



Wade into the Water

-Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

The theme from Mark 4:37 where Jesus stills the storm feels ironic for David Driedger, a prairie boy who knows nothing of the sea. “A tippy canoe on Moose Lake in the wake of a ski boat is as close as it gets for me,” he said.

As a pastor, however, Driedger is familiar with other types of “choppy water” and thinks deeply about how the church can best discern ways to be faithful as it deals with these. A problem for the church dealing with new issues, he says, is that it tends “to re-entrench its position as knowing and possessing the truth and then applying that truth to those outside its parameters.”

With “tweets” from his message displayed on large screens, Driedger challenged delegates to think about how churches might faithfully wade into the waters of diversity in their communities. He engaged the Being a Faithful Church 5 document, with affirmation for its emphasis on the ongoing nature of discernment, and challenge for the way it points to unattainable ideals. These ideals, represented by the two horizons of the Garden of Eden and the New Jerusalem, can tempt the church to see itself as possessing unassailable truth that precludes thinking and “redesign” when the unknown is encountered.

Driedger suggests that instead, the church pay attention to the Holy Spirit who hovers over the waters, helping people engage faithfully right where they are.

Driedger concluded with a suggestion and challenge for the church. He said; “We know these waters and I want to suggest that our faithfulness comes not in trying to re-entrench some distant ideal but in attending to one another in the midst of the waves.”

How might Mennonite Church Canada Congregations wade into the waters as we go out from Assembly 2014?



David Driedger challenges delegates from the podium, while “tweeting” texts from his message to a large screen on either side of the worship area. Photos by Deborah Froese & Moses Falco.

Assembly by the Numbers

Registered **participants** include:

- 20** children/youth
- 1** youth ambassador
- 287** church delegates
- 36** Area Church Delegates
- 126** non delegates
- 31** staff
- 47** young adults

Also represented are:

- 5** MC USA congregations,
- 4** Mennonite Brethren congregations,
- the Conference of Mennonites in Mexico,
- and about 12 related organizations.

Profile of a delegate: Bonnie Sawatzky

-Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

It's hard to organize a trip to Assembly, knowing what to pack, how many books to bring, and how to plan visiting times. Who to travel with, however, is a no-brainer for Bonnie Sawatzky. Leon, a black lab service dog, is her constant companion. Leon helps Sawatzky pick things up, walk when she needs to, get up if she falls, and Leon especially likes to push buttons to open doors.

Sawatzky, a professor of biomechanics at the University of British Columbia, was born with some physical difficulties that were exacerbated by a car accident in 1993. Before the accident, she loved to cycle, but after, "I felt like my legs were cut off," she said. Her first service dog, a golden retriever named Phoenix, was an energetic, gregarious individual. With Phoenix pulling her wheelchair, Sawatzky was 'cycling' again. "The wind in my hair is what I gained with Phoenix. . . he pulled me everywhere... having a service dog brought life back for me." When Phoenix died suddenly of cancer, the grief was

profound. "I never knew what it was like to be depressed until I lost Phoenix." In addition to the grief of losing a beloved companion, Sawatzky had to cope, once again, with the loss of function and independence.

In 2008, one year after losing Phoenix, Leon came into Sawatzky's life. He is very different than Phoenix, calm and quiet in contrast to Phoenix's exuberance. While Sawatzky has not been able to resume 'cycling' because Leon does not pull, there are other things she has gained. Leon is content to patiently wait through long university classes (or Assembly sessions), and his steadiness has encouraged her to go for short walks in their neighbourhood. Leon helps Sawatzky negotiate stairs, and is able to assist her to stand up if she falls.

Asked how she wants Assembly participants to interact with Leon, Sawatzky said: "Leon loves belly rubs, but please ask if it's an appropriate time to pet him."



Photo by Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

From the Archives

Concern for Creation Care in Mennonite History

Creation Care has surfaced in the national church setting on numerous occasions. In 1978, a small group, including some Mennonites, met in Island Lakes, Man. to discuss the impact of a gas pipeline on local ecology. In the 1980s, a push by Eldorado mines to establish nuclear reactors near Warman, Sask. met with resistance in the church. At various times there has been Mennonite resistance to American nuclear war heads near the Canadian border. More recently in Sask., issues related to nuclear power have resurfaced. Mennonites along with Christians from other denominations stopped the plan from proceeding. In the circa 1943, photo above, Conscientious Objector Peter Berg of Rosenfeld, MB poses with tools of the forestry trade. In 1938, the Sayward forest on Vancouver island was devastated by a fire. Swiss and Russian Mennonite COs cleared snags (charred trunks) before replanted 17 million trees from 1942-1944 This was the largest reforestation project of its time. As of 1995, the trees are said to be worth \$1.7 billion to the economy.

