

EARTH CRAMMED WITH HEAVEN

CANADIAN MENNONITE

February 16, 2009

Volume 13 Number 4

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in B.C.

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EDITORIAL

Introducing Dick Benner

TIM MILLER DYCK
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

I mentioned in this space this past September that the magazine's board was then in the process of seeking my successor. (I'm in my fifth year as editor/publisher and feel that this is about the right length of time for me in this role.) The magazine's board has been searching for who that person would be for several months and would now like to announce the next editor/publisher of *Canadian Mennonite*.

Dick Benner has spent much of his career so far as a publisher and journalist. He was the owner and publisher of a chain of weekly community newspapers for 13 years; was executive director for 11 years of Shalom Foundation, an organization publishing church print materials; and has taught journalism at Eastern Mennonite University for the past eight years.

He has also been a regular columnist in the Newton, Kan.-based newspaper *Mennonite Weekly Review* for the past 10 years and is a member at Park View Mennonite Church, a Mennonite Church USA congregation in Harrisonburg, Va.

"Dick brings expertise in publishing and journalism as well as strong history of church involvement. He is an Anabaptist visionary and will bring a

prophetic edge to *Canadian Mennonite*," says board member Henry Neufeld, who chaired the search committee.

"The depth of Dick's journalistic and managerial experience, as well as his commitment to the church, will help enhance *Canadian Mennonite's* vitality as

a forum for reporting and a constructive exchange of views. Dick is well-prepared to continue the effective work done by Tim Miller Dyck over the past five years, for which the board expresses its deep gratitude," says Larry Cornies, chair of the *Canadian Mennonite* board.

For his part, Benner says that he would "continue the level of good journalism and creative graphics by the previous editor/publisher, Tim Miller Dyck, and keep as a guiding light the legacy of the magazine's founder, Frank H. Epp, who wanted the journal to represent 'the everyday work clothes, not the Sunday going-to-church clothes, of journalism.'

"I will reinforce the goal of making the publication not as much the 'official voice' of the denomination, but focus more on the 'voices' of MC Canada under the rubric of our shared Anabaptist core beliefs and values," he says, adding, "I am hoping the level of conversation will lift our vision and improve our insights as we face the



Benner

complexities of the 21st century, especially in its appeal to the younger generation."

Dick and his wife Marlene are making plans to move from their Harrisonburg apple orchard to the Waterloo, Ont., area, where our head office is located. He is an American citizen, so we are in the process of applying for a work permit for him. Legal requirements permitting, we hope he can start by early March.

I'd like to pass on my personal welcome to him. My last day is March 13 and he and I plan to spend some days together in orientation before then.

Banquet Invitation: If you can come to this publication's annual banquet on March 7 at Altona Mennonite Church, both he and I will be glad to say hello and enjoy that special evening event with you. Please see the ad on page 19 for more information on how to book your space at this evening of ideas, food and music.

Introducing a new *Canadian Mennonite* blog author: I'd also like to welcome Hinke Loewen-Rudgers as a new regular contributor to our blog (it can be read at canadianmennonite.org/blog).

Here's how she describes herself: "I am a third-culture kid who spent most of my childhood in Tanzania and Kenya, and moved to Virginia for college. After a very brief career in the pharmaceutical industry, I switched vocational gears and did a masters in theology in Manitoba and eventually ended up working for the Mennonite Church. Now I am a Witness International Volunteer with Mennonite Church Canada and am currently in Israel. I love learning about cultures, studying language and forming new relationships as part of living out my faith."

I encourage you to check out Hinke's posts from the Middle East, as well as those of our four other blog authors.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Gareth Brandt, a professor of practical theology at Columbia Bible College, was a workshop leader at this year's MC B.C. FaithQwest event, held in mid-January at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond. For story, see page 18.

PHOTO: GERRY SPORTACK, SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Mission statement: *Canadian Mennonite (CM)* is a bi-weekly Anabaptist/Mennonite-oriented periodical which seeks to promote covenantal relationships within the church (Hebrews 10:23-25). It provides channels for sharing accurate and fair information, faith profiles, inspirational/educational materials, and news and analyses of issues facing the church. In fulfilling its mission, the primary constituency of *CM* is the people and churches of Mennonite Church Canada and its five related area churches. *CM* also welcomes readers from the broader inter-Mennonite and inter-church scene. Editorial freedom is expressed through seeking and speaking the truth in love and by providing a balance of perspectives in news and commentary. *CM* will be a vehicle through which mutual accountability can be exercised within the community of believers; the paper also encourages its readers to have open hearts and minds in the process of discerning God's will.

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:23-25, NRSV).

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In the first of his three-part feature series, 'Reading the Bible for all its Worth,' **JOHN H. NEUFELD**, former pastor and past-president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College, expands on Philip's question to the Ethiopian dignitary, 'Do you understand what you're reading?' to apply to the whole Bible, not just a passage in Isaiah, and to us as Bible readers.



Abbotsford Vietnamese fellowship expanding 16

In our continuing series on 'emerging church plants,' B.C. correspondent **AMY DUECKMAN** reports on the new Abbotsford Vietnamese Ministries, a joint effort of MC B.C. and two Lower Mainland congregations.



Found in translation 20-21

MC Canada communications director **DAN DYCK** reports on the Bible translation work of Witness worker **ANNA KOMPAORE** and the conversion of former Muslim **TRAORÉ SOULEYMANE**, who now brings his own gift of language to the work in the West African country of Burkina Faso.

New wine/New wineskins: Two reports 22/23

Mennonite Central Committee staff and supporters met recently in Saskatoon, Sask., and Kitchener, Ont., to discuss the future of the long-time organization. *Canadian Mennonite* correspondents **KARIN FEHDERAU** and **DAVE ROGALSKY** were on hand to cover the brainstorming sessions that are continuing across Canada and internationally.

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Mennonite?: **REBECCA JANZEN**

Seeing spiritual: **DAVID DRIEDGER**

READING THE BIBLE FOR ALL ITS WORTH: PART I OF III

Do you understand what you're reading?

BY JOHN H. NEUFELD



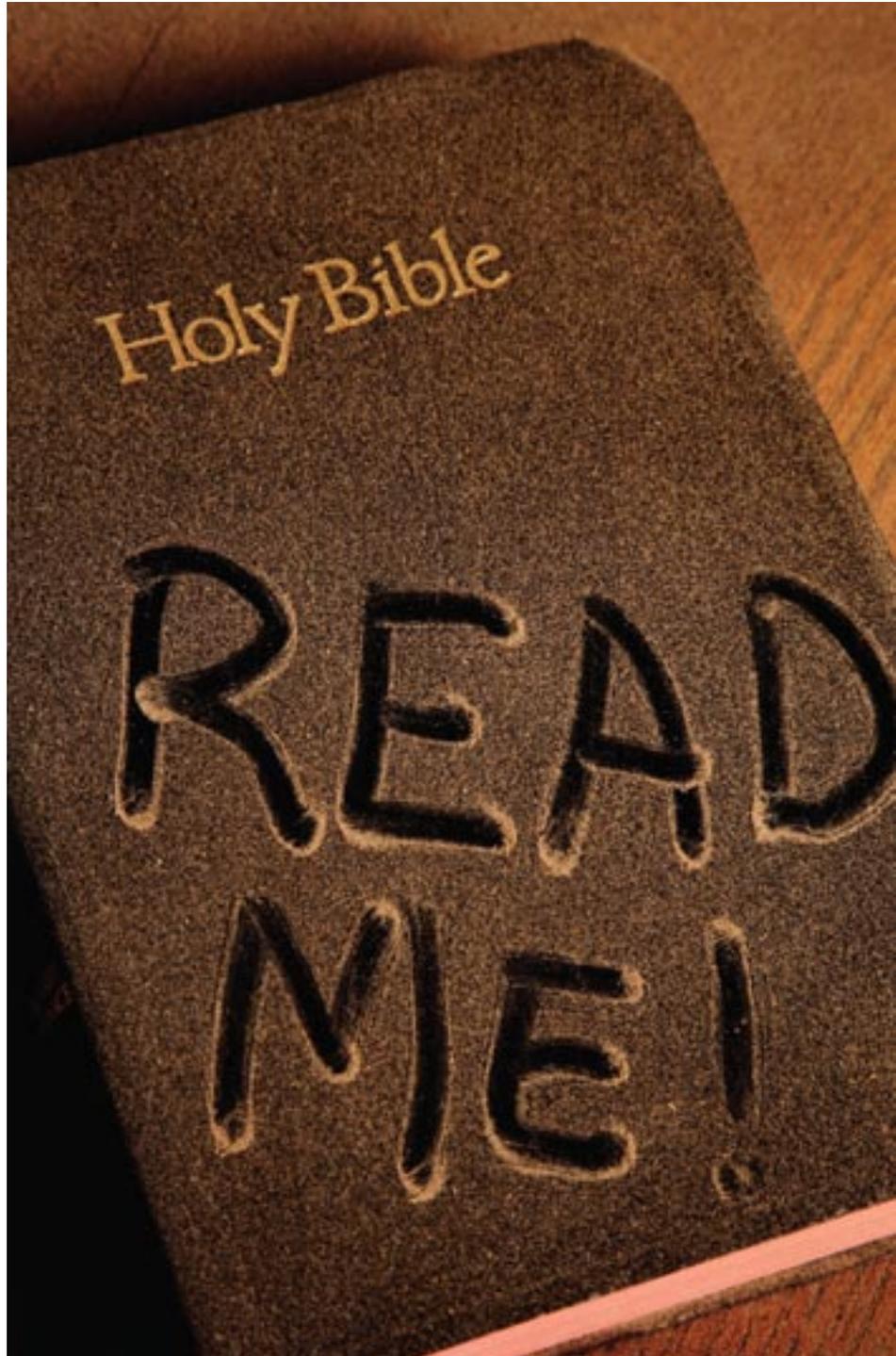
Our Anabaptist forebears assumed it was accessible to all, and reading the Bible became both their passion and their practice.

This series of articles explores the question posed by Philip when he met the Ethiopian eunuch travelling home from Jerusalem: “Do you understand what you are reading?” (Acts 8:31). This highly placed civil servant, Queen Candace’s treasurer, had come to Jerusalem on a religious pilgrimage and before he left he had purchased a scroll of the book of Isaiah. On his homeward journey he spent some time reading out loud from this scroll in a language not his own. Philip overheard his laboured reading and asked him, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The unnamed Ethiopian readily admitted he was having difficulty: “How can I unless someone guides me?” Expanding on Philip’s question—so that it refers not only to Isaiah 53:7-8, the passage with which the Ethiopian was struggling, but to the Bible as a whole—the author poses two related questions: “How do you understand what you are reading?” and “What’s the point of reading the Bible at all?”

Before I begin dealing with the three main questions, I want to mention some preliminary things that impact our reading and understanding of the Bible.

As I was growing up I learned the biblical stories from both testaments, but on later reflection I realized that, while I knew many of the stories, I had not received help to understand the Bible as a whole. Since I was 19, I have been involved in studying and teaching the Bible. I particularly enjoyed teaching a course on personal inductive Bible study, using Oletta Wald's insightful book, *The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study* (1956). This emphasis on a first-hand encounter with the text continued in my studies at seminary and in my work as a pastor. I discovered repeatedly what Dan Epp-Tiessen recently wrote, "Bible study is basically the art of careful reading."

