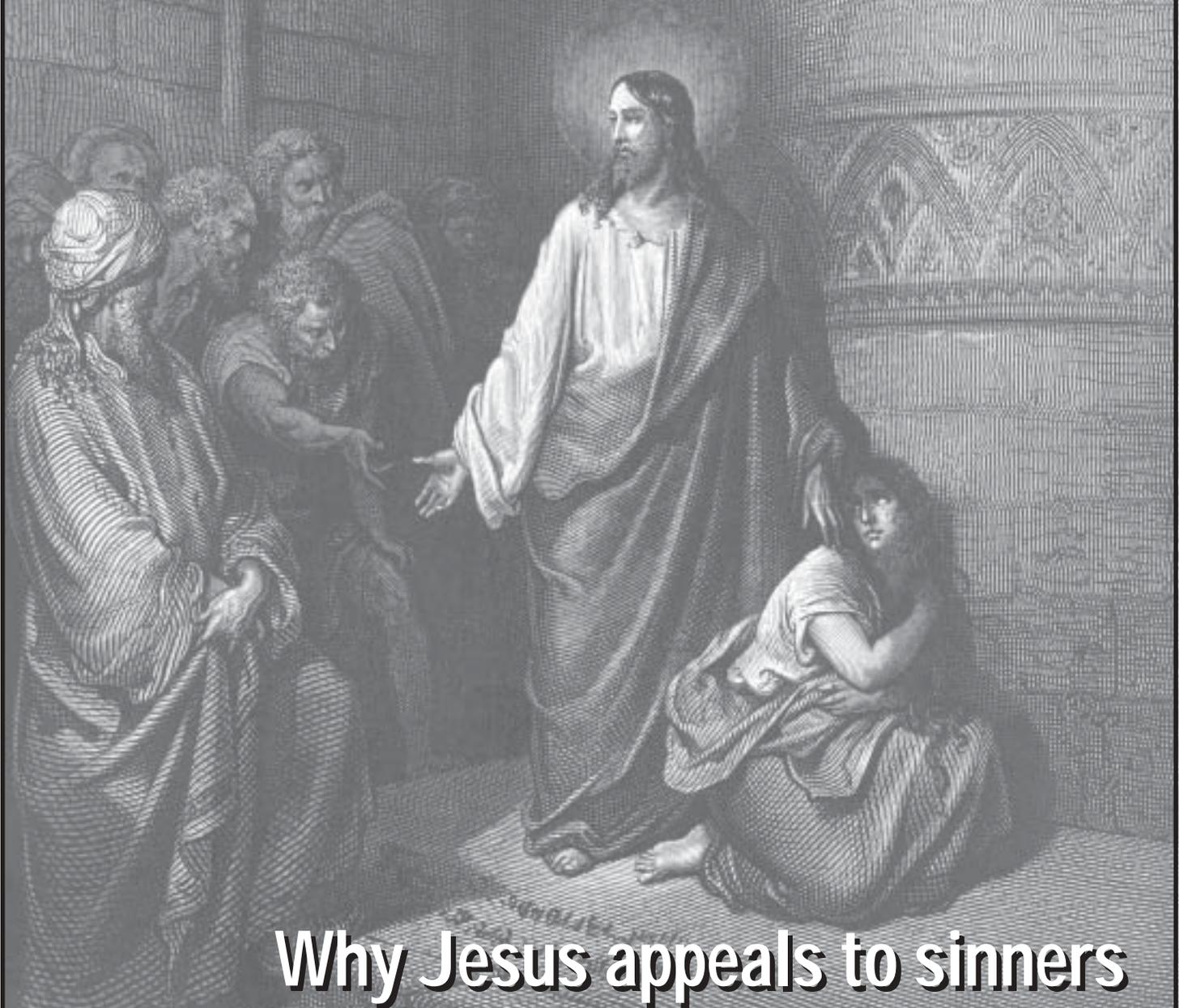


# *The* Messenger



## Why Jesus appeals to sinners

Jesus and the woman taken in adultery  
Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

EVANGELICAL MENNONITE CONFERENCE  
VOLUME 41 NUMBER 21 DECEMBER 3, 2003



## Advice to the shepherds

“DO NOT be afraid!” an angel of the Lord said to the shepherds. A pastor has called this beautiful, useless advice.

I don't recall what the pastor wrote in an article of years ago, though it would have involved some of what is below. Certainly the minister, whose name is forgotten, has made me think, and I am indebted. And both of us are indebted to Christ who came long ago and yet remains so near!

What would we do if an angel appeared and spoke to us, while the Lord's glory shone around us? Would we rub our eyes, pinch ourselves, run, freeze—what? Would we be calm, cool, and collected? I doubt it!

The shepherds were “terrified” (Luke 2:9). They could fight off wolves, lions, and thieves with wooden rods, but how do they fight off an angel? The shepherds were out of their league, and their loss of control frightened them. Too late, angel, they were already frightened!