-compiled by Dan Dyck, research by Conrad Stoesz



Meeting challenge and change

-Deborah Froese

As a teenager, Betty Pries raised uneasy questions about church and the faithful living. Who is Jesus really? What does it mean for Jesus to be called God's son? What does it mean to be a Christian in a world

of such diversity in faiths, beliefs, practices & lifestyles?

Those questions developed Pries' ability to look at faith from a wide variety of standpoints and instilled a deep appreciation for the theological

perspectives of others—skills that are foundational to the work she does today.

Pries is one of the founders and the Executive Director of *Associates Resourcing the Church (ARC)* Ministries, a consultancy service for churches and faith-based organizations. She also teaches conflict resolution and mediation at Conrad Grebel University College, and served on Mennonite Church Canada's Faith and Life Committee for 9 years.

Pries is sharing her perspectives about meeting challenge and change as a keynote speaker for Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2014, *Wild Hope, Faith for an unknown season* in Winnipeg, July 3-6.

Through ARC, Pries connects with congregations across the denominational landscape who face tough questions about theology, conflict, fear of decline and desire for renewal. Unfortunately, she says, some churches want quick fixes, seeking programs instead of spiritual renewal.

But renewal is not a function of programming.

“Everything I know about the spiritual journey is about being transformed again and again and again into greater maturity,” she says. “We can be very comfortable in our lives and perspectives but it's usually not until we suffer that we return to dependency on God. In this sense, decline becomes an opportunity for the church – an opportunity to rediscover our dependency on God.”

While most denominations are entering a time of

“Everything I know about the spiritual journey is about being transformed again and again and again into greater maturity,”

change and don't know what lies ahead, Mennonites are somewhat protected, Pries says, because they have always considered themselves to be on the fringes anyway. But for mainline churches whose precepts once shaped the Canadian landscape

politically and socially, the change is massive. “They were once at the centre of town hall and have now been relegated to the back.”

In the face of challenge, change and everyday life, Pries says, “The church is a place of tremendous opportunity for transformation and healing. That's the gift of the church.”



Photo provided.

Volunteer connections

-by Dan Dyck

Art Driedger jokes he's too old to be a delegate.

Truth is, he prefers to be a volunteer. “This is my Mennonite Church Canada family,” he says. His eyes dart about the dining tent acknowledging a wide array of friends. “I know so many people here. This is where I want to be involved.”

As a delegate he'd have to focus on different responsibilities and might not get to see as many people as he can ushering.

At 81 years old, this busy senior from Bethel Mennonite Church in Wpg. just returned from a 32 day road trip spanning the USA and Canada with his wife Kathleen. Together they visited his long time friends from PAX – an MCC program providing an alternative to military service. It ran from 1951 -76.

Driedger worked in Austria to help settle 250,000 refugees from Hungary. Friendships formed by the “PAX Boys” during service in Austria and Germany



Photo by Dan Dyck.

from 1956-59 were renewed again as the couple visited a variety of old friends in far flung places.

Whether his bonds are with the PAX Boys or connections through the Mennonite Church Canada family, relationships built on shared faith values bring Driedger, a native of Leamington, Ont., back to his roots.

During the couple's road trip, they also visited numerous Mennonite congregations in the US and Canada. They felt at home in each one. As ethnic,

language and cultural diversity grows in the church, Driedger hopes that one element remains the same – that Anabaptist faith values will connect us with the same family-like bonds he experienced growing up.

Take a moment to thank Art Driedger and other volunteers, clearly identifiable in their green vests. These dedicated souls are often here well before you arrive and stay long after you leave. They work on the front lines and behind the scenes to bring this assembly to you. A simple thank you just might make their day.

The Assembled News is the daily news sheet for the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2014 in Wpg. Man. Full colour editions of Assembled News will be available in PDF format at home.mennonitechurch.ca/events/Winnipeg2014. We will print an ecologically friendly quantity of hard copies for distribution on site – please share. Comments, questions, and affirmations can be sent to ddyck@mennonitechurch.ca.

