

Revisiting the Past: A visit with Six Nations

-Kathy Moorhead Thiessen

During a Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2011 tour on Wednesday July 6, 2011, Hazel Hill, a Haudenosaunee¹ leader, talked about the hundreds of Six Nations members who came to Douglas Creek Estates in 2006, a small area of land that lies between territories still held by the Six Nations and the nearby town of Caledonia, sitting on land that they say once belonged to them. They were there to voice their concerns, to tell the world that they wanted to control what happened on their lands. They raised questions about their identity and what their future would hold.

On the morning of April 20, 2006, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) conducted a raid on the Six Nations protesters, arresting 16 people, bringing their Caledonia area land claim to national attention.

Despite this difficult history, Hill affirmed the role of Six Nations supporters, including Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry and Christian Peacemaker Teams.

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Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2011 tour group gathers before the entrance to the former Mohawk Institute, a door that the First Nations boys and girls who lived there were not permitted to use. - photo by Ben Borne.

Quilt art depicts Mennonite-Aboriginal interaction

Barb Draper, Editorial Assistant, *Canadian Mennonite*

A fibre art depiction of the interaction between early Mennonite settlers and Aboriginal people in the Grand River Valley was on display at Mennonite Church Canada Assembly July 4-8. "My vision was to create a pictorial slice of history," said Judy Gascho-Jutzi, the artist.

Neill and Edith von Gunten, recently retired co-directors of Mennonite Church Canada's Native Ministries, had seen examples of Gascho-Jutzi's work. They were inspired to ask the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario to commission her to portray the early contact between Mennonites and the Six Nations in quilt form. The von Guntens were delighted to see their dream come true.

Flowing through the scene is the Grand River, meandering past many symbols of Mennonites and Aboriginals. In the right foreground is the trunk of a black walnut, a tree valued by Mennonites. Balancing it on the left is a wampum belt with two parallel lines symbolizing cooperation. Grandmother moon, at the top left, lights up the sky and helps to give movement to the piece. The Pioneer Tower reminds us of the earliest Mennonite farmers while a large pine tree is an Aboriginal symbol of peace with its roots stretching in four directions. The artist put the pine tree on a turtle because native tradition says that North America is shaped like a turtle.

At the bottom left is a quilt block in the traditional log cabin pattern. Gascho-Jutzi was delighted to find 100-year-old fabric for this quilt block. The log cabin and the Conestoga wagon are also symbolic of the early Mennonite presence while the long house and the various clan animals represent native culture. The crops (corn, beans, squash, strawberries) and the circles are common to both cultures. The medicine wheel is an important symbol for the Aboriginal people while the Pennsylvania Dutch rosette design in reminds us of Mennonites.

The artist also shared some of her secrets for achieving a three-dimensional effect. "It's exciting to find just the right kind of fabric," she said. She was thrilled to locate just the right texture and colour for the black walnut tree. By sewing it onto shrinkable cotton waffle cloth, she was able to achieve the effect of the crevices found in walnut bark. The moon and clouds are given depth with dryer lint. She was able to include a real arrowhead that came from a farm along the Grand River due to the generosity of Margaret Woolner. The arrowhead is attached using bridal tulle. Sometimes Gascho-Jutzi is hampered by the realities of what fabric is available and she was disappointed not to find better beans.

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Quilt continued



“These projects need to speak to me and I need to feel them,” said Gascho-Jutzi.

Neill von Gunten said that the three sections make it a Mennonite wampum belt—it symbolizes working together.

The artist said it took about a year to make the piece. She thought about the project and

began collecting fabrics last fall and then started sewing in January. She worked hard to complete it by July.

The historical society plans to have the piece on display at Conrad Grebel University College, although it may need to wait until the construction of the enlarged library and archives is complete.

Revisiting continued

On the day of the tour, fifty Mennonites ascended a series of imposing steps, passed through two large white pillars and entered the main door of the former Mohawk Institute, a residential school in Brantford, Ont.

The First Nations children who spent years of their lives in the school were banned from using that door. Instead, as they approached, sisters and brothers were separated to the left and to the right. For many of these siblings, this was the last contact they had with each other for months despite living in the same building.

Thankfully, the school has been closed since 1970.

As one member of the tour group from Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2011, I walked the halls of the Mohawk Institute and heard guides tell stories of former residents who survived their experience. These stories included one about a man who was taken into the school at age two.

At times, the grief and loss of the children who once lived inside those walls was palpable. So was the residual trauma of families whose lives were torn apart by the colonial policy behind the school.

The goal of the residential schools had been to assimilate Aboriginal children into English society – to ‘take the Indian out of the child’. As a result of this policy, generations of First Nations people lost their voice. But they are beginning to find it again.