Imagine yourself being asked the question that Philip asked the Ethiopian: "*Do you understand what you are reading?*" I suspect there would be a variety of answers to this question:



- “I take it exactly as it stands, I don’t interpret it.”
- “What do you mean, ‘Do I understand?’ Of course I understand it. I can read and I understand it.”
- “Well, I tried reading the Bible through from cover to cover and I gave up on it. I got bogged down in Leviticus. Isn’t that where they have all those detailed rules about living? It sounds pretty irrelevant to me. I felt a bit guilty about giving up on reading the whole Bible in a year. I also wondered whether reading the Bible through from cover to cover was even the right thing to do, given that the Bible is 66 books, not one.”
- “Well, there are parts that seem easy to understand, but then there are other parts of Scripture that I have real diffi-

that, even though it is necessary, it is not a simple thing to open this inspired library of ancient books, written and compiled over hundreds of years, in cultures and languages quite different than our own.

Our Confession of Faith

Article 4 of our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* continues the emphasis on the importance of the Bible: “We believe all Scripture is inspired by God . . . we accept the Bible as God’s word written . . . the Bible is the essential book of the church . . . we commit ourselves to persist and delight in reading, studying and meditating on Scripture.”

We are glad for this statement in our *Confession of Faith*. We agree that the

What a writer meant stays as he meant it, but the significance it has for later readers changes as our understanding and circumstances change.

culty understanding, and I really understand the Ethiopian’s second question, “How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?” My attitude is, unless I get some outside help, I’m not even trying to read some sections of the Bible, like some of the Old Testament prophets or the book of Revelation.”

A glance at the Reformation

In spite of some difficulties with reading the Bible on our own, many of us still feel that we ought to read the Bible. After all, it is the church’s book. Ever since the invention of the printing press and the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, Protestants have held that every believer can—and ought to—take the Bible and read it.

Our Anabaptist forebears assumed it was accessible to all, and reading the Bible became both their passion and their practice. They were known far and wide as “people of the book.” They showed amazing knowledge of the Bible when they were taken to court because of their beliefs.

Our tradition has taught us that reading and studying the Bible is necessary and good. What we are discovering is

Bible is important for faith and life, and we are delighted that we can read it in our own language and in a number of versions, but that does not make the reading of the Bible simple. Even the best translations do not answer all the questions we encounter.

How language works

One of the reasons reading the Bible is not simple is because of the way language works, not only in Scripture but in all literature. Some years ago, Perry Yoder, who taught at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, wrote an essay entitled, “How language works.” One of the things he pointed out was the difference between what is said and what is meant.

In the Bible we find simple but ambiguous sentences. For example, in Acts 5:29 we read: “*We ought to obey God rather than men.*” This is part of Luke’s account of the incident when the apostles were before the Sanhedrin and were strictly charged not to teach in the name of Jesus. Peter and the others responded with: “*We ought to obey God rather than men.*” Each of the words in this sentence is simple and clear, but what does “men” mean in this sentence? Does this refer to males

only? Does this refer to people of either gender? Or does “men” refer to people who are rulers? In this case, Peter was referring to the religious rulers.

Another example is found in I Corinthians 14:34-35: “*Let the women keep silent in the churches . . . If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is improper for a woman to speak in church.*” Again, there are no complicated words in this passage and it seems to be clear, but actually it isn’t. What does “not speaking” mean? Does it mean that women are not to teach, not to sing, not to pray, not to make announcements and not to preach? Does it mean all—or none—of these?

In considering this question, we have to look at the larger context to try to figure out what Paul may have meant when he wrote these words to the Corinthians. In order to discover what Paul probably meant, we must carefully read the context for possible clues. In I Corinthians 11, he gave instructions that women are to cover their heads when praying or prophesying in public worship. Is he then contradicting himself in I Corinthians 14? Or is he only referring to married women in chapter 14, since single women had no husbands to ask at home? When we see that he is trying to restore order in public worship here, talking about uses and abuses of tongues or taking turns, then it begins to become clearer. He wants women in the congregation to keep from talking out of turn, which would add to the confusion in a public service. Paul probably meant that women in the congregation of listeners were to keep silent, not the ones addressing the people.

I want to emphasize again that there is a difference between what is said and what is meant—or intended. Let’s consider one more passage. I Timothy 5:23 states: “*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.*”

When I read a passage like this I have another question to deal with: Did Paul intend this to be a general principle for all time or was it specific instruction given to his fellow pastor in the first century, and limited to those specific

circumstances? What Paul was trying to do was help Timothy deal with his stomach ailments and he gave advice that made sense at that time. When we give advice to someone about their stomach ailments today, we would probably suggest using Roloids or Gaviscon.

Perry Yoder has been very helpful in pointing out the difference between the meaning of a statement and its significance for later readers: What a writer meant stays as he meant it, but the significance it has for later readers changes as our understanding and circumstances change. This is especially true when we

blame me for what we had found, but I insisted that I had not created the problem for him. Everything I had pointed out was in the text itself. Careful reading of the text brought these differences to light. He was surprised that, even though he claimed to take the text literally, exactly as it was written, he had failed to notice what exactly was written.

A familiar New Testament text raises similar questions. In the earliest account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, in I Corinthians 11:23-26, we find the words, "*This is my body.*" These four simple words have come to be under-

taken literally when referring to the bread Christ was holding in his hands.

In conclusion

We believe the Bible is God's word in human speech, arising in specific places and times long past. We do not shy away from the sometimes-complicated questions of reading and interpretation. We honour the Bible by taking it seriously. Sometimes the problem lies in the assumptions we, as readers, bring to the text; sometimes the questions arise in the details of the text itself, as we have seen in Genesis 1 and 2. When we stumble across difficult questions we are to use our God-given understanding and work patiently at solving them.

In the upcoming articles we will consider a number of guidelines that will help us in reading the Bible for all its worth, to quote the title of Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart's 1981 book.

John H. Neufeld was president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now Canadian Mennonite University) from 1984-97 and before that was pastor for 15 years at First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. He lives in Winnipeg and continues to preach and conduct seminars.

I got bogged down in Leviticus. Isn't that where they have all those detailed rules about living? It sounds pretty irrelevant to me.

are reading something written a long time ago and in a culture radically different than our own.

How do you understand what you read?

One day a young man came to the church office, introduced himself and said that he had come to check out my theology. When I asked him where he would like to start, he was quick to respond, "Do you take the Bible literally or not?"

My response was, "Well, some parts I take literally and others I take symbolically."

When he said he took the Bible literally, I suggested that we take a look at Genesis 1 and 2. We skimmed through these two chapters and I jotted down a few things in two columns on a sheet of paper. The sequence in Genesis 1: creation of the environment, creation of the animals, creation of human beings, male and female. The sequence in Genesis 2: creation of the environment, creation of the man, creation of the animals, creation of the woman. We also noted that the names used for God in these two chapters are different. Genesis 1 uses "God" exclusively and Genesis 2 uses "Lord God" exclusively.

The visitor in my office was taken aback by what we had noticed when we read the texts carefully. He wanted to

stood quite differently by sincere believers in different church traditions. Catholic believers hold that the bread actually becomes transformed into the body of Christ when the mass is celebrated. Lutherans hold that Christ is somehow present alongside the bread in the Lord's Supper. Reformed churches and Anabaptists hold to a third view of these words: the bread symbolizes the body of Christ; in other words, "is" is not to be

/// For discussion

1. In what settings and how frequently do you read the Bible? Is this different from other generations in your family? What passages have you memorized? How much guilt is associated with reading—or not reading—the Bible?
2. Do you find the Bible difficult to understand? What questions do you have about the Bible? How important is it that we know the context of a passage? How important is it to know the historical and social contexts of biblical times?
3. John Neufeld refers to Perry Yoder, who said there is a difference between the meaning of a biblical statement and its significance for later readers. What do you think he means by this? Can you think of some examples where the understanding of a passage has changed over time? How much is this a way of not dealing with a text if we don't like its meaning?
4. What does it mean to take the Bible literally? What are some examples of passages that you do—or do not—take literally? What are some passages of the Bible that some might take literally while others do not?

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters sent by subscribers intended for publication. Respecting our theology of the priesthood of all believers and of the importance of the faith community discernment process, this section is a largely open forum for the sharing of views. Letters are the opinion of the writer only—publication does not mean endorsement by the magazine or the church. Letters should be brief and address issues rather than individuals.

Please send letters to be considered for publication to letters@canadianmennonite.org or by postal mail or fax, marked "Attn: Readers Write" (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author's contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines.

✉ On being (and not being) at home in the church

RE: "AT HOME in the Mennonite Church," Nov. 24, 2008, page 7.

"At Home in the Mennonite Church" was not actually my title, and what appears in *Canadian Mennonite* is part of a longer message that I gave at the Mennonite Church Canada/MC USA summit last July. Not long after that, editor Tim Miller Dyck said he'd like to reprint my personal story at some point, but I had forgotten about that until I actually saw it in print.

As a stand-alone piece, the excerpt paints a rather rosy picture of my sense of being at home in the Mennonite Church. It's all true, but it's also not the whole story. In fact, later in the same message, I said, "I began tonight by sharing some of my own experience of discovering a sense of community and a sense of shared values with the Mennonite Church. It's a wonderful part

FROM OUR LEADERS

What God is doing in our world

RENATA KLASSEN

Recently I heard the following morning message over the intercom at a Christian school: "There is nothing that you can do or think of doing that is so bad that God will love you any less, and there is nothing so good that you can do or think of doing that God will love you any more!"

Really? How incredibly freeing! Does that also apply to those people in my life who think, speak and act in ways that I find offensive, repugnant, evil or annoying? What about evil historical figures? Does God love all of them as much as he loves me?

If this is true, and this is the God that Jesus came to show us, does that impact how we follow him? If each day we hold up to God his world—or our corner of it—and envision God's love enfolding it, will our thoughts, words and actions change? As we visualize ourselves and our loved ones, our neighbours and our

co-workers, and even those we disagree with, being carried in the loving embrace of God, we do not come with requests for God to change them. We simply sit with the knowledge of God's all-encompassing love surrounding us.



I think if we all committed to this as a daily conscious discipline, we might notice some changes. Perhaps our eyes would be more open to see what God is doing in our world. It might change our perception of people around us. We might be inclined to join in God's work in new ways. Perhaps even our theological and ethical discussions might change!

Our church tells us that it is important to have a private devotional life. Daily Bible reading and audible morning and evening prayer were modelled for many of us in our homes. In recent years, there is greatly increased interest in ancient spiritual disciplines within Protestant

church circles. I believe that we have much to learn in this area, and that if we foster a greater personal connection with God, many of our interpersonal and inter-church challenges will become easier to manage.

Catherine of Sienna, a 14th century spiritual teacher, put the following words in God's mouth when she wrote: "It is necessary to bear with others and practise continually the love of your neighbour together with true knowledge of yourself. In only this way can the fire of my love burn within you, because love of the neighbour develops from love of me. It grows as you learn to know yourself and my goodness to you. When you understand that you are loved by me beyond measure, you will be drawn to love every creature with the same love with which you yourself know to be loved. You cannot adequately or directly repay the love that I have for you, because I loved you without being loved, creating you out of love. But you can repay me in my creatures, loving your neighbour without being loved first, without consideration for repayment now or in eternity."

Renata Klassen is the moderator of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

of my story that I'm delighted to share—but it's only part of the story. Along the way, I've also discovered that sometimes community can be a very lonely place. For all the earnest talk and sincere efforts at becoming more multicultural, there is still a long way to go. There are times when I've felt more claustrophobia than community, times when I've realized with some dismay that not everyone shares quite the same values or lives them out in quite the same way."

So although I do feel at home in many ways, I am

also keenly aware that "home" can also be disappointing, frustrating, painful and full of failure, a "home" where I am sometimes still treated like a stranger and outsider, where I feel I don't quite belong and am not sure I really want to. That's also part of my story, and I don't think it's at all unusual.

Whether your family has been part of the Mennonite Church for generations, or you've become a part of the church more recently, whether you're in church leadership or on the margins of church life—any of us may

NEW ORDER VOICE

Welcoming the rich and powerful to divest

AIDEN ENNS

As long as I am materially and culturally rich, I will keep reflecting on how problematic it is. I trust this is an avenue of liberation. It's also very earnest and maybe that's what makes me a good Mennonite!

