

October 2004, *Equipping*

Mennonite Church Canada Witness Report
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Two worlds:

Sometimes I feel schizophrenic.

On the one hand, I watch the news and see **war**, torture, killing, violence, rape, genocide, famine, absolute poverty, theft, dishonesty, and greed. I read and hear about actions that seem inhuman: beheading prisoners, spearing pregnant women, displaced persons forced to drink acid. It's a world difficult to imagine. But it's a **real world**. It's a world many people experience. In fact, for many, not experiencing these things close up is unimaginable.

And then I experience a **different world**.

I see Canadian and American Natives meeting for a week in northern Manitoba this July to celebrate their common faith in Christ. Native leaders give **testimony** of how conflicts are being resolved, how reconciliation is happening, how love is growing, how healing from an abusive past is coming. They talk freely about how commitment to the Lordship of Jesus and their worship of God has dramatically changed their lives, the lives of their families and communities.

I participated in the celebration for Edith and Neill Von Gunten: a **celebration** for 35 years of dedicated, committed, selfless ministry with Native communities on behalf of our church. Where does such a life-giving and self-less service to others come from? How do persons like them have the strength and fortitude to persevere?

I participated in the international mission worker seminar in Indiana. There we heard **story after story after story** of love breaking into evil circumstances, forgiveness replacing bitterness, lives transformed, joy injected into difficult situations, and communities of Christian hope and healing addressing very difficult contexts.

I spent a week with Cuban pastors, and see the **thrill of learning** in their eyes, and discussed with them the awesome opportunities for integral Christian growth in that country. With few resources, tenuous facilities, and little training, these leaders are encouraging the formation of Christian communities of healing, forgiveness, and sharing.

I participated in a planning meeting for our joint assembly in Charlotte, North Carolina, for July, 2005. The theme, based on Acts 4:20, is "Can't keep quiet." Representatives from Mennonite colleges talked about how they are instruments of this lack of "quietness." They are **bugles of Christian testimony** to thousands of students every year.

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I see and experience the **faithful ministry** of our pastors in my own congregation, as they methodically address the personal and family crises of life with the wisdom of the gospel. At the same time, they teach and model a vision of Christian hope and meaning to the ones they serve.

I see **thousands of volunteers** in congregations, program agencies, and community organizations, giving of their time to make life better for someone other than themselves.

I hear my wife's stories about her experiences in hospice work, accompanying persons, often lonely, to their death. And I see her compassion, her empathy, and her wisdom in her ministry of **encouragement and solidarity**.

I am aware of **thousands of prayers** being uttered on behalf of the world, and on our behalf.

I sign receipts for financial gifts to our programs. Behind each gift I am aware of serious discernment, a spirit of **generosity**, and a deep desire to help to change the world.

I see and hear expressions of **gratitude**. People live grateful lives, and are grateful for the work and life of others.

And this second world too is real. It too is a world many people experience. In fact, for many, not experiencing these things close up is unimaginable. The **challenge** for the church is to deeply believe and trust that this second world is, in fact, what will define the reality of the future. This in spite of the many voices that insist that our defining reality is the first world.

The **vision of the Christian gospel** is that these two worlds will become one. The first world will be transformed into the second.

At Mennonite Church Canada Witness we are grateful for our opportunities to work on behalf of the church to bring these worlds together. **We thank you for your prayers and support.**

"... thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." (Jesus)