we will continue to bear the heavy burden of consequences," Sinclair said, adding that the three decided

Day schools issue hits home

Ray Mason addresses Partnership Circles

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

"Little is known about the day school part of our colonial history and it is pretty critical we get to know it," said Steve Heinrichs, director of indigenous relations for Mennonite Church Canada. "We have day schools in our Mennonite church history. It hits home."

Mennonites and the Indian Residential School system was the focus of the eighth annual Partnership Circles meeting at Charleswood Mennonite Church on April 26. The Partnership Circle meetings and the annual Building Bridges event are co-hosted by MC Canada and MC Manitoba to strengthen relationships and partnerships between Mennonite churches and first nations.

Before the Partnership Circle discussion could move to day schools, participants wanted to distill what Justice Murray Sinclair had expressed the evening before, particularly his challenge to respect aboriginal spirituality.

"Christian religious superiority was guiding a lot of the missionary zeal," Heinrichs said. "Many of us still believe



Ray Mason, left, and Neill Von Gunten, former co-director of MC Canada Native Ministry, share a laugh as Mason shows off a shirt promoting this summer's Native Assembly at CMU.

our faith is superior. I'm personally challenged. How are we going to respond to this wise word of challenge?"

Norman Meade, pastor and elder, said, "Everyone has to examine their own relationship with the One we know to be God. My way is through Christ, but maybe my friend has another way. That should not stop us from being friends. I should respect him for that."

Ray Mason, founder of Spirit Wind Survivors Inc., and an advocate for day school survivors, explained that in Manitoba there were 14 day schools and 114 across

at the outset they would follow three rules: “Take care of ourselves, which included our spiritual health; then take care of our families, because we knew they were the ones who would see us through this process; and, thirdly, take care of the work. We believed it was sacred work from the very beginning.”

Sinclair said he learned from a victim of the Rwandan genocide that the process of forgiveness is ongoing: “He said, ‘The hardest part is that every morning when I wake up I have to do it all over again.’ That’s what reconciliation is about. It has no ending, no place of arrival. It’s a constant everyday battle and you can’t stop the process, because if you do you are back at the beginning.”

Sinclair stressed the importance of settler groups coming to terms with their relationship to indigenous people. “It has to be done right,” he said. “If it is done wrong, it will perpetuate the blindness, the conflict and the power imbalance. . . . The role of the churches is to encourage their



Neill Von Gunten, former co-director of MC Canada Native Ministry, left, presents a talking stick carved by Henry Neufeld to Justice Murray Sinclair.

congregations, their people to participate in the conversation, to keep the dialogue going when the commission is over, and

to take a look at the practices that each of the faith groups bring to the conversation,

(Continued on page 20)

Canada. “A quarter of a million people were affected by day schools,” he said. There were several different kinds of day schools, including those that were church run. “Our class action [lawsuit] brings them all together,” said Mason. “In some cases, some of our day school brothers and sisters were abused worse than us in residential schools.”

“Although we were not as involved as some other denominations, we were definitely involved,” said Heinrichs. From 1948-68, Mennonites operated day schools on the Sunchild Cree Reserve and at Fort Vermillion in Alberta, and in Pauingassi and Bloodvein in Manitoba. In 1955, “an official in the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs estimates that between one-third and one-half of all teachers in the ‘unorganized territories’ [land located outside the boundaries of settler governance] were Mennonites,” Heinrichs said.

Eagon Ens taught in the first nation communities of Little Grand Rapids and Bloodvein. “I had to make sure the children didn’t speak their language,” he said. “I didn’t follow that, but I still taught our culture and our value system.”

He described when, after the Catholic and Mennonite schools were closed and the schools were taken over by Indian Affairs, he was invited by the community to be principal. “Although we had the invitation to come in, did we still follow the lead of the community?” he wondered. “I had no say in who was hired to teach. The

three teachers that were hired had no qualifications.”

“Our communities were getting second-class education,” Mason said of the situation.

Melanie Kampen, who has just completed her master’s thesis on indigenous theology, was asked to respond by reflecting on what she thinks the Mennonite church needs to do in the next five years. “The most emphasized thing I heard was the challenge: ‘Can the churches make a statement that aboriginal spirituality is a valid and equal means of worship?’” she said, adding, “We need to wrestle with this.”

Kampen suggested more research be done, searching out stories of day scholars and examining the attitudes in the reports, official documents and theology that was brought to indigenous ministry. “Perhaps we need to consider revising some of our official documents,” she said.

“Mennonites have not attended to their own trauma,” Kampen said. “It is important for us to work on our own community and to have our own healing circles. Not coming to terms with our own trauma is a real obstacle to feeling empathy with others. We have trouble identifying ourselves as colonizers.”

“We must continue the dialogue with respect, love and understanding because we have to live together,” Mason concluded. “It’s a long journey that we need to take together.”



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(Continued from page 19)

to see if there is something about the way their practices are founded that might need to be changed and reconsidered."

"How do we reconcile? Is reconciliation possible? If you've never had conciliation to begin with, what are you returning to when you reconcile?" Sinclair asked his audience.

He said mutual respect and restoring self-respect to indigenous people is a good place to begin. "The identity of aboriginal children, knowing where you come from, your teachings concerning faith and life were all denied to us, and this is still perpetuated today," he said. "We need to talk about that. You must understand that that which has been lost must be found, that which has been taken must be returned, that which hurts must be healed. Negative attitudes must be altered."

"Apologies are never enough, but they are important," Sinclair said. "Apologies have to be accompanied by atonement and a change in behaviour. Apology has to be the precursor to reconciliation, but there has to be more, a change in behaviour and attitude. There has to be a move to mutual respect."

"Churches have to make statements of respect for indigenous people and indigenous spirituality," Sinclair said. "Christianity is not the only answer. As Desmond Tutu said, 'God is not a Christian.' Reconciliation is not about furthering the assimilation process. Respect must be stated and shown. It's how we talk to, and about, each other and each other's belief systems. Social needs are still important, and you need to keep doing that because you do that well, but don't just concentrate on social welfare, but recognize and support indigenous people as people, too."

"Is it possible for churches to make a statement acknowledging aboriginal spirituality as valid and as an equal means of worship?" Sinclair asked. "Can you do it? If not, the relationship will be as bad as the existing one."

"Children are the means to reconciliation," Sinclair concluded. "We can set the tone, but it will not occur in our lifetime. It took a long time to get here and it will take a long time to fix, but the children are ready for it." ❧

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PHOTO BY IDENA THIESSEN



Each year, Mennonite women across Canada stitch countless comforters for victims of war and natural disaster, but rarely see the results of their efforts. Recently, however, quilters from Saskatoon's First Mennonite Church were able to vicariously meet the recipient of one of their donated quilts. The quilters, who prepare 250 to 300 comforters each year for relief, presented the quilt to Lydia Schroeder, far left, who gifted it to homeowner Ana Marie in Far Rockaway, N.Y., where MDS volunteers are rebuilding the main floor of her home that was destroyed in 2012 by Hurricane Sandy.

God at Work in the World Snapshots

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Ken Martin, right, of Elmira Mennonite Church receives his steaks from Jordan Weber of Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Church at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario canner meat sales at the Elmira Produce Auction on April 23. With the meat, slaughter and preparation all done by volunteers, the whole price of the meat goes to support the local MCC meat canner project.

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World Vision U.S. chastened over gay hiring policy

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

Earlier this year, World Vision U.S. announced a landmark policy change that would permit gay Christians in legal same-sex marriages to be employed by the Christian aid organization.

"I don't want to predict the reaction we will get," World Vision U.S. president Richard Stearns told *Christianity Today* magazine. "I think we've got a very persuasive series of reasons . . . and it's my hope that all of our donors and partners will understand."

Stearns said the decision was not an endorsement of same-sex marriage, nor an attempt to weigh in on that debate. Rather, it reflected a desire to create a tent big enough to include World Vision U.S.'s supporters from churches that accept same-sex marriage. He said the decision reflected a desire for Christian unity.

