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Instilling faith at home

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EDITORIAL

No more closed doors

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

The pastors of Mennonite Church British Columbia got together recently in a closed meeting to discuss their response to the Being a Faithful Church 7 resolution passed at Assembly 2016. The resolution “creates space for some congregations and individuals to embrace committed same-sex relationships in a way not reflected in our *Confession of Faith*.”

Our *Canadian Mennonite* reporter was not permitted to attend, nor was anyone not classified as a “pastor.” We were told that, because of the sensitivity of the issue, the pastors would be more free behind closed doors to express themselves, and not to be intimidated by the church press or anyone else who might misquote or misinterpret what was said.

We learned second-hand that, while the discussion was congenial, the issue itself was—and is—contentious. Eleven pastors are threatening to leave the area church because, as they put it, “we aren’t leaving the area church; the church is leaving us”—meaning, of course, a departure from the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* that states that marriage is between one man and one woman.

We have no problem with dissidents taking issue with what was a majority vote in Saskatoon—277 delegates voting “yes” to the resolution and 50 voting “no,” with 23 abstaining. Disagreements are to be expected with this issue. The minority always needs to be respected on any issue, and their views honoured. And there is

nothing wrong with healthy debate. That is the way we wend our way to the truth. It toughens the fabric that makes us the dynamic faith community that we are.

What is not acceptable is that contentious discussions and debate go on behind closed doors. That is not in keeping with our “priesthood of believers” ethos, nor does it represent the transparency to which we all aspire as “priests” to each other. If there is serious disagreement among the pastors of MC

B.C., all members of all the congregations represented have a right to know the specific arguments and dynamics of the discussion. That’s called “accountability.”

And this is not to mention the low confidence in our *Canadian Mennonite* coverage, the assumption that somehow our reporter would not be objective and balanced in her reporting, but, rather, would “slant” the story to give a favourable view to one side over the other. As it turned out, she was forced to get all her information from the area church executive minister, which gave readers only one person’s view of the meeting—his.

This trend, if it continues in other settings, is both disappointing and dangerous. The government and the public media have higher standards of transparency. Sunshine laws allow for “in-camera” meetings of government officials for only five reasons:

1. THE SECURING of municipal property.
2. DISCUSSION OF personnel matters of

municipal employees.

3. DISCUSSION OF pending acquisition or disposal of property.

4. LABOUR RELATIONS or employee negotiations.

5. MATTERS OF litigation.

If a particular municipality goes behind closed doors for any other reason, the press has a right to sue. We don’t intend to sue MC B.C.! That wouldn’t be the Anabaptist way, nor would it contribute in any way to the unity of the church. We are far more concerned and hopeful that the pastors and congregations of MC B.C. will come together, despite their differences on this one subject, and realize how much more they have in common on other important faith issues.

There will undoubtedly be high anxiety during the next two years, as our denomination and area churches work through a restructuring process that serves the highest spiritual welfare of our particular union. We need to be patient with each other. Transparency and accountability are a part of that patient dynamic.

We will only fan the flames of disunity and separation if we insist on having our disagreements behind closed doors. And all of us—leadership and laity alike—have to work harder at trust issues to bring us through this transition with wholeness and hope, and the confidence that God is present among us, even at our low points.

And *Canadian Mennonite* is committed to high journalistic standards of reporting “open meetings” with fairness and balance. We hold a high view of the church and its ability to find its way through controversy with grace and transparency. We will do our best to honour our minority and dissident viewpoints, always mindful that our own communion was birthed by dissidents and “heretics” nearly 500 years ago.



ABOUT THE COVER:

‘At times we have been both inspired and overwhelmed by the parenting books that crowd bookstore and library shelves.’ With that introduction, Paul Heidebrecht and Carmen Brubacher go on to reflect on how they have tried to instill three Anabaptist Mennonite values—peace, community and service—in their four children. Their story begins on page 4.

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Guiding values:

Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom •

Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will

• Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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Award-winning
member of the
Canadian Church Press



Instilling faith at home

Raising Anabaptist Mennonite children in the 21st century

BY CARMEN BRUBACHER AND PAUL HEIDEBRECHT

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/ADL21



You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead. Teach your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise' (Deuteronomy 11:18-19).

At times we have been both inspired and overwhelmed by the parenting books that crowd bookstore and library shelves. We have also found useful advice, and a dauntingly high bar, in countless parenting blogs and social media posts. This abundance of resources is one indication that we live in a society that takes child-rearing very seriously.

As parents, we are expected to structure our lives around the best interests of our children. We should curate meaningful experiences and relationships, and advocate for them within the school and healthcare systems. Our identity as parents is intertwined with the successes and failures of our children as never before.

It seems to us that changing expectations around parenting must be impacting faith communities as well. After all, shouldn't we put the same level of intentionality and thoughtfulness into nurturing our children's faith as we put into every other dimension of their lives? Don't we want high-quality Christian education and youth program-

[S]houldn't we put the same level of intentionality and thoughtfulness into nurturing our children's faith as we put into every other dimension of their lives?

ming? Aren't we grateful that Mennonite churches are putting more of an emphasis on faith formation? Absolutely!

As we reflect on our own experience as parents, however, we are humbled to realize that our efforts to introduce and welcome our children into our own particular family of faith have often lacked the intentionality and thoughtfulness it deserves. While we have genuinely sought to embody the gospel vision in our life together as a family, our words and explicit teachings have typically been preoccupied with more mundane matters: Can't you solve the problem without yelling at each other? How much screen time have you had today? Did you put away the laundry?

In the midst of the busyness of life, we

wonder how we can make our faith as visible as an emblem on our foreheads. When do we actually teach our children our values, helping them to understand what motivates our decisions and our actions? Let's consider three values prominent in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition:

Peace

Although our family certainly struggles to be peacemakers, peace is one distinctive value that our children are quick to name. One key element to Christ's call to peace for us has been the rejection of violence, and there are innumerable ways we have underscored this for our children, including—predictably—exerting control over the books, movies and games they were exposed to when they were young. Another key element is to clearly place our loyalty and devotion to God above loyalty to political authorities and military might.

One symbol of this conviction when we lived in the U.S. was asking that our children be excused from reciting the Pledge of Allegiance at school.

Surprisingly, when we moved back to Canada we still felt like outsiders as we processed our children's experience of a Remembrance Day ceremony at their new school. Whether this was because we were living in Ottawa, our nation's capital, or because the perspective of the Canadian government and society had shifted during our absence, we struggled to know how to encourage our children to remember and acknowledge the pain and sacrifice war involves without glorifying or condoning it.

How, we wondered, could we encourage our children to think differently from their peers when there isn't an obvious or non-threatening rationale for why they don't fit in—such as being a citizen of another country?

One way we grappled with this question the following year was to join another family from our church in marking "Peace Day" on Nov. 11. Skipping out on school and work, we gathered together for what would go on to become a sacred tradition. We emphasized peace with creation while taking a hike, peace with others while eating food from a place in the world that was in conflict, peace with ourselves through artistic expression, and peace with God as we prayed and sang together.

As the clock approached the 11th hour during our activities, we often heard the sound of fighter jets flying over Parliament Hill—a reminder that we continued to be very much in the world even if we were not fully of it. For one day we and our children felt set apart, but we also felt a sense of connection to each other, and to others in our faith tradition far removed from us in time and space.

Community

Given that our family has moved on several occasions, a big part of our journey as parents has been seeking out connections with people in new cities, and centreing this effort on a community of faith has been our natural starting point. Indeed, as Anabaptist Mennonites, following Jesus has never been a solitary quest for us, and, whether it is through worship or fellowship, our children seem to have picked up on the value of community as a crucial way to connect to God.

Of course, parenting hasn't been a solitary quest for us either. Not only is an appreciation of community something we have tried to pass on, but it has been in community with others—such as our "Peace Day" friends in Ottawa—that our children's faith has been formed in significant ways.

Other "peak church" moments we have shared with our children include helping start a new Mennonite church in Milwaukee, Wis., a congregation that emerged out of a close community of friends. But there have also been low moments, occasions when, for example, the car ride home on Sunday begins with a child—or two or three—asking, "Why are we always the last ones to leave church?" rather than a parent asking, "What struck

you about worship today?"

There are many times when we have put our best energy into creating meaningful worship and fellowship experiences for other adults at the expense of our children. Times when extending hospitality to people beyond our family comes into tension with the preference of some within our family for time alone. Times when the cultivation of a strong sense of self has been undervalued. Building community that can touch the diverse needs of our entire family is a complex undertaking!

Service

A third value that is integral to the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition is service, and working with others to make the world a better place is an ideal we have also wanted our entire family to strive toward. Whether this is expressed by volunteering locally or overseas, or work opportunities in fields such as education or peacebuilding, we hope that our children gain an appreciation for the ways that their own well-being is tied up with the well-being of others. We also hope that their being steeped in myriad church-related agencies and institutions has made pathways to service clear and concrete.

Here, too, we recognize that there have been many occasions when we have fallen short. We have failed to explain our decisions to our children and to invite them into our discussions, and so much of what we have presumed to be passing along may remain a mystery to them. And perhaps it shouldn't be a surprise that service isn't compelling when it has taken priority over our family's needs. There was a long stretch, for example, when one of us was away for more than a month every year, missing mealtimes and bedtimes, school events and homework help, all for the sake of serving in the name of Christ.

We have also learned to appreciate the ways that our children lead us down new pathways as they live into this value. One instance was the gift of an extra-curricular school program that encouraged several of our children to raise awareness of social-justice issues in other parts of the world. Through projects such as an annual hunger banquet they helped shift

[A]s Anabaptist Mennonites, following Jesus has never been a solitary quest for us, and, whether it is through worship or fellowship, our children seem to have picked up on the value of community as a crucial way to connect to God.

their peers from a charity mindset to a justice one, and, just as importantly, they were empowered as leaders.

Did we explicitly connect this school-based program to being followers of Jesus? No. Was our, and our children's, involvement rooted in our understanding of Jesus' call to live justly in the world? Hopefully!

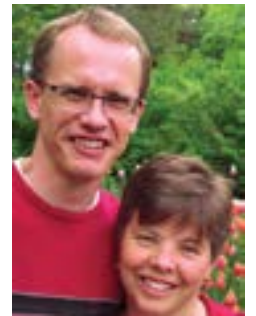
Questions seeking answers

Will our children choose to claim values such as peace, community and service as their own? Does it come down to our actions as their parents? Our words? Our ability to joyfully embody these values? Frightening thoughts! How much remains beyond our control as parents, regardless of how thoughtful and intentional we are? As important as faith formation is, surely it is not our work alone.

Since we are convinced that God is already at work in our children in ways that we cannot fathom, perhaps they will name values that have gone unnoticed by us. Ultimately, we hope that our children

experience the good news and then live it out in their own contexts, in ways that will surprise and challenge their parents, and call us all into even fuller lives as followers of Jesus. ❧

Carmen Brubacher and Paul Heidebrecht are invigorated by the joys and challenges of faith formation at home and in the larger church. They attend Waterloo North Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont., along with their four children.