We stopped next at the reclamation site of the Six Nations reserve, our tour leaders, Neil and Edith von Gunten, recently retired Co-Directors of Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry, said that all of our churches are in areas that historically belonged to Aboriginal communities.

As a national church that believes in Jesus’ call to peace and justice for the oppressed we need to hear the stories of our Aboriginal neighbours, to support them as they rediscover their identity and voice.

¹ *The Haudenosaunee, or People of the Longhouse, are a sovereign people of six Indigenous nations including Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora.*

From the Archives

Before the Blue Box

This photo from 1980 shows the Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO) recycling drive in process, before the arrival of the “blue box” so common today. MCCO initiated these drives in Kitchener in 1976 to “eliminate waste in our society; demonstrate an alternative method of waste disposal, so that the earth’s beauty may be retained; and raise money for the work done by MCC through the name of Christ.”

Prepared by Laureen Harder-Gissing, Mennonite Archives of Ontario
Photo credit: MCC Ontario photo collection, Mennonite Archives of Ontario (grebel.uwaterloo.ca/mao)



Epic News is the daily news sheet for the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2011 in Waterloo, Ontario. It will be brought to you daily from July 4 – 8, 2011. Full colour editions of *Epic News* will be available in PDF format at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1389. 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** Megan Kamei, Ryan Roth Bartel

Exploring the Heart of Mennonite Worship

Deborah Froese

The Heart of Mennonite Worship: Five Vital Rhythms, will help congregations “listen to what’s going on and where we go in the future,” said presenter Mark Diller Harder. The new study guide, intended to help congregations explore how they worship, was introduced at Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2011.

The Heart of Mennonite Worship will help individual congregations take a closer look at how they worship. By completing a related on-line survey¹, participating congregations will assist Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA determine the kinds of worship resources that will be needed over the next ten to fifteen years.

The study guide acknowledges five vital rhythms of worship:

1. Worship is our response to a loving God, known to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit).
2. Our worship is rooted in, and shaped by, Scripture.
3. Worship creates a new community, uniting believers as the body of Christ.
4. Worship forms us as followers of Jesus.
5. Worship and life are intimately connected.

On the afternoon of Friday, July 8 2011, Assembly delegates met in small groups to discuss a series of questions surrounding the project.

Dynamic tradition

Diller Harder, pastor of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church and one of 8 members of the Mennonite Church Binational Worship Council, led the Plenary Response that followed small group discussions. He began by reviewing the vast array of materials produced on behalf of North American Mennonite churches.

With the help of Dave Bergen, Mennonite Church Canada Executive Secretary, Formation, whom he nicknamed “Vanna” after the well-known Wheel of Fortune game-show hostess – Diller Harder acknowledged the changing face of music in worship. Bergen held up various items drawn from the display of materials – from hymn books to an overhead projector sheet.

“There’s a growing body of Mennonite musicians who are composing their own music,” Diller Harder added, pointing to artists like Bryan Moyer Suderman and Marilynn Hauser Hamm.

Future resources

Needs, preferences and music styles change, Diller Harder said. Most worship resources have a “20-25 year life span – so *Hymnal a Worship Book* is nearing end of its life.” That is not to say the rich diversity of music it contains will be lost, but rather added to.

Diller Harder encouraged participants to take the resource and use it for discussion within their own congregations. Then, congregations are invited to compile a list of all of the songs used during worship between September 2011 through April 2012. Reviewing this list will help the Bi-national Worship Council determine next steps.

The Mennonite Church Bi-national Worship Council includes: Dave Bergen; Mark Diller Harder; Irma Fast Dueck; Amy Gingerich; Saulo Padilla, and Sara Wenger Shenk, president of AMBS.

Delegate responses

Following Diller Harder’s presentation, discernment group leaders shared a variety of comments that arose in their discussions:

Our congregational worship style was reflected in Assembly worship, including a variety of music and a high level of involvement by all participants.

There is a fluid relationship between worship and our life together.

Congregational worship definitely facilitated connection with God. Sometimes it happens through more heartfelt emotional worship, sometimes it is a more intellectual connection.

Although we want to involve as many lay people as possible, strong leadership is necessary to draw them into worship.

Bilingual lyrics in multi-lingual settings allow non-traditional Mennonite congregations to use the same hymnal as traditional congregations without thinking ‘it’s not for us,’ one respondent said.

The phrase “heart songs” – speaks to songs that really touch my heart but that is out of context with the worship experience. The “heart songs” suggest that



With expressive use of her hands, Donita Wiebe Neufeld, co-pastor of First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, contributes to small group discussion on *The Heart of Mennonite Worship*. Photo by Deborah Froese.

On this day, 29 years ago

In his presentation to Assembly participants about the history of music in North American Mennonite congregations, Mark Diller Harder drew a strong connection between his wedding day and the familiar blue *Hymnal, a Worship Book*.