We can be frightened by so much in our world: personal stresses, political events, disasters. We can feel out of control and that can terrify us. Deep down at Christmastime, then, we need reassurance that ultimately God is still in control.

Some people have specific fears. Some people fear that God is out to harm them. They fear that God only cares about “the good people.” They fear that if God knew more about them, He'd have no use for them.

But, surely, part of the good news is that the shepherds survived! Though fearful and inadequate, they met an angel of the Lord and lived to tell of it. That's why the angel's advice to “not be afraid” is beautiful. The shepherds discovered that God wasn't out to punish them. God is out to help us!

God's messenger has wonderful news: “Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord!”

Through the Babe in the Manger, the

shepherds find that God cares for us, is on our side, and came to be with us in our corner. God seeks our well-being, even if it costs him the price of taking on our human nature and facing the world's rejection. He turns that rejection into a covering for our sin in the Cross, and he rose on Easter Sunday to give us eternal life.

The shepherds begin to grasp the significance of the angelic visit—the coming of Christ and the goodness of God. They “returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told” (Luke 2:20).

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17). At Christmas we celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ for our wholeness, forgiveness and our freedom—our salvation. As we listen again to the story of Christ's coming, we can be touched, respond, and rejoice.

Yes, you might say, but that's only part of the story. What if a person walks away? What if an individual doesn't care, scoffs, is indifferent, rejects or ignores Christ? Well, you are right, if a person persists in that choice until death, elsewhere in Scripture we are told that such a choice causes misery for all eternity.

But the shepherds weren't such people, and I doubt that you are, even if you are fearful. We might be conscious of our weakness and failures. Guilt might trouble us. But remember this: The angel came to people who did not expect to be approached. Is that like you?

The shepherds “glorified and praised God” (2:20). They responded with faith and joy. That's how we are to respond to news that God is so involved in our world that He came in His Son as our Saviour.

This Christmas you are invited to look at Christ and rejoice!

Terry M. Smith



### The Messenger

EDITOR

Terry M. Smith



ASSISTANT EDITOR

Rebecca Buhler

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*Mailing information:* All correspondence, including undelivered copies, change of address and new subscriptions, should be addressed to:

*The Messenger*  
Box 1268  
Steinbach, Manitoba  
R0A 2A0

Phone: 204-326-6401

Fax: 204-326-1613

E-mail: [emcmessenger@mts.net](mailto:emcmessenger@mts.net)

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# Why Jesus appeals to sinners

Pastor Glen Koop



The Annunciation

Gustave Doré

**J**EWS were very interested in genealogies, much like our people today. There are a number of genealogical records in the Old Testament like in Genesis 5 to 11 and Chronicles 1 to 9. The reason for interest in one's pedigree (line of descent) was to be sure that the greatest possible care had been taken on purity of lineage (William Barclay, *Matthew*, p. 12).

If there was the slightest mixture of foreign blood in any man he lost his right to be called a Jew, he was not a

member of God's people (J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, p. 216).

A priest had to be able to trace an unbroken record of his descent stretching back to Aaron. Later during New Testament times the Sanhedrin kept these records. Herod the Great was despised by pure-blooded Jews. He was half Edomite. He had the official records destroyed so that no one could prove a purer descent than his own.

To the Jew it would be most impressive that the descent of Jesus could be traced back to Abraham and even to God as Luke does in 3:23-38 (Barclay, p. 12).

Looking at Jesus' genealogies either in Matthew or Luke there are unique characteristics. In Matthew we begin with Abraham and move to David, then from King David to the exile in Babylon, and then from exile in Babylon to the birth of Jesus.

Matthew mentions three sections with fourteen people in each, this may have been for easy memorization (Barclay, p. 13). Remember, to Matthew, Jesus was the possession of the Jews (Barclay, *Luke*, p. 41). Then he opens a can of worms.

He tells us that Solomon came from David. His mother had been Uriah's wife. Why Matthew included it in the genealogy, we can only speculate. But we know that David killed Uriah to obtain Bathsheba as wife, whom he had already impregnated.

Another one is Ruth, the Moabitess, the mother of Obed, grandmother of Jesse, and great grandmother of King David. So now we know that Jesus was not of pure Jewish

Glen Koop, B.A., M.Div., is interim pastor at Ridgewood EMC near Giroux, Man. He has served as a pastor in Winnipeg, La Crete, Virginia, and Lesotho. Koop has also served as an Old Testament professor at Steinbach Bible College. This article is shortened from his EMC convention message in July at Morris, Man.



blood—he had some Moabite blood flowing in his veins. Were Jews aware of Jesus’ bloodline? Most likely!

But maybe much worse is the story of mother Tamar (Genesis 38). She had twin sons through an incestuous relationship with her deceptive father-in-law. He had promised his third son as her husband, but he never delivered. So she dressed up like a “lady of the night” and seduced him. Through this relationship she gave birth to twin boys. Through the lineage of one twin, Perez, came the Christ child.