❧ For discussion

1. What are the most important values for Christian parents to pass on to their children? If you were asked for parenting advice, what tips would you give?
2. Carmen Brubacher and Paul Heidebrecht write, "Our identity as parents is intertwined with the successes and failures of our children as never before." Do you agree? If this is true, what has changed in our society to make this happen? How have smaller families changed the dynamics of parenting?
3. What are some of the biggest challenges for parents in today's world? What role does the church play in helping to raise children? Can you think of new or better ways that the church could be involved?
4. Brubacher and Heidebrecht admit that parenting is challenging, given the demands of day-to-day life, and say it is frightening to think that it is their responsibility alone. Do you think all parents feel a sense of inadequacy? How might we encourage greater confidence in young parents?

—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.

✉ Philpott deserves better from us

RE: "PUT NOT your trust in 'princesses'" letter, Sept. 26, page 10.

I am irritated when the press and the public berate our government ministers for spending money on hotel rooms and taxis.

I have travelled for my work and, in my experience, it gets old very quickly. I have gone to cities for my work and never left the hotel where we had our meetings. I have been on flights where I tried to work on my laptop, only to have the person in front of me lean his seat back so I couldn't work, not to mention leaving the person next to me snoop on my spreadsheets.

The press and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation went after Minister of Health Jane Philpott for the money she spent on taxis/limos to get around in Toronto. She is in charge of a federal ministry with a

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FROM OUR LEADERS

'ReLearning' community

BRIAN BAUMAN

As a Mennonite baby boomer, going to church was family reunion, Christian faith and social life all rolled up into one tight-knit package. Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church was my community.

Community is a core strength of Mennonite churches.

Surviving and thriving came from a dependence on God and each other. Even though my tribe of Swiss German

Mennonites have prospered in a peaceful and just land for two centuries, church community remained tight and did not easily include "outsiders." Through half a millennium, one generation taught the next the strength and safety of community. Church is family. Community is everything.

The church's community, which has served us well, can also become a hindrance in today's Canadian society. Our closeness inadvertently can keep others



out. One of the consistent themes that Mennonite Church Eastern Canada staff heard from congregations during a listening tour was an appeal for help in connecting with their neighbourhoods. How can we be community for the people in our neighbourhood? It is an important question to ask. However, living out the answer to that question is not easy. Community rarely is.

Since we already know how to do community within the walls and family relationships of church, God invites us to take that strength into the streets of our neighbourhoods. Several MC Eastern Canada congregations have begun to "ReLearn" how to be community so they can better engage and include their neighbours in their own lives. In the midst of a trusted relationship, those unassuming questions and non-threatening conversations of faith have room to rise to the surface.

"ReLearning" how to be community is a process. I have not yet discovered

a paint-by-number program or the all-inclusive workshop that has the magic elixir to fix our inability to build relationships of depth in our neighbourhoods, where living out as well as telling our faith stories is non-threatening, unobtrusive and normal.

With guidance from 3DM Europe, the Missional Network and Forge Canada, groups of MC Eastern Canada leaders and congregations have set out on a "ReLearning" journey to discover what it means to be church for those in attendance and for those who may never be in attendance for Sunday morning worship. The journey is a little scary because we have no guarantees of success. Finding renewed ways of making disciples, being in mission and living in community each and every day is as Anabaptist and Mennonite as one can be.

Oh, in case you had forgotten, being a community of Christ followers was never meant to be easy. I pray that in the days and years to come we will have encouraging stories of inclusion to share with all of Canada.

May God continue to bless us in community!

Brian Bauman is MC Eastern Canada's mission minister.

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budget of nearly \$4 billion and more than 10,000 employees. I don't want her working on sensitive documents in coach class when she is on an airplane or in dirty old taxis.

I was also annoyed when former cabinet minister Bev Oda was condemned for the infamous \$16 orange juice. I can remember after a day of travel arriving at a

hotel late in the evening craving something more than just water, but with no convenience store in sight I drank a cola from the room's bar fridge at a cost of \$10. When work and meetings fill the day, saving money on orange juice isn't exactly the primary focus.

I firmly believe that, as Christians and citizens, it is our duty to treat our elected government leaders with respect and dignity, and to give them the tools they

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Our heritage is . . .

PHIL WAGLER

Our family was invited to an Indo-Canadian family birthday celebration. A one-year milestone, particularly for a son, is a monumental occasion in our friend's culture. The colourful dress, curried-sensations and dancing were a little overwhelming and invitingly beautiful for a white bloke like me who grew up in southwestern Ontario, where dancing was verboten and curry was "hurry" pronounced incorrectly.

Currently, we are enjoying befriending a Syrian family that is adjusting to Canada. There is much we appreciate about their way of life—like the importance of hospitality—and there are other things we experience with them that make us rejoice that our culture is different.

Culture is simply, as Erin Meyer says, the shared patterns of what we see, think and do. Every culture has been shaped in a variety of ways, and is both rich and poor. Consequently, every culture needs to be transformed by the good news of God's kingdom—which roots heaven's way of seeing, thinking and acting among the diversities of every people.

Do you despise your roots? Sometimes when you experience something new, it can cause you to turn against the water you swim in; and yet you can never really get out of that pool. In the end, we tend

to reduce cultural heritage to feigned nostalgia and surrender the essence of what shaped us to accommodate the new that seems better or inevitable.

Unwittingly, this is what has happened to many within the Anabaptist tradition of the church. We have embraced the secular-humanist values of our culture, and run the risk of abandoning what is central to our own story. To be clear, this has nothing to do with white European ways, modes of dress, four-part harmony or having an inexplicable soft spot for borscht or farmer's sausage.

The fact that we might reduce our heritage to such things actually underlines the issue, for the true heritage of Anabaptists is not food, dress or even relief work that might be done exceptionally well. Our heritage is firstly the story of Germanic people within religious Europe called to radical obedience by

to the gentiles for whose sake he willingly became all things (I Corinthians 9:22). Yet, as he speaks to Agrippa, he references his Jewish heritage as "our religion" (26:5), "our twelve tribes" (26:7), and "our people" (26:23). His roots are not despised, but at the same time he has been transformed by a new identity: "a servant and witness" of Jesus (26:16). In fact, he is so sure of his true identity that he appeals for those of his own people "to become such as I am—except for these chains" (26:29).

The invitation is to identity in Christ and life by the Spirit. The issue for Anabaptists in this day is to recover this true heritage. But this will not be found in our politics, our dress or even our good works. Our heritage, which the 16th-century Anabaptists only recovered again—as we must once more—is Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, and the one to



We have embraced the secular-humanist values of our culture, and run the risk of abandoning what is central to our own story.

Jesus' cross, resurrection, and invitation to surrender their lives for his glory and be led by the Holy Spirit regardless of the cost. This kingdom transformation of their culture literally changed the world.

In Acts 26, the Apostle Paul stands before King Agrippa. He who once ravaged churches is now seasoned as the one sent

whom every culture must bow—including our very own.

Phil Wagler (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca) serves the training of workers and churches for mission. He still loves a good summer sausage sandwich, but a dash of curry is increasingly welcome.

need to do their jobs effectively.

ERNIE ENGBRECHT, LETHBRIDGE, ALTA.

✉ Ukrainian survivors rebut 'Aryan' claims

RE: "BECOMING ARYAN," July 4, page 12.

As Second World War Mennonite refugees from Ukraine, we would like to offer more information on the dissertation outlined in Ben Goossen's Viewpoint column. We find his research to be imbalanced, as it includes some historical facts and details, but ignores other relevant information.

Yes, Mennonites in Ukraine made choices such as

(Continued on page 10)

GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

Expressing love with food

BARB DRAPER

Fred Redekop often reminded his congregation that preparing food for others who may be struggling with illness or a death in the family is a way of showing love and care.

So when it came time to say farewell to him after 25 years as our pastor, we wondered what food was appropriate for our farewell meal. Agreeing on a menu proved to be challenging, but after many conversations we finally decided to honour our out-going pastor with a faspa, a traditional "Russian" Mennonite Sunday meal.

When Fred arrived in our very traditional "Swiss" Mennonite community of Floradale, Ont., there was only one other "Russian" Mennonite in the congregation. Even Fred's wife has deep Pennsylvania-Swiss roots. Over the years, Fred became accustomed to our way of doing things and graciously ate the food we served at potlucks. However, he never lost his nostalgia for the food of his childhood and adolescent years, and sometimes reminisced about the smell of his mother's baking.

Fortunately, the other "Russian" Mennonite in our midst knew what was appropriate for a proper faspa and we planned for cold cuts, salads and Jell-O, as well as the distinctive bread rolls known as zwieback. Using her mother's



However, [Fred] never lost his nostalgia for the food of his childhood and adolescent years, and sometimes reminisced about the smell of his mother's baking.

recipe, a few volunteers each baked several dozen while our experienced caterers ordered the right amount of meat and made the Jell-O.

As we discussed dessert possibilities, I remembered that years earlier, when our women's group was hosting a traditional "Russian" Mennonite meal, Fred's mother made the journey from Niagara especially to teach us how to make platz. Her recipe had a thin layer of coffee cake covered with fruit and crumbs. After digging through my recipe drawer, I found the hand-written instructions that I adapted to fit my cookie sheet.

The village of Floradale has a bakery owned and operated by Old Order Mennonites, and they agreed to make several pans for the church's farewell meal for the Redekops if we provided the recipe.

It seemed bizarre to have horse-and-buggy Mennonites, who can probably trace all their lineages back to 17th-century Switzerland, making this traditional "Russian" Mennonite food, but at the same time it felt right to have different kinds of Mennonites working together. It was a way that the community could participate in saying farewell, and it showed that the differences between Swiss and Russian Mennonites are probably superficial.

Although my instructions to the bakery mentioned that authentic platz uses raw fruit with lots of crumbs, they followed my method and cooked the fruit before

spreading it in the pan. I guess that makes it "Swiss Mennonite" platz.

We had a great farewell event for the Redekops. Perhaps they appreciated the zwieback more than the platz, but hopefully the whole family was able to get the message that we were trying to say "We love you" with food.

Barb Draper is Canadian Mennonite's editorial assistant.

Visit canadianmennonite.org/platz for the recipe.



(Continued from page 9)

retreating with the German army and, for the most part, becoming German citizens from 1943 to 1944. The historical context of these decisions is, however, not included. The entire backdrop of a World War with opposing totalitarian regimes forcing survivalist decisions is not referenced.

The choices we made in Ukraine were not motivated by Aryan, National Socialist or racist theories, but, rather, were based on the Stalinist extermination of Mennonites from 1937 to 1940. This oppression and persecution was not unlike that which our religious group faced in earlier historic times.

Further, we confirm that we had not heard of Aryanism and other racial theories until well after the conclusion of the war. Many of us remember

Litzmannstadt. We were X-rayed for tuberculosis purposes, but we cannot recall any blood work done there. It was a simple and relatively quick process.