Stearns asked: "What do we do about someone who applies for a job at World Vision [U.S.] who is in a legal same-sex marriage that may have been sanctioned and performed by their church?"

But within two short blustery days, World Vision U.S. had back-pedalled unequivocally.

In a statement, Stearns and the organization's board chair said the initial decision had been a "mistake," and that they had "failed to be consistent" with the organization's commitment to "the traditional understanding of the biblical marriage" and the World Vision Statement of Faith which expresses the belief that the Bible is the "infallible, authoritative Word of God."

"We . . . humbly ask for your forgiveness," the two wrote.

Stearns told reporters bluntly, "We feel pain and a broken heart for the confusion we caused for many friends who saw this policy change as a strong reversal of World Vision's commitment to biblical authority, which it was not intended to be."

The organization—which is the 10th largest charity in the U.S., with annual revenue of \$1 billion—had suffered withering attacks on social media and drawn a storm of criticism from prominent evangelicals. Franklin Graham was among them, saying World Vision U.S. was not faithful to God's Word. He asked, "What if a job applicant belonged to a church that sanctioned polygamy or incest?"

Stearns later told the *New York Times* that he and the board were originally "trying to create some space, some room for grace." They had wanted to "avoid divisive debates."

The attempt failed spectacularly. Much of their donor base rebuked them. *The Times* said Stearns sounded "chastened."

The decision does not affect World Vision Canada, which operates in a different legal environment. On its website, it said it complies with provincial laws that "prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

"Matters of sexual orientation are not part of our interview process, and are not a factor in employment," the statement reads. In an e-mail to *Canadian Mennonite*, the organization said, "We seek staff who are committed to and are in alignment with our core values."

The whole U.S. fiasco prompted one former staff member of World Vision Canada to publish an article on the *Huffington Post* entitled "I was blocked from hiring a gay person at World Vision Canada." As a

senior manager, Kristy Woudstra needed to hire someone. She chose a candidate without knowing her sexual orientation, but when more senior staff found out the candidate was lesbian, they stepped in to block the hiring process.

Woudstra, who left World Vision Canada in 2010, was dismayed and angered. She wrote that former colleagues now tell her that "the board and senior staff are more accepting of gays and lesbians."

How Mennonite organizations handle the issue

Mennonite organizations also have to deal with the tension arising from the wide range of views within their constituencies. When asked about its hiring policy in relation to sexual orientation, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada pointed to a set of "lifestyle expectations" on its website. The expectations include "sexual celibacy for personnel outside of a heterosexual marriage relationship." Staff are asked to sign this code of conduct annually.

The policy says "persons of homosexual orientation" can work for MCC as long as they meet the other criteria, remain celi-

MCC Canada . . . 'lifestyle expectations' . . . include 'sexual celibacy for personnel outside of a heterosexual marriage relationship.'

bate and do not "use MCC as a platform from which to advocate for same-sex sexual relationships."

Mennonite Economic Development Associates, Canadian Foodgrains Bank and *Canadian Mennonite* magazine follow an approach like World Vision Canada, with no explicit code of sexual conduct and no inclusion of sexual orientation in the hiring process.

No matter what policy Christian organizations adopt, most stand in the tension between a donor base largely opposed to same-sex marriage on one side, and on the other, an undeniable legal and societal trend in the other direction, as well as growing numbers of staff and prospective staff who would either not sign a code of sexual conduct or would do so with serious reservations. ❧

Correction

A University of Toronto Press ad for the book *Path of Thorns* omitted the name of Sarah Dyck as a co translator. The ad should have read, edited by Harvey L. Dyck and translated by Harvey L. Dyck and Sarah Dyck.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Discovering faith in a consumer age

Seminar explores Christianity in modern culture

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

“**W**e are formed to be consumers, wanting maximum value for the lowest price,” Scott Hagley of Forge Canada told a group gathered at Level Ground Mennonite Church for “Consumed: Finding faith in a consumer age.” Not only that, but he said people have come to “imagine God in economic-consumeristic terms.”

Citing his own experience of moving from city to city and trying to find a new church, Hagley led the group in thinking how a consumer mentality in society affects how people view their interaction in the church. He said the term “church shopping” itself assumes a consumer mentality. “We bring a transactional mentality [if I do this, then God does that] to the gospel,” he said, explaining that buying and selling are formative practices, with the assumption that both sides will act in their own best interests.

Hagley gave insights into such concepts as “bumper sticker Christianity”: Give your life to Jesus and you’ll get the free gift of eternal life. But, he pointed out, “we all know there’s more to it. Telling about Jesus means telling about [being part of] Jesus’ body.”

He also talked about “juvenile Christianity,” with its prevailing attitude of entertainment and avoidance of suffering. “We say it’s a sin to bore anyone, but learning involves boredom,” he exclaimed. “We’ve let go of the reality of suffering; to follow Jesus means submitting to Christ.”

Everyone has some connection to place, and the church is no exception, said Hagley. Participants were grouped together by congregation to consider the questions, “How is your church/community already rooted in a neighbourhood, and how

might it look to take it more seriously?” and, “Which shared practices currently orient your life as a church?”

Ultimately, said Hagley, God’s love is a gift, with Father, Son and Holy Spirit as a community constituted by reciprocal gift-giving. “We like to make ‘love’ abstract, but



Scott Hagley of Forge Canada challenged B.C. Mennonites to think about how Christians view the church as consumers in an April 5 seminar at Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford.

in the Bible there is ‘no idea of love’; there is only ‘love,’” said Hagley. “There is love because there is God.”

Forge Canada is a network of leaders and churches in Canada that are committed to training leaders and churches to transform their neighbourhoods through sharing resources and encouraging one another in mission. ❧

/// Briefly noted

John Paul Lederach honoured with Grebel’s first honorary doctorate

WATERLOO, ONT.—Conrad Grebel University College chose to honour John Paul Lederach of Notre Dame University, South Bend, Ind., a long-time peace and reconciliation worker, with its first honorary doctorate. “Lederach is internationally recognized for his pioneering work in conflict transformation; . . . a leader in conciliation work in Columbia, Venezuela, the Philippines, Nepal, Central Asia, Ethiopia and Somalia; and has designed and conducted training programs in 25 countries across five continents,” said James Pankratz, Grebel’s dean. He noted that Lederach is also a published poet, something that became apparent as Lederach addressed the graduates and gathered community on April 13. Beginning with the concept of time inherent in the idea of a graduation being a commencement—a beginning and not an end—he challenged graduates and their supporters to join the “cloud of witnesses” in Hebrews 12, most of whom were “crazy people” in the “moral imagination” that is filled with hope for the future, even if the present looks bleak. He ended where he had begun, challenging graduates to move forward with what they had learned in theology and peace studies at Grebel, to make their difference in the world now.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Susan Schultz Huxman, president of Conrad Grebel University College, ‘hoods’ John Paul Lederach on April 13. Lederach received Grebel’s first honorary doctorate at the annual convocation.

Mennonite churches caught up in 'shifting stats'

'The past is not serving us well': Willard Metzger

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
TORONTO

The statistics were not new:

- **CANADA'S POPULATION** is made up of more than 200 different ethnicities.
- **ONE IN** every five people who live in Canada was born outside of the country.
- **A QUARTER** of the population has no religious affiliation at all, up from 16.5 per cent just a decade ago.

The numbers spun off by Don Moore of World Vision Canada show the continuing shifts in Canadian culture as it enters more deeply into post-Christendom. The focus of Moore's presentations at the cross-country "Shifting stats: Shaking the church" seminar series on April 8 at Tyndale College and Seminary in Toronto seemed to be to shake up the church in order to find ways to evangelize these new people to Canada, and to reach out to the non- or former-religious population.