My latest Christian insight is that Jesus loves rich people like me and others in my class. This insight stems from a conversation I had over lunch with a friend. As we each ordered our cheeseburgers and fries—I asked that mine have egg instead of meat, on account of being a vegetarian—I saw that he had a book sitting face down at his elbow.

"So, what book are you reading?" I asked. He's always reading books, which is what I like about him.

"Oh, I'm back to reading Henri Nouwen," he said, and flipped over the cover of his book, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Then he added something like, "I need to read more Jesus-loves-me stuff. I can only handle so much of the God-is-mad-at-you-and-your-lifestyle stuff."

As we chatted, I discovered I have the

opposite feeling. As I read the story of Jesus, I see him frequently reaching out to those in power, welcoming them to the abundance of life at the margins of society. Indeed, I feel Jesus loves me and has compassion upon me and my rich friends.

Three examples come to mind:

- A Roman centurion, who commands 100 soldiers, hears about Jesus, the healer who moves among the peasants, and sends Jewish elders to ask Jesus to heal his ailing slave (Luke 7). Jesus heals the

- Finally, Zacchaeus, another tax collector, wants to see this Jesus who draws so many crowds of poor and hungry people. Again, Jesus reaches out to him who is relatively rich and invites himself over for dinner.

They eat together—a social and religious taboo—and the proper response happens: Zacchaeus adopts the prophetic vision of the jubilee, redistributes his wealth and redresses those whom he has defrauded (Luke 19).

I find what Zacchaeus did rather daunting. I want to know what happened in his encounter with Jesus that enabled him to let go of his wealth. In Jesus, did he find mercy and love? I suspect he did. Did he discover an alternative, prophetic vision of common humanity, social justice and all-around beauty? Likely, at least in my mind.

In the story of Jesus, as he mingles with

I identify more with the tax collectors, who benefited from socially legitimate fraud, than with the crowds of exploited peasants outside.



slave and praises the centurion for his humility, generosity and faith. See? Here's a case where the powerful one comes to Jesus for mercy and is not disappointed.

- Levi is sitting at a tax booth when Jesus invites Levi to follow him. That night they "recline" together with many other tax collectors and "sinners" (Mark 2). In this story I identify more with the tax collectors, who benefited from socially legitimate fraud, than with the crowds of exploited peasants outside. Jesus welcomes the tax collectors.

those who are medium-rich, I discover a welcoming love and alternative vision. This love and new way of seeing cuts through the prevailing consumer-capitalist perspective and opens up new beauty in voluntary poverty and solidarity with the masses. I trust this is an avenue of liberation.

Aiden Enns can be reached at aiden@geezmagazine.org. He is a member of Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, and sits on the Canadian Mennonite board.

experience times when we feel at home and any of us may experience times when we feel very lonely. For our true home is not of this world at all—not in any human denomination, institution or relationship, but our true home is found in the heart of God.

APRIL YAMASAKI, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

✉ Mennonites mustn't 'spinelessly' give in to claim of anti-Israeli bias

IT WAS WITH some disappointment that I read Beth Metzger's letter ("Israeli criticism about bias must be taken seriously," Dec. 15, 2008, page 13).

Why does it seem to happen so often that organizations supporting Palestinian human rights suddenly

fall all over themselves to appear "fair and balanced" once accused of "bias" by Israel supporters? Certainly, the ongoing Israeli butchering of Gaza seems neither fair nor balanced. It is ridiculous to speak of balance or bias in such a plainly asymmetric situation.

If representatives of Mennonite organizations wish to meet with Rabbi Adlerstein or other defenders of Israel to discuss issues like balance and bias, then they should. But in doing so, they should refuse to discuss any Mennonite "bias" until the rabbi answers questions like these:

- Does he exhort members of the congregation in his synagogue to pray for justice for Palestinians?
- Does he ask them to withhold money from organizations they know will support Israeli military

OUTSIDE THE BOX

The church at risk

PHIL WAGLER

My boys and I enjoy trying to conquer the world. There are a few moments quite so peaceful at our house as a cold winter's day gathered around a game of Risk.

It's interesting watching the cognitive tendencies and development of my boys as they learn the strategy of world domination one role of the dice at a time. Along the way we discuss this flat world we are vicariously crisscrossing. They learn geography, and about different peoples and their sordid and sad histories. They talk about the type of ruler they would be—always a stark reminder that boy dictators should be on very short leashes! They learn how to make peace when confronted with a sibling who is also a rival. And they learn that unless they have an eye for protection they will very quickly possess only the eyes of a spectator.

Some churches are masters at protection. My eldest son's approach to Risk fits this category. He collects pieces and keeps collecting. Only very conservatively and cautiously does he look toward advancing. Similarly, a protective church works diligently to keep everyone feeling safe and secure. They know each

other well, occasionally too well and in too closed a circle. Their programs tend toward in-house events for the already-at-home.

There can be great strength in this, just as there can be in my son's approach to Risk. However, he never wins. While he usually outlasts his brother, eventually his unwillingness to take chances results in the steady dwindling of his resources. Soon it's just a frustrating matter of time.

Likewise, many protective churches are now finding out that the jig is up. Others will only realize this in the next decade. This type of church needs to hear the words of Wilbert Shenk, "[T]he church is most at risk when it has been present



Try as I may, there is no convincing him that a little consolidation and patience would be wise.

in a culture for a long period so that it no longer conceives of its relation to culture in terms of missionary encounter." Is this the risk your church is taking?

Some other churches are masters of advance. My youngest son's approach to Risk fits this category. The game begins and he bolts forward in all-out attack.

Try as I may, there is no convincing him that a little consolidation and patience would be wise. He is usually the first to be swept off the board, his empire banished to the annals of board game history. After first of all making great gains—but without getting grounded or leaving himself with little to protect—he may as well have not even started.

Churches that only think about advance have an incredible way of connecting the gospel to their world. They advance with ease, but quickly discover that their inability to protect well has created a disastrous vulnerability—shallow disciples who are more culturally, rather than biblically, shaped. This type of church needs to hear the words of Leslie Newbigin: "A preaching of the gospel that calls men and women to accept Jesus as Saviour but does not make it clear that discipleship means commitment to a vision of society radically different from

that which controls public life today, must be condemned as false." Is this the risk your church is taking?

Phil Wagler serves our conquering Lord with a protecting and advancing people near Lake Huron in southern Ontario (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca).

objectives?

- Does he ask them to request that Israel keep Gaza's borders open to permit much-needed food, equipment and medical supplies to enter?
- Does he ask them to pray for an end to Israel's illegal nuclear-weapons program, or to speak out against Israeli army attacks on civilian targets in Gaza and elsewhere?
- Does he ask his congregation to write letters to the Israeli government imploring it to respect international law and standing UN resolutions, and to withdraw from the Occupied Palestinian Territories and permit the return and repatriation of all Palestinian refugees?

If he doesn't, he should! And until we hear that he does, let us have no more talk of "bias" from the likes of him.

In conclusion, we Mennonites—who love peace, fairness and such ideals—are easily put on the defensive by claims like these, which question our commitment to our values. But if we are truly committed to issues like justice and human rights for Palestine, among the many other issues with which Mennonite organizations involve themselves, then we need to resist this defensive stance. Mennonites may be pacifists, but you don't need to pull any triggers to stand up on two feet and fight this fight. All it takes is a spine.

EDWIN JANZEN, OTTAWA

✉ 'The Crimson Phoenix' deserves our praise and support

RE: "WHERE IS the reaction to 'The Crimson Phoenix'?" letter, Dec. 15, 2008, page 13.

Thanks to Lorne Brandt who reminded us that we should not just write letters to the editor when we are

incensed, but also to provide encouragement.

I read the three instalments of "The Crimson Phoenix" with my two children (aged seven and nine). They were so intrigued with the first two instalments that it was quite hard to wait for the third. I found "The Crimson Phoenix" (available for order online at heraldpress.com) the most effective way I can think of to counteract the violent message of redemptive violence so prevalent in our society, particularly in the medium that Friesen has chosen for his story.

I thank Friesen for this initiative, and ask him to please continue to write and draw about the good news, the gospel of peace.

NANCY FREY, COTONOU, BENIN

✉ MCC overseas staff encouraged by Canadian Mennonite coverage

THIS MORNING AT our weekly staff meeting at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) office in Zaporozhye, we read with great interest two items regarding Ukraine in the Jan. 19 issue ("Martyr legacy a challenge to today's Mennonites," page 22, and the photograph of the Vineland United Mennonite Church fundraiser on page 24).

How encouraging for us to know that there are people who regard the plight and support the programs which reach out in love to the remnants of Mennonites as well as their many needy neighbours. People here are moved to hear that North Americans are interested and volunteer to support communities in MCC outreach. Thank you for caring!

PEARL AND GEORGE RICHERT,
ZAPOROZHYE, UKRAINE

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Ellison—Ashton Cayden (b. Jan. 4, 2009), to Chuck and Lisa Ellison, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Giesbrecht—Keira Marie (b. Jan. 12, 2009), to Travis and Shelby Giesbrecht, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Giesbrecht—Owen Thomas (b. Jan. 13, 2009), to Jake and Tina Giesbrecht, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Inrig—Rosie (b. Jan. 17, 2007), adopted by Taucha Inrig in December 2008, Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont.

Martin—Ainsley Nicole Burkhardt (b. Jan. 22, 2009), to Phil Martin and Krista Burkhardt, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Modolo—Henry Emmanuel (b. Dec. 13, 2008), to Mark and Jennifer Modolo, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Niessen—Joshua Evan (b. Jan. 24, 2009), to Julio and Erika

Niessen, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Neufeld—Bryce William (b. Jan. 4, 2009), to Sheldon and Jen Neufeld, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Neufeld—Jacob Benjamin (b. Jan. 21, 2009), to Mark and Sylvia Neufeld, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, B.C.

Parker—Caydence (b. Jan. 15, 2009), to Stacey and Dustin Parker, Cassel Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Rempel—Logan Jackson (b. Jan. 28, 2009), to Kendell and Jill Rempel, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Schmidt—Leah Beverley (b. Jan. 25, 2009), to Jonathan and Darlene (nee Hemingway) Schmidt, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

Sellar Voll—Eamon Michael (b. Dec. 22, 2008), to Martin and Isabella Sellar Voll, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., in Saskatoon, Sask.

Van Alstine—Xander Carlo (b. Aug. 23, 2008), to Ben and Angela Van Alstine, Hunta Mennonite, Driftwood, Ont.

Wall—Taylor Faith (b. Jan. 20, 2009), to Dan and Tracey Wall, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Witzel—Nathan Lawrence (b. Jan. 25, 2009), to Chris and Pauline Witzel, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Baptisms

Graham Aberdein, Craig Fehrenbach, Grace Kim, Jeremiah Kim, George McLeod, Mary McLeod—Bloomingdale Mennonite, Ont., Jan. 25, 2009.

Stephanie Cressman, Susan Hartzler—Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont., Nov. 30, 2008.

Marriages

Andres/Golding—Denielle Andres (Eyebrow Mennonite, Sask.) and Luke Golding, at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim, Sask., Oct. 13, 2008.

Cornies/Cressman—Dan Cornies and Karrie Cressman, at Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont., Oct. 4, 2008.

Dyck/Lyon—Paul Dyck (Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.) and Heidi Lyon, at The Pines, Cambridge, Ont., Nov. 1, 2008.

James/Peters—Beth James and Steve Peters (Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man.), at Winkler Bible Camp, Dec. 13, 2008.

Swartzentruber/Wonnacott—Dan Swartzentruber and Kathleen Wonnacott, at Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., Jan. 2, 2009.