Goossen's research has been based upon previously written primary sources. However, oral history is central to the multifaceted complexities of any historic topic such as this. He does not cite any personal interviews conducted with those who actually lived through the upheaval in Ukraine when decisions were made.

Therefore, we would invite Mr. Goossen to travel to Leamington to hear our history and relevant facts.

JOHANNA DYCK, LEAMINGTON, ONT.

On behalf of Second World War Mennonite refugees and survivors.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Lebold—Coen Jaxon Davey (b. June 3, 2016), to Ryan and Anastasia Lebold, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Witzel—Benjamin Jon (b. Sept. 14, 2016), to Ashely and Jon Witzel, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Marriages

Baergen/Neufeld—Alyson Baergen (First Mennonite, Edmonton) and Aaron Neufeld (Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.), at Toronto United Mennonite, Oct. 8, 2016.

Becks/Horst—Trevor Becks and Abigail Horst (St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.), in Kitchener, Ont., Oct. 1, 2016.

Bell-Graham/Wideman—Jody Bell-Graham and Trevor Wideman (St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.), in Kitchener, Ont., Oct. 1, 2016.

Friesen/Paulson—Thomas Friesen and Terri Lynn Paulson, Osler Mennonite, Sask., Sept. 10, 2016.

Klassen/Schroeder—Steven Klassen and Lyneda Schroeder (both of Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon), Aug. 20, 2016.

Deaths

Bowman—Ruth (nee Snyder), 89 (b. April 11, 1927; d. Oct. 11, 2016), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Fischer—Harry A., 82 (b. March 13, 1934; d. Oct. 14, 2016), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Klassen—Gertrud (nee Strichow), 89 (b. April 25, 1927; d. Oct. 7, 2016), First Mennonite, Calgary.

Pauls—John, 75 (b. July 12, 1941; d. July 22, 2016), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Weber—Norman R., 94 (b. Sept. 27, 1922; d. Oct. 2, 2016), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

A moment from yesterday



A 1978 car wash at Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. Pictured, Don Wiens, right, soaks Adrienne Wiebe, left. Car washes, bake sales, quilt raffles, pie auctions, coffee houses, work days, cook books, and chocolate and cookie drives are methods that churches and church-related institutions have used to raise funds. There are so many good causes to financially support.

Text: Conrad Stoesz / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies

Photo: Mennonite Brethren Bible College Photo Collection / Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies



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VIEWPOINT

Colombia's road to peace

PABLO STUCKY

A plebiscite was held in Colombia on Oct. 2, for the citizens to approve or reject the peace agreements reached between the government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) after four years of negotiations. A variety of groups participated in this process: citizens' groups, international advisers and, most notably, victims of the armed conflict.

The transformative power of the process was evident in the bilateral ceasefire and FARC's commitment to meet their objectives through dialogue, as opposed to arms. It was also seen in a photograph involving Ivan Márquez, chief negotiator for FARC, as he apologized to victims, one of whom hugged him in an emotional act of reconciliation. When asked to describe Márquez in one word, the government's high commissioner for peace said simply, "Transformed."

Even so, when the accord was put to a vote, 62 percent of the population abstained, and of those who voted, 50.23 percent voted "no" and 49.76 percent voted "yes." It did not pass. In those regions of the country that have been most affected by the five-decade conflict, the majority voted "yes." In the regions less affected by the war, the tendency was to vote "no."

At the time of the vote, everyone stated that they wanted peace. However, those who opposed the agreements would say, "Peace, but not on those terms." The accord was intensely debated in all quarters, including the churches, and certainly among the Anabaptist churches belonging to Mennonite World Conference (MWC). Given the strong campaign to reject the accord put forward by some leaders of the largest evangelical churches, and given the close outcome of the vote, it is difficult to ignore the crucial impact of the evangelical churches on the result of the vote.

PHOTO BY MARION MEYER



José Ricardo Torres, a Colombian Anabaptist peacemaker, is pictured after a peace march in Cali, Colombia. The flag says, 'March of yes and no, the path towards peace.'

Those who voted "yes" saw the agreements as a means to achieve disarmament in favour of nonviolent political action, peacebuilding efforts that are free from stigma or threat, restorative justice, priority to the victims, and proposals that address structural socioeconomic realities in a way that can bring about well-being for the country and the most vulnerable parts of its population.

Among those who voted "no," the concerns were that transitional justice is equivalent to impunity, the participation of insurgent leaders in politics is unacceptable, the demobilized guerrillas will receive too many benefits, rural reform will negatively affect the economy, and that the preferential treatment for women and for those who identify as LGBTQ—both of whom were seen as having been particularly

victimized—introduces a gender ideology and constitutes an attack on the family. This last issue was of great concern for many in the churches.

As churches, we are faced with the question, "How is it possible that we could have come to such different conclusions based on the same Bible and professing the same lordship of Christ?" It is also an opportunity to grow in our capacity to approach critical topics in such a way as to strengthen unity—rather than polarization—in light of I Corinthians 12:7 that affirms "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

As Anabaptist churches in Colombia, and members of MWC, God has given us the grace to grow in our capacity to worship God and work together without denying our differences. Certainly, we will all continue to pray for peace and join our efforts, each contributing according to the light that has been given them. And in the juncture of the current peace process, we seek to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Now that the plebiscite is over, the government has created working groups, and is meeting with political parties and groups opposed to the agreements to consider revisions that can lead to a national consensus. Citizen movements are mobilizing to insist that the war must not resume and are asking to be included in the process. FARC has reiterated its commitment to using words as a political tool, instead of arms.

All this will mean returning to the negotiating table to address substantive issues. Achieving consensus will not be easy. If successful, it could mean an agreement that is more inclusive of the whole population. We will remain firm in our work for peace in Colombia and for salvation, trusting in the promise of Mark 4:26-29 that the seed grows and we will reap the kingdom of God. ☿

Pablo Stucky is MWC's Latin America-Andean regional representative.

WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Making diamonds out of us

BY PHYLLIS RAMER

Often in the morning as I awake, God gives me songs which become prayers. Usually, it's just a phrase or tune that causes me to search out the rest of the song and leads to a time of worship in the shower, or as I wait for the kettle to boil. I praise God for this gift. It was not always so.

Many years ago I had recurring bouts of depression. It was a pretty black time in my life. Mornings were the worst. I used to cry because it was morning, and struggle to get out of bed and see the kids off to school. Then I'd return to bed, curl up in a fetal position and weep. Even getting into the shower was difficult although I knew I'd feel better afterwards. Often it took several minutes standing outside the shower with the water running before I could step into the cleansing water.

Even though this was a time of darkness, discouragement and hopelessness, God blessed me by putting a



scripture song or Bill Gaither gospel tune in my head each morning when I woke, songs that kept me from complete hopelessness and suicidal despair, and eventually led to the following experience:

One day, while trying to cry out to God in prayer, I felt I couldn't even pray right. I was a failure even at that! Like the paralytic in Luke 5, I was paralyzed and felt useless. Believing Satan's lies—that I was a terrible mother, wife, friend and Christian—how could Jesus still love me when I was such a failure?

Suddenly, peace surrounded me, protecting me from the lies of the enemy, and within me I felt the Father say, "That's okay. Rest in the prayers of your friends."

That day, those holy words echoing the healing of the

*God still gives me reminders
and encouragement
through 'morning songs.'*

paralytic put a new song in my heart, and began the process of calling me back to wholeness and joy, wrapped in a cocoon of God's love and held securely in the prayers of my friends.

Do I still rely on the prayers of my friends? Yes. But I also remember quite clearly when Jesus told me it was time to pick up my bed and walk, time for me to pray again, both for others and myself.

God still gives me reminders and encouragement through "morning songs." And quite often I'm led to share the song or a prayer with others in person or by email; or just to pray in the Spirit as needs and people are brought into my heart and mind. That's the gift God gives to me: Allowing words of encouragement and love to flow through me to others as I give praise: "He gave me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning / The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness / That we might be trees of righteousness / The planting of the Lord that he might be glorified" (based on Isaiah 61).

And oh yes, my morning song today was "Diamonds" by Hawk Nelson: "He's making diamonds, diamonds out of us." ❧

Phyllis Ramer (peramer@hay.net), pictured with her husband Jim, is coordinator of the Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. She attends Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite Church.



The Lord is my provider

In her blog (bit.ly/fun-with-psalm-23), April Yamasaki, pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., encourages readers to paraphrase Psalm 23 using a specific letter of the alphabet. Phyllis Ramer chose the letter P.

The Lord is my provider.
I possess all the provision I need.
He persuades me to prostrate myself in plush pastures.
He pilots me beside peaceful waters.
He purifies my soul.
He points me along perfect paths for his precious name.
Even though I proceed through perilous passages,
I will not panic because of the perceived posers
of the Prince of Darkness.
Your presence permeates my person.
Your parenting and protection provide for my well-being.
You prepare a party for me in the presence of my perpetrators.
You pour promises into my soul.
My cup pours over profusely.
Surely your probity and your passion will pursue me,
all the days of my pilgrimage.
And I will permanently reside in your presence forever.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

MC B.C. divided on BFC7

Same-sex resolution sparks calls for both unity and separation

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

“Who is MC B.C.? What kind of family are we and what kind of family do we want to be?”

These questions were posed by Garry Janzen, the area church's executive minister, to a gathering of 200 billed as “Hearing each other with regard to the BFC [Being a Faithful Church] 7 decision in Saskatoon,” held at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford on Oct. 22.

To which he answered: “We are committed to believing the best of each other, committed to being a safe space, committed to showing the world that it's possible to move with love, grace and dignity.”

In his introductory remarks, Janzen asked all to pray for wisdom, guidance and grace, to be respectful of one another, and to hear God's wisdom as the group discussed a potentially divisive issue: the resolution passed at this past summer's MC Canada assembly. That decision, passed by an 85 percent majority, created space for MC Canada congregations to differ from each other on the issue of committed same-sex relationships within the church, putting them at variance with the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* that affirms only one man/one woman marriage.

Participants were mixed randomly for prayer and discussion around tables, then they were each given two minutes there to share their own feelings on the issue and how their congregation might be leaning, if known.

An open mic time followed, revealing a wide variety of opinions on what the BFC7 resolution would mean for MC B.C. congregations. Several people spoke in favour of upholding the traditional view of marriage, while others spoke in favour of wider inclusiveness, with many voices calling for

compassion and understanding:

- **“IT SADDENS** me that we've spent so many years on this. Every human has choice. The Bible is clear on the subject.”
- **“IF GAY** couples are committed to Jesus Christ, let them serve.”
- **“IF, BECAUSE** of human perspective, we say that gay marriage is biblical, if the choice is to go our separate ways, I'd support that.”
- **“EVERY DECADE** has its issue. If the best we can do is drive people away from the church, do we want to be part of that? My appeal is: God help us to be inclusive.”
- **“SO MANY** are theologizing from our own experience exclusively. This is the Word of God. Let us seek truth with unity around that truth.”
- **“THIS HAS** affected every denomination. We need to be more discerning of each other. . . . Err on the side of mercy than of judgment.”

