

CANADIAN MENNONITE

January 15, 2018

Volume 22, Number 2



Myanmar
on the move

pg. 16

inside

'Serving the Lord with gladness' 4

Questions for 2018 19

'We need the peace theology' 23

EDITORIAL

I can give with joy

AARON EPP
YOUNG VOICES EDITOR

Early last year I decided to give a few dollars to any panhandler I encountered. I made sure to keep loonies, toonies and quarters in my car in case someone approached me while I was stopped at a red light.

Prior to this, encounters with panhandlers felt awkward. I was taught growing up not to give money to panhandlers because they would just use it to buy drugs or alcohol. “No, sorry, I can’t spare any change,” I would mutter, avoiding eye contact.

Really, I have plenty of change to spare. I’m not entirely convinced giving it to panhandlers is the best way to go—perhaps I would be better off making a donation to a soup kitchen—but last year, giving spare change to anyone who asked me for it wasn’t about helping other people. It was about changing my attitude towards how much I have and how much I’m willing to share it. I have so much, and some of the people living in the same city as me—never mind in other parts of the world—have so little. If I say that I follow Jesus Christ, but refuse to help the poor and marginalized, what kind of person am I?

Last month, the Angus Reid Institute (ARI) and CHIMP (Charitable Impact Foundation) released a report that sheds some light on the giving habits and attitudes of millennials. That’s the generation roughly defined as people

born between 1981 and 1996, which includes me.

The report found that, “on one hand, Canadians under 35 are less likely to donate to charity than other generations, and generally donate less money when they do give. On the other, millennials are more trusting of charitable organizations than their elders, and most say they would give more under the right circumstances—if they had more money, could find the right cause or simply felt more confident about giving in general.”

The report goes on to say that younger respondents were considerably more likely than people over 35 to agree with the statement, “I can barely make ends meet—never mind giving money to charitable causes.”

Money matters weren’t the only thing preventing millennials from giving more to charity, though. More than half of those aged 16 to 34 agree with the statements, “I would give more money to charity if I felt more confident about the whole thing” (66 percent), “I would give more money to charity if I could find the perfect cause for me” (58 percent), and “I would give more money to charity if I was approached in the right way” (54 percent).

“These findings suggest that—although money woes are a major concern—many millennials also feel under-served by current charitable approaches,” the report says.



Personally, waiting for a charity to approach me in the right way seems ridiculous. I think that if I’m feeling under-served by current charitable approaches, it’s up to me to do the research necessary to increase my confidence in giving or to find causes I can wholeheartedly support. Everything else seems like an excuse not to give.

I am convicted that we, as Christians, are called to live as faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us. Article 21 in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* says as much: “As stewards of money and possessions, we are to live simply, practise mutual aid within the church, uphold economic justice, and give generously and cheerfully. As persons dependent on God’s providence, we are not to be anxious about the necessities of life, but to seek first the kingdom of God. We cannot be true servants of God and let our lives be ruled by desire for wealth.”

It’s difficult, and often considered taboo, to talk about money. As I consider my experiences from the past year, the things I was taught growing up and the findings of the ARI and CHIMP report, I find myself with an increasing desire to talk about these things with people I trust. I think that by talking about it, I’ll become wiser when it comes to stewarding the things God has entrusted to me.

I’m reminded of what musician Bryan Moyer Suderman sings on his 2007 album, *My Money Talks*: “I can give with joy because I trust in you.” Whether I’m giving a toonie to a panhandler, sending a donation to church via e-transfer or writing a cheque to a charity, that’s a lyric worth keeping in mind.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Ken Frey, from the Drayton, Ont., area, in the Canada shirt, and Dean Shoemaker, ahead of him in black, pedal past Buddhist monks during a MEDA-sponsored ‘Myanmar on the move’ fundraising tour last November. Read Byron Shantz’s reflection of the tour and see more photos beginning on page 16.

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contents

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'Serving the Lord with gladness' 4

WILLIAM THOMAS SNYDER, Mennonite Central Committee's longest-serving executive, is remembered on the centenary of his birth in our God at Work in Us feature by his former associate, **EDGAR STOESZ**.

Farmers, thinkers, eaters 14

Mennonites in agricultural research learn from plots, buffalo and theologians, writes **WILL BRAUN**.

Creating a mission partnership web 20-21

JEANETTE HANSON is working to build relationships between Mennonites and the church in China, reports **DONNA SCHULZ**.

An unblinking look at midlife 25

'As I leave [my 40s] behind, I find myself focussing less on me and more on how I might, bit by incremental bit, help to make the world more whole,' writes **JENNIFER GRANT** in *When Did Everybody Else Get So Old?* from Herald Press.

Young Voices 27-29

AARON EPP interviews **THOMAS COLDWELL**, the new MCC Alberta executive director, and **STEPH CHANDLER BURNS**, who has sometimes struggled to fit into the church.

Regular features:

For discussion **6** Readers write **7** Milestones **13**

A moment from yesterday **13** Calendar **30** Classifieds **31**

I can give with joy 2

AARON EPP

#MeToo in the pew next to you 7

DAVID MARTIN

Salty language and coming to faith 8

RYAN JANTZI

Collective Kitchen involves all abilities 9

KRISTA LOEWEN



Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN US FEATURE

'Serving the Lord with gladness'

William Thomas Snyder, MCC's longest-serving executive, remembered on the centenary of his birth

BY EDGAR STOESZ



KITCHENER-WATERLOO RECORD FILE PHOTO /
MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Opening of the MCC Ontario building in 1964. Pictured from left to right: MCC executive secretary William Snyder, Fred Nighswander, Henry H. Epp and Abner Cressman.



BURTON BULLER PHOTO / MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

When Kathy Hildebrand attended the 1969 annual MCC meeting, she commented to executive secretary William Snyder, 'I didn't come to shop at Marshall Field! I came to hear what MCC is doing.'

When the indomitable Orie O. Miller retired from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in 1958, there was a lot of speculation about who would fill his big shoes. In Miller's mind, though, that question had been settled years earlier, when he chose, out of the rich Civilian Public Service (CPS) talent pool, the unpretentious William Thomas Snyder to be his associate. Few observers could have imagined that Snyder would exceed Miller's 23-year tenure as the head of MCC.

The MCC inherited by the 41-year-old Snyder was in the final stage of a post-Second World War recovery program that was out of proportion to its size. It had become a household name for Mennonites in Canada, the United States, parts of Europe and beyond. Its future role was unclear. Some even suggested that it be terminated lest, as an ongoing inter-Mennonite organization, it would distract from conference-sponsored programs.

Snyder had already worked closely with Miller for 15 years. He had a major though largely behind-the-scenes role in the relocation of 5,400 refugees to Paraguay and Uruguay. The Snyder family, which included three children, made Akron, Pa., their home. Snyder and his wife were charter members of the former General Conference Mennonite Church in neighbouring Lancaster City.

The MCC of the late 1950s was, to say it kindly, provisional. It did not even own the remodelled buildings that constituted its shabby headquarters. Many asked why such a ministry should be housed in Akron, a small borough surrounded by Amish tobacco fields in Pennsylvania Dutch country.

The MCC of this period was staffed mostly by young short-term volunteers under the direction of a few veterans. Its primary focus was aiding Mennonites in Europe and Paraguay.

Snyder was not driven by ego or personal ambition. Under the direction of an active executive committee, he professionalized the workings of the MCC headquarters. He introduced policies and procedures that attracted a new generation of workers. A modern office building was constructed in 1961, followed by a dining facility to better serve the volunteers passing through

Akron en route to their assignments.

The seamless transition from Miller to Snyder was a double surprise to many. Miller let go, and the youthful Snyder assumed the reins in a surprisingly sure-footed way, continuing the programs underway while introducing a string of innovations. Snyder was action-minded, his vision global. His North Star was always what the Mennonite church would support. His fingerprints in the tumultuous 1960s and '70s were as pronounced as those of his predecessor in his era.

Supported by a service-minded constituency, Snyder built a global ministry that reached into more than 50 countries. With a multimillion-dollar budget, it was staffed by an ever-growing stream of young people. Prominent in the expansion were programs in Africa, then in the throes of various national independence movements. Many were in partnership with the decades-old Mennonite missions. The primary emphasis shifted from relief to development and peacebuilding.

Bridging the Miller and Snyder

transition was a Voluntary Service program, patterned after CPS to address needs in the United States and Canada, and the virile PAX program, which focussed initially on postwar reconstruction. Later, in the Teachers Abroad Program, more than a thousand years of service were collectively rendered by MCC teachers, educating a new generation in the newly independent African countries.

Snyder had a major role in nurturing

(Continued on page 6)

SIDEBAR

The Canadian connection

In 1963, Mennonite relief, immigration, service and peace organizations across Canada were brought together to form Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada. Jacob M. Klassen was MCC Canada's first executive secretary.

“[I]mportant for the MCC-MCC Canada relationship . . . was the friendship and trust between J.M. Klassen and William Snyder, MCC executive secretary. Klassen's work with MCC in Korea and his short stint at the MCC office in Akron had given him a good understanding for, and sympathy with, MCC and its ministry, and respect for Snyder.

A trip which the two men made to Paraguay in 1964 seems to have cemented their relationship. At the end of a hot, dry day of travel, Snyder was discovered polishing Klassen's dusty shoes. Klassen interpreted this simple deed of service as comparable to Jesus' act of foot washing. Loyalty to, and continuing cooperation with, Akron would remain a very high priority for Klassen.

Snyder had harboured doubts about the formation of MCC Canada and how it might de-rail the U.S.-Canada relationship in MCC. But as the money arrived steadily from Winnipeg, he became a believer.

In mid-1965 he wrote a letter of appreciation to Klassen for the prompt remittances, indicating the MCC Canada structure would be a much improved channel for getting funds and personnel to places most needed. He wrote, “I believe history will give all of you who had a hand in bringing MCC Canada into being as a broadly based organization, a few kudos.”

Snyder was thrilled when, in 1965, MCC Canada sent

\$190,654 to Akron, not including the value of material aid, and in 1966, almost double that amount, \$363,446. At points he noted MCC Canada was increasing its giving to MCC in greater proportion than other groups. In many ways Snyder's worries about the Canadians were mitigated, at least for a time.

Klassen and Snyder frequently assessed the Canadian response to MCC by measuring Canadian statistics against those of the entire North American constituency. According to the membership in Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches across Canada, compared to that in the U.S., Canadians should be contributing roughly 30 percent of the total revenue and material aid to the combined effort.

It became clear in the 1960s that Canadians did comparatively well in terms of money and material resources. They even increased the MCC workers serving worldwide, 137, or 22 percent, were Canadians. Notably, 80 percent of MCC's “country reps” (the administrative heads in the respective country programs) were Canadian.

The preponderance of Canadian service workers in this leadership role was because they tended to be somewhat older and more experienced than U.S. workers, many of whom were young men fulfilling alternative service obligations through MCC (a draft continued until the end of the Vietnam War). The percentage of Canadian service workers would rise and fall through the decade before climbing to 32 percent in 1973.”

Excerpted from Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History by Esther Epp-Tiessen, pages 90-91.



William Snyder

(Continued from page 5)

to maturity a raft of new ministries, many of which are still functioning two decades after his death. These include Mennonite Disaster Service, numerous mental health programs, Self-Help Crafts (now Ten Thousand Villages), Mennonite Indemnity, and Mennonite Economic Development Associates. It was also in this era that the now-ubiquitous *More-with-Less Cookbook* was published by MCC.

To finance the growing number of programs, new forms of fundraising were introduced. These included relief sales and thrift stores, which became major MCC income streams.