The book was used in his home congregation for the first time on July 8, 1992, the day that he and his wife Rachel were married.

“On our wedding day we got to use the new hymnals. We opened them up [for the first time] for the ceremony and hardly anyone paid attention to us!”

Since then, church and music have changed. “As mentioned,” Diller Harder said, “we’ve had a couple of supplements [to the hymnal]; Rachel and I’ve had three.”

the purpose of worship starts with us, but worship is connected with God working in us.

What about congregations that can barely sing? Singing is one of our identity pieces. We don’t want to lose that, but how do we teach singing and keep it valued?

What comes next?

The Worship Council will compile feedback from the on-line survey and bring their fall meeting.

“Pray for us,” Dave Bergen urged, “but also continue to give us feedback and suggestions. Share what you are singing.”

1 www.mpn.net/worship/survey/

"Good news . . . God dwells with us!"

Dave Rogalsky – Eastern Canada Correspondent for Canadian Mennonite

At the last worship service of Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2011 in Waterloo on July 8, Nelson Kraybill reminded the congregation that many of the aboriginal people living in Southern Ontario moved here from the United States as politics became intolerable there. He then quipped that if Sarah Palin were to get elected, another flood of people might be coming north.

Then he continued, speaking of the Wednesday afternoon tour which took him to Caledonia, site of a long standing land claim by Aboriginal people. They had been promised land six miles on either side of the Grand River, "in perpetuity." As they watched this promise being eroded year after year, a planned residential development on the land about which they were negotiating culminated in their occupation of it. When the police raided, many more Aboriginal people streamed into the area, surrounding the police and escorting them off the land, "mostly peacefully."

Kraybill noted a small Baptist church standing on the edge of the disputed land and asked the native folk how the congregation had reacted. The Aboriginal people told stories of how the church people "learned to know us, served ice cream, worked to build a trust on both sides, and held weekly prayer vigils for peaceful resolutions." Christian Peacemaker Teams was also remembered as a positive force.

Revelation 22:1-2 alludes to Ezekiel 47 where the prophet saw a vision of God at work in the world:

¹²On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.

This healing, Kraybill emphasized, "Is not manufactured by the saints, this river of life . . . this flowing salvation is a gift from God. God dwells with us, and God has a mission from us and the New Jerusalem to bring healing to the world."

Referring to Prairie St. Mennonite in Elkhart, Indiana, where he is on the pastoral team, Kraybill told of a young man who took it upon himself to list the places where he saw God at work in Elkhart. He returned with a printed list, giving each place 1-2 lines. "The document is 24 pages long!" exclaimed Kraybill. "God's at work . . . even in Elkhart."

"We're control freaks," he said. "But in missional theology – rather than organizing salvation around the world, we try to catch up with what God is already doing." What we need is an "apocalypse," an unveiling (referring to the Greek definition of "apocalypse") to see where God is at work, to see where the water is flowing. Without mission, he said, we are like



Mennonite Church Canada Denominational Minister Karen Martens Zimmerly prays for Nelson Kraybill as he prepares to bring the final message at the 2011 Annual Church Gathering in Waterloo, on July 8.

the "peanut-free peanut butter" available in the university cafeteria, an oxymoron. Without mission, the church is not the church.

As an example, he referred to Mennonite Voluntary Service workers who are connected with Prairie St. Mennonite Church, and how they are influencing Elkhart by joining in the good work already being undertaken. On Wednesday evenings the volunteers host a potluck with street people, kids, the unemployed, as well as church people. At a recent dinner, Kraybill sat along side a young man with learning disabilities and hungry children.

Referring to Alan and Eleanor Kreider's recent book, *Worship and Mission in Post-Christendom*, he called for the renewal of testimony in the church, of telling the stories of the mighty acts of God. People need to get out and see what God is doing. Kraybill has stopped worrying about how many people show up on Sunday morning. There is no slick evangelism program. Instead, at Prairie St. Mennonite Church, they get involved with what God is doing already. He then told the story of the Living Water congregation in Chicago a multicultural church whose tag line is "meet at the corner". Years ago a young man was shot on a street corner. Christians began to meet to pray there. When a commercial property came up for sale on that corner it was bought and a church formed – "a physical outpost of the reign of God . . . made of diverse cultural groups" – as the river of God flows out of the congregation into the community.

"Stop reducing the message to mere peace and service. . . Anabaptism should point us to Jesus, not just to ethics. Salvation belongs to God," said Kraybill.

"After almost incessant worship, in this last book of the Bible, Revelation ends with an invitation to the river . . . one we can pass on, extend to the world. The spirit and bride say come, let everyone who wishes take the water of life," Kraybill concluded.

Number of the Day **4106**

By using washable plates at this assembly, we prevented an estimated 4,106 disposable plates from entering the landfill.