A group of 11 pastors then publicly presented a response to BFC7 on behalf of their congregations' leadership: “We believe that with BFC7's adoption, MC Canada has fundamentally changed our *Confession of Faith* and has adopted a new hermeneutic that we are opposed to, and is incompatible with our MC B.C. covenant [signed in June 2007].”

They outlined two possible options:

1. **“SCRAP** MC B.C.'s re-covenanting document of 2007—essentially what BFC7 does—and adopt BFC7, and then make our decisions based on that.”
2. **OR, “WE** believe that our MC B.C. covenant is clear that it is those who distance themselves from the *Confession of Faith* who are distancing themselves from



Gerd Bartel of Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, left, John Klassen of Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship in Vancouver, and Betty Loewen of Langley Mennonite Fellowship discuss possible paths forward as Mennonite Church B.C. deals with disagreement concerning MC Canada's passage of the Being a Faithful Church 7 resolution affirming same-sex marriage.

MC B.C., and called to step out of formal relationship with us.”

Their document states that the national adoption of BFC7 is a faulty interpretation of Scripture and that, in adopting it, MC Canada distanced itself from the common *Confession of Faith* and MC B.C.'s covenant. Therefore, the pastors propose that the area church maintain a unity separate from that of MC Canada.

Participants then brainstormed other options in moving forward:

- **HOLD A** referendum of all MC B.C. members.
- **ACCEPT BFC7** and allow LGBTQ members, but not accept pastors in same-sex relationships or who perform same-sex marriages.
- **DELAY A** decision with more time for processing.

Gerd Bartel of Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, urged the body not to rush into a decision when he said: “[A proposal] coming to us at this time is too early in our process. If we can work together, there must be compromise in that. There are absolutely no easy answers.”

Another gathering is called for Jan. 21, 2017, to determine what proposal to bring to the area church annual general meeting in February. ☸

/// Briefly noted

Donna Entz has 'a lot of sun in her bones'

Donna Entz, an outreach worker for Mennonite Church Alberta, has many friends in the North Edmonton communities in which she lives and works. Manna Ali, a member of the Somali community, is among them. She told a gathering at First Mennonite Church on Sept. 23 to celebrate MC Alberta's



Donna Entz is pictured with her award from A Common Word in Edmonton.

North Edmonton ministry, that Entz started English-as-a-second-language classes and a community league, organized a Somali seniors group, and helped children with homework. Of Entz's energy, Ali speculated, "Maybe because she lived in Africa for 30 years, she has a lot of sun in her bones!" Speakers from the more than 14 groups assembled told stories of sharing faith, friendship and the practical help that Entz is fostering among the varied communities she engages. Salwa Kadri of A Common Word Alberta said during the presentation of an award to Entz, "When we [different faith groups] get together, we see hope." A practical expression of that hope was voiced by Omar Yaqub of the Islamic Family and Social Service Association, who spoke about how Entz and her husband Lorne instigated cooperation between Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and his association in helping refugees. "It has been a tremendous blessing to work together with MCC!" he said.

—STORY AND PHOTO
BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

'Social media: The good, the bad and the beautiful'

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

Selfies just might be God's idea. Remember, you are smarter than your smartphone. What if virtue went viral?

With these three ideas front and centre, David Balzer, assistant professor of communications and media at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, spoke to multiple audiences of students, faculty, staff and parents on the topic of "Social media: The good, the bad and the beautiful" during Spiritual Emphasis Week earlier this fall at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener.

In classes and other venues students immediately began to think about how they take selfies. "What would it feel like to always be asked before you were included in a selfie?" was one question to which students connected. The objectification of people into images, instead of being with the people one was with in person, was another discussion, as was the challenge to not only be consumers of media, but creators as well. As faithful people, Balzer said there is a lifelong calling to bring the biblical story into media use and production.

During a parents, students and pastors session on Sept. 28, he delved into two texts from Genesis that contrasted human co-creation with God. In Chapter 2, where humans are invited to name the animals, God is still the creator and the naming brings honour to God. But in Chapter 11, the builders of the Tower of Babel do so to "make a name for ourselves," trying to reach the heavens on their own without God.

Those present entered into a lively discussion about the place of smart phones in the lives of students and their parents. Many students named parental overuse of smart phones as their example. "I'll put my phone down as soon as my parent does," was one sentiment. Balzer and parents gave each other permission for phone or screen fasts, for an hour or a weekend, to make room for real conversation and



Paul Heidebrecht, left, the director of Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement at Conrad Grebel University College, discusses David Balzer's presentation on social media with him during Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's Spiritual Emphasis Week on Sept. 28.

interaction with their children.

Fascinating in Balzer's presentation was the comparison taken from Harold Innes, who looked at the effect of technology on society, economics and politics. Innes, who died in 1952, looked at how writing enabled the Roman Empire to exist and flourish for centuries with information being able to be passed over large distances. Then the invention of the printing press in the 1400s made wide dissemination of ideas possible.

Both of these were pivotal moments of change in western civilization, much like the present, when change is happening faster than most people can absorb. To illustrate this, Balzer showed a humorous video of someone making the change from scrolls to books and needing an "information technology" helper to do so. //

To view the video, visit bit.ly/medieval-helpdesk.



'Everyone has something to offer'

Welcome Inn celebrates half-century in Hamilton's North End

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
HAMILTON, ONT.

Welcome Inn, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in September, was developed as a Christian service agency in the depressed North End of Hamilton in 1966, when Herman Enns, pastor of Hamilton Mennonite Church, cast a vision to establish a place of refuge and care.

Key components of Welcome Inn for many years were the Voluntary Service (VS) workers who came from all over North America to build, do renovations and run programs. Some, like Mark Diller Harder, originally of Toronto and now a pastor at St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church, found their life partners while there.

Shortly after Hugo and Doreen Neufeld began their 18 years as co-directors in 1971, worship services developed out of the weekly Bible studies, and Welcome Inn became an official congregation in 1980.

Jen Kellner the current executive director, and a member of the Commons, a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregation in Hamilton, notes that the values of the centre have not changed over the years. A key one is that "everyone has something to offer," she says. No matter someone's health, finances or family situation, they are valued as full members of the community.

Tim Epp, a former VSer and board member, notes that the congregation closed in 2009 due to an imbalance between those with more needs and those with more to offer, resulting in leadership burnout.

A happy outcome, though, is that many Welcome Inn members have found other church homes. Donna Hill and Marion Rutter have ended up at Hamilton Mennonite. They, too, note that the essence of Welcome Inn has stayed the same. "Grace, the place runs on grace," Rutter says. "It's inclusive, and volunteers [from

the community itself] run many of the programs."

Last year, more than 350 volunteers served almost 4,000 participants.

A Brethren in Christ Meetinghouse congregation is also partnering with Welcome Inn at this time.

But the community and its needs are changing. With the advent of a Go Train station for Toronto commuters in the community, it is becoming harder for locals to find housing. Partnering with Indwell, that bills itself as "a Christian charity that creates affordable housing communities that support people seeking health, wellness

and belonging," Welcome Inn is looking at building on its current site, with the community centre occupying part of a complex that serves needy seniors with affordable housing.

On Sept. 24, a party featuring food, music and memorabilia ran in the centre's yard. The following day, a worship service with Hugo and Doreen Neufeld sharing was held.

Kellner sees the centre continuing to do the same work it has for years: meals, listening to and advocating for those in need, validating people's intrinsic value and working from an explicitly Christian set of values. She thinks about "being the church in this day . . . the church as body, rather than destination, gathering in love with truth."

Long-time participants like Doreen Hoekstra note, "Welcome Inn, from the beginning [in 1966] was a church," implying that the Christian values and way of working was obvious, even when it wasn't a congregation. This is Kellner's hope for the future as well.✂



Jen Kellner, left, executive director of Welcome Inn in Hamilton, Ont., visits with Hugo Neufeld, former co-director and co-pastor, and Chris Cutler, community relations advisor to the mayor, after Cutler presented a plaque at the Sept. 24 community barbecue in honour of the centre's 50th anniversary.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Faith formation for leaders today

VIRGINIA GERBRANDT RICHERT

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Spending half of Canadian Thanksgiving in the U.S. away from my family is not how I usually like to plan things. But this past summer as I was thinking through my fall schedule, the speakers and themes from the Deep Faith conference that was being planned at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., kept coming back to me and drawing me in. And I'm glad I went.

The three-day conference in early October focussed on faith formation, both explicit and implicit, but the question that garnered the most discussion was around the major challenges facing leaders in the church today as they seek to nurture deeper faith in their congregations, families and individuals.

For the workshops I chose a broad scope, from young to old, including children's spirituality, rituals in the church for all ages, late-life spiritual formation and intergenerational practices. I was reminded of the need to trust that the Spirit of God is at work in the lives of the people that we are engaging—whether they are 3 or 93. And that the Spirit is active and at work in their lives. The purpose of leadership in these settings is drawing other's attention to God, to physical reminders of God, to re-framing activities to pay attention to God, and to rituals that will assist with these things.

We were also reminded of the importance of bringing the various generations in the church together for faith formation, since the young need the old and the old need the young. This helps us to see that faith formation does not just end when people graduate from high school, but it is a life-long journey.



One of the struggles that was shared at the beginning of the conference is that many people in our churches don't feel like they are equipped to be leaders or mentors to others along their

faith journey. Part of this comes from too much comparison in our churches to those who seem to have it all together, and part of it stems from too harsh judgment on ourselves. The speakers and workshop leaders were good at encouraging grace in all areas: grace when things don't work out the way you wanted, when the children get too loud during the time of silence, and grace when ideas seem to fall flat. In all things, grace is needed with ourselves and with others.

What struck me the most out of the whole conference was Rachel Miller Jacobs' plenary session. She entitled it "Practising *aphiemi*." *Aphiemi* is the Greek word for forgiveness, but she didn't want to be limited by our English understanding of the word. Her talk sought to encompass the whole of the Greek understanding of *aphimeis*: that of letting go, releasing, forgiving and sending away.

Forgiveness can fit with faith formation, but at a conference on helping empower leaders I was pleasantly surprised to hear it. Miller Jacobs began by pointing out the many ways that we offend and hurt one another in the church, because that is what happens in community. She went on to talk about how to deal with harm in ordinary time, how to evaluate our own feelings and involvement, and how to work towards reconciliation. Nothing is a given, and being realistic and humble were important points that she made. Sometimes the best way to deal with a hurt is to "send it away," put it

PHOTO BY WALT WILTSCHKE



This visual image of lilies on water drew Deep Faith participants into worship each day.

at the throne of God to be judged by the one who loves all people best.

