

CANADIAN MENNONITE

February 29, 2016

Volume 20 Number 5

Making a Mennonite

My experiences
at a Mennonite camp
led me to the Anabaptist faith

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EDITORIAL

What our survey says about you

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

“**C**anadian Mennonite provides a vital service by keeping the congregations informed on church life issues and trends. It has a good balance on raising cutting edge questions.”

This is only one of the 442 (mostly positive) comments on how this publication is fulfilling its mission from the results of a recent independent readership survey. We want to thank everyone who participated in the survey, all 1,221 of you, which represents, according to our survey analyst, a phenomenal return at more than 10 percent of the total. Most surveys of this nature get a 3 percent return; 7 percent is considered exceptional.

Full survey results will be reported in a later edition. But first, we'd like to point out some parallels between who our readers are and what they said in answering our 42 questions and what we observe are the demographics and viewpoints of our 220 congregations across Canada.

Not surprising are the demographics of those answering. The largest group responding was age 66 and older. They are well educated with an above-average income. Doesn't that track pretty well with the average congregation across Canada? We are an aging denomination—a generation that is well-informed and living a comfortable life.

This group does not see *Canadian Mennonite* as “owned” by Mennonite

Church Canada, but by the congregations. While this is not only very true, it is interesting that the notion of some “independence” is understood by our main readership. While we are supportive of MC Canada and receive funding from it and the five area churches, we are free to critique and treat them as one voice of many across the church.



This older group sees us as a source of information about the congregations and a place to connect. This same group sees our purpose as “spiritual and inspirational.”

The 25- to 65-year-olds see us a place to challenge and discuss ideas. They discuss these issues mostly in personal conversations, rather than from the pulpit or in other leadership discourse.

Isn't that what happens at the congregational level, too? Don't we come to church to feed our souls spiritually, to receive inspiration for our home/work/community lives during the week? Don't we look forward to connecting with our friends who, in large part, form our networks of small care groups and book clubs? Isn't this where we experience “community” like in no other setting?

In that sense, we are in sync with life at the congregational level and are hopefully enriching our collective spiritual lives together. The magazine is said to be read from “cover to cover” by the 66-plus year-olds, while the younger age groups “skim

through it quickly” and then read it more thoroughly later. “Overall, the magazine is well read,” says our analyst, and also well liked.

Isn't that true in your congregation, too? The older group, many of whom are retired, take the time to absorb most of our content, while the younger group, busy with home, school and work, are more selective.

Most readers feel that while our current content is good, they are not looking for devotionals or information from leaders. They want it to maintain a “news feel.” What does that say about our congregations? “Is community” more important than preaching and worship? Or shall we say that gathering and friendship are just as important as spiritual formation?

While there is a “very low engagement level online,” according to our analyst, there is strong sentiment to keep the printed version of *Canadian Mennonite*. This is a surprising response, given that we have worked very hard in the last two years to beef up and improve our website. This response needs to be nuanced, however, because the number of responses were small from the younger group compared to those of the older group.

What the younger demographic wants to see, however, is striking. They are “very interested in more Christian and theological teaching in response to issues.”

While web survey respondents enjoy the discussion and letters, they want some “theology” to go along with it. This was the only group to articulate the desire for a stronger Anabaptist presence; others wished for more theological views, some from leaders, but not exclusively.

Finally, what does this say about what the age 45 group wants? Is there a yearning in our congregations, too, for more Anabaptist teaching, more wrestling with the issues from the perspective of our spiritual roots?

ABOUT THE COVER:

‘Not going back to camp will be tough,’ says Andrew Brown of his experiences at MC Manitoba’s Camp Moose Lake in ‘Making a Mennonite,’ on page 28. For more stories and photos, see our Focus on Camping on page 23.

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Mission statement: To educate, inspire, inform, and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through an independent publication and other media, working with our church partners.

Guiding values:

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

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



'LIVING INK' REFLECTION

For what purpose has Christ grabbed hold of you?

Week 5 Lenten biblical reflection on Philippians 3:4-14

BY ELSIE HANNAH RUTH REMPEL

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE



Could these texts help worshippers be reconcilers who grow in relational connections, even in the face of political and media-based fear-mongering? Could they help us see the face of Jesus in our perceived enemies? We prayed they would.

A year ago, when a colleague and I spent an intense two days in the beautiful Fraser Valley of B.C. with the writing team for our *Leader* magazine, I met this passage again as part of the 2016 lectionary texts for Lent. Many important and life-giving words from these texts (including Isaiah 43:16-21, Psalm 126 and John 12:1-8) spoke to us and led us to the theme of “Living ink,” as well as to weekly sub-themes for this important church season.

As I reread the notes from our writing retreat in preparing this reflection, I remembered how we considered these texts in the light of the wide and varied contexts of our North American Mennonite congregations within Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. I remembered the team’s growing passion and determination to speak good news into all these contexts.

We were gripped by a sense that many worship settings would be challenged by our struggle with diversity and that our sense of denominational unity would be fraying. Could these texts help worshippers be reconcilers who grow in relational connections, even in the face of political and media-based fear-mongering? Could they help us see the face of Jesus in our perceived enemies? We prayed they would.

As we focussed on the texts for this fifth week of Lent, we perceived themes of living forward and turning towards newness. God’s subversive and unexpected values came into clearer view for us, as did the process of deepening faith and trusting actions. We wondered about the original purpose of selecting texts that seemed so extravagant and over-the-top for this week—just before the sobriety of Passion Week. As we settled on the storied theme of “Living ink,” the sub-theme of “An unexpected



Recognizing the 'Lent twists' helps us live purposefully toward and through difficult encounters.

Can these words, which Paul wrote to keep the house church in Philippi on track, strengthen our little denomination's sense of unity? Can they help us in our struggle with diversity?

twist" seemed right for this place in this year's Lenten worship story.

When I revisited the texts for this particular week of Lent on my own, the weekly theme, "Living ink: An unexpected twist," provided a helpful lens for reading both the written and living Scripture. Living Scripture refers to God's ongoing revelation in our lives. There were definitely words here that lived on in the story of my life. The Epistle reading called out to me like an old friend, for the Bible verse I was given at my baptism, back in 1968, ends this week's reading from Philippians. The words have often

been "Living ink" for me, encouraging me to keep going when I've been discouraged by life's events.

As I returned to these words this time, and studied them in their place within the letter, I thought more about Paul's life, and the place in life from which he was writing. I empathized with Paul, an imprisoned veteran of church planting and nurturing, as he wrote to the congregation at Philippi. I heard his frustration with those he referred to as "dogs" (Philippians 3:2), the common term used for gentiles by Jews. These "dogs" were either Jewish or gentile Judaizers who

were threatening to get the mainly gentile Philippian congregation off track.

Commentators aren't sure who these "dogs" were, but the irony of his possible reference to zealous Jews as gentiles in this particular conflict around circumcision is rather sweet. What matters more is that some people were promoting a message of Christ's grace plus adherence to Jewish circumcision practices, and Paul, steeped in Jewish law observance with the best of Jewish pedigrees, disagrees strongly—and with good reason. His own zealous adherence to Jewish law led Paul to persecute the followers of Jesus' way. It was only a most unexpected twist by Jesus himself, who blinded him and stopped him in his zealous, law-abiding, persecuting tracks on the road to Damascus, that redirected him towards the greater purpose Christ had for him, and for them, towards the superior value of knowing Christ Jesus (verse 8).

“Knowing” was a loaded term for Paul, formed by study in Hebrew Scriptures, carrying meanings of intimate connection and lifelong commitment. It included head, gut and body knowledge. Knowing Christ, being found in him (verse 10), meant knowing both the amazing power of the resurrection that broke down the barriers between Jews and gentiles, and the path of suffering that was part of living into God’s reign in a fallen world. But this suffering was made bearable by the knowledge that God’s love and righteousness were stronger, and more enduring, than the sting of death. They were stronger than the social and cultural divisions that were part of the early churches.

Paul’s maturity and clear sense of purpose in this letter impresses me. I appreciate the way he reflects on what mattered most in his life of faith, and what could root this congregation securely in the good news of “*God’s upward call in Christ Jesus*” (verse 14). As a youth, I heard the excitement of striving to win the race in this text. Now, after many years of running this race, with the attendant scrapes and scars of running with other sinners toward the already-but-not-yet reign of God, I am more inspired by the promised goal of growing fully into Christ.

I also appreciate the humility of Paul’s acknowledgement, “*It’s not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected*” (verse 12a), and, “*Brothers and sisters, I myself don’t think I’ve reached it*” (verse 13a). To my relief, I found out from commentators that the Greek word Paul used for “perfection” meant maturity and continued formation towards a goal. That, I can also aim for. But I also appreciate Paul’s continuing determination that this race is indeed worth it: “*But I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose*” (verse 12b), and, “*I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. The goal I pursue is God’s upward call in Christ Jesus*” (verses 13-14).

Christ definitely grabbed hold of Paul for a purpose, but the call is also mine. I sensed that vaguely at my baptism almost 48 years ago. In my adult life, the Spirit

has repeatedly nudged me back into the peculiar Mennonite arena for making work and worship one, often through unexpected twists and seasons of struggle. Even after my employment ended last November, Mennonite opportunities to serve with my words, like this one, keep coming. And when I obey, and study and reflect to write or speak, I feel aligned with the Spirit.

For what purposes has Christ grabbed hold of you? He doesn’t always use the strong-arm tactics it took to turn Paul around, but it does seem that God’s Spirit enjoys using the unexpected twists and hard experiences of life to achieve redeeming outcomes.

Lent is “laced with strange mixtures of excitement and fear, success and failure, loyalty and betrayal, affirmation and denial, life and death,” writes Charles Olsen in *The Wisdom of the Seasons: How the Church Year Helps Us Understand our Congregational Stories*. Lenten experiences don’t all come in the six weeks before Easter, but are part of our everyday lives. Recognizing the “Lent twists” helps us live purposefully toward and through difficult encounters.

Consider again the writing group’s assessment of our context. Can these

words, which Paul wrote to keep the house church in Philippi on track, strengthen our little denomination’s sense of unity? Can they help us in our struggle with diversity? Can they help us be reconcilers and grow in our relational connections, even in the face of fear-mongering and budget shortfalls? Can they help us to see the face of Jesus in our perceived enemies?

