

Being a Faithful Church

- Deborah Froese

How we wear our inner convictions on the outside depends on who and where we are. Mennonite congregations across Canada are finding different ways to share God's love and redemption with a hurting world.

The Third Usher program at Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg grew out of a desire to become more connected with its inner city community. In seeking an appropriate response to the often hungry, homeless folks who showed up at the door on Sunday mornings, a core group of six people initiated the program, inviting them indoors for a hot cup of coffee, a snack and most importantly - conversation.

"It was also a way to bring church to people who might not otherwise experience it," Grant Klassen, Home Street member says.

Since inception about five years ago, Third Usher now serves people whose names and faces are remembered and whom the congregation is slowly coming to know. While the congregation isn't sure where

the program will lead, those closest to the ministry say it has been a growing experience.

Some 1300 kilometres away in Calgary, Foothills Mennonite Church opened a Mennonite Guest House in the fall of 2007 to offer affordable lodging for family members of out-of-town hospital patients.

Foothills pastor Doug Klassen was struck by the need during chaplaincy training at Foothills hospital as he watched the financial strain on families who were paying hotel rates to be close to loved ones. "The idea [of a guest house] caught on when somebody else [in the congregation] took the idea and ran with it," Klassen says.

Members of Foothills MC contributed a four bedroom home and spent the summer renovating it. "The first guest that came was from Newfoundland," said Klassen.

The church, which is situated near the Foothills Medical Centre, is ideally situated for those who come from across Alberta and as far away as the East Coast to support

their family members during treatment.

In Richmond, BC, Peace Mennonite Church supports members Joji and Daniel Pantoja, Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers, in their peacebuilding efforts in Mindanao, Philippines.

In an email exchange, Pastor Timothy Kuepfer writes that the Pantojas came to Peace Mennonite when they developed convictions that the Gospel is rooted in a radical peace theology. An internet search of "Peace," "Mennonite," and "Richmond" brought the Pantojas to Peace Mennonite – and shared the needs of the Mindanao region of their Philippino homeland. "It was hard not to get enthused by Dann and Joji's passion," Kuepfer writes.

That passion led to more than financial support for the Pantoja's ministry; the congregation prays for them weekly. Several members have visited Mindanao to assist with their peacebuilding ministry.

"We print the MC Canada vision statement on the front of our bulletin every Sunday," Kuepfer wrote. "The connection between that and what we are doing in partnership with Joji and Dann is self-evident."

ANNOUNCEMENTS A note about publishing the daily news...

After Winnipeg 2008, staff noted a trend in the event evaluations: many participants felt that hard copies of the daily news sheet were too widely distributed on site. This was deemed to be at odds with Mennonite Church Canada's ongoing efforts to "green" its events. We also received comments that the daily news sheet most helped delegates report back on the event to their congregation after they returned home.

In light of this feedback, at Saskatoon 2009 we will make only a small number of hard copies available on site, and publish

primarily **online**. We'll continue to carry announcements – but announcements will also be projected visually from time to time on screens in the main discernment hall. This shift will require delegates to be more alert to special announcements, late breaking changes, etc. However, the news you have come to expect from each day's activities will continue to be posted on line, as usual. If you feel strongly that we need to return to widely distributing hard copies at future assemblies, please let us know via the evaluation form in your Program Book.

WELCOME to Assembly 2009!

Greetings to all who have travelled from near or far join in worshipful conversation about what it means to be a faithful church! As we worship, pray, discern and fellowship together, may the Holy Spirit renew and invigorate our compassion for our role as the church and inspire greater Christlikeness in all we say and do.

-Karen Martens Zimmerly,
Denominational Minister and
Director of Leadership Development

Pandemic Response

Christ commanded us to love our neighbours by responding in times of crisis and emergency. Today we do this through a variety of ongoing ministries and in the face of impending disasters, war and other natural or human-caused emergencies. But medical experts warn that another emergency is coming – pandemic influenza – and the recent spread of virus H1N1 has raised concerns about how churches and other organizations can respond.

In anticipation of a pandemic, Mennonite Church Canada, with the support of Mennonite Disaster Service, began to develop a pandemic resource website two years ago. The website is up and running and has been accessed widely since H1N1 appeared. To find out how your church can equip for a pandemic, see: www.churchpandemicresources.ca.