Going deeper in our faith and encouraging faith formation in our congregations has so many levels and facets to it. Paying attention and involving all ages is vital. Respecting the Spirit of God already at work in individual lives is a must. And spending time as leaders learning and speaking about forgiveness in our community needs to be at the foundation of our faith. I am hopeful that these insights and conversations continue to grow beyond the Deep Faith conference.

More than 100 people from across the United States and Canada gathered for the event that grew out of conversations at a 2014 Mennonite Camping Association convention, which led to participants envisioning a first-of-its-kind conference "by faith formation workers, for faith formation workers," according to planning team member Elsie Rempel of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. ☞

Virginia Gerbrandt Richert is assistant pastor of Berghthaler Mennonite Church of Altona, Man.

Much to be thankful for at Emmaus House

Intentional community still alive and well at 70 Cornish Avenue

STORY AND PHOTO BY MATTHEW VEITH

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

As brown leaves fall outside of a red 105-year-old brick house near the Assiniboine River, family, friends and travellers are gathered inside for Thanksgiving at Emmaus House, an intentional community for university students in Winnipeg's West Broadway neighbourhood. For Rod and Susan Reynar, who are welcoming students to live with them for a third year, it isn't just a pause to be grateful for the joys of the past, but also the challenges of the future.

When the Reynars moved to Winnipeg from Olds, Alta., in 2013, they found encouraging voices all around them—something that continues to this day. “I don't think we can underestimate the value of friends from various circles coming and expressing curiosity and affirmation,” says Susan. “It's brought us so much encouragement.” When asked what they have personally given up to embark on this, she

laughs and says, “Control of our own home environment.”

The work itself—mentoring students in embracing lives of simplicity, intentionality, service and relationship—is a lived dialogue and something of a risk. “We've noticed that people have relatively few connotations about what intentional community is,” explains Rod. “So how do we begin to set a tone whereby people can respectfully live with each other? The challenge is to [do that] without being overly prescriptive.”

Part of accepting that challenge has been leaning into the spiritual depth of the everyday and mundane. “You come together for food, but it seems like all the different days come together in one ending,” says Vanessa, a fine arts student at the University of Manitoba, of her second year at Emmaus. “When you gather all of these people together, their stories become rich.”

To reach this togetherness as a household amidst life's chaos depends on a vulnerability that is a perennial challenge. “It's a significant step when people are willing to be transparent with the other,” explains Rod. “In the world of social media, it's characteristic that we construct a persona that we want to project. When you live closely with people, it becomes difficult to maintain and wear that persona.”

Kelsey, a physics student at the University of Manitoba, has been at Emmaus for three years, and has seen a new side of himself. “I've gained a great respect for hospitality,” he says. One of the many things that has changed is being willing to invite someone over for supper and get to know them better.”

With a grin, Anika, a social ecology student at Canadian Mennonite University also going on three years at Emmaus, chimes in: “With both Kelsey and Vanessa, I remember in the beginning you were both followers, both looking to other people, and asking questions. Now, both Kelsey and Vanessa are leaders. . . . That's a huge growth, and you see that in people.”

Descriptions of Anabaptist life and expressed faith often—and rightfully—are painted with superlatives. But it seems that intentional community is a cross carried a little differently: Restless individuals being reborn again and again as community in the daily death throes of their egos, presumptions and facades. It would be hard to walk through the doors of 70 Cornish Avenue without feeling the depth of what's going on. If we do indeed find God and the face of Jesus in the mundanely beautiful company of one another, home is indeed holy ground. ☞

Matt Veith is a guest Manitoba correspondent for Canadian Mennonite. He also works as a freelance graphic designer in Winnipeg, where he attends Home Street Mennonite Church.



Thanksgiving dinner 2016 at Emmaus House. Every year, Rod and Susan Reynar host a large turkey dinner, inviting friends and family and whoever they in turn invite over.

CANADIAN MENNONITE



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

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

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Ted Giesbrecht wins local law association award

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Ted Giesbrecht of the Kitchener, Ont., law firm Giesbrecht, Griffin, Funk and Irvine has been honoured by the Waterloo Region Law Association with the 2016 Coulter A. Osborne Award, given to lawyers who practise law “with integrity, courtesy and beneficence.”

There have been three time periods in Giesbrecht’s legal work.

In his younger years, he worked primarily in real estate and some criminal law. His work as a defence counsel allowed him to use “alternate dispute resolution,” diverting young offenders from jail into repayment of damages and community service.

This exciting time was followed by a long period during which he became an expert on adoption law and anti-child trafficking. In some ways, it began when he and his wife Karen adopted their children Matthew and Amy. He became an adoption licensee with authority to place children for adoptions. Working through that gave him a handle on the law, and he was asked to help formulate the Standards and Guidelines for Ontario Adoptions in 1995.

Four years later, he was appointed to a quasi-judicial position allowing him to adjudicate appeals brought by prospective adoptive parents who were challenging adoption decisions of children’s aid societies. Of all his written decisions, only two were appealed to a panel of three Supreme Court judges, and on both occasions his decisions were upheld.

When a new text, *Canadian Child Welfare Law*, was in the works, Giesbrecht was asked to write the chapter on adoption law.

It was this knowledge that led BDO, a trustee in bankruptcy, to approach him when Imagine Adoption, an international adoption agency in Cambridge, Ont., was

restructuring its debt, leaving 46 children in Ethiopia who were to be adopted by Canadian families in dire straits.

Giesbrecht flew to Addis Ababa to first get the children food and drink, and then to get them connected with their families. Fifteen families were there awaiting the final paperwork and were on their way in a week because of the work of his office in Kitchener and the Canadian high commissioner in Kenya.

Of the other 31 children, all but one eventually made it to Canada. The last child had serious health problems and, through the help of Canadian sponsors, was placed in an educational institution

with medical support.

The 2010 earthquake in Haiti took him there to interview birth parents in an effort to locate birth certificates and obtain new consent forms lost in the devastation. He also helped in Guatemala, Ukraine, South Africa, Kenya and South Sudan, where he helped those drafting legislation on adoption and anti-child trafficking.

But as Giesbrecht has passed into his 60s, his focus is changing more to estate planning, wills and a continued work on elder abuse. The latter includes working with social services and religious groups to protect elders from physical, mental/emotional and financial abuse, on some occasions working to get back what someone charged with protecting an elder had stolen.

Through it all, Giesbrecht has remembered Jesus’ words in Matthew 25:40: “If you have done it to the least of those who are members of my family, you have done it to me.” His “Rejoice” devotional guide and Bible are in the top drawer of his desk, there to remind him of his Christian commitment and roots. ☸

Ted Giesbrecht of the law firm Giesbrecht Griffin Funk & Irvine poses in his Kitchener, Ont., office with the Coulter A. Osborne Award, given by the Waterloo Region Law Association in April to lawyers who practise law ‘with integrity, courtesy and beneficence.’



PERSONAL REFLECTION

The journey of a feather

PETER OLIVER

THE MICAH MISSION

Among many aboriginal people the eagle feather communicates respect, humility, courage and wisdom. Several years ago, I received an eagle feather as a sign of appreciation for my ministry at the prison in Saskatoon. I was honoured but troubled because the feather did not feel like it belonged to me. I brought my concerns to Harry Lafond of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation and executive director of the Saskatchewan Office of the Treaty Commissioner. He explained, “You are the carrier of the feather. One day you will meet the feather’s owner and you will give it to him.”

I would like to tell you about my meeting with the person to whom the feather belongs, but first want to revisit the events of June 26, 2002. On that day, two men broke into Jo Oliver’s home and brutally assaulted her. The incident left in its wake a tremendous amount of fear and pain. Arrests and convictions followed. About two years later, the older of the two men was designated a dangerous offender, the most extreme designation any person can receive in the Canadian justice system. Once designated a dangerous offender, the person is rarely released from prison.

Jo Oliver is my mother and I work at the Micah Mission as an integration and development chaplain. With support from Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, we promote restorative justice by reaching out to ex-prisoners, but we have never tackled the realities experienced by victims of crime.

The adage “lead by example” spoke to me, so I contacted Alan Edwards from Restorative Opportunities, a program sponsored by Correctional Service Canada. I asked him to set up a mediated encounter with Mervin, one of my mother’s assailants. He was the man who was designated a dangerous offender.

Numerous meetings, calls and emails followed, as Edwards worked with my family and Mervin.

One of the first steps we took was to ask Mervin to write his autobiography. He willingly shared his story: 14 foster care homes before he was 12; no father; years in prison; aboriginal and German heritage. He enjoys reading! The young offender who accompanied Mervin on the night of the break-in had taken his life a few years later. Bits and pieces of the story began to form a coherent narrative.

As my family came to know more about the process and who Mervin was as a person, we decided a meeting with him in the penitentiary was exactly what we wanted. Edwards explained that they always engage two mediators in the kind of encounter we were planning.

At our request, the meeting format was a sharing circle. The non-confrontational nature of the circle allowed us to tell our stories, hear Mervin’s story, speak our truths and weep. Mervin listened, did his best to answer some questions, and apologized.

During a short intermission in our sharing, my family was given some private time to talk about our experience. We all agreed that Mervin had received us into his life, and we felt the sincerity of his apology.

When we returned to the circle, I shared the story of the feather and the guidance I had received. I told Mervin that I believed the feather belonged to him. Handing the feather to my mother, I invited her to give it to him. Then in an act of reconciliation, Mom crossed the room, offered Mervin the feather and gave him a hug.

A few weeks later, Mom received a letter from Mervin. He expressed his gratitude for the meeting with my family, and spoke of an inexplicable joy that had

PHOTO COURTESY OF PETER OLIVER



The eagle feather once given to Peter Oliver has found its home in the hands of a dangerous offender named Mervin.

come over him following our encounter.

The people with whom we share the story say we have acted courageously. That may be true, but I am more impressed by the fortitude of the man who owned up to his part in assaulting my mother. When he joined the circle he was utterly alone, a man condemned, disregarded and forgotten. He had no idea what we would say or how we would treat him. He came simply and vulnerably. He spoke sincerely, and took responsibility for his behaviour. He apologized without making excuses or bemoaning the punishment of prison, and, in doing so, he demonstrated more humility, courage and respect than I have seen in a long time. I believe the feather has found its home. ☸

Peter Oliver’s story first appeared in a longer version in the Prairie Messenger.

GOD AT WORK IN US

Peacebuilding with ordinary people

BY HENRY NEUFELD

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Julianne Funk is a peacebuilder in Bosnia, the northern region of the country of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and at the University of Zurich, where she teaches religion as well as peace and conflict studies. Based in Zurich, she travels to Bosnia regularly.

A graduate of Wheaton (Ill.) College and the Katholieke Universtat Leuven, Belgium, where she earned a doctorate, she became interested in the Bosnia-Herzegovina situation in the late 1990s while working at a Bosnian refugee resettlement program in Chicago. She was puzzled: How could religion be at the core of their violence?

