

CANADIAN MENTOR MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL

Forgiveness is unconditional

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Forgiveness seems to be top of mind for Mennonites in recent months.

The Lutherans are asking our forgiveness for what they confess are the sins of their past, namely for killing our forefathers for their “errant” beliefs in the first generation of Anabaptism mid-16th century. On the same stage at the Mennonite Word Conference assembly in Paraguay this past summer, we officially forgave Ayoreo Chief Jonoine for killing one of our missionaries to the Chaco, Kornelius Isaak, 50 years ago.

The ensuing conversation has brought a flurry of responses, not the least of which was a negative reaction to a word in the cover title in *Canadian Mennonite*: “recant.” Jeremy Bergen has asked us, correctly, not to become self-righteous, or to gloat, in the process.

Critics have asked whether this was more theatre than substance, one of them going so far as to suggest that the staging in Asunción, complete with spear and native garb, was so one-sided as to be disingenuous.

One letter writer wondered why there was no response from the chief, why we didn’t hear his own words of acceptance. Another letter writer, yet to be published, while accepting their apology, is asking the Lutherans why their Book of Concord, drafted in 1530, remains unchanged in condemning the Mennonite-

Anabaptist view of the “sword” and baptism, even though its original preface renounced their persecution. “These foundational issues cannot be easily ignored,” he writes.

While all of these questions and comments are legitimate, helping us to examine all sides of the issue, I am wondering if they, too, might not reflect a sort of theological provincialism of our westernized view of this important tenet of our faith.

Who are we to qualify, or nuance, another’s act of forgiveness? In looking further into the planning of Chief Jonoine’s forgiveness, I am told by Alfred Neufeld, speaking on behalf of the assembly’s national coordinating council, that the president, Juan Ramos, wanted to witness to the gathered global Anabaptist community something that the Enlhet and Nivacle community saw as “a divine intervention of reconciliation” in what happened with the chief and the German Mennonite community.

“Isn’t it a miracle that today we can be brothers and sisters in Christ with them,” was spoken several times by the Ayoreo community. Neufeld also reported that Jonoine was very ill and weak that morning, so “his participation was rather passive.”

Why can’t we accept this “miracle” without condition? If that’s the way our Paraguayan sisters and brothers, indigenous and immigrant alike, want to express

their forgiveness, who are we to second-guess them?

And while we could wish the Lutherans would abandon their historic condemnations of Anabaptists, it is not for the “forgiven” to put restrictions on another communion’s gracious act some 430 years later, is it?

I am reminded of Peter’s question to Jesus on the number of times one must forgive an offender before getting it right. Seven times? Jesus, wanting to root out the hard, legalistic edge of the Mosaic law implied in the question, came back with an impossible, but plausible, almost comic answer: “No, Peter, seventy times seven.”

We have to assume Peter got the point: You will never perfect an act of forgiveness. It has no limits. It cannot be refined. It stands alone as a divinely inspired act of grace.

Can we likewise accept the cultural differences embodied in a speechless Ayoreo chief’s response and the Lutheran’s words of forgiveness without asking them to change their ancient dogma?

Meet your board member

Joe Neufeld of Regina is MC Saskatchewan’s representative on *Canadian Mennonite*’s 12-member board. A family counselor and retired professor of educational and counselling psychology at the University of Regina, he is the psychologist for his congregation, Grace Mennonite Church, Regina. He has held several leadership positions with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada and MCC Saskatchewan. Married to Jeanette Janzen, a retired sociologist, he is the father of two sons, Keith and David. He can be reached by phone at 306-584-9819 or via e-mail at jandjneufeld@sasktel.net.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Karalee Kuny, a Rosthern Junior College biology teacher, gets duct-taped to a school wall to raise funds for Mennonite Central Committee’s Haiti earthquake relief. In total, the school raised \$3,000 for this impromptu project on top of \$10,000 originally raised for its annual Pennies for Poverty campaign. Help for Haiti coverage, begins on page 18.

PHOTO: ROSTHERN JUNIOR COLLEGE

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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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Over four pages, read about seniors and students in B.C., Manitoba and Alberta, who raised nearly \$57,000 for Haitian earthquake relief. Plus, MCC structural engineers assess the damage, while MEDA prepares to offer long-term economic recovery assistance and the World Council of Churches praises the G7 nations for cancelling Haiti's debt.



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New blog postings

[at canadianmennonite.org/blog/](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/)

Christ-ian: **PAUL LOEWEN**

Do you know what I know: **DAVID DRIEDGER**

A collective work of art: **CHERYL WOELK**

Don't ya just hate that guy?: **WILL LOEWEN**

Giving . . . and receiving the faith

During the 2008 assembly in Saskatoon, the Faith and Life Committee of Mennonite Church Canada led a discussion around a paper entitled “Confessing Jesus Christ in a religiously pluralistic world.” A full version of the document can be found at mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre. This three-part series of theological and personal reflections seeks to further engage us in the task of testifying to Jesus. What can we learn from each other about how to speak about Jesus in our places of work and leisure?

With and without words

BY DONNA KAMPEN ENTZ



For 30 years the Muslim people of Burkina Faso were our greatest encouragement and our greatest mystery. Our desire was to share our faith in non-coercive ways that reflected Anabaptist values. We lived intentionally close to the people as a “wordless witness,” affirming their Muslim faith yet seeking creative ways to communicate “in words” the message of Jesus. There were *kairos* moments when God enabled our Muslim friends and us to reach across the cultural and religious chasm that could have so easily divided us. We now carry with us a storehouse of experiences that reflects the privilege we were given.

On Christmas Day, 1979, an influential imam reciprocated the visit we had made to his home on a Muslim feast day. After some Psalms—which are mentioned in the Qur’an—had been translated, they were set to music using traditional melodies and instruments. Fabé Traoré*, who had come to Christian belief in the Bible translation process, declared with emotion, “Music like this will be the vehicle that communicates God’s message to my people.” The deep desire for the first Samogho Christians to share their faith moved us.

As we studied the story of Abraham and his children with an Arabic-educated head of the Muslim community, surprise became disbelief when he explained that the Torah (Pentateuch) is older than the Qur’an and, therefore, authoritative. Through this

This story got her 'hooked' on God's Word and she took every chance to learn more. Her insatiable hunger to learn about God was life-giving to us as well.

neighbour, we learned about respecting all holy books, regardless of one's personal preference.

The oldest elder of Saraba, Kwepiri Ouattara*, decided one day that a fetish ritual would no longer be celebrated. This was the culmination of much reflection over a 10-year period during which he had been a key player in helping test wording of the Old Testament and gospel translations in his language. His understanding of biblical stories—like the Israelites' golden calf and the Philistine god, Dagon—led him to the conviction that his ritual was inconsistent with the worship of Allah.

Kwepiri modelled how to work calmly but firmly with delicate issues of religious change. At his Muslim funeral, Siaka Traoré, president of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso was "given the word," meaning "asked to speak." This was unusual, but reflected the deep ties between us.

Saraba midwife Jonye Ouattara* is a great traditional storyteller. She understood profoundly that the midwives in the story of Moses' birth would never be able to kill their babies. This story got her "hooked" on God's Word and she took every chance to learn more. Her insatiable hunger to learn about God was life-giving to us as well.

We thought it almost impossible, but truly everyone in a totally Muslim village came out to listen as the team of Eglise Evangélique Mennonite de Burkina Faso pastors and young people proclaimed the gospel in song, drama, sermon and with a DVD about Jesus. We had received word from our many close friends that these villagers were increasingly open to hearing the gospel message. We realized with gratitude that many of these young Mennonite presenters were children of

early believers we had helped disciple in years past. Joyful rhythms of newly composed Christian songs accompanied that evening of celebration. We were blessed by the creative Spirit's work in this second generation of Mennonites.

As if to frame our 30 years of ministry, the same imam who faithfully visited us each Christmas, spoke at the farewell service that the Mennonite church leaders planned in our honour. He said we had respected him, so he could not be absent.

His presence and benedictions summed up our life among the Muslim people of Burkina Faso. We pray that

Muslims and Christians worldwide would share the deep respect for each other that this imam demonstrated towards us. ❧

* Pseudonyms.

Donna Kampen Entz grew up in Fiske, Sask., and, together with her husband Lorne, spent her adult years as a Mennonite mission worker in Burkina Faso. She is presently enrolled in the master of intercultural studies program at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif.

Faith on film . . . film on faith

BY MARY LOU KLASSEN WITH JOSIE WINTERFELD

It's one of those serendipitous things that happens when a group of organizers decide they are looking for a new kind of interaction and "just do it." Our interfaith film club began with a conversation among Josie, Deborah and Dalinda—a Christian, Muslim and Jew, respectively—who met during an interfaith workshop. They decided they wanted to create a forum for a small and diverse group of women to explore their lives together, but from an intentionally multi-faith perspective where difference is deliberate and celebrated.

They also decided that since each one led a very full life, a book club would be a non-starter, but watching a movie together was doable. It would involve the group in a common experience, provide an opportunity for a focused and meaningful discussion, yet allow each one to go home and not have to do any homework. I was fortunate enough to be invited to join them.

Our group meets once every month on a Sunday evening to watch a film, share snacks and to chat. During our early meetings, our group that has included Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu and aboriginal women, watched a film,

discussed it, and went home at a reasonable hour. As we have gotten to know each other better, the films begin later in the evening, and our departure time gets later as we share more deeply of our lives and questions with each other.

We've watched dramas and documentaries, mainstream and independently produced films, including:

- *Muffins for Granny*—chronicling the experiences of First Nations people in Canada;
- *The Man Who Sued God*—a light and funny movie in which religious leaders (Catholic, Protestant and Jewish) are sued as representatives of God. It seems that the only way they can win the case is by proving that God doesn't exist (or, heaven forbid, reclaiming religious language that has been co-opted by the insurance industry);
- *The Syrian Bride*—a story of a woman from a religious minority in the Golan Heights whose marriage across the Israel-Syria border means leaving her family forever.

All films create opportunities for thoughtful conversations often initiated by a few prepared questions. The talk

The powerful aspect of our group is that we offer as a gift the truth of our traditions to each other as a filter through which we view the films.

is meaningful to me because my sisters from other faith traditions help me see something about my own tradition in a new light.

During our last film night, we watched the documentary *The Power of Forgiveness*, that portrays the possibilities of forgiveness from the perspectives of different religions, as well as from a scientific perspective.

It was our Jewish friend who pointed out from her tradition that forgiveness on a human scale is limited. I can only forgive someone for what they have done to me personally. It is beyond my human ability to forgive a person for crimes outside of my personal experience. I took this to mean that individual Jews can forgive individual Nazi collaborators who hurt them personally during the Holocaust, but it is beyond their power to forgive the Nazis as a group.

Sometimes I feel that our Christian tradition trivializes forgiveness and aims for it too quickly and too easily. My Jewish friend's comments gave me a more sober perspective—both on the profound power of forgiveness and a deeper reverence for God's forgiveness offered through Jesus Christ.

On another occasion while watching *Jesus Camp*, a film that documents a program for children with a strong salvation message but with a militaristic style, a Hindu member expressed alarm and confusion since "conversion" is not a part of the Hindu worldview at all. Christians and Muslims in our group were challenged, since our faiths include missionary traditions.

The powerful aspect of our group is that we offer as a gift the truth of our traditions to each other as a filter through which we view the films. Sometimes we are each frustrated by our traditions, or the way they are lived out, and we are free to confess this to each other. Sometimes our prejudices or misunderstandings of another's beliefs are brought out and so can be clarified. By receiving these

gifts from this diverse and interesting and committed group of women, I am challenged to return to my Christian faith with a deeper understanding, and encouraged to live more faithfully from within it. ❧



Mary Lou Klassen lives and works in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont., as a student of theology and as an assistant to Conrad Grebel University College's peace and conflict studies program. She is a member of Waterloo North Mennonite Church.