More broadly, will knowing that God’s reign will come—on earth as it is in heaven—make the struggle towards God’s way of righteousness now worthwhile? Will the sense of God’s grace grabbing hold of us individually and as a church, and of perfecting us as we keep saying yes to God’s good dream, make it easier for us to face the challenges of being a faithful church in our context? If so, this is a gift of great grace: “*It is the righteousness of God that is based on faith.*” ❧



Elsie Rempel is a faith formation consultant who worked in a variety of faith formation ministries for Mennonite Church Canada from 2002-15. She is a member of Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

❧ For discussion

1. As you think back on the path of your life, where were the unexpected twists? What were the factors that caused these twists and turns? During these times of uncertainty and confusion did you think of God as the author of your life? Who has more control over the pen, God or you?
2. What does it mean for your everyday life that Christ has “grabbed hold of you”? What are different ways that we can “know” Christ Jesus? In what circumstances is it difficult to remember the “surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus”?
3. In Philippians 3, Paul says he is pressing on towards the goal. Do you think of your life as a race? How would you describe the goal or the prize? What are the obstacles? Is suffering an obstacle in the race of life?
4. Elsie Rempel writes that it seems as though “God’s Spirit enjoys using the unexpected twists and hard experiences in life to achieve redeeming outcomes.” Can you point to examples in your own life, or in your congregation? How does a mature Christian respond to the unexpected?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. In light of the many recent letters on the topic of sexuality, we will edit any letter on this topic to a paragraph and post the rest online at www.canadianmennonite.org. All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to letters@canadianmennonite.org and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

✉ Magazine should 'continue to challenge and question'

RE: "DO CHURCH and journalism mix?" by Will Braun and "Are congregations up to it?" by Dick Benner, Feb. 1, pages 14 and 2, respectively.

Kudos to Braun and Benner!

Braun's timely column raises important points about the role of church-related media in providing independent analysis of critical issues in the church, and even in speaking truth to power when church journalists question the wisdom of actions or statements by our church leaders.

While I acknowledge that many *Canadian Mennonite* readers chiefly want what Braun terms "newsletterism: straight up church news with no probing of deeper layers," I tend to skim over those items

FROM OUR LEADERS

History matters

KOREY DYCK

Last summer, the Mennonite Heritage Centre was given a German language database of more than 110,000 family registries. We were ecstatic! With this new resource, we could reconnect families torn apart during the Second World War. The "lost" had been found. A branch from our faith family tree could be grafted back on.

Just like museums and other "memory institutes," the Heritage Centre is charged with keeping stories and records of the past—like this database—alive. But we do more than that. Our vast collection links us to the faith stories of people who are no longer living and helps individuals and families reconnect.

It is a responsibility curators and archivists do not take lightly.

Reflecting on faithfulness through the pages of history is an important aspect of Christian faith. Repeatedly, God and the prophets implore the people of Israel to remember what God has done. Jesus breaks bread with his disciples and says,



"Do this in remembrance of me"

(Luke 22:19). Weekly church services engage in the act of remembering as we worship and share a wide array of stories from the Bible, from our collective past and even from present day experiences, events that will eventually become stories of our collective past.

As Christians, a collective memory is vital to our participation in God's ministry. It reminds us that adversity can strengthen, rather than deplete, faith. It reveals God in our midst through the ages and bolsters courage for faithful living.

Within the Heritage Centre's walls, we carefully store sermons, stories, music, photographs, immigration papers, diaries and art, so that future generations can examine stories of the past with greater clarity.

Time and circumstances are changing in ways that only the Spirit knows. In days gone by, the Heritage Centre focussed on quietly performing a service for the larger church by collecting and preserving items reflecting Mennonite church history and Mennonite genealogy.

As our holdings grow, their value rises and so does the need to share them more broadly and in more easily accessible forms.

We are rising to that challenge with increased electronic resourcing. A wide array of material is available through a revamped archives webpage at archives.mennonitechurch.ca/. A blog is scheduled to arrive there soon. In just one year, we've made more than 16,000 images available electronically through the Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID) at archives.mhsc.ca/, a project we launched with our now eight Mennonite partners. Our gallery displays art exhibits that connect the ethnic past of our Mennonite family with its multi-ethnic present and future. Photos from those exhibits are also available online at gallery.mennonitechurch.ca/.

The physical holdings, permanent displays, travelling art exhibits and online digital collections of the Heritage Centre are impressive, but the greatest gifts it has to offer are the faith stories these collections tell, and the ability to connect and reconnect members of our Mennonite family.

Korey Dyck is the director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and Gallery in Winnipeg.

and crave pieces that dig deeper into the topics that affect our church and society.

A while ago I looked back at some of the early issues of the *Mennonite Reporter*, a predecessor of *Canadian Mennonite*. I was struck by the difference in tone from the more recent publication. Under the direction of founding editor Frank Epp, the *Mennonite Reporter*

provided an independent (prophetic) voice and regularly prodded and probed in ways that made people uncomfortable.

It is indeed risky as an editor to nip at the arm that funds you, and thus Benner is to be commended for his editorial. He took to task the Future Directions Task Force for the limited timeframe given to our churches to engage with that Task Force's far-reaching

FAMILY TIES

Aging gracefully

MELISSA MILLER

On a soft spring day, I looked out my window to see the neighbour's mature crab tree in full bloom. Its tall, fully rounded shape was blanketed in a carpet of pink-lilac blossoms. Unbidden, a thought emerged, "I want to be like that when I'm old."

Years later, I can still recall the beautiful, magnificent tree and the visual it offered of aging well.

My thoughts often turn towards aging these days, what it means to age gracefully, or gracelessly would be the alternative, I suppose. As I companion my 85-year-old mother and as I pastor the seniors in my congregation, I witness the journey of many people in the final years of life. Often I am awed and moved to tears by the beauty they display, their deeply held faith, their quietly secure trust and the grace they extend to themselves and others. Regularly I am reminded that there are enormous challenges in aging and that there is no one mould that fits all. Histories; physical, emotional and spiritual health; personalities and circumstances all play a part.

Some individuals are human expressions of the beautiful, blooming tree. Perhaps the psalmist had them in mind when he spoke of people "*like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season; their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper*"

(Psalm 1:3). Such people are a joy to be around, a testimony to a well-lived life right up to the end of their days. As the Apostle Paul enjoins, they are "*joyful in hope, patient in suffering and persevering in prayer*" (Romans 12:12).

And then there are others, illustrated by a cartoon of two crones discussing their futures. When one says she wants to age gracefully, her companion replies, "Not me. I'm more the 'oh-no-what-has she done now?' kind."

A Swedish book by Jonas Jonasson and its companion movie, *The-Hundred-year-old Man who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared*, was farcical and very funny. It is hard not to cheer on the spunk of the lead character, as he encounters and surmounts many obstacles. It is hard not to cheer, unless one is the anxious, bewildered family member trying to walk alongside the spirited

in others and the world. Work less, let the young take leadership; mentor and encourage them. Embrace new opportunities. Celebrate the wisdom that comes with a long life.

These maxims came from people who appear to be aging well, or hoping to do so. For others I asked, the question seemed to be burdensome, as if it were one more stone piled onto someone weighed down by the pain and losses of old age. They struggled with the value-laden question, uncomfortable with what could be a judgment that they had failed to age with grace. I winced at my own insensitivity. Aging is full of losses and laments; while grace is to be found, it is sometimes overshadowed by weighty hurts.

At the end that is the destination of aging we can trust the grace that will be present. One responder to my question spoke of a relative who had died sur-



Aging is full of losses and laments; while grace is to be found, it is sometimes overshadowed by weighty hurts.

elder who climbs out the window or its equivalent.

What does it mean to age gracefully anyhow? I've been taking a little poll and the responses often sound like proverbs. Accept limitations (most frequently cited), stay active and maintain a positive spirit. Cultivate patience. Avoid self-centredness; keep a lively interest

rounded by those who loved her. We agreed that such times are a part of aging well, grace-filled gifts for the dying and the living.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) has a passion for helping people develop healthy, vibrant relationships with God, self and others.

recommendations, which, if implemented, will profoundly change our denomination.

We face big challenges as a church. And nothing that I have seen in the past while from our national leadership provides me with assurance that Mennonite Church Canada staff, mission workers, pastors and people in the pews have been adequately engaged in this discernment process. Let's support

and pray for those tasked with leading in troublesome times. And may *Canadian Mennonite* continue to challenge and question.

DEAN PEACHEY, WINNIPEG

GOD, MONEY AND ME

Autonomy and community

MIKE STRATHDEE

"So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. . . . The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip" (Genesis 32:24-25, 31).

Dutch pastor Wieteke van der Molen used this text for a Friday evening message at the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Harrisburg, Pa., last July. Out of many good sermons that week, her message, "On autonomy and community," struck the deepest chord for me. (The entire message is available online at pa2015.mwc-cmm.org).

We are all part of a community, van der Molen noted, be it a family, tribe, school, workplace or church. Some of us are members of multiple communities. Community feeds us, nurtures us and teaches us right from wrong, she said. To be human is to be part of community; we cannot survive alone.

We also crave autonomy, to have control over what concerns us. We want to make our own decisions, to be and do our best. There is a major tension between these important truths.

The struggle was ever thus, even in Old Testament times. As we read in Genesis, Jacob believed that he came first, always.

He swindled his brother, deceived his father and so on. But living by your own set of rules and living in community do not go well together. After wrestling with the angel, Jacob struggled with the people around him, with God and with himself.

Autonomy, van der Molen argues, means that you are your own judge, but you have to figure it all out by yourself. Jacob's story teaches us that it is not wrong to seek our own way, but we need to recognize the community around us, acknowledging the pain, hurt and frustration on both sides.

Modern, grown-up autonomy doesn't come easy. When we act like Jacob did, wrestling with God, community and self, van der Molen has this warning: "Even if you win, it leaves you slightly limping." How much of that limping results from failing to seek counsel?

One of the core principles that Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) teaches is that God asks for our whole selves; that stewardship is best forged in Christian community marked by integrity, accountability and joy. Do we seek out Christian community and

accountability in our walk as stewards of all that God has entrusted to us? Where do we find counsel in making choices around financial matters and in determining whether those choices are God-honouring?

In the 16 years that I have shared the MFC message of generous living and faithful, joyful giving, I have noticed the desire for autonomy, at whatever cost, intensify. Interest in, or even understanding of, community and the responsibilities that come with community, has crashed to a similar extent. It affects many of the institutions that we serve. Denominations, churches and some charities are limping, staggering in some cases. Others are thriving and growing, but there will be more limping and brokenness in coming years, I suspect.

We can do a lot more together than we can apart. How do we foster discussions around the value of community in our financial decisions? MFC can help. Perhaps a money autobiography class would be helpful. Maybe a discussion of best practices, both on a personal and congregational level, could be of assistance. Ask the MFC office closest to you for resources to help get the discussion started.