Friday Bible Study – Loren Johns

David Rogalsky – Eastern Canada Correspondent for Canadian Mennonite

Johns final Bible Study focused on one verse, Revelation 21:5:

Its gates will never be shut by day – and there will be no night there.

“Does [Revelation writer] John believe all will be saved?” he asked. The gates will always be open. No one will be kept out. Is the book of Revelation a universalist document? Some interpret it to mean the the end will save all, while others, like Tim LaHaye in the *Left Behind* series, believe that only a small number of people will be saved. Some believe that many will turn to God while others have a low view of human potential to make this choice.

Loren Johns offered what he sees as one of the most helpful commentaries on Revelation, that by M. Eugene Boring in the *Interpretation* series of studies for ministers and teachers in the church. Boring writes:

‘By offering pictures of both unconditional/ universal and conditional/limited salvation and thus affirming both poles of the dialectic, John, in accord with biblical theology in general, guards against the dangers inherent in a superficial “consistency” obtained by affirming only one side of the issue. The interpreter’s task is not to seek ways to reconcile the tension in the text; the task is to find the thrust of Revelation’s message precisely in this tension.’ (p. 228)

Johns repeated “The book of Revelation is a remarkably inclusive document.” God will accept everyone, and yet the ability to choose is maintained. But, Johns concluded, “If Jesus comes back and wishes to show mercy to all, I will not object,” stating that he wants his own life to be radically inclusive.

Addendum: Johns also listed John Yeatts’ Believers’ Church commentary and Mitchell Reddish’s Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary as accessible for pastors and teachers working with Revelation.



Is the end near? Exploring the Left Behind industry

Dave Rogalsky – Eastern Canada Correspondent for Canadian Mennonite

Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, together with Tyndale House Publishers, have unleashed a behemoth industry on the world, Christian and otherwise.

The original twelve volumes of the *Left Behind* Series have sold over 63 million copies in over a hundred languages. Forty children’s books, Bible studies on Armageddon and ‘the second coming,’ graphic novels, a chart of novels and the book of Revelation, a video “have you been left behind?” for Christians to leave for those who have been left behind, music, apparel, collectables, a board game and a video game – you use prayer and weapons to defeat the Anti-Christ and his human assistants.

In his seminar Loren Johns, Professor of New Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, taught that Revelation is usually used in one of four ways Revelation 4-18 gives the entire history of the world as a foretelling; futurist or dispensational – chapters 2-3 are seven eras of church history; 4-22 spell out the end time; idealist or theological using the language of history to teach us about God and Jesus Christ; and Preterist – we first read Revelation in its first century context, and then apply what we learn to our day. Johns said that he is mostly Preterist, some idealist, and a bit of futurist, but has no room for church historical. The *Left Behind* series is pure church or world historical, reading the symbols and images as descriptions of real events.

Johns found he enjoyed the novels more than he expected, “They’re real page turners.” But he finds the “ends-justifying-the-means” use of lying, anger, hatred and violence disturbing. He wondered aloud how Christians would respond if a Muslim wrote similar material. “It rejects the good news of Jesus Christ,” he said, a good news that does not kill our enemies or hate them. He also believes the series rejects the way of the cross and celebrates humanity’s will to conquer.

But he would not stop congregations from having them in their libraries. Instead he would invite conversation about the books and their contents, asking people what they think of them, of the stories, of the characters, and what the readers get out of the books.

In answer to the question, “Is the end still coming? After all, Christians have been disappointed, what should we say?” it would seem to Johns, quoting from Eugene Boring’s commentary on Revelation, that John the Revelator was wrong. Jesus did not come back as he had expected. But this does not negate the message that God will bring about an end in God’s own good time, adding that no one knows the time or seasons (Mark 13:32, and Acts 1:6, 11). The future is in God’s hands.

Voices from the past

God’s covenant is an eternal covenant, which is from the beginning, continues in eternity and ceases not. It implies that it is his will to be our God and Father, and that we should be his people and loved children, and that he desires through Christ to fill us at all times with every divine blessing and with all that is good.

Peter Riedeman. (Died 1556)

DEBATING HARMONY

Edmund Pries, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church

Debate on theological issues at the national church level is always a fascinating exercise in which to participate – and equally interesting and instructive for observation and analysis.

Thursday's discussion on the Harmony Motion was particularly illuminating as delegates sought to articulate their varied positions – and there were more than two or three perspectives delineated, suggesting a multi-dimensional perception and analysis that transcended bi-polarization. While diversity of opinion was present, most indicated a preference for dialogue that promoted the unity of the denominational body – and none more so than Ben Borne, mover of the Harmony Motion and mover of the motion to “refer the resolution to the General Board.”

Nevertheless, the debate does allow for more than a few observations relative to positions taken. Due to space limitations, I will briefly highlight only two.