Editors: Dan Dyck, Deb Froese; Design by Ryan Roth Bartel

Ministry has no age barriers

-Deborah Froese

Being young is not a barrier to sharing your gifts with the wider church.

At the ages of 10, 11 and 12, Rebecca, Immanuel and Andrew are sharing their voices and acting talent to spread God's love via new videos that highlight kid friendly Mennonite Church Canada ministry projects.

Brother and sister Andrew and Rebecca Stoesz assume the roles of Chris and Selah, who narrate the videos. Immanuel plays himself in a video that leads viewers through an aquaponics sustainable farming operation in his own backyard in Winnipeg, Man. The pilot operation is being used to learn about and prove the concept for similar projects Mennonite Church Canada is encouraging in the Global South. The backyard aquaponics farm was developed by Immanuel's father, Hippolyto Tshimanga, who serves as Director, Africa, Europe and Latin America Ministry.

A second video shares the good news of healing colouring books that help kids in the Philippines cope with the aftermath of war and natural disaster. A third video, still in production, introduces Chris and Selah's new friend, Gloria, whose voice is contributed by Thinky Ndlovu of Zimbabwe. Thinky, daughter of

Mennonite World Conference Danisa Ndlovu, has been studying at CMU and currently resides in Winnipeg.

Chris, Selah and Gloria are drawn from the national church's Advent and Lent at Home series of booklets written by Elsie Rempel, Formation Consultant. The videos are designed to connect children with kid-friendly ministry projects.

Three-dimensional figures of Chris, Selah and Gloria were designed by Megan Kamei, and sewn by Rempel's sister Mary Funk. They are available for congregational itineration through the Resource Centre. Their congregational specialty is telling children's stories about their World of Witness tours and leading children in worship during Advent and Lent. resources.mennonitechurch.ca/ResourceView/8/14210

See the videos at donate.mennonitechurch.ca/project/aquaponics and donate.mennonitechurch.ca/project/colouring-art-books



Chris (left) and Selah (right) are drawn from Mennonite Church Canada's Advent and Lent at Home series of booklets written by Elsie Rempel, Formation Consultant and designed by Megan Kamei. Three-dimensional figures were sewn by Rempel's sister Mary Funk.



Gloria is drawn from Mennonite Church Canada's Advent and Lent at Home series of booklets written by Elsie Rempel, Formation Consultant. Three-dimensional figures of Chris, Selah and Gloria were designed by Megan Kamei and sewn by Rempel's sister Mary Funk. Photos by Moses Falco.

Seminar

Cultivating Spiritual Practices

-Evelyn Rempel Petkau

"It only takes a scrap of time to turn to God."

April Yamasaki shared this anonymous piece of 14th century wisdom in her workshop, Cultivating Spiritual Disciplines. Sometimes it feels like a scrap of time is all we have but that can be turned into a sacred pause, she told a roomful of participants.

Yamasaki shared some important and helpful tips she has learned about turning that scrap of time into a sacred moment. When she visits someone she might pause in the car for a moment of silence to think about that person and bring them before God in prayer. Sometimes, before rushing to the next thing, she will exercise the simple practice of taking a conscious breath while praying the Jesus prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me."

She noted that a sacred pause might last a few seconds or it might last an entire weekend. What these moments have in common is our attentiveness to God, not only when we need healing but to be aware of those places where God is present in our life.

Practice is important. "Depth can come to the spiritual discipline as we repeat it. We don't pray just once. Be patient with your practices even if you think it isn't working. Accept that today you feel restless. Let it go and try again another time. Spiritual disciplines are not magic."



Photo Evelyn Rempel Petkau.

Yamasaki asked participants, "When have you taken time in the past week to be attentive to God? When in the past week did you fail to realize God and what were the barriers?" It became a sacred pause when silence filled the room and participants confessed those barriers and released them to God.

"Sometimes I wonder where accountability comes in with social media. The constant buzz can work against us but I've been tweeting a Bible verse a day and this has led me to read the entire Bible through in one year. I read until I find a word to put on my twitter. I have never read the Bible so consistently before," said Yamasaki.

Children and the future of the church

-Elsie Rempel

Part 2: Nurturing faith in a new world

In a changing world where fewer young people connect with faith communities, it grows increasingly important to practice faith rituals at home as well as in congregations. But it doesn't have to be complicated.