What my Buddhist friends have taught me

BY JESSICA REESOR

Nearly a year ago, I stepped off an airplane and onto Canadian soil for the first time since I had begun my 11-month adventure with Mennonite Central Committee's Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program in Laos.

The time I spent there may be slipping farther into the past with every passing day, but the sight of red mud roads snaking through brilliant green rice paddies, the taste of spicy green papaya salad and, most importantly, the kind words and loving embraces of my Lao friends have struck me so hard that I'm not sure I'll ever "recover." In particular, so much of what I've learned about sharing my Christian faith has come from the ways in which my Buddhist friends and neighbours in Laos generously shared their faith with me, in both intentional and unintentional ways.

Lesson 1: Be honest and inclusive

When non-Christian friends ask about my religion or accompany me to church events here in Canada, I have a tendency to oversimplify my explanations, leaving out anything I don't particularly like

or, more to the point, anything I fear my friends won't like or understand.

As North American Christians, we often fall into the trap of thinking that in order to be inclusive of people of other faiths, or those of no faith, we need to water down our religious practices and confessions of faith until they become so generic as to be unrecognizable. I thought I was doing everyone a favour this way until I found myself in the outsider's shoes in Laos.

As a foreigner who knew nothing at all about Buddhism, let alone the particular branch of Theravada Buddhism that is practised in Vientiane, Laos, I found myself completely at the mercy of what my Buddhist friends would share with me or invite me to experience with them. I wanted to learn as much as I could about the people of Laos and, as such, I appreciated their honest, unapologetic answers to my questions and invitations to attend their festivals and ceremonies—just as I appreciated the way my host mother seasoned our stir-fries with the typical three or four chillies, rather than trying to cater to my Canadian taste buds.

On the night of a full moon in October,

I would never have had this beautiful learning experience if my friend had not chosen to include me even though she knew I did not share her belief system.

a friend invited me to join the throngs gathered on the banks of the Mekong River to pay tribute to the life that the river provides by saying a prayer and setting afloat a candle on a tiny banana leaf raft. Later that night, I recorded the memories of this poignant experience in my journal:

“When we’ve eaten our fill and basked in the glow of the moonlight and candlelight long enough, we go to the edge of the barge, slide onto our stomachs and reach far, far down to the water below, to release our newly lit candles. This festival is held in honour of a religion not my own, but its beauty has moved me. As I

I found myself completely at the mercy of what my Buddhist friends would share with me or invite me to experience with them.

watch my candle float around the barge and out of sight, I pray passionately to the Creator God I know, thankful for and inspired by the radiance of this night.”

I would never have had this beautiful learning experience if my friend had not chosen to include me even though she knew I did not share her belief system.

Lesson 2: Seek first to understand the other's faith

A few weeks later, in a hotel room in Bangkok, another Buddhist friend pulled a copy of *the Teachings of the Buddha* from the desk drawer, laid it beside the Gideon's Bible and said simply, “Tell me about your faith and then I will tell you about mine.” During this long night of mutual sharing we came to understand each other's faith on a much deeper level, for the more we learned about each other's faith, the better we could explain our own. 卐

Jessica Reesor is a peace and conflict studies student at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.



Jessica Reesor, back row centre, poses with some of the Buddhist friends she made while in Laos with Mennonite Central Committee's Serving and Learning Together program.

Our lives became our witness

BY VICTOR A. DORSCH

Our journey of letting our lives become our witness in a country whose religious faith was different than ours began in 1956, when Eastern Mennonite Mission invited Viola and me to go to Somalia as

pioneer missionaries. In orientation we were told that Somalia was 99.9 percent Muslim, where it was illegal to give a verbal witness of our faith. We were also told that missionaries had worked in Muslim countries for many years, seeing

few results for their labour, and that we should not expect any rapid results.

All this information came to mind as we landed at the very small airport in Mogadishu and waited to go through Immigration and Customs. While waiting, we were invited to come to the fence separating the crowds from the tarmac, to greet our Mennonite missionary friends who had come to the airport to welcome us.

The director of the mission then introduced me to a veteran Sudan Interior Mission worker, who had worked on Bible translation for many years. The man simply stated that we had come from a culture where everyone trusted each other until proved otherwise. "Now you are entering a culture where the opposite is true," he said. "You are considered guilty until you can prove yourself innocent in the court system."

This came as a shock to me, as our calling had prepared us to love and trust the Somali people. I learned many lessons the hard way. Now in the country, we quickly needed to learn to let our lives be our witness. We did this by learning to communicate with the people in their own language, by respecting our hosts in the way we did business in the market place, in learning to appreciate the customs in a male-dominated society, and in respecting their day of worship and religious feasts.

When we opened our school in Jamama, we tried to be fair to all students, regardless of clan. Across the river from Jamama lived a non-ethnic Somali group of people who were brought in from Tanzania to be labourers. Among this group were some believers from another mission's work at the turn of the 20th century. These believers invited our mission to have services in their homes on a regular basis. These services needed to be discontinued for a variety of reasons, but we continued to invite these believers to our homes, giving them a

Why would the mission forgive this man when obviously he was guilty?

We left following the coup, thinking that we would never see our Somali students again. But because of conditions under the coup, many educated Somalis came to Canada as refugees.

warm meal after the service.

At the court case of an individual who had stabbed to death a missionary colleague and critically injured his wife, our mission representative requested a life sentence while the prosecution was demanding capital punishment. The court granted this man a life sentence, which was contrary to Muslim customs. For weeks following the trial, this became the centrepiece of conversation: "Why would the mission forgive this man when obviously he was guilty?"

However, following the trial, the Somali Ministry of Education requested all missions to allow Qur'anic teaching to be taught in all schools, at their expense. Our mission agreed, but the other mission in the country decided to close its doors and leave.

Eventually, a Soviet-backed military coup required all mission personnel to leave the country, and the government took over all mission properties in 1976. This all happened as our silent witness was beginning to bear fruit among our

students and friends.

We left following the coup, thinking that we would never see our Somali students again. But because of conditions under the coup, many educated Somalis came to Canada as refugees.

Recently, there was a reunion initiated by former students, who invited their missionary teachers to meet together with them at a Toronto church. They wanted to express their appreciation for the education they had received many years ago that had helped them to become who they are today.

It was a most rewarding experience to hear their words of appreciation for what they had received. ❧



Victor A. and Viola Dorsch and their family served in Somalia for 14 years with Eastern Mennonite Missions and then in Tanzania for 17 years. The Dorsch's now live in New Hamburg, Ont.

❧ For discussion

1. What faith stories have you heard? In what settings did you hear these stories? Which stories stayed in your memory? Are Christians more or less willing to talk about their faith than people of other religions?
2. The stories of Donna Kampen Entz and Victor Dorsch refer to witnessing without words. What were some of the successes and surprises in their experience? How can words sometimes be a barrier? Is "wordless witnessing" a cop-out?
3. Jessica Reesor says that when it comes to sharing faith, it is important to be honest and inclusive. What do you think Mary Lou Klassen would add? Would you feel comfortable visiting with Lao Buddhists or joining an interfaith film club? How difficult would it be to share your faith in those settings?
4. Why are we sending out fewer Mennonite missionaries than in earlier times? Should we invest more effort and money into international missions? Where does the Christian message need to be communicated in North America? What is the most effective way to do this?

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.

✉ 'Perfect' Christmas impulses not necessarily 'bad' or 'wrong'

RE: "CHRISTMAS UNSANITIZED," Dec. 21, 2009, page 4.

I found the article by Dan Epp-Tiessen thought-provoking; it caused me to reflect on how many people mistake and, thereby, corrupt the meaning of Christmas, mostly inadvertently. My conclusions are somewhat different from those of the author, though.

I think it is important to speak directly to us Mennonite Christians, rather than our society at large. It does little good to point fingers at others when the intent is to examine oneself. I tried to do that personally, with respect to family, friends and acquaintances.

Among the people I know, Christmas is not so much about "perfection." They, and I suspect many more, understand clearly that the depictions and trappings—whether cards, ads, gorgeous wrapping or food magazine suggestions—are not significant in how they celebrate the essence of Christmas.

In my experience, what does affect us all and hampers our attention to the birth of Jesus includes:

FROM OUR LEADERS

Hope of ages

JERRY BUHLER

For the past five years Mennonite Church Saskatchewan has lived with the clever, catchy and meaningful phrase, "Christ centred and sent." This year we plan to enhance this by adding, "... Voicing our hope." Let me voice a bit of mine.

I was delighted to attend the Mennonite Church Canada Youth Assembly last July in Caronport, Sask. This event affirmed for me the immense appreciation I have for our younger generations. I observed extreme commitment to every component of the assembly: passionate worship; attentive listening; intense discussion; quiet prayer, both collective and individual; and energetic service projects.

More recently, I participated in the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization's senior high retreat. Here

again I enjoyed seeing authentic interaction and mutual contribution create a successful weekend.

I cringe when I think of how adults in our culture often place the younger generation on hold by asking them what they hope to be someday and not always recognizing what they are right now. It is



I cringe when I think of how adults in our culture often place the younger generation on hold....

unfortunate to suggest that their world is somehow less "real" than ours.

Perhaps Jesus saw in children a freshness that compelled him to make them an example of what would fit well in the reign of God. Perhaps he saw in them the characteristics that might make it easier to "sell all you have" or to "consider the lilies" or to "love your enemies."

I think of our young people as the church of today, blending their wisdom, beauty and energy with the wisdom and beauty and energy of our older people.

This blending requires the shunning of fear, the embrace of risk and the art of letting go. It also requires the cultivating of relationships and trust that can carry and sustain us all on our communal journey.

As I age, I find myself increasingly inspired—and even mentored—by my

children and their peers. I am equally inspired by older people who demonstrate a life of ongoing learning and change. In this mix and mutual engagement I find much hope, and I believe that God honours this celebration of each other.

Jerry Buhler is Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's area church minister.

- Preoccupation with “stuff” We feel the need to buy enough gifts, often worried at the last minute whether all recipients are equally treated. We also try to get everything on an actual or imagined list done, so that our Christmas will follow in the established family tradition. (This may come close to the idea of “perfection,” but I think it is different.)
- Time and energy focused on activity, rather than reflection and celebration, like social engagements we feel obliged to attend or host, cooking and baking “over the top,” ferrying children to and from their events, and more.
- Family duties and involvements that become

compulsory and onerous, rather than enjoyable and unifying.

These and more are pressures to which I believe we are especially vulnerable, in part because they are very pervasive, often not recognized in time, and highly insidious.

I believe a key message in Epp-Tiessen’s article—and also in my reflection—is that these impulses and actions are not “bad” or “wrong.” But we need to beware of them becoming our focus while the special, joyful Christmas message slips away.

LINDA WIENS, GRAYSLAKE, ILL., U.S.A.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

In the blink of an eye

PHIL WAGLER

When that horrible earthquake shook Haiti on Jan. 12, I was busy. I had some writing to do, some people to meet with and a meeting to prepare for. Important stuff, you know. I was busy and, although I saw the headlines, I didn’t have time to read them. It would be another day before I really caught up. All this ambivalence despite our family having a heart-connection to Haiti through friends and my wife’s journey there that is the source of some beautiful paintings hanging in our home.

My first response to such tragedy is to want to ditch what I do for something that “really matters.” Maybe I should quit my job and do something that actually makes a difference. But the best we could do as a family in January was watch the images of pancaked homes, and share our money and our prayers.

I suddenly felt the tediousness and irrelevance of what I do. Does it really matter if our Sunday morning runs smoothly when children lay buried beneath the Port-au-Prince rubble? Will anybody besides my editor notice if I don’t meet my writing deadline? Does it matter that the Maple Leafs play hockey like my grandma when aftershocks continue to rumble? My life is starting to sound like a

rerun of Ecclesiastes: maybe I should just eat, drink and be merry?