For a Church Matters podcast about healing and hope in the midst of a pandemic, see www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/569

Instead of war...

"... in the conflicts in the past 15 years, only 7.5% have ended with a military victory by one party over the other. the negotiation route, though long and difficult, is the one that prevails in 92% of the cases. The challenge is thus not being a skilful warrior but a skilful negotiator."

– 2008 Peace Process Yearbook, School for a Culture of Peace, Autonomous University of Barcelona.

Throughout history, Mennonites have viewed non-violent conflict resolution as an intrinsic part of their Anabaptist identity. During World War II, over 10,000 young Canadian men, most of Mennonite heritage, took a stand for peace as Conscientious Objectors. Refusing to take up arms, they served Canada through Alternative Service work in fields such as agriculture, industry, construction, forestry and healthcare. Find out more about the history and principles of Alternative Service at www.alternativeservice.ca, a website created by The Mennonite Heritage Centre with funding in part from the Canadian Council of Archives and Heritage Canada.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

No Kid's Assembly this year

An earlier and shorter Assembly this year to accommodate those who wish to also attend Mennonite World Conference 2009 in Paraguay, also led to virtually no child registrations. there will be no Children's Assembly. Watch for it's return in 2010!

NOTE: The Youth Assembly, which is held on alternate years, will take place at the usual time, in early July (July 6-10) in Caronport, Saskatchewan.

We try our best... but...

Attending an annual assembly can at first be disorienting for delegates, planners, leaders, staff, and volunteers. You suddenly find yourself plunked down in a new space for a few days, trying to find your way around. The confusion and disoriented feeling can sometimes lead to unexpected requests. Staff tries their best to please as many people as possible, but sometimes we can't, and sometimes requests create additional confusion. We try to please everyone, but we ask for your understanding if we can't.

Today's Offering: Supporting Multi-language resources

Mennonite Church Canada produces a wide array of multi-language resources that serve our diverse ethnicity, including Chinese, French, German, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Low German, Ojibway, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

The most widely translated resource is Vision: Healing and Hope/MC Canada Purpose Statements, which is available in all of the languages listed above. In addition, available materials include What Makes a Mennonite (in Simplified Chinese and Chinese), Confession of Faith (German, Vietnamese, Laotian, Hmong, Chinese), This We Believe (Chinese), Signs of God at the Crossroads (German), Who are the Mennonites? (German and French), Vietnamese Mennonite Church in North America and in Vietnam (Vietnamese), and From Anabaptist Seed (Vietnamese).

To access these resources, please see www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1050.

Come meet Hugo Neufeld

author of *The North End Lives: A Journey Through Poverty Terrain*, today, 10am in the Bookstore.

NUMBER OF THE DAY

344

The word "peace" or variations of it appear 344 times in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. And "peace" is often offered as a blessing. We offer you one such blessing now;

"Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have."

(I Samuel 25:6)

Greening our gatherings – by Dan Dyck

At Abbotsford 2007, delegates passed a resolution that called on MC Canada to develop guidelines to reduce the consumption of energy and other resources when planning future assemblies. Planners continue to work at balancing creation care alternatives with other values such as cost and accessibility of venues.

One of the biggest environmental impacts of MC Canada assemblies is the transportation choices people make to travel to the event. In 2008, staff conducted an informal poll to see if participants would consider traveling to the assembly by bus. The results indicated that, overwhelmingly and for a variety of reasons, people were not prepared to travel that way. This year, some Manitoba residents have joined the MC Canada staff car pool.

Although planners can attempt to influence the choices people make, participants will ultimately choose on their own. Some experts say that travel by bus is far less environmentally intrusive than travel by car or airplane. A bus option was explored for staff this year, but the need for flexible travel dates, to accommodate additional ministry and family travel made car pooling the best choice.

For Assembly 2009, we have continued to encourage participants to reduce their ecological footprint through the choices they make. Here are some examples.

Items marked with an * are new to the assembly this year.