Mike Strathdee is a stewardship consultant at Mennonite Foundation of Canada serving generous people in Ontario and the eastern provinces. For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit MennoFoundation.ca.



✉ Say 'no more war' when you file your income tax return

RE: "DISARMING CONFLICT 'not silent about the immorality of war,'" letter, Feb. 1, page 11.

Erwin Wiens writes that "any western political leader who has not lost faith in war now finds himself squarely among the lunatic fringe."

I wonder. I have not heard political leaders say they have lost faith in war, nor have I noticed them withdrawing from it. Even our own new Liberal government's withdrawal of Canadian bombers was followed up by the commitment to reconnaissance and the re-fuelling of other coalition planes, and the training of Iraqi soldiers, hardly a statement of loss of faith in war.

Why will Justin Trudeau not say, "No more war"? He must sense that popular support is not behind that. There is no strident anti-war movement to be heard. If hundreds of workers at General Dynamics in London, Ont., lost their jobs making armoured vehicles for Saudi Arabia, they would make far more noise than thousands of peace-minded people in our churches have been making over the years.

Make your voice heard with "No more war," and resolve conflicts by nonviolent means. When you file your

taxes, send in a Peace Tax Return that says what you truly think. Or louder yet, withhold the military portion of your taxes. Learn how at consciencecanada.ca.

MARY GROH, TORONTO

Mary Groh is a member of Danforth Mennonite Church, Toronto.

✉ Future Directions needs more spark

IT IS SOMEWHAT ironic (I hope not prophetic), that the short note in the Jan. 18 issue of *Canadian Mennonite* about the final report of the Future Directions Task Force is on the same page as a note about a congregation disbanding and that ideas are needed about what to do with the empty building.

The Task Force report is a good one, but more spark is needed for the structures to come to life, whatever the structures may be. Help us to stand up, to speak up.

Let justice (peace, wholeness, wellbeing) flow like a mighty river. Let every congregation, every camp and school have at least one corner, one layer, for awareness and activism—mission, service, peace, evangelism, call it what you will. Teach us all to wake from the slumber of comfort and pleasure. Teach us all to lift our eyes beyond our own families, our own backyards and our own busyness. Teach us all to look beyond today and to see seven generations into the future.

RAY HAMM, NEUBERGTHAL, MAN.

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/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Brown—Annalize Charlotte Dorothea (b. Feb. 4, 2016), to Erin Panning and Chris Brown, Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

Canning—Carter David (b. Feb. 4, 2016), to Shannon and Samantha Canning, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Dietrich—Peter Jonathan (b. Dec. 13, 2015), to Laura and Ian Dietrich, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Ens—Roger Abram Obirek (b. Jan. 23, 2016), to Lisa Obirek and Gerald Ens, Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

Friesen—Raphael Leonard (b. Feb. 3, 2016), to Wanda Wall-Bergen and Isaac Friesen, Waterloo North Mennonite, Ont.

Gerber—Quinn Charlotte (b. Feb. 6, 2016), to Joel and Heather Gerber, Toronto United Mennonite.

Hilker—Emily Grace (b. Aug. 2, 2015), to Trevor and Sarah Hilker, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Horst—Nicholas James (b. Jan. 9, 2016), to Jamie and Annalee Horst, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Hughes—Ainslee Alice (b. Dec. 29, 2015), to Dustin and Carly Hughes, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Krahn—Cordelia Hope (b. Jan. 19, 2016), to John and Stacy Krahn, Ottawa Mennonite.

Mogk—Tyson Josiah (b. Jan. 20, 2016), to Naomi and Dustin Mogk, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Roes—Lyla (b. Feb. 3, 2016), to Alison and Kyle Roes, Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.

Shetler Fast—Madeline (b. Jan. 28, 2016), to Rebecca and Paul Shetler Fast, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Wigglesworth—Henry Funk (b. Jan. 29, 2016), to Rachel Funk and Jason Wigglesworth, Rockway Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Marriages

Bergen/Zehr—Steve Bergen and Anneka Zehr, Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite, Zurich, Ont., Jan. 16, 2016.

Campbell/Truderung—Sharon Campbell and Benita Truderung, Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg, Dec. 31, 2015.

Deaths

Arndt—Alfred, 76 (b. Sept. 7, 1939; d. Nov. 11, 2015), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Bender—Marie (nee Wagler), 90 (b. May 30, 1925; d. Jan. 28, 2016), Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.

Brubacher—Naomi (nee Martin), 92 (b. Jan. 4, 1924; d. Jan. 15, 2016), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Dyck—Sophie (nee Siemens), 87 (b. Oct. 9, 1928; d. Oct. 17, 2015), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Enss—Elizabeth (nee Martens), 84 (b. June 10, 1931; d. Oct. 31, 2015), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Epp—Clarence, 83 (b. Oct. 8, 1932; d. Nov. 4, 2015), Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Friesen—Katharina (nee Loewen), 97 (b. Aug. 12, 1918; d. Nov. 1, 2015), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Garber—Leonard, 84 (b. May 10, 1931; d. Feb. 7, 2016),

Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Hauser—William, 87 (b. Dec. 4, 1928; d. Jan. 16, 2016), Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont.

Hildebrand—Katharina (Katie) (nee Thiessen), 81 (b. April 21, 1934; d. Jan. 15, 2016), First Mennonite, Calgary.

Hildebrand—Nettie, 95 (d. Jan. 7, 2015), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Kroeger—Arthur, 93 (b. Sept. 1, 1922; d. Nov. 13, 2015), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Litke—Jacob, 91 (b. Aug. 30, 1924; d. Jan. 15, 2016), Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont.

Loewen—Cornelius Wilbert, 93 (b. Oct. 22, 1922; d. Feb. 2, 2016), Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Martin—Harvey B., 85 (b. Dec. 28, 1930; d. Jan. 1, 2016), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Neufeld—Ingrid Marie (nee Wiens), 80 (b. Sept. 20, 1935; d. Jan. 13, 2016), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Penner—Anna (nee Klassen), 87 (b. April 14, 1928; d. Oct. 9, 2015), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Ramer—Leonard D., 97 (b. Jan. 3, 1919; d. Jan. 4, 2016), Wideman Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Reimer—Elmer, 88 (b. May 30, 1927; d. Dec. 22, 2015), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Rempel—Gertrude (nee Wiebe), 87 (b. Dec. 14, 1928; d. Jan. 19, 2016), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

Rempel—Mary (nee Neufeld), 89 (b. June 3, 1926; d. Nov. 21, 2015), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Riss—Helen (nee Krahn), 92 (b. Nov. 23, 1923; d. Jan. 1, 2016), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Roth—Cora, 88 (b. May 2, 1927; d. Feb. 11, 2016), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Schroeder—Katie (nee Schmidt), 91 (b. Jan. 29, 1924; d. Jan. 7, 2016), Tofield Mennonite, Alta.

Wiebe—Mary, 96 (b. Sept. 15, 1919; d. Sept. 28, 2015), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

A moment from yesterday



In the spring of 1948, First Mennonite Church in Greendale, B.C., was inundated with water. Dikes had been built along the rivers some 50 years earlier, but they had suffered from neglect. During the winter of 1947 and early 1948, a lot of snow built up, and the late spring and fast melt triggered a sudden rise in run-off. The first dike was breached on May 26, with the water reaching its peak in early June. People were evacuated from Greendale. In 1955, the Greendale church building was destroyed by fire. What happened to the church records—did they survive the flood and fire?

Text: Conrad Stoesz, Mennonite Heritage Centre

Photo: Mennonite Heritage Centre

VIEWPOINT

A forest or a bunch of trees?

DEREK SUDERMAN

In “The new face of mission” column, Jan. 18, page 7, David Martin, executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, contrasted collecting coins for overseas mission as a child with his conviction that congregations should be more involved in mission in their local contexts. While I strongly resonate with his call for a “balanced commitment to mission,” the Future Directions Task Force proposal he mentions moves in the opposite direction.

I grew up in the context of “overseas mission.” To the surprise of many—How could you take your sons out of hockey?—our family left Saskatchewan for a year of language study and then a four-year term in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where my dad taught New Testament at a seminary while my mom worked with students and women’s groups, and hosted a never-ending stream of guests.

From a young age I was aware of very different approaches to “mission”: attending a missionary school where my friends’ parents were Bible translators in the Amazonian jungle; spending summers living with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) staff working in agriculture and community building; getting to know a Catholic nun from the U.S. who left her order to become a rural doctor in the Bolivian healthcare system; playing baseball with teenaged blonde-haired, blue-eyed Mormons from Utah.

After returning to Canada for high school, I moved again with my parents, this time to Bogotá, Colombia, where I earned my first university credits as an 18-year-old at the fledgling Mennonite



seminary. Taking “Biblical bases of nonviolence” at the height of the drug war I witnessed heated discussions among pastors, lawyers, activists, and even a petite woman who turned out to be a disillusioned former member of the armed guerrillas; faith and nonviolence was far from a theoretical topic.

Upon my return to Canada I was inspired by professors in Mennonite post-secondary institutions and taught for the first time as a counsellor-in-training director at a Mennonite camp geared for kids from inner-city Toronto (Fraser Lake). After returning to Colombia to volunteer with JustaPaz, a Mennonite justice and peace agency, I have travelled North America as a “peace evangelist” for MCC and the Mennonite church, and currently represent MC Canada on the editorial council of the Believer’s Church Bible Commentary series.

For me, being involved in the church’s “mission” has consistently meant moving beyond the congregation; in fact, I know that my visceral commitment to the church emerges from these experiences. Twenty-five years after taking that first course in Colombia, I am teaching “The violence of the Bible” to a new generation of students, many of whom have only experienced church in their congregation, including some who have become sceptical of Christian “mission” and even “church” altogether.

The next few months mark a key moment for the future of MC Canada. Prompted by mounting financial pressure, the Task Force has proposed a fundamental reworking of what we mean by “church,” including a realignment of

mission to local contexts. The proposal assumes that “the congregation is the foundational unit and expression of God’s work in the world,” and on this basis effectively collapses “church” into “congregations.” The primary purpose of structures beyond the congregation is to support, you guessed it, congregations.

As an analogy, imagine walking into a thriving forest. What do you see? Certainly there are trees, but not only trees. The health of a forest depends on a complex, interrelated web of tree and non-tree elements that together form a sustainable ecosystem. To limit a forest to trees undervalues the other elements lying underfoot and in between. After all, there is a big difference between an old-growth forest and a tree standing on a golf course. Ironically, maintaining healthy trees without such an ecosystem requires more effort and intervention, not less, and what takes decades to develop can be destroyed overnight.