Like his predecessor, Snyder was not a dynamic public speaker. He did not author any books. His gift was the creation of a stage for a generation of action-minded youth to render Christian service to a needy world. Snyder is deservedly remembered as a servant leader willing to share the limelight. This no doubt contributed to his being forgotten too soon.

Equally unheralded were his wife Lucille and their children. They lived modestly in an MCC apartment across the street from the historic MCC Main House on Akron's Main Street.

Although MCC was the primary channel through which he chose to invest himself, Snyder was known and respected well beyond it. He was a long-time influential member of the board of Bluffton (Ohio) College, his alma mater. Bluffton conferred on him an honorary doctorate in 1982. The following year it recognized him with the Outstanding Alumni Award.

Snyder served on numerous committees of the then General Conference Mennonite Church. He had a warm collegial relationship with leaders in the National Council of Churches, although MCC was never a member. He was much appreciated in the International Voluntary Service organization based in Washington, D.C., on whose board he served for some years with persons of national prominence.

When he retired in 1985, at the age of 65, MCC conferred on him the title of executive secretary emeritus. He

continued to read widely. His knowledge of the world was encyclopedic; his commitment to MCC and the wider Mennonite church was infinite.

While his poor health precluded travel in retirement, his interest in world affairs, and the Mennonite role within it, never waned. He died at the age of 75 in 1993. He lies buried in the Akron Mennonite Church cemetery under a marker with the apt inscription: "Serving the Lord with gladness." ❧

Edgar Stoesz served with William Snyder during Snyder's entire 24-year term as executive secretary, and for some years as his associate.

CM PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION /
MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

William Snyder, MCC's executive secretary, left, congratulates the retired Orie O. Miller, MCC executive secretary emeritus, at a dinner honouring him on his 75th birthday at the 1968 annual meeting of MCC in Chicago.



❧ For discussion

1. How have you, your family or your congregation been involved with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)? How is MCC perceived by Mennonites in Canada? Why might Mennonites support MCC rather than other aid or development agencies? How well are MCC fundraisers supported in your community?
2. Have you, or people you have known, volunteered with MCC, either locally or overseas? What kind of impact did these experiences have? How has voluntary service changed over the years? Do you think volunteerism is dwindling?
3. Edgar Stoesz writes that, under the leadership of William T. Snyder, MCC began many new ministries, including Mennonite Disaster Service, Ten Thousand Villages, and other mental health and economic development programs. Why were most of these programs developed to become independent of MCC? Which initiatives should remain under the MCC umbrella?
4. What challenges do you think MCC faces in the future? Is there still a strong connection between MCC and Mennonite congregations? How important are material aid projects (relief kits, blankets, etc.) in maintaining this connection? Where should MCC concentrate its efforts for the next decade?

—BY BARB DRAPER

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VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

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✉ 'Come to the table ... and meet Jesus'

RE: "A MEMORABLE remembrance," Nov. 20, 2017, page 12.

I want to affirm Troy Watson's assertion that our communion services should "result in our hearts being set ablaze within us."

It is now more than a year since we found a welcoming church home at Seeds of Life Community Church, a Mennonite Church Manitoba congregation in Altona. Granted, the journey that landed us in the context of this wonderful community of Jesus-followers had been long and difficult. You might say that we were spiritually and emotionally exhausted.

One of the things that attracted us to Seeds was the

(Continued on page 8)

FROM OUR LEADERS

#MeToo in the pew next to you

DAVID MARTIN

The incredible wave of disclosure around sexual abuse has dominated the front pages of our newspapers and our news feeds these past months.

Women, in particular, are saying, "It's about time that the pain and suffering of victims are acknowledged. It's time to bring into the open what has been covered up and suppressed for far too long."



I agree. I can't believe what women have endured in terms of sexual harassment and abuse. Suffering alone in silence, they've assumed that they will not be believed or that it's simply not safe for them to speak their truth.

The #MeToo movement has empowered victims to courageously step forward to disclose the ugly truth about sexual abuse and harassment, and to share the sometimes-debilitating impact on their lives. It's time that their stories are believed, their truths embraced and their

souls restored.

Don't be surprised if the next wave of #MeToo disclosures begins to happen in our churches. Empowered by the courageous women and men who have recently stepped forward in the public sphere, my guess is that victims of abuse in the church will also refuse to be silent any longer. Like all victims, they deserve our support. Their pain and suffering need to be embraced by the faith community so that the power of God's healing love can flow more freely.

It's gut wrenching to hear the depth of betrayal that women have experienced within the supposed safety of their church community. It's disheartening to hear the depth of pain and brokenness that they have borne in silence, sometimes for decades, sometimes even thinking it was their fault.

So how do we as churches prepare to embrace our sisters and brothers who may disclose to us the painful burdens

they have been carrying?

We must first communicate that the church will create a safe space within which painful stories can be disclosed. Victims must know that the church is more ready to believe than disbelieve their disturbing accounts, and will refrain from twisting their stories into blaming the victim.

We must also recognize that pain does not necessarily resolve with time. It is just as fresh 20 or 30 years after the fact. There's no expiry date on pain. It simply needs to be shared and healed.

Next, the church must demonstrate to victims that we will hold abusers to account. While asking abusers to take responsibility for their actions, we will also offer them support to repair the brokenness that has driven them to abuse.

Additionally, it's imperative that we courageously name bad behaviour when we see it, build awareness about the dynamics of sexual abuse, and educate people of all ages about appropriate boundaries. Only then will our faith communities be as safe as possible for young and old alike.

I'm ready to begin a new movement: #MeTooForHealingAndSafeChurch.

David Martin is executive minister of MC Eastern Canada.

(Continued from page 7)

fact that it practises communion every Sunday. The invitation is always the same: “Come to the table—as you are—and meet Jesus.” This experience touched us deeply.

I mentioned to someone recently that, even after a year at Seeds, I can hardly remember taking communion with dry eyes. Jesus always met us at the table and

continues to sustain and set our hearts on fire.

A big thanks to the Seeds community for offering a haven to spiritual refugees and regularly inviting them to share the table with it.

JACK HEPPNER, ALTONA, MAN.

KINGDOM YEARNINGS

Salty language and coming to faith

RYAN JANTZI

“Ah, sorry about all the cussing! I’ll be sure to watch my language around you from now on.”

I can’t count the number of times I’ve heard an embarrassing apology of this sort when someone discovers that I’m a pastor. Having spent time in hockey dressing rooms, on baseball fields and at construction sites, it’s a familiar story. I’ve grown accustomed to the shock and surprise when it is revealed that I am a person “of the cloth.” The most frequent reaction is an immediate apology for their foul language.

My response is often a hurried assurance that it’s not a big deal. I’d have a full-time job if I decided I was going to be the language police in the realms of the diamond, the rink and the framing crew. I’ve grown so accustomed to the profanity that, to be honest, it doesn’t really faze me anymore. Besides, I believe that to address bad language would be more a hindrance than a help in sharing the Good News of Jesus.

The truth is, I do care about vulgarity. I personally aim to keep it clean and haven’t dropped an F-Bomb since the eighth grade. Proper speech is something I

value. I believe that constant cursing demonstrates a lack of respect toward others as well as a lack of intelligence in expressing oneself. I also believe that we, as Christians, have far more significant issues to be concerned about, but it would be pleasing to me if public conversation was a little more sweet and a lot less salty.

There are two key reasons why I don’t speak to the swearing of others around me. First, to call them out communicates that they must clean themselves up first, before coming to Jesus. Many unbelievers feel initially awkward around me upon discovering that I’m a pastor. However, they are also generally curious about what I might have to say about the role

I believe that constant cursing demonstrates a lack of respect toward others as well as a lack of intelligence in expressing oneself.

and presence of God in their lives. For me to ask them to address a particular sin at the onset of this conversation communicates that they are not yet acceptable for a pastor to relate to. And ultimately it communicates that they need to tidy up, become someone they’re not, in order to first encounter God. This would be a

complete reversal of the Good News. We do not become righteous so that we can come to God. Rather, Christ became righteous on our behalf, so that through his life, death and resurrection, we could fully be with God.

Second, to ask my friend to address his language is to put the cart before the horse in his spiritual journey. Do we believe that it is up to us to transform ourselves? Or, is this a work of the Holy Spirit? The Apostle Paul tells us that the by-product of the Holy Spirit in our lives is love, peace, self-control and all that good stuff. So, to expect my buddy to be transformed prior to the experience and filling of the Holy Spirit, am I not setting him up for frustration and failure?

Following Jesus follows faith in Jesus. Transformation is a work of the Holy Spirit. As we share Christ with others, we must never get this order mixed around.

So, what to do about my foul-mouthed buddy? Well, we’re going to have a tonne of fun playing shinny together. The next time a round of expletives comes streaming out, I’ll keep my head down, playing on with a smile on my face. And I will pray every step of the way that somehow,

perhaps through me, he will meet and be transformed by the love of his Creator.

Ryan Jantzi pastors Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite Church, Ont., where he’s fascinated with exploring the interplay between traditional church and new expressions of mission.



✉ General Board thanked for its confession to LGBTQ community

RE: "GENERAL BOARD confession to the LGBTQ community," Oct. 9, 2017, page 9.

I want to thank the General Board for its confession to the LGBTQ community. As a member of Christ's family, a Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

congregation and the LGBTQ community, I offer my deepest respect and appreciation for this step.

Following Christ is controversial in this world in which we live. We are called to make choices to open ourselves up to see what God is doing, or to close doors, thus dividing and making less of those who belong to Christ who may not see or agree with our

(Continued on page 10)

GATHERING AROUND THE TABLE

Collective Kitchen involves all abilities

BY KRISTA LOEWEN

The act of eating and preparing food is my greatest joy. Creating the dance of different flavours upon my palate is a spiritual experience. Robert Farror Capon writes in *The Supper of the Lamb*; "Food and cooking are among the richest subjects in the world. Every day of our lives, they preoccupy, delight and refresh us. . . . Both stop us dead in our tracks with wonder. Even more, they sit us down, every evening after evening, and in the company that forms around our dinner tables, they actually create our humanity."

The opportunity to create humanity around the table is a privilege. In my work with L'Arche Saskatoon as the Collective Kitchen coordinator, I witness people with and without disabilities sharing life together. Some of our Collective Kitchen members often have things done for them, leaving them without the opportunity to enact hospitality and serve others. The Collective Kitchen allows them to make decisions, work collaboratively and create something for themselves and their family.

A Collective Kitchen is a group of people who share their resources to cook a meal together. These resources include time, money and abilities. We gather every six weeks to prepare supper to share with each of our families. By pooling our

resources, we are able to cook healthy meals in affordable and accessible ways.

The Friends of L'Arche Collective Kitchen grew from two friends who met together to make crafts on Sunday afternoons in a church basement in 2010. More and more people joined until there was a desire to do more together, and the Collective Kitchen model seemed like a great fit. L'Arche is founded on the philosophy that we all have gifts to share, and our Collective Kitchen allows everyone to help in their gift areas. Some

The Collective Kitchen allows them to make decisions, work collaboratively and create something for themselves and their family.

people are better at chopping, some prefer washing dishes and some prefer recipe testing! We all have a choice as to which task we work on. When we all come together to share our gifts we create a delicious feast that is taken home to be shared with our families.

We are a group of eight people with and without disabilities who have grown close over seven years of gathering. When we get together to cook it creates a common space to share of ourselves. The Collective Kitchen is food for the body and soul.



Nancy Kube and Krista Loewen co-edited the new cookbook, *One Big Table: Recipes from Friends of L'Arche Collective Kitchen*.

Our new cookbook, *One Big Table*, celebrates the sacred space we share as a group. It includes accessible recipes for people of all abilities, so that laughter and joy might be spread through the act of cooking and sharing around the table. It also includes profiles of the participants,

stories of the L'Arche Saskatoon community and artwork created by our workshop. All proceeds go to the L'Arche Solidarity initiative to ensure that our L'Arche sisters and brothers in financially poorer parts of the world have the resources they need to live the mission of L'Arche.