Perhaps I’m the only tortured soul who wrestles such demons. But when life for so many changes in the blink of an eye, what do I do with my blinking eyes? Where should they turn? Should they just stay closed? So much is suddenly made



But when life for so many changes in the blink of an eye, what do I do with my blinking eyes?

trite and so much is suddenly made clear when major catastrophes happen, even if a world away.

I’ve never experienced an earthquake. I’ve never seen existence so instantaneously altered, but that doesn’t mean my eyes can’t see. If I pull myself away from the Internet long enough, I may begin to see the proverbial earthquakes people are living through around me. They may even be happening in my home. What do my blinking eyes see?

In his great novel, *The Chosen*, Chaim Potok tells the story of a boy named Reuben and his search for identity. Reuben’s father passes on a profound perspective: “I learned a long time ago, Reuben, that a blink of an eye in itself

is nothing. But the eye that blinks, that is something. [God] can fill that tiny span with meaning, so its quality is immeasurable though its quantity may be insignificant.”

To be a people on a mission with the God who sees (Genesis 16:13) is to take this fatherly advice. There will always be things that change in the blink of an eye that we are mostly powerless to change. The real wonder is that my eye blinks. My eye is attached to me. It is, as Jesus said, “*the lamp of the body. If your eyes*

are good, your whole body will be full of light” (Matthew 6:22). What I am given to behold, in the particular locale where God has placed me, is what I am primarily called to add a “kingdom” quality to, despite what little difference it might seem to make. So, give to Haiti and beyond, but perhaps even more so, live and strive to see the kingdom come on the street corner, the neighbourhood and around the table where your eye does the blinking.

Phil Wagler (phil@kingsfieldcommon.ca) sees life primarily in Huron County, Ont., where he lives and serves. He is the author of Kingdom Culture: Growing the Missional Church.

✉ A biblical literalist responds

RE: “TAKE THE Bible truthfully, just not literally” letter, Dec. 21, page 8.

I think there is a flaw in the logic that says “modern-thinking people cannot accept some [biblical] stories literally,” and therefore we should “embrace these stories as ‘true’ but not literal.”

The impression that modern-thinking people are somehow different—or more advanced—than people

from other eras that have read the Bible is wrong. There have always been sceptics who have not taken the stories literally. (I would cite those who laughed at Noah, but if the story isn’t literal, that example might not fly.) It is those people who have taken the stories seriously, and followed Yahweh, that have made more of a difference in the world than those who didn’t.

As for the idea of people now as intellectually ahead, I would point out that the mathematical knowledge of the Chinese culture from 3,000 years ago, the

NEW ORDER VOICE

A spectacle of goodwill

WILL BRAUN

I shouldn’t be writing about Haiti anymore. It’s old news. The moment has passed. That’s just the nature of news. But it’s also the product of a fickle society. We’re prone to sensationalism and subject to the “CNN effect,” whereby immediate saturation coverage shapes public policy, bends non-governmental organization agendas and puts the public discourse on fast-forward.



To some extent we pick and choose the subjects of our generosity, or, more accurately, prime-time news-peddlers choose for us.

This leads to shallow narratives that feed on spectacle, numbers (death tolls and dollar amounts), conflict (looting as opposed to women organizing to care for their families), and self-obsession (what we are doing). This is not to deny the essential role of journalism, and it is not to say that no thoughtful reflection on Haiti has taken place. Rather, it is to call for a deeper, more critical understanding.

A more thorough look at the Haiti quake would have to consider why that disaster got so much attention compared to others. Why do some disasters “sell” and others don’t? Among other factors, the Haiti quake was dramatic, focused in time (compared to a protracted war), easy to film (many gripping images in a small area), relatively non-politicized, and the possibilities for response were easy to imagine (delivery of supplies

versus stopping a war or addressing long-term causes of hunger).

But Bruce Guenther, food, disaster and material resources program coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), says 87 percent of all disaster-related deaths in the world are caused by drought. These are “slow onset emergen-

cies,” he says, usually in places with warning systems. “These deaths are preventable,” says Guenther, yet they don’t get the attention nor the mass donations.

Guenther says MCC tries to promote lower profile situations, but there’s no competing with mass media. While MCC has a strong base of steady donors, its phones rang off the hook for Haiti, as they should, while Guenther and his colleagues struggle to also meet desperate needs in Zimbabwe, East Africa and elsewhere.

A recent Oxfam report makes the same point about the 2004 tsunami: “the 500,000 people assisted after the tsunami received an average of \$1,328 [all figures in Cdn dollars] each in official aid, while the 700,000 recipients of aid in [conflict-ravaged] Chad received just \$25 each.”

To some extent we pick and choose

the subjects of our generosity, or, more accurately, prime-time news-peddlers choose for us. In turn, a key part of their story becomes our “outpouring of generosity.” This, too, should be put in a broader perspective. Canadians, who were praised by Bill Clinton and *The New York Times* for their contributions to Haiti, gave about \$5 for every person 20 years old and up. I don’t need to dredge up stats on pet food expenditures or per-capita coffee-spending to demonstrate that we could have done better.

Sure, the star-studded benefits made

it feel like the world was brimming with goodwill, but consider that just one performer in the U.S. benefit, Beyonce, made more last year (\$93 million) than the entire event raised (about \$71 million). Or compare Haiti donations with the more than \$2 billion spent worldwide on *Avatar* at the box office. Or consider that the five largest companies in the world made \$126 billion in profits last year, but gave less than \$10 million to Haiti.

Any and all giving counts for something. And Mennonites will score better than average on giving. But a pat on our own backs should not be part of the narrative. I hope the Haiti quake made us feel humble and connected to humanity, not just sad and then generous.

Will Braun lives in Winnipeg and can be reached at wbraun@inbox.com.

pyramids and other “ancient” achievements indicate that each era has its own modern thinkers.

As well, my readings of the Psalms lead me to believe that, at their core, people now and then are more similar than different. The concerns, feelings, hopes and disappointments in David’s day were very much the same as they are now.

In fact, in trying to “embrace ‘truth’” and discount the “literal” appears to me as a way of treating the modern-thinking people as children by making it more palatable for them. I prefer to be like a child in my attempt to understand and live as a member of the kingdom of God, and I do believe in a literal resurrection as the prime path to life-transforming power. I

look forward to one day hearing the trees sing for joy (Psalm 96:12), whether or not modern thinkers choose to take that literally.

JOHN GOOSSEN, DELTA, B.C.

✉ Exposing ‘a pastor’s dirty little secret’ praised

RE: PHIL WAGLER’S very entertaining and prophetic “A pastor’s dirty little secret,” Dec. 21, page 9.

Wagler is obviously aware of St. Paul’s solemn farewell address to the Ephesian elders: “Let me say plainly that I have been faithful. No one’s damnation can be

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mennonites, blacks interact in 19th century Waterloo region

BY TIMOTHY EPP

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

As early as the 1830s, blacks fleeing slavery had settled in the Queen’s Bush northwest of what is now the city of Waterloo, Ont., and formed the largest black settlement in Upper Canada at that time, says Linda Brown-Kubisch in her book *The Queen’s Bush Settlement: Black Pioneers 1839-1865*.

As the Mennonite settlement expanded northward, the Mennonites began to interact with the black community in the area around the villages of Wallenstein and Glen Allen. By the 1860s many black families were forced to give up the land they had cleared and farmed, because they couldn’t afford to purchase it, and there is at least one record of a black family of the Queen’s Bush who sold it to a Mennonite family.

Little has been written about Mennonite/black interaction in Canada before the 1830s. It is recorded in Ezra Eby’s 1895 *From Pennsylvania to Waterloo* that Abraham Erb brought a “coloured boy” to the Waterloo area in 1806. All we know about the boy, named

Isaac Jones, is that he tended cattle for Erb, and one evening was lost, searched for and found. Eby also records that his father, Benjamin Eby, a prominent bishop in the Mennonite church, included in his records the death of a black man.

Among the early members of Wanner Mennonite Church were the Wildfongs, who were abolitionists from Pennsylvania.

Archaeologist and historian Karolyn Smardz-Frost has identified Mennonites as having lent seed and tools to the blacks of the Queen’s Bush.

Historical author Pat Mestern addresses interracial marriage in her book *Rachael’s Legacy*, where she writes of a union between a Mennonite man and a woman described as “half-Negro.” Mestern says this information came in part from a now-deceased Old Order Mennonite historian who mentioned that this was not the only interracial relationship between a Mennonite man and a black woman in the area.

Smardz-Frost also refers to patterns of labour exchange between blacks and

Mennonites, in which a black person would work on a Mennonite farm for two days in exchange for one day of assistance from his Mennonite neighbours on his own farm. One source tells of a young Mennonite boy who attended a Black church one day against his parent’s wishes; he recorded being warmly welcomed in the church.

One or two descendants of the Hisson family, one of the original black families from Glen Allan, are buried in Mennonite cemeteries.

In spite of some suggestions of prejudice and discrimination, the relationships between Mennonites and blacks were generally positive, involving the exchange of labour, possible interracial marital unions and other neighbourly activities.

However, this research is far from complete, and I welcome any suggestions or information that can help to piece together this puzzle. Send them to: Timothy Epp, associate professor of sociology, Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ont. by e-mail to tepp@redeemer.ca. ❧

blamed on me, for I did not shrink from all that God wants you to know" (Acts 20:26-27, NLT).

I would risk saying that contemporary pastors have a greater challenge in their ministry to say "all" than the elders of St. Paul's day. Today, virtually all Evangelical churches have adopted a commercial model of doing church ministry; the pastor is CEO. Salary is according to academic qualifications, previous experience, size of congregation and church staff. A sense of call is often lacking; the frequent turnover of church leaders reflects this. There is very little mentoring of leaders in the local congregation.

To ensure the approval of the congregation—the employer—the temptation is to downplay and omit some aspects of scriptural teaching. What if the "taxpayers" are offended with themes such as sin, temptation and stewardship? Jesus identified mammon as his chief opposition, but how often do you hear this addressed because of the fear of "oops, there goes my job"?

Wagler uttered a very courageous and seldom-spoken question by pastors, "So the secret is, we need you to remind us of what we're supposed to be doing, but are you really willing to do it? See, if we reorient, it's going to require your reorientation too." Thank you for flushing out your "dirty little secret."

Another very dirty—but not a little—secret is found in Hebrews 4:13: "*And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.*"

GEORGE H. EPP, CHILLIWACK, B.C.

✉ Why not pray when you read *Canadian Mennonite*?

THIS MORNING, DURING my devotions, I again started at the beginning of the *World of Witness* prayer directory. On page 5, I read Robert J. Suderman's "invitation to constant prayer." For me, it is a profound invitation and challenge to pray for all those listed in that book.

Often I become discouraged because of my feeble prayers and intercessions, but then I'm reminded of Paul's words in Romans 8:26-27: "*[A]nd in the same way—by our faith—the Holy Spirit helps us with . . . our praying. For we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how to pray as we should, but the Holy Spirit prays for us . . . as he pleads for us in harmony with God's own will*" (Living Bible). So I carry on praying.

Now in my congregation, and when on occasion I visit other congregations, I notice quite a few copies of *World of Witness* prayer directories "idle" in the vestibules. Then I wonder what could happen if we would join hands in prayer.

As I pondered this, it occurred to me, what if we prayed in the same manner when reading *Canadian*

Mennonite? Issues are dealt with in its pages that affect us all, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, no matter which congregation. It might even be applicable to the ads offering employment opportunities, as well as Mennonite Church Canada, U.S.A., Mexico, Colombia and around the world.