Deaths

Bender—Gladwin, 91 (d. Oct. 12, 2008), Nith Valley Mennonite, Hew Hamburg, Ont.

Cressman—Mabel, 88 (d. Oct. 16, 2008), Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Dyck—Isaak, 70 (b. Sept. 14, 1938; d. Jan. 24, 2009), Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, B.C.

Epp—Matthew, 16 (b. Nov. 30, 1992; d. Jan. 2, 2009), Fiske Mennonite, Sask.

Friesen—Isbrand, 87 (d. Jan. 17, 2009), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Gerbrandt—Luella, 86 (b. May 24, 1922; d. Jan. 9, 2009), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Ginter—Isaac, 72 (d. Oct. 29, 2008), Emmaus Mennonite, Wymark, Sask.

Ginter—Jake, 88 (d. Jan. 16, 2009), Lowe Farm Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Holst—George, 83 (b. Dec. 4, 1925; d. Jan. 13, 2009), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Iutzi—Viola, 84 (d. Jan. 14, 2009), Cassel Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Peters—Gertrude, 83 (b. Feb. 3, 1925; d. Dec. 22, 2008), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Rempel—Mary, 89 (d. Jan. 11, 2009), Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Shantz—Arley, 80 (b. Oct. 8, 1928; d. Jan. 19, 2009), Wilmot Mennonite, Ont., New Hamburg, Ont.

Toews—Tamara, 91 (d. Jan. 21, 2009), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Wismer—Clayton, 93 (b. June 12, 1915; d. Jan. 8, 2009), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

Yuzik—Peter, 82 (b. Feb. 24, 1926; d. Jan. 8, 2009), Pleasant Point Mennonite, Clavet, Sask.

Zehr—Fern (nee Brenneman), 82 (b. April 22, 1926; d. Dec. 20, 2008), Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

Zehr—Lester, 70 (b. Aug. 19, 1938; d. Jan. 18, 2009), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

Correction

The parents of Joseph Riley Wiebe are Andreas and Maria Wiebe. Incorrect information appeared in the Jan. 19 Milestones on page 15. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to milestones@canadianmennonite.org including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please include birth date and last name at birth if available.

 **Pontius' Puddle**



WORSHIP WISDOM: PART II OF VI

Old wine, new wineskins

BY CHRISTINE LONGHURST

Ten years ago, *Christianity Today* carried an article entitled “The triumph of the praise songs: How guitars beat out the organ in the worship wars.” In it, author Michael Hamilton described how contemporary worship music styles were winning out over more traditional hymnody in many congregations.

If anything, some might think the “victory” is even more complete today. Almost every church has broadened the range of music used in worship, combining traditional hymns with music from a variety of other sources—praise and worship songs, international songs, music from the Taize and Iona communities, and more. Some churches have even done away with traditional hymns

Grace,” “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,” and “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” many students in the class knew very few traditional hymns.

So is traditional hymnody on the way out? Is the whole repertoire of historic worship music gradually disappearing from the worship of many congregations? Is it no longer relevant in many worshipping communities? Ten years ago, I might have been tempted to say yes. Today, though, my answer would be the opposite. Not only is hymnody not on the way out, it seems to be making something of a comeback—even in congregations unaccustomed to singing hymns.

It seems that a new generation of contemporary Christian songwriters has discovered hymnody. Some of these

Not only is hymnody not on the way out, it seems to be making something of a comeback

and hymnals altogether; it is not surprising these days to meet youths from some churches who have never used a hymnal in their lives, and who have no idea what a hymnal rack is.

This was brought home forcefully to me a few years ago when I taught a course in hymnology at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. The class of 33 included students from a variety of denominational backgrounds and worship traditions. One day I made reference to the hymn “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy” (*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 145) written by Frederick Faber and first published in 1854. I asked the students if they knew the hymn. To my surprise, only three put up their hands.

Other hymns didn’t fare much better. Isaac Watts’s “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” was only slightly better known. In fact, apart from a few well-used hymns like “Holy, Holy, Holy,” “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” “Amazing

songwriters are updating traditional hymn settings to make them more appealing to churches unused to traditional hymn styles. These new versions often retain traditional hymn melodies, but update them with contemporary rhythm and harmonization; many also include a newly composed refrain. I would love to be able to use examples from the recent Mennonite hymnals *Sing the Journey* or *Sing the Story*, but songs reflecting the trend I’m describing haven’t found their way into Mennonite songbooks yet.

Among the better-known composers doing this is Chris Tomlin, who has crafted updated settings of familiar hymns like “Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone),” “The Wondrous Cross (When I Survey),” “Take My Life,” “O Worship the King,” and others.

Other songwriters, most notably Stuart Townend and Keith Getty, are writing brand new hymn texts and setting them to singable contemporary tunes. The

goal, says Getty, is “to try and create a more timeless musical style that every generation can sing, a style that relates to the past and the future.” Many churches have added songs like “In Christ Alone,” “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us,” “Beautiful Saviour (All My Days)” and others to their worship repertoire.

Still other songwriters are composing completely new musical settings for traditional hymn texts. Vikki Cook’s new setting of Christie Bancroft’s “Before the Throne of God Above,” first penned in the mid-19th century, is used in many congregations. Ian Hannah, a songwriter from Ireland, has given traditional hymn texts like “Now Thank We All Our God” and “O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus” new musical settings. The Reformed University Fellowship Online Hymn Resource encourages the practice of writing new music for traditional hymn texts, and even makes these new settings available for churches to explore and use.

Granted, many of these new settings may look and sound quite different from the musical style of the hymns many of us grew up with. But the practice of adapting traditional texts to contemporary musical expressions has a long and rich history in Christian worship. As the Reformed University Fellowship website observes: “We have been thrilled to see a movement gaining momentum—a movement to help the church recover the tradition of putting old hymns to new music for each generation, and to enrich our worship with a huge view of God and his indelible grace.”

Is hymnody on the way out? From what I’m seeing recently, I’d have to say no. ☿



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You can hear or download a number of the songs listed in this article at www.worshiptogether.com and gettymusic.com/hymns.asp.

VIEWPOINT

Gaza tragedy a Holocaust reminder

BY BONNIE PRICE LOFTON

A half-dozen years ago, Rania Kharma of Gaza was my classmate, earning a master's degree in conflict transformation from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va. In October 2007, Rania wrote me and others she knew at EMU to ask for our help in breaking "the siege on Gaza."

Rania reported that Gaza had almost no food, medicine, fuel for cooking and generators, or access to materials for growing food or building homes. Residents could not leave Gaza for work or to further their education. They couldn't even leave for medical care.

Rania, who has worked for the United Nations and World Bank, and who disliked Hamas, wrote, "Last time I was trying to cross the Erez checkpoint to Ramallah, there was a little child . . . around seven to eight years old . . . a cancer patient who had an appointment in a hospital in Jerusalem. I will never ever in my whole life forget his little face covered with tears as he knew he was denied access."

By December 2007, Rania reported that matters had worsened.

Now a year later, the news is more horrific. Over Christmas, Israel bombed a place where 1.5 million people have no place to hide or run. They were sitting ducks in a small pond. Supposedly this will destroy the minority of men known as Hamas, who came to power in Gaza in 2006 and who have launched home-made rockets that have killed fewer than 20 civilians in Israel, according to *The*

Washington Post.

Israel's actions go beyond an "eye for an eye." Israel seemed to be saying, "If I lose an eye, I will kill you and your entire



extended family and all your neighbours. I will do so first by depriving you of food and other means of survival. I will block aid shipments from whatever source, even from the United Nations and Red Cross. And if any one of you resists violently, I will kill all of you, even the children."

Such heartlessness reflected a collective psyche hardened to cries of pain. It reflected an inability to empathize with those suffering. It reflected a rationalization that "our lives," at whatever cost, matter more than a multitude of "other lives."

In a former marriage, I was part of an

extended family of Holocaust survivors. I was related to Polish Jews who escaped from an Auschwitz work camp and hid in an attic for years. I was also related to Jews who fled Nazi-occupied Austria. I listened to their stories, and I learned of Christian neighbours and schoolmates who turned on them. I learned of cruel people in Nazi-occupied Europe, as well as a handful of kind, courageous ones. When my Jewish family members said "never again," I said "amen."

What happened to "never again"? Does it only apply to those who once suffered—and not to those suffering now? Today, the Palestinians look like the victims. They are living in what amounts to a huge prison camp, with bombs raining down.

I no longer hear from Rania. I can only pray that she and her family are safe. What news I get from Gaza comes from a young man in his early 20s named Sameh Habeeb. Describing himself as a "photo-journalist and peace activist, humanitarian and child relief worker," Sameh somehow finds a way to post remarkably unemotional English-language reports at gazatoday.blogspot.com about the devastation around him.

Recently, Sameh closed his e-mail with this simple appeal: "Hold Israel accountable to international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 33, which forbids the collective punishment of a civilian population." Almost as an afterthought he added, "Please don't let Gaza's plight be forgotten."

End the killing. God gave us brains and hearts. Please, let's use them to find life-giving solutions and not perpetuate a cycle of atrocities. ❧



Bonnie Price Lofton is a writer in Harrisonburg, Va., and a 1994 MA graduate of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite

University. Originally published in the Richmond Times Dispatch, Va. Reprinted with permission. See also report on p. 25.

Israel is bombing a place where 1.5 million people have no place to hide or run. They are sitting ducks in a small pond.

STORIES OF FAITH IN LIFE

Uncovering buried treasure

BY JACK DUECK

Story knows us better than we know it, and story is always more than the sum of its parts. Novelist Joseph Conrad wrote that story “is to make you hear, to make you feel, before all, to make you see . . . you shall find a glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.” An African Mennonite said that “the more we share our stories, the better we see Jesus.” But without story it’s easier to take sides and to “pass by on the other side.”

On a six-month trip across Canada and the United States, I maintained a journal entitled “Being What We Mean.” In it I recorded conversations, incidents and observations about Mennonite church life. When I set out to craft stories I discovered that the journal was contaminated, rendered powerless by my judgmental categorizations. Nonetheless, my spiritual Geiger counter registered a submerged pulse of story.

In one Sunday church service, a 93-year-old reads the story of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10. In a smooth



And there, Elizabeth and Shawn (both pseudonyms) visit me in their stories:

- Elizabeth was a six-year-old in a Mennonite village in Russia following the anarchic 1917 Communist revolution. Typhoid and starvation were rampant. She remembers a mother leading six hunger-emaciated children to a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) soup kitchen. In its first stirrings of taking Jesus literally, MCC came with food, clothing and medical supplies for Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike. Years later,

in Canada, Elizabeth tells her own children about the real-life Clayton Kratz losing his life while carting food to a Russian village. Elizabeth found life and love in Canada, raised six children and now lives in a retirement home. When asked why she wants to volunteer in the local Welcome Centre, she replies, “I know what it’s like to be a refugee, to be cast aside.”

Nonetheless, my spiritual Geiger counter registered a submerged pulse of story.

bass-baritone voice he slowly releases the story until its treasure glows among us. The story portrays four men: one is physically destroyed and helpless; two are spiritually dysfunctional and



worthless in service, safely passing by on the safe side; and the Samaritan—a denigrated outsider—is all heart, all soul, all strength and all mind. My journal, with its facile categorizations, had become my ticket to “passing by on the other side.” But now the Samaritan arrests me at the fork in life’s road.

Being with these new refugees became her calling: sitting, listening, seeing and walking with them through their story—a

story of lonely, traumatized, culturally uprooted people gripped by memories of falling among thieves, rape, plunder and hunger. While a busy society may be passing them by on another side, Elizabeth steepes tea, and arranges housing and access to food and services.

“Refugees the world over feel isolated in their own story,” she says of her ministry. Sometimes I find that a good opening is to share my story. Soon they nod and share theirs.”