Visit canadianmennonite.org/hoisin-glazed-chicken for a recipe from *One Big Table*.

The cookbook is available at blurb.ca/b/8317628.



(Continued from page 9)
understanding of God.

I've talked to many of God's children who have walked away from seeking a relationship with God for a variety of reasons; being LGBTQ is the one closest to my heart. I rejoice in being a follower of Christ. Yes, I fail, usually in Technicolor, yet every time I do, he is there to forgive, heal, encourage and give hope.

Unfortunately, most times, my co-followers were nowhere in sight. That's fine, because it keeps my focus on Christ, the Spirit, and my understanding of God's Word—because one day we will stand before him to give an account of ourselves, not our brothers nor our sisters. It's tremendously freeing, and fosters a spirituality that is personal, exciting and growing.

Thank you to the General Board for seeing and living out the Vision, Healing and Hope statement. Thank you to my MC Saskatchewan church family, who have taken me in; given me a place and reason to seek to grow in grace, joy and peace; and for demonstrating a vibrant faith and lifestyle that encourages me to respect those who may see things differently, with love and acceptance of difference.

PETER LIPPMANN, SASKATOON

✉ More responses to Maple View's paid supplement on sexuality

RE: "HONOUR GOD with Your Bodies" insert, Sept. 25, 2017.

The Maple View Church insert has caused a lot of controversy. The homosexual issue is not as simple as the church would have us believe. It is certainly entitled to its opinion, but it is only an opinion.

To take a very few verses from the Bible to justify a particular position is, in my opinion, very irresponsible. Consider other issues, such as war, killing, slavery, racism, treating women as second class citizens, and even bigamy and polygamy, to name a few. Each of these can be justified by quoting some verses from the Bible.

It seems to me that we need to reassess how we read and understand the Scriptures. The sexual orientation issue is probably the most divisive issue the church is facing and it will never be resolved. Consequently, let us agree to disagree, lay the issue aside, and concentrate our efforts in obeying Christ's command: "Love one another."

PAUL KLASSEN, HANOVER, ONT.

The author attends Hanover Mennonite Church.

I GREW UP in a Mennonite church but am no longer in a congregation. I could be considered an ex-Mennonite by some. I read *Canadian Mennonite* as a tribute to my parents, as a way to stay in touch.

Let me try to frame the secular world viewpoint as I see it:

- **I HAVE** gay friends and gay work colleagues. They love, hate, complain about their in-laws, have long-term married relationships, fool-around, live and die the same as everyone else.
- **I VIEW** the words "sin" and "biblical truth" as tools of hate.
- **I HAVE** read the Bible and other sacred texts many times. It doesn't matter to me if Jesus or Buddha really existed, or if the Qur'an or Torah were God-inspired or man-made.
- **TRUTH ONLY** resonates when it connects with compassion and unconditional love. That is what I take from the words attributed to Jesus. I encourage others to read the works of Karen Armstrong, Edith Eger and others who lead the way on this new thinking.

I am hopeful that Mennonite Church Canada works through these truths and becomes a stronger light for love and compassion.

RANDY MARTIN, SMITHS FALLS, ONT.

✉ Freedom has limits

WE SHOULD BE thankful we live in a country that values freedom of thought, freedom of expression and freedom of choice. A certain professor once said, because freedom is like a free-flowing river that is protected by its boundaries, if you take away the borders, it creates a swamp.

My wife and I were often delegates to the Canadian and Manitoba assemblies. One Canadian assembly that stands out in my mind was in 1980 in Edmonton. These were the years when there was conflict in our colleges and it filtered into the local churches.

A few college students were given the freedom to present their views about our Mennonite institutions. The content of the film used said that Mennonites are too proud of their institutions, Mennonites are victims of old traditions, and even parents can't let go of the past.

While there was some truth to what was said, even during the intermission there was no response to what was shown or said. It made me sad that there was no discussion, no dialogue.

Let's cherish our freedom with open discussion and respect.

JACOB J. UNGER, BOISSEVAIN, MAN.

VIEWPOINT

A persistance that results in good news

DAVID DRIEDGER

FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH, WINNIPEG

Every Wednesday for five weeks last fall, groups gathered at First Mennonite Church to discuss questions of power, authority and abuse within the Mennonite church. The series, entitled *A Persistent Theology*, came from acknowledging just how hard it is for those who have suffered abuse or

images of Christ that the church has promoted, she considers how a female Christ image, “Christa,” as some have called her, can indeed be good news. Quoting theologian Mary Grey, Guenther Loewen concluded, “Christa liberates . . . by being present with and sharing in the brokenness, identifying this as the priority for God’s healing love . . .”

After the public lecture, smaller groups met to discuss papers dealing with topics like the Bible and authority in the Mennonite church; concerns over violence within our church processes, particularly dealing with LGBTQ issues, the question of sexual ethics and the legacy of John Howard Yoder; and current research and reflections on the history of Mennonite identity as it has been tied to German nationalism and the Nazi party.

We resonated with how both conservative and liberal seg-

ments of the church can inflict violence on LGBTQ individuals, either by the outright rejection of their faith or by the need to make LGBTQ individuals submit to processes that do not acknowledge unjust power dynamics, keeping many of these individuals simultaneously “erased and overexposed,” as one article put it.

We struggled with the ongoing legacy of patriarchy that is unable to address, and often even acknowledge, patterns of sexual abuse; how this legacy keeps us from potentially transformative confessions that acknowledge our incapacity in these areas; and our need to hear the voices of survivors and learn from them and those who walk with them.

Finally, we discussed the broad complexities of the global Mennonite identity

and its German heritage, particularly as it was influenced during the rise of Hitler and fascism in the 1930s. There are many differing stories and perspectives surrounding these events, depending on your geography and generation. We found some sort of consensus that even here, even in the midst of our own suffering as a people, we need to face our history that saw some Mennonites directly and indirectly involved in Nazi violence against Jews, as well as our reception of praise and promotion for being so pure, so German.

Perhaps such events or opportunities can be viewed as yet another attack on the church at a time when the church is not experiencing high popularity. The reason for them, however, was much different. Taking pot shots at something you hate or don’t care about anymore is different than facing difficult topics with a commitment to continue the hard work of justice, healing and peace.

Lara McCabe, a member of First Mennonite, attended all of the sessions and shared that “even through dark experiences, theology and faith persist—the church will always remain. . . . It’s heartening to me that, while we examine hard truths about behaviour of Mennonites past and present, we are drawn together as the body of Christ, and can choose to change our behaviour for the future.”

So, while this series could be viewed as yet another reason to be critical of the church, it was offered as an invitation and challenge to take faith commitments seriously, perhaps even as a renewal of our baptismal commitments to reject the devil in all its forms. My hope is that with persistence the church can increasingly be a place to face and name not only the abuses we practise but the theology that allows or even enables it, and, further, that such persistence results in good news. ✎

Texts used for the series, as well as video of Guenther Loewen’s lecture, can be found at criticalconversation.wordpress.com/.



Susanne Guenther Loewen delivers her ‘Can the cross be good news for women?’ lecture to open the five-week Persistent Theology series at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg last fall.

neglect in the church to gain recognition, never mind see change.

The series began with Susanne Guenther Loewen, co-pastor of Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, who shared her research on Mennonite and feminist understandings of the atonement in a lecture entitled “Can the cross be good news for women?”

She identified the way in which traditional theology has tended to elevate the view of suffering as a divine calling or good in and of itself, and how it tends to have the worst consequences for women. She also touched on the role of gender regarding God’s identity and whether a female Christ figure might be more liberating.

Responding to some of the harmful



VIEWPOINT

Jesus isn't talking to you

The real audience of the Sermon on the Mount

CALEB RATZLAFF

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him" (Matthew 7:7-11).

Receiving everything we ask for is scandalous in an age of consumerism. But perhaps Christ's Sermon on the Mount isn't addressing me and my family, whose material needs are thankfully satisfied. Perhaps he has someone less privileged in mind. This subtle shift significantly changes the meaning of the sermon; suddenly Christ isn't talking to me and mine when he says, *"Ask and it will be given to you."*

Christ's introduction to his sermon lends itself to this interpretation, making it clear that only those who aren't abusing their power can follow Christ's teachings: *"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:17-20).

Assuming the Sermon on the Mount's intended audience is the weak and the suffering is a helpful exercise in bringing new meaning to light. In *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium*, Walter Wink takes a similar position in his interpretation of Christ's instructions on turning the other cheek and walking an extra mile (Matthew 5:38-42). He argues that these teachings don't advocate for passivity in the face of injustice, but, instead, are a call for nonviolent resistance.

Wink explains that striking someone on the cheek was a way a slave-owner, Roman soldier or husband might humiliate an "inferior." Simplifying Wink's argument, we could say that offering the other cheek is one way "inferiors" can assert their humanity. Turning the other cheek implies

that the persecuted are human beings with agency who will not merely conform to the will of a master. By asserting the other cheek, the "inferior" challenges the humility that accompanies the abuse.

Christ's teaching to walk two miles when pressed into service to walk one is probably the clearest example of Wink's argument. During Rome's occupation of Israel, Roman soldiers regularly forced the poor to carry their heavy packs. By law, however, the soldiers were not permitted to compel anyone to walk more than one mile. Jesus' audience would know that soldiers could be arrested for breaking the law. Jesus, then, isn't arguing that his audience should suffer the violence of an oppressor passively, but rather should resist injustice in a way that doesn't replicate the harm.

The wealthy and powerful, ignorant of the daily grind of the lower classes, would struggle to comprehend the meaning of these teachings. Wink's insight, therefore, lends further support to the assumption that the Sermon on the Mount addresses—and is more easily understood by—the weak, oppressed and underprivileged.

The illustration used by Christ in the section of the Sermon on the Mount entitled, "Ask, seek, knock," reinforces the argument further. In his example, it's a son asking a father for bread, not the other way around. I would be uncaring if I expected my toddler to provide me with my daily bread. By necessity, children need to ask, discover and knock. These activities require a level of humility and neediness often absent in the life of the powerful. The oppressed, like children,

are better equipped to understand Jesus' message by virtue of their position as oppressed people.

When you have wealth and power, if you want something, you buy it; if you're hungry, you order takeout; if you're bored, you take a trip. As a white male, this is my privilege.

In Christ's vision of the kingdom of heaven, though, there's lots of asking, seeking and knocking. In the coming kingdom of peace, everyone who asks will receive, who seeks will find, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. It's just that for some in the current kingdom, there's never been a need to ask or search or knock because they've always had everything they ever wanted.

So, to the powerful and the privileged like myself: If you're going to follow Christ, if you want to understand his teachings, you need to find ways to live in solidarity with the weak and the powerless. Either you're on the side of the oppressed or you're the oppressor. There's only room for one of these groups in the coming kingdom of peace. ☿

Caleb Ratzlaff works at Westview Christian Fellowship in St. Catharines, Ont. When he's not baking naturally leavened bread, you'll find him exploring the neighbourhood with his two young boys.



'THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT'
BY CARL BLOCH, 1877



/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bonifas—Ethan Jacob (b. Dec. 14, 2017), to Teresa and Andrew Bonifas, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

Petkau—Margo Joanna (b. Sept. 23, 2017), to Justin Petkau and Sylwia Sieminska, Carman Mennonite, Man.
(Correction of a Nov. 20, 2017 birth announcement.)

Tiessen—Camellia (adopted on Nov. 2, 2017), by Laura and Roger Tiessen, Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Baptisms

Mitchell DeFehr, Dan Honke, Michael Rempel

Boschman—Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Dec. 3, 2017.