While he called on the ecumenical gathering of participants to "listen, learn and lead," the listening and learning were placed in pietistic context of listening to and learning from God—not to the new or non-religious—and leading seemed to be all about "mobilizing to change" in order to get people into churches.

From the conversation facilitated by Mennonite Church Canada afterward, it seemed that the presentation by Bruxy Cavey, which followed Moore's, was more interesting. Teaching pastor of the Meeting House, a multi-location Brethren in Christ church in central Ontario, Cavey spoke of pastoring and leading in the postmodern, post-Christendom context the church now finds itself in.

Ideas ranged from admitting to not knowing the answer to every question as a pastor, and making room for the

congregation to question and discuss teaching on a regular basis, to not backing down on what the church believes (but without rancour), and promoting both a "community of welcome" and a "community of witness." Everyone is welcome—other religions, agnostics, atheists and other denominations—but there are a set of core beliefs that make the church the church, and will not be changed, he said, noting that sometimes a congregation has to let go of people who don't fit.

Afterwards, Willard Metzger, MC Canada's executive director, and two other members of the denomination's Future Directions Task Force—Aldred Neufeldt and Terry Keller—listened to the 10 MC Eastern Canada pastors at the "Shifting stats" event, and presented some of the task force's preliminary findings.

Metzger said, "Past structures are not serving us well, not just in regard to money, but emotionally. Life [now] is different." While the "larger collective" of national and area churches is important, he said the task force is finding that the focus is on local congregations. Discussion flowed around ideas about what to let go of, in order for both congregations and pastors to do less but do it more effectively.

Matthew Isert Bender, pastor at Nith Valley Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont., spoke to the grief inherent in letting go.

Metzger acknowledged that there needs to be room to experiment and to celebrate failures as attempts to do something new.

Neufeldt said that he keeps hearing that Anabaptist theology and practice are interesting to others, even when they are not leaving their denominations and joining Mennonite churches.

The idea that this time of flux and change could take 50 years raised questions about what to do in the interim, and what to do to prepare for that new reality that is still unknown.

Ray Martin, pastor at East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock, said that congregations are going to be different from each other as they respond to the new realities in different ways. ▮



Terry Keller, left, and Aldred Neufeldt, right, members of Mennonite Church Canada's Future Directions Task Force, chat with Matthew Isert Bender and Dan Cressman of Nith Valley Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont., at the 'Shifting stats: Shaking the church' event on April 8 at Tyndale College and Seminary in Toronto.

Four new directors named at 43rd annual CMPS meeting

Canadian Mennonite
WINNIPEG

Four new directors were named to the Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service (CMPS) board at its 43rd annual meeting held here from April 10 to 12. They are Henry Krause of Langley, B.C.; Ken Reddig of Pinawa, Man.; Bryan Moyer Suderman of Stouffville, Ont.; and Kuen Yee of Edmonton. All will serve three-year terms.

Krause, pastor at Langley Mennonite Fellowship since 1989, has been involved in various ways in Mennonite Church British Columbia and MC Canada. A B.C. native, he is a graduate of the University of British Columbia and Regent College, and is married to Edith Krause, an artist and instructor at Trinity Western University, with whom he shares four young-adult children and one delightful daughter-in-law. He represents MC Canada on the 12-member board.

Reddig, retired as development director for Eden Health Care Services in Winkler, Man., attends Pinawa Christian Fellowship that is affiliated with MC Manitoba. Born in Kansas and educated at Tabor College and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, he and his family—Willa and children Chantel and Lamont—moved to Manitoba, where he both taught and served as archivist for the Mennonite Brethren, MC Canada and the Province of Manitoba. He represents MC Manitoba

and succeeds Al Friesen of Altona.

Suderman is an itinerant music minister, Bible teacher and singer/songwriter. Born in Winnipeg, he has lived in five countries and three Canadian provinces; he currently resides in Stouffville, Ont., with his wife Julie and their son Matthew, and is a member of Community Mennonite Church. He represents MC Canada on the board.

Yee is an English ministry pastor with Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church and is part of the Inter-Mennonite Ministerial Fellowship there. Employed also by Accelerated Software Corp of Edmonton, she received her training at ACTS Seminaries of Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C. She represents MC Alberta and succeeds Jim Moyer of Lethbridge.

In a meeting with local pastors, Ewald Goetz of River East Mennonite Church described his congregation as being mainly from South America and speaking primarily Low and High German. Vic Kliever from Steinbach Mennonite said his church has both English and German services and that his congregants are interested in reading about the church in Paraguay.

Youth pastors Paul Lowen and Tyrell Wiebe both agreed that youth have little denominational loyalty today and obtain information primarily online. Facebook



Henry Krause



Ken Reddig



**Bryan Moyer
Suderman**



Kuen Yee

seems to have been a passing fad; young people are more interested in Snapchat and texting, they said.

In other business, the board renewed Dick Benner's contract as editor and publisher of *Canadian Mennonite* for up to three years after a five-year performance review. The board also met with representatives of MC Canada to see how the two entities could work together in better promoting and informing the readership on a study of human sexuality as framed in the Being a Faithful Church process (see "Between horizons" on page 26), as well as reporting regularly on the Future Directions Task Force.

A proposed budget was passed for 2014, showing \$708,878 in income and expenditures of \$748,749, bringing a shortfall, with depreciation deducted, of \$24,601—due to an increase in funding for a half-time web editor, the approval of a "Mennonite Mosaic" marketing campaign that will increase advertising revenue, and the cost of redesigning *Canadian Mennonite's* website. In a review of the finances for 2013, it was noted that individual donor income of \$76,413 came from 913 donors, this in addition to the \$269,624 from the six publishing partners.

The board also spent considerable time revising CMPS bylaws to bring them in line with new legal requirements of the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, and spent time finalizing the language of the new three-year covenant with the six publishing partners. Board members also heard a presentation from Harold Penner of Mennonite Foundation of Canada on ways to increase and manage *Canadian Mennonite's* endowment fund.

A fundraising dinner wrapped up the two-day event that featured comedian Matt Falk, the Winnipeg Children's Choir and a brief talk by the editor and publisher on *Canadian Mennonite* as the "gift that keeps on giving." Donations from the event totalled \$6,045, a record amount. ☺




Do you know of someone in your congregation not getting *Canadian Mennonite*?

Ask your church administrator to add them to the list. It is already paid for.

Between horizons

Biblical perspectives on human sexuality

Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite Church Canada's General Board offers this discernment guide in advance of Assembly 2014, to be held in Winnipeg from July 3 to 6.

Introduction

The Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process is now into its fifth year of discernment and conversation. We are very pleased with the response of congregations to this significant effort. To this point (April 15), 65 percent of our 218 congregations have responded in some way. The responses have been quite evenly spread across the church, from 44 percent to 71 percent in the five area churches.

There has been very good personal contact and visits to 16 percent of the congregations where English is not their primary language. More are scheduled in the near future. Several congregations have indicated that further responses are still pending. In addition, we have received responses from individuals, a circle of scholars and various groups with special interests in the conversation.

A large majority of the responses affirm the process and support it.

It is important to note that what is reflected in this report is accurately descriptive of what we have received and heard—to the best of our ability.

Responses to BFC 5: Biblical perspectives on human sexuality

To this point, we have received 82 responses to BFC 5, the highest response rates to date. This level of interest and response is quite remarkable and very encouraging.

Congregations that did not participate in the BFC 5 process have identified various reasons:

- a. Lack of time in the annual schedule.
- b. Transitions of leadership in the congregation.
- c. Concern about causing conflict among congregational members.
- d. Other pressing agenda considered more urgent.



e. The study was too similar to what they have already done in the recent past.

Observations of responses

1. Much appreciation was expressed for the resource. Special mention was made of the link suggested between sexuality and spirituality, and the concept of living between the horizons.

2. Although there was some call for change, most responses reflected a lack of desire to change the historical understanding of sexuality as implied in the resolutions of Saskatoon (1986), Purdue (1987) and the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995). At the same time, there is also an expressed desire to strengthen our compassionate embrace of persons in same-sex attraction.