Luke traces the genealogy back to Adam and God. To Luke, Jesus was the possession of all mankind, because his line is traced back to the Creator of the human race. Luke even removes the national and racial boundaries from the ancestry of Jesus (Barclay, *Luke*, p. 41).

The family of Jesus went all the way back to Adam and then to God (Luke 3:31–38). The genealogy shows Jesus to be a real man with a family tree (G. B. Caird, *Luke*, p. 77; Leon Morris, *Luke*, p. 101).

That the family tree goes back to David supports Jesus’ claim that he is the Christ, the Messiah (*Ibid.*, Rom. 1:2–3, Acts 2:29–30). The fact that he traces the genealogical line back to Adam brings out his kinship not only with Israel, but with the whole human race. Jesus’ mission is ultimately to all of mankind. And tracing it back to God relates him to the creator of all. Jesus was the Son of God (*Ibid.*).

### Jesus came in poverty

He put aside some of His divine power. Jesus put aside his divine attributes when he became man. He put aside his omniscience, his knowledge of everything. He asked questions on several occasions. As a child he learned and grew (Luke 2:40, 52). Secondly, he put aside his omnipresence, the ability to be in all places at the same time. He was present only in one place at a time. His human body limited him in time and space. When he was in Galilee he was not seen in Jerusalem.

Jesus also put aside his omnipotence, his almighty power to do everything; Jesus actually allowed wicked men to put him to death. And yet Jesus really and truly was God (*365 Meditations for this Day*, J. B. Phillips, p. 233).

### He faced uncertainty from conception

When he was conceived it was to an unwed woman. He almost entered a home without a human father. It was very close to being a one-parent home. We’re told that the man to whom Mary was betrothed was planning to divorce her quietly (Matt. 1:19). Betrothal was considered as good as married and therefore the reference to divorce. But God sent an angel to talk Joseph out of divorce in a dream. With that dream Joseph was persuaded and decided to move ahead with their marriage

However, their problems were not over. The Roman authorities had sent out a decree for them to go to Bethlehem and get registered. They came from Nazareth, in Galilee, and travelled south to Bethlehem, in Judea, which was close to Jerusalem.

When they got to Bethlehem they found out that there was “no



The Nativity

Gustave Doré

room in the inn.” This literally means that “there was no ‘space’ or ‘place’ on the earthen floor of that grossly overcrowded little resting place” (Phillips, p. 236).

“We do not know who first thought of the ‘stable’ or ‘lean-to’ or ‘cave’ where the animals were brought in for the night, but lowly as it was, it gave the holy woman, whom God had chosen for this unique honour, shelter, warmth and privacy” (*Ibid.*).

Jesus was born in a lowly cattle shed. The baby lying in the manger seemed as frail and helpless as any other baby on earth. Yet he grew into a man of matchless quality, a man of such tempered strength that even death could not hold him.

But the longer we live the more we become “convinced that the apparent weakness of Jesus is really tremendous strength. His weakness is greater than all our wisdom. Even our pride, our hatred, our fear, and our selfishness cannot defeat his

unfailing love” (*Ibid.* p. 238).

“The baby we worship today is now alive eternally, both in our hearts and beyond time-and-space”. He is the King who reigns in the lives of people (*Ibid.*). He lives in our lives because we have opened the door to let Him in. He is Christ in us.

**W**hat would we like to do with our ancestry? “Historian, biographer, please do not include everything about our family tree. Okay if you insist, but smooth it over a bit. Dress it up!”

Why in the world would God choose to send Jesus through men and women like Tamar and Judah? Or Rahab? Or Boaz and Ruth the

Moabitess? Or David and Uriah’s wife Bathsheba? Jesus’ ancestral story is very transparent. There were ancestors who brought little good to him. There were those who had little in the line of morals, they were deceptive, they were hypocrites, they were foreigners, not of Abrahamic stock, and they were assassins.

But the Bible has no cover up. It is wide open to us! This I find

most awesome about our Lord Jesus Christ.

Coming from this colourful background Jesus increased in wisdom, and in years, and in divine and human favour (Luke 2:52). Coming from the home of Mary and Joseph, Jesus grew, became strong, was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him (Luke 2:40). Not from a Levitical background, Jesus learned obedience through suffering (Heb. 5:8). Coming from a Moabite background Jesus was a servant to the people (Matt. 20:28).

Coming from a mixed background Jesus taught and lived an exemplary lifestyle. He called and invited people to “Follow Me!” (Matt. 4:19). Coming from Judah and Tamar parentage, Jesus was a great healer (Matt. 8:14–17). Coming from God Jesus was both the living water and the bread of life (John 4:10,13–14; 6:35). Coming with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Jesus exhorted the disciples to a place of retreat, to rest as well as to feed the hungry and quenched the thirst of many (Mark 6:30–44; 8:1–10).

Coming from this background Jesus was one with the heavenly Father and the heavenly Father was one with him (John 14:9–12). Coming from this background Jesus was the suffering Lamb of God; he died for all of humanity, past, present and future. He died for every and all sins. And God the Father raised him to life, thus giving us eternal life (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:12, 7:14, 17:14).