- Paperless/electronic registration for the assembly is an option
- Paper reduced promotion of the assembly
- The daily news sheet will be published primarily online, with only a small number of paper copies strategically distributed on site.*
- Announcements will be made verbally and via projection screen.*

- Assembly print materials are produced on recycled paper when possible
- Use of worship graphics/banners, projecting litanies on a screen rather than being printed; most printed display material is re-used from previous years
- Not serving bottled water; participants have been encouraged to bring their own water bottles/ coffee mugs and use tap water.
- Previously enjoyed mugs will be available for purchase for those who do not have or forgot to bring one.*
- Re-useable on site signage
- Primary lodging within walking distance; no air conditioning in on-site lodging
- Camping facilities have been identified for those who want that option
- Billeting options have been provided

- A limited shuttle service has been arranged

In addition, the U of S provides this information on greening efforts, summarized from their web site (more detail is available at the U of S web site via

www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1052):

- The U of S cafeteria is equipped with food waste and recycling bins
- Diners are encouraged to take only one serving at a time to reduce food waste
- Diners are encouraged to use china rather than disposable dishes
- Recycling bins are available on campus
- Local food purchase program
- The campus is in the midst of a waste management audit and is piloting the use of green cleaning supplies. ■

Mennonite Church Canada responds to "A Common Word" web site

- Dan Dyck, from reports

Winnipeg, Man. — Mennonite Church Canada leaders have sent a letter to Muslim leaders of the website at www.acommonword.com. The web site is self described as "An initiative by Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals from many different countries, denominations and schools of thought" advocating for dialogue and understanding between Muslims and Christians.

In an email exchange, Rudy Baergen, Chair of MC Canada's Faith and Life Committee, said, "The Muslim scholars who wrote the letter took this initiative in the interests of Muslims and Christians working toward world peace. The Mennonite Church has constantly affirmed that world peace is God's will and we have put much energy and many resources into promoting peace.

It seemed quite appropriate that we would join other Christian voices in encouraging such an initiative of dialogue between the Muslim and Christian family."

The Muslim initiative has inspired a variety of respondents, ranging from Mennonite Church USA to the Archbishop of Canterbury, from Gordon Brown the Prime Minister of England to the World Evangelical Alliance.

Attendees interested in learning more will be invited to lunch time discussion at the MC Canada Assembly in Saskatoon (June 5-7). MC Canada's letter of response can be found at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/983. At the time of writing, MC Canada's response letter had not yet been posted to www.acommonword.com.

Peace in the Public Square: A 'brief' history

-Dan Dyck

At this year's assembly in Saskatoon, delegates will consider a proposal arising from Assembly 2008, namely how Mennonite Church Canada can more actively proclaim the message of the gospel of peace in the public square.

Ensuring the continuity of Christ's message of peace has always been fundamental to the Mennonite church, but the approaches to doing so have changed over the years.

Prior to 1956, references to peace building in official denominational documents were primarily concerned with supporting conscientious objectors. The church made efforts to ensure that young people continued to be taught non-violent peace making, even as some young Mennonite men enlisted in the Canadian military. Additionally, churches worked to establish peace conferences and peace study materials.

As early as 1951, documents began using the term "Voluntary Service" to describe demonstrative peace building, when enlisted men engaged in non-combat roles contributing to society by working in hospitals or forestry rather than taking up arms.

Peace advocacy

Over the years, churches across the country took various steps toward affirming their commitment to peace:

- In a perhaps unusual-for-today nod to patriotism, a 1946 (Vineland, Ont.) resolution of thanks states, "God bless and protect our homes. God bless and protect our Canada."
- A 1949 (Sardis, B.C.) resolution says, "We thank God that He so graciously led us through the years of World War II." The 1949 Sardis gathering also records that "we do not want to be a part of the military machine or serve in military uniform," but rather serve in "charity and service to others."
- 1957 (Winkler, Man.) was a stellar year for peace building work: the Board of



An artist concept for a peace billboard.

Christian Service presented numerous recommendations under the heading of "Service and Peace Promotion" which included a recommendation to establish the Mennonite Disaster Service. Delegates also proposed that the Sunday nearest Nov. 11 be designated "Peace Sunday" in Canadian Mennonite churches.