To narrow the church and its mission to congregations is like calling a cluster of trees a forest. In contrast to Martin’s call for a balanced approach, the Task Force recommendations swing the pendulum from a rich ecosystem to clumps of free-standing trees. I am particularly distressed to see little vision for church beyond the congregation since, for me, it has been these “in-between” and “beyond” places where I have been most inspired to find my own place in the church. Such experiences not only provide new eyes to recognize opportunities for local witness, but also to distinguish local mission from simply turning inward.

I, too, am interested in a balanced approach, recognizing that mission does not just happen “over there” (internationally) or “over here” (locally). Most importantly, I am convinced that any concept of Christian mission requires a more robust understanding of church. As we discern the Future Directions proposal and the future of MC Canada (yes, this national body is “church” too!), I urge us not to lose sight of the forest for the trees. ☸

Derek Suderman is associate professor of Bible at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

The pursuit of truth (Part 2)

TROY WATSON



I can't imagine two scientists debating something of a scientific nature and concluding, "Well, you have your truth and I have mine." Yet this attitude is quickly becoming the norm when discussing matters of spirituality in Canada today. Why is that?

It comes from the idea that science deals with objective reality and faith deals with subjectivity, speculation or even superstition. It's rooted in the modern dichotomy of science vs. religion, which exalted science and reason as the supreme arbiters of truth. This has resulted in some in the science community adopting the arrogant attitude often attributed to the medieval church, like acting like they have a monopoly on truth.

The modern notion that science is based on fact and religion is based on faith is somewhat disingenuous. The scientific method is based on presuppositions that must be accepted by faith. (Presuppositions are assumptions about the world or background beliefs whose truth is taken for granted.)

Scientific reasoning assumes, among other things, the orderly, or rational, nature of the universe; the know-ability of the external world; and the reliability of our senses to gather accurate information. These are beliefs that can't be proven without first assuming them to be true or stepping outside the domain of science into the realm of philosophy. This means the scientific method is not opposed to faith, but founded on it.

Perhaps the most significant critique of postmodernity on scientific reasoning is the illusion of objectivity. The

objectivity of science is suspect because it relies on the human beings doing the research to be objective. Scientists, like all human beings, are social animals who have been conditioned, socialized, normalized and cultured, resulting in the development of certain biases, beliefs, desires and preferences, many of which they're not aware of.

This impacts the evidence discovered, and the conclusions made in scientific research, because the evidence and results are not merely the result of observation, but of interpretation. And the interpretive process involves the subjective inner reality of the observer as much as the external objective reality being observed.

Some have described this in terms of the "observer effect," which states the act of observing something influences the results of the observation. This would include not only the instruments used in the experiment, but the researchers themselves.

Furthermore, science itself is a social enterprise. Social conditions and attitudes affect how individuals and groups interpret evidence, and how much they attempt to resist falsification, especially if the evidence contradicts the core program of their scientific community and culture.

For many, postmodernity has effectively challenged the superiority of scientific reasoning. It has brought a healthy scepticism to modernity's claim to objectivity and certainty by demonstrating science and reason can be just as biased and agenda-driven as religious belief. It calls for greater humility, awareness

and psychological understanding, by highlighting the propensity of science and reason to be used destructively and manipulatively.

Postmodernity also reminds us of the power of culture, language, social influence and story in how we understand reality and live in relation to the world, including how we do scientific research.

The point here is not to undermine science and reason. The point is that there are different ways of knowing, and all these ways of knowing are valuable and necessary for understanding our complex and multi-dimensional reality. Postmodern philosophy reminds us that scientific reasoning is not the only way to know reality and it's not always the best way to know reality. Science certainly has a key role in our pursuit of understanding ourselves and the world, but its claim to objectivity, certainty and superiority are delusional.

That being said, even the harshest critics of the scientific method accept that it works. Most of us accept the scientific method and its results because it provides meaningful and utilitarian knowledge about the world. This is important. I would argue we should evaluate our faith and spirituality the same way.

Too many churches and Christians are obsessively trying to prove Christianity is "true" or "the Truth" when the question most people are asking is, "Does it work?"

When people look at science successfully performing organ transplants and landing exploration rovers on Mars, they conclude science works. At the same time, more and more Canadians are concluding the church and Christianity don't work or no longer work for them.

Is the church's modern understanding of "truth" part of this problem?

To be continued. . . ✎

Troy Watson (troydw@gmail.com) is pastor at Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

What makes a quilt Amish?

Conrad Grebel University College
Bechtel Lecturer asks provocative questions

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

What makes a quilt Amish? Does it have to be “quilted by a group of Amish women sitting around the frame in their sitting room?” Or does it have to have an Amish pattern, like the Amish Wedding pattern created and popularized by Rachel Pellman of the Old Country Store in Lancaster, Pa? Is appliqué or pieced the appropriate technique?

Janneken Smucker asked these questions in her 2016 Bechtel Lectures at Conrad Grebel University College on Feb. 4 and 5, citing the above quote as one person’s romantic imagination about the quilt she had bought in a Lancaster store and labelled as Amish.

What if the quilts hanging in Lancaster County stores labelled Amish were actually designed, pieced, appliquéed and embroidered by Hmong women, some in Pennsylvania and others in villages in Thailand, and only quilted by the Amish women, she asked rhetorically, noting that Pellman is not Amish and yet has designed and published books of Amish designs.

Amish quilts were discovered and popularized as art pieces reminiscent of abstract impressionist paintings by Mark Rothko and Josef Albers by the New York couple Jonathan Holstein and Gail van der Hoof in the early 1970s. They had begun collecting, hanging the quilts in their home, and displaying them in public, popularizing the objects as works of art.

This led to a 1978 feature article in *Home and Garden Magazine* and the trend was begun. Demand for the quilts soon outstripped the ability of Amish women to produce them, so other means were found.

The traditional *paj ntaub* embroidery of Hmong women made them potential co-workers with Amish women and others

in producing appliqué quilts when refugee Hmong families moved into the Lancaster area just as the interest in Amish quilts for American Country Décor took off. Some Hmong women were unwilling to stay in the background and began to sell their works in stores in Lancaster alongside traditional Hmong embroidery.

Smucker was focussed on the questions of authenticity, provenance (the artistic process behind an object and to whom does it belong), style, pride, simplicity and justice. Some Amish were willing to sell family heirlooms when it became apparent to them that they had quilts valued at

more than \$10,000. It was a proud thing to have such an expensive object, especially if the money could pay down a mortgage, something deemed much more practical.

But many of the Hmong women were being paid minimum wage or lower to produce items that were selling for thousands of dollars. Others were producing more than one quilt a week, carrying out all the steps and becoming wealthy in the process. Some quilts were simply labelled “locally made” and sold in Lancaster.

But as styles changed and the market was flooded by quilts, and the Amish found it more practical to buy comforters from large chain stores, no longer producing quilts, the trend came to an end. This was aided by an exposé in the Allentown (Pa.) *Morning Call* paper, drawing attention to the fraudulent nature of many of the Amish quilts. (*Visit bit.ly/1WrGTu5 to read the article.*)

Smucker wondered if the term “fraudulent” actually applies. What makes a quilt Amish? When does it start being Amish, since the Amish borrowed the form from non-Amish neighbours in the mid to late 1800’s? When does it stop being Amish?



Bruce Bechtel, left, Janneken Smucker, Debbie Shapansky and interim academic dean Marlene Epp pose after Smucker’s 2016 Bechtel Lectures at Conrad Grebel University College on Feb. 5. Bechtel and Shapansky are the children of Lester Bechtel, who has supported the lecture series from its inception 16 years ago.

On the 401 Highway in Cambridge, Ont., a large bed and chair advertise Mennonite Furniture, and other local businesses in the Waterloo Region do the same. What makes furniture, or anything else for that matter, Mennonite?

Smucker left the questions hanging. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

Edmonton church becomes inclusive, affirming

On Feb. 7, Edmonton's First Mennonite Church voted to become an inclusive and affirming Christian community. Two motions, one stating that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer people are welcome to become full and equal members of the church, and another to approve the statement: "God calls us to be an inclusive, affirming, Christian community," were originally put forward at the 2015 annual general meeting. The motions were tabled until 2016, to allow for the congregation to engage in a year of study, prayer, discernment, and an exploration of hopes and hesitations around the issue. The church also committed itself to communicate with the Edmonton Mennonite Ministerial, Mennonite Church Alberta and MC Canada while engaging in the process. Turnout for the annual general meeting was excellent, discussion was gentle and humble, there was no call for a secret ballot, and the vote was almost unanimous. Church members expressed a desire to continue to work towards hearing concerns and discomforts that may still exist both within and outside the congregation. While the year of discernment proved to be an important and unifying factor in the decision-making, the church acknowledges the process of struggle and learning around the issue of inclusion has been ongoing for more than 25 years. The statement will be reviewed in five years. First Mennonite Church welcomes prayer as it strives together to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ.

—First Mennonite Church, Edmonton



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GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

PHOTO BY D. MICHAEL HOSTETLER



On Feb. 7, during the faith formation hour, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., heard two Syrian refugee families tell their stories. One family is sponsored by Rockway Mennonite Church, the other by Stirling Avenue, Pioneer Park and First Mennonite churches, all of Kitchener.

MC Canada wants to know who is caring for refugees

Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite Church Canada congregations are taking the words of Deuteronomy 10:18-19 to heart by caring for Syrian refugees. The passage shares God's desire to clothe and feed strangers. It's a rather fitting way for Mennonites to express God's love, as many were once refugees to Canada themselves.

Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary is one of the congregations involved. Lead pastor Doug Klassen says that sponsoring refugees has been part of his congregation's ministry for years. "We have sponsored refugees from Vietnam, Eastern Europe, Colombia, and when [Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)] Alberta asked us if we were going to sponsor refugees from Syria [and] Iraq, we said we would gladly do it."

Every year, the congregation designates \$6,000 from its budget towards a refugee

sponsorship fund. When enough funds are accumulated to meet government recommendations for family support, the process begins.

"Over the years, we have also gone halves with other churches in the area, sharing costs and responsibilities," Klassen says.

Tallying up the number of congregations supporting Syrian refugees—or even identifying the congregations involved—is no easy task. Like Foothills, some congregations sponsor refugees directly, but others pool their resources and work together or send donations to organizations that specialize in resettlement.