Jesus did not have much to brag about his ancestry. Jesus did not come with a rich family background. God sent Jesus with limitations so he

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### Gifts

I start my day  
In a very ordinary way  
In bed  
Sitting up against the back rest  
A Christmas gift from my daughter.  
Covering my knees with this new blanket  
A gift from another daughter.  
Sipping my tea  
A gift from my husband.  
Starting this new day  
A gift from my Creator  
With my Bible  
My diary, and some old envelopes  
To write on.  
Expecting greatness to flow into me  
From God’s Word, the true Word.  
Expecting great words to flow out  
Through this pen  
Not because of me  
Not because of who I am  
But because of who you are  
My great God  
My Lord  
My Creator  
My Saviour  
My Sustainer  
I praise you, Lord  
I thank you, Lord  
For all the gifts you’ve given me!  
How gifted I am!

Laura Siemens  
Kola, Man.

appeals to sinners. But the limitations did not in any way limit his sacrifice for *all* of the world. Therefore God sends us in our weakness, our limitation, and our dependency on Him. We are to be encouraged and challenged to serve God boldly and globally. We are encouraged to serve with mouth, heart, mind, lungs, hands, feet, our whole body. And we are encouraged to serve unitedly as the body of Jesus Christ! ■

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### Heaven’s Song

Whispers on that Holy night,  
shone Love’s Light of Grace and  
Might.  
Heaven’s Song in cradle lay,  
in swaddling clothes upon the hay.

Wise men followed Star so bright,  
to Bethlehem where Stayed that  
Light.  
On bended knees their gifts they  
gave—  
myrrh, frankincense, and gold,  
they laid.

For through the year King Herod  
sought,  
this heavenly Child, from God,  
begot.  
A bounty placed upon His head,  
this wicked king, to kill Him dead.

God’s Plan would change all men,  
indeed,  
and help them in their every need.  
But only when with thanks we bow;  
accept His Gift with Love endowed.

Little, little sleeping Child—  
Christ, our Lord, so meek and mild.  
He came in joy our lives to save—  
full sacrifice, the cross, to pay.

As Heaven’s Song is sung anew,  
let’s worship Him, sweet Jesus, True.  
I’ll love and serve Him all my life—  
in joy or pain, in love or strife.

Heaven’s Song shall echo true,  
our precious Lord, all praises due.  
The Christmas song will ever be,  
men’s hearts to save, and make us  
Free.

He is the Ruler of all Earth,  
this tiny babe in joyful birth.  
Starlight shine on me tonight,  
this glorious Christmas Day, so  
bright!

Eleanor Lee Gustaw  
Riverton, Man.

# Misconceptions about mental illness

Irma Janzen

**T**HERE is a wide range of opinions on the subject of mental illness.

Some of us have had occasion to dig deeper, but often our convictions stem from what we have learned in our homes and communities. We are all human and, while we do not necessarily believe everything we hear, we cannot help but be affected by what people around us say. Not all things are what they seem, and it is easy to make assumptions based on incomplete information.

Imagine Tina, a Christian woman in her early 40s, who develops depression. She calls her friends to pray for her. Her depression lifts and Tina and her friends thank God, rejoice in her healing, and call it a miracle.

It is a miracle. But if Tina's friends do not understand mental illness, the situation may lead them to believe that prayer alone cures mental illness. They may not realize that not all people are healed by prayer alone.

Some of us believe that mental illness is a spiritual problem or that it is the result of a sin. Others believe that mental illness is a sign of weakness and that it can be prevented by being "strong."

While it is possible for depression to result from sin, there are those who reject God but never suffer from depression. If we look further into the issue, we can see that some kinds of mental illness, such as depression, are common among both Christians and non-Christians.

Another widespread misconception is that mental illness is common among street people. While it is true that there are people with mental illness living on the street, there are far more people with mental illness living among us as our neighbours and friends. The assumption may be accurate for some, but it is wrong to assume that all street people are mentally ill, or that all people with mental illnesses live on the street.

Still others believe that mental illness does not affect average people and is the consequence of poor upbringing. But poor parenting does not necessarily result

in mental illness either. Children who receive little support from their parents often grow up and contribute in significant ways without developing mental illness.

People of faith often confuse hallucination and delusions with demonic oppression and possession, but the two have different roots. Hallucinations and delusions are the result of physical problems. Demonic oppression and possession are caused by spiritual forces.

Other common misconceptions include:

- people with mental illness are crazy
- people with mental illness are dangerous
- people with mental illness are lazy or lack intelligence
- people with mental illness are of lesser value to society and the church
- people with mental illness want to be left alone
- people with mental illness cannot make good decisions

Today, we have facts that are helping to dispel the myths. We have reliable evidence that shows mental illness is a genetic trait that can be passed from one generation to the next. Evidence also supports the position that mental illness, in at least some instances, may be the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain.