PETER UNGER, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

✉ Peace and justice must be rooted in faith . . . or they eventually die

RECENT LETTERS ENCOURAGING Mennonites to put a higher value on actions that promote peace and justice than on Christian faith itself—what we do is more important than what we believe—reminded me of an eloquent lament made by a late Quaker friend.

She observed that there were some young adults in her community who were committed to peace and justice activism, but did not have a personal Christian faith and felt that it was unimportant. In her words, it was as if they were "picking a bouquet of flowers, not realizing that without the roots deep in the soil it was just a matter of time until the beauty would fade and die."

JOANNA REESOR-MCDOWELL,
STOUFFVILLE, ONT.



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/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Codling—Cayleb Joel (b. Jan. 8, 2010), to Jason and Angela Codling, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, B.C.

Crowe—Marcus Peter (b. Dec. 30, 2009), to Esther and Kevin Crowe, Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Dippel—Jared Raymond (b. Aug. 25, 2009), to Jeff and Jenny-Lee Dippel, The Gathering, Kitchener, Ont.

Eldridge—Elisabeth (stillborn Jan. 23, 2010), to Julie and Patrick Eldridge, First Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

Fischer—Jordyn Ann (b. Jan. 8, 2010), to Aaron and Jennifer Fischer, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Harder—Emma Grace (b. Dec. 19, 2009), to Dwayne and Jennifer Harder, Hope Mennonite, North Battleford, Sask.

Hiebert—Isabella Carla (b. Jan. 2, 2010), to David and Carla Hiebert, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Kasdorf—Madison Natalie (b. Dec. 31, 2009), to Michael and Stephanie Kasdorf, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Konkle—Raya Nicole (b. Jan. 6, 2010), to Scott and Jen Konkle, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Montgomery—Seth Robert James (b. Jan. 26, 2010), to Jim and Laurie Montgomery, Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Pineda—Ian (b. Jan. 2, 2010), to Isaias Pineda and Carol Guzman, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Roth—Gavin Lee (b. Jan. 7, 2010), to Adam and Melanie Roth, Eigenheim Mennonite, Rosthern, Sask.

Ruby—Leah Mae (b. Dec. 12, 2009), to Kim Leis and David Ruby, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Baptisms

Brett Birch, Jennifer Halbert, Chris Klassen—Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Dec. 13, 2009.

Marriages

Boulton/Brown—David Boulton and Michelle Brown, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., Dec. 20, 2009.

Bowman/Robertson—Tyler Bowman and Katie Robertson, The Gathering, Kitchener, Ont., July 11, 2009.

Deaths

Boshart—Edna (nee Bender), 84 (b. May 16, 1925; d. Jan. 27, 2010), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Eldridge—Elisabeth (stillborn Jan. 23, 2010), First Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

Jutzi—David H., 82 (b. June 4, 1927; d. Jan. 24, 2010), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

Kropf—Doris (nee Wagler), 85 (b. Aug. 22, 1924; d. Jan. 23, 2010), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Kruger—Abram, 80 (b. Feb. 2, 1929; d. Jan. 29, 2010), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Loewen—John C., 72 (b. Oct. 9, 1937; d. Jan. 24, 2010), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Neun—Ronald James, 79 (b. June 6, 1931; d. Jan. 20, 2010), Kelowna First Mennonite, B.C.

Petkau—Betty (nee Schapansky), 82 (b. Jan. 12, 1928; d. Jan. 16, 2010), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Penner—Tina, 84 (b. Oct. 25, 1925; d. Jan. 10, 2010), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Sawatsky—Jake, 85 (b. March 24, 1924; d. Jan. 2, 2010), Oak Lake Mennonite, Man.

Schmidt—Margaret (nee Schroeder), 86 (b. Aug. 31, 1923; d. Jan. 24, 2010), Tofield Mennonite, Alta.

Wiebe—Jacob, 84 (b. Dec. 5, 1925; d. Jan. 25, 2010), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

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



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

'CONFESSING JESUS CHRIST' REFLECTION

Its gates will never be shut

STORY AND PHOTO BY PHILIP BENDER

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA RELEASE

"Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there . . . nothing unclean will enter it" (Revelation 21:25-7).

Nanjing is a city of walls. My wife Julie and I visited this ancient former Chinese capital last July before making our recent move to Dazhou. One can still walk on portions of the old wall that zigzags around the central city. Built in the late 1300s, it is the longest city wall in the world.

Equally impressive are Nanjing's 13 gates. Some of these entryways are actually tunnels through the walls, sectioned into vaults sealed by smaller gates. An army of thousands could be garrisoned inside. Any enemy that tried to enter the city faced a formidable obstacle.

But the gates were not impregnable. At various times marauding armies broke through and wreaked havoc. On Dec. 12, 1937, Japanese troops marched into Nanjing. Six weeks of carnage and atrocity followed, leaving more than 300,000 residents massacred.

The closing image of the Bible quoted above is a city coming down from heaven to earth, resplendent with glistening streets and sparkling lights,

breathing life through green trees and flowing streams.

Like Nanjing, this city is circumscribed by walls and is accessible through gates. But these gates stand wide open—not just during the relative safety of the day, but all the time. Why? Because this is not an ordinary city. It is the holy city, the new Jerusalem, God's final act of new creation. It is the restored, redeemed city that God has been building since Abraham and Jesus.

And the new Jerusalem is a secure city, where residents live without fear. "Nothing unclean will enter it," the seer of Revelation assures. Here, heavy locked gates would be curiosities, tourist sites, artifacts of a bygone era, as they are in Nanjing today.

An open gate can be an image for mission, including teaching English in China. Along with the speaking and writing they teach in the classroom, Mennonite teachers have many chances, literally and figuratively, to open their gates. When they entertain students in or outside of their homes—rarely done by Chinese teachers—fissures appear in the walls of language and culture that otherwise loom as formidable barriers.

And there is more. Not only does opening walls that divide people contribute to reconciliation and peace today, it also helps to build that renewed city

of God that lies ahead.

"Blessed are those who from now on die in the Lord," the seer says. Their work will not pass away with their physical death, "for their deeds shall follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

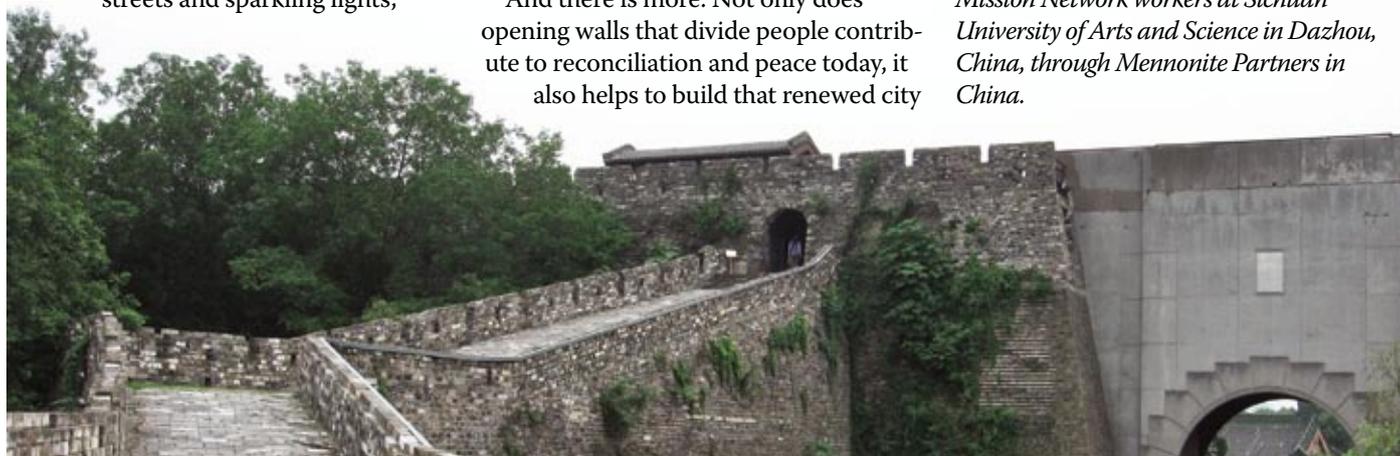
Because God's final kingdom will involve the renewal of time and space—the new Jerusalem comes down to earth—words and deeds done today in the name of Jesus, even when they seem ineffectual, are not fleeting or futile. They will endure beyond this life, being somehow used by God as construction material for the new Jerusalem.

Creating gates in walls of language, class, race and culture can be hard, discouraging work. Patience, perseverance and a sense of humour are needed. Especially essential is hope in the ultimate victory of the lamb that was slain, whom one day "every nation, tribe, people and language" will praise (Revelation 7:9).

Still, because of Jesus' death, resurrection and present lordship, we can believe that our efforts for hospitality, understanding and peace today, in his name and Spirit, will leave their traces in the new heaven and earth.

Mission means declaring the good news that God in Jesus is renewing the whole creation and will complete it one day. By paring down walls that divide, we announce and signify the kingdom that has started to appear. By opening our gates to others, especially to those not like ourselves, we help God build that beautiful, lively, open-gated city that is coming. ✎

Philip and Julie Bender are Mennonite Church Canada Witness/Mennonite Mission Network workers at Sichuan University of Arts and Science in Dazhou, China, through Mennonite Partners in China.



No strings, no rings

Cohabitation before marriage impedes the permanency of future relationships

STORY AND PHOTO
BY RACHEL BERGEN
National Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Recent evidence proves that living together before marriage reduces the likelihood that a marriage will survive, despite popular belief to the contrary.

This was one of the messages discussed at a workshop that was part of the Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) Church in Ministry Seminar, “Mapping the way: Finding pathways through challenging issues.” The subject of this year’s seminar was cohabitation before marriage and its social and spiritual implications. The workshop was led by Irma Fast Dueck, a CMU professor of practical theology for both undergraduate and graduate programs.

A cohabiting couple is defined as “a co-resident man and woman, living together within a sexual union, without that union having been formalized by a legal marriage.”

There are several kinds of cohabitation:

- **CASUAL COHABITATION**—where the couple drifts in and out of living together and have a normal sexual relationship;



Irma Fast Dueck leads a group of Church in Ministry Seminar attendees in discussion about cohabitation before marriage at Canadian Mennonite University earlier this year.

- **CAUTIOUS COHABITATION**—where the couple is more serious about the future and is tentatively moving towards marriage;

- **COMMITTED COHABITATION**—where the couple expects to get married but haven’t yet, due to such matters as financial issues; and

- **ALTERNATIVE COHABITATION**—where the couple is taking a radical stance against marriage.

According to Adrian Thatcher in his book *Living Together and Christian Ethics*, cohabiters are more likely to return to singleness than to enter marriage, although most young people think it is a good idea to live together before marriage.

Fast Dueck says this is because the experience of cohabitation may change the

partners’ attitudes towards marriage and may “reinforce the belief that all intimate relationships are fragile and transient.”

“There is something deeply Christian about marriage and two people becoming one flesh,” she said. Marriage also encompasses a covenant and a community of believers who enter into the covenant with the couple, to help them. However, this belief appears to be dwindling in the current population, Fast Dueck shared. Christian beliefs, she said, are “like a ship sailing in the shallow waters of modernity, throwing cargo off to stay afloat, but soon there is nothing left.”

The Christian beliefs about marriage involving covenant and community are things to hold on to, Fast Dueck stressed. ❧

What the Confession says

“WE BELIEVE THAT God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life. Christian marriage is a mutual relationship in Christ, a covenant made in the context of the church. According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship. Marriage is meant for sexual intimacy, companionship, and the birth and nurture of children.”

—*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Article 19: Family, Singleness and Marriage)

Canadian cohabitation statistics

According to a January 2009 release from the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, “Cohabitations, where a couple chooses to live together before, or instead of, getting married, is inherently less stable than the married relationship between husbands and wives who have never lived together before becoming married.”