First, the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (CoF)* was repeatedly referenced – but not always in the same manner. Some congregational statements read aloud seemed to lend quasi-biblical authority to the Confession; they pointedly pledged their allegiance to the CoF and staked their current position on issues of sexuality on the 1995 confession. Others saw the confession as a time-bound document that had been superseded by other faithful movements in the denomination.

What is our perspective on the role of the CoF

and its authority over congregational faith and life? What is our understanding of the Confession's relationship to time and history? Is the Confession descriptive or prescriptive? Or, put another way, does it indicate “where we stood” (at a point in history) or “where we [will] stand” (in relative perpetuity)?

Historically, Mennonites, in contrast to some others, have understood confessions as the discernment of the community on issues of faith at a particular point in the history of the church. While recognizing that a confession did, for a brief time at least, provide guidelines for congregational faith and life, the sheer number of confessions indicates that this applicability was understood as being limited to a particular time – especially since it was also understood that confessions addressed a particular historical context and theological environment.

Theological environments and biblical interpretations can and have changed throughout history. Recently, the Worldwide Lutheran Communion repented of statements about Mennonites in their Augsburg Confession. A quick perusal of older Mennonite confessions would quickly reveal several items that would be unanimously rejected by the delegate body of today. Practices arising out of allegiance to beliefs expressed in past confessions have caused statements of repentance to be made by the Mennonite Church in the past also. Will we need to do that again or has our understanding of the role of CoF changed?

Second, some persons spoke of being faithful in the discernment process, but “not moving the goal posts.” What, for us as professed followers of Jesus of Nazareth, constitutes an immovable set of goal posts on the issue of sexuality? Is it the grace and mercy of God available to all? Or is it the just referenced 1995 Confession of Faith? Is it the love of God? Or is it perhaps a past position taken by the Mennonite Church / Conference – which dare not be changed? Is it a particular interpretation of a biblical passage? Or is it faithfulness to Jesus' reminder that whatever we have done to the least of Christ's sisters and brothers . . . ? What, exactly, is immovable, unshakeable and closed to revision?

What, besides the welcome of Jesus, should be non-negotiable?

Kid's Assembly Bookends

Elsie Rempel

Friday's Children's assembly focused on ways of going forth and connecting our dreams with God's dreams for the world. This included a fine pantomimed skit during worship by the group calling themselves “the 49ers, finishing dream mobiles by adding a foot shape inscribed with their hopes and commitments, and an Art Workshop with Art Therapist Cheryl Weber Good that helped the children share their hopes for their congregations 10 years from now. Watch for some of their samples to be posted on the Mennonite Church Canada web site.

Just as they learned about the extra importance of the last and first words in the Bible, the participants also sensed that their “last words” at Assembly carried extra meaning. Maybe that's why they rocked the Humanities Theatre with their songs during the final evening worship service!

But now, I'd like to share a more personal bookend experience with you. Several years ago, there was another fabulous children's assembly. The children were integrated into evening worship with the theme “Enough for All”. Our music worship was blessed by a song by Bryan Moyer Suderman. I chose to sit in the balcony for communion.

As the words for invitation were offered, there was no clear indication of how those who were not baptized could participate in the

service. From my balcony perch, I saw a variety of responses to the invitation. What I saw and experienced at that communion service churned within me and eventually helped me churn out a Master's Thesis on “Mennonites, Children and Communion” in 2007.

This past Friday night, many of the experiences from that assembly long ago were echoed. Bryan wrote another fabulous song, the children participated well, and I was in the balcony again. But this time the children who had so passionately sung “I love you Jesus, deep down in my heart” during morning worship, were graciously invited to receive a grape during communion and the blessing, “Know that Jesus loves you.”

Thanks be to God for these wonderful bookends, the reciprocated blessing for them, and this inclusive communion experience for me.

This coming fall, Mennonite Church Canada will continue to work out the implications of this year's budget reductions. It is not clear at this time if my new half time position as Formation Consultant will allow for the development of future Children's Assemblies, but it was wonderful to experience this blessed bookend on a topic that has been so close to the core of my ministry as Director of Christian Nurture.

God be with you till we meet again.

Ben Borne addresses delegates

re: Harmony Motion on Human Sexuality

On Thursday afternoon, July 7, Ben Borne, mover of the Harmony Group's motion on Human Sexuality addressed the Mennonite Church delegate body prior to referring the motion to the General Board. These are his words. – Ed.

Good afternoon.

My name is Ben Borne, I am a delegate from Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, SK. This feels like a once and a lifetime experience being able to come up here and share a little bit about the resolution put forward by one of the groups I co-ordinate, known as "Harmony". For those who are not familiar with Harmony, we are a grass roots initiative started within Mennonite Church Canada. We do not directly represent congregations, however we all have deep ties with Mennonite Church Canada as members, friends, and adherents of congregations.