- 1963 (Altona, Man.) recommendations noted "That we seek to have conversations with other Christians about our understanding and interpretation of the Peace message as contained in the New Testament," a desire to have "... a more practical and effective witness to government and its officials," and that we seek "Ways and means of adequately presenting our cause ..." We also recommended continuing "peace mailings to our young people" of the Christian Youth and War series booklets.

In 1970 (Winkler, Man.), during the time of the Vietnam war, a resolution notes that "conference is presently struggling with its historic peace position." Mennonites in the USA in particular sought help from Canadian Mennonites in upholding the peace position during this difficult time.

- In 1970, 1979, and 1981 (Winkler, Man.) the word "militarism" appears in official

documents. A 1979 resolution urges "its member congregations to devote considerable study" to a Mennonite Central Committee statement on "Militarism and Development."

- In 1988 (Winkler, Man.), a resolution urges each congregation to "seriously consider forming a Christian Peacemaker Team."
- A 1993 resolution (Waterloo, Ont.) stated in part, "...we recognize this as an urgent time to redirect our taxes away from military spending and toward ways of conflict resolution; and that we act to support initiatives such as a Peace Trust Fund..." (In 2008, MC Canada staff worked closely with Conscience Canada in the drafting of a private members bill to develop a federal Department of Peace. In the spring of 2009, MC Canada recommended individual members register as "conscientious objectors to military taxation" – an initiative of Conscience Canada.)

In 1994 (Clearbrook, B.C.), delegates again raised a concern about the state of "biblical teaching and practise of peace" and urged "our Conference boards to find ways to keep this truth on our agenda..."

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Peace in the Public Square

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Direct and indirect peace activity

Since about 1957 and in addition to the items outlined above, we have frequently elected to write letters to government leaders on a number of direct peace issues at gatherings in Alberta and Saskatchewan: the Vietnam war, conscience and conscription, the proliferation of nuclear power (especially in Saskatchewan) and arms, armament manufacture in Canada, cruise missile testing, and advocating for peace on behalf of war affected people in numerous countries around the world. Other less direct but significant peace witness has occurred over the years with regard to the abolishment of capital punishment, poverty alleviation, and honouring the biblical principles of justice and peace in members' investment portfolios.

We have, in our 106 year history, discerned, advocated, affirmed, recommended, and resolved on many issues of peace. We have demonstrably resisted war through conscientious objection. We have taken positive peace action through Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Disaster Service, Mennonite Voluntary Service, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and led the way with the establishment of a socially responsible investment firm, Meritas.

In 2008, Pastor Gordon Allaby, on behalf of Osler Mennonite Church (Saskatchewan) presented a resolution advocating for the promotion of the message of peace more broadly, in the public square, intended to counter the increased advertising and recruiting activity of the Canadian military with its message of "Fight Fear, Fight Chaos, Fight Distress."

The findings in this article are not exhaustive. Special thanks to Conrad Stoesz, Mennonite Heritage Centre, for conducting this research.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Erland Waltner addressed the Ministers and Deacons conference 40 years ago in Saskatoon on the role of deacons. A reporter summarizing the talk, wrote:

"...deacons are to live in solidarity with people who are 'poor' in various ways, and serve in that context..."

Erland Waltner passed away on Easter Sunday, 2009, at the age of 94. Other leaders who spoke of pre and post marital counselling were Bernie Wiebe and Henry J. Gerbrandt.

Thank you to Alf Redekopp for this research.



Photo supplied by Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives Collection

Helping our processes at Assembly 2009

Listening Committee:
Melissa Miller (Chair)
Jerry Buhler
Doug Klassen

Resolutions Committee:
Hilda Hildebrand (Chair)
Don Rempel
Boschman
Al Rempel

Prayer Team:
Jerry Buhler
Sharon Schultz
Lois Siemens
Henry Block

Assistant Secretaries:
Steve Plenert
Lynell Bergen

Parliamentarian:
Ernie Epp
(to be confirmed)

Witness workers return to Canada

Dan Nighswander and Yvonne Snider-Nighswander have returned to Canada after a three year term of service to South Africa with Mennonite Church Canada Witness. During their time in Pietermaritzburg, they were involved in leadership development, Bible teaching, and development of networks between Anabaptist and ecumenical ministries, among other activities.