The release also notes that:

- Children born into a married relationship not preceded by cohabitation are nearly three times less likely to experience family breakdown before they turn 10 than are children born into a cohabiting relationship.

- Canadian relationships which start with cohabitation are nearly twice as likely to dissolve as those which began with marriage, regardless of whether the cohabiters eventually marry or not.

- As of 2006, common-law couples made up 17.9 per cent of all couples in Canada, while 22.6 percent of Canadians aged 25 to 29 were in a common-law union.

Church Snapshots

WMES PHOTO



Grade 8 student Odin Wilson-Duke receives congratulations and a trophy from John Sawatzky, principal of Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary and Middle School (Bedson campus), for winning the school's Canwest Canspell Spelling Bee on Jan. 15. More than 30 students from Grades 4 to 8 competed in the contest. It took five rounds for Odin to out-spell his schoolmates. Odin advanced to the Winnipeg City Finals, to have been held at the Winnipeg Art Gallery on Feb. 20.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHANTZ MENNONITE CHURCH



Four couples at Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden, Ont., celebrated 60th anniversaries last fall. Photo above: Robert and Lena Shantz, and Mae and Morgan Baer. Photo below: Bill and Merrill Steckley, and Ruth and Abner Martin.



Seniors, students raise money for earthquake relief

STORY AND PHOTO BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

Mennonite Central Committee B.C. Release
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Peter Neufeld celebrated his 81st birthday on Jan. 14 by challenging the residents of Tabor Court in Abbotsford to make a difference. With his birthday hat on, he stood and said, "I am giving \$20 to MCC [Mennonite Central Committee] for the earthquake in Haiti. Who will match me?"

The residents responded enthusiastically, some emptying their change purses, others writing cheques, to raise a total of \$1,450 to help MCC respond to the Jan. 12 quake that levelled much of Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince, and the surrounding area.



Peter Neufeld, a resident at Tabor Court, an assisted living facility in Abbotsford, B.C., hands an envelope containing \$1,450 to Phil Schafraan, director of resource development for Mennonite Central Committee B.C., to be used for earthquake relief in Haiti.

"This just goes to show that seniors can make a real contribution," said Ruth Ann Braun, activities coordinator at Tabor Court, an assisted living facility.

For Neufeld, who attends Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, contributing to MCC was a given. MCC aided his family when they fled Russia and came to Canada in 1949. He knew that MCC would be responding to this disaster. "MCC is the most trustworthy organization," he said. "I know my donation will get to the people who really need it."

At Mennonite Educational Institute (MEI) in Abbotsford, students also got on board the Haiti relief train. They were encouraged to bring money for earthquake relief to their weekly chapel service. The goal was to raise \$20,000, to be divided between MCC and Heart to Heart Ministries. The students raised \$33,000.

"When I had seen all those videos about Haiti, and heard stories from my teacher, whose husband is from Haiti, I couldn't not bring money," said Grade 11 student Ashley Redekop. "It was just so incredibly sad and so hard to fathom what is going on there. It was astounding when we found out that we reached and surpassed our goal of \$20,000."

Dave Loewen, a teacher at MEI and a former MCC B.C. board chair, said that he was impressed by the amount raised, but not completely surprised. "On the day we challenged our students, I believed and stated to others that I felt our students would meet the challenge, but might surpass our expectations," he said. "Two days later, my instincts proved correct. I have no doubt that this generation of young people have significant capacity for compassion and a clear understanding of who their

/// Briefly noted

Violin student performs for Haiti

WINNIPEG—Justin Wiebe, a Grade 12 student at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate who recently completed his Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Toronto exam in violin performance, gave a recital at Douglas Mennonite Church on Jan. 31, raising \$21,000 for Mennonite Central Committee's Haiti earthquake relief efforts. The funds will be matched by an equal contribution from the Government of Canada. Hazel Wiebe accompanied Wiebe on the piano. Works performed included "Amazing Grace," "Sonata in C minor" by Beethoven and "Zigeunerweisen" by Pablo de Sarasate.

—BY JOHN WIEBE

'neighbour' is and how to respond to their neighbour's needs."

Loewen added that the decision to support the two organizations came from the school's connection to both: MEI students have supported the work of Heart to Heart at Grande Goave, Haiti, by sending student mission teams and funds to an orphanage and school there.

"MCC, on the other hand, has a well-deserved reputation in development work on a broader scale, as well as a history in Haiti," Loewen noted. "In addition, our constituency has a deep relationship with MCC." //

HELP FOR HAITI

Structural engineers assess building damage in Haiti

BY LINDA ESPENSHADE

Mennonite Central Committee Release

When the structural engineers working with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Haiti evaluate the soundness of earthquake-damaged buildings, their classification system is very practical:

- Is it safe to use?
- Can it be used with restrictions?
- Should it be abandoned?

During their one-hour-per-building inspections, structural engineers are “reading” the cracks in the walls and looking at the building from close up and far away, to make an immediate determination.

“What we’re doing now is emergency work,” said Johann Zimmermann, a licensed structural engineer from Harrisonburg, Va., who is leading MCC’s team. “People have to get off the street. People have to get back in the buildings.”

The team of four engineers is focusing its work on public buildings used by organizations working in the community. Assessing homes will happen eventually.

On Jan. 26, the team evaluated six schools: two were usable, two had damage

that could be fixed without engineers, and two would need technical expertise to complete the repairs, Zimmermann said.

Initially, the engineers sent by MCC were spending several hours assessing each building and explaining to Haitian builders how to make repairs. They soon realized that approach wasn’t time-efficient. Instead, they are noting the buildings that need further repair and are hoping a formal MCC assessment team, scheduled to arrive in late February, will determine the best way to teach Haitian builders to do the technical repairs.

“We’ve met some people who are very capable,” Zimmermann said, adding that with a little instruction they would be able to make the repairs. Prior to this earthquake, builders didn’t realize they needed to make a building earthquake-resistant, nor did they have the training to do so, he said.

Zimmermann is touched by the openness and kindness of Haitians who are anxious with every tremor and fear entering any building that has not been evaluated.

“We really like the people-to-people part of it,” he said. “With going fast from place to place, we still want to get in and sit a couple minutes with the people who are there, get to know the little children, . . . not just look at concrete and steel.”

MCC plans to keep a changing team of four structural engineers working in Haiti through the end of February.

MCC’s office in Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s capital, was the first beneficiary of the engineers’ work, when Zimmermann and two other team members arrived on Jan. 23, less than two weeks after the quake. The engineers determined that the office was safe but in need of repair, and a nearby medical clinic/classroom building would be usable once two columns on the first floor were strengthened.

On Jan. 24, the engineers attended Assemblée de la Grace, a Mennonite church in Croix-Des-Bouquet, about 13 kilometres northeast of Port-au-Prince. Almost everyone in the community was affected by the quake, with most houses damaged and a few destroyed.

The church was damaged beyond repair, Zimmermann said, but people were most concerned about the safety of a swaying water tower set on six-metre-high concrete columns. After the engineers determined that the columns could be repaired, they explained to a builder how to do it. ☼

MCC PHOTO BY BEN DEPP



From left to right, volunteer engineers Johann Zimmermann, Peter Pereverzoff and Marcus Schiere begin their work in Haiti by inspecting the structural integrity of the Mennonite Central Committee offices in Port-au-Prince, where a 7.0 magnitude earthquake damaged much of the capital city on Jan. 12.

HELP FOR HAITI

MEDA offers long-term recovery support for Haiti

By ROSS W. MUIR
Managing Editor

In the wake of the Jan. 12 earthquake that decimated much of the region around Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince, Jean Claude Cerin, the former Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) country manager in Haiti, sent the following report to MEDA president Allan Sauder:

"The disaster is very big indeed. The current situation is very critical. . . . Movement is quite difficult because there is no fuel being sold, no city power, no internal communication. Hospitals that were not destroyed have closed their doors because they are overwhelmed and the wounded population is remaining without care.

"There is a general feeling of fear across the population, as people are scared of a rebound. Also, there are many damaged buildings that could collapse any time soon. The bodies of dead people are accumulating and people don't know how to dispose of them, so they just throw them on the streets expecting the government to get rid of them. But this is not happening quickly and this may create a catastrophic situation and health hazard."

Cerin ended his update with a request for prayer for a swift response, for comfort for those burying their dead, and for care for the injured.

While many other non-governmental organizations, including Mennonite Central Committee, are now on the ground in Haiti to assist in emergency aid and relief efforts, MEDA's thoughts have already turned to helping to resurrect the country's economy and people in a sustainable way.

MEDA has a quarter-century history in Haiti of bringing hope to the lives of the poor in one of the world's poorest countries. Most recently, it has been working with Fonkoze, the country's largest micro-finance organization, whose mission is to build the economic foundation for democracy by providing the rural poor—mostly

women—with the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty.

Fonkoze's head office in Port-au-Prince was destroyed in the earthquake. It is still trying to reach staff and clients throughout the country. But clearly there will be a massive need to rebuild and recapitalize Fonkoze, a task that will be crucial to

ensuring that credit is available to hundreds of thousands of hard-working entrepreneurs trying to rebuild their businesses and support their families.

"We urge you to consider a gift that will make a lasting contribution to recovery efforts in Haiti," says Sauder. "Your gift . . . will have a real impact on survivors of this horrific event, and your generosity will bear witness that the people of Haiti have not been forsaken in their hour of need"

To donate to MEDA's Haiti recovery efforts, visit medatrust.org/haiti. ☛

From a Mennonite Economic Development Associates Release.

PHOTO BY VELDENE BERGEN



Seven friends with seven shovels: Seven Grade 10 students at Bev Facey Community High School in Sherwood Park, Alta., raised more than \$500 for victims of Haiti's earthquake on Jan. 31. The girls went door to door offering to clear snow in exchange for donations to the Red Cross. "We have a group that gets together for girls nights once a month. We used the same group to do something good for Haiti," Tara Bergen, left, said. Sister Kathleen, centre, added that people were "kind of surprised, but a lot of people were open to us and thanked us. . . . We were received graciously. It was really rewarding. I didn't think we'd raise that much money." The Bergen sisters attend First Mennonite Church in Edmonton. Also pictured from left to right: Sydney Munsterman, Kennedy Anderson and Heather Fraser. Not pictured: Julia Pratt and Christian Peitch.

HELP FOR HAITI

WCC commends G7 relief of Haiti's debt

World Council of Churches Release

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has welcomed the initiative by the seven most industrialized nations (G7), which earlier this month decided to write Haiti's debts with them off.

In a letter from the WCC general secretary, Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, the WCC also asked for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international financial institutions to follow the G7 example and make sure financial

support to Haiti is "grant-based and not debt-creating."

Tveit welcomed and expressed appreciation for the G7 initiative in a Feb. 8 letter to the finance minister of Canada, Jim Flaherty, who hosted the G7 meeting in Canada. Letters of appreciation were also sent to the finance ministers of France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the U.S. Tveit expressed hope that the G7 move will "encourage other countries and multilateral

institutions to commit to the unconditional cancellation of Haiti's debts".

In regard to the IMF, Tveit shared his concern that "more loans" from the institution will add "to Haiti's burden." He regretted that the IMF has not shown "clear willingness" nor made "definitive moves yet to cancel the country's current debt".

However, IMF external relations director Caroline Atkinson has said debt relief "is not a today issue" on the grounds that "Haiti owes the IMF no debt service now and will not for at least two years."

Tveit reiterated the commitment of the ecumenical family to Haiti's long-term needs. Churches and church-related organizations around the world have participated in relief efforts since the disaster. ❧

Snapshots

ONPHA PHOTO

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Community



Fairview Mennonite Home of Cambridge, Ont., was presented with the 2009 Award of Excellence by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association on Nov. 16. In a video shown at the awards ceremony, Fairview was recognized for providing "truly senior-centred housing" and for being the first in the province to provide independent bungalow-style housing and adopt a continuum of care model. Holding the award are Tim Kennel, executive director of Fairview Mennonite Home, and Nancy Kinsie, Fairview's manager of independent living.