3. Many respondents hesitated to declare their submission as representative of their congregations. Rather, they identified small groups, leadership groups or individuals as responsible for the feedback. This indicates that within congregations we are not of one mind.

4. There is strong recognition that the church needs to respond in a Christ-like compassionate way to persons attracted to the same sex in our society. Several reasons were identified:

- i. Increasingly, our society and culture view same-sex relations as a justice issue.
- ii. Same-sex marriage has been legalized in Canada.
- iii. Christian concerns are often viewed as compassionless and reactionary.
- iv. Our youth often find the traditional view incomprehensible and see the church

as out of touch with its time.

5. Some express the concern that this discernment should not overshadow the importance of our larger missional vision and work.

6. There is evident difference in biblical interpretation as related to matters of same-sex attraction and relationships.

7. There was again strong affirmation that Scripture and the leading of the Spirit are foundational in our discernment process.

8. There is a strong rejection of immorality and promiscuity in all our relationships.

9. There is a conviction that sexual union belongs in the framework of a life-long commitment.

10. There is a need to cultivate healthy, wholesome sexuality in our culture and church.

11. There are differences in understanding the medical/scientific data/evidence available to date.

12. Some would have preferred a less academic, simplified document.

Several trends can be identified in the responses

1. In spite of congregations not being able to reach consensus, responses stated a deep desire for unity and that challenges of same-sex relations should not cause divisions at congregational, area- or national-church levels.

2. A significant majority of responses reflect the historical affirmations as implied in the Resolution on Sexuality (1986 and 1987) or Article 19 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995). At the same time, the responses express a desire to be more compassionate and welcoming of those individuals who are same-sex attracted.

3. A significantly smaller number of responses oppose any revisiting of the historical understanding of biblical sexuality.

4. A significantly smaller number of responses call for more inclusion of persons in same-sex relationships, including welcoming them as members, leaders and as committed same-sex partners.

Key questions and next steps

The next step in the BFC process has been to identify the specific question to be discerned regarding same-sex attractions and

relationships. However, we do not see a specific question emerging from within the responses.

The responses clearly indicate that the Spirit of God has placed a deep felt desire for unity in our hearts. We yearn to be together in congregations, area churches and the national church. Is the same Spirit leading us to differing understandings of faithfulness in regards to same-sex relationships?

From the beginning of the BFC process we have prayed for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We have invited congregations to surround their discernment in worship

and prayer, and we have seen much evidence of that. The responses have revealed significant differences of understanding of the will of God, even while Scripture has been the foundation. Is the challenge for us now to see the fruit of this discernment as also being led by the Spirit of God?

We continue to hear differing understandings of faithfulness in the midst of our common yearning for unity. Do you affirm that the responses suggest the following questions as the ones to address in the next step of discernment?

i. God's gift of unity in Christ is not invalidated by our disagreement. How shall we

maintain our unity in Christ as congregations, area church/national church while understanding matters of same-sex relationships differently?

ii. Most responses indicated a desire to be "more compassionate and welcoming of those individuals who are same-sex attracted." Describe how your congregation hopes to reflect this desire.

iii. In reviewing the trends, what counsel do you have for the area/national church in light of the different understandings of compassionate responses toward persons that are in same-sex relationships? ☸

Not so gently down the stream

Paddlers battle elements for Camp Squeah fundraiser

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
FORT LANGLEY, B.C.

Even with 10 paddlers capsizing the first day, the 16th annual Camp Squeah fundraising paddle-a-thon ended successfully on April 27 with 28 participants celebrating their two-day sojourn down B.C.'s Fraser River.

The group left the day before from Camp Squeah near Hope. Not long after, a "perfect storm" of a swift current, high winds and getting caught in a back eddy caused four kayaks and three tandem canoes to overturn near Herrling Island, sending the accompanying Zodiac vessel on a multiple rescue mission. No one was hurt, and the trip continued uneventfully.

Among those who landed in the water were Jon and Janna Janzen of Vancouver, who were carrying with them a special carved cedar paddle from the Ahousaht First Nation. First United Mennonite Church, where the Janzens attend, has an ongoing relationship with the Ahousaht on the west coast of Vancouver Island, and the paddle had been given to the church as a gift. While Jon got their canoe to shore, Janna rescued the paddle before it floated away.

The paddlers spent Saturday night in Chilliwack, where the ground crew had a meal prepared, and they continued Sunday past Mission to the final landing point in



Jon and Janna Janzen display the carved cedar paddle they used briefly to row on the Fraser River during this year's Camp Squeah paddle-a-thon. The paddle was a gift to their church, Vancouver First United Mennonite, from friends at the Ahousaht First Nation on Vancouver Island.



The first canoe arrives at the marina in Fort Langley, B.C., the end of the fundraising paddle-a-thon for Mennonite Church B.C.'s Camp Squeah Bursary Fund.

Fort Langley, where family and friends greeted them.

Rob Tiessen, Squeah's executive director, reported that more than \$45,000 had been raised this year. "You overcame the elements and laughed in their face," said Tiessen, referring to the previous day's mishap.

Each paddler raised a minimum of \$500 to earn the right to sit in a kayak or canoe. Monies raised go to a bursary fund for post-secondary students who volunteer their time to work at camp each summer.

Scott Alexander won the prize for raising the most donations this year. ☸

'Remember your creator'

Saskatchewan Women in Mission group explores Ecclesiastes 12:1 at annual Enrichment Day

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

“Remember your creator in the days of your youth,” proved to be a poignant theme for Saskatchewan Women in Mission’s annual Enrichment Day, since the only women under 50 were the three guest speakers. Yet it was to hear the voices of young women that 75 members met at Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon on April 26.

The day began with a business meeting. Nominating committee member Denise Epp reported that no candidates had been found for the four vacant executive positions. Nominations from the floor yielded one volunteer, as Marlies Patkau of Hanley agreed to serve on the nominating committee. However, the program committee is still one member short and the positions of secretary and president-elect remain vacant.

In light of the difficulty recruiting leaders, president Myrna Sawatzky suggested changing the organization’s name to make it more appealing to younger women. As the only women’s group in Mennonite Church Canada with its own charitable status, Saskatchewan Women in Mission would have to keep its name in order to maintain that status, Sawatzky pointed out, but the organization could adopt a new operating name. Given the group’s aging population, she wondered aloud, “Do we want to continue as an independent charity?”

A comment in favour of relinquishing charitable status and funnelling money through the area church was made from the floor, but no decision was reached.

Treasurer Ruth Heppner reported that the group’s finances are in good shape. As if to prove the organization’s viability as a charity, the women gathered an offering of just under \$3,000.

Program committee member Lois Siemens led a time of worship and

activity focused on the chosen theme from Ecclesiastes 12:1. Through prayer, singing, journalling and adding handprints and signatures to a colourful banner, the women explored what it means to remember their creator.

Laura Buhler addressed the theme from the perspective of her experience volunteering at Bethlehem Bible College in Palestine. Buhler said she finds Ecclesiastes 12:1 “an intimidating verse because it puts a timeline on your faith.” She would rather render the verse: “Discover your creator in your youth so that when you are older you will be able to remember.”

Meghan Wiens reflected on her nine-month adventure with Canadian Mennonite University’s Outtatown program in Canada and South Africa. Witnessing abundant joy juxtaposed against profound suffering in Soweto, Wiens said “Do not try and put God in a box because he will definitely break out”

Terri Lynn Paulsen brought her perspective as an agriculture student and gardener with a passion for community to the day’s theme. Paulsen sees God at work in creation and in his people. When asked what she would say to the women present, Paulsen replied, “Please be my friend. Sometimes as young people we don’t know how to ask for [friendship]. Share with me how you walked your faith.”