Contemplative spiritual practices are fundamental to faith, and they begin simply, by showing children God's ever present spirit. When I practice silence after singing and signing "Be still and know that I am God" with

3-5 year olds, something holy happens. In those few moments their sweet voices and serious movements, followed by deep silence and fluttering eyelids, help me know they sense God's presence.

This fall, preschool children who use the new MennoMedia *Shine* curriculum in churches will meet the Good Shepherd through contemplative spiritual practices like carefully pouring water over stones as they pray, "Loving God, we listen for your voice." This is not returning to the kind of "meaningless ritual" that our ancestors railed against. These spiritual practices give vocabulary and hands-on, physically active expression to children's intuitive awareness of the divine. They build body knowledge, identity and spiritual roots. And these practices can also be done at home.

Providing spiritual nurture for children's hearts and bodies, and informing their minds, extends a natural invitation to know and follow Jesus. The time we invest builds their faith and the future of our church.

Congregational life must also support children and youth on an integrated spiritual journey. Recent research confirms that multi-generational relationships are essential. These are best developed as we worship, fellowship and serve together in church, at camp, on MDS trips, and in the local thrift store or food bank. Children and youth grow stronger spiritual roots when they relate with adults who are authentic, affirming, and available.

However, the heart of church life beats most strongly during Sunday morning worship. Many congregations now include children and youth in worship service programming. How can we strengthen the potential for worship to help our children and youth grow spiritual roots in our churches? Here are a few guidelines.



Photo by Matt Veith.

1. Choose worship language that is understood by all who are present.
2. Stimulate the senses; symbols reinforce the spoken message.
3. Keep sermons short, or break them into sections with an audience response – such as a song.
4. Give active young bodies a chance to move in non-disruptive ways, preferably with a repeated ritual, such as coming forward with offering contributions.

5. Ensure prayers refer to issues concerning people of different ages and across life stages.
6. Keep special worship bags of quiet, engaging activities available for pick-up as children enter the sanctuary, and/or provide children's bulletins.
7. Include songs that are accessible to children and other untrained voices.
8. Choose worship leaders who encourage the congregation to understand what to expect from children of different ages.
9. Show grace in the face of minor disruptions caused by children as they grow into worshipful behaviour.

Will our faith have children? Practice faith rituals with young people and embrace them within your congregation. God's answer will grow in your heart.

Elsie Rempel is the Formation Consultant for Mennoite Church Canada and a strong advocate for young people in the church. She is the author of Please Pass the Faith (Herald Press, 2012, www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1798) and she writes Faith Bytes: Elsie spins a blog at elsiebannabrub.wordpress.com/.

Seminar

What we believe about children matters

- Elsie Hannah Ruth Rempel

What do we believe about children? What stories do children share with us that we like to recall and savour? How are our today's Mennonite writers reflecting the spirituality of children?

These are just a few questions I asked my seminar participants to reflect upon. We assessed fifteen current theological statements about children. The following statements were considered to be compatible with an Anabaptist perspective:

Children are:

- Fully human, made in God's image
- Children have a privileged spot on the lap of Jesus and the church
- Gifts of God, sources of joy
- Developing beings in need of guidance and instruction

- Possess a complex innocence and develop their moral and spiritual accountability gradually.

The group was also very attracted to the following statements:

- Children's faith adds vitality and playfulness to seeking God together.
- Children learn through play. Their 'playing' at faith is really doing theology.
- Children's spiritual awareness is intrinsic.
- Models of faith, sources of revelation.

These statements certainly reflect the cultural and ecclesiological environment in which we are living What do you think? Are these statements also compatible with an Anabaptist perspective? Join the conversation by emailing me, Elsie Rempel at erempel@mennonitechurch.ca

Peaches ripe for fundraising

-Deborah Froese

Peaches grow aplenty in the Niagara region of Ontario and with a little help from Niagara United Mennonite Church (NUMC), their abundance is helping to support a ministry for young people in Botswana.

In 2011, NUMC began making peach salsa, jam and platz to sell at the Niagara on the Lake Peach Festival as a fundraiser. Over the years the proceeds have been directed to: Refugee project, Youth Programs and most recently for the ministry of Nathan and Taryn Dirks. Nate and Taryn are Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers who connect with young adults from a number of African Initiated Churches in Gaborone, Botswana's capital.