Ryan Siemens, area church minister for MC Saskatchewan, reports that 17 of its 31 congregations are currently sponsoring refugees in one way or another. "Some churches are sponsoring on their own,"

he says. "One church is doing a family reunification and another church has two families coming in at once. A lot of refugee support [is coming] from a small scattering of churches."

He emphasizes the need for churches to work together to serve the community, and points to Grace Mennonite Church in Regina as an example. In the fall of 2015, the congregation invited other MC Saskatchewan churches to join it in refugee sponsorship. Several small rural congregations responded to that call.

He also notes that MCC Saskatchewan received some significant donations from churches that felt they didn't have enough personnel to sponsor refugees, but wanted to help.

If you or your congregation is responding to the refugee crisis in Syria or another area—whether through direct sponsorship or fundraising—please let MC Canada know by contacting Deborah Froese, director of news services, at dfroese@mennonitechurch.ca. ☞

VIEWPOINT

Is climate change real?

WILL BRAUN

A reader of this magazine sent an e-mail admonishing me not to associate our Mennonite faith with the “fear narrative” of climate change. He provided some links to seemingly credible people who refute the common global-warming argument. My impulse was to either delete or politely—or impolitely—sidestep it. Instead, I took it seriously.

Some of you, like me, probably feel immediately defensive when someone questions climate change. Others probably feel immediately vindicated. We should not follow either of those impulses.

People on both sides of many issues scoff and sneer at each other, instead of engaging in mature dialogue. Just watch Question Period, raise same-sex issues with church friends or tell your lefty friends you’re studying the climate dissenters.

But experience has taught me the value of letting that initial impulse pass and then crossing the boundaries of my ideological enclave. So I propped a stone up against the door of my mind to keep it from slamming shut and I entered, for the first time, the realm of climate dissension.

I watched videos of Patrick Moore, the Greenpeace founder who has since changed his tune; Nigel Lawson, former finance minister under the late British prime minister Margaret Thatcher; Richard Lindzen, professor emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; energy policy expert Alex Epstein; and others. I cross-referenced their arguments with reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), NASA and seemingly official ice-monitoring organizations.

What did I learn?

1. IT’S COMPLEX, involving many academic disciplines, complex computer modelling and almost countless variables.

2. SCIENCE IS not always scientific. You can find duly credentialled scientists on both sides of pretty well any issue. Many times the outcomes of funded studies predictably align with the bent of funders.

The popular notion that 97 percent of scientists agree about global warming is at best a dubious and decidedly unscientific assertion. Lindzen says science, which is commonly distorted by political agendas and financial interests, too often “becomes a source of authority, rather than a mode of inquiry.” Groups find scientists to place in their corner, instead of engaging in genuine pursuit of knowledge.

You can find duly credentialled scientists on both sides of pretty well any issue. Many times the outcomes of funded studies predictably align with the bent of funders.

3. BEWARE THE graph. Facts are not necessarily as factual as we think. Stats are remarkably malleable.

4. IT IS not hard to poke holes in the arguments on either side. Both sides cherry pick data, focus on their strengths, gloss over their weaknesses, and refute the other side’s weakest arguments, instead of their best ones. They lazily seem to assume people will not do any double checking.

5. I CANNOT dismiss all climate dissension based on the assumption it is funded by big oil. I don’t believe it all is.

6. AMONG CLIMATE change believers, I found two key areas of uncertainty. First, within the past 150 years—the period of most accurate record and most frequent reference—the warming started before, not after, significant greenhouse gas emissions. Second, the 114 different computer-climate-modelling tools that the IPCC draws on cannot yet account for the seeming fact that the warming

trend has flattened significantly over the past 15 to 20 years.

Yes, last year was the warmest on record, but not as warm as the models predicted and not warm enough to bend the graph line significantly upward. The IPCC addresses this modelling shortcoming—which is foundational to its most basic predictions—but only by offering possible, as yet unproven, explanations.

In the end, it boils down largely to who you are going to trust and to what extent. I’m still inclined to take seriously the IPCC, but I have less confidence in its confidence, and less respect for the climate campaigners.

Wendell Berry—an elder in the progressive realm—says we should back off of apocalyptic predictions, whether religious or climate related, and, instead,

focus on taking care of the actual places we live right now.

He also says the following: “I always suppose that experts may be wrong. But even if they are wrong about the alleged human causes of climate change, we have nothing to lose, and much to gain, by trusting them.” By trusting them, he means reducing “waste and pollution.” I agree that we should reduce waste and pollution, but to say we have nothing to lose is simplistic. We all need to be more rigorous in our analysis.

In part, I’m just using climate change as a case study. My point is, life is complex; we need to embrace that complexity. I found it invigorating and healthy to look carefully at both sides of an issue. We need to talk to each other. We need to be humble enough to accept our limitations and confident enough to venture straight into enemy territory with an open heart. I believe that is where we find creativity, community and maybe even God. ☸

Breakfasts, burnt curtains and a surprising friendship

Church youth form bond with social assistance recipients

STORY AND PHOTO BY J. NEUFELD

Manitoba Correspondent
ALTONA, MAN.

Across the parking lot from Altona Mennonite Church stands a long, yellow brick building with narrow halls and tiny bachelor suites that rent out for \$285 per month. Friendship Manor is a government-run housing facility for people on social assistance.

It's a snowy Sunday morning in early February, but the tiny kitchen in the Manor's common room is a happening place. A half-dozen young people from Altona Mennonite have braved the storm and are making waffles, filling up the room with their youthful enthusiasm. It's an unlikely breakfast club: six young adults

from the church, five Manor residents and Margruite Krahn, a local artist and the former leader of the Altona Mennonite Church youth group.

After everyone has had enough to eat and coffee cups have been topped up, the tables are pushed together and everyone joins in an informal sharing circle. Krahn talks about her daughter, who's just come through a difficult time. One of the residents, a man named John Penner with a salt-and-pepper beard that rests on his chest, says he's troubled by his cousin's recent death. A woman named Bev Winter with short grey hair announces

her engagement to the man sitting at her elbow. Everyone applauds.

The friendship between a group of young people from Altona Mennonite and the residents of Friendship Manor goes back five years, says Krahn. It all started with Jean Vanier, the Catholic philosopher and humanitarian who founded L'Arche. Krahn was leading the church youth group and they read and discussed Vanier's book *Becoming Human*, a reflection on the need for community and the gifts that everyone has to offer, even the most vulnerable.

"We were like, these guys are at the end of our parking lot. Why aren't we doing what Christ calls us to do?" says Krahn.

So the youth group decided to start getting together with the residents of Friendship Manor for breakfast.

But the housing complex wasn't well maintained. Fire extinguishers were broken. Maintenance requests had gone unanswered. Broken baseboard heaters had singed the curtains in the common room and the whole place reeked of smoke.

"The drapes had been hanging over the heaters for so many years that they were burnt," says Winter. "Manitoba Housing didn't care. So when we met Margruite and she offered to be our advocate, we just ripped them off."


"We pretty soon became advocates," says Krahn. "Because clearly Manitoba Housing was not giving them adequate accommodation."

The youth group sat down with residents, made lists of their concerns and came up with some projects to do together. They painted the common room, raised money for new chairs, arranged for carpets to be shampooed, reported fire hazards to the local fire inspector and brought the tenants' concerns to Manitoba Housing.

"Manitoba Housing listened," Krahn says. When the youth group volunteered to paint, Manitoba Housing paid for the supplies.

Since then, Manitoba Housing has made major improvements to the Manor, renovating some of the suites, installing a kitchen, and providing new tables and chairs for the common room. A tenant-led advocacy committee is being organized. Krahn doesn't credit her youth group with all of the changes, but she's pretty sure they had something to do with it.

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Beverly Winter, of Friendship Manor, a government-run housing facility for people on social assistance, and Karlyn Wiebe of Altona Mennonite Church stand in Winter's apartment.

"Things are good now," says John Penner. He's a man of few words, but from his demeanour it's clear he regards the visitors as old friends.

"Before this all happened, everyone stuck to themselves. We never got together in the common room. Now we do it all the time," says Winter.

As she's speaking, David Wiebe, another tenant, walks up to her with a flat of eggs. He heard she needed some for a baking project.

Krahn is no longer the youth leader at Altona Mennonite, and many members of the original youth group are now university students in Winnipeg. But the friendships remain.

Paige Mierau Friesen is in her second year of university, studying English and sociology at the University of Winnipeg. Last year she wrote an article about her friendship with Winter for *Canadian Mennonite* (bit.ly/1SvisgU).

Friesen says the residents at Friendship Manor have showed her a lot of love over the years, adding, "I feel like we get a lot of love from them. They meet us halfway each time."

She and Winter chat on Facebook and Friesen hopes they'll stay connected even after Winter gets married this spring and moves out of Friendship Manor. "I know it'll be hard because of our two very different lifestyles, but then again, I guess that's kind of the point, right? To realize we can still be friends despite the different demographics and everything." ❧

/// Staff change

Local principal appointed as new executive director at MCC Manitoba

Darryl Loewen has been appointed as the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba executive director. He comes to MCC with extensive leadership experience at Mennonite Collegiate Institute as a teacher and principal, along with numerous church and community organizational roles. "I've always deeply admired the work of MCC, and I am excited to step into that mission," he says on accepting the role. "I look forward to being part of the really important work MCC does with justice, peace and cultural understanding at a time when organizations like MCC need to be out front. This is not an easy calling, but one I look forward to." Loewen will start employment at MCC Manitoba in August of 2016. Peter Rempel will continue to serve as interim executive director until then. MCC Manitoba oversees MCC's fundraising and community initiatives within the province, including work with refugees, peacebuilding, indigenous communities and 16 MCC thrift shops. Last year, MCC Manitoba raised \$10 million for the work of MCC. Of this amount, \$1 million is applied to programs serving local needs in Manitoba.

—MCC Manitoba



Darryl Loewen



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GOD AT WORK IN US

OBITUARY

Former soldier leaves legacy of Christian pacifism

Siegfried Bartel,
Jan. 6, 1915 - Feb. 11, 2016

BY AMY DUECKMAN
B.C. Correspondent

Siegfried Bartel, the former German army officer who became an ardent advocate for peace and an influential Mennonite figure in Canada, died at the age of 101.

Siegfried Wilhelm Bartel was born in Prussia, now Poland, into a successful Mennonite farming family. Pacifism had ceased to become important to the Prussian Mennonites, and Bartel voluntarily enlisted in the German army in 1937, before the start of the Second World War. He moved up the ranks quickly. During the war, he was wounded twice and was awarded the Iron Cross for bravery.