Perhaps as Saskatchewan Women in Mission members look for ways to remember their creator in the coming days, they will take up Paulsen’s challenge and share their walk of faith with the young women in their lives. ❧



Participants in Saskatchewan Women in Mission’s Enrichment Day add their handprints and signatures to a banner in an exploration of the theme, ‘Remember your creator.’

'On holy ground: Rich soil for seeds of promise'

Balanced budget announced at MC Eastern Canada annual church gathering

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

A “worshipping community is God’s mission in the world,” announced Safwat Marzouk during his address to the 27th annual church gathering of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada on April 25 and 26.

The assistant professor of Old Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary focused on Moses’ call in Exodus 3 as a template for Canadian Christians to consider as they try to be God’s people in “a predominantly post-Christian, secular society where active adherents [of churches] are now a minority.”

But this is not a kind of fortress mentality, with Christians hunkering down inside their churches with no thought for the world outside, or anyone who comes in their doors, he said. Rather, this is a call to worship as the church’s primary task, this being a sign of God at work in the world.

Worship without apology, Marzouk said, and be followers of God in a world that doubts God’s existence or, if God exists, that God cares. The church is an inclusive body of equals who are different from each other in every way, but unified in their focus on God, he said, and it is different from the egocentric world focused on things and on doing battle with anyone who disagrees.

Marzouk set the stage for the rest of the gathering where a series of Lead, Equip, Disciple (LED) talks, in which different voices—young, old, male, female, leaders and followers—spoke or used images to show what it means to be followers of God in the 21st century.

Church business

One new piece of business was a strategic directions plan the executive board and

staff have begun to work on. A survey was sent to all congregations, some congregational leaders are being visited, and a review of data on MC Eastern Canada congregations is ongoing. Jeff Wright, executive missional consultant with Urban Expressions North America, has been engaged to provide missional input and expertise.

An old piece of business revisited was the Warden Woods Community Centre property in Toronto. The area church holds title to the land, but the centre claims that this was only in trust for the centre, and that the centre neither needs to buy the land, nor can MC Eastern Canada sell it. To that end, the centre has taken the issue to court. In the last few months MC Eastern Canada has offered to move into mediation with the centre, and it has accepted.

Through decreased spending and careful transfers from various reserve funds—but not the new Legacy Initiative Fund (LIF)—Ester Neufeldt, operations minister, guided the budget to a balanced position and proposed a similar budget of \$2.3 million for 2014-15, with \$1.56 million remaining in the area church, and \$740,000 going to MC Canada and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

Based on a bequest from Enid and Harold Schmidt, LIF has garnered \$4.8 million dollars so far, with some of the estate still left to be settled. Gifts have already been given to Mennonite World Conference and MC Canada. At the gathering it was announced that both Rockway Mennonite Collegiate and UMEI Christian High School would be receiving matching gifts of up to \$150,000, and Conrad Grebel University College would be receiving \$250,000 for the Ralph and Eileen Lebold



Jessica Reesor Rempel—who in her LED talk focused on two questions put to young adults in the church: ‘What is the best thing about the church? And what would make the church more authentic?’—steps onto Meg Harder’s interactive artwork, ‘The place you are standing is holy ground,’ at Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s 27th annual church gathering, April 25 and 26 in St. Catharines, Ont. Harder’s piece challenged those who were willing to step on it to remember that under their feet is that which is holy.

Endowment Fund. Both high schools will use the money to boost enrolment, while the Lebold Endowment will now finally reach its goal of \$1 million toward supporting a staff person to help guide the ministry stream in the master of theological studies program.

A variety of other programs have also been funded, including a new Kijiji-like sharing website called TheExchange. Here, congregations can offer or seek such things as worship materials, rides, objects, services from each other. Also, a LIF loan will go towards paying for MC Eastern Canada’s use of the new 50 Kent Avenue building in Kitchener, Ont., until its former office in Cambridge is sold. ❧

GOD AT WORK IN US

Spiritual wrestling in 'an unknown season'

Assembly 2014 keynote speaker brought face to face with poverty and other social issues after stint with Mennonite Disaster Service in San Francisco

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

David Driedger remains passionate about the church, but it's not an easy passion. He continually wrestles with theology, his understanding of who God is, and how to live in the name of God.

Driedger is serving as one of three keynote speakers at Mennonite Church

Canada's Assembly 2014 from July 3 to 6. He is a member of the national church's Formation Council, the body that created the assembly theme, "Wild hope: Faith for an unknown season."

Driedger readily admits to his own feelings of unsettledness. "I am interested in

speaking and engaging in this process because of my own need to understand this season," he says.

Driedger is associate minister at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. He grew up on a farm in southern Manitoba, where he attended a Sommerfeld Mennonite congregation with his parents and two sisters.

In his junior high school years, his attendance declined. "I bounced around quite a bit, connecting with different youth groups," he says. By late high school, wrestling with larger questions about life brought him back. "A pastor in a local church gave me a fair amount of time and attention, and opportunities to serve, including preaching at a young age," he says.

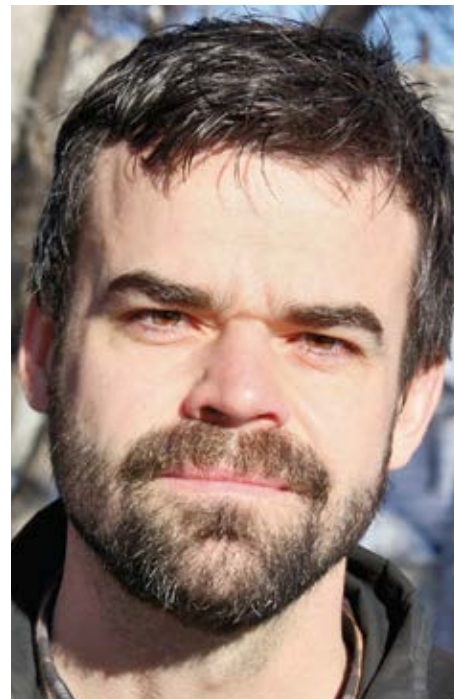
But his quest was not over. "I moved around quite a bit denominationally before coming back to the Mennonite church," he says. A strong spirit of volunteerism led him to serve as a lay minister in Anglican, non-denominational and para-church settings, and in youth drop-in centres.

A stint with Mennonite Disaster Service

PHOTO BY GEORGE EPP



Craig Neufeld, centre, was ordained as pastor of Rosthern Mennonite Church by Jerry Buhler, right, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan area church minister, on April 27. Neufeld, who graduated from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in 2008 with a master of divinity degree, has served Rosthern Mennonite for the past four years as youth pastor and, most recently, as lead pastor. He was engaged in short-term pastoral work in Ottawa and Toronto before coming to Rosthern. Neufeld chairs the Rosthern Ministerial and sits on the Church Engagement Council for MC Canada. Pictured at left is Ted Janzen, Rosthern Mennonite's council chair.



'I moved around quite a bit denominationally before coming back to the Mennonite church,' says David Driedger, who is one of three keynote speakers at this summer's Mennonite Church Canada assembly, whose theme is 'Wild hope: Faith for an unknown season.'

in San Francisco brought Driedger face to face with poverty and other social issues. The following year, he spent time helping in downtown Vancouver while attending Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford. These experiences convinced him that where and how he chose to live needed to reflect a commitment to those who struggle around him.

About five years ago, he was drawn into a variety of conversations about religion and theology. As he tried to explain his beliefs, his conversation partners pushed back. They told him that he was protecting his perspectives from change because he framed them as “Christian.”

“I was offended at first and often

responded defensively,” he says. “But in the course of these conversations I came to realize that I was protecting my own way of thinking, that no matter what someone said about particular aspects of my religion, I would not accept. I would not even be able to hear them because I disqualified their view ahead of time.”

That realization forced him to consider what it would mean to think and listen more openly. “I had to put aside some long-held convictions, but at the same time some of my other perspectives became stronger and clearer. This experience continues to shape me, and how I live and work in the church.”