I am sure there has been lots of confusion, excitement and anxiety surrounding what the implications of this motion are for the Mennonite Church. This motion comes from a group of people who gather once a month to share and support stories of deep personal struggle with pain, within families, with friends and in churches over the notion of same-sex attraction and what it means in an Anabaptist Mennonite context.

As a group, and the many near 300 people who have supported this motion on paper, we feel conversation needs to begin soon because of the impact of hurtful silence on issues of sexuality in the church, which has caused much confusion and distress for many. As a group we developed this motion to do several things, to one, acknowledge the 1986 Saskatoon Resolution, and the impact it has made in the past 25 years in conversation around issues of sexuality, two, acknowledge the pain of those who have waited in deep ambiguity for the church to be speak again on this topic and three, to re-engage people in conversation, to signal that the church body is an open and safe place to discern questions of sexuality from various perspectives.

After the "Being a Faithful Church 3" paper was announced, we added in our motion that we affirm the Being a Faithful Church Process, and that we hope that the discussion and education on issues of same-sex attraction will occur quickly, not for our sake as individuals in Harmony, but for the sake of many Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer people who feel like they need an answer, not to satisfy a personal belief that they are right, but to satisfy a desire to know if there is a place in our congregations and churches for LGBTQ people to participate, and to know if there is a way to reconcile same-sex attraction with faith.

In part of remaining faithful to process, I see that this motion could cause division. Not necessarily because people are "for" or "against" this motion, but because we don't fully understand the issues well enough to make informed decisions. For this reason I don't see it fair that this motion should come to a vote. However I see this motion as a symbol for urgent need for our Mennonite Church Canada congregations to move swiftly in this conversation, as part of the being a faithful church process. This



General Secretary Willard Metzger (left) invited Ben Borne to the podium to pray for the church as delegates take home and engage the Being a Faithful Church Process 3 on human sexuality. – photo by Dan Dyck

conversation is not for personal gain on either side of the belief spectrum; it is for the people who are truly caught up in the middle of this all. It is for the future of our church, the young people who have been worshiping in the building just next door. In an age where youth and young adults are now looking outside the church for answers, as a people of Christ we have a responsibility to remain faithful to our youth to provide nurture, love and growth in all aspects of their Christian lives, including sexuality. This is not just for our heterosexual youth who want to know what the church thinks about sex and sexuality, but for our youth, young adults and even yes, adults who sit in our pews every Sunday who identify both privately and openly as LGBTQ who may face bullying in school, in the work place, on the internet, at the dinner table with family, in church, bringing them to the point where they might contemplate and follow through with taking there own lives.

How do we respond? It is because of these feelings and questions there is a true sense of urgency to start these incredibly difficult conversations, to listen to the stories of pain that I hear, and to listen to the stories of those who really deeply struggle with the notion of same-sex attraction as part of our belief system. This is why the Being a Faithful Church process is so important in our present time. Through this process, Members of Harmony and myself strongly encourage all members of our body to step out and meet in the middle to lovingly, and authentically face the questions of today, for the generation of today and tomorrow.

With much grace, peace and blessings during this process, I move that this motion be referred to the care and responsibility of the general board of Mennonite Church Canada.

Assembly 2011 Summary of Actions and Decisions

(Disclaimer: This information was recorded live during sessions.

The official record shall be the minutes as recorded by the recording secretaries. – Ed.)

Motion #1: By-Law Changes

During its meeting on April 16, 2011, the General Board agreed to recommend the following two by-law changes to the delegates at Assembly 2011:

1. Whereas the budget reductions being implemented in 2011 limit the amount of staff time available for assembly planning, making it impossible to continue with annual assemblies unless additional staff are hired, the following by-law change is recommended:

Current by-law on annual assemblies:

Delegate Assemblies

9 (1) Regular delegate assemblies shall be held:

- (a) annually, beginning normally during the first two weeks of July

Proposed by-law:

Delegate Assemblies

9 (1) Regular delegate assemblies shall be held:

- (a) biennially, beginning normally during the first two weeks of July

Proposed by-law (proposed amendment):

9 (1) Regular delegate assemblies shall be held:

- (a) biennially, beginning normally during the first two weeks of July
- (b) This by-law to come into effect following the 2012 Assembly

Amendment Rationale

1. This puts us on an alternating schedule with MC USA allowing for:
 1. Continued relationship development between Canada & US Churches at the leadership level
 2. Allows youth to attend “both/and” youth assemblies
2. Sustains current momentum in the “Being a Faithful Church” process for 1 more year.
3. Puts us on an alternate year with the next Mennonite World Conference.