A sweetly pious fellow church member prods Elizabeth: “You do good work, but do you also lead the refugees to Jesus?”

“They seem too fatigued and disoriented to be led,” Elizabeth responds. “I can only lead Jesus to them.”

- Shawn was my student at Goshen College, a guileless, inquisitive, poetic young man. His Vietnam War draft notice arrived and during a sidewalk conversation he quietly confided, “I don’t want to go to war. I don’t think I can kill anybody.”

But me, I rushed off to a special session to discuss the purity of Anabaptism. At the seminar, someone insisted that no one was qualified to claim conscientious objector status unless he was an Anabaptist-believing Christian—which left Shawn out in the cold.

I don’t recall that any of “us Anabaptists” ever visited the families and attended the funerals of the young men killed in that long war. And when the question of why we didn’t was ever raised, I recall one answer: “That’s what you get when you engage in violence and don’t believe in peace.”

I never saw Shawn again. He vanished into the steaming maw of the napalm-scorched jungle. What I should have done was drop my Anabaptist piety and joined him in his struggle not to kill.

But my self-centred guilt feelings will only diminish his story. Shawn’s and Elizabeth’s stories, like the story of the Good Samaritan, abound in painful grace—an ever-present alert not to “pass by on the other side” in any human story. ✎

E-mail Jack Dueck at ejadueck@gmail.com or visit him online at jackdueck.com.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Abbotsford Vietnamese fellowship expanding

Post-Christmas celebration doubles attendance

By AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Vietnamese immigrants in the Abbotsford community now have a local place to worship in their own language, thanks to the efforts of a new church plant in the community.

A joint effort by Mennonite Church B.C., Vancouver Vietnamese Mennonite Church and Emmanuel Mennonite Church begun last April has resulted in Abbotsford Vietnamese Ministries, a small but growing group that meets at Emmanuel on the first and third Saturday evenings of each month. Nhien Pham, pastor of Vancouver

Vietnamese Church, is providing leadership. Pham comes to Abbotsford every Wednesday, utilizing office space at the church to make personal contacts in the community and to prepare Bible studies.

Abbotsford has an estimated Vietnamese population of 500, Pham indicated in a report at Emmanuel's annual meeting. A previous Vietnamese church started by the Mennonite Brethren had disbanded, so there was no Vietnamese church in the city.

To advertise the presence of the new group, Pham put up notices at Vietnamese grocery stores and sent letters to families with Vietnamese names listed in the phone book. Initial outreach efforts resulted in seven people attending regularly, four from Abbotsford and three from Surrey.

"People say they are grateful that there is a Vietnamese service here," says Pham. "One lady was very happy because she'd been going to an English-speaking church. Some had been going to the Surrey Vietnamese church."

Although at this time there are no youngsters attending, Pham says he hopes that eventually families with youths and young children will find their way to the new group and be integrated into the life of Emmanuel Mennonite.

A post-Christmas Vietnamese celebration on Dec. 27, 2008, drew an estimated 60 to 70 people from Abbotsford and beyond. Emmanuel member Vanj Thiessen, along with her husband Ernie, chose to attend the gathering as an expression of friendship and reported a wonderful time with the Vietnamese group that included musical solos and groups, dancing, Christmas caroling, a sermon by Pham,

and a meal of Thai and Vietnamese food.

Although the Thiessens do not speak Vietnamese, they were warmly welcomed and a secondary school student sat with them and translated for most of the evening. "As we listened to a group of about 10 men and women beautifully sing Vietnamese carols, I was reminded of our brothers and sisters from the Mennonite Church in Vietnam that have suffered for the sake of Christ," Thiessen says.

Some of those who came to the Christmas celebration have returned more regularly to the worship time, which more than 16 now attend. The pastor is encouraged by the increase in numbers. "We now want to train a lay leader to help in church planting in Abbotsford and eventually assume the leadership of the group," says Pham. ❧



PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN



Nhien Pham is providing leadership to the new Abbotsford Vietnamese Ministries, where attendance has increased in the new year.

/// Briefly noted

Swift Current church getting new pastor

After months of being without long-term leadership, Zion Mennonite Church, located in Swift Current, Sask., is looking forward to finally welcoming a permanent pastor. Herman Wiebe begins serving at the congregation of 137 in April. Wiebe, presently working as an electrician, comes to the job with Bible college training and other ministry experience. "He has been at [churches in] Drake and Langham [Sask.]," notes Grace Funk, Zion's secretary. The Wiebes have three grown children.

—By Karin Fehderau

Quilting retreats celebrate decade of friendship and service

By EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

WINNIPEG

It's been 10 years since Val Pankratz and Christine Epp organized the first Camps with Meaning quilting retreat, which quickly propelled the idea into an annual event.

"Christine and I planned the first retreat because we wanted to learn how to quilt," Pankratz recalls. "After that first year I was seriously hooked on quilting."

And so were others, it appears. To

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VAL PANKRATZ



Quilter Leah Janzen displays her che-nille project. She is a participant in the Camps with Meaning quilting retreats, which celebrated their 10th anniversary last year.

accommodate the surging interest, the second year began the tradition of holding two retreats on successive November weekends at Camp Moose Lake.

"We had at least 50 repeaters over the years," Pankratz notes.

After organizing 19 retreats over the last decade, Pankratz is ready for a change. As a mother of four working outside the home and continuing a home-based hairstyling business, she finds herself at a busy juncture in her life. Ten years ago, she says, "I was mostly at home with the kids and one of my personal goals with organizing the retreat was to come away refreshed, rejuvenated and having fun learning a craft."

"Ten years ago, there were no quilting retreats," Pankratz says. "Now there is a plethora of them and in many different settings—stores, hotels, etc."

What is unique about the Camps with Meaning quilting retreats is their size—approximately 20 quilters each time—and the fact that they include a spiritual component and community building. Throughout the years, Pankratz would gather stories and inspirational anecdotes to share during devotional times. For some retreats, though, other devotional leaders provided spiritual input.

"We wanted to create an environment that enabled self-growth and offered something to think about while sewing," she explains. "On Saturday evening I would have a different sharing theme. Sometimes hilarious, sometimes lots of pain was shared. There was a sense of unity and support for you no matter what your walk was. Lots of relationships have been formed over the years."

Some years, specific projects were the focus of the retreat. One group project was the completion of the "Quilt from the Lake" quilt that will hang in the Mennonite Church Manitoba office. Last year, to mark

the 10th anniversary of the retreats, a special project was spearheaded by Judy Blatz and between 40 and 45 baby blankets were made for Villa Rosa, a home for unwed mothers in Winnipeg.

Thirty-five from last year's retreat want to return this fall.

But "we still need to find someone to lead," acknowledges Bob Wiebe, director of Camping Ministries for MC Manitoba, in the wake of Pankratz's departure. "We want to continue a similar combination of project and spiritual dimension. It has always been a unique blend of activity, relationship building and spiritual experience."

"It has been good," Pankratz says. "It has been life-giving for me and it will carry on whether I am there or not." ❧



Val Pankratz, organizer of the Camps with Meaning quilting retreats for their first decade, is stepping down.

❧ Briefly noted

Bethany College students to learn about AIDS awareness

On March 16, Bethany College in Hepburn, Sask., will be inviting several Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) speakers as part of the school's lectureship series. "It's a series where they invite speakers from other organizations to . . . engage students in a variety of issues," says Miriam Ullah, youth and young adult co-ordinator for MCC Saskatchewan. Joanna Hiebert Bergen from Manitoba, Joseph Kiranto from Calgary and Dana Barand from Saskatoon, all from the MCC Generations at Risk program, will be speaking about HIV/AIDS awareness.

—By Karin Fehderau

FaithQwest 2009 unpacks deep theological mysteries

BY LAURA SPORTACK

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

RICHMOND, B.C.

The second annual FaithQwest weekend took place at Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond in mid-January. Seventy five brave souls registered for a weekend of pondering that all-too-often-intimidating word “theology.”

Under the title “Glimpses of God,” keynote speaker Harry Huebner, retired Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) professor, and workshop leaders Glen Klassen from CMU and Gareth Brandt from Columbia Bible College, helped participants consider how they study God and God’s relation to the world they live in.

Huebner’s four plenary lectures focused on the theological imagination of the Bible, keeping the church theological and reading the Word theologically, and introduced praise and lament as forms of theological worship.

Klassen, a professor of biology, offered three workshop sessions that considered ways to reconcile some of the historic

tensions between science and faith opened a path towards resolution, and encouraged participants to bring together theological and scientific learning in a way respectful to both.

True to his title of professor of practical theology, Brandt spoke of work as worship, praying all day and keeping the Sabbath as three expressions of how theology gets lived out when people enter into the “new creation” promise of faith.

The goals of the weekend extended beyond academics and spiritual growth to include fun. Many friendships crossed the boundaries of individual Mennonite congregations within the Vancouver area. In planning the FaithQwest weekend, choices such as preparing gourmet coffee breaks and serving a supper of homemade soups were all intended to support an event that fostered the building of relationships and encouraged love for the church through which participants practise their faith.

PHOTO BY GERRY SPORTACK



Glen Klassen, left, Gareth Brandt and Harry Huebner “wrestle” with theology, faith and science at MC B.C.’s second annual FaithQwest event, held at Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond in mid-January.

The event also provided a potential opportunity for long-time church members to build relationships with the area church’s most recent immigrants for whom English is a second language, as it was for many of European-origin Mennonites. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

MPN appoints new head of marketing/sales

John Longhurst has been appointed as director of marketing and sales for Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN), beginning May 1. He will provide leadership for the marketing and sales



Longhurst

of all MPN products, including books, curriculum, periodicals and other resources. He will lead the team of marketing and customer service staff that relate to churches and the book trade, and will also lead and manage direct marketing initiatives. In his position, Longhurst will be part of the management team of MPN, which serves Mennonite Church Canada and MC USA and the broader community with Anabaptist resources. In his more than 25 years in communications and marketing, he has been associate editor of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, and directed communications for Mennonite Central Committee Canada and Mennonite Economic Development Associates; he is currently director of communications and marketing for Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. In May 2006, he received an award for “distinguished contribution to religious communications in Canada” from the Association of Roman Catholic Communicators of Canada. In his new position, he will be based in Winnipeg, and work with staff in other centres where MPN staff are located: Waterloo, Ont., Scottsdale, Pa., and Newton, Kan.

—MPN Release

/// Briefly noted

Hungry bear eats bread for World Communion Sunday

For World Communion Sunday last fall, Hunta Mennonite Church in northern Ontario decided to assemble breads representing various cultures to use as a display and for communion. Having around a dozen types of fresh bread to store until they could be placed in the refrigerator at the church, pastor Polly Johnson placed them in a cooler on the deck near the back door of her home. During the night, she was awakened by a loud commotion, and found that the cooler was overturned and empty, except for two slices of dark rye bread. Not even a wrapper was left behind. The huge, muddy paw prints on the screen door clearly said "Bear!" "Somehow, I don't think that this is what God had in mind when he said in Proverbs 25:21, 'If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat,'" Johnson muses, adding, "Oh, well. We had a reverent and meaningful World Communion Sunday in spite of it all." This is not the Johnson family's first encounter with a hungry black bear; their home was threatened by a more predatory type that her husband was forced to shoot in 2006. "It's now a rug," Johnson says.

—By Ross W. Muir

From a report by Polly Johnson

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CANADIAN MENNONITE

An Invitation to the Canadian Mennonite Annual Fundraising Banquet in Altona on March 7

Canadian Mennonite would like to invite you to a dinner and evening out starting at **6 p.m. on Saturday, March 7**, at **Altona Mennonite Church**, 267 8th Avenue NE, Altona, Man.



Ken Reddig will be our dinner speaker. Ken is a fine Mennonite historian and storyteller. Now at Eden Foundation, he was director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg and is a former director of MCC Manitoba.