Driedger says he hopes that the

experience of “Wild hope: Faith for an unknown season” will help people understand what it is to open themselves to others in the world, and to wrestle together with what it means to live in the name of God. “If there is a sense of wild hope, it’s in the ability to trust that, if God is a living God, God will be present as we attend to others beyond boundaries of fear and preconceptions.”

Brian Quan, minister of English Ministries at Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church, and Betty Pries, a conflict management specialist with Associates Resourcing the Church, will also serve as keynote speakers for Assembly 2014. ✎

OBITUARY

‘Simple living’ was writer’s beat

LaVerna Klippenstein,

b. April 22, 1934; d. March 4, 2014

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

LaVerna Klippenstein will be remembered by many *Canadian Mennonite* readers for the columns she wrote in the *Mennonite Reporter*, precursor to this publication. She was also a regular columnist for 30 years for *Christian Living* magazine. Being a strong supporter of Christian education and the nurturing of Christian faith, she wrote many devotionals for *Rejoice!* and other publications.

She frequently gave presentations that, like her writing, addressed themes of Christian values and personal relationships. “One of the topics she liked to write about was ‘simple living’ because that was how she believed we should live,” recalled Lawrence, her husband of 57 years.

She passed away on March 4 at Bethesda Hospital in Steinbach, Man., at the age of 79. She is survived by her husband, three



**LaVerna
Klippenstein**

sons and a daughter and their families.

She was born in Steinbach to Peter D. and Maria Reimer on April 22, 1934. Although she missed an entire year of school when she was 14 due to polio, she did not let that deter her from completing Grade 12 and graduating with the same friends with whom she had begun her education.

After completing Normal School, she taught for three years before marrying Lawrence Klippenstein of Altona, Man., in 1956. Together, they served with Mennonite Pioneer Mission in the Métis community of Matheson Island for two years.

When they completed their studies at Goshen College in Indiana, and moved to Winnipeg, he taught at Canadian Mennonite Bible College and she devoted her time to her family. Their children

Norman, Noreen and Nathan were born during those years. She also devoted time to Sunday school teaching, substitute teaching in the public schools, writing and speaking.

When the family moved to Minneapolis, Minn., for four years, she studied special education and taught at the Kenny Institute for physically disabled high school students. She found this work very fulfilling. Their fourth child, Nevin, was born during this time.

During the years that followed in Gretna, Altona and then Winnipeg, she continued to devote time to her family, to writing, and to reaching out and relating to people. Many remember her deep compassion and service for people who were lonely and in need of friendship. Her family remembers how she reached out to refugees, immigrants and many others in need during those years.

In more recent years, she and Lawrence accepted several Mennonite Central Committee service sabbaticals that took them to London, England, and Moscow.

Her life took a very difficult turn in 2004, when she suffered a devastating stroke. No longer was she able to enjoy her life-long love and skill with words. “Her life was a life of sermons, not in the traditional sense, but in the way she wrote and taught and lived,” said Lawrence.

A funeral service was held on March 8 in Winnipeg. ✎

ARTBEAT

PHOTO BY GEORGE EPP



The Station Singers, a Saskatchewan community choir with many Mennonite members, including director Duff Warkentin (at right with back to the camera) and accompanist Sharryl Riekman, teamed up with the Grinnin' Pickers to perform Carol Barnett's *The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass*, at the Station Arts Centre in Rosthern on April 4 and at Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon on April 5.



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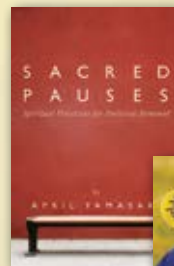
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PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Artistic director and conductor Stephanie Martin, centre, led the Pax Christi Chorale and accompanists, including the Truth North Brass Quintet, during the chorale's spring concert in Toronto on April 27. The concert included Randall Thompson's 'The Peaceable Kingdom' sung a cappella, and a new piece by Martin, 'Now the Queen of Seasons,' which refers to Easter. To view 'Now the Queen of Seasons,' visit <http://bit.ly/PRib9D>.

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young voices



'Our youth and young adults want traditional four-part hymns and choral music,' says Brandon Leis of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.



Tasha Janzen, a music leader at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C., personally prefers hymns for the nostalgia they inspire.

The great music debate

Young Mennonites weigh in on decades-old church controversy

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor

There is great debate over church music these days. What was once a fight over traditional versus contemporary tunes and how they are played has blossomed into something more.

Many Mennonite churches have begun projecting hymns using PowerPoint, singing from the more contemporary *Sing the Story* and *Sing the Journey* supplements to *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, and singing contemporary praise and worship songs that have traditional melodies.

According to some young Mennonites involved in worship planning and leading, it might be a problem simply resolved by being intentional about involving young people of varying skill and experience levels in worship.

The music debate certainly isn't a prob-

lem at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont. According to music director Brandon Leis, 34, music at Sunday morning worship services is generally 90 percent hymns from the blue *Hymnal* or its two recent supplements. The other 10 percent is newly composed music from people within the congregation, camp songs and anything from more contemporary sources.

young adults are very active in facilitating worship music and planning the services. But when they participate in local events with youth from other Mennonite churches, the music is primarily contemporary praise and worship.

"Our youth have named those [events] 'cross-cultural experiences,'" he says with a laugh.

Leis says he has seen the debate surface when people objectify the music by making it about their style preferences and perfect performances, rather than using music as a vehicle for worship.

"When you objectify music like that, it becomes something that can be divisive," he says. "Where music has become contentious in my experience is when it is turned into an object of worship, as op-

'Where music has become contentious in my experience is when it is turned into an object of worship as opposed to being a vehicle through which we can worship.'
(Brandon Leis)

posed to being a vehicle through which we can worship."

The young people like it that way.

"Our youth and young adults want traditional four-part hymns and choral music," Leis says. According to him, youth and

Leis says fostering an environment of inclusivity—where the worship music isn't about showcasing talent, but about allowing people to participate in planning and leading the community of faith—is important. On any given Sunday, a worship service at Stirling will have about 15 people involved, he says, noting, "Our church is very open to many different styles and genres of music."

Tasha Janzen, 19, is a music leader at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in

Abbotsford, B.C., and sits on the worship committee there.

An average worship service at Janzen's church has six or seven songs: half hymns and half contemporary worship songs; she says she personally prefers hymns for the nostalgia they inspire. She says many of her peers at church prefer them as well for similar reasons.

Although she prefers hymns, she thinks contemporary music has a place in the church. "It is a form of connection for [people]—especially if they are new to the church—if they hear the music and it is a style that they are familiar with," she says.

Cheryl Woelk, 32, is an accompanist and song leader at Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon.

Her first memories of church music include singing from the red hymnal with accompaniment from a piano and organ. Once in a while during special youth services, they would sing songs they learned at camp.

These days Woelk doesn't necessarily resonate with one or the other. "I really like good music," she says. "I'm more interested in music that has integrity . . . in terms of melodies, harmonies, rhythms, whether

that's traditional or contemporary. I like music that has depth to it. Words that have depth to it. Something that connects to our faith community, to how we articulate our faith."

The music Woelk chooses to lead others in doesn't fit into the narrow field of either traditional or contemporary. "I think within any congregation we don't all have the exact same faith," she says. "We have individual experiences that are different. We're a part of this community and we bring all of that with us. We have stories that don't always line up with each other, either."

Woelk wonders if the debate was ever just about music. "I think the issue has more to do with church dynamics and hearing different voices from different generations," she says, "not just musical voices, making space in leadership for people in younger generations [while] respecting the older generations."

"We need to listen to each other more and put aside some of our senses of entitlement or what we think is right and wrong," Woelk says, concluding that the music debate is "more of a kind of flag pointing to this bigger issues of the church." ❧



Cheryl Woelk, an accompanist and song leader at Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, says, 'I'm more interested in music that has integrity musically, in terms of melodies, harmonies, rhythms, whether that's traditional or contemporary.'