Moved: Ross Penner, MCEC area delegate on behalf of MCEC

Seconded: Ryan Siemens, Prince Albert
Carried

During its meeting on April 16, 2011, the General Board agreed to recommend the following two by-law changes to the delegates at Assembly 2011:

Whereas there has been increasing anxiety about achieving quorums at recent assemblies and whereas other denominations (including Mennonite denominations) require at most one-third of eligible voting delegates for a quorum (with no impact on attendance), the following by-law change is recommended:

Current by-law on quorums:

Voting at Delegate Assemblies

11 (1) The quorum for a delegate assembly shall be one half the total number eligible voting delegates from the area churches plus 200 voting delegates from constituent congregations.

Proposed by-law:

Voting at Delegate Assemblies

11 (1) The quorum for a delegate assembly shall be 20 eligible voting delegates from the area churches plus 150 voting delegates from constituent congregations.

Moved: Information unavailable at press time

Seconded: Information unavailable at press time
Carried

Motion #2: Peace in the Middle East

Be it resolved that Mennonite Church Canada work with Mennonite Central Committee to provide congregations with resources to help churches and individuals discern and seek Christ-like responses to the ongoing lack of peace in Palestine/Israel.

Moved: Leon Kehl

Seconded: Rick Cober Bauman
Carried.

Motion #3: Human Sexuality from the Harmony Group

Whereas nearly identical Resolutions on Human Sexuality were adopted by the predecessor conferences to Mennonite Church Canada in 1986 and 1987 (for convenience hereafter collectively referred to as “the Saskatoon Resolution”);

And whereas the Saskatoon Resolution addresses a number of important issues relating to sexuality, and calls us to remain “... in loving dialogue with each other in the body of Christ”, but it has seldom been referenced for any topic other than homosexuality;

And whereas non-heterosexual people in our congregations, whether in a same-sex relationship or not, have felt excluded and marginalized by all levels of MC Canada;

And whereas the way the Saskatoon Resolution has been applied, has led to a deep struggle with unspoken pain, resulting in silence for individuals, their families and church communities, and it has led to schisms, withdrawals and disciplinary action for individuals, for their families, and for congregations within MC Canada;

And whereas the intent of the Saskatoon Resolution never was to exclude from the fellowship of Christ’s table, nor the discipleship of the Church, any person who confesses Jesus as Lord in the context of an Anabaptist perspective, but rather to articulate the then-current understanding of MC Canada that certain kinds of sexual activity were to be regarded as sinful;

And whereas there is now renewed questioning about that understanding, especially in the context of loving, Christ-centred, monogamous, same-sex relationships;

And whereas the church is a body formed by those who “have sinned and come short of the glory of God”, and there is no mandate for the Church to exclude from its fellowship, those whom Jesus invites to His table;

Now therefore be it resolved:

That MC Canada acknowledge that there are non-heterosexual individuals who are struggling within its congregations, whether or not those individuals have publicly acknowledged their orientation, and whether or not they are in a relationship with another person;

That MC Canada further acknowledge that all Christians have a legitimate place in God’s Kingdom generally, and in the Church specifically;

That MC Canada urge its area churches and congregations to take seriously the call to continue in loving dialogue, and to fully embrace by inviting and welcoming into their midst, all

persons including non-heterosexual members, adherents and neighbours; and

That MC Canada be encouraged to expedite the present “Being a Faithful Church” process, especially as regards to education and discernment on matters of sexuality.

Moved by Ben Borne, from Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon; Seconded by Egon Enns, Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg

It is moved that this resolution be referred to the General Board.

Moved: Ben Borne
Seconded: Rudy Dirks
Carried

Recommendation for Proposed Delegate Action

Action recommended by General Board, Mennonite Church Canada, July, 2011.

We approve Being a Faithful Church 3 as a framework and plan to guide the ongoing discernment in Mennonite Church Canada on matters of sexuality. Our approval is also a commitment to encourage and support the General Board as it continues to provide the leadership needed to implement this plan, and to encourage our congregations and Area Churches to participate as fully as possible.

Moved: Information unavailable at press time
Seconded: Information unavailable at press time
Carried.

How much is too much?

Deborah Froese

We all know that God invites us to give as generously as the poor widow in Luke 21 who offered the treasury “all she had to live on”, but what does that mean exactly? How do we determine what we need and what we should share?

At a seminar for Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2011, Mike Strathdee and Dori Zerbe Cornelson, Stewardship Consultants for Mennonite Foundation of Canada, embraced this question. Although they gave no hard and fast answers, they did offer a range of considerations to nudge individuals toward a clearer understanding of need and excess.

“Sacrificial giving is an act of worship,” Strathdee said, but he noted that there is some resistance to this idea. A discussion about it in one congregation prompted an individual to say that “we don’t have sacrificial worship; why should we have sacrificial giving?”