We will also enjoy music by Altona local singer/songwriter Paul Bergman and his band for the evening. He writes thoughtful, soulful folk songs with touches of gentle humour (more information is at paulbergman.ca).



Proceeds from ticket sales and donations will go to support *Canadian Mennonite's* ministry. Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased at the door, but please reserve them in advance by contacting area board members Al Friesen at afriesen@goldenwestradio.com or Paul Krahn at (204) 324-1612 or krahnp@borderland.ca.

Thank you!

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STORIES FROM BURKINA FASO

GOD AT WORK IN US

Found in translation

Anna Kompaore finds inspiration in translating God's Word into Burkinabé languages

BY DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada Release
OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO

In 1982, two single white North American women showed up in Kotoura, a remote village in southwestern Burkina Faso. They brought with them a few suitcases, a passion for languages and their Christian faith.

Twenty-six years later, one of those women—Anne Kompaore, a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker from Listowel, Ont., now married to Daniel Kompaore, a Burkinabé native and pastor—reflects on the early days of her work and the formation of the Mennonite Church in this West African country. “There was no church and no Christians of any kind in Kotoura, nor did people know anything about who Christians were,” she recalls.

With fondness she shares the story of Cheba, the son of the chief in Kotoura, who was assigned to help Kompaore and her colleague, Gail Wiebe, settle into village life. “For about 11 months he peppered us with questions every day about who our God was and how we believed in him,” says Kompaore of the first Christian convert in Kotoura. He, in turn, shared his new faith with several friends, and about two weeks later they also became Christians. “In this way, the [Mennonite] church was begun in Kotoura,” she says.

These early successes energized Kompaore, who, for the next 10 years, vigorously worked in Kotoura on a linguistic analysis of the Sicitte language, teaching local people to read and write the formerly oral-only language, training the first students to teach others, and then finally training people to translate portions of the Bible into their own language.

The patient and compassionate Kompaore thrived on what others might perceive as a long and tedious project, but she says, “I have always liked languages and

have always had a strong sense of wanting to do what God wants in my life.”

Kompaore then moved to the capital city of Ouagadougou, to work as a linguistic consultant with Wycliffe Bible Translators and the new National Bible Translation Association, which work mostly in minority languages. Then in 2005 she began service with the Burkina Bible Society as its first resident Bible translation consultant.

Says Bible society director Dramine Yankine, “I want to say to the Mennonite Church in North America that Anne’s work is a blessing to us.”

Kompaore’s daily translation work provides her with inspiration. “Most people have to do other things to earn their bread, but I get to read my Bible every day,” she enthuses. “This is very enriching. I have a really strong sense that I am in God’s will.”

While her work provides a deep well of spiritual strength, so do the Burkinabé people. She recalls Jean Pierre Tapsoba, an

orphan who became a Christian at age 13 and is now a translator of the Mòoré language. At that time, as the only Christian in his village, he became actively ostracized and was pressured to abandon his faith. He was even threatened with death. Fearing for his life, Tapsoba prayed for the courage to leave his life in God’s hands. Later, he survived an attempt to poison him.

“When I see people becoming Christians and having such a strong faith that God will intervene where their needs are, sometimes I sense that their faith is stronger than mine,” she says. “God answers prayers in miraculous ways time and time again. It reconfirms every time that God cares about each one of us and is present in each of our lives.”

In addition to her translation work, Kompaore has also begun teaching Hebrew and Greek at the Logos Unité de Formation Biblique & Théologique in Ouagadougou. Teaching translators how to work from the root text is critical to achieving quality translations, she believes. Kompaore also preaches in her husband’s church from time to time, and models her faith in her large adopted family, offering joy, comfort and grace as the occasion requires.

Committed to her work over the long-term means that there are now well-trained and capable Sicitte literacy teachers and translators who, she says, “know Greek better than I do.” But with 60 language groups in a country of over 14 million people, much work remains to be done. ❧

PHOTOS BY ED DOELL



Anne Kompaore and Josiah Sanogo, executive director of Logos Unité de Formation Biblique & Théologique, pose in front of the school where Kompaore is now a teacher of Hebrew and Greek.

STORIES FROM BURKINA FASO

One man's struggle for faith

BY DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada Release
TIN, BURKINA FASO

Beneath Traoré Souleymane's humble modesty lies a spiritual martyr with a deep wisdom, a broad vision and a gift for languages. He speaks French, the national language of this former French colony; Siamou, the local dialect of his home region; and Jula, the language of commerce.

Traoré first connected with Mennonites in 1985 through his work as house help for Paul and Lois Thiessen, who represented the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. His employers gradually recognized his linguistic gifts and the word spread. By 1999, he was enlisted to assist with Bible translation by Mennonite Church Canada Witness/Mennonite Mission Network workers Lillian (Haas) Nicolson and Donna and Loren Entz in nearby Orodara.

The team recognized early on that bringing biblical values to an indigenous population with an oral culture would mean developing the local Siamou language into written form—a process called orthography by linguists. Traoré soon found ample opportunity for biblical translation work among the Mennonites,

helping with pronunciation and converting the oral Siamou language into written orthography.

It took years of growing relationships with Mennonite workers, and close attention to Scripture, before Traoré became a Christian himself. "When I understood what Christianity was about, I realized that I really needed to follow the path that was the path of truth," he tells translator Donna Entz in an interview.

That path has not been easy for Traoré, who was born into a Muslim family. "There are many religions in this place," he says, "especially Islam, which has taken most of this village, so it was not an easy step for me." People also practise animist beliefs and ancestor worship.

Traoré's Muslim father, who interpreted Traoré's conversion to Christianity as rebellion and disrespect, tried forcing his son to attend the mosque. "But eventually he saw all the changes that came to my life because of Christianity, so he finally left me alone and didn't force me to do anything else," he says. "There's really no problem today between us. I am fully his son and I respect him as my father, and everything is good."

Traoré was also deeply concerned about

creating tensions in his wife's family. A move from their home village of Tin to Orodara in 2002 provided some beneficial physical distance. On Dec. 25, 2003, Traoré and his wife Orokia were baptized in Orodara Mennonite Church. Today, he reports that Orokia's relationship with her family is "generally good."

In addition to his translation work, Traoré has provided leadership to a local Bible study group since 2005. He hopes to one day teach from a Bible entirely translated into Siamou. So far, he and his group have covered all the available translated portions. "I have to struggle between the Jula and the French to explain it in Siamou," he says. "It would be so easy and so exciting to be able to explain it in Siamou. This group that I am working with right now is very interested in God's word, but it's hard because I don't have the rest in Siamou."

Exposing people to Christianity is a challenge, says Traoré. "There are people that want to put up barriers between Christians and Muslims, and we don't want those barriers. We pray that we can love at all times," he said. ☞



Traoré



Children peer in through a window to take in the Women's Day worship service at Orodara Mennonite Church in rural Burkina Faso.

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MCC 'gives legs' to Mennonite faith

Saskatchewan MCC supporters gather to envision a new future for the organization

BY KARIN FEHDERAU
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON, SASK.

It was a day of questions. Questions that Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) asked of participants and queries that participants levelled at each other, all in an effort to redefine and overhaul the well-known Mennonite organization.

To the casual observer, it was confusing why, in an organization that is already seemingly run so well, this type of day was necessary. For insiders, however, the need was clear.

"Right now, we have three different mission statements from 12 MCC boards. We need a unified statement of all," explained MCC Saskatchewan accountant Jake Friesen.

So the 70 or so people who gathered at Cornerstone Mennonite Church on Jan. 10 spent six hours thinking, questioning and brainstorming about how MCC could be more unified, as their counterparts across the country and around the world have been doing for many months now and who will continue later on into this year.

But it was more than that. MCC wanted to know what supporters think the new vision should be and, with that vision, what the new structure to carry the ideas forward could look like. Hence the event title, "New Wine/New Wineskins." If there is to be new wine (vision), then there must be new wineskins (structures) to hold it.

The room was filled with tables of between four and six participants, mostly MCC supporters and staff, and each group had to work through the same set of questions. The discussion began with participants sharing one highlight of their MCC experience. Then the discussion moved on to consider other topics: MCC's core

purpose, future trends and challenges for stakeholders.

Participants were asked to do a broad overview of the organization's past, present and future. Even with an entire day to work through the process, there was still only time for skin-deep analysis. Looking back, people shared stories about positive MCC experiences. Considering the present-day situation, they listed reasons why MCC was effective. Words like "compassion" and "non-political" were used to define its strengths.

"MCC gives legs to our faith," observed

Peter Neufeld from Regina.

"I'm so proud to be part of MCC, and I've worked for other organizations," said Marian Jones from Rosthern.

But the intensity increased when the topic of future MCC endeavours rose to the fore. Workbook questions prodded people to think of what challenges the organization might be facing in the future.

"[We need] to maintain the Mennonite identity and define it for the future generations," said one person.

Economic downturn, compassion fatigue and increased shipping costs were also offered as future challenges.

As the day progressed, it seemed clear that MCC was puzzling about its future. Where should it put its money? One group tried to limit the needs to three, but ended up with five. Needs arising from peace-making, poverty and justice were lumped under one heading, as the group argued that they were interrelated. The group's other priorities were emergency humanitarian aid and equitable allocation of resources.

As MCC works to make the worldwide organization more equitable, it was a sobering thought for many that, under the current arrangement, those who hold the purse strings also hold the power. ❧

PHOTO BY KARIN FEHDERAU



As an assignment at each Mennonite Central Committee "New Wine/New Wineskins" discussion forum, each table of participants was asked to use materials like construction paper and pipe cleaners to create "a graphic illustration of MCC's core purpose and . . . the forces and factors that give it life." Pictured, at last month's event in Saskatoon, Sask., Rita MacDonald holds up the simple craft her table designed together to show what MCC means to them.

NEW WINE/NEW WINESKINS

Prayer, worship part of MCC Ontario revisioning exercise

By DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Worship began and framed the day-long New Wine/New Wineskins exercise in thinking about MCC's future at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate last month.

Led by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario board chair Marg Nally, a leader in the KW House Churches, there was an extended prayer after the reading of Jeremiah 29:11-14: *"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile."*

Using the hymn "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" (*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 353) as a response, Nally led the group of around 110 from across the

MCC Ontario constituency in a time of prayer and contemplation. Beginning each contemplation with the *"There is a time for every purpose for everything under heaven"* quote from Ecclesiastes 3, she then phrased a question for prayerful thinking:

- For what are we grateful in our story?
- What do we need to lay down from our story?
- What do we need to pick up? What are the expectations of our time together? What is the purpose for which we are gathered?
- Help us confront what we are avoiding. Bring to the surface that which needs attention. Help us address with a full heart the intention of change.
- Recognizing what we hope for, open us to name that which we dream.

Using Appreciative Inquiry, a discernment method that focuses on what is working in an organization or in a ministry, rather than looking for weaknesses and how to repair them, Jan Schmidt of

Winnipeg, co-facilitator and co-coordinator of the New Wine/New Wineskins project, led the group through a series of exercises created to help them get to the core of their personal hopes and aspirations for MCC.

The day ended with concrete ideas for shaping and re-shaping MCC's goals, vision and structures. Ideas like giving ownership of MCC to the worldwide Mennonite community, rather than retaining ownership in North America, were tempered by questions of where non-Mennonite partners around the world fit into the picture of priority- and goal-setting.