VIEWPOINT

Recipes for life

Professors' responses to life's big questions add to students' cookbooks for living

BY ALLY SIEBERT

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

The student diet rarely gets a three-star review, unless you consider peanut butter and beer to be gourmet. Students who cook for themselves are often limited by skinny budgets and thin slices of time.

Food is not the only kind of nourishment we students forget about during the school year. I'm convinced that the years I spend studying will be some of the most self-centred years of my life. It's all about my papers, my ambition, my future. I'm

most concerned with feeding myself. While I'm preoccupied with making mac and cheese in the microwave, I forget to check on what the world around me is cooking up.

At this time of life, we students compile our cookbooks using recipes that offer advice not only on how to eat, but also on how to live. On March 15, as part of Conrad Grebel University College's 50th-anniversary celebrations, a group of

(Continued on page 36)



Ally Siebert



Jeremy Bergen

(Continued from page 35)

students gathered over brunch for the Big Questions Symposium.

Four faculty members from the University of Waterloo/Conrad Grebel joined us. Kelly Anthony, teaching fellow and lecturer of applied health sciences; Jeremy Bergen, professor of theology at Grebel; Kirsten Müller, professor of biology; and Hamid Tizhoosh, professor of systems design engineering, spoke about their journeys through school, career and personal life, paying particular attention to the people and experiences that shaped how they made important decisions and navigated the “big questions”

of mentor, but the panelists said that for them it came down to making a connection with someone they respected and being persistent in forming a mentor/mentee relationship.

It’s this perspective on life that many students are hungry for, and much of the follow-up discussion has been about mentorship. We learn a lot in the classroom, but it is the personal stories and the lived experiences of others that really teach us.

“Part of achieving success as a person comes from recognizing and responding and living with big questions,” Janzen remarked.

‘Part of achieving success as a person comes from recognizing and responding and living with big questions.’

(Ed Janzen, Conrad Grebel University College chaplain)

that had arisen.

The questions these professors answered ranged from the logistical and personal, to the philosophical: What excites my sense of curiosity? How do I choose to balance children and career? In which country do I live, given my political views? How can my theology be both descriptive and prescriptive? What is my responsibility in acquiring knowledge?

But they weren’t there to give one-size-fits-all answers.

“It’s about sharing our own stories and finding encouragement, or even some ideas for dealing with our own big questions,” said Ed Janzen, chaplain at Conrad Grebel, who organized the event.

Each speaker responded to life in a different way, but a common theme that emerged is that they never worked through a tough recipe alone. All spoke of the importance of an academic or life mentor, someone who was not only inspiring in their professional life, but who was also willing to “walk with students,” as Anthony put it. It was someone invested in academics who also challenged them to think beyond classroom learning.

Many of us wanted to know if there was a magic formula for finding this kind

The mentors we seek are not just people we admire for their work, but are individuals who have grappled with life in all its new ingredients, difficult measurements and failed recipes. If we’re serious about learning, we need to practise alongside more experienced chefs—and those chefs need to be ready to take on an assistant.

Feeding ourselves is essential, because this is the time of life to figure out how we perceive the world and how we are going to participate in it. Perhaps there is some value in a few years of self-centred exploration, but we cannot forget that our cookbooks are not complete without the batter-stained pages and hand-scribbled notes of those who have tested the recipes before us.

In the long run, we’ll be healthier for it. ☺

Ally Siebert recently completed her second year of English literature and language studies at the University of Waterloo, Ont., living for the past two years at Conrad Grebel University College. She is originally from Ottawa, and is a member of Ottawa Mennonite Church.



Kirsten Müller

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Getting back on track

AARON EPP

YOUNG VOICES CO-EDITOR

This whole Year of Reading Biblically (YORB) was a bad idea. It seemed like a good idea last October, but today I'm questioning what I was thinking when I concocted this scheme.

Did you know that all of this has

which only repeats the cycle.

Funny what happens when we put things off until tomorrow. You start out with the best intentions, but then you put it off, and one day you wake up and you haven't gone to visit your oma in a few months, you're 30 kilos overweight,

As I tell people when they ask me about how things are going, I may be behind, and that does make me feel bad, but when I get to reading my Bible, I thoroughly enjoy it.

something to do with a pretty girl? I was on a date with a woman last summer and in the midst of our conversation, we started talking about faith. I forget exactly what she was saying, but she mentioned something about Paul's letters in the New Testament and it occurred to me that she knew her Bible much better than I did. I thought to myself, "I wish I knew my Bible that well. Then I could impress her or other pretty Christian girls."

It's the same reason teenage boys learn to play the guitar! That's one of the reasons I decided to read my Bible this year. To impress females.

By extension, it's why many of you are reading your Bible this year. Truly, the Lord works in mysterious ways.

But let me back up for a minute. I bet you're asking, "Why is YORB all of a sudden a bad idea, Aaron?"

Because I'm behind. According to the reading plan, I should be wrapping up II Kings shortly, but instead I find myself two books behind, somewhere in II Samuel.

I missed a few days for one reason or another and haven't caught up. And when I get behind, I feel bad, and the guilt can be paralyzing. I tell myself I'll get caught up tomorrow, and then I don't,

or you're 40 pages behind in your Bible reading.

I have some catching up to do in the next few weeks, but I'm up for it. As I tell people when they ask me about how things are going, I may be behind, and that does make me feel bad, but when I get to reading my Bible, I thoroughly enjoy it. I like reading the stories and I like reading words like, "Be strong and courageous," when I'm not feeling much strength or courage.

In the first article in this series, I wrote, "The goal here is progress and not perfection, so if you miss a day or two, that's okay. Do what you can to get back on track and keep reading." That's a good reminder for me today, because the pursuit of perfection is maddening, and, for me, it can lead to paralyzing guilt.

When YORB started, I was haunted by visions of waking up on Dec. 31, 2014, and only being somewhere in the Book of Genesis, and then madly trying to read the entire Bible in one day.

I'll get back on track. I'll avoid that fate.

And along the way, who knows? I may learn enough to impress a pretty girl. ✎

PHOTOS BY MATTHEW SAWATZKY



UpComing

Mountain climbers sought to help alleviate poverty

WATERLOO, ONT.—Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) supporters have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity this summer to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania along with president Allan Sauder to aid MEDA's work in creating business solutions to poverty around the world. "I'm excited to be part of this fundraising climb, which gives our supporters the chance to contribute to our work in a unique way," says Sauder. "We have set an ambitious goal of raising \$250,000." Hikers from across North America will travel the Lemosho Route through five eco-systems, giving them the feeling of hiking from the equator to the North Pole in just 10 days. Climbers also will visit MEDA project sites in the country. One of these facilitates the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets to protect against malaria in pregnant women and young children. At press time, MEDA had 16 trekkers committed to make this remarkable journey. So far, they have raised more than \$82,000. To learn more about the MEDA Kilimanjaro Climb, or to sponsor a climber, visit www.meda.org/climb.

—Mennonite Economic Development Associates

Canadian soloist returns to Bach Festival for repeat performance of *Elijah*

HARRISONBURG, VA.—A popular oratorio from the early days of the 22-year-old Shenandoah Valley Bach Festival at Eastern Mennonite University will return this summer. The festival, held June 8 to 15, will feature Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah* performed by an orchestra, choir and four soloists. One of the soloists, Canadian bass Daniel Lichti, sang in the first performance of *Elijah* at the Bach Festival in 1995. This year's *Elijah* is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on June 14, in Lehman Auditorium. Lichti, singing the title role, has established himself as one of Canada's finest bass-baritones, performing with many of North America's major orchestras and choirs. He appears regularly at festivals and performs oratorio and opera internationally. This year, he is celebrating 40 years of professional performing with concerts in Canada, the United States and Europe. His debut was in an opera in 1974 at the Stratford Festival in Ontario. Lichti is a voice professor at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont. During a recent sabbatical from his teaching, he performed Franz Schubert's epic *Winterreise* in Paris, Vienna and Lyon.