Henry Pauls, board chair of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Generations Thrift Store in Waterloo, Ont., models a complete ski outfit, including the skis, at the Suit Up For Sudan fashion show that featured clothing and sportswear available at Generations and the MCC Thrift Shop in Kitchener. The \$6,100 raised on Jan. 23 will go to the Sudan: Coming Home Project, a 10-year commitment by MCC to help the many displaced people in Sudan create homes for themselves.

GOD AT WORK IN US

Caring for the creatures

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent

The closest most urban Mennonites get to the source of their steak is the shrink-wrapped product at the grocery store. But Eugene Janzen—assistant dean of clinical practice at the University of Calgary, a practising veterinarian, a professor specializing in beef cattle and feedlot management, and one of the main shaping forces behind the University of Calgary's new school of veterinary medicine—is an exception.

Janzen, who attends Trinity Mennonite Church in Calgary, grew up in Rosthern, Sask., and spent his first five years on a farm. "My father was a grain farmer all his life, so I never grew up with animals on our place, but got exposed to animals from both my grandparents, and uncles and aunts. That's kind of how it began," he says, noting, "I was fascinated by people that actually did nothing but work with animals."

The family attended the nearby Eigenheim Mennonite Church, where his grandfather was the bishop and who, he says, instilled in him "a kind of a reverence for the animals around us."

His grandmother, a teacher, once gave Janzen a severe scolding—in German—for

torturing a grasshopper. He says she told him, "Never torture an animal, because it feels the pain like you."

Janzen remembers this event as an important lesson, still informing his respect for the animals he treats and what he teaches his students. "I think animals [raised for food] deserve to be treated properly," he says, recalling a family Bible with a picture of Balaam beating his donkey. "The angel berates him for beating the donkey," Janzen points out. "When he does that, his eyes were opened and he saw the angel standing in the path. I think there's lots of evidence where we're admonished to pay attention to the welfare of our animals."

Janzen is generally impressed with the attitudes of veterinary students today. Overall, he feels, they do not look at animals simply in utilitarian terms. "They think my generation is sort of Neanderthal because of some of the things we do, or did, and they've developed a pretty significant sensitivity," he acknowledges, like not tolerating treating animals without anesthetic.

In a society increasingly aware of food production and animal welfare, Janzen

provides a uniquely informed insight into current issues, speaking highly of the concern for animals he observes in his clients. "To a degree, many of the good feedlot operators have been my mentors," he says, noting that these operators show genuine concern for their animals, follow regulations, and are attendant to the quality and safety of the end product.

Janzen is somewhat bemused at the popularity of the organic movement, though. As an insider, he says the organic label doesn't necessarily mean the animals are better off. He notes that the primary diagnosis of the chickens he sees, that are bred for specific feeds and then allowed to range free, is starvation.

"I'm all for . . . not using as many pharmaceuticals as we do, but when you see [cattle] at this time of the year, and [farmers] haven't used a parasiticide, and the animals are scratching for lice, that's not how we should raise animals," he says. "I don't think that's the way we were admonished to look after our cattle."

Janzen's faith has shaped both his life and work. "As I've grown older, I've found it very difficult to divorce my personality from what I am as a professional," he admits. "The two are intertwined. I suspect the way I view what I do on a daily basis, part of it is motivated by what I believe as a Christian. You live as a Christian because that is the end, that has value in itself. You don't, like a Pavlovian dog, live as a Christian because you get a reward." ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF EUGENE JANZEN



Eugene Janzen, a practising vet and a prof specializing in beef cattle, says that his Christian faith has shaped both his life and work.

Flying high on pigeon feed

Merv Scheerer has been putting God first while providing nourishment for animals and birds for five decades



STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
BADEN, ONT.

Merv Scheerer has been involved in selling feed for almost 50 years. Dairy, horse and small animal feed are normal products—but racing pigeon feed?

Beginning in 1961, Scheerer worked in Baden, near Kitchener, as a truck driver, dispatcher and manager of a retail feed store. In 1976, he and brother Roy purchased a mill in Newton, west of Waterloo. In purchasing the business Scheerer prayed, setting before God hurdles that needed to be jumped to know it was the right thing to do: the right price, financing,

One of his most difficult experiences was worshipping with one of his customers who was so delinquent in paying that they removed him from their list of customers.

and selling property and a house in Baden, among others.

When everything fell into place, they bought.

The business, primarily selling feed to dairy farmers, grew through the years and is now owned by Scheerer's brother and son. Through it all, Scheerer has practised a balanced approach: supplying good feed, paying his bills and expecting his customers to do the same.

One of his most difficult experiences was worshipping with one of his customers who was so delinquent in paying that they removed him from their list of customers. "What hurt more was when [the customer's family members] let it be known in the community that we had 'cut them off.'"

Eventually, Scheerer and one of his four sons purchased a feed store back in Baden.

Again he prayed and it seemed like a green light. But this business did not prosper. The books at purchase had included income that came from the previous owner's other businesses, which made the store seem solvent when it really wasn't.

Year after year the small losses accumulated. Scheerer took himself off the payroll, hoping to make enough to pay the bills. He felt for those who hadn't been able to pay him in the past. Bankruptcy was something he did not want to face. Masterfeeds,

which owned the store property, gave them free rent for five years to help them gain solvency.

One day a man named Karl von Gardony walked into Scheerer's office. Two hours later, Baden Feed and Supply Ltd. began the process of mixing racing pigeon feed. Von Gardony gave them recipes and they prepared feed for him.

"Clean, it must be clean, or the pigeons don't get the energy to fly around summer thunder storms during a race," Von Gardony had said. He turned out to be a satisfied customer.

Little did Scheerer know that pigeon racers belong to clubs and word-of-mouth spreads quickly among them. Soon orders began coming in from all over southern Ontario, Illinois and Indiana.

That was 1993. It took several more years before the business was in the black, though. Pigeon feed, now several million dollars worth a year, saved the business. Baden Feed and Supply now ships all over the U.S. and one of the company's agents in Florida sends shipments to many places in the Caribbean.

In all this Scheerer gives the glory to God.

One of the earliest members of Mennonite Economic Development Associates in Waterloo Region, Scheerer has also served in a variety of ways in the congregations he has attended, as well as in the community. Most recently he was an elder and missions committee member at Wilmot Mennonite Church, south of Baden. ▮



Merv Scheerer has been in the feed business for nearly 50 years. He is pictured in the warehouse of Baden Feed and Supply Ltd. with a skid of the company's popular racing pigeon feed.

Retirement is no time to take it easy

Saskatchewan couple has spent the last 15 years pouring their hearts into the lives of struggling people in developing countries around the world

BY KARIN FEHDERAU
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON, SASK.

As they sit in their sun-lit living room on a February afternoon, Delmar Rempel and his wife, Betty Brown, acknowledge that their comfortable life in Canada is a far cry from the world they see when they travel.

And travel they do. Having visited numerous destinations in the last 15 years of their marriage, Rempel and Brown do not endure sickness, jetlag and danger just for the fun of it. Together they have poured their hearts into the lives of struggling people in developing countries.

It just sort of happened, they admit. During a tour through Haiti as a Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) board member, Rempel heard a challenge from the country representative who asked him to come up with a way to help artists there. Rempel had experience in papermaking from his days as owner of the Del Mar Framing Gallery. He decided to take the refuse from the banana plants home and see if he could develop a technique to make paper out of it.

Back in Saskatoon, he began to

experiment, learning quickly that he'd taken on a real challenge. "We'd never worked with that type of fibre," he said.

His search for information led him to Ottawa, where he met with another papermaker and learned some things from her. Then he built a papermaking machine, and eventually returned to Haiti to teach the locals and help establish Haiti Papermakers International.

Before the earthquake hit, the business was doing well, selling cards in the United States and Canada. "Four years ago, we heard that 2,600 children were being fed, clothed and schooled through the sale of these products," he said.

While on a second tour with MEDA in 2007, this time to Cairo, Egypt, they learned about the needs of a community of 2,000 women living off the little they could sell from the garbage dump.

"They couldn't find work, so they became garbage collectors," said Rempel.

"So many of the women were single moms," added Brown, who, being skilled in needlework, wanted to teach the women how to use the scraps of fabric they found

PHOTO BY DELMAR REMPEL



Delmar Rempel, right, teaches papermaking skills to women in Cairo.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DELMAR REMPEL

in the garbage.

Later in the same tour, the group was introduced to a project in Aswan, where MEDA was working with local employers to improve working conditions for children. "Child labour has had a bad rap," commented Rempel, explaining that it's a fact of life that children need to work there.

While listening to the presentation, Rempel noticed that his camera had attracted the curiosity of a small group of boys. Having worked as a professional photographer for 27 years, Rempel was keen to share his skills.

Upon returning home, Rempel asked his small group members at Nutana Park Mennonite Church if they would consider collecting money for a camera. A generous response produced enough for six cameras to take back to Egypt.

Since then, the energetic couple, now both in their 70s, have returned to the deplorable living conditions in Cairo to offer what assistance they can. Brown brought back with her a suitcase full of sewing supplies she had collected from friends in



Betty Brown, left, views a wall hanging made by women in Cairo from scraps of fabric they found at the dump.

Saskatoon. She showed the women how to use them, saying the gratitude shown by the women there was humbling.

"The second visit was so delightful," Brown said. "They recognized us and it was just like old friends coming back."

Their upcoming trip to Uganda to help shoot a documentary has Brown's children worried. But the resilient couple are determined to go. "We feel it won't be any more dangerous than what we experienced in Haiti," said Rempel calmly. ☿



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OBITUARY

From Manitoba to Paraguay, a minister to the world

Henry H. Epp

March 23, 1925 – Jan. 28, 2010

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU
Manitoba Correspondent

Henry H. Epp, 84, contributed in many significant ways to the Mennonite communities in Manitoba, Ontario, British Columbia and Paraguay.

After growing up on the family farm in Lena, Man., Epp graduated from Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Man. He served for 18 months as a conscientious objector at the Brandon Mental Hospital, Man., then began his pastoral ministry at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., marrying Mary Reimer during that time.

From 1953-55, Epp ministered in a Mennonite congregation in Asuncion, Paraguay, and then taught for a year at Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Montevideo, Uruguay.

He returned to Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite to continue ministering there until 1966. During this time he was



Epp

instrumental in the founding of Conrad Grebel College and served on its first board of governors in 1961.

He also was secretary of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada from 1959-61, "a time of transition in the conference, as congregations were moving to in-

dependence from the former *Gemeinden* (church communities), from lay positions to salaried ministers, from bishops to leading ministers and congregational chairpersons," recalls Epp's sister, Anna Ens.

He chaired the Hymnal Commission that resulted in the publication of the *Gesangbuch der Mennoniten* in 1965. George Wiebe, co-chair of the German hymnal project, says Epp was "deeply concerned . . . about Mennonite hymnody and about how we do worship"

From 1966-74, Epp was executive secretary of the Education and Publication Board of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. "He was a moving force in setting up the resource centre of the conference as well as establishing the archives of the conference on a more permanent basis. . . . The indexing of *Der Bote* was begun under his watch and he guided the conference in establishing the every home plan for *Canadian Mennonite*," notes David Schroeder, a former faculty colleague of Epp's at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg.

Epp also pastored at Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.; and Yarrow United Mennonite Church and Kelowna First Mennonite, both in B.C., before his retirement in 1986. ☞

☞ Staffing change

Pries-Klassen new MFC executive director

Darren Pries-Klassen has been named executive director of Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) effective immediately. Pries-Klassen worked as an MFC consultant beginning in 1998, when he was hired to open the Niagara office in St. Catharines, Ont. Prior to that, he spent six years as associate pastor of youth and young adult ministries with his wife, Monika, at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church Waterloo, Ont.