Upon their return to Canada, the couple spent

some time meeting with their supporters before settling in Winnipeg where Dan assumes the role of lead pastor at Jubilee Mennonite Church on August 1, 2009.

Andrew and Karen Suderman will continue Dan and Yvonne's work in South Africa and plan to arrive in Pietermaritzburg in August.

Be sure to extend your greetings to Dan and Yvonne, who are attending Assembly 2009.

There are now **over 1000** print, audio and video files available to download free from our online catalogue at www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre. These include regular Equipping materials, publications from MC Canada, and items submitted from our churches. In 2008 these items were downloaded over 51,000 times (an increase of 88% from the previous year)! Submit your original creations now – resources@mennonitechurch.ca

DID YOU KNOW?
Resource Centre Facts



Ten Tips for Sharing your "Inside Out" experience

—By Deborah Froese

As a wise and discerning people (from Assembly 2008 theme) we will want to share our Assembly experiences with our home congregations. It's difficult to engage an audience by reciting a chronological list of facts or resolutions. Planning ahead makes sharing easier.

Here are ten tips for bringing your experience to life:

1. Jot down the highlights of each day, including any major decisions that were made and any experiences that have affected you personally.
2. Make a point of getting to know new people from our family of congregations and special guests at the assembly. Share what you have learned from their perspectives.
3. Consider the elements of worship services that leave an impression on you. Remember to take note of special music or prayers – or an effective order of worship – that worship planners from your congregation may be able to use.
4. Ask yourself the following questions about your experiences, especially in regard to the discernment sessions: What is God showing me here? What

is this experience telling me about God and the assembly? What from this experience is particularly relevant for my congregation, for me?

5. Take pictures. Or, you can download images from www.mennonitechurch.ca/events/saskatoon2009/#photos. These are copyright free images from the Assembly photo gallery that MC Canada members are free to use.
6. Report on personally transforming moments. How will you, as an individual, respond to the actions and decisions we make together at the assembly? How might your own response influence your congregation?
7. Meet with all of the delegates from your church to plan report presentations.
8. Create a written report(s) to share in your church newsletter – and a verbal presentation accompanied by refreshments to entice attendance.
9. Recreate a worship service that includes meaningful elements from Assembly services. There is an Assembly Sunday worship resource available at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/991.
10. Meet with other church members to find ways to incorporate significant themes into curriculum, sermons, etc. ■

EXHIBITORS at Assembly 2009

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS)

[Ardent Retirement Group Ltd.](#)

Canadian Mennonite

[Canadian Women in Mission](#)

Christian Peacemaker Teams

[Columbia Bible College](#)

Conrad Grebel University College

[MAX Canada](#)

MCC Saskatchewan

[Mennonite Church Saskatchewan](#)

Mennonite Disaster Service

[Mennonite Foundation of Canada](#)

Mennonite Men/Join Hands

[Mennonite World Conference](#)

Meritas Mutual Funds

Exhibits are located in the main hall Education Building

Need medical assistance?

A First Aid station will be attended by two nurses in the Education Building Lounge during the hours of:
Friday, 1:00pm- 9:00pm and
Saturday 8:30am – 9:00pm

Church Matters Live! Being a Faithful Church

Join us in the Education building gym TODAY following the afternoon coffee break for a live *Church Matters* interview with Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada. Hosts Dan Dyck and Janet Plenert will invite Suderman to share some insights on *Being a Faithful Church* in our time and context.

Church Matters is a radio broadcast/ podcast featuring a guest or guests who tell stories from their own experiences about why the church matters in the world today. Listen to *Church Matters*

at 8:45 am CST on the third Sunday of each month. It is broadcast via the Golden West Southern Manitoba radio network on CFAM 950, Altona, AM 1250, Steinbach, and CJRB 1220 Boissevain.



To view a list of past episodes, click on *Church Matters* in the right-hand margin of the Mennonite Church Canada website: www.mennonitechurch.ca

To subscribe to the podcast, see www.mennonitechurch.ca/cm/, or via iTunes.