Rather than treat mental illness as something abnormal, it is much healthier to view the problem as a disease and to treat people with mental illness the same way we treat those with cancer or diabetes.

Treating mental illness comes with its own set of myths. There are those who strongly believe that there is only one method of dealing with the problem whether through medication, counseling, therapy or positive thinking.

The healthy approach for a Christian may be to consider a combination or even *all* of the above. The healthy approach for a Christian may be to consider God's part in a holistic approach to dealing with mental illness.

Prayers and support from the Christian community are always important. With prayer and faith the solution to chemical imbalance may be medication. With prayer and faith the solution to confusion and frustration may be therapy.

**M**ental illness is not always permanent. Some people do recover and go on to live full, productive lives. Some people may deal with an episode and never have trouble again. Some may use medication or therapy



Irma Janzen is director of MCC Canada's mental health and disabilities program, on the ministerial team at Fort Garry EMC, and a member of the EMC Social Concerns Committee.

to deal with the illness and still enjoy a good quality of life. Some people may never recover, but there are those who do not recover from cancer either.

When the situation does not resolve the way we had hoped, perhaps the person with mental illness did not get the right kind of help. Perhaps the right treatment had not yet been discovered. Perhaps the person with the illness waited too long before seeking help. Perhaps the person did not know where to get help.

It is time we started talking about mental illness and addressing the issue in the same manner we address other issues. Recognizing mental illness as an illness is essential to beginning the process of dispelling the myths.

There are people all around us who have mental illness, but we may not know who they are. They may be people close to us. They may be people who have chosen to remain silent for fear of rejection or of being stereotyped.

People who attend church may not be willing to say that those who suffer mental illness are of lesser value to God, but do their actions imply otherwise? Certainly we need to be aware when the illness is not under control and we need to have plans in place should their illness deteriorate, but what is the implied message when no one sits with them at the noon potluck? What is the implied message when people with mental illness are not invited to take part in ministry?

As a church community, we should be providing care and support to people with mental illness in the same way we treat others who are sick and living with a disability. When we start talking, we free those who have mental illness to express themselves, and ourselves to construct the necessary supports. ■



A Woman's  
Journey of Faith

Betty Koop  
Steinbach, Manitoba

**ANNE**

THE YOUNG woman in plain dress and traditional covering looked disconsolately around the bare, cold room of her mobile home. The children were fussing, unhappy that they couldn't play outside. But it was so cold with the snow on the ground and they did not have warm clothing.

The food in the cupboard was almost gone, and her husband couldn't seem to find a steady job that paid enough to feed his hungry brood, especially since his

But for  
Anne the  
road to  
this  
particular  
happiness  
has been a  
long and  
difficult  
one.

English was so limited. She hated to go out because all around her people were speaking a language that she did not understand.

Everything was so different from the Colony in Bolivia where the weather had been warm and she knew all her neighbours. Here she didn't have any neighbours, just a lot of trees surrounding the clearing where the

trailer stood. She was so lonely.

A knock at the door startled her. She opened it hesitantly, not knowing what to expect. There stood a lady with the most cheerful smile she'd seen in a long time. In her hands were several plastic grocery bags filled to the brim. The lady greeted her in Low German and stepped in quickly out of the cold. The young woman sensed love radiating from her visitor and relaxed. What a wonderful visit they had! And there was plenty of food to cook for supper.

That visitor was Anne on one of her errands of mercy. In my visits with her, I sensed that she has a gift for finding the lonely and the needy, and then acting upon it. But she is a very modest person and didn't really want this spread around. So don't tell anybody! Giving is so much more fun if no one knows about it, is her philosophy.

But for Anne the road to this particular happiness has been a long and difficult one.

Some years ago, her husband was

diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour. Surgery, radiation, chemotherapy marched in seemingly endless succession. Travelling many hours to the big city for treatment, living alone much of the time while he was in hospital, sitting by his bed and watching him change before her eyes were just some of her hardships. Yes, she knew God was there, but maybe He could do a bit more?

As the tumour grew back and more treatment was not possible, he was transferred to a hospital closer to home. And then, as medication no longer was effective, she had to watch as the agonizing pain in his head gripped him, leaving him writhing, then exhausted. Month after month, she felt so helpless and prayed so desperately that at least God would relieve the pain.

One evening when she got back from the hospital something snapped. She was angry, very angry, and told God so. Why didn't He hear her prayers? Why did her husband have to suffer such agony? She seemed to go into a trance and saw Satan appear by her bed. He walked around, urging her to give up her faith in God. His long claws ripped the wallpaper to shreds as he paced around. His evil presence was terrifying.

But Anne prayed "very hard," as she said, asking for God to protect her, to forgive her anger, and to keep her faith strong. Finally, Satan seemed to realize he wasn't winning and went to sit in her husband's favourite chair, pouting.