Volunteering with the U.S.-based Church of the Brethren in Bosnia spawned her interests in the country and its recent troubled history. She speaks highly of Mennonite Central Committee's work in the Balkans.

Funk, who spoke recently at Vancouver's Menno Simons Centre, credits her Mennonite heritage of peacebuilding as a significant foundation for her work, meaning refusing to return evil for evil. "The strategy of considering ordinary, often powerless people, is inspired by a Mennonite belief that peace cannot be imposed," she said.

Peacebuilding involves two key questions: How do we remember? How do we deal with the past? Working with local grassroots organizations, she fosters cooperation between groups, and tries to move them from avoiding each other to collaborating. Mutual encounters, getting religious leaders together, relationship-building, sharing stories and facilitating dialogue are basic to Funk's work in Bosnia.

Her research focusses on coexistence, trauma and healing. The Bosnian, Serbian and Croat divisions that resulted from the 1992-95 war are based mostly on religion. "In Bosnia, religion is seen as divisive and many peace initiatives avoid religious issues," she said, adding, "[M]y religion denotes honour and yours is corrupt and menacing," is a common attitude.

"The conflict resulted in three losers and no winners," Funk told the audience. "Religion was the key element in the conflict." Mass violence and genocide were common; in one detention camp more than 8,000 men and boys were killed.

The war's end brought a negative peace, she said. Negative, because relationships on the ground remain fragile and often hostile.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CURTIS FUNK



Julianne Funk is pictured in the hills above Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Funk attended a Bosnian mosque for a year. "I found community there. I experienced care from Muslims," she said, explaining that Bosnian Islam is special and is very open to the "other." In that, it differs from Arab Muslims.

The values of respect, honesty, fairness and kindness cross boundaries of religious traditions. "One Muslim believer told me . . . that it is not strange for him to be associated with Christianity; in fact, he sees his identity as partly Christian," she said.

Most of Funk's peacebuilding work with local non-governmental organizations involves localized, low-level religious leaders. "Peacebuilders need credibility, they must be authentic, trusted," she said. "Their expertise is recognized. They tend to be locals. . . . They do not leave when the going gets tough."

Rejecting the notion of a "quick fix," her work results in small but solid alternatives to violence within the sphere of faith. "There's a need to outdo violence with goodness, love and mercy," she said. ▮

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Mario Marchand licensed toward ordination

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
LORETTEVILLE, QUE.



Mario Marchand, left, is blessed by Henry Paetkau, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's area church minister, at Marchand's service of licensing toward ordination at Église Mennonite Ichtus in Loretteville, Que., on Oct. 16.

Church planter Mario Marchand responded to being licensed toward ordination on Oct. 16 by reciting his vision for the church in Québec: "Jesus, the centre of faith; the community of faith, the centre of life; and reconciliation, the centre of our mission."

Église Mennonite Ichtus, the church plant of Marchand and his wife, Line Lemieux, meets in St-Ambroise de Loretteville Roman Catholic Church in the northern suburb of Québec City, where upwards of 20 gather each Sunday to worship and study together. The licensing service was the culmination of a two-year process of testing and reflection involving the pastor, the congregation and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Bernard Sejour, MC Eastern Canada's mission catalyst in Ottawa and Québec, is impressed by the growth in maturity of the congregation over the past year.

In his sermon, Henry Paetkau, MC Eastern Canada's area church minister, focussed on God building and equipping the church to grow in maturity through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. "Ichtus is God's building project," he said. Begun in 2012, the congregation took a step of growth and maturity in licensing Marchand, according to Paetkau, "not elevating him, but 'officializing' what they are doing as a community."

Ichtus has yet to apply for "emerging" status in MC Eastern Canada.

Marchand came to a personal faith through the ministry of Joliette Evangelical Mennonite Church that was planted by Harold and Pauline Reesor in the late 1950s as part of the then Mennonite Conference of Ontario's outreach into French Canada. But unlike many of the evangelical groups in Québec at the time, this work included what some called the social gospel, caring not only for souls saved but also for lives cared for.

Marchand and Lemieux are full of

hopes for their congregation, as God has been bringing people to Ichtus. Close to the Huron community of Wendake—the current name for the Huron-Wendat reserve—the congregation has been contacted by several indigenous Christians, and is actively ministering to them.

"The Mennonite church can be a different 'colour'" within the Christian community in Québec, says Marchand, working for peace, justice and reconciliation.

Lemieux hopes that Ichtus can bring people to freedom in Christ, both to come to know Christ, and to know him at work in their lives.

But there are challenges as well. "Just to be a Mennonite in Québec is difficult," says Marchand, noting their proximity to a military base. And to plant a church in Québec, which is still throwing off the "social contract" of the past, which saw the government and Roman Catholic Church working hand in glove on healthcare and education, is difficult. The province experienced one of the fastest processes of secularization in the 1960s and '70s, with church attendance slumping to very low levels very quickly.

The "quiet revolution" pushed religion out of the public sphere, and people moved out of the churches. "The church had put too much pressure on people," says Marchand, noting that to name oneself a Christian and a pastor invites comparison with the Roman

Catholic Church of the past, of which many do not have good memories.

"How to reach the Québécois?" Marchand wonders. "How to bring the message? How to not be seen as weird?"

And so Ichtus does things like singing and playing Québécois songs in the local park on St. Jean Baptiste Day, the Québec national holiday, handing out the words of the songs so others can join in, with a note about the congregation attached. It is planning to sponsor a "blanket exercise" that shows the effects of colonization on the Indigenous Peoples in Canada, in an effort to reach out to its indigenous neighbours.

Ichtus is happy to be meeting in a Roman Catholic building, and leaves the door open to its services and meetings, so people can look in and discover they are not weird.

Still, their experience is that, while many come occasionally, not many become engaged in the mission of the church. But "Ichtus is their church," say Marchand and Lemieux, who hope to disciple all who come. ☸



Pictured with Mario Marchand, third from left, at his licensing toward ordination service at Église Mennonite Ichtus in Loretteville, Que., on Oct. 16, are, from left: Bernard Sejour, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's mission catalyst in Ottawa and Québec; Henry Paetkau, MC Eastern Canada's area church minister; Felix (his son) and Lily-Ann Marchand; his wife, Line Lemieux; and son Joel Marchand.

ARTBEAT

BOOK REVIEW

Church growth the result of actions, not words

The Patient Ferment of the Early Church.
Alan Kreider, Baker Academic, 2016, 321 pages.

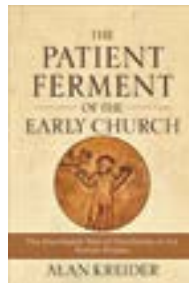
REVIEWED BY LORNE BRANDT

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Recently, I have become curious about the life of the early church. What did its members believe? What did they preach and what did they practise? More to the point, what did they do that made the church grow? We read of no great missionaries spreading the Word after the time of the apostles. Yet the church grew to the point where, as we know, its erstwhile nemesis, the Roman Empire, succumbed to it in AD 313.

Alan Kreider comes to the early church with questions similar to mine. Fortunately for us, he has done the homework necessary to provide some answers to these questions. In doing so, he enlightens us with findings from his study of early-church writings that are at once reassuring, but also quite challenging.

The reassuring part for some of us who might feel guilty about our poor showing when it comes to bringing others into the church through verbal witnessing, is that this was not how the early church grew. How the church grew was through the witness of the believers' deeds, their behaviour—or "habitus," as Kreider refers to it. This is where the "patience" of the title comes in. The first Christians took very literally the biblical injunctions taken from the Sermon on the Mount and other practical teachings of our Lord and the apostles. And it took time and contact with unbelievers to bring this out. New birth was not the result of a dynamic message or a few well-chosen or



rehearsed phrases.

So do our lives reflect these teachings in such a way as to make those whose lives we cross notice? Does our behaviour, what we have to say about our prayer life and our worship, interest our co-workers, our families and friends enough to make them want to

look further into who we are, into what we "have"? All of this appears to be what "worked" for the early church.

What might have helped make this "work" is the seriousness with which the early church took preparation for baptism. The church seems to have quickly developed a structure of teachers, catechists and sponsors who rigorously instructed the candidate for baptism in how the Christian life is lived. Only when the candidates' lives really showed the sought-after change were they deemed worthy of admission to the community and the privilege of partaking in the eucharist and worship with their new family.

Does this sound like we have made things too easy these days? Our current "user-friendly" approach seems to focus first on making our non-Christian neighbours feel accepted and feeling like they belong. Then we hope they will ask the questions that many of us are, in any case, ill-prepared to answer, but that we hope will provide that much-desired opportunity to help them become one of us.

Some of us might want to defensively protest that that was then and this is now. I would encourage you to read *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*, and even the early fathers—and mothers—on their own. There might be more than we would care to admit that we could learn from a study of these writings. ☿

MENNOMEDIA PHOTO BY MERRILL MILLER



Members of the new Mennonite Worship and Song Committee take a break at their first meeting, held from Sept. 22 to 25 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va. Committee members include, from left to right, front row: Bradley Kauffman, project director; Saejin Lee; Karen Gonzol, editorial assistant; Katie Graber; Adam Tice, text editor; Emily Grimes; and Sarah Kathleen Johnson, worship resources editor; and back row: Amy Gingerich, editorial director for MennoMedia; Cynthia Neufeld Smith; Mike Erb; Tom Harder; Darryl Neustaedter Barg; Paul Dueck; Benjamin Bergey, music editor; and Anneli Loepp Thiessen.

PHOTO COURTESY OF
CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE



Elizabeth Rogalsky Lepock sings while **Ben Bolt-Martin** plays cello. Together with **Erica de la Cruz**, piano, and **Linnea Thacker**, violin, they performed a noon-hour concert, 'Tableaux & Trio,' at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., recently. What made it particularly special was that all four performers were former directors of Ontario Mennonite Music Camp: Bolt Martin from 1999 to 2001, Thacker and Lepock as joint directors from 2012 to 2015, and de la Cruz in 2016.

/// Briefly noted

'Mountain of God' songwriter presents new interactive worship songbook

WINNIPEG—As leaders and musicians from across North America discuss the shaping of a new collection of music and liturgies for Mennonites to share, Winnipegger Phil Campbell-Enns is releasing a "video songbook" of his own. Widely known for penning "The Mountain of God," he is also associate pastor of youth and young adults at Bethel Mennonite Church. This new online collection of 22 videos with free chords and sheet music aims to present music he's written over the years in a format that individuals and congregations can access and learn together easily. In 2013, Campbell-Enns was encouraged by a friend and former pastor of Bethel, Rudy Baergen, to revisit and compile some of his unreleased music as a sabbatical project. He invited Bill Derksen, a former music professor from Providence College with connections to Bethel, to take part in transcribing sheet music. "He really pounced on it," says Campbell-Enns with a chuckle. Campbell-Enns's wife Heather jumped on board, setting up a clean functional website where the materials are now hosted. To check out Campbell-Enns's "Video Songbook," visit philcampbellenns.com/.