On Christmas Eve 1941, when he and his men in the front trenches heard Russian soldiers singing the same Christmas carols that he sang at home, something in Bartel changed. In his 1994 book, *Living with Conviction: German Army Captain Turns to Cultivating Peace*, he wrote, "Now I was hearing Russian soldiers singing about the birth of Christ. Were those enemy fighters also remembering warm family times as



**Siegfried
Bartel**

they sang? . . . Later in life I realized, 'My pacifism, which I cherish so much today, may have been born at that moment.'" His true peace convictions would take many years to come to maturity, however.

What Bartel described as his "darkest hour" came in 1943, when his reserve unit had to deal with partisan units fighting against German forces behind the front lines. A young man in the village was arrested for conveying information to the partisan units about the military's movements and activities. Feeling he had no other choice, Bartel gave the order to have him arrested and later executed. "Little did I know that the guilt and pain of that action would go with me throughout the rest of my life!" he wrote.

After Germany's defeat, Bartel had plenty of time to reflect on his wartime experiences. "People on the winning side seldom review; they are the winners, they are the heroes," he said in a later interview. "If you are on the losers' side, people look on you

as criminals. But we were doing exactly the same thing. I asked myself a number of times, what exactly Jesus expected of me?"

After the war, Bartel managed a farm in Germany for several years. With the help of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), he and his wife Erna, whom he had married on Dec. 23, 1939, immigrated to Canada in 1951 with their four sons: Gerd, Reinhard, Christoph and Alex. The eldest son, Siegfried, had died at age three in 1944. Two more sons, Dietrich and Martin, were born in Canada.

The family settled in Agassiz, B.C., and began 30 years of dairy and crop farming. They became active in the community as they worked and raised their family. Bartel served 14 years as a trustee on the Agassiz-Harrison School Board, and also served one year as chair of the Fraser Valley Board of School Trustees. From 1980-84 he was a member of the Parole Board of B.C.

The Bartels first attended East Chilliwack Mennonite Church, where Bartel also served as church chair. In 1962, they helped found Eden Mennonite Church, also in Chilliwack, where Bartel both taught an adult German class and did lay preaching in German.

In 1966, Bartel became involved with the Mennonite Benevolent Society. He was elected as a member of the executive of MCC B.C. in 1970, representing the Conference of Mennonites in B.C., where he would remain until 1988. Bartel began as MCC B.C. chair in 1971, which necessitated also serving on the boards of MCC Canada and MCC Binational.

When MCC Canada was dealing with the issue of capital punishment in 1972, Bartel had to come to terms with his role in war and particularly the execution he had ordered.

Wayne Bremner, current executive director of MCC B.C., wrote to staff following Bartel's passing: "Siegfried gave a significant part of his life to MCC and has significantly shaped MCC through his leadership at various board tables, MCC B.C. in particular. . . . It was an honour to have Siegfried release the doves and turn the sod at the groundbreaking for the MCC Centre in June of 2013, and participate in the ribbon cutting a year-and-a-half later." ❧

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ARTBEAT

FILM REVIEW

Hollywood feminism and the decline of cinema

REVIEWED BY VIC THIESSEN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

The original *Star Wars* (1977) was, for me, pure movie magic, the perfect epic sci-fi adventure and the perfect enactment of Joseph Campbell's archetypal hero's journey, something which clearly resonated with me at that time in my life.

Thirty-eight year later, we are treated to J.J. Abrams' version of the same *Star Wars* story. While 2015's *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* features improved acting and dialogue, the lack of originality and imagination left me dumbfounded. And yet this inferior remake is critically acclaimed and has become the second-highest-grossing film of all time. What does this signify for the future of cinema?



than these flaws. The first of these is the reaction—or lack thereof—when the Starkiller instantly wipes out the central planetary system of the Republic, killing billions of people. That inconceivably horrific act should have been greeted by our heroes with cries of anguish and

Female leaders like Rey could be teaching men that there are other ways to handle conflict, and to challenge evil and oppression, rather than through violence.

While the lack of originality is the primary flaw of *The Force Awakens*, produced by Lucasfilm Ltd., Bad Robot and Truworth Productions, there are many other flaws, including:

- **AN OVERWHELMING** amount of PG-rated violent action.
- **THE UTTER** implausibility of the destruction of the Starkiller.
- **LACKLUSTRE CINEMATOGRAPHY** and score.
- **FINN** (STORM trooper turned good guy) having no trouble shooting at the enemy once he knows who the real enemy is, namely his former colleagues.

However, there are two features of *The Force Awakens* that disturb me more

despair beyond imagining, leaving them devastated. Instead, there is almost no reaction at all and the whole unfortunate matter is soon forgotten.

I assumed the destruction of the Republic was a way of fuelling the revenge-motivated finale, but insiders suggest the filmmakers had to get rid of the Republic, introduced in the six prequels, because it didn't fit into their plans for the new *Star Wars* universe, so they decided to simply wipe it out entirely. Such a decision is cynical, verging on crass, although most viewers took the death of billions of people in stride. Has our desensitization to screen violence and death come so far that we are not deeply troubled by such scenes?

The other disturbing element in *The Force Awakens* is also found in *Mad Max*:

Fury Road, directed by George Miller and produced by Kennedy Miller Productions and Village Roadshow Pictures last year. That these sci-fi films feature women in the lead roles is a cause for celebration, but I humbly suggest—as a man—that the actions of these female protagonists actually undermine radical feminism.

In *The Force Awakens*, it's great to have a young woman in the Luke Skywalker role, especially a woman as strong, intelligent, skilled and compassionate as Rey. I also appreciated Maz, the female version of Yoda. Unfortunately, as with the women in *Fury Road*, Rey ultimately reveals her strength through her ability to fight and kill as well as any man, suggesting that being violent is a way women can gain equality with men.

By contrast, feminists like Grace Jantzen and Dorothee Soelle—and the women in my family—not only call for gender equality, but question the very legitimacy of some typical masculine virtues, like toughness, honour, retributive justice and a willingness to kill in combat.

Following their lead, rather than celebrating films that show how women can embody typical masculine virtues, I would applaud films that show how men can be as compassionate, merciful, nurturing, peaceful, sensitive and caring as women. Female leaders like Rey could be teaching men that there are other ways to handle conflict, and to challenge evil and oppression, rather than through violence.

As a lifelong film buff, I have observed with dismay how Hollywood has increasingly been willing to sell its soul to the almighty dollar and the almighty opening weekend. Above all, this has led to a greater emphasis on mindless action and special effects at the expense of an intelligent and imaginative plot. That *The Force Awakens* could become the second-highest-grossing film of all time means that Hollywood will continue to give us more of the same.

I became a film critic because I believe in the power of this most-popular entertainment medium to help make us better people and to help make the world a better place. There are countless thought-provoking films out there that do this,

(Continued on page 22)

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Biker club Christians de-escalate conflict

After a misunderstanding over home territory, a member of the U.K. Anabaptist Network helped a biker club build relationships.
canadianmennonite.org/biker-christians



Hugo Friesen and Ted Regehr receive MHSC Awards of Excellence

The annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada recognized the contributions of individuals and highlighted the success of various history projects.
canadianmennonite.org/friesen-regehr-awards



Healing wounds through art: a YAMEN experience

Through her service in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, a Honduran young adult used art to help at-risk children heal from emotional wounds.
canadianmennonite.org/healing-art-yamen



Anabaptist movement flourishing in South Korea

South Korea is home to some creative and dynamic expressions of contemporary Anabaptism.
canadianmennonite.org/anabaptist-south-korea



(Continued from page 21)

but almost all of them are independent or foreign films.

Unfortunately, the majority of film viewers seem content to watch Hollywood films that promote and perpetuate the myth of redemptive violence, dehumanize the enemy and desensitize us to the violence in our world, even as they show us a world far more violent than the one we have. As a result, the decline of film, and of feminism in film, hinders the development of a planet where all life might flourish. ☘



Visit bit.ly/21l17jm for a longer version of this review.

☘ Briefly noted

To and From Nowhere ends tale of displaced Mennonites

CMU Press announces the publication of its latest title, *To and From Nowhere*, written by Winnipeg author Hedy Leonora Martens. In this gripping and moving novel, protagonist



Greta Enns and her family struggle to exist in the Soviet Union from 1941-76 after being displaced by Stalin, along with thousands of Russian Germans, Mennonites and other ethnic groups. "I hope this book will help readers enter into the lives of people who become refugees," Martens says, adding that it wasn't just Mennonites that Stalin displaced. "Many nationalities were exiled, torn from their homes, some of them never to return. They were wiped off the map as if they never existed, which is why the book is called *To and From Nowhere*." The new book is the conclusion of a two-part project that began with the publication of Martens' 2010 novel, *Favoured Among Women* that the *Winnipeg Free Press* called a "detailed and touching portrait ..."

—CMU Press



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FOCUS ON CAMPING

Camping ministry a common thread for AMBS students

BY ANNETTE BRILL BERGSTRESSER

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
ELKHART, IND.

What do 10 of the 33 first-year students at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) have in common? A background as staff members at Mennonite camps and retreat centres.

Scott Litwiller of Hopedale (Ill.) Mennonite Church is one of the 10. Litwiller has a bachelor of arts degree in biblical and theological studies from Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, and is a master of divinity student in pastoral ministry at AMBS.

In reflecting on how his camp experiences played a role in bringing him to



Scott
Litwiller

AMBS, Litwiller shared that serving as program director at Menno Haven Camp and Retreat Center in Tiskilwa, Ill., gave him opportunities to try out his gifts and notice what gave him energy.

“Being in charge of the summer staff members really helped cultivate my leadership abilities and helped me understand how passionate I am about working with people,” he said.

In particular, he named an experience of helping two staff members talk through a conflict together: “Being part of that process was a very life-giving experience that made me think maybe being a pastor could work out.” He also pointed to “everyday” experiences such as the morning gathering

time with campers.

Lee Hiebert, who is halfway through his work toward a master of divinity degree in Christian faith formation, is another AMBS student with camp staff experience. Hiebert, who grew up going to First Mennonite Church in Kelowna, B.C., served as associate pastor at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg while studying at CMU.



Lee Hiebert

Hiebert counselled for five years at Camp Valaqua in Water Valley, Alta., and for two years at two of the Camps with Meaning facilities in Manitoba. He said camp was where he first began to understand the importance of Christian community.