—Eastern Mennonite University



Daniel Lichti

Calendar

Alberta

June 6-7: Summerfest at Millennium Place, Sherwood Park. For more information, call Trish Elgersma toll-free at 1-888-622-6337 or visit www.mccreliefsale.com.

June 9: Public lecture at Trinity Mennonite Church, DeWinton, at 7 p.m. Speaker: Gordon Matties, CMU professor of biblical and theological studies. Topic: "Joshua and the legacy of scriptural violence." For more information, visit www.mennonitechurch.ab.ca.

June 9-11: "Joshua and the legacy of scriptural violence," a Christian faith studies event, at Trinity Mennonite Church, DeWinton. Presenter: Gordon Matties, CMU professor of biblical and theological studies. Sponsored by MC Alberta. For more information, or to register, visit www.mennonitechurch.ab.ca.

June 14: Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon. Enjoy a day of hiking in the mountains while raising money for the camp. Hikers and sponsors needed. Details available in April.

June 20-21: MC Alberta men and boys camp-out at Camp Valaqua. Theme: "Manhood in an age of 'jumping ship.'" For more information, call Foothills Mennonite Church at 403-289-7172.

Saskatchewan

May 24: RJC fundraising golf tournament at Valley Regional Park.

June 20, 21: RJC year-end musical performances.

Sept. 19-21: SMYO junior high retreat at Youth Farm Bible Camp.

Manitoba

May 15: Early deadline for the Mennonite Church Canada assembly that takes place in Winnipeg from July 3 to 6.

May 28: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Grade 7-9 spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

May 29: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Grade 10-12 spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church,

Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

June 10: CMU President's Golf Classic. For more information, visit cmu.ca/golf.

June 16-27: Canadian School of Peacebuilding, at CMU. For more information, visit csop.cmu.ca.

July 5-6: Mennonite Heritage Village 50th-anniversary celebration in Steinbach. (5) Schmeckfest Jubilee featuring traditional cuisine, a dessert bar and entertainment by improvisational violinist Rosemary Siemens; (6) Worship, guided tours of the village, a traditional saengerfest and fropa/vesper table meal.

Ontario

May 20: Conrad Grebel University College presents "1914-2014 Concert with Violin and Piano," in the Chapel, at 7:30 p.m. Featuring Elena Denisova on violin and Alexei Kornienko on piano. For more information, visit grebel.ca/events.

May 21: Conrad Grebel University College presents "The loss of history: Memory, humanity and peace after 1971," in Room 1208, at 4 p.m. Speaker: Yasmin Saikia, Ph.D., history professor at the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict at Arizona State University. For more information, visit grebel.ca/events.

May 23-25: MC Eastern Canada junior youth retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp.

May 24-25: Hillcrest Mennonite Church celebrates its 50th anniversary: (24) evening meal servings at 5 and 6 p.m., DVD launch, musical program; (25) morning worship with speaker Jeff Wright of California, potluck lunch, displays. For more information, call 519-662-1577.

May 26: Retired Pastors Retreat (including spouses) at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp; from 9:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Bring your own lunch. For more information, call Amsey Martin at 519-662-3314.

May 28-June 1: Mennonite Education Agency's Marpeck Conference at Conrad Grebel University College.

June 4: MC Eastern Canada Administrators' Day at 50 Kent Ave., Kitchener.

June 5-8: Sound in the Land III ("Music and the Environment") at Conrad Grebel University College. Keynote

speaker: Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer, founder of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology. Public concerts: (5) Mennofolk at Grebel, 3 to 11 p.m.; (6) Orchestra concert at UW Theatre Centre, at 8 p.m.; (7) Chamber concert at Grebel Chapel, at 8 p.m.; (8) Choral concert at Knox Presbyterian Church, Waterloo, at 7 p.m. For more information, or to register online, visit grebel.ca/sound.

June 15: *Laughter is Sacred Space* by Ted and Co, at Hespeler Memorial Arena, Cambridge, at 7 p.m. Co-sponsored by Preston and Wanner Mennonite churches. For more information, call 519-658-4902.

June 16: MCC Ontario 17th annual networking conference, at the University of Western Ontario, from 8:15 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Keynote speaker: Kathryn Edmunds. Topic: "We are tired of thinking and working with poverty." For more information, e-mail Lily Hiebert Rempel at lilyhr@mennonitecc.on.ca.

June 20-21: Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp hosts "Under construction: Reframing men's spirituality," with

Gareth Brandt of Columbia Bible College, who will speak on his book of the same name. For more information and to register, visit www.mennonitemen.org.

June 21: MennoHomes annual fundraising bike-a-thon, Out-spoken for Affordable Housing IV. For more information, call Dan Driedger at 226-476-2535 or visit www.mennohomes.com.

June 21: Nithview Community strawberry social, New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6:30 to 8 p.m.

June 22: Grand opening of the "Next Chapter Building Project" at Conrad Grebel University College. For more information, visit grebel.ca/events.

June 26: Ralph and Eileen Lebold Endowment for Leadership Training Banquet, in the Conrad Grebel University College dining room, at 6:30 p.m. Speaker: Roberson Mbayamvula, pastor of Hagerman Mennonite Church, Markham. Topic: "Our present future: Being an intercultural learning community. Tickets available at grebel.ca/lebold.

June 27-29: Family Camping Weekend

at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. For more information, or to reserve a cabin, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

Québec

June 6-7: The Montreal Centre for Anabaptist Studies is organizing a series of conferences with Stuart Murray Williams, author of *The Naked Anabaptist*, and Juliet Kilpin, director of Urban Expression UK, addressing the challenges for the church in a post-Christian and postmodern society. For more details, including schedule and locations, visit <http://centreetudesanabaptistesmontreal.blogspot.ca/>.

Classifieds

For Rent

For rent: 3 bedroom Bungalow in Charleswood, Winnipeg, fall 2014 for two years, furnished, fenced, \$1200/month plus utilities. Contact Nellie/ Henry 204-415-7076.

Three-bedroom cottage at Red Bay on the Bruce Peninsula, nestled among maple trees. Short walk to sandy beach in small park. Includes a rear deck and a new kitchen stove. Available June 28 through July 5 and July 12 through August 30. Call Diane at 519-746-4920.

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.

Advertising Information

Contact

D. Michael Hostetler

1-800-378-2524 x.224

[advert@](mailto:advert@canadianmennonite.org)

canadianmennonite.org

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

Announcement

Parent Support Group: Announcing a bimonthly support group for Mennonite parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) persons in Southwestern Ontario. We provide confidential support, fellowship, resources and opportunities for dialogue in the Spirit of Christ. For more information please contact the following: rvfast@rogers.com, pmsnyderangel@rogers.com, or Roy and Mary Gascho, 519-742-1850.

Employment Opportunities



Employment opportunity

Concordia Hospital in Winnipeg invites applications for the position of Facilitator of Bereavement Care (.2FTE)

- Post-secondary college or university degree
- Experience in companioning bereaved individuals and families
- Experience in planning and leading memorial services
- Experience in planning and leading support groups
- Experience in program development

Please send résumés to Kathleen Rempel Boschman at krboschman@concordiahospital.mb.ca Application deadline is May 20.

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Good Friday Blues Snapshots

With this year's theme of 'Love came down,' the Good Friday Blues Band led its third annual fundraising services at the House of James bookstore in Abbotsford, B.C., on April 17 and 18. The two sold-out concerts raised more than \$5,000 for the Cyrus Centre, a local ministry for homeless and at-risk youth. A poignant feature of the two evenings was a homemade cross, pictured at left, on which audience members could write their 'blues' and nail them to the cross, to be seen only by God. Pictured below performing are Daniel Wagner, left, La Vern Klassen and Angelika Dawson.

PHOTOS BY AMY DUECKMAN