"Through the sale of peach salsa, peach jam and peach platz, we have raised \$6,500 in support of the Dirks' efforts," said Bill Devolin, Chair, Missions and Service Committee in an email interview.

The Peach Festival is a local summer highlight that takes place every year during the second week of August. NUMC participates on Saturday, when Queen Street is closed to vehicle traffic for the celebration.

"On the street we have music and all things peach," Devolin says. "Each group participating must sell a unique peach product and we have the peach salsa."

Peach salsa production is a two day event that requires many hands. It starts on a Friday evening several weeks in advance of the event when about 15 people of all ages gather in NUMC's kitchen to chop fruit and prepare other ingredients. The following day at 8:00 a.m., 15 to 20 people cook and can the treats. The



From left to right: Linda Pankratz, Sharon Dirks and Jake Enns cook up vats of peach salsa for a ministry fundraiser at the Niagara region Peach Festival. Photo provided.

day before the sale, peach platz is prepared by church members, an experienced group of bakers.

"We very much appreciate their efforts" says Devolin.

"And I am equally grateful," said Hippolyto Tshimanga upon hearing the peach project. "Such dedication to fundraising means Nathan, Taryn, and myself can focus on the ministry," added the Director of Africa Ministry for Mennonite Church Canada.

In an email, Nathan Dirks said the funds raised by NUMC have helped purchase needed supplies and resources for their ministry – from Bibles and teaching resources to blankets for people displaced by flooding. "It's remarkable to be able to see the ingenuity and efforts of our congregation at home making use of our local specialty in a unique way, having a direct impact on the lives of people in Botswana, all in the name of Jesus."

NUMC's Peach Festival sale begins around 8 a.m. with the help of 5 to 8 volunteers. They sell about 500 jars of salsa each year, plus 150 jars of jam and 400 -500 slices of Platz.

"A particularly significant outcome of this salsa-making experience is the sense of community and purpose which is experienced by those who are involved," says Sharon Dirks, NUMC's Minister of Pastoral Care—and Nathan Dirks' mother. "I love that a wide variety of NUMC people get involved. The sense of camaraderie is delightful. This act of creativity is another facet of our love for and worship of God. And of course, being on Queen Street in Old Town Niagara on Peach Festival day is always fun!"

Devolin says the event allows the church to connect with the local community beyond the church, extending fundraising efforts to a broader area. Volunteers have the opportunity to share information about the Dirks' ministry with every jar of peach preserves or slice of platz sold.

"This year we will also be profiling a documentary of our church's history that has recently been completed," he adds.

NUMC welcomes more helping hands for the Peach Festival sale on August 9 this year. If you would like more information, contact NUMC at office@redbrickchurch.ca



Photo by Dan Dyck.

National Church Bikeathon Announced

-Daniel Horne

Last October, five Mennonite Church Canada office staff decided to try something new to raise money for ongoing ministries in the Philippines. We partnered with the Ride for Refuge for a one day cycle-a-thon and quickly raised \$6000, tripling our goal.

This fall, join other Mennonite Church Canada congregations from across Canada as we partner together with the Ride for Refuge for our first ever national church bikeathon. On October 4th we will be joining riders in every major city across this country to ride 5, 10, 25 or 50 km. This year we will be riding to raise support for our Witness workers Nathan and Taryn Dirks, helping to fund their work with at-risk youth in Botswana. To register, or for more information, please go to www.rideforrefuge.org (our team name is Mennonite Church Canada) or contact Daniel Horne at dhorne@mennonitechurch.ca, 1-866-888-6785 ext. 107.

Future possibilities for the Philippines church

-Deborah Froese

In the Philippines the church is vibrant and growing, particularly among young people. That's what Robert J. Suderman – Jack – and his wife Irene discovered when they travelled there earlier this year on a short term ministry assignment with Mennonite Church Canada to provide leadership training.

One of the youth leaders they met through the Youth Leadership group of the Integrated Mennonite Churches of the Philippines (IMC) was formerly a leading member of the Communist Youth Party, advocating for armed revolution. The young man, who prefers not to be named, pointed to *Biblical Foundations of Peace*, a course he took with Jack Suderman in 2011 at the Asian Theological Seminary in Manila, and shared how his life had since changed.