“It was where—with the guidance of those ministering around me—I first experienced my gifts being discerned,” he said. “My time at camp was when I realized how important the community that surrounded me really was, and that if I wanted to pursue ministry I needed to seek out a place that would help to shape me for this purpose. AMBS is one of those places.” ☞

Deep in the marrow: Silver Lake Mennonite Camp

BY MARK MORTON

Silver Lake Mennonite Camp

I never went to camp as a kid because growing up on a farm in Saskatchewan seemed sufficiently uncivilized that I didn’t need to spend another week or two sleeping in a forest.

My children, though, aren’t me: they’re growing up in a city, where they rarely see the sun set or the stars shine, and the most conspicuous flora and fauna are front lawns and the neighbourhood dogs that pee on them. That’s why I acquiesced to my wife’s suggestion, 10 years ago, that we send our kids to camp, specifically Silver Lake Mennonite Camp located on Ontario’s Bruce Peninsula. I figured that there they would get to experience

creation—or at least the Bruce Peninsula incarnation of it—in its full glory: hearing the wind in the trees, seeing the sun shimmer on the waves, smelling the smoke of a campfire and tasting really good well water. As our kids reported back to us summer after summer, all of this happened.

What I didn’t anticipate, probably because growing up on a farm is a fairly solitary activity, was how our kids would also develop special bonds with their fellow campers. These bonds seemed different from the ones they had with their peers at school, because they were forged under the open sky. As our two eldest progressed

from campers in their first five summers, to Counsellors in Leadership Training, and finally to bona fide staff members, they experienced mentorships and fostered friendships that seem, from my perspective, to be the most important ones in their lives.

They also had opportunities to explore a different kind of spirituality, one based not on sermons, but on the harmony and beauty evident in creation. Their Mennonite faith has, I think, been shaped as much by their summers at camp as by their Sundays at church. If attending church has developed the bones of their faith, going to Silver Lake Mennonite Camp has filled those bones with marrow. ☞

Visit canadianmennonite.org/music-camp-nurtures for a story and photo about the Ontario Mennonite Music Camp.



FOCUS ON CAMPING



These students from Canadian Mennonite University were leaders at Camps with Meaning last summer.

CMU and Camps with Meaning prepare leaders of faith

Canadian Mennonite University
WINNIPEG

Summer may be a distant memory at this time of year, but Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) student Jonas Cornelsen fondly recalls how he spent last July and August working as the Bible instructor at Camp Koinonia, one of three run by Mennonite Church Manitoba's Camps with Meaning (CwM) ministry.

Cornelsen had never worked at camp full-time before and found it a meaningful summer of spiritual renewal. "Certainly that's a place where you can become re-connected with that part of your being," Cornelsen says. "I think I managed to

carry that back a little bit with me into this [school] year, which has been great."

All 17 members of CwM's 2015 leadership team and more than half of its senior counsellors were CMU students or alumni.

"CMU prepares people who become stronger leaders," says Rebecca Klassen-Wiebe, a 2015 graduate who ran the summer program at Camp Assiniboia.

Breanna Heinrichs says that studying music at CMU equipped her to be a better song leader at camp. She recalls working one summer after taking a class on leading worship, in which she learned practical skills and explored the theology of worship.

"I found I could bring that understanding [to worship at camp], whether I articulated it explicitly with my fellow song leaders or not," Heinrichs says.

While there is no direct link between CMU and MC Manitoba, Ken Warkentin, executive director of the area church, says he recognizes CMU's importance in CwM's ongoing ministry. "We appreciate the integrated approach to education that CMU provides," he says. "This approach infuses the intellectual and spiritual development of the student with Christian Anabaptist values and worldview."

For Heinrichs, working at CwM is "a way of serving the church in a meaningful way. . . . It's a good fit with a lot of what CMU is all about: community, the church and figuring out ways of being the church." ❧

Camp installs 'green' roof

Story and Photo by Hidden Acres
Mennonite Camp
SHAKESPEARE, ONT.

Last fall, workers installed a "green" roof over the Stonehouse meeting room at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. The old flat roof was in need of replacement and while it would have been easy to simply replace it with the same materials as before, the Hidden Acres board and staff are always looking for ways to better demonstrate "appreciation and care for the natural environment." After all, that is one of the organization's core values.

The camp staff is eagerly awaiting this coming spring when the sedum plants will spring to life!

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Last fall, workers installed a 'green' roof over the Stonehouse meeting room at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp.

envelope has been shown to be more effective than internal insulation. In summer, the green roof protects the building from direct solar heat; in winter, it minimizes heat loss through overhead insulation.

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We look forward to sharing the benefits of this decision for the next 35 to 40 years, and hope the excitement about "going green" catches on! ☘

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FOCUS ON CAMPING

'God has a vision for Shekinah that's exciting'

MC Saskatchewan camp appeals to churches for assistance in time of financial crisis

By DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
WALDHEIM, SASK.

It's not the kind of news Shekinah Retreat Centre executive director Nick Parkes likes to share with his constituency, and it's not the kind of news the constituency likes to hear. In a statement to Mennonite Church Saskatchewan dated Feb. 9, Parkes announced that Shekinah is in a deep financial crisis.

The trouble, says Parkes, began in 2015, when low enrolment in summer camp resulted in a \$30,000 loss. This, coupled with a \$40,000 shortfall in the fundraising dollars needed to make budget, resulted in a precarious situation at the end of the year.

Since then, the camp suffered further losses of potential revenue with the cancellation of significant, long-standing bookings. The most important of these is an art school that for many years has run a week-long event offering classes and workshops

in all different fields of art. At its peak, the art school attracted about 100 artists and used the entire Shekinah campus. Parkes estimates that this annual event generated between \$30,000 and \$60,000 annually for Shekinah over the years. Art school co-ordinators cited declining enrolment as a reason for the cancellation, says Parkes.

Another significant loss occurred when a provincial government group cancelled its annual booking, resulting in an additional \$10,000 loss. Parkes speculates that government cutbacks were behind the decision. "When we lost those bookings, we didn't have the cash reserves" to carry on, he says.

"We had to put it out there that we're in crisis," Parkes adds. "We are in danger of not making payroll for March." He sees the crisis as a warning for MC Saskatchewan.

Although Shekinah is owned and operated by the area church, only 1.5 percent of its total operating budget comes from the churches, and half of that 1.5 percent comes from one congregation. "What does it mean for us to be owned by MC Saskatchewan?" asks Parkes. The announcement, he adds, "is an appeal to our owners. We do need their support."

Although he knows Shekinah has many supporters within MC Saskatchewan, he also knows there is room for improvement. Some congregations "have expressed disappointment in the way Shekinah has presented itself in the past," says Parkes, suggesting that these churches felt the camp promoted itself as more of a nature camp than a Bible camp. Another reason may be a lack of communication between Shekinah and MC Saskatchewan. "The relationship between Shekinah and the churches is not as strong as it once was," he says.

But if the financial crisis is a warning, it is also an opportunity. Parkes believes firmly in Shekinah's future. "We're here because God called us to be here," he says. "I believe God has a vision for Shekinah that's exciting. I know God will provide." His confidence appears to be justified. In the week following the announcement to the churches, the camp received \$10,000 in booking deposits and donations. Although

SHEKINAH RETREAT CENTRE FACEBOOK PHOTO



Children and adults alike enjoy tobogganing on Shekinah's Quill Hill in the winter. These photos were taken at Shekinah's annual Winter Fun Day in February 2015.

only a fraction of what the camp needs to remain financially solvent, the timely arrival of this money has proven a great source of encouragement to camp staff.

Parkes says Shekinah's board of directors has a plan beyond the appeal to the churches to pull the camp through the

crisis and raise its profile both within the church and in the wider community. It includes participating in trade shows and local fairs, and communicating more intentionally with churches. He urges churches to book Shekinah's facilities for retreats and to utilize the grounds for outdoor

activities year-round. He also encourages individuals to volunteer at the camp. Those who are concerned that the cost of a retreat at Shekinah will negatively impact their church budget are encouraged to speak with Parkes. "We'll work something out," he says. ☺

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young voices

CAMP PHOTOS COURTESY OF MC MANITOBA



'I made great friends at camp.'



'I wanted to give campers the same great experience I had.'



'I returned to camp every summer because I loved everything about it.'

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Making a Mennonite

My experiences at a Mennonite camp led me to the Anabaptist faith

ANDREW BROWN

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

I did not grow up attending a Mennonite church. Growing up two hours southeast of Winnipeg in Piney, Man., I attended International Christian Fellowship, a small congregation that includes an interesting mix of people and theological backgrounds. It is an international amalgamation of American and Canadian churches on the U.S. border, officially under the Evangelical Church, led by a Dutch Reformed pastor and including people from Lutheran, Baptist, Evangelical and Mennonite backgrounds.

Every summer when I was growing up I attended Camp Moose Lake, a camp run by Mennonite Church Manitoba that is not far from Piney. I got to do cool activities, learn what it means to follow Jesus and grow in my faith with other children my age. My church was great,

followed some of them to Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg for my undergraduate studies. Between going to CMU and working at camp, I was beginning to develop a strong sense of identity within the Mennonite community.

I was drawn to the way that people lived out their faith as disciples, and how they were able to bring that with them into an academic setting at CMU. I did not know much about Mennonite theology, but the more I learned, informally at camp and formally at CMU, the more I began to identify with it.

Soon I was encouraged to join the leadership team at camp, filling the roles of nature instructor, Bible instructor and summer program director at Moose Lake. After the summer of 2012, I was bap-

I returned to camp every summer because I loved everything about it.

but it did not have many other children, so this was something new and awesome for me.

I returned to camp every summer because I loved everything about it. Once I was old enough, I signed up for the Servant Leader in Training (SLIT) program, and started serving at Moose Lake as a staff member. I wanted to become a counsellor so that I could give campers the same great experience I had.

I made great friends at camp and

tized there on a beautiful late-September afternoon with people supporting me from CMU, camp and my home church in Piney—the three major faith communities in my life.

This past summer I had the opportunity to be one of the directors of the SLIT program and train a bunch of awesome, young teenagers to become camp staff. It was a special experience to come full circle, from being in the program myself to leading and training the next group of

servant leaders.

For the majority of my camp career, my service was largely volunteer-based because my church in Piney was not able to support me financially. Last year, I really wanted to work at camp for one last summer, but I simply could not afford to volunteer for the four-month camp program without financial support.

Since I have been at CMU, I have been attending Charleswood Mennonite Church with friends. When I mentioned to them that my financial situation was holding me back from serving at camp one last time, they told me to ask church leaders if the congregation would sponsor me for the summer. After meeting with one of the pastors, he told me that the church was willing to do so.

I was so excited that I would be able to go back to camp. I was also extremely grateful that Charleswood was able to support me. To show my gratitude, combined with my desire to be a part of a Mennonite church community in Winnipeg, I transferred my church membership to Charleswood this past December.