Deaths

Bartel—Delmer Roy (D. Roy), 81 (b. May 29, 1936; d. Sept. 4, 2017), Cornerstone Church, Saskatoon.

Becker—Elizabeth (nee Thiessen), 97 (b. Aug. 30, 1920; d. Oct. 21, 2017), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Braun—Margaret (nee Driedger), 91 (b. Feb. 3, 1926; d. Dec. 5, 2017), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Dyck—Nick, 91 (b. Oct. 15, 1926; d. Nov. 24, 2017), Springridge Mennonite, Pincher Creek, Alta.

Dyck—Robert Nicolai, 68 (b. March 24, 1949; d. Nov. 7, 2017), Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Dyck—Valentina (Wally) (nee Klassen), 93 (b. Feb. 4, 1924; d. Nov. 13, 2017), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Flatt—Linda, 60 (b. Oct. 4, 1957; d. Dec. 11, 2017), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Kroeger—Henry, 83 (b. Feb. 20, 1934; d. Nov. 1, 2017), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Kruger—Elizabeth (nee Isaak), 94 (b. Nov. 15, 1922; d. Nov. 8, 2017), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Lebtag—Max, 91 (b. June 19, 1926; d. Nov. 16, 2017), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Neufeld—Menno, 82 (b. July 9, 1935; d. Dec. 1, 2017), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Plenert—Mary (nee Friesen), 92 (b. Nov. 18, 1925; d. Oct. 25, 2017), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Rutter—Marion, 72 (b. June 19, 1945; d. Dec. 2, 2017), Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

Shantz—Donald Roy, 92 (b. March 31, 1925; d. Dec. 2, 2017), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Steinman—Reuben, 98 (b. June 14, 1919; d. Dec. 2, 2017), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Toews—Nettie (nee Sawatzky), 93 (b. Oct. 14, 1924; d. Oct. 29, 2017), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Woelcke—Rosmarie (nee Enns), 84 (b. July 7, 1933; d. Oct. 8, 2017), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

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

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

A moment from yesterday



The phrase “singing off the wall,” referring to singing from projected words rather than a hymn book, first appeared in *Canadian Mennonite* in 2010. This image shows that the practice went back much further. Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., recently donated a collection of glass “lantern slides” probably in use circa 1924-45. This particular slide of the hymn “Blessed Assurance” was created by the United Church Publishing House in Toronto. The donation also included several “radio mat” templates which a congregation could use to create its own slides, thus dazzling youth or Sunday school singing times, Christmas programs or budget meetings with new technology.

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing

Photo: United Church Publishing House / Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Farmers, thinkers, eaters

Mennonites in agricultural research learn from plots, buffalo and theologians

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

Agriculture is changing. Perhaps it always has been. Markets realign. Tastes shift. Ideas evolve. Climatic conditions rearrange.

Mennonites are part of the change—as farmers, thinkers and eaters.

Joanne Thiessen Martens notes another change. She grew up on a farm near Austin, Man. Then she studied agro-ecology out of an interest to work overseas, which she did in Brazil with Mennonite Central Committee. Now she does agricultural research at the University of Manitoba.

The change she notes is reduced polarization between the different schools of thought: organic and conventional, small and big, till and no-till.

She says emerging interest in soil health cuts across those old divisions.

As a land management specialist with Manitoba Agriculture and a small farmer near Beausejour, Man., Matthew Wiens

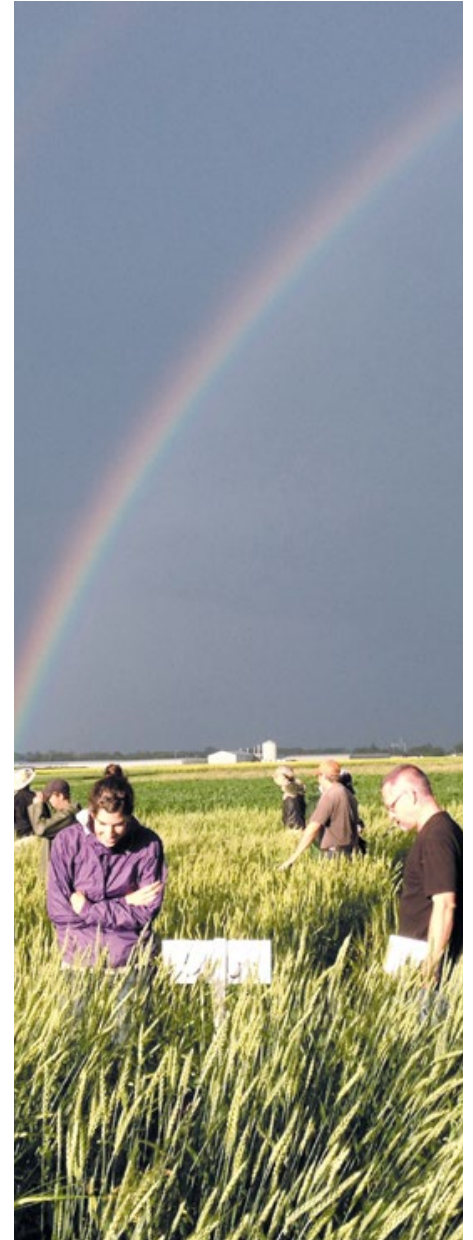
thinks a lot about soil. To him, soil is not just “a medium to hold up crops and accept inputs,” but rather a “complex ecosystem containing essential microorganisms to be cultivated rather than ignored or fought against.”

What does soil health look like? Wiens shares the example of farmers planting a mix of numerous varieties of forage crops onto a field, grazing it intensively in fall, then returning it to a cash crop the following year. That crop will require less fertilizer and in many cases will look better than it would have in a more typical crop rotation. Also, in a wet planting season the farmer will be able to seed sooner, since the forage growth in late fall uses up water.

It’s about diversity of plants, the work of their roots, integration of livestock and crops, and the myriad microscopic activities in the soil. It is also about reducing the use of synthetic fertilizers that are expensive,



Laura, the sheep, participating in an organic cover crop grazing study at the University of Manitoba’s Carman research farm.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NATURAL SYSTEMS AGRICULTURE, UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Field day at the University of Manitoba’s Carman research farm.

energy intense and can affect water quality.

And it is about productivity, a concern of every farmer.

Wiens studied under Martin Entz at the University of Manitoba. Entz leads the Natural Systems Agriculture team, of which Thiessen Martens is a member. Among other things, Entz has overseen organic research plots that have been in production for 26 years, although he too



Harvesting grain as part of a long-term organic crop rotation study at the University of Manitoba's Glenlea research farm.

notes a slackening of the dualism between organic and other approaches.

An underlying goal in Entz's work is to harness nature's processes and enhance natural functions within agricultural systems. Diversity is key. That can look like planting multiple crops on the same field at the same time, known as intercropping; more variety in crop rotation; use of diverse forage crops; or enhanced landscape diversity, such as protection of wetlands.

"Embracing diversity on the farm can really pay off," he says.

Entz also notes a change in machinery. No-till drills can plant two crops, such as chick peas and flax, in a single pass. Weed-control machinery has advanced. Solar fences and new water technology give livestock farmers more flexibility.

Art Petkau, who farms with his brothers near Morden, Man., moves his cattle to a new strip of pasture every day, except Sundays. This is called rotational, intensive or mob grazing, and it roughly mimics the movement of buffalo over prairie.

The Petkaus have about 600 cows and upwards of 325 hectares of pasture for

their otherwise conventional cow-calf operation. Petkau feels intensive grazing results in more productive pasture and healthier animals, compared to the traditional approach of letting cattle out on a large area for an extended period.

"I think it's working," he says. "Other guys who have done it longer than us are sold on it."

Petkau's motivation is simple. "Increased production is what I'm looking for," he says.

At Thousand Hills Ranch, south of Morden, Man., Dean and Tiina Hildebrand also practise intensive grazing. They raise grass-finished beef and use no synthetic pesticides or fertilizers on their farm.

Dean says that some ranchers have electronic gates that allow them to move cattle up to six times a day. He moves his once a day or less, depending on the state of the pasture.

He has seen improved pasture productivity and animal health in the five years he has been practising intensive grazing. He also experiments with seeding vetch, clover and birdtail trefoil into his pastures for greater diversity and healthier soils.

For Entz, the nitty gritty of plant varieties

and grazing practices are tied to bigger questions. In 2015, he spent a sabbatical at Canadian Mennonite University. He wanted to know what theologians had to say about sustainable agriculture.

He was struck by the idea of sabbath as a time to let the land rest. This is not about "doing nothing," but rather "stepping away" and letting "creation be itself." He calls that a good lesson for natural systems agriculture. "We are sometimes over-managing," he says.

Within the mix of evolving agricultural thinking and moral considerations, Thiessen Martens suggests the need for an underlying shift away from a singular focus on "growing as much food as possible in as efficient a way as possible." This approach is often morally undergirded by the drive to "feed the world."

But she focusses on a broader set of values that include long-term soil health, ecosystem sustainability and even the beauty of rural landscapes. She worries that someday we may see that a narrow focus inadvertently obscured our view of factors she believes are ultimately vital to meeting humanity's needs. ▮

COVER STORY

Myanmar on the Move

BYRON SHANTZ

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

When I originally told friends and family of my intention to travel with my family to Myanmar, I was challenged with the idea of a known global-crisis country as a travel destination. However, we were completely removed from any threat of the Rohingya genocide crisis in the northwest of the country. Our experience was in the south, where Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) is impressively rooted in creating sustainable solutions to poverty there.

The idea of travelling with MEDA is attractive, deeply fulfilling and safe. MEDA has an ability to draw like-minded donors who are ecstatic to show their involvement and support, in this case for Myanmar on the Move, an initiative to improve the lives of 25,000 women farmers.

We were a multi-generational crew of 20 who really gelled together as we started our days at 5 a.m. before cycling and trekking in 40-degree heat, eating ethnic foods along the way. By midweek, we connected like a travelling hockey team on a road trip.

A big part of this experience was to see this trip through the eyes of my 17-year-old, Ashlyn. If there's one thing we can offer as parents, it's the idea of gratitude and giving back.

While conversing on our bikes one day, Pastor David Dyck of Leamington (Ont.) Mennonite Church suggested, "We need to be taken from our own environment and exposed to a new culture, a new way of thinking, to understand more deeply our own roots." I agree with him. Flying 26 hours to a culture that predates Christianity by 800 years and is immersed in Buddhist philosophy built on compassion, awakened states and karma, is a different place than our environment here in Canada.

Our most robust, arduous and maybe

rewarding day was a 700-metre vertical trek to a well-recognized pagoda that was surrounded by 1,200 Buddhas at its mountain base. As we scaled to the peak in extremely warm temperatures, we mused about finding nirvana. Our light-hearted discussions proved to be great conversation as we immersed ourselves in this foreign environment. I really believe understanding one another globally brings more peace to the planet.

Being together in this country, we could start to recognize similarities between our East and West history and faiths. In doing so, I was reminded why I'm so proud of my Mennonite roots. Being surrounded by such a team of outstanding individuals from across Canada and the U.S. was an enriching highlight of this experience.

Cycling the roads alongside marching monks greeting one another with *mingalaba* (hello in Burmese) will be a memory I'll never forget. I witnessed such a deep peace in the eyes of so many Burmese people, and their smiles were



PHOTO BY BYRON SHANTZ

Ashlyn Shantz of Heidelberg, Ont., right, shares a meal together with a local in the village of Win Poat, Myanmar.

infectious. They live with such a life of simplicity, something I feel that we can greatly learn from these people.