After six hours of working together on a cold winter Saturday (Jan. 24), energy continued to flow through the participants as they completed one last exercise on the way out: placing four "dots" on charts which listed strategic activities for MCC, voting for their priorities (the tallies of which were not complete at the end of the day). ☘

/// Briefly noted

Canadians respond to hunger in Zimbabwe

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is providing 9,109 metric tonnes of food to people in Zimbabwe, in response to growing need in that country. The \$7 million project includes 6,927 metric tonnes of maize, 1,385 tonnes of pulses, 405 tonnes of oil and 392 tonnes of corn soy blend, all purchased in southern Africa. Approximately 120,000 beneficiaries will receive rations to sustain them for five months, until the next harvest. Zimbabwe faces one of the most significant food crises in the world in coming months. The UN predicts that 5.1 million people, nearly half the population of Zimbabwe, will require emergency food aid in the first quarter of 2009. There are several contributing factors, including recent drought, some poor agricultural policies, a lack of agricultural inputs, a rapidly declining economy, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and a recent cholera outbreak.

—Canadian Foodgrains Bank Release

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



John Fast of Waterloo describes his group's "ideal structure" for Mennonite Central Committee at the end of the day's last appreciative inquiry exercise.

Addictions service tears down barriers

By ASHLEIGH VIVEIROS
WINKLER, MAN.

For people struggling with an addiction, admitting they need help is often the first step to recovery. But for some in and around Winkler, that step is hindered by language, cultural and even religious barriers that make accessing available counselling all the more difficult.

Enter Mennonite Addictions Services, a counselling program that kicks off 2009

with an increased staff roster and a renewed mission to keep local immigrants in need from falling through the cracks. The program—a partnership between Eden Health Care Services and four conservative Mennonite churches—targets those who might otherwise shy away from accessing other Manitoba addictions programs. By offering biblically based counselling in their mother tongue—be it Low or High German—people are much more likely to seek out the help they need, says counsellor David Wiebe.

Since its launch in 2006, the program's reputation has slowly grown within its target community, mainly through word of mouth, says Wiebe, who is also a pastor at Sommerfeld Mennonite Church. To date, Wiebe estimates he has met with about

50 married couples (in which one of the spouses is battling an addiction) and another 30 or so single individuals.

"Without this program, these people would have fallen through the cracks because they would not have accessed what the province has offered, because there's a tremendous language barrier," Wiebe says of the mostly Low German-speaking immigrants from Central or South America he has counselled in the last couple of years.

Of those involved with the program, many have successfully overcome their addictions, Wiebe says. "The success rate would be in the neighbourhood of about 65 per cent," he notes, explaining that he generally meets with people regularly for several months. "It's often the ones who quit counselling too early who fall back into old habits," he adds. "There's a high percentage of those people that stop coming and . . . two months later I get a phone



Wiebe

PHOTO BY ANNA GROFF (THE MENNONITE)



A peaceful demonstration against gun violence in Philadelphia, Pa., on Jan. 16 ended with the arrest of two Mennonite protestors for civil disobedience outside a downtown gun dealer. Fred Kauffman, Mennonite Central Committee's Philadelphia program coordinator, and Drick Boyd, a professor at Eastern University, were charged along with five others with a variety of misdemeanors, including criminal conspiracy and blocking a highway or any public sidewalk. The demonstration concluded the five-day "Heeding God's Call: A Gathering on Peace," a joint effort of Mennonite Church USA, Brethren and Quaker congregations and organizations. Three-hundred-and-seventy-five people from a variety of denominations and faith traditions attended the gathering.

call from them: 'I need to continue [counselling]'" he says.

Wiebe's church, along with Reinland Mennonite, Old Colony Mennonite and the German Old Colony Mennonite Church, helps to keep the program connected to the regional Low German-speaking Mennonite community. And while the bulk of its clients are drawn from this community, the program has seen a wider range of people seek out its services in recent years, Wiebe says, including some High German-speaking immigrants.

Wiebe stresses that people do not need to attend one of the four churches that sponsor the program to be eligible for help. Anyone with an addiction is welcome to give him a call. "We do not turn away people that come from outside of those four denominations," he says. "We will say 'no' to nobody."

To help with the growing demand for the program throughout southern Manitoba, a second part-time counsellor—fellow Sommerfeld pastor Stan Krahn—was hired late last year to work out of an office

in Altona, Man.

To get in touch with Mennonite Addictions Services, call Wiebe at 204-362-8833 or Krahn at 204-324-4309. ✎

Originally published in the Jan. 9, 2009, issue of the Winkler Times. Reprinted with permission.

MCC prepares shipment of blankets and relief supplies for Gaza

BY TIM SHENK

Mennonite Central Committee Release
AKRON, PA.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is preparing to ship blankets and other relief supplies to the Gaza Strip despite Israeli restrictions on humanitarian aid to the war-torn region.

Israel is preventing most humanitarian aid from entering Gaza in the aftermath of a 23-day war against Palestinian militants, according to Daryl Byler, an MCC regional representative for Jordan, Iran, Iraq and Palestine.

Byler is optimistic that MCC's shipment of 3,910 blankets and 1,260 relief kits will be allowed into Gaza when it arrives in a month. "I think we're not far away from the doors being opened a little more," Byler says following an announced ceasefire in late January. "But I know that there's a fairly high level of frustration today because . . . it's still quite difficult to get things in."

The war exacerbated the economic hardships facing the 1.5 million people of the Gaza Strip.

During the recent conflict, MCC provided \$56,000 to help three Palestinian organizations distribute basic supplies to people in need in the Gaza Strip. MCC workers in Jerusalem maintained regular phone contact with staff members of MCC



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This position has a comprehensive compensation package and relocation support. Our website Mennonite Savings and Credit Union has additional information about this opportunity and considerable information about who we are, the services we provide and the values that govern our credit union. Interested and qualified candidates can direct their inquiries and resumes, in strict and professional confidence to Kaye Rempel, Lead, CEO Search Committee at ksrempel@sympatico.ca or 519-998-1014.

partner organizations in the Gaza Strip, Byler reports. "As much as the money that MCC sent, those phone calls were really valued," he says. "Often the reports were, 'The building next to our office was just shelled,' or, 'My neighbour's house was just destroyed,' or, 'One of my relatives was killed in the shelling last night.'"

Including the recent shipments, the monetary value of MCC's aid to the Gaza Strip in 2008 and so far in 2009 is \$436,000. ❧

PHOTO BY BRENDA BURKHOLDER



Parke Mellinger, a volunteer at MCC's Material Resource Center in Ephrata, Pa., folds a blanket that is part of a shipment to the Gaza Strip.

❧ Briefly noted

'Spirituality of service' speech third in contest

AKRON, PA.—Conrad Grebel University College student Leah Reesor, a fourth-year student in peace and conflict studies and political science, came third in the annual C. Henry Smith Oratorical Contest. In her speech, "Giving and receiving: Exploring the spirituality of service," she reflected on lessons learned through her experience as a peace intern in Jamaica.

—MCC U.S. Release

Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, BC

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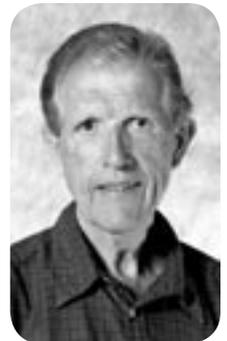
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ARTBEAT

Cyberspace journal now online

Goshen College launches new web-based Center for Mennonite Writing

GOSHEN COLLEGE RELEASE

GOSHEN, IND.

For Mennonites and non-Mennonites interested in Mennonite writing, there is now one place to go online for a multitude of resources: the Center for Mennonite Writing. A project of the Goshen College English Department, the site was launched in the middle of January at mennonitewriting.org.

"We've had enthusiastic responses from some of our contributors, and we hope that more people who care about Mennonite writing will find that Goshen College is a virtual hub for this sort of ongoing creative activity," says English professor and site editor Ann Hostetler. "We also hope that the web form of this journal will open up the possibility of an international reach and scope for the study of Mennonite literature."

The site has three components:

- A journal section that includes new writing and criticism;
- A resource section that includes writers' biographies, bibliographies and links to other relevant sites and classic Mennonite texts;
- A community section that is interactive and includes forums and discussion groups.

The bi-monthly CWM Journal, as it is called, will be initially guest-edited by Ervin Beck, professor emeritus of English, and will reflect "the best of contemporary Mennonite writing" in the genres of poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction and criticism, Hostetler reports.

"Each issue of the journal will focus on a theme of special interest to Mennonite literature," she says. "A web journal, I felt, would offer many attractions: the possibility of incorporating sound files as well as images, a venue for publishing a wider variety of creative and critical works in the same place, a greater tolerance for informal prose

and the occasional opinion piece, and an interactive blog feature."

The first issue is on "orality" (verbal communication) in Mennonite literature, and features a critical essay by Magdalene Redekop of the University of Toronto, MP3 audio files of Low German comedy, a series of poems by Carl "Stevens" Haarer, a WBZ Boston radio journalist and 1979 Goshen College alumnus, and a new short story by Bob Johnson, programming director

"[W]e hope the web format of our site and journal will attract writers from around the world"

(Ann Hostetler)

of WSBT-TV and 1973 Goshen alumnus. Future issues will focus on Yorifumi Yaguchi, life writing, Mennonite folk culture, martyrdom and Mennonite poetry.

"At present, our writers are mainly from the United States and Canada, with a significant writer from Japan," Hostetler says. "But we hope the web format of our site and journal will attract writers from around the world, as we aspire to reflect the truly global potential of our location in cyberspace."

The site was designed by Matthew Yoder, a 2008 Goshen College graduate who majored in communications. Yoder's design for the site was inspired by the traditional Mennonite folk art of *fraktur* (using a specific blackletter typeface) and invokes a rural heritage. The image inside the flower "bud" on the site's logo that resembles a circle and

a pen stroke was inspired by a traditional image for "work and hope"—that of a figure spading the ground—used in traditional Mennonite iconography.

The project has benefited from having the Mennonite Church USA Archives located on campus, as well as the Mennonite Historical Library.

"The site draws on some unique resources at Goshen College, including networks created when we hosted the second and third Mennonite/s Writing conferences in 1997 and 2002," says Hostetler. The fifth conference in this series is slated for this fall at the University of Winnipeg. "We hope that this website will be a place where the conversations and exchanges can continue in cyberspace beyond the marvellous but time-limited venues of live conferences," she adds.

The vision for this undertaking, according to Hostetler, should be attributed to Beck, who "inspired me with the idea for

the Center for Mennonite Writing on the web, because he had long been dreaming of a centre for the study of Mennonite literature at Goshen College. With technology fast becoming the publishing medium of choice, it seemed a great way to go." ❧

GOSHEN COLLEGE PHOTO BY JODI H. BEYELER



The Center for Mennonite Writing website (mennonitewriting.org) has been launched by Ann Hostetler, right, site editor and Goshen College English professor. She attributes the vision for this undertaking to Ervin Beck, left, professor emeritus of English, who will be initially editing the site's bi-monthly journal.

BOOK REVIEW

Mutual aid society a part of the past

We Bear the Loss Together: A History of the Mennonite Aid Union.
Laureen Harder. Pandora Press, 2008, 125 pages.

REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER

Mennonite Aid Union (MAU) managed to operate in Ontario for 140 years, although major changes to its constituency during that time meant it was a constant struggle to function effectively.

This mutual aid society began in 1866, when Mennonite farmers wanted an organized way to help each other in case of fire. Over the years, the organization was repeatedly modified to accommodate a less rural membership with a growing number of entrepreneurs.

Mennonite Aid Union (MAU) was created in a community that believed insurance was

not appropriate for Mennonites; they were to trust God and the brotherhood. In the case of a fire or other loss, all members would contribute so that they could "bear the loss together." Collections were taken at the end of the year and distributed through a system based on trust of fellow church members.

Because the aid union was an alternative to insurance but not licensed, it operated in a legal grey area. Mennonites were taught not to sue, but as they became more prosperous with larger businesses, especially after World War II, MAU was faced with larger risks. As Mennonites began

borrowing money from financial institutions, instead of only from relatives, the risk of lawsuits increased even more.