“That course turned my life around,” he told the Sudermans. “It did to me what I was convinced wasn't possible: it changed me by persuasion and not by coercion. In it, I committed my life to a nonviolent struggle for justice in the Philippines.” His conviction led him to become a youth pastor.

The Sudermans learned that young people drawn to faith search for a way of life that reflects the early church. They seek a horizontal leadership structure, a congregation that cares for one another like family, one that changes lives through positive relationships, and one that is connected with every other church in town.

And they say they want to live in a community that is not separated by religion.

During their stay, the Sudermans had the opportunity to visit several church communities. Members of three of these churches also attend Peace Church Philippines, the church plant of Mennonite Church Canada workers, Darnell and Christina Barkman.

Theo Sa Kanto (translated: “God on the Street-corner”). This church is located in the poorest part of Manila and meets on the “street-corner” in a Jeepney – a traditional Filipino taxi ; an old World War II American Army stretch-Jeep. Twenty-five people – some of them former gang members – meet in the Jeepney church. It provides a safe and peaceful place to meet.

Church at 71. This house church of 20 to 35 people meets every Sunday afternoon in a home located in a middle to low income neighbourhood. It's one of several house churches who voluntarily divided from a larger congregation to create easier access and fellowship. The Sudermans attended a service where they studied



Jack and Irene Suderman (sofa, far right and left) meet with the Youth Leadership group of the Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines. Photo provided.

Scripture related to being a “peace church.”

“They strive to be a ‘horizontal’ church, in which all participate and have a voice,” Jack Suderman wrote in an update.

Garage-church. A tiny garage in a very poor sector of Manila welcomes up to 45 children from the surrounding neighbourhood along with more “senior residents” – young adults 30–40 years of age. They meet on Sunday mornings and work with the complex lives of the young people residing in the area.

But not all of the churches in Philippines are small. The Sudermans also attended Victory Church, a mega-church with 5-star facilities in a wealthy section of Manila.

“It was packed with people: singing, and then an hour-long sermon,” Suderman reports. “We estimate at least 2,000 persons attending this service.” Church facilities include the latest staging devices such as multiple projection screens and a high quality sound system.

“The church in the Philippines, like in other countries, is in search of renewal, relevance, and authenticity,” says Suderman. “This effort is led by a committed group of energized and creative young leaders. It is exciting to be with them.”

Robert J. Suderman is a former General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada. He and his wife Irene are members of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont. They periodically conduct leadership training in places such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

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Hope Lines

“Hope is understanding that there is a process. It's not fixed and attainable. Hope is living in the tension, the paradigm. We are going through this and hanging on, and trusting that God is leading us.”

-Brian Quan, Pastor of English Ministries, Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church. Assembly 2014 Keynote speaker.

Seminar

Wild Hope: Living in Light of God's Good Future

-Aaron Epp
Young Voices Co-Editor, *Canadian Mennonite*.

Where in the Bible can we turn to for wild hope if we are to have faith in an unknown season?

That was the question Dan Epp-Tiessen, associate professor of Bible at Canadian Mennonite University, addressed during the seminar he led at Assembly on Friday afternoon. Entitled "Wild Hope: Living in Light of God's Good Future," Epp-Tiessen highlighted biblical visions of God's good future.

"In my own personal life, in my own faith pilgrimage, I'm finding just more and more strength and hope in God's good future," Epp-Tiessen said. "More and more I find I'm challenged and inspired by these biblical visions."

"I'm struck by the contrast between what we see in Paul and the New Testament, and many of our congregations," he added. "We don't talk about that wild hope, or at least the congregations that nurtured me [didn't]... We shy away from that stuff."

Epp-Tiessen pointed to stories in Genesis 12, where God begins to work through Abraham to redeem the Israelite people, as well as stories in Isaiah, the Psalms and the New Testament; stories where God begins the work of renewing human community, healing creation and setting it free from bondage and decay.

God's good future will come in God's time, Epp-Tiessen noted. He added this future should inspire the lives of Christians. Ultimately, what Christians do on Earth matters.



Photo by Aaron Epp.

"God has an agenda for God's creation, and God expects us to get on board with that agenda," he said. "All our small efforts to help our neighbours, to help feed the hungry in the world... somehow God is going to take our efforts and resurrect them and do something marvelous with them."

Forty people attended the seminar, which was held in CMU's Laudamus Auditorium. Rudy Franz, a pastor from Blumenort, Man., said he appreciated the seminar because the cultural context North Americans find themselves in does not always offer much hope.