The village of Win Poat was a magical moment for our group. We were greeted by village dancers dressed in ethnic tribal garb, accompanied by local hand drummers who shared their ancestral heritage through movement and song. An entire village completely off the grid





PHOTO BY DEAN SHOEMAKER

On a cultural stop along the way, Peter Dueck, in the green vest, stands outside the Saddam Cave in front of a white 'royal elephant' waiting for the rest of the group to arrive. Inside the cave are dozens of Buddha statues and pagodas.

of any sign of modern technology, but deeply vibrant and rich in community.

We saw a country that is developing in many ways: rich and lush in agriculture; an expanding tourist destination; and warm, expressive people in a land that has almost no crime rate. It's also a country with

many challenges: climate change, farming irrigation and technology issues, ethnic cleansing, an emerging democracy and yet corruption within its government and military. Overall, the desire for advancement seems to be on their side as they move forward with new hope and vision.



PHOTO BY BYRON SHANTZ

The 20 cyclists on last fall's Myanmar on the Move fundraising tour stop at a craft village along the way, meeting the artisans who build these products from teak wood.

Our last evening in Myanmar was celebrated with a dinner with Canada's ambassador to Myanmar. It was evident how respected MEDA's impact is in this country. It's exciting to see how well this project is performing in Myanmar. It's even more exciting to know that this is not grant money, but rather loan money, creating ownership and responsibility in the farmers managing their micro-finance loans. ☺

With the money raised by the November cyclists (more than \$120,000) and other previous events, MEDA's Myanmar on the Move initiative exceeded its goal of \$600,000 by 10 percent.

PHOTO BY DEAN SHOEMAKER

The Myanmar on the Move team stops for a water break and photo. The scenery throughout Kayin State is stunning.





VINELAND UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO BY LOUISE WIDEMAN

Liz Koop, left, and Lily Friesen, members of Vineland United Mennonite Church quilting group in St. Catharines, helped create 94 gift bags that were filled with shampoo, deodorant, soap, a chocolate bar, Gideon's New Testament by the church's connecting and caring team. The bags were dedicated on Dec. 10, 2017, and then given to Westview Mennonite Fellowship's Centre4Women.

Project Ploughshares' coalition wins 2017 Nobel Peace Prize

Hopes to pressure Canada to sign global nuclear weapons ban

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Mennonite Central Committee

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) congratulates Project Ploughshares, a member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), on winning the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize. Project Ploughshares, of which MCC is a member, was started 42 years ago by a former MCC service worker, Ernie Regehr.

Cesar Jaramillo, the executive director of

Project Ploughshares, says Project Ploughshares is honoured to be one of several civil society organizations affiliated with ICAN that are recipients of the prize. The coalition was awarded the prize for its role in negotiating the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

"The general feeling is one of optimism that the Nobel Peace Prize will serve to be

a rallying point for further work on nuclear disarmament," he says. "I think it's going to inject the movement with some welcome momentum."

Last July, the UN passed the treaty, the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, with the goal of their total elimination. More than 50 countries have signed the treaty.

For those nations that are party to it, the treaty prohibits a full range of nuclear-weapon-related activities, including undertaking to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as well as the use or threat of use of these weapons.

But the U.S. and other nuclear-armed countries and their allies, including Canada, stayed out of the negotiations. Many have said they do not intend to ever become party to it. The escalating tensions between the U.S. and North Korea prove there is still work to be done.

"The risks are real and it has little to do with the actor," says Jaramillo. "It doesn't matter who holds the weapon. There's no right hands for wrong weapons."

He says Project Ploughshares is inspired to keep pushing Canada to sign on to the treaty and to work toward nuclear disarmament. "We want to continue to make a contribution with our research, our advocacy [and] our publications to inform debate on issues of international security," he says. "We hope to continue to be a credible stakeholder in the policy process, both in Canada and internationally." ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAULA CARDENAS

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) campaigners Setsuko Thurlow, left, Ray Acheson and Cesar Jaramillo call on Canada to join a UN nuclear weapons ban at a press conference in Toronto on Oct. 27, 2017. Jaramillo is the executive director of Project Ploughshares, a Mennonite Central Committee partner.

Questions for 2018

BY WILL BRAUN
Senior Writer

Mennonite Church Canada

- The Being a Faithful Church (2009-16) and Future Directions processes (2013-17) are officially over. What will our congregations collectively focus on next?
- What will happen with International Witness? Funding for the equivalent of 11 full-time salaries is in place until June. Two plan to complete their terms in 2018. Will congregations and regional churches maintain this work?
- What differences will congregations notice as a result of Future Directions restructuring?
- Tensions run high within MC B.C. Will it unify or formally fracture?

Vatican

- Pope Francis made a big splash in 2013, his first year, but it seems we have heard less and less from him since. What might the 81-year-old Argentine have in store for 2018?

Trumpland

- We're a year into the Trump era, with

lots of bluster, significant policy shifts, and a 35- to 40-percent approval rating. Will Trump stir up actual international chaos—in North Korea or the Middle East or some other thorny spot—or will he just churn endless headlines while stirring the pot at home?

- Will Democrats win control of the U.S. Senate or Congress, or both, in the November 2018 midterm elections? Will they find ways to address the concerns—some legitimate—that Trump harnessed, or will they just shout, condemn and ride the waves of polarization?

Indigenous peoples

- Will the unprecedented levels of government and civil society talk about reconciliation and Indigenous rights turn into on-the-ground change for the people who need it most?

Social media

- I'm not into social media, but if I were I would follow Mennonite World Conference (MWC) online at mwc-cmm.org.

org. We are part of a phenomenal global Anabaptist communion, and MWC does a great job of sharing photos and images.

Congolese Mennonites

- In my view, the Mennonite story of 2017 was the armed rebellion in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thousands of Mennonites were among the 1.4 million people displaced. Mennonite churches and schools were destroyed, at least three dozen Mennonites were killed, and many remain displaced and in desperate need. (It was hard not to notice that the tragic death of one white American in the Congo—Michael Sharp—garnered more attention than the broader crisis.)
- To date, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has received \$250,000 in donations for the Kasai crisis from Canadian and American donors. For comparison, Mennonites spent more on the Mennonite Church Canada Special Assembly 2017 than on assistance for DR Congo.

MCC

- In terms of disaster, MCC's largest response in 2017 was Syria and Iraq. Top priorities heading into 2018 are Syria-Iraq, the Congo and South Sudan.

Quote of the year

- "Our Anabaptist ecclesiology emphasizes the local congregation till the point of losing a biblical view of God's vision: 'A multicultural global community made up from people from every nation.' That is everywhere in the Scripture," says César García, MWC's general secretary. "In our theology, the idea of being an alternative community is great, but we miss it when we apply it just locally. An alternative community to the political powers of today requires a transnational, cross-cultural, global community that lives out the Christian values of interdependency, love and equality. That kind of community is the only way of showing the world that it is possible to overcome nationalisms and ethnocentrism." ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

2017 Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN) orientation in Thailand. YAMEN is a joint program of MCC and Mennonite World Conference.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Creating a mission partnership web

Jeanette Hanson works to build relationships between Mennonites and the church in China

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

What does mission look like in a country where the church is well established? From Jeanette Hanson's point of view it's a web of interconnected relationships.

Hanson is a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker and the associate director for Mennonite Partners in China (MPC). For 10 years, Hanson and her husband Todd taught English under MPC's former iteration, China Educational Exchange. Since 2001, she has worked full-time at building the MPC web, connecting Chinese Christians with each other and with North American Mennonites.

MPC is a partnership of MC Canada, Mennonite Mission Network, Eastern

Mennonite Missions and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Its main office is in Harrisonburg, Va., where Myrri Byler serves as director.

In addition to Byler and Hanson, MPC employs two full-time workers in China. Yin Hongtao, a graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, works to connect Chinese church leaders with each other but also with North American Mennonites. Betty Zhang is MPC's official business presence in China. She deals with taxes and irons out the logistics of international exchanges, such as visas.

MPC facilitates a variety of international exchanges. Chinese young adults participate in MCC's International Volunteer

Exchange Program (IVEP). An ongoing pastor exchange program has seen Canadian Mennonite pastors visit China and Chinese pastors reciprocate. North American health professionals have visited China to share expertise on elder care, and Chinese health professionals have travelled to North America through Mennonite Health Services for four- to six-week internships. A young Chinese pastor, currently studying at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, serves in youth and campus ministry with local Mennonite churches.

Chinese church leaders are also open to exchanges going the other way. "Chinese Christians would like to take our young people as interns in their churches," says Hanson.

She admits that the language barrier is daunting, but surmounting it is absolutely essential in building relationships. MPC once had close to 40 people teaching English in China; now there are only four. But just teaching English isn't enough. "We need the people who go there to... be placed strategically where they could teach English and use other skills" to help build the web, she says.

Since 2015, Hanson and her family have been based in Canada. Although partly for family reasons, their move also suited the Chinese church's needs. "They want me



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEANETTE HANSON

Jeanette Hanson, left, Wang Jing, Sun Zili and Huang Gexin discuss the progress Sun Zili's granddaughter is making in the New Hope speech therapy kindergarten run by Wang Jing. Former Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worker Huang Gexin remains committed to this school and provides support during his retirement. MCC provides grants for teacher training and support of students.



Dr. Wang Xuefu, second from left, and Sun Wen, second from right, directors of the Zhimian Institute counselling centre, talk with Yin Hongtao, left, and Jeanette Hanson of Mennonite Partners in China.

here to maintain the web on this side," she says.

Hanson visits China twice yearly. On her most recent trip she met with IVEP alumni, supporting them and connecting them with one another. She visited with teachers in special education and early childhood education facilities, in order to find suitable exchange placements for students from Bluffton (Ohio) University. She also met with Rebecca Burkholder and Blaine Derstine, MCC's new directors for Central Southern and Northeast Asia, to talk with them about the work MCC does in China through MPC.

While in China, Hanson asked several

church leaders to reflect on the relationship between Mennonites and the Chinese church. Her colleague Yin Hongtao suggests the ideal partnership is one "where our work together benefits us both, where we grow together and learn from each other."

Yin goes on to say, "Anabaptist thinking is a good fit for China in the present, but we lack resources. You can rediscover your Anabaptist faith and the strength of that teaching as you work to share this with our churches here. We can work together in translating and developing study materials."

Pastor Peter (a pseudonym) trains young

pastors at a Chinese Bible college. He says, "You are called Christendom, but your voice is small. Chinese Christians have more passion to preach to all levels of society, but you have not even passed your faith to your young people. The attraction of secularization is great. We see it too here, more and more. We can learn from each other."

Pastor Timothy (also a pseudonym) pastors a "conference" of about 80 congregations with a total of 250,000 members. "When I hear that churches in North America are smaller than ever and people are mourning that 'the church is dying,' I don't believe it," he says. "The church is more than how many people are in the pews on a Sunday morning. When I saw your schools and social service projects, nursing homes and quality medical programs, I saw the essence of Jesus' call to be salt and light to a world in need."

When Chinese church leaders look to the future, they think long-term, says Hanson. And they see themselves as having something to offer Mennonites in North America. She says they have told her that "the next 20 years will be a time where we step up and support you, so that you do not turn into yourselves and become insular."

The challenge for Mennonites, says Hanson, will be to be open and accept what the Chinese church has to offer. ❧



Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers George and Tobia Veith, right, receive thanks for their training work from local partners (names withheld).

Ten years of being good news

Kingsfield-Clinton seeks 'to become more like Jesus in Huron County'

BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent

A decade ago, Zurich (Ont.) Mennonite Church, which was formed in 1908 by those who did not want to keep the restrictive dress code of the nearby Blake Amish Mennonite congregation, renamed itself Kingsfield-Zurich. Around the same time, it “multiplied” itself by spawning the nearby Kingsfield-Clinton congregation. Both congregations are in Huron County along Lake Huron.