—BY MATTHEW VEITH

PHOTO COURTESY OF PHIL CAMPBELL-ENNS



Phil Campbell-Enns shot and produced all the videos for the songbook in his workshop.



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EVI announces workshop tour

Emerging Voices Initiative is holding conversations on the future of Mennonite Church Canada, with regional meetings scheduled for November and December. canadianmennonite.org/evi-tour



Huxman completes role at Grebel

As Susan Schultz Huxman leaves Conrad Grebel for a new position at EMU, she and her father reflect on the role of presidents serving Mennonite educational institutions. canadianmennonite.org/huxman-completes-role



Like a 'biblical mustard seed'

Valleyview Male Chorus looks back to its beginnings in a local congregation and celebrates 20 years of song. canadianmennonite.org/mustard-seed



MCC calls for 'big tent thinking'

Recognizing the diverse viewpoints of the Anabaptists who support MCC's work, Don Peters encourages members of these groups to put aside their differences to address global needs.

canadianmennonite.org/mcc-big-tent



FOCUS ON MISSION & SERVICE

'Yesterday we lost everything'

Hurricane Matthew devastates Caribbean island of Haiti

Mennonite Central Committee
PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI

When rushing water of the River Gris, overflowing with rain from Hurricane Matthew, washed away the houses and possessions of Sarditren Dete and Antovan Enit, it destroyed their livelihoods as well.

"Yesterday we lost everything: our chickens, our pig and our garden. This is how I eat, this is how I feed my children, this is how I keep them safe at night," Dete said.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) representatives Paul and Rebecca Shetler Fast listened to their stories on Oct. 5, the day the rain from a Category 4 hurricane stopped falling in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti.

The women were recipients of assistance by Sakala, an MCC partner in Cité Soleil, one of the poorest parts of Port-au-Prince. MCC delivered relief kits full of hygiene supplies, blankets, water-purification tablets and food to families there.

The visit was just the beginning of

MCC's response to the damage caused by Hurricane Matthew in the Caribbean nation. Many emergency supplies were already in place, enabling MCC to respond quickly with its partner organizations.

Sitting right at sea level, this vulnerable neighbourhood, where most people were already struggling to get by each day, suffered the effects of high winds, rain and a storm surge.

"We know that these first supplies are a stopgap and in no way address the long-term challenges that this community and others in Haiti are facing right now," said Rebecca. "But it is important to us to be present in these communities right away, to bear witness to the effects of the hurricane, and to provide what immediate assistance we can."

Other MCC emergency distributions in Port-au-Prince took place over the next two days as MCC partners, staff and local government officials carried blankets and

MCC PHOTOS BY PAUL SHETLER FAST



Hudson Reny-Jean stands beside the River Gris that washed away homes in Cité Soleil, one of the poorest parts of Port-au-Prince. He says the water purification tablets that MCC distributed were 'a blessing' because the flooding had affected the drinking water in community wells.

relief kits to 220 families living in remote areas of the mountains of the Artibonite Department, two-and-a-half hours northwest of the capital. An MCC disaster assessment team is also at work in the Artibonite, where high winds, heavy rain and flooding damaged houses, killed livestock and destroyed crops.

The flooding raises concerns about increased incidents of cholera, a disease carried by contaminated water that typically peaks in the fall rainy season. It has already infected more than 800,000 people and killed an estimated 10,000 since cholera came to Haiti in 2010 following a massive earthquake that killed more than 300,000.

In spite of the hurricane damage, MCC's 20 years of reforestation work in the mountains around the town of Desarmes in the Artibonite may have saved lives, according to Monfleuri Previlman, a municipal leader for agroforestry coordination, who said, "Before this work, a hurricane this size would have resulted in large landslides and floods on the plain, and many, many



Sarditren Dete and Antovan Enit, residents of Cité Soleil, one of the poorest parts of Port-au-Prince, stand where their houses used to be before they were washed away by Hurricane Matthew along with their possessions, livestock and gardens.



Elise Quiring of Riverview, N.B., left, an MCC service worker in Haiti, and Rebecca Shetler Fast from Pennsylvania, right, an MCC Haiti representative, help to load relief kits onto a truck that took them to MCC's partner Sakala in Cité Soleil, a neighborhood in Port-au-Prince.

lives lost. This is the type of durable disaster prevention that really works; lives were saved because of it."

MCC's response in the Artibonite and Port-au-Prince areas will continue to unfold as the impact of the storm becomes clearer. Haiti's interior ministry announced on Oct. 7 that the death toll had reached 500 people, the majority in the southwest part of the country.

While longer-term responses to Hurricane Matthew's catastrophe are still developing, immediate help is appreciated by those whose lives have been turned upside down.

Paul was struck by the importance of water purification tablets to Hudson Reny-Jean of Cité Soleil, where well water is contaminated by the flooding, saying, "He held these three-cent tablets in his hand and just kept repeating, "These are such a blessing; these are such a blessing for our community." ❧

Donations to support MCC's response in Haiti can be made at mcccanada.ca/hurricane-matthew, by calling 1-888-622-6337 or by mailing cheques to any MCC office.



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Empathy is learned through experience: Elise Hartin

Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, B.C.

Go online and you quickly realize that the world is not always a friendly place. People make snap judgments and post harsh comments. Vicious mockery is shockingly common. How do you respond to a world like this?

If you're Elise Hartin, you focus on teaching young adults to excel in empathy. She is a faculty member in Columbia Bible College's Caregiving and Counselling Department. She works part-time as a clinical counsellor, supporting women who are victims of abuse. The rest of the time? She's in a classroom, helping her students develop the ability to withhold judgment and, instead, listen, understand and

feel compassion for others.

"Whether students are on track to become counsellors or not, I believe that becoming empathetic helps them in every relationship," Hartin explains.

"They learn to love people more deeply and show them compassion."



Empathy isn't something a student can learn from a textbook. This is why her "Intro to



Elise Hartin

(Continued on page 30)

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Reaching out to help other people

Student, activist, actor, karate instructor and Sunday school teacher aims to make a difference

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

For Johise Namwira, being a student and being an activist go hand in hand.

During the 2015-16 school year, the 19-year-old was involved with a variety of different groups on campus at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. She served as the women's liaison on the Arts Student Body Council, ensuring that all of the group's events were inclusive of women. Namwira was also a member of the Justice for Women student group, as well as the university's Oxfam group, which organizes events to raise awareness about global poverty and injustice.

Namwira is taking gender studies and criminology. This year, her course load prevents her from being as involved on campus as she was last year. Still, she is currently an editor for the undergraduate journal "Feminist and Queer Review," a teaching assistant, an employee at an organization that works with adults and children with disabilities, a Sunday school teacher and a karate instructor at Karate for Christ, a dojo that her father started.

"I have to have a very, very strict schedule with all of the things that I do," Namwira says.

'Instead of returning the mean or vicious things that [people] do to me, I'd rather make it into something productive—take their comments and make it motivate me to keep doing things.'
(Johise Namwira, Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship)

"I love to reach out and help other people," she says.

Namwira, who attends Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, adds that her Christian faith informs the way she lives her life. Her faith aids her in her activist work, and she chooses to turn the other cheek whenever she experiences backlash for her efforts, or is the target of racism.

"Instead of returning the mean or vicious things that [people] do to me, I'd rather make it into something productive," she says. "Take their comments and make it motivate me to keep doing things."

She credits karate with giving her the confidence and drive to succeed. Namwira began training in the martial art at the age of 6. One of her instructors told her that for every thousand people who start training, only one person will stick with it long enough to earn a black belt.

"From 6, I wanted to be that one black belt," she recalls. "I just always like to set the bar high in whatever I do."

She reached her goal five years later, after training predominantly with men who were older and larger than she was. "I had

(Continued on page 28)

young
voices

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHISE NAMWIRA



Being involved on campus at the University of Manitoba is important to Johise Namwira.



Johise Namwira, pictured with two of her karate students, Ester Nyelele, left, and Ephemie Sumaili, says karate has given her the confidence and drive to succeed.



Johise Namwira's acting credits include a role on the CBC adventure-crime show, The Pinkertons.

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



Johise Namwira, 19, was born in the Congo.

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to be tough," she says. "It's probably why I'm so determined to persevere."

As a young child, Namwira also began acting. She appeared in a number of theatrical productions in Winnipeg before making the jump to TV. Her recent credits include appearing in *Un musée pour l'humanité*, a French-language documentary about the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, as well as acting in an episode of *The Pinkertons*, a CBC adventure-crime show that takes place in the 1860s.

For Namwira, acting is a form of activism. "One of the things that I really like about acting is it reaches out to people," she says. "I like the fact that, although it might be for entertainment purposes, I [can] add a pinch of something that will make people think after the play is over."

Namwira has also written dramas. Two years ago, leadership at her church asked her to write a play for its Good Friday service. The 17-year-old then-aspiring lawyer took the story of Jesus' crucifixion and turned it into a modern-day courtroom drama that addressed current issues such as racism and indigenous-settler relations.

Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Namwira moved to Canada with her parents and three younger brothers

when she was 2. For her parents, it was important that family members maintain their Congolese heritage. She and her siblings grew up speaking Swahili and French, eating traditional food and singing the songs that their father grew up singing.

She is thankful for those influences. "Knowing where I come from is, I think, the most important in knowing where I'm going to go," she says.

Namwira graduated from high school a year early, and is currently in her third year of an honours degree. She aspires to do human rights-related work after she graduates in 2018.

"I've always had a huge love for travel and culture," says Namwira, who, in addition to English, Swahili and French, also speaks Spanish. "I would love to have a job that allows me to travel, because I love travelling and meeting new people."

She credits the people around her with supporting her as she works to achieve her goals and to make the world a better place.

"Graduating [high school] at 17 was not easy," she says. "Starting university at 17 was not easy. Being in the honours program at 19 is not easy. But I'm a very determined person," she says. "I've always had parents who encourage me, and my friends are supportive. My church family, too." ❧

VIEWPOINT

Give a little means a lot

Lessons I've learned from talking with more than 125 volunteers

BY AARON EPP

YOUNG VOICES EDITOR

COURTESY OF WINNIPEG HARVEST



Organizations like Winnipeg Harvest rely on volunteers like Brooklynn Deslandes.

Two-and-a-half years ago, I took over a long-running column that appears in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Each week, I write about a different volunteer in the city.

The column is simply called "Volunteers," but I think my editors should re-name it "People who make

Aaron feel lazy." Often, the people I'm profiling are altruistic all-stars with seemingly superhuman abilities to give. I don't have the demands on my time that many of them do, and yet I'm not out there knitting scarves for needy school children, coaching people with disabilities to compete in sports, or serving

meals to homeless people downtown. The people I interview give and give and give, and then, it seems, they give again.

I have interviewed more than 125 volunteers at this point, and it has taught me a lot about the importance of serving in one's own community.

Something that the people I interview typically say is, "I get way more out of volunteering than I give." Some have met new people and made new friends as a result of their volunteering.