"To contrast that with a biblical message... offers us perspective," Franz said. "Our lives are part of a bigger story of God (working) in the world, and we ought not forget that."

Seminar

Hope in Disorienting Times: Navigating the Challenge of Pluralism

-Aaron Epp
Young Voices Co-Editor, *Canadian Mennonite*.

Embodying the love that Jesus Christ modelled, and treating people the way we want to be treated, are the best ways to face an increasingly pluralistic society.

That's the message Ryan Dueck, pastor at Lethbridge Mennonite Church in Lethbridge, Alta. delivered Friday afternoon during a seminar titled, "Hope in Disorienting Times: Navigating the Challenge of Pluralism."

Speaking to a full classroom, Dueck noted that while Canadian Mennonites find themselves in a culture

filled with a variety of differing religious views, that pluralism should not make them afraid. He pointed to 1 John 4:18: "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

"I don't think we ever need to approach our neighbours as objects of fear. We need to treat them as people made in the image of God," Dueck said.

"If pluralism makes us fearful, clinging to our truth, then we have not been perfected by love."



Photo by Aaron Epp.

Seminar

Stronger Together

-Dick Benner
Editor, *Canadian Mennonite*.

CommonWord, scheduled to open in January 2015, will integrate Mennonite Church Canada's Resource Centre and CMU's Bookstore. It will occupy a bright corner of the new CMU library when it opens in January, 2015, across from a café and stage for performing and public events and under the mezzanine of the new building, Dave Bergen reported in a seminar, "Stronger Together," on Friday. Fair trade giftware, greeting cards, brand wear, and stationery supplies will be offered on site, while books and DVDs for sale and/or loan will additionally be available online. Congregations are invited to make a financial



Rendering provided.

contribution to the collaborative effort. Contact Dave Bergen at dbergen@mennonitechurch.ca for more information. Bergen is the Executive Minister of

Christian Formation for Mennonite Church Canada.

Seminar

Re-imagining the Congregation

-Evelyn Rempel Petkau
Correspondant, *Canadian Mennonite*.

A buzz of wild hope was evident at the Future Directions Seminar led by Task Force members Ken Warkentin and Anita Retzlaff. In the face of an uncertain future, trepidation of shrinking budgets and programs, tired and fewer volunteers, and changing realities, stories were shared of vibrant Mennonite churches that were responding in creative and varied ways.

In the small Manitoba town of Pinawa, which was created by government for the purpose of nuclear research in the 1960s, the need for a church was identified. In response, six denominations including Mennonite Church Manitoba came together. They formed the Pinawa Christian Fellowship and worship as one. The Niverville Christian Fellowship formed when two Mennonite congregations reunited after a split to share their resources. They answered a need in the community for a different kind of congregation and fulfilled a unified desire to engage in church planting.

Little Flowers is an inner city church in Winnipeg that purchased and is in the process of renovating an apartment block to provide supportive community for people struggling with mental illness.

In Warkentin's Winnipeg neighbourhood, an informal church is springing up. It has become a place of sharing and caring between neighbours. "This group is deeply engaged and interested in God and we have wonderful conversations about God and about justice and peace making," said Warkentin.



Photo by Evelyn Rempel Petkau

Retzlaff asked seminar participants what changes have happened in their churches in recent years. Their responses reflected many different ways that congregations are responding to their changing realities including different denominations coming together in a community for Canadian Foodgrains Bank projects, work with immigrant and refugee families, moving the congregation's church office downtown where the church intersects with the lives of people of all walks of life.

Numerous other examples indicate the future will look different but it can still be vibrant and vital.

Seminar

Subversive Guest: Exploring Anabaptist Presence in a Post-Christian Landscape

-Virginia A. Hostetler, *Canadian Mennonite*.

Seminar leader Chris Lenshyn began the session by reading chapter 1 of the book of Daniel. Then he invited participants (48 adults and one baby) to gather in twos to converse about this story of young exiles living out their faith in a foreign land. It is the story of a group of people expressing their unique values, of “not aligning with society.”

The twenty-first-century Mennonites in the room didn’t struggle to make connections to that reality.

Lenshyn is associate pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, and belongs to MennoNerds, an association of Anabaptists who share their insights through an online presence. He challenged participants to consider how they live out and express their faith in a post-Christian context. In order to do this, “there is a spirituality that we need to facilitate and embrace,” he said. And we can’t be the “quiet in the land.”