According to Joel Siebert, an elder at the Clinton church, the relationship is structured as “interdependent autonomy,” and was never to be seen as a mother-daughter relationship. The two congregations contribute to each other, as one has a surplus and the other a need. For most of Clinton’s first decade, Zurich contributed finances to help pay its half-time pastor, but since Ryan Jantzi left Clinton to pastor the Zurich church, the flow of money has reversed.

The seven families, numbering about 30 people, who currently make up Kingsfield-Clinton meet weekly in homes. Facebook and a website shared with Kingsfield-Zurich lets congregants know where they are meeting week by week. With few young children currently, all ages meet together

for worship, followed by a potluck meal. Church business, including dividing up mission funds, tends to happen during lunch.

After a six-month stint of the elders taking turns teaching the group on Sunday mornings, the Clinton congregation experimented with using materials from The Meetinghouse, a Be In Christ (formerly Brethren in Christ) ministry based in Oakville, Ont., a practice it currently continues.

Kingsfield-Clinton’s size means that it can be flexible and shift quickly. A heavy rain flooded a member family’s home one Sunday and the congregation cancelled its meeting to help with that house, as well as several others in the neighbourhood.

Some Sundays the congregation meets by doing service in places like the local food bank; such times are chances to invite others from the community to join them in doing the gospel work of caring for neighbours. While hoping to speak of Christ, the congregation also wants to “be Christ’s hands and feet, to show people the love of Christ.”

For a while, the group was large enough that it needed to split in two. But with

some moving away and others deciding to no longer attend, the group now can squeeze into one home each Sunday.

While Kingsfield-Clinton would like to grow numerically, Siebert notes that growth also takes the form of people growing in following Jesus as individuals and families. He says that he and the other Clinton congregants hope “to see Christ’s kingdom come and grow in all the communities the congregation comes from: St. Joseph, Bayfield, Goderich [and] Clinton. [And] also see that people who come to Kingsfield-Clinton don’t just show up to passively sit there, but to grow, to be disciplined, to become more like Jesus in Huron County.”

Kingsfield-Clinton celebrated its 10th anniversary on Nov. 5, 2017, with worship and a potluck lunch. ❧

/// Staff change

New Foodgrains rep appointed in Manitoba

• **GORDON JANZEN** of Winnipeg was appointed as the new Canadian Foodgrains Bank regional representative for Manitoba, beginning last November. He replaces Harold Penner, who has moved on to another role within the organization. Most recently, Janzen worked as director of Mennonite Church Canada’s Asia, Europe and Middle East programs; he also brings experience in pastoring congregations in Osler, Sask., and Mather, Man. Janzen grew up in Saskatchewan and in India, where his parents served as medical missionaries for 10 years; he also served internationally with Mennonite Central Committee in India, Lebanon and Egypt. He has an educational background in plant science from the University of Manitoba, and several theology degrees. He is a member of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. He and his wife Linda have three daughters.

—CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK



PHOTO COURTESY OF MELANIE SIEBERT

Joel Siebert and Travis Lubbers play guitar for worship as part of Kingsfield-Clinton’s 10th anniversary celebration on Nov. 5, 2017.

'We need the peace theology'

Lao Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church gains full membership in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
TORONTO

Chinda Kommala is a serious Mennonite Church Eastern Canada booster. From the beginning of the Lao Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church's life, he has been relating to the regional church and encouraging others to do the same. "We need the emphasis on peace theology," he says, remembering the years of war back in Laos between various factions.

Kommala, one of two unpaid pastors, attended many congregations from many denominations, but did not feel at home until he landed in an Anabaptist group. Kommala and Ongath Phounsavath both work full-time jobs.

Founded in 2004 by Kuaying Teng in a split from Toronto United Lao Mennonite Church, the congregation has had two English-speaking pastors besides the Lao-speaking leaders. The church became an emerging congregation in MC Eastern Canada in 2006 and moved to full status last April. In 2011, the two Lao congregations were reconciled and became one congregation.

The congregation originally met in the warehouse of a family that ran an importing business, but the economic downturn of 2008 meant that space was no longer available. It then bought a garage in an industrial mall, and converted it to a useful and beautiful meeting space. Worshipping in Lao and English, the congregation invites Lao, Thai and others to join.

Lao Canadian works diligently to make inroads into the mostly Buddhist community from Southeast Asia. Offering funerals for free to families is an important ministry, since a temple funeral can cost \$20,000 plus donations to the monks involved. Kommala notes that the church funeral tries to give Buddhist survivors some hope, but it doesn't "guarantee eternal safety" for the deceased.

The culture of Buddhism from Laos is part of the reason why the pastors are not paid; instead, they depend on freewill gifts from others while giving up family and human comforts in dedication to their god. People believe that "if you are spiritual, you don't talk about money," says Kommala, who believes that if he were to broach the subject with his congregation, some would leave.

Part of the congregation's hope is to bring the good news of Jesus back to Laos, but this is tricky since only the registered Lao

Evangelical Church from Europe can operate there. To work openly means to ally with the registered church, and give it a quarter of the donations received for the work.

The congregation invites Mennonites across Canada to pray that it will have the money to continue its work and to do outreach, and that young leaders will arise to lead the congregation.

Phounsavath hopes that congregants will learn to know their Bibles better, and that "God always loves and is always doing good" to all.

Kommala hopes that more outreach to new Canadians can take place. Although he has concerns about how much of a priority support of new Canadian churches is for the nationwide church, he is still a booster for congregations to be part of MC Eastern Canada. ☸



A potluck lunch at Lao Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church includes pad thai, red curry and other 'comfort' foods.

/// Briefly noted

CMU campaign reaches \$14.4 million goal

WINNIPEG—A fundraising campaign to build Marpeck Commons, the library, learning commons, and bridge (pictured) at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), has reached its goal. “It is our great pleasure and gratitude to announce that the Connect Campaign goal of \$14.4 million has been achieved in gifts and commitments,” Cheryl Pauls, CMU’s president, said during a speech on Nov. 25, 2017, at the university’s annual Christmas concert. This has been the largest fundraising campaign in CMU’s history. Nine hundred donors contributed, with 60 percent of those contributions coming from Manitoba. The donations included those of alumni and supporters who purchased 459 engraved bridge tiles. The pedestrian bridge that spans Grant Avenue connects the north and south sides of CMU’s Shaftesbury campus. Led by campaign chair Elmer Hildebrand, CEO of Golden West Broadcasting Ltd., the cabinet included Arthur DeFehr, Philipp R. Ens, Bill Fast, Janice Filmon, Albert Friesen, Charles Loewen, Jake Rempel and Tamara Roehr. “I am really pleased with the way all of the members of our campaign cabinet stepped up to meet the challenge,” Hildebrand said. “It was a real pleasure to work with this group of visionary and generous individuals.”

—CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY



/// Briefly noted

Cluster meetings outline changes for B.C. congregations

Informing Mennonite Church B.C. congregations how they will fit into the new structure while MC Canada reorganizes was the focus of two cluster meetings in November. Meetings in Richmond on Nov. 21, 2017, and in Abbotsford on Nov. 23 drew about 20 people each, with participants from Black Creek and Kelowna joining in online for the Abbotsford meeting. “This was especially an effort to bring clarity to how donations should be given in the new structure,” said Garry Janzen, the regional church’s executive minister. “The key shift is the focus on local congregations as the centre of mission.” The primary message was that the contributions for MC Canada are to be combined with the line for the regional church (MC B.C.), and then an agreed-upon amount will be forwarded to do nationwide and global ministries. At the Vancouver area meeting in Richmond, a question arose about why congregations were being asked to give the same amount when MC Canada staff nationwide are being reduced. The response was that some costs are being shifted to regional churches, particularly donor relations, congregational engagement and receiving of donations, so capacity in the regions needs to be increased. A discussion ensued in Abbotsford about whether congregations that do not wish to participate in nationwide ministries could continue to participate with the pension plan.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN



/// Staff change

Executive director of two seniors homes retires

• **TIM KENNEL** retires as executive director of Fairview and Parkwood Mennonite Homes in Cambridge and Waterloo, Ont., on Jan. 18, after over 34 years of service as an administrator. He left his career as a registered nurse to become the assistant administrator at Fairview in 1983, becoming the acting administrator in 1988. When Parkwood was established as a Mennonite Home in 1994, he became the executive administrator there, and later executive director of both seniors homes. Kennel has overseen significant building and expansion projects for both homes. Many projects at Fairview—including the long-term-care home, suites and villas—and all developments at Parkwood were completed during his tenure. But Kennel’s legacy is not limited to bricks and mortar; he has developed warm and positive relationships with residents, family members and community partners, and he set a tone among management and staff that encourages collaboration and support. “Everything we do is in concert and conjunction with other people,” he says. “Nobody’s more important than anyone else.” Kennel moves into retirement with the gratitude of the board of directors of Fairview and Parkwood; board chair Doug Shantz says that Kennel’s exemplary leadership and deep institutional knowledge will be missed.

—FAIRVIEW/PARKWOOD MENNONITE HOMES



ARTBEAT

An unblinking look at midlife

MennoMedia

The questions of midlife are quieter and deeper than clichés involving motorcycles and illicit affairs suggest. Who have I become? Is this all there is to life? Why does God feel so distant at this point of my life? Or, to quote musician Paul Simon, “Why am I soft in the middle? The rest of my life is so hard.”

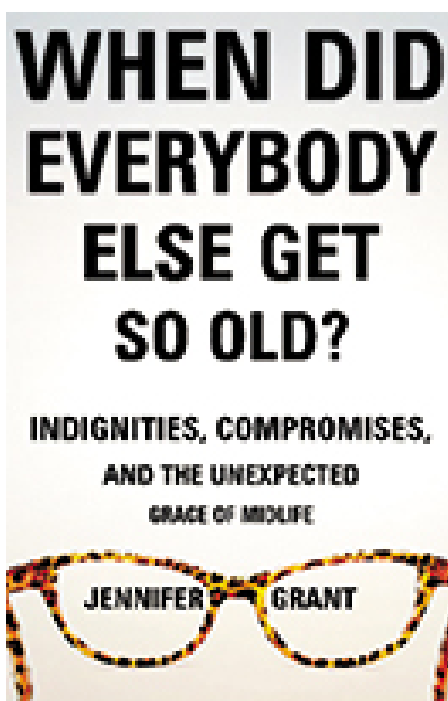
Author and veteran columnist Jennifer Grant takes an unblinking—and often humorous—look at the transitions of midlife in *When Did Everybody Else Get So Old? Indignities, Compromises and the Unexpected Grace of Midlife* from Herald Press.

From the emptying nest to the sagging effects of aging, Grant, a writer, editor and speaker, acknowledges the complexities and loss inherent in midlife. As she leads readers through the events of her 40s, stories of loss and crushing identity and faith crises are followed by chapters marked by acceptance and gratitude as she finally gets her footing in midlife.

“I started my 40s looking too often into the mirror and getting tangled up in my thoughts—my goals, my shifting identity, my disappointments, my hopes,” she says. “As I leave this decade behind, I find myself focussing less on me and more on how I might, bit by incremental bit, help to make the world more whole.”

As Grant addresses issues like hormonal swings and a teenager’s scorn, her middle-aged readers will recognize themselves in the pages. More than just a memoir, *When Did Everybody Else Get So Old?* encourages readers to live fully and embrace this stage of life.

Author Jon Sweeney calls the book a “necessary, awakening memoir,” and journalist and religion writer Cathleen Falsani writes, “What I didn’t expect was to have my breath taken away, torrents of tears followed—sometimes on the same page—by



uncontrollable belly laughs.”