Think of the metaphoric image of breaking bread and sharing, Zerbe Cornelson suggested. She described the vast global difference between rich and poor and explored biblical stories of “too much” and what happened to those who took more than they needed – like manna in the desert that turned wormy overnight (Exodus 16) or a gluttonous consumption of quails that turned to plague (Numbers 11).

“How many of us would be willing to have just enough every day?” she asked. Rather than trust in God’s provision, we tend to worry and store away more than we need, she said, hinting that she, too, struggles with this challenge.

Zerbe Cornelson also asked participants to consider what makes them happy. Researchers have found that once individuals, communities, and nations have attained a certain level of security and comfort – enough shelter, food, clothing, community – further increase in wealth has no impact on happiness.

How much to give and how much to keep depends upon finding the delicate balance between need and excess.

Strathdee took the conversation in a slightly different direction by displaying a photo of a man carrying a house on his back.

“The average Canadian spends \$1.48 for every dollar earned,” he said, noting that we recently surpassed Americans in terms of spending. We tend to struggle as much with how much is enough as with how much is too much.

After addressing the debt issue, he looked at a challenge facing a growing number of Canadians; how much do we need to save for retirement?

How much to give and how much to keep depends upon finding the delicate balance between need and excess.

While financial planners generally suggest that income needs for retirement years should meet 70-80% of pre-retirement income, Strathdee says that kind of money is needed only if you wish to live “high off the hog. If you’re okay with a lifestyle similar to what you had during your working lifetime, look at 50%. About half that could come from CPP [Canada Pension Plan].”

He suggests that retirement planning should first involve consideration of what individuals expect to do during those years. Many will not quit working completely. “People aren’t always retiring at age 65. They are lost within a few months of walking out the door – or bored stiff.”

Ultimately, both Zerbe Cornelson and Strathdee agreed; People need to remember that God owns and we manage.

Find out more about the Mennonite Foundation of Canada at www.mennofoundation.ca/

Assembly 2011 was brought to you by a series of complicated technical achievements, grace, and goodwill.

Thank you to:

- The teams of volunteers from local churches
- The staff at Conrad Grebel University College
- All our speakers and presenters
- All of Mennonite Church Canada's partner ministries
- The University of Waterloo
- Youth assembly sponsors
- Our Advertisers
- Sponsors of t-shirts, water bottles, tote bags, lanyards, name tags, note book, pens, pencils, printing, and more.
- Donors who helped underwrite some costs of the assembly
- The *Canadian Mennonite*
- Volunteers who contributed video, still images, and stories for *Epic News*
- Youth who responded to the *question of the day*
- And especially all the youth and adults who participated in this assembly and reveled in the joy of being the church together!

Assembly 2011 Offering Update

Thank you to the your generosity, the following ministries will be enabled and empowered by your gifts:

The Translation Project is a work that seeks to make more core Mennonite resources available in more languages to meet the needs of newcomers to Canada: \$2,507.45

Mennonite Church Canada is helping the Mennonite Church in Burkina Faso build a church in Ouagadougou to meet the needs of the many Mennonite young adults who move to the capital to attend university: \$8,598.75

Thank you!

Sprawling campus a walk with Jesus

-Elsie Rempel

We often talk about aligning with God, but we don't often talk about it in a literal sense.

This week at Assembly, as many of us did more than our usual amount of walking between meal and meeting venues, I had a unique experience of almost literally walking with Jesus. It began on Wednesday night during our outdoor evening worship. As we were singing about Jesus as our Prince of Peace, I became aware of a path to the right of our stage area, and felt as if our donkey-riding Jesus was making an entrance on that path.

During the rest of the week I had a recurring sense that a donkey, with Jesus on it, was beside me. At times I felt as though I could smell and feel the coarse hair and warm skin on the donkey's back. It was an amazing experience of encouraging accompaniment as I trudged back and forth across the maze-like, sprawling campus where we were remembering God's Epic future.

Walk on, and enjoy the walk, it seemed to say.

Thanks for not coming to the assembly...

Elsie Rempel, Director of Christian Nurture, Mennonite Church Canada

Dear friends from Nairn Mennonite Church,

Thank you for staying and serving at home!

Why am I grateful that you did not come to Assembly 2011, to which we've been inviting others and preparing for over the last year?

Liz Weber, on-site Children's Assembly volunteer leader, told me that a number of you were filling in for her, on the opening week of the summer day camp that she and Kevin Rempel operate in your church. This gift to the wider church is both humbling and inspiring. I trust that God blessed your work and that his gracious Spirit flowed freely through you to the children in your program.

Liz did an amazing job of leading the Children's and Junior Youth Assembly. Thank you for sharing her considerable gifts with the national church.

Peace be with you.



Did You Know?

You can put Mennonite Church Canada's Resource Centre "on the road." Host a display, request a *Cheaper by the Dozen* order, invite Arlyn Friesen-Epp or others from our *Speakers' Bureau* to your congregation.