He told the story of Mayeken de Corte, an Anabaptist woman who was martyred for her faith during Reformation times, in spite of the persistent attempts to get her to recant. While we in North America may not be able to grasp the reality of staying faithful to the face of death, Lenshyn called for the same kind of “integrity in Anabaptist presence” as we follow Jesus in our own context.

Confessing that he would make his second-grade Sunday school teacher proud, Chris reminded participants that, “It begins with Jesus!” We must follow Jesus in order to know him, and we must be ready to tell our faith story boldly to those around us.

The seminar blurb promised that it would explore “the gift the Anabaptist community can be to our currently diverse Canadian landscape and why we must not be quiet about it.” Although time was short, there was plenty there to challenge and provoke further thought.

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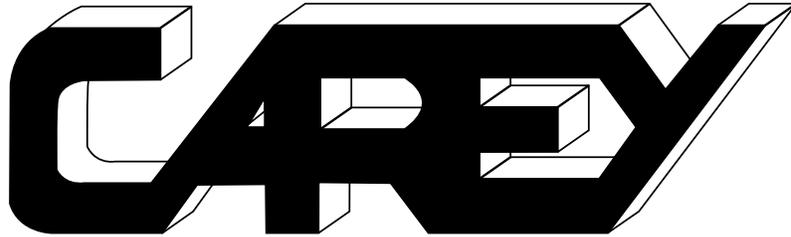
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Art, Live!

-Deborah Froese

This year's Assembly art exhibit offers something special.

In addition to displaying the art of creators who responded to a call to visually express their beliefs and convictions in this "unknown season," it features art in progress.

On Friday and Saturday from morning through dinner, artist Ray Dirks, Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery curator, can be found with brush in hand in lounge B130, surrounded by the works of other artists from Manitoba and beyond.

Dirks is working on another painting for his *Along the Road to Freedom* exhibit. It depicts the stories of Mennonite women who brought their children out of Stalin's horrors to safety in Canada. He invites people to stop and chat about his project and its across-Canada tour, and about the work of the gallery.

Seminar

Broken Promises: Indigenous Nations, the Crown and the Royal Proclamation

-Rachel Bergen
Young Voices Co-Editor, *Canadian Mennonite*.

The Cree word Kiciwamanawak means "we are all cousins." In Canada, this familial relationship between settler and host is fractured.

This was the theme of the "Broken Covenants" workshop yesterday. Steve Heinrichs, Mennonite Church Canada Director, Indigenous Relations and Brander McDonald, the Mennonite Church British Columbia Indigenous Relations Coordinator hosted the workshop.

Heinrichs and McDonald introduced participants to the Royal Proclamation of 1763, a piece of legislation which paved the way for the treaty making process.

According to Heinrichs, though this legislation exists, the covenants are broken through a horrific history of colonialism, residential schools, and a lack of Aboriginal consultation on resource extraction. But there is hope.

"There are covenants that settlers and host people share, covenants that have been broken but can be

mended and lived into. Covenants that a peace church must grapple with as it seeks to follow Jesus and walk justly in these lands," he said.

Heinrichs and McDonald played a short documentary called *Broken Covenant* during the workshop which followed Heinrichs on a trip he made to London, UK last year. The trip marked the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation where several First Nations leaders and supporters went to meet with the Royal family.

Unfortunately the meeting never happened, but the importance of the Royal Proclamation to First Nations stands. McDonald urged the participants to understand their responsibility in the treaty process.

"The reality is that you are treaty people. That is what has been given to you by your forefathers who were a part of this treaty process," he said. "I plead with you to treat native issues as delicately as you



Friends Steve Heinrichs, Mennonite Church Canada Director, Indigenous Relations and Brander McDonald, the Mennonite Church British Columbia Indigenous Relations Coordinator hosted a workshop explaining the significance of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 - photo by Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

would your child or your grandmother."

The Broken Covenant seminar will be presented again today at 3:15 in C167.

Announcements

Canadian Mennonite invites you to bring your lunch to Room C 167 on Saturday, July 5, to share your thoughts on how the magazine can implement the BFC 5.1 recommendations.

First Aid

If you or someone else needs First Aid assistance, please approach one of our ushers or the registration/information desk.