Of her own middle years, Grant notes that she and her husband will be empty nesters in four short years. “Our two daughters will be gone, grown, off discovering the people and purposes that will shape their adult lives,” she writes. “As much as my heart will strain sometimes, and feel as if it just might tear apart with missing my children, this is all as it should be.”

The former health and family columnist for the Chicago Tribune is also the author of four previous books, including the adoption memoir, *Love You More*. Her work has also been published on websites such as “Aleteia/For Her” and on the *Sojourner* magazine blog “God’s politics.”

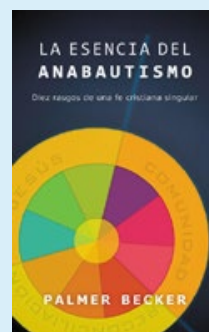
Grant is a long-time member of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Glen Ellyn, Ill., and lives in Wheaton with her husband, four children and two rescue dogs. ❧

/// Briefly noted

Three books in four new translated versions

Herald Press published four new translations last summer. Two of these translated volumes are in Spanish, one is in French, and one is in English (from German). Grants from the Schowalter Foundation and other donors made possible the translation of Palmer Becker’s newest book, *Anabaptist Essentials: Ten Signs of a Unique Christian Faith*, into Spanish and French. “French and Spanish were chosen for the first translations of this new volume in order to have the book available in the three primary languages of Mennonite World Conference,” said Russ Eanes, executive director of MennoMedia and Herald Press. In addition, Eanes, who handles foreign rights for Herald Press titles, arranged for the second edition of Alan Hirsch’s *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements* to be translated from English into Spanish. *Love in a Time of Hate: The Story of Magda and André Trocmé and the Village That Said No to the Nazis* is an English translation of a book by German journalist Hanna Schott first published in Germany by Neufeld Verlag in 2012. The book tells the story of Le Chambon, a village that sheltered thousands of Jews during the Second World War.

—MennoMedia



/// Briefly noted

Illustrator and bakery collaborate

WINNIPEG—*Where Do Sticky Buns Come From?* is a picture book illustrated by local artist and designer Jonathan Dyck and written by Jon McPhail, owner of Jonnies Sticky Buns bakery. The book was released on Dec. 16, 2017, to a packed audience in Winnipeg. It tells the story of a father and daughter who creatively imagine where sticky buns come from and are inspired to try baking their own, with a recipe the book provides. “The book inspires children to learn about how their food is made and helps them appreciate the work involved in producing it,” says Dyck, a member of Covenant Mennonite Church in Winkler, Man. Dyck, who graduated from Canadian Mennonite University in 2008, lives in Winnipeg and works for Mennonite Central Committee Canada as a graphic designer. Dyck used mixed media to create the illustrations, drawing them in ink and colouring them on his computer. “I was inspired by sticky buns and by the silliness of the concept. I enjoyed playing around with the swirl of the bun, turning it into a question mark or a vortex,” he says. The book can be purchased at Jonnies Sticky Buns, McNally Robinson Booksellers in Winnipeg or at Amazon.ca.

—BY NICOLIE KLASSEN-WIEBE



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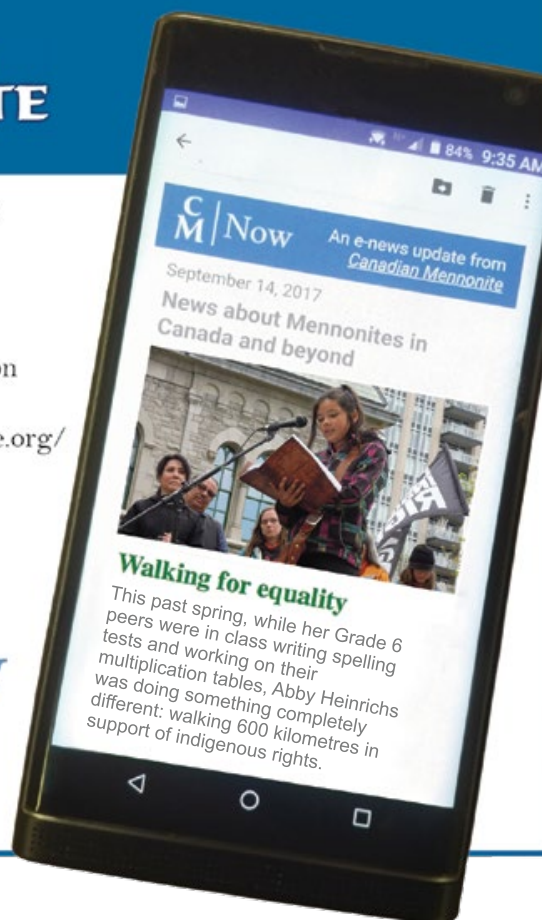
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Walking for equality
This past spring, while her Grade 6 peers were in class writing spelling tests and working on their multiplication tables, Abby Heinrichs was doing something completely different: walking 600 kilometres in support of indigenous rights.



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'More significant than my age'

Thomas Coldwell talks about his path to becoming MCC Alberta's new executive director

BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

Five years ago, Thomas Coldwell knew very little about Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Today, he's the executive director of MCC Alberta.

"I've been told multiple times, 'Be yourself in this role,' so that's what I'm trying to do," he said via Skype from his office in Calgary last month, three weeks after starting the job. "I'm bringing my skills and abilities to the table to help MCC grow into the future, in Alberta and beyond."

Coldwell replaced Abe Janzen as executive director on Dec. 1, 2017. Prior to that, he spent two years working as the peace programs coordinator at MCC Alberta.

Originally from the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia, where he grew up attending Congregational Christian and Baptist churches, Coldwell learned about Mennonites from Sam Reimer, one of his sociology professors at Crandall University in Moncton, N.B.

Reimer was one of Coldwell's main professors and his thesis advisor, and the two spoke frequently about sociology, social justice and faith. Reimer led a regular small group for students at the university called Living Justly or Just Living that helped frame Coldwell's Anabaptist faith understanding.

When Coldwell moved to Ottawa in 2013 for graduate studies, he started attending a Mennonite church. Reimer encouraged him to go to the annual MCC Ottawa Office Student Seminar, so he did.

There, he met Megan Enns, MCC Alberta's peace programs coordinator at

the time. Enns told him about Uprooted, an MCC Alberta learning tour to Mexico for students. Because his graduate research focussed on Mexico, he went on the tour in 2014. He returned the following year as a leader on the tour.

Just as Coldwell was finishing his master of arts degree in globalization and international development, Enns left the position at MCC. He applied for the job and got it.

The role involved coordinating local and international service and learning programs for youth and young adults, and inter-provincial work with MCC's advocacy network. Coldwell was also involved in community engagement, speaking in churches and schools, and supporting fundraising activities in Alberta.

The son of a carpenter father and homemaker mother, Coldwell grew up with his three siblings on a hobby farm in Victoria Vale, N.S., near the Bay of Fundy. His parents instilled in him a strong work ethic and placed great importance on getting an education.

His passion for social justice was sparked during a two-week trip to Kenya with Canadian Baptist Ministries shortly after he graduated from high school. "It started to open the door to me that I'm part of a bigger world and that the things I do here in Canada have some sort of ripple effect elsewhere," he said.

Coldwell has gravitated toward leadership roles throughout his life, spending seven summers working at a Bible camp, and

(Continued on page 28)

young
voices



PHOTO BY ANGELA BENNETT

Thomas Coldwell is the new executive director of MCC Alberta.



PHOTO BY LEAH ETTARH

Thomas Coldwell, pictured in Kampala, Uganda, this past July, learned about the Anabaptist faith as an undergraduate.



PHOTO BY LEAH ETTARH

'We want to be thoughtful in the way we do our work,' says Thomas Coldwell, pictured talking with Cecile Sanou. Sanou volunteered with an MCC partner in Soroti, Uganda, during 2016-17.



PHOTO BY ANGELA BENNETT

Thomas Coldwell replaced Abe Janzen as executive director of MCC Alberta last month.



PHOTO BY DON KLAASSEN

MCC's work is inspired by the greatest commandment, says Thomas Coldwell, pictured walking in Hebron this past November with MCC worker Seth Malone.



PHOTO BY AARON EPP

Steph Chandler Burns recently served as interim pastor at Bloomingdale (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

(Continued from page 27)

serving as a resident assistant at Crandall.

He hopes that his relatively young age will help guide MCC into the future, especially when inviting younger generations to become involved with the work it does.

“Kindness, listening, being part of the community and being thoughtful about this work all go a long way,” he said, adding that he has the ability to work collaboratively with MCC staff, its board of directors and its supporters, to further the work of MCC. “I hope that’s more significant than

want to be thoughtful in the way we do our work and the way we adapt into the contexts we’re moving toward.”

Part of what will help MCC do that, he added, is keeping an eye on what’s worked well over the last 100 years.

He recalled a visit last July to a school in Uganda that MCC partners with. The school’s headmistress, Sister Sophia, told Coldwell that what she likes about Mennonites is that they are all over the world serving others because of their heart for God and their heart for humanity.

[Coldwell] hopes that his relatively young age will help guide MCC into the future, especially when inviting younger generations to become involved with the work it does.

my age.”

Coldwell and his wife Jen have lived in Calgary for more than two years. He attends Foothills Mennonite Church.

He noted that MCC will celebrate its centennial in 2020. He thinks about how it will enter into the next 100 years. “My broader goal is to help MCC go into the future in a way that is inviting, thoughtful and welcoming to people,” he said. “We

“It was just a nice reminder—an encouragement from Sister Sophia in Uganda—to continue to be true to why this thing called MCC began, which is to love God and to love our local and international neighbours,” Coldwell said. “For me, that’s what this is about. This is about the greatest commandment.” ❧

More than a label

Steph Chandler Burns’ faith journey has included leaving, and coming back to, the church

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

For Steph Chandler Burns of Kitchener, Ont., talking about her faith journey means talking about coming out as a queer individual.

“I am a bisexual woman and I am a woman created in God’s image, and knowing those two things alongside each other has taught me a lot about who I am in God,” she says.

Because she is married to a man, most people assume she is straight. “I am in a committed marriage and so sometimes I feel

invisible in my journey as a queer person,” says the 27-year-old, who recently completed a four-month stint as interim pastor at Bloomingdale (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

She finds it difficult at times fitting in to the church because of her sexual orientation, but it’s not the first time she’s had trouble fitting in. As an undergraduate student, she became frustrated with God and the church, so she stopped attending.

Growing up, she loved going to church. Her father struggled with substance abuse

issues and was in and out of the family's life, so her mother did what she could to make ends meet. On Sundays, Chandler Burns's maternal grandparents would take her to Bloomingdale Mennonite.

"My whole family really taught me the importance of love, and that God loves you," she says.

As a teenager, she began playing music in church and leading worship. At 16, feeling a call to potentially work in the church someday, she participated in 'Explore, the summer youth leadership development program at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

After graduating from high school, she enrolled at the University of Waterloo

okay to have these questions, and that if anyone can handle my anger, God can," she says. "That ended up being really healing."

In 2015, she returned to school, graduating from Conrad Grebel University College last fall with a master of theological studies degree. Many of the papers she wrote while studying at Grebel explored sexuality, identity and how the ways that humans are uniquely created might have something to say about who God is.

"We really like our labels for God—'He,' 'King,' 'Saviour,' or 'mother'—a lot of the time, but how does God fall in between those categories?" she asks. "How is God all of those things at the same time? Language about God is always going to fall

*'Language about God is always going to fall short and need correctives, but how do we talk about God in a fuller way?'
(Steph Chandler Burns)*

with the intention of pursuing a degree in religious studies. During her first semester, her father passed away.

"My dad and I had just started to patch up some of our relationship, so it was very difficult," she says. "I ended up walking away from the church partly because of my anger at God."