Joanne Zahaiko, a 37-year-old woman who has spent the past 22 years volunteering as a coach with Special Olympics Manitoba, told me how she had met all of her close friends through volunteering with the organization. "I'm getting friendships, I'm getting training, I'm getting pure enjoyment," she says. "The relationships that I've made with the athletes and the people I've met is incredible. It's become a social thing for me."

For some people, volunteering has allowed them to learn new skills. Joanne Machado, a 49-year-old woman who uses some of her vacation time each year to build houses with Habitat for Humanity, got to learn how to use a hammer and a skill saw, as well as how to frame a house. "It's really hard to explain, but I feel selfish that I can take a week's vacation and go and build a house," she says.

Numerous people have told me how volunteering positively affects their mental health.

Sangeetha Nair, who is the founder of an anti-bullying campaign that makes presentations to students at grade schools, was bullied as a young person and attempted to commit suicide five times between the ages of eight and her mid-20s. "Volunteering really helps your mental health," she says. "You spend your time in a positive way and you get all that positive energy from people you are helping. That really keeps you going and makes you feel that you're needed."

Another person says something similar. Carson Hoy is 64 years old and is on long-term disability because of significant spine issues that have left him unable to work. Still, he drives an hour-and-a-half to Winnipeg from the acreage he lives on near the U.S. border so that

he can volunteer at an inner city soup kitchen every Friday.

Hoy says that his various ailments can take a toll on his outlook, but he does his best to remain positive. "I go down in the dumps, but I get rid of those feelings as quick as I can," he says. "And the best way to get rid of those feelings is to serve somebody a little bit."

It's not just adults who are featured in the column. I've written about a 12-year-old who collects backpacks filled with personal hygiene products, bottles of water, granola bars and warm clothing for the homeless; a 13-year-old who organizes an annual campaign that collects thousands of dollars of baby formula for Winnipeg Harvest, a non-profit that feeds hungry Winnipeggers; and a 15-year-old with spina bifida who volunteers his time as an ambassador for an organization that helps Manitobans with disabilities.

Writing the column continually reminds me that we all have something to contribute. The people I feature may seem superhuman in their ability to give, but really they are just ordinary folks who have found causes they feel passionate about.

"Volunteering is really important," says a woman who spoke with me recently. "You don't have to put in a ton of hours. . . . Even if you can volunteer an hour a week or two hours a week, it helps." ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF WINNIPEG HARVEST



Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and make new friends.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HABITAT FOR HUMANITY MANITOBA



People can learn new skills when they volunteer with organizations like Habitat for Humanity.

Promotional Supplement



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(Continued from page 26)

counselling" classes are focussed on experiential learning. Students interact with art work and poetry created by people struggling with mental health challenges. They divide into counselling dyads and practise key skills: active listening, probing for understanding and careful observation. It's not long before transformation happens.

"I watch as student perspectives change from curiosity and fascination, to empathy and care," she explains. It's a transformation that thrills her because she's well aware that her students are future workers who will serve in the church and community.

As a Columbia alumna herself, Hartin knows first-hand that the equipping these students are receiving will transform many lives. And perhaps make the world a kinder place.

/// Calendar

British Columbia

Nov. 20-27: Theatre of the Beat, MCC and Trinity Western University present "Forgiven/Forgotten," a play about the varied responses of a community that learns an ex-con will be serving his parole in their midst; (20) Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church, Chilliwack, 10:45 a.m. (20) Highland Community Church, Abbotsford, 7 p.m. (24) Kelowna First Mennonite Church, 7 p.m.; (25) Killarney Park, Vancouver, 8 p.m.; (26) Cedar Park Church, Delta, 7 p.m., (27) Saanich Community Church, Victoria, 11 a.m.

Nov. 26,27: Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir, at 7:30 p.m.: (26) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (27) Knox United Church, Vancouver. Offerings to Menno Simons Centre.

Dec. 4: Emerging Voices Initiative fall 2016 workshop on Future Directions initiatives, at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford. For more information, email jcornelsen1@gmail.com.

Alberta

Dec. 3: Emerging Voices Initiative fall 2016 workshop on Future Directions initiatives, at Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary. For more information, email jcornelsen1@gmail.com.

Saskatchewan

Nov. 26: MC Saskatchewan fall leadership assembly.

Nov. 26: Emerging Voices Initiative fall 2016 workshop on Future Directions initiatives, held in Saskatoon during MC Saskatchewan's fall leadership assembly. For more information, email jcornelsen1@gmail.com.

Dec. 11,17: A Buncha Guys Christmas concerts: (11) at Mayfair United Church; (17) at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Carlton. Both concerts at 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 16,18: RJC Christmas concerts: (16) at Knox United Church, Saskatoon; (18) at RJC in Rosthern, at 2:30 p.m.

Manitoba

Until Jan. 29, 2017: "Along the Road to Freedom: Mennonite women of courage and faith" exhibition at the Manitoba Legislative Building, Winnipeg, featuring 26 paintings by Winnipeg artist Ray Dirks.

Nov. 18: Exhibition openings of Megan Krause's "Fertile Ash" and Dale Boldt's "Interna," at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg. Until Jan. 19, 2017.

Nov. 22: Westgate "Evening of the Arts" event, at St. Mary Anglican Church, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m.

Nov. 23: CMU Outtown Discipleship School for a day. For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.

Nov. 25: CMU campus visit day. For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.

Nov. 26: Christmas at CMU. Celebrate the start of Advent enjoying music, festive décor, cookies and hot apple cider.

Nov. 27: Winnipeg First Mennonite Church Choir and orchestra present "Das Stern von Bethlehem" and "A Ceremony of Carols," at the church, at 7 p.m.

Nov. 27: Emerging Voices Initiative fall 2016 workshop on Future Directions initiatives, held at CMU, Winnipeg. For more information, email jcornelsen1@gmail.com.

Nov. 28: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate annual general meeting, at 7 p.m.

Dec. 5: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Christmas concert, at Westminster United Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Dec. 18: CMU Vespers service. A Christmas-themed worship service

incorporating Scripture, prayer, hymns and choral music.

Ontario

Until Dec. 5: "Together: When we are engaged" photo exhibit that celebrates everyday acts that deepen our sense of community, at the Conrad Grebel University College gallery, Waterloo.

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

Nov. 18-19: "Spirit of Christmas" sale, at Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig: (18) from 6:30 to 9 p.m.; (19) from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. With crafts, Ten Thousand Villages items and home baking. Music in the tea room. In support of the local food bank.

Nov. 19: Fairview Mennonite Home's annual handicraft sale, in Cambridge, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Includes tea room and bake sale, Christmas decorations and gifts, and Santa's "sweet shop."

Nov. 19: Annual Nithview bazaar with a bake sale, silent auction, community vendors and a tea room, in New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Nov. 19,20: Soli Deo Gloria Singers present their fall concert, "Christ alone, Scripture alone": (19) at UMEI, Leamington, at 7:30 p.m.; (20) at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For tickets, call UMEI at 519-326-7448.

Nov. 26: Rescue Junction concert and MennoHomes AGM at Woodside Church, Elmira, at 7 p.m. Everyone welcome. For information call 226-476-2535 or visit www.mennohomes.com.

Dec. 4: St. Jacobs Mennonite Church presents the music of Vivaldi's "Gloria" with choir, soloists and orchestra as part of its Sunday morning worship service, at 10 a.m.

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



Classifieds

Help Wanted

Resident Manager and Food Service Coordinator at Camp Moose Lake (Sprague, Manitoba)
Mennonite Church Manitoba is accepting applications for the positions of Resident Manager and Food Service Coordinator. This is an ideal position for couples who wish to share in the ministry of hospitality. For more information contact Dorothy Fontaine (204) 896-1616 or visit the "News" section at www.campswithmeaning.com.

For Sale

The Village Casketmaker
Funeral caskets and urns sold directly to public. Sensible and eco-friendly. Made in Winnipeg. Urns ship easily across Canada. Learn more: thevillagecasketmaker.com.

Employment Opportunity



Mennonite Church Alberta

Employment opportunity

Area Church Pastor, Mennonite Church Alberta (MCA)

The MCA invites applications to provide spiritual leadership to member congregations in Alberta. This is a half-time position commencing in early 2017. The Area Church (Conference) Pastor provides leadership development for churches and pastors and gives area church oversight as discerned by MCA Executive. The position reports to Executive Committee and works alongside a Future Directions Coordinator who also reports to Executive Committee.

Key responsibilities include:

- Leading the Pastor Council, providing professional development on the 6 core competencies of pastoral leadership, and providing administrative direction to MCA staff.
- Supporting MCA Executive initiatives and communicating with congregations, providing input and direction to the missional vision of MCA, and supporting local church leadership.

The ideal candidate will have a Master of Divinity degree and at least 10 years of experience as lead pastor or suitable combination, and a commitment to Anabaptist practice and perspective on the life of the faith community. She or he will be a dynamic collaborative leader, an active listener, Biblically sound with missional leadership capabilities, self-aware with cultural sensitivities, and skilled in promoting healthy congregation/pastor relationships.

Considerable travel to local congregations is expected. The MCA provides a range of benefits and a salary structure aligned with Mennonite Church Canada's Pastor Salary Guidelines.

Applicants are invited to submit their expressions of interest and an updated Ministerial Leadership Information form (MLI) to Michael Ediger (Chair, Personnel Committee) at dmediger@shaw.ca, or to request further information from Paul Bergen (Chair, Congregational Leadership Committee) at pauldbergen@gmail.com.

Applications are requested by November 30, 2016.

The Canadian Mennonite

"If you live what I teach, you are really my disciples." —Jesus.

That was the vision of Ted Friesen, the first publisher of *The Canadian Mennonite* back in 1953. This vision, noted by Ted's son Eric, is the sustaining vision as the magazine continues to give voice to Canadian Mennonites 63 years later. We, as a church, are wending our way through a transition period outlined by the Future Directions Task Force. Our pages and communication initiatives are needed to carry on the conversations that will determine a future devoted to living out the teachings of Jesus.

**He was a
"seeker of truth,
not a possessor of truth"**

—Eric Friesen

Ted had a vision and passion for a unified Mennonite church. He brought it together through the pages of *The Canadian Mennonite*. Despite financial losses, Ted kept it going through the first decade.

To carry on with Ted's vision, his wife Linie (Krahn), their sons Eric, Paul and Tim launched the Ted Friesen Legacy Fund with a \$50,000 gift as seed money. They invite you to join them in their support of *Canadian Mennonite*. Donors giving major gifts of \$2,000 or more will be named in an honour roll unless requesting anonymity.

Please make cheques out to Canadian Mennonite, 490 Dutton Dr., Unit C5, Waterloo, ON N2L 6H7 or make a credit card donation by calling 519-884-3810 (local) or toll-free 1-800-378-2524.



PEMBINAVALLEYONLINE.COM PHOTO
Ted and Linie Friesen

TED FRIESEN LEGACY FUND