Laureen Harder has done careful research and recounts this history in an engaging way. She tells some interesting stories about the early years of fire fighting in the Waterloo Region of southwestern Ontario, beginning with the story of an 1873 barn fire that the Berlin Fire Company ignored to participate in a water fight that included soaking the mayor. She also describes Harold Schmidt as a colourful figure who sometimes operated in unconventional ways. Major changes to MAU came in 1999, when Schmidt retired from his 52 years as secretary-treasurer.

The history of the Mennonite Aid Union is the story of an organization related to the church that carried out a careful balancing act to keep operating in spite of difficulties. In the end, this style of mutual aid proved to be no longer sustainable and, today, together with other Mennonite mutual aid societies, MAU has become part of a licensed insurance company operating as MAX Canada. ❧



Call For Applications

Wilfred Schlegel Memorial Fund supports visionary initiatives & leaders of the Mennonite Church within Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. We are now accepting applications for 2009.

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Calendar

British Columbia

- March 13:** Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. presents "Pete: Moving Man-made Mountains," a film about Mennonite entrepreneur Peter Friesen; Bakerview Mennonite Brethren Church, Abbotsford, 7 p.m.
- April 4,5:** Lenten Vespers with Abendmusik Choir. (4) Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (5) Knox United Church, Vancouver; 8 p.m. both evenings. Donations to Menno Simons Centre.

Alberta

- March 27-28:** MC Alberta annual delegate sessions at Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church.
- April 18-19:** First Mennonite, Edmonton, will celebrate its 50th anniversary with worship, a program, social gathering and barbecue supper. Direct inquiries to Anne Harder at 780-470-0868 or aeharder@telusplanet.net.

Saskatchewan

- March 13-14:** MC Saskatchewan Songfest at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.
- March 21-22:** CMU "portable" teaching sessions with John J. Friesen, First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, 5:30 p.m.
- March 25:** MEDAffinity breakfast, at the Saskatoon Club, 7 a.m. Speaker: Marlene Froese. Topic: "How business and service relate."
- March 28:** Shekinah Retreat Centre fundraising banquet and silent auction, Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon, 5:30 p.m.
- April 5:** "An evening of quartets" MCC Saskatchewan fundraiser, Forest Grove Community Church, Saskatoon, 7 p.m. Donations in support of MCC's Food For All initiative. To register a quartet, or for more information, e-mail office@mccs.org.

- April 11:** Menno Folk at The Refinery, Saskatoon.
- April 18:** Women in Mission Enrichment Day, Hanley Mennonite Church.

Manitoba

- March 6-8:** Peace, Pray and Praise-It-Together (PIT) at CMU's Shaftesbury campus. Theme: "Face your fears." Speaker: Tony Campolo. For more information, visit cmu.ca.
- March 12-14:** CMU presents West Side Story, at Laudamus Auditorium, Shaftesbury campus; 7:30 p.m. each evening.
- March 12-14:** MCI's presents "Ann and Gilbert; Buhler Hall; 7:30 p.m. each night.
- March 16-17:** CMU presents "Proclaiming Christ in the public square," the university's annual apologetics lectures, with author and radio host Michael Coren. For more information, visit cmu.ca.
- March 18:** CMU presents an evening with Eric Friesen, formerly of CBC Radio Two, 7:30 p.m., Laudamus Auditorium.
- March 22:** Men's Chorus Festival featuring the CMU Men's Chorus, the Faith and Life Male Chorus and additional high school male singers, 7:30 p.m., at CMU's Loewen Athletic Centre.
- March 26:** CMU Verna Mae Janzen vocal competition finals, 7:30 p.m., Laudamus Auditorium, Shaftesbury campus.
- March 27:** CMU presents "Envisioning sound: Encounters with the music of Olivier Massiaen," Laudamus Auditorium, Shaftesbury Campus; 7:30 p.m.
- April 7:** Jazz@CMU, featuring the CMU Jazz Band and Wholly Jazz, 7:30 p.m., at the Great Hall, Shaftesbury campus.

Ontario

- Feb. 26:** VBS information night at Mennonite Publishing Network office, Waterloo, 7 p.m. For more information, call Kathy Shantz at 519-747-5722.

Feb. 28: Menno Singers presents Mozart's Requiem, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, 8 p.m. Tickets available at Music Plus, MSCU and at the door.

Feb. 28: Pax Christi Chorale presents "Savoury Duets," a soirée featuring wine, gourmet food and musical vignettes, Westmount Gallery, Etobicoke, 6 p.m. reception followed by live and silent auctions. For more information or to order tickets, call 416-491-8542.

March 6-7: Engaged Workshop, Riverdale Mennonite Church, Millbank. For more information, contact Denise Bender at 519-656-2005 or denise_bender@yahoo.com.

March 7: Church leadership seminar: "Hope for the small church," in Waterloo.

March 7: DaCapo Chamber Choir presents "Water: Holding mystery, destruction and healing—Music inspired by snow, flood and rain" by Glenn Buhr, Murray Schafer and Eric Whitacre; St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, Kitchener; 8 p.m.

March 14: Community breakfast featuring keynote speaker Adrian Jacobs for the Six Nations reserve, Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, at 8 a.m. Topic: "An aboriginal perspective on issues affecting Canada's aboriginal and mainline cultures." For reservations, call 519-634-8311.

March 16,17: Hidden Acres Camp annual "Grandparent/Grandchild Retreat" for grandparents and their grandchildren in grades 1 to 6. For more information or to register for one of the days, e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

March 21,22: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents "Felix Mendelssohn and the Romantic Choral Heritage," featuring the GPC Chamber Singers, Howard Dyck conducting. (21) First United Church, Waterloo, 7:30 p.m.; (22) St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Cambridge, 3 p.m. Tickets for both shows available at 519-578-6885.

March 26,27: Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies at Conrad Grebel University College.

Speakers: Ched Meyers and Elaine Enns. Topic: "Restorative Justice and Theology."

April 10: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the KW Symphony Orchestra, Howard Dyck conducting. Centre in the Square, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m. Tickets available at 519-578-6885.

April 16-18: Missionfest Toronto. International Centre, Toronto. Keynote speakers include Tony Campolo and Shane Claiborne. Musicians include Brian Doerksen. For more information, visit missionfest.org.

Paraguay

July 14-19: Mennonite World Conference assembly, Asuncion. Registration materials available at mwc-cmm.org.

Ukraine

Oct. 9-11: Celebration weekend featuring the unveiling of a monument to "Mennonite victims of tribulation, Stalinist terror and religious oppression" in the main square of the one-time village of Khortitsa, Ukraine. For more information, visit mennonitememorial.org.

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

/// Briefly noted

Special interest groups keen to meet in Paraguay

Numerous special interest groups see the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly in Paraguay this July as an opportunity to confer with colleagues from around the world. Stuart Clark, a senior policy advisor with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, will lead planning for a series of four workshops on "Refinding our place in creation." In many parts of the world the discussion of such issues as climate change and species extinction focuses on the need for technical fixes, but the root of the problem may lie deeper—in our understanding of our God-given place in creation—he suggests. The creation care group is just one example of a special interest group. Another is Indigenous People of the Americas. What they have in common is that they are the First Nations people of lands to which Anabaptists migrated and took up residence. These indigenous people adopted Christianity and are now part of the Anabaptist faith family, who will gather at the assembly for workshops and to hear each other's stories. Other special interests groups planning meetings in connection with Assembly 15 are: Latin American and African women theologians, theological educators, Mennonite historians, global Mennonite secondary school representatives, and various mission agencies.

—Mennonite World Conference Release

/// Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



WILLOWGROVE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Willowgrove is a Christian organization with a wide program offering which, includes Fraser Lake Camp, Glenbrook Day Camp, Willowgrove Primary School and Willowgrove Outdoor Centre. Located in Stouffville, Ont., with a second camp in Bancroft, the programs serve over 20,000 children per year with an annual budget in excess of \$1 million. A self-sustaining, non-profit organization, Willowgrove enjoys the enthusiastic volunteer and financial support of a large membership base and is affiliated with MC Eastern Canada. Willowgrove is looking for a dynamic Executive Director to build on its past success. The new Executive Director will work closely with Willowgrove's Board to:

- Build upon and execute a dynamic vision for Willowgrove's programs.
- Direct and supervise a capable staff, including camp leadership, teaching staff and a large volunteer staff.
- Establish and administer the annual budget.
- Oversee program development.
- Develop and execute effective public relations and marketing plans.
- Develop and participate in fundraising efforts.

The successful candidate will preferably have worked in a Christian organization, will have demonstrated success in managing a diverse organization and will have worked closely with a Board of Directors. He/she will have managed a budget and be comfortable being visible in the community, leading staff and making presentations. A strong Christian faith, including supporting the core Mennonite beliefs, and an enjoyment of working with children is a must.

Interested candidates should respond by Feb. 27, 2009, with a letter and resume in confidence to:

E-mail: WillowgrovePC@gmail.com
Attention: Chairman of the Personnel Committee

Announcement**YOU'RE INVITED**

To: Edmonton First Mennonite Church 50th Anniversary Celebration

Theme: Jubilee

When: Registration 2:00-3:30 p.m. April 18, 2009. Followed by festivities, a 5:30 BBQ, and early evening program. Worship service and potluck lunch on April 19. A DVD featuring stories and six decades of history will be available for purchase.

Contact: Please RSVP by March 1 to: ms.n.harder@gmail.com or 1-780-470-0868.

Employment Opportunities**HALF-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH**

Four Markham, Ont., Mennonite churches are actively seeking to hire a half-time youth pastor.

The successful candidate will have an Anabaptist faith, and will be responsible to lead a group of 20 to 30 area youths. Do you see yourself as organized, supportive and fun-loving with a passion for youth ministry? If so, please respond to: markhamyouth@gmail.com for more information.



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**Grace Mennonite Church of Regina
is****Inviting a Full Time Pastor or
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Grace Mennonite Church is an urban congregation of 100 – 120 members. We are an intergenerational, multicultural church.

We are looking forward to working with pastoral leadership that has a vision for church growth and for involving young adults

The pastor / pastoral team should:

- ✧ be committed to Anabaptist / Mennonite theology and practice within Mennonite Church Canada
- ✧ support and nurture a team model of working with the youth pastor and lay leadership
- ✧ be comfortable preaching, teaching, and providing pastoral care

Seminary education is preferred; pastoral experience is desirable.

Please reply to:

Joe Neufeld
Search Committee Chair
Grace Mennonite Church
2935 Pasqua Street
Regina, SK S4S 2H4

Announcement

Growing and Eating Faithfully: Sustaining Communities. Camps with Meaning (Man.) joins the Mennonite Camping Association in of-

fering programs for farmers, home gardeners, churches and consumers. March 27-29. campswithmeaning.org.

Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
March 16	March 3
March 30	March 17
<i>Focus on Summer</i>	
April 13	March 31



Snow day in London

(so Mennonites come out to play)

London, England, ground to a halt on Feb. 1 following the biggest snowfall in 18 years. Buses were pulled off the streets for a day-and-a-half, trains and subways provided very limited service, and schools (and many businesses) were closed for two days. Meanwhile, parks and front lawns were full of laughing children—and some London Mennonite Centre staffers—throwing snowballs, building snowmen, and sledding down hills on anything they could find (recycling box lids and plastic for-sale signs, for example). It felt like a grand holiday, according to centre director Vic Thiessen.

Top photo: Will Newcomb, right, manager of the centre's Metanoia Book Service, scores a direct hit on Vic Thiessen, left, while Phyllis Shirk, one half of the centre's host couple, sends a snowball in the direction of Thiessen's wife, Kathy.

Right photo: Will Newcomb appears to gleefully consider washing Janelle Thiessen's face with snow, although she doesn't seem to mind.