As her studies progressed, she changed her focus to social work. After she graduated with a bachelor of arts degree with a major in social development and minor in peace and conflict studies, something unexpected happened.

"Despite sometimes wanting to leave spirituality and Christianity and the church, there was something about God that kept pulling me back," she says. "I remember finishing my undergrad and winding up back at my home congregation, even though I don't remember making the decision to go back to church. All of a sudden I was on the worship team, even though I don't remember making that decision, either."

She talked to the church's pastor about her faith journey, why she had left the church, and the anger and hurt she felt when her father passed away.

"I remember feeling such a sense of peace from that conversation—that it's

short and need correctives, but how do we talk about God in a fuller way?"

She points to Exodus 3, where Moses encounters the burning bush and God introduces Godself as "*I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.*" God later tells Moses, "*I am who I am.*"

"In that passage, I really see God trying to be bigger than the categories we put on God," she says. "The takeaway to think about is . . . how might someone else's picture of God make our picture of God bigger and more accurate and more meaningful? How can we expand who God is by listening to others' experiences?"

Now that her interim pastoral role at Bloomingdale is over, Chandler Burns is open to finding pastoral work at another congregation. Currently, she works part-time at a social justice organization connecting individuals who are on parole with supportive faith communities. The job has taught her not to put labels on people, and to get to know them instead.

"We miss so much by putting a label on a person," she concludes. Whether it's sexual orientation or a criminal past, "you can't just limit one person to one piece of who they are." ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPH CHANDLER BURNS
'Sometimes I feel invisible in my journey as a queer person,' says Steph Chandler Burns, pictured with Greg, her partner.



CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PHOTO
Steph Chandler Burns, front row second from left, graduated with a master of theological studies degree from Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., this past fall.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPH CHANDLER BURNS
'We miss so much by putting a label on a person,' Steph Chandler Burns says. 'You can't just limit one person to one piece of who they are.'

Calendar

British Columbia

- Feb. 18:** MC B.C. and Columbia Bible College join Western Hmong Mennonite Church, Maple Ridge, in worship.
- Feb. 23:** Lead conference, *Made in the Image of God: Engaging Prejudice, Power and Privilege*, at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack, beginning at 8:30 a.m.
- Feb. 24:** MC B.C. annual meeting, at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack.
- April 14:** Reading the Bible conference, location and time to be announced.
- May 5:** Women's Inspirational Day, location and time to be announced.

Alberta

- June 30-July 1:** Springridge Mennonite Church, Pincher Creek, is celebrating its 90th anniversary. All past and present congregants are invited. RSVP to delwillms@gmail.com. For more information, visit springridgemennonitechurch.ab.ca.

Manitoba

- Jan. 26:** Opening of exhibition of art from First Nation communities, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit gallery.mennonitechurch.ca.
- Feb. 2:** CMU campus visit day. For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.

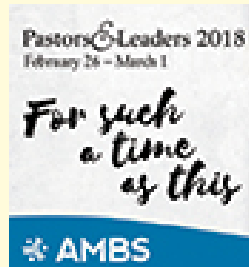
- Feb. 5:** Face2Face panel discussion at CMU's Marpeck Commons, at 7 p.m. Topic: "Is 'sola scriptura' a Reformation slogan that matters in the church today?"
- Feb. 6-7:** ReNew: Resourcing Pastors for Ministry conference for pastors and all those involved in ministry, at CMU, Winnipeg. Topic: "Delighting in Scripture: Sola Scriptura at 500 years." Includes a half-day preaching clinic. For more information, visit cmu.ca/renew.
- Feb. 9:** Discover Outtatown visit day, at CMU, Winnipeg. For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.
- Feb. 11:** CMU Men's Chorus festival, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.
- Feb. 15:** CMU presents the 13th-annual Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition, in the Laudamus Auditorium, at 7 p.m.
- Feb. 16:** Grade 10 to 12 students are invited to dance the night away at Mennonite Heritage Village' "Guys and Dolls Gala," from 8 p.m. to midnight. Advance tickets required; tickets available at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach.
- Feb. 17:** Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, hosts a winter carnival, from

- 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Activities include skating, snowman-building contest, sleigh rides, bonfire, hot chocolate bar, tug of war and snow bowling. Fun for all ages.
- March 2:** Music Therapy Coffee House, at CMU's Great Hall, at 7 p.m.
- March 9:** CMU campus visit day. For more information, visit cmu.ca/campusvisit.
- March 15-16:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate junior-high students present three one-act plays, at the Centre culturel franco-manitobain.
- March 16:** Opening of exhibits by Anthony Chiarella and Faye Hall at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit gallery.mennonitechurch.ca.
- March 21:** Bach on the Bridge, at CMU's pedestrian bridge.
- March 25:** Bells and Whistles with Strings Attached, featuring CMU's handbell ensemble and guitar ensemble, in CMU's Laudamus Auditorium, at 7 p.m.
- March 27:** CMU open house. For more information, visit cmu.ca/openhouse.
- April 4:** CMU Jazz and Concert Band perform, in the CMU Chapel, at 7 p.m.

UpComing

Pastors and leaders to focus on hope 'for such a time as this'

ELKHART, IND.—In a time when many people are experiencing anxiety, trauma and upheaval, how can church leaders sustain hope among the people they serve, even when they might struggle with fear, hopelessness and exhaustion themselves? Pastors and Leaders 2018, an annual leadership conference formerly called Pastors Week, aims to help participants explore how "fear of the Lord" prepares them to live confidently and speak courageously at this moment in history, as well as to ground themselves in Christian practices that keep faith and hope alive. The event, on the theme "For such a time as this," will run from 7 p.m. on Feb. 26 through 12:30 p.m. on March 1 on the campus of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS). This year's event, which is hosted by AMBS's Church Leadership Center, will include worship, prayer, teaching sessions, workshops, and large- and small-group conversations. Canada's Allan Rudy-Froese, associate professor of Christian proclamation, will be among the keynote speakers. Participants will be able to choose from 15 workshops, including Hospitality and Safety; Flourishing in Ministry; Healing the Whole Person; The Immigrant, Racism and the Church; and Choosing Words for Worship for the Future Church. To learn more, visit bit.ly/ambs-pastors-and-leaders. —Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary



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April 21: CMU spring choral concert, in the Loewen Athletic Centre, at 7 p.m.

May 11: Opening of an exhibit by Gabriella Aguero at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit gallery.mennonitechurch.ca.

May 14: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate bursary banquet, at the Canad Inns Polo Park, Winnipeg. For more information, visit westgatemennonite.ca.

May 16: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate work day.

May 30: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate junior-high spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

May 31: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate senior-high spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Aug. 21: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate annual fundraising golf tournament, at Bridges Golf Course, Starbuck. For more information, visit westgatemennonite.ca.

Ontario

Until April 13: Conrad Grebel University College's Peace and Conflict Studies program celebrates its 40th anniversary with *Beyond Essays: Approaching Peace*

Education Differently, an exhibit of art-based PACS assignments completed by students over the past decade.

Until May 2019: Sites of Nonresistance: Ontario Mennonites and the First World War exhibit of letters, photographs and documents from the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

Jan. 25: Stories from Jordan: A Lunch and Listen Event, at MCC Ontario in Kitchener, at noon. Speaker: Carolyn Gray, MCC Ontario's material resources coordinator. Topic: MCC's peacebuilding, relief and development work in Jordan.

Jan. 25: Conrad Grebel University College presents the Fretz Visiting Scholar Lecture: Muslim-Mennonite Encounters in the Russian Empire, at the College, at 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 9-11: Women's winter retreat at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. To register, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

Feb. 15: Conrad Grebel University College presents the Rodney and Lorna Sawatsky Visiting Scholar Lecture: Psalms in a Difficult Time—Rhythms of Lament and Doxology, by Don E. Saliers, at the College, at 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 25: Menno Singers presents "Midwinter Hymn Sing," at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

March 1-2: Conrad Grebel University College present the Bechtel Lecture in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies, at the College, at 7:30 p.m. each evening: (1) One Generation Away: Martyrs Mirror and the Survival of Anabaptist Christianity, by David Weaver-Zercher; (2) Mennonites and the Media: Telling Mennonite Stories Today, a panel discussion with David Weaver-Zercher, Sherri Klassen, Katie Steckly, Sam Steiner and Johnny Wideman.

March 2-4: Winter camp for grown-ups (20- and 30-somethings) at Silver Lake Camp, Sauble Beach. To register, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

March 25: Menno Singers presents "Come Light and Life Eternal," at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Kitchener, at 3 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

April 28: Pax Christi Chorale presents "Die Schopfung" by Haydn, at Grace Church on-the-Hill, Toronto, at 7:30 p.m.

May 5: Menno Singers presents Come Joy and Singing, at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, at 7:30 p.m.

U.S.A.

Feb. 2-4: Mennonite Arts Weekend 2018, at Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. Canada's Theatre of the Beat will be among the featured performers. For more information, visit mennoniteartsweekend.org.

March 16-17: Mennonites and the Holocaust conference, at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. Featured speaker: Doris Bergen, who holds the Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Chair in Holocaust studies at the University of Toronto. For more information, visit mla.bethelks.edu/MennosandHolocaust.

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

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



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



Employment opportunity
Willowgrove Day Camp Director

Willowgrove, a Stouffville based charitable organization affiliated with the Mennonite Church, is accepting applications for the position of Willowgrove Day Camp Director.

The position is year round beginning April 2018. The Day Camp Director will report to the Executive Director and have primary responsibility for planning, preparing, supervising, and executing the various aspects of the day camp program.

Candidates interested in this position must be able to work independently as well as part of a team. They must be organized and have exceptional people skills. Previous camp experience in a supervisory role and education in a related field is an asset.

For more information and/or to submit a cover letter and resume, contact Miriam Reesor, Executive Director, by email at Miriam@willowgrove.ca. Applications deadline is February 10, 2018. Find out more at Willowgrove.ca.



Bethel Mennonite Church
www.bethelmennonite.ca

Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg invites applications for a full-time associate pastor. The associate pastor joins the existing pastoral team in fostering Bethel's community life and its mission to a diverse neighbourhood. Expressions of interest should be directed to:

Rick Neufeld, rneufeld@mennonitechurch.mb.ca
Director of Leadership Ministry Mennonite Church
Manitoba by February 9, 2018.

Advertising Information

Contact

D. Michael Hostetler 1-800-378-2524 x.224

advert@canadianmennonite.org



MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE PHOTO BY LARRY STONER
Menonite Disaster Service (MDS) and local Menonite church volunteers work together to repair the hurricane-damaged roof of a home near the town of Aibonito, Puerto Rico last November. Elizabeth Soto of Lancaster, Pa., has been invited to be the administrator of the MDS work in Puerto Rico, assisting local Menonite churches and MDS in planning and implementing the final clean-up tasks and then implementing repair and rebuilding of homes and churches.

God at Work in the World Snapshots



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAISAL ALI, WOOLWICH OBSERVER / TEXT BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Cutting the ribbon at the Nov. 22, 2017, grand opening of the Foundry building in Elmira, Ont., an accessible and affordable dwelling built by MennoHomes, are, from left to right: Earl Martin, a building committee volunteer; Steve Hohl of Nith Valley Construction; Vi Radcliffe, a fundraising committee volunteer; Leona Milligan, a new tenant; Murray Martin, a Woolwich Township counsellor; Brian Shantz, planner; Larry Shantz, a Woolwich Township Counsellor; Dan Driedger, executive director of MennoHomes; and Margaret Nally, chair of MennoHomes. The \$6-million, three-storey building includes 25 units: 14 singles, 9 two-bedrooms and 2 three-bedrooms. More than \$2.5 million was raised by local individuals, businesses and organizations.