I will be graduating from CMU in April,

and for the first time since 2009 I will not be returning to camp. CMU and camp have been two of the most important faith communities in my life, and not going back and being involved in the way I was before will be tough. In this time of major life changes and transitions, being a part of the great community at Charleswood means a lot to me.

Recently, I decided to become a youth sponsor at Charleswood, to become better acquainted and involved with my new church community, and to have fun with the youth in a camp-like setting.

Through the amazing communities at camp, CMU and Charleswood, God has continually provided opportunities for me to grow in my faith. I feel deeply blessed.

Thanks be to God. ☩



Andrew Brown, 22, is double majoring in history and political studies at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg.



'At camp, I got to learn what it means to follow Jesus.'

Cohabitation focus of discussion event at CMU

'We have to practise talking about this,' panellist says

BY AMELIA WARKENTIN

Special to Young Voices

What is the significance of youth pastors living with their partner outside of marriage? How do young people respond to this information? Sexuality, spirituality, marriage, cohabitation and the church community all pertain to this conversation. The reality of cohabitation questions long-held views of marriage.

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg faced this reality head-on during a panel discussion called "Cohabitation: The question of living

together before marriage." Held on Feb. 9, the event was organized as part of the university's Face2Face discussion series. David Balzer, associate professor of communications at CMU, moderated the discussion.

Rebecca Steiner, recruitment coordinator at CMU, and Paul Peters, a program manager with the university's Outtown Discipleship Program, represented the young adult voices on the panel. They shared five real-life stories to reflect the diversity in the relationships of young

PHOTOS BY JAMES CHRISTIAN IMAGERY



Rebecca Steiner and Paul Peters tell stories that reflect the diversity in the relationships of young couples.



Cohabitation is far more common in churches in the United Kingdom and Europe than it is in Canada, CMU professor Irma Fast Dueck notes.



Audience members offer questions and comments after hearing from the panel.



David Balzer, associate professor of communications at CMU, moderates the discussion.

couples today.

The stories Steiner and Peters told gave several views on living together. Cohabitation for some was seen as practical or economical. “Test driving the vehicle” before investing in a lifelong commitment just made sense. Yet even with justifiable reasons, those cohabiting expressed concern about what others thought of them. One couple expressed concern that their decision not to live together would brand them as old-fashioned or irrelevant with their friends outside the church. Another couple were in a committed relationship, received their church’s blessing to live together and had no intention of getting married.

Is it the sexual intimacy before marriage that makes cohabitation frowned upon by the church? This question was raised, but was never directly answered. If a couple is living together prior to marriage but does not have a sexual relationship, ought their living together be viewed differently?

The four panellists included John Neufeld, lead pastor at the Meeting Place, a Mennonite Brethren church in downtown Winnipeg, and Irma Fast Dueck, associate professor of practical theology at CMU.

After hearing from the panel, audience members delved further into questions of nuances and definitions. The conversation about cohabitation is not one that refers solely to young adults, Neufeld pointed out, as people in the church of all ages cohabit.

Cohabitation has many implications—cultural and perceptual being among those. Dueck has researched cohabitation and reflected on her findings. Since the 1960s, there has been an increase in the number of people cohabiting. In Dueck’s experience speaking to pastors in the United Kingdom, it is rare there for a couple to be married that has not already lived together. In many cases, young people believe it is a good idea to live with their partner before saying their vows.

When forming a Christian framework to view this information, Dueck said, “marriage has always been a moving target.” It is challenging to form a Christian response when, historically, the understanding of marriage has changed and evolved. The motives behind cohabitation and the

nature of the relationships themselves all need to be considered before placing judgment or making assumptions about a couple’s intentions or beliefs.

Following up on the “moving target” comment, audience member and CMU student Moses Falco probed the question: “What is, or isn’t, the significance of marriage today?”

Neufeld responded by addressing the connection between marriage and the church community. When a couple is joined in marriage the two are supported by their church community. This support is not always available to cohabiting couples.

Neufeld stated that there is also a connection between community and restoration. “We are working towards being something that is created in the image of God,” he said. “The restoration question is: ‘How do I re-align my life with what I truly believe?’”

To conclude the evening, the panel members were asked where they think this conversation will go in the next 10 years. Responses varied. Dueck, in looking at trends in the United Kingdom and Europe, believes cohabitation will become the “norm.”

The advantage the church in Canada has over the church in Europe and the United Kingdom when it comes to addressing cohabitation is that “we’re learning how to talk about sex better,” Dueck said. “That’s our resource, is that we have to practise talking about this.”

In this respect all the panellists agreed that the topic of cohabitation is not only relevant, but necessary, in further understanding the relationships between community, church, sexuality and marriage.

Owning the reality that cohabitation is happening is key for the church in addressing it, Peters said. “I think if we can own it, at least we can hopefully in 10 years be a place where [the church] is the safe community now to have the conversation, [and the church] is the safe place to enter into dialogue.” ☞

To view a recording of the discussion, visit cmu.ca/face2face.



Calendar

British Columbia

March 17: Pastors and leaders conference, "Leadership lessons from David," with Mark Buchanan, at Columbia Bible College, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

April 2: Early marriage seminar for the engaged or newly married, "Love for Life" led by Ken Esau and Claire Weiss at Columbia Bible College, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

April 9: "Journey of reconciliation: Listening to indigenous elders," with Chief Robert Joseph and Patricia Victor at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, 9 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Register by March 30.

April 15-17: MC B.C. Junior Impact youth retreat, at Camp Squeah, Hope.

April 16: Camp Squeah paddle-a-thon.

April 30: MC B.C. Women's Inspirational Day, "Wisdom in Legacy" with Ingrid Schultz at Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Alberta

March 18-19: MC Alberta annual general assembly.

June 4: Heritage retreat for those 50 and over at Camp Valaqua, Water Valley, from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Theme: "Refugees/in search of a homeland." For more information, call Hugo Neufeld at 403-201-4358 or e-mail hdneuf@shaw.ca.

Saskatchewan

March 11: Youth Mega Menno Barn Dance. For more information, visit smy.ca.

March 11-12: Mennonite Church Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions, at Osler Mennonite Church.

April 10: RJC Guys and Pies events, featuring A Buncha Guys.

Manitoba

Until March 26: Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg features "The Alchemy of Life" exhibition with works by painter Margruiete Krahn and composer Andrew Balfour, and "Typoems" with works by printmaker Norman Schmidt.

March 10-12: Mennonite Collegiate Institute, Gretna, presents the "Mary

Poppins" musical; 7:30 p.m. each evening and a 2 p.m. matinee on the 12th. Tickets available at mcblues.net.

March 11: Open house at CMU. For more information, visit www.cmu.ca/campusvisit.

March 12: Open house at Mennonite Collegiate Institute, Gretna, at 11:30 a.m.

March 13: Mennonite Community Orchestra presents its spring concert at the CMU Chapel, at 3 p.m., featuring works by Glinka, Jacob and Brahms.

March 18: Learn about CMU's Outatown Discipleship Program on campus. To sign up, call 204-487-3300.

Ontario

Until April 23: "As the women sew: Community quilts of Mampuján, Colombia," art exhibit at the Grebel Gallery, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo (grebel.ca/events).

Until Dec. 26: New exhibit at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo: "Conchies speak: Ontario Mennonites in Alternative Service"

March 14 or 15: Grandparent and Grandchild Days at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Same activities each day. For more information, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

March 19: Fundraising breakfast for MCC Elmira meat canning at Calvary United Church, St. Jacobs at 8 a.m. Hear the story of Jacob Reimer's family settling in northern Ontario.

March 30: "The Power of Partnership" dinner and evening with Stephen Lewis sponsored by MCC Ontario at St. George Banquet Hall, Waterloo, 6 p.m. More info at powerofpartnership2016.ca.

For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



Classifieds Travel

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way! Faith-based Hotel Tours to Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland and Ukraine, focussing on the Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage. More information online: mennoniteheritagetours.eu

Employment Opportunities

Altona EMMC

Employment opportunity

Altona EMMC located in Altona, MB is in search of a lead pastor. We are a vibrant church with an average of 450 people attending our dual Sunday morning services. The successful candidate would serve with our multi-staffed pastoral team.

For a complete job description visit <http://www.emmc.altona.mb.ca/>. Resumes can be submitted to pastor search committee chair Harv Toews email: harvjtoews@gmail.com

PEACE MENNONITE CHURCH

www.peacemennonite.ca

Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, British Columbia is seeking a **FULL-TIME LEAD PASTOR** with pastoral and/or other work experience.

We are a church with about 200 attenders. We intend to continue to grow and be an evangelizing influence for Christ in the multi-cultural community of East Richmond.

Applicants must have a strong commitment to Anabaptist beliefs centred on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. The candidate is expected to have proven skills in:

- Effective preaching and communication;
- Congregational care and counselling;
- Pastoral team leadership and developing lay leaders; and
- Working with and relating to a multi-cultural community.

This position is available starting summer 2016. Please send applications to pastoralsearch@peacemennonite.ca.

Vineland
United Mennonite Church

Employment Opportunity

Vineland United Mennonite Church invites applications for the half-time position of Associate Pastor of Family Ministries. We are located in a semi-rural community in the heart of Ontario's Niagara Peninsula.

We are seeking a person who is willing to develop effective programming and excels in building and maintaining relationships among the young adults, senior youth and junior youth within a multi-generational setting. The candidate will work alongside other leaders in the congregation as part of the ministries within the church. Start time is negotiable. More information at mcec.ca/content/job-and-volunteer-opportunities.

Applications to be submitted by March 31, 2016, through the office of:
Henry Paetkau
MCEC Area Church Minister
50 Kent Ave.
Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1

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Or by email to pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca

Why Mennonite education matters ... Discover CMU

“ What passes the faith on to the next generation? Connections with Christ-following mentors. Experiences in communities that know what it is to live in the Spirit. Opportunities to ask the big questions about God—with those mentors in that kind of community. In short, the very ways we experience God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in all their richness at places like CMU.

Peter Epp
Student, Graduate School of Theology and Ministry

“ Mennonite education matters to me. At CMU I've been opened to think critically and ask challenging questions in a supportive context. My professors have consistently encouraged me to keep the bigger picture in mind—to think through a theological lens as I study biology, chemistry, peace and conflict transformation studies and psychology. My Mennonite education is holistic. It connects my academics with my heart and my living, as I study, explore and practice what it means to live as a Christian, and a Mennonite, in our world.

Katrina Woelk
Student, Arts and Science



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