—MFC Release

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Dr. Peter Frick, pfrick@uwaterloo.ca, Tel. 519-885-1465, ext. 214.

Itinerary/Registration Form: <http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/~diebon06/2010StudyTour.pdf>



ARTBEAT

Original watercolours donated to Grebel

BY KARL JUHLKE

Conrad Grebel University College Release
WATERLOO, ONT.

The children of Peter Goetz, a well-known artist from Waterloo who died in 2007, donated 16 watercolours depicting Mennonite life in the Waterloo area to Conrad Grebel University College last fall.

The paintings, which range in content from landscapes and buildings to Old Order Mennonites, capture a glimpse of what the artist saw as the serenity and sense of community in the region.

"Peter Goetz was part of a very significant and accomplished, but largely unheralded, group of artists to emerge among the Mennonite refugees who fled the Soviet Union in the 1920s," comments Henry

Paetkau, president of Conrad Grebel. "We are thrilled to add his paintings depicting Mennonite life in Waterloo County to the college's growing art collection."

"As works of art, Goetz's paintings delight us, and they give us new eyes to see the world around us," observes Hildi Froese Tiessen, co-editor of several volumes of work concerning Waterloo County art.

Goetz honed his skills as an artist by taking courses at the Doon School of Fine Arts, where he studied under Fred Varley, a member of the Group of Seven.

In 1986, Goetz's work was featured in *Waterloo County Landscapes 1930-1960: A Sense of Place*, a volume that also



Sunday Morning by Peter Goetz.

includes works by fellow Mennonite painter Woldemar Neufeld and five other local artists. ❧

Educational leader left legacy both at home and abroad

BY JONATHAN DYCK

Canadian Mennonite University Release
WINNIPEG

More than 100 people attended the launch of *A President's Journey: The Memoirs of Henry Poettcker*, a new release from CMU Press that recounts Poettcker's passage from a farm boy to the president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College ([CMBC], now Canadian Mennonite University), and Mennonite Biblical Seminary (now Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary).

The event, held last fall, was also a celebration of the contributions made by Henry and Agnes Poettcker to the Mennonite church; it featured reflections from friends and former colleagues, including David Schroeder, Waldemar Janzen and Jake Pauls.

Schroeder emphasized a gentle efficiency in Poettcker's administrative style and the special care he took to speak with the "voice of faculty" when engaging Canadian churches.

Janzen compared Poettcker's

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- SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA & ITS FJORDS (June 13-28)
- PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19 - July 2)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE (June 24 - July 5)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE II with JOHN SHARP (June 29 - July 12)
- ITALY, AUSTRIA & GERMANY (July 7-17)
- ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23 - August 4)
- SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29 - August 11)
- EUROPEAN HERSHEY CUSTOM (August 13-24)
- FAITH LUTHERAN HOLY LAND TOUR (September 5-16)
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- TM MYSTERY TOUR (October 15-23)

2011 TOURS

- THE AMAZON RAIN FOREST and the GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (January 5-16)
- JAMAICA - IT'S PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY and FRUITS (January 28 - February 6)
- CHURCHES and SAFARIS in KENYA and TANZANIA (February 7-18)
- PANAMA CANAL CRUISE TOUR (February 23 - March 5)
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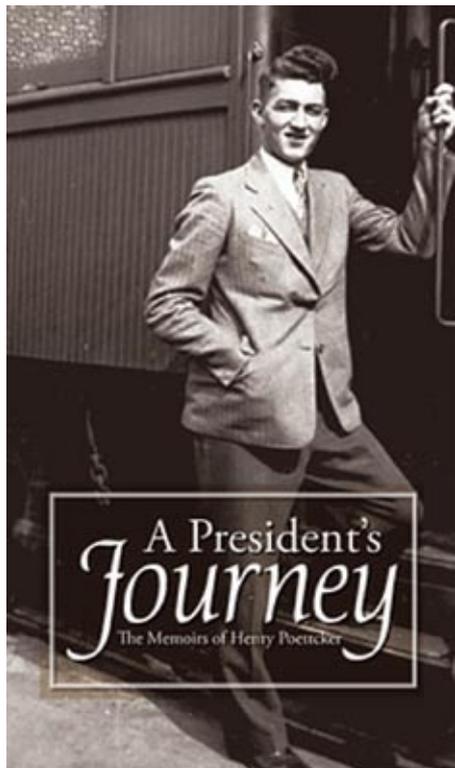
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Schools directory

teambuilding and leadership approach to straightening and reusing nails from an old building to create a new structure that would give glory to God. "When I hear the term 'servant leader,' I think of Henry Poettcker as the one that best fits that description."

Once a student of Poettcker's at CMBC, Pauls, former pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, spoke of the professor's ability to balance higher education with the needs of the Mennonite conferences. "Besides challenging students and meeting their needs, he also had to meet the needs of the supporting conferences, which was no easy task, and he managed to do it for 40 years," Pauls said. "Henry did all this at a time when higher education was still not fully accepted by all the conference churches."

Pauls also spoke to the contribution made by the Poettckers in their work overseas. "We here in North America have no idea how important overseas contacts are for new churches, and how important it is to read the Bible together," he said. "This is what Henry and Agnes did." And because of it, "they have had a growing impact around the world." ❧



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Gladwell to speak at fundraiser
Malcolm Gladwell, author of five books appearing on the New York Times No. 1 bestsellers list, is the guest speaker at a fundraiser to be held Friday, Mar. 5 at the Floradale Mennonite Church, Elmira for the Woolrich (Ont.) Counselling Services. Call for tickets at 519-669-2852

Calendar

British Columbia

March 20: *Communitas Supportive Care Society* presents "Mission and ministry: The next generation" conference, at Seven Oaks Alliance Church, Abbotsford. Keynote speakers: Tom and Christine Sine. Registration closes March 1. For more information, e-mail office@CommunitasCare.com.

April 9: MC B.C. Leaders, Elders and Deacons (LEAD) conference.

April 10: MC B.C. annual meeting, at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack.

April 17-18: Camp Squeah paddle-athon.

April 23-25: Junior youth IMPACT retreat, at Camp Squeah.

Saskatchewan

March 14: Evening of trios and quartets, at Cornerstone Mennonite Church, Saskatoon. Fundraiser for MCC.

March 21: RJC Chorale performs at Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, morning service.

March 27: Shekinah Retreat Centre fundraising supper and silent auction,

at Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

April 10: Saskatchewan Women in Mission Enrichment Day at Zoar Mennonite, Langham.

April 18: Carrot River Mennonite Church celebrates 50 years in Carrot River. Worship service begins at 10:30 a.m., followed by a full day of events. For more information, or registration forms, e-mail crmc@sasktel.net or debbergen@sasktel.net.

Manitoba

March 13: MCI presents *The Sound of Music*, at Buhler Hall, Gretna; curtain rises at 7:30 p.m.

March 14: Mennonite Community Orchestra and CMU choirs present Haydn's *Mass in Time of War*; 7 p.m., Loewen Athletic Centre.

March 14: Eden Foundation fundraising *Four on the Floor* concert featuring *Encore and Sound* Foundation, at Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach, at 3 p.m.

March 21: Southern Manitoba CMU fundraiser featuring CMU Chamber Choir and Men's Chorus; 3 p.m., Winkler.

March 25: Verna Mae Janzen Vocal Competition, at CMU Laudamus Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

April 2: First Mennonite Church Choir, Winnipeg, performs Bach's *St. John's Passion*, at 7 p.m.

April 18: Eden Foundation fundraising *Four on the Floor* concert featuring Winkler Men's Community Choir, at Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church, at 7 p.m.

April 24: CMU spring concert, at Loewen Athletic Centre, 7:30 p.m.

Ontario

March 3: *Paraguay Primeval*, a multimedia piece with music by Carol Ann Weaver and text by Rudy Wiebe, Dora Dueck, and Henry and Esther Regehr, is being premiered at the Conrad Grebel chapel, Waterloo, at noon.

March 5: Rodney and Lorna Sawatsky Visiting Scholar Lecture at Conrad Grebel Great Hall, 7:30 p.m. Keynote speaker: Pakisa Tshimika. Topic: "The Kajiji of my dream: A radical community transformation."

March 5-6: Engaged workshop for all engaged or newly married couples, Riverdale Mennonite Church, Millbank. For more information, e-mail denise_bender@yahoo.com.

March 6: Menno Singers present Rachmaninoff's "Vespers," St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, 8 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

March 6: Second annual Peace and

Justice Community Breakfast, hosted by Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden. Speaker: Mark Yantzi. Topic: "Responding to crime: What works, not what sounds good." Call the church at 519-634-8311 to register your attendance.

March 13: MEDA Waterloo Chapter annual dinner, at Floradale Mennonite Church. Reception at 6 p.m.; dinner at 6:30 p.m. Keynote speaker: Helen Loftin. Topic: MEDA's work in Pakistan. Reservations required. Call Corina at 519-725-1633 or e-mail cmcgillivray@meda.org.

March 15,16: Grandparent/Grandchild Days at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. One-day retreats for grandparents and their grandchildren in grades 1 to 6. Play, learn and worship together during March break. Theme: "Adventures in prayer." Resource person: Elsie Rempel, MC Canada's director of Christian nurture. For more information, e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

March 20: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents "A Springtime Choral Potpourri" with the Grand Philharmonic Chamber Singers; St. George Hall, Waterloo; 7:30 p.m.

March 22-25: Mennonite Camping Association binational meeting, at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. Open to the public. Keynote speaker: Tom Yoder Neufeld of Conrad Grebel University College. Theme: "Who is Jesus? What does he want? What am I

You Are Cordially Invited

To an evening out at *Canadian Mennonite's* annual Fundraising Banquet, **Saturday, March 13.**

The event will be held at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, 3471 Clearbrook Rd., Abbotsford, B.C., beginning at **6 p.m.**



James R. Coggins, of Abbotsford, former editor of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* and murder mystery novelist, will be our dinner speaker. He will speak on the role of the religious press and related topics. Writing his first novel in high school, the hero of his later fiction works was John Smyth, named after the 17th century English

Separatist. A special music group from Emmanuel named the *Peregrinos* will perform Spanish and German folk music as well as Christian hymns.

Proceeds from ticket sales and donations will go to support *Canadian Mennonite's* ministry. Tickets are \$12.50 and can be purchased at the door, but please reserve in advance by contacting board members Ed Janzen at epjlj@shaw.ca (604-852-0095) or Linda Matties at lindamatties@shaw.ca (604-852-8082). Thank you.

CANADIAN MENNONITE

UpComing

Weaver to premiere work based on 2009 trip to Paraguay

WATERLOO, ONT.—*Paraguay Primeval*, a new multi-media piece is being premiered at the Conrad Grebel University College chapel at noon on March 3. With music by Carol Ann Weaver and text by Mennonite novelists Rudy Wiebe and Dora Dueck, and Henry and Esther Regehr (who translated informal journal entries by Schoenbrunn colonists), the concert features vocalist Rebecca Campbell, percussionists Kyle Skillman and Chris Snow, cellist Ben Bolt-Martin, Low German reader Henry Paetkau and projectionist Myra Weaver. The work is the result of Weaver's trip to the Paraguayan Chaco in conjunction with last summer's Mennonite World Conference assembly, a journey that she found both enlightening and inspiring.

—From a release by Carol Ann Weaver

supposed to do?" Also featuring Darren Kropf of MCC Creation Care Network and musician Bryan Moyer Suderman.

March 25-26: Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies; Conrad Grebel chapel; 7:30 p.m. each evening. Keynote speaker: Ernest Hamm, York University, Toronto. Topic: "Science and Mennonites in the Dutch Enlightenment."