Anne continued to pray and fell asleep. Later, when she had to get up her first thought was, how am I going to get past that evil thing in my husband's chair? But the chair was empty! God had removed her anger, her fear and replaced it with peace. "Yes," she said, "Satan may be powerful, but God is all-powerful. That is what kept me going."

After her husband's death, Anne grieved the loss of her dear one. Her lovely family gave much appreciated support. But slowly she discovered that the best way to cope with grief was to reach out to others in love. Instead of letting self-pity take control, she looked for others who were hurting or had a need.

She doesn't want me to tell of all her good deeds (and I don't know the half of them anyway!), so I will respect that request. But I see a woman who cheerfully and consistently lives what C.S. Lewis advocated: "As Christians, we can't love the whole world. But we should remember that God has placed us in a specific community at a particular time. We're called to love those around us. Loving them means serving them...."

Serving? Loving those God directs us to? What better way could there be to celebrate Christmas year round!

**Day of Prayer  
for EMC Missions**  
January 11, 2004




Thank you for praying for EMC missions. Your prayer is more needed and helpful than you know!

# With Our Missionaries

AIMM going through changes

## Can Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission re-create itself?



*Window  
on Missions*  
**Len Barkman**  
General Secretary

Over the course of the past three years, the AIMM executive and council has prayerfully worked at designing a new model for Anabaptist missions in Africa. Change is seldom easy and this process has not been without its setbacks and challenges. Throughout this process it has been the desire of us, as partner agencies, to discern our role in supporting the building of Christ's church in Africa. The following news release provides a glimpse into the new AIMM structure.

Len Barkman

CAN A Mennonite mission agency re-create itself? The governing Council of Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission International (AIMM) has answered that question with a resounding yes.

Ben Sprunger, former MEDA President, facilitated the discussion leading to an agreement to radically reshape AIMM at their semi-annual meeting October 17 and 18 in the North Danvers Mennonite Church in central Illinois. The meeting was the culmination of a careful and prayerful process over a period of several years that included in-depth consultation with African Mennonite conferences as well as conversation with African indigenous churches relating to AIMM.

The Congo Inland Mission, later to become AIMM, was founded at a meeting in central Illinois back in 1912. It was the North Danvers Mennonite Church that provided the first CIM missionaries to what was then the Belgian Congo. So it was appropriate that in 2003 the leadership of AIMM decided to come back to central Illinois to take on the formidable task of transforming the agency—to position it to provide innovative and responsible leadership for Mennonite missions in the coming decades.

AIMM is presently a partnership involving the mission arms of six North American Mennonite conferences/denominations. Several of these had indicated their intention to withdraw from AIMM. Since

most of the partner mission agencies are currently facing severe financial shortfall themselves, the temptation to begin cutting back on participation in partnerships proved difficult to resist. Hence, the squeeze was on for AIMM. Additionally AIMM, along with other Mennonite mission and service agencies, has in recent years also had difficulty recruiting long-term personnel for international placement. The AIMM International Council chose to turn this "crisis" into an occasion for bold, new action.

The proposed schedule calls for the transformation process to be largely completed by early 2005. Important changes will include the following.

*Congregations welcome as partners—*Individual congregations will be invited to partner directly in mission activities and decision making in the countries or regions for which the congregation has a particular interest. Conferences and their mission agencies will continue to be welcome as partners as in the past.

*African Mennonite churches as equal partners—*AIMM will be changed from a North American mission agency to one that is a partnership between Mennonite churches of Africa and Mennonite churches of North America. It is a partnership which will also welcome new partners from throughout the global Mennonite world.

*Decisions made in Africa—*Partnership Councils will be put in place for each country in which the mission activity takes place. These Councils will have final decision making responsibility for the program in that country. Furthermore, the Councils will meet in the country of mission activity.

*Mission from Africa—*While the new

AIMM will continue to facilitate mission in Africa it will also assist mission from Africa to other parts of the world including North America, providing a vehicle whereby the growing commitment and capacity for mission in the African Mennonite conferences can find expression.

*Reduced central staff—*While a small central staff will be necessary to carry on some remaining and essential central functions in the immediate future, central administrative staffing and costs will be greatly reduced.

The AIMM website [www.aimmintl.org](http://www.aimmintl.org) has more information concerning these changes as well as the ongoing work of AIMM in Africa. The Council and staff of AIMM also request prayers and invite inquiries from interested congregations,



conferences and mission agencies throughout the global Mennonite church.

The continuing partners in AIMM are Evangelical Mennonite Conference, Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Mission Network.

Dave Dyck, Transition Coordinator



**Plan to attend the  
54<sup>th</sup> EMC Annual Convention**



**Reproducing the New Testament Church**  
July 2 to 4, 2004  
Swan River, Man.

**Speakers: Conroy Koop, Peter Dueck, Mike Plett, Cameron McKenzie**

## Are they interruptions?

It was Friday morning and the last shopping needed to be done for the annual family camp of the Confraternity. How is it that I couldn't find enough meat in town? I checked at numerous places with the same response—later. I would make another attempt at noon to see how this need could be met, seeing we were expecting to feed around 300 people for a full weekend.