March 27: Mannheim Mennonite Church hosts a benefit concert for House of Friendship and MCC, at 7:30 p.m. Featuring Menno Valley Sound. For more information, call Anita at 519-662-1908.

April 2: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents Bach's *Mass in B Minor*; Centre in the Square, Kitchener; 7:30 p.m.

April 5: New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale annual promotion dinner at

Bingeman Park, Kitchener, at 6:30 p.m. Guest speaker: Joe Manickam, MCC Asia program director. For tickets, call the MCC Ontario office at 519-745-8458.

April 11: Silver Lake Mennonite Camp annual general meeting, at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 3 p.m.

April 16: Ham dinner fundraiser at Hamilton Mennonite Church for the MCC meat canner; 5 to 7 p.m. MCC displays, Hope Rising music concert. For more information, call 905-528-3607 or 905-387-3952.

April 17: Watchmen Quartet perform at Kitchener MB Church, 7 to 9 p.m. For more information, call 519-698-2091.

April 18: Menno Singers presents an a cappella hymn sing at Mannheim

Mennonite Church, Petersburg.

April 23-24: Engaged workshop for all engaged or newly married couples, Living Water Fellowship, New Hamburg. For more information, e-mail denise_bender@yahoo.com.

April 23-24: MC Eastern Canada annual church gathering, Niagara Peninsula. For more information, call

519-650-3806 or e-mail mcec@mcec.ca.

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.

Classifieds

Announcement

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

For Rent

Rent Furnished Kitchener Home - Sept. 1, 2010 - Aug. 31, 2011. East Ward neighbourhood, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, office space, finished basement, fireplace and big city backyard. Walking distance to all amenities and downtown. Close to highway for easy commuting. Contact Andrew Keely-Dyck at keely-dyck@rogers.com or 519-745-1935.

Employment Opportunities



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mennonite Church Manitoba is a community of 50 congregations seeking to live the Kingdom of God in the Anabaptist tradition. MCM congregations are found throughout Manitoba in urban and rural contexts. Our offices are located on the south campus of CMU in Winnipeg, where a staff of 10, together with a dispersed camp staff of 9, support Christian camping, evangelism and service, and leadership ministries.

Mennonite Church Manitoba invites nominations for the position of Executive Director. Our Church is looking for a leader with vision, a collaborative spirit and love for the church.

If you feel this calling for yourself, or would like to nominate someone who you feel would be well suited for this position, please respond to:

Hans Werner, Moderator (204) 487-2355 or
Executive Director Search Committee
Mennonite Church Manitoba
200-600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB R3P 2J1

YOUTH PASTOR

Are you interested in being part of a supportive and supported pastoral team?

Do you feel led to help guide youth in their spiritual and life journey?

Are you excited about encouraging a life of Christian Service?

Nutana Park Mennonite Church is an intergenerational church of 250 people in beautiful and vibrant Saskatoon. We are welcoming applications to join us as YOUTH PASTOR. Preference will be given to those candidates with related education and experience in youth work along with a commitment to Anabaptist theology and the practices of the Mennonite Church.

Please see our website — www.npmc.net/youth — for more information.



Stewardship Consultant

MFC seeks a full-time Consultant to work in its St. Catharines, Ontario office. The successful candidate will be responsible to promote

biblical stewardship of financial resources and to provide charitable gift and estate planning services.

The successful candidate will:

- Support and incorporate MFC's core values of stewardship in personal life
- Communicate effectively with individuals and in public presentations
- Have knowledge of, or ability to learn, charitable gift and estate planning
- Be creative, organized, and self-motivated in balancing multiple projects
- Be willing and able to contribute as part of an inter-dependent staff team.

A start date for the position is negotiable. Processing of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Submit resumes to:

Darren Pries-Klassen, Executive Director
22-595 Carlton Street, St. Catharines, ON L2M 4Y2
fax: 204-488-1986
dpklassen@mennofoundation.ca

Mennofoundation.ca

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Braeside Evangelical Mennonite Church in Winnipeg is looking for an Associate Pastor. The responsibilities will include Youth Ministry as well as Worship Ministry (including worship technology). Ideally this position would be filled by one person but we are open to other arrangements. Please send resumes to: braeside@braesidechurch.ca, Attention: Search Committee.

www.braesidechurch.ca

FULL-TIME LEAD PASTOR

Hamilton Mennonite Church (www.hmc.on.ca) invites applications for the position of full-time lead pastor to begin Fall 2010. We are an active urban congregation of 96 members, prayerfully seeking a pastor with gifts in preaching, teaching and spiritual leadership. The successful candidate will be committed to an Anabaptist understanding of faith and theology, and deeply rooted in biblical teaching. Persons with seminary training and a passion for pastoral leadership are encouraged to apply.

Interested applicants please contact:
MCEC Conference Minister
Muriel@mcec.ca or 1-800-206-9356

LEAD PASTOR**Graysville Mennonite Church**

"A community striving to learn and live the teachings of Jesus Christ"

We are a country church located 10 miles west of Carman, Man. We seek a lead pastor able to start Spring 2010. Time commitment is negotiable between .5 - .75 FTE. We await the leading of the Holy Spirit as we seek a pastor committed to the Christian faith as exemplified in *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. We are a mature church of nearly 50 members emerging into a congregation of all ages. We seek a pastor able to serve all ages, willing to tackle the challenges of a truly rural church and recognize the value of cooperation with other Christian churches of all faiths.

Inquiries and resumes may be sent to: Cam Stockford, council chair, Graysville Mennonite Church, Box 31 Graysville, MB R0G 0T0; e-mail: stockfor@cici.mb.ca or visit www.graysvillemc.org.

Ottawa Mennonite Church is inviting applications for an

ASSOCIATE MINISTER (YOUTH)

We are a growing congregation of approximately 225 people, situated in Canada's national capital. The primary responsibilities of the Associate Minister (Youth) position involve relationship building and program development/coordination in connection with youths and young adults. The position also includes various elements of broader congregational ministry. Applicants should have post-secondary education in Christian theology, and a degree at least at the Bachelor's level. This is a full-time position, commencing in September 2010. Applications will be accepted until March 31, 2010. For the complete Position Description and Statement of Qualifications, please direct applications and inquiries to:

application@ottawamennonite.ca
Phone: 613-733-6729
www.ottawamennonite.ca

LEAD PASTOR

Altona Mennonite Church (AMC), located 100 km southwest of Winnipeg, Man., invites applications for a full-time Pastor starting September 2010. AMC is a progressive and caring congregation of 100, in a rural community of approximately 4,000. The candidate to be considered needs to be committed to Mennonite Anabaptism, educated in a conference school, and have gifts as a preacher, spiritual leader, teacher, and in pastoral care.

Please see our website - www.altonamennonitechurch.ca - for contact information. Direct resumes to:

Altona Mennonite Church
c/o The Pastoral Search Committee
Box 1237
Altona, MB R0G 0B0

LEAD PASTOR

Richmond Park Mennonite Brethren Church is searching for the Lead Pastor whom God has chosen to lead us into the future. We are a multi-generational church of 250-plus that is seeking to faithfully make an impact on our city and surrounding area with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have recently completed a refocusing process and require an individual who can lead us through equipping and mentoring others for roles in ministry. Gifts should also include teaching and preaching.

We are located in Brandon, a city in Western Manitoba with a population of about 50,000 people, which is experiencing growth and increasing cultural diversity. Please forward resumes and inquiries to lysackd@mts.net. Closing date March 15, 2010.

LEAD PASTOR

Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, located in a residential area close to the heart of Winnipeg, is looking for a Lead Pastor. With the retirement of our Pastor after 13 years of service to our faith community, we seek a full-time person who is committed to Mennonite/Anabaptist theology, and who can work with a Pastoral Team to give leadership in providing spiritual nurture and care to our congregation of 258 resident members.

You may reply in confidence to:
Herb Rempel, Chair of the Pastoral Search Committee
E-mail: hrempe@mts.net or fax to 204-947-3747

FULL-TIME LEAD PASTOR

Trinity Mennonite Church is located in the rolling foothills of the Rocky Mountains between Calgary and Okotoks, Alta. We are a growing congregation with an active membership of about 100, with diverse ages, occupations and cultural backgrounds. We are actively involved with MC Canada and MC Alberta.

We seek a pastor who will provide strong leadership and focus on the vision, mission and values defined by our congregation, working together with our members and participants to foster a faith community that is open and welcoming to new participants, and is founded upon the Anabaptist understanding of the Christian faith. Proposed start date on or about July 1, 2010.

Please apply in confidence to: Rob.Doerksen@shaw.ca or Rob Doerksen, Trinity Mennonite Church, RR 1, Site 17, Box 21, DeWinton, AB, Canada T0L 0X0. <http://trinity.mennonitechurch.ab.ca/>

World's oldest Mennonite?

At 111, Elizabeth Buhler has lived in three centuries

BY KEVIN ROLLASON

Winnipeg Free Press
WINKLER, MAN.

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS PHOTO

When Elizabeth Buhler was born, Queen Victoria ruled England, the Czar led Russia, the Boer War broke out and Manitoba was 29 years old.

Buhler, a member of Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church and the oldest Canadian still living in Canada, celebrated her 111th birthday on Feb. 8. She might also be the oldest living Mennonite.

Buhler's age cannot be accurately verified because her family says all birth records were destroyed during the years Josef Stalin was leader of the Soviet Union. But the family says Buhler always maintained that she was born in Ukraine on Feb. 8, 1899.

Her secret to longevity?

"Exercise," said her 80-year-old daughter, Lena Pranke, noting that her mother had several plaques recognizing she'd been the oldest participant in a 10-kilometre fundraising walk.

"And good solid food," her 76-year-old daughter, Mary Dyck, said, adding, "Her faith in God has been there all along."

Buhler was just weeks shy of giving birth to her first child, Isaac, when she and her husband, whom she married on Sept. 7, 1924, in Russia, uprooted and left for a new life in Canada in 1925, along with her parents and several other family members.

Buhler had a hard life on their farm south of Winkler, which she left with her husband in 1956, to allow their son to work it. They raised a son and five daughters on the farm, and the couple moved to a house in Winkler, where they took in boarders. Her husband died at 69.

"They were married 43 years, so she has been a widow almost as long as she was married," her 74-year-old daughter, Justina Suderman, the baby in the family, said.

Today, when she has a good day in the Salem Home where she lives in Winkler, Buhler can sing hymns she learned as a child, laugh and have conversations with people. Recently, she insisted that she wanted to remarry, but the family talked her out of it, noting there were no males in the seniors' residence old enough for her without "robbing the cradle."

On a not-so-good day, Buhler is hard to wake up and difficult to get a response from. Suderman said Buhler's sight is almost gone, except for seeing objects in front of her, and she needs a hearing aid. She has to be pushed around in a wheelchair.

There were times when Buhler risked not coming anywhere close to living to 111.

The first was during the Russian Revolution, when anarchists came intent on pillaging her house and killing the family. Buhler, whose maiden name was Unger, picked up a guitar and began



The oldest Canadian still living in Canada, Elizabeth Buhler of Winkler, Man., turned 111 on Feb. 8. She may also be the oldest living Mennonite.

Recently, she insisted that she wanted to remarry, but the family talked her out of it, noting there were no males in the seniors' residence old enough for her without "robbing the cradle."

singing until the commander ordered his men to leave and not steal anything.

The next time was when she was giving birth to her final child. The baby turned out to be a breech birth and, even though she was in a hospital for the first time, the family says that because the nurse was out on a date and the doctor wasn't around, the baby died, nearly taking Buhler with him.

To help celebrate her milestone birthday, Buhler has received certificates from Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Governor General Michaëlle Jean. ❧

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