Back home I loaded the car with the already purchased supplies and needed to be on my way. Just then they called me from the bookstore to say there was a lady who wanted to study the Bible. Wow! That seemed like an inconvenient interruption in my plans.

Although a stranger to me, Gladys quickly opened up to me as tears streamed down her face. "A change is happening in my life and I need to study God's Word and get to know him better," she said. Her marriage wasn't going well, with her husband being a nominal Baptist and she a Catholic. She was not allowing their four-year-old son to go to Sunday school. Suddenly it seemed that she was getting a picture of where this was taking her and desired a change.

Although it was obvious there was a change of attitude in her heart already, she confirmed her decision by praying audibly to receive Jesus into her life. Gladys was born into the family of God, but how would she grow? They live in Coronel Oviedo now but might move back to Asuncion. She took the adult Bible correspondence course and seemed anxious to delve into the studies. Remembering her son, she asked for the children's Bible course, so he would get to know his Creator, as she put it.

About an hour had slipped by when she bid me farewell, saying she sensed an inner peace and joy she hadn't known before. "God, keep her in your care," I pray as I see her leave—teary-eyed but smiling. She said she would be back sometime.

"Lord, what kind of interruption was that in the midst of a tight schedule?" For a moment it seemed like an interruption but as I reflected, I know that personally it had refreshed me in the Lord, giving me a clearer focus on what really is important. And God would provide for the camp's needs.

The camp was bustling with activities for all age groups throughout the weekend. Berthold Friesen and Larry Siemens (both from *Radio Mensajero*) spoke on family and youth related topics.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the relaxed family environment. The challenge, of course, is to put into practice what has been taught, even when the going gets rough. By the way, it literally was a rough, slippery road out for the buses when they left on Sunday after a heavy rain. But it had been a good weekend.

My thoughts return to Gladys. Is she getting a firm grasp of who Jesus is for her? Will the Bible lessons help her? I'm confident they will. They have already been a help to many others, be it children, teens or adults.

Carolina, an 11-year-old girl, started studying the Bible lessons in October of last year. Shortly after starting the lessons she prayed to receive Jesus into her life.

She writes: "When I was in grade four I couldn't get along with anybody and was



Carolina receives a diploma from Doris Friesen after completing one of the Bible courses.

a bad girl. One day I saw Nora with a lesson book in her hand. I was curious enough to ask her where she was going. She explained to me what was in the Bible lesson. So, with the help of Nora and Doris, I found the way to God. I invited Him to come into my heart. And now many more people are finding the way to God."

Many times I get called away from what I'm doing, to receive the people that come with their Bible lessons or stop by to talk. Are they interruptions? Interruptions never seemed to distract Jesus. He accepted them as opportunities for even a richer service. May I keep learning from Him.

Doris Friesen

Doris Friesen (Blumenort) is involved with Christian education ministry in Paraguay.



Carmen and Zuni work with the children at family camp.



Larry Siemens from *Radio Mensajero* speaks to the youth at family camp.

## Autumn thanksgivings from Fort Chipewyan

We had an unpredictable Sabbath recently, as is not uncommon in these parts. Annette and I had finally given up waiting for parishioners this morning and were singing a few hymns together when folks suddenly showed up. The regulars were in the bush now, so we didn't know what to expect.

In the evening we had a whole new group. One requested help to get sand to fill in her mom's grave. Apparently it had abruptly fallen in as a daughter visited.

One man out was pleased to see our *Denesothline* (Chipewyan) colleague Gilbert at the large Chipewyan gathering up the lake from us in Black Lake, Saskatchewan. The man said, "There's nothing in Catholic that's helped me." He has a gambling problem.

One afternoon, however, he came along (having only once come to our house before) and asked prayer that his grandson would be allowed to come with him to meetings. We knew the religious barrier that this child was held behind. I hoped for a gradual breaking-down of his home's anti-Christian bias. The Lord surprised me with a decisive turn-around the next week.

Services with folks in the bush went well. One had to be postponed, though, when a large bear swam over for church. Had he been more spiritually qualified, he would have been the only church member right on time! Later, the meeting was held up briefly by three men landing and packing meat from their boats. One couple who will not join us for prayers in the village did so out here.

Here and there along the Slave River we ate bear, moose (Annette downed the nose), bush-chicken, fish, bannock-and-lard, and cranberries. The day we left it was good we still had a hunk of fat bear-meat for breakfast because we almost froze.

Beyond my efforts to convince people to read important literature (in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Northwest Territories), I'm responding to requests from Action International and Janz Team for translated materials. From Janz Team we received a fine Bible-teaching series in Low German for our mission's brand-new CIAM radio station. This helps fulfill the CRTC's condition for granting the station charitable

status—that it be multi-lingual/cultural.

The international Christian current affairs program *The Heart of the Matter* interviewed me after they heard about the northern Blessed-Virgin spirit apparitions. They scooped the CBC national news by several months!

It was a treat for us this past July to be with other missionaries. We represented Northern Canada Evangelical Mission at the EMC annual convention along with Venus Cote, whom we rarely see. We visited two ex-students, the Sinclairs, hard at work with *Tribal Trails*;

and Karen Peters from La Crete, with her fine family, at NCEM headquarters. Later in B.C. and Northwest Territories we worked again with our pilot, Albert Heal, and finally met his kids.

Following our field conference at North-Peace Mennonite in Fort St. John we caught a ride down the Alaska highway with Heals to their home, and toward our home by airplane via three Northwest Territories communities. These stops were possible partly by you faithful supporters.

It was a successful detour! Folks in Jean Marie River seemed pleased we hadn't forgotten them. One couple was exceptionally friendly. They hold our Alberta in high esteem, as well they should.

A former chief has been pleasant during my several contacts with him, but also deeply concerned lest our conversations become uncomfortable. Yet, on my second visit during our short stay in July, he allowed it get more spiritual. He seemed fascinated by my suggestion that the Creator is a specific person who indeed lives a life and has a name.

I quoted several of John's opening verses to him and he became completely and uncharacteristically quiet, and listened. He said, "In all these years our priests have never mentioned anything like that. We need someone like yourself to live with us and tell us more like what you just said. Our young people, especially, don't know anything of importance anymore."

In Fort Smith we spent time with a native Pentecostal lady, and with a woman on her way back to a tough Chipewyan

community where she is the only believer. A man came to pick us up from the airstrip upon our return home. He told us that one evening while we were gone his heart had suddenly "gone crazy," causing his life to flash before his eyes. "Not one good thing I seen, what I done in my life!" he said.

Soon after we finally made it home we traveled downriver for a full week of profitable spiritual-camp in the bush. I used the Cree Bible more than usual and visuals more than ever.

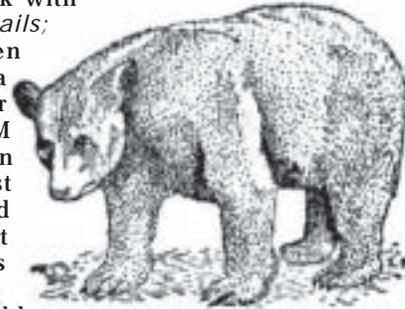
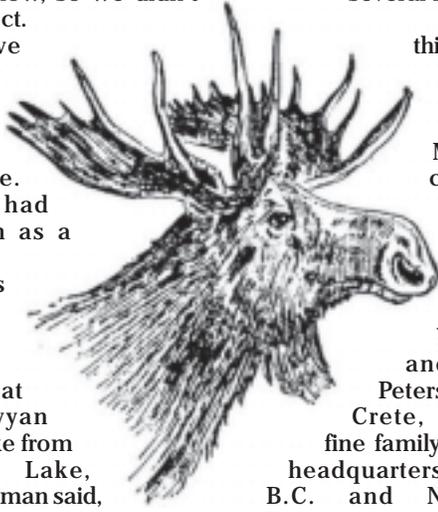
After a recent get-together with kids whom Annette had flown north to Bible camp in June, a grandmother, a strong Chipewyan Catholic and band councilor, brought over a reindeer-fur tufting for her.

This is remarkable; any acknowledgement or appreciation is rare and precious.

Lastly, we are grateful for sufficient health.

My chronic bronchitis, the worst part of a diphtheria legacy, cleared up while we were working at Key-Way-Tin last winter. Shortly thereafter I experienced my first real brush with snow-blindness. One eye recovered quickly, but its partner is perhaps waiting on a few more prayers before it regains its full measure of cheer.

Arlyn van Enns



Annette and Arlyn van Enns (La Crete) serve with Northern Canada Evangelical Mission in northern Alberta.

## Not flashy, but needed!



New outhouses and improvements to the main lodge assist in the ministry.

As you know, a lot of ministry projects require money. Some of these projects are quite glamorous; some are not so flashy. We are very appreciative for the funds we received to help improve our Gem Lake Wilderness Camp.

We did not use the money to buy a flashy *Evangelizer TX 2000*, but instead put the money into some new outhouses and many great improvements to our main lodge. This dramatically helped to facilitate the camp providing better care and cleanliness to campers and staff. Here are some of the particulars for that project.

Two new composting toilets are planned. These tanks required a fiberglass kit. Because of adverse weather conditions in fall one of our workgroups was not able to finish the tanks. They will be completed in early spring.

New mouse proof, sanitary cabinets and counters almost double our counter space, and almost triple our cabinet space. There is a better serving area and wall to control the kitchen busyness. We have several new, industrial cooking pots and pans. There is a new freezer to expand the camp's cooling capacity.

The kitchen has new flooring to help keep it cleaner, and a 12' x 12' storage area was attached to the main lodge kitchen (for freezers, bedding, coolers, supplies, and crafts).

Once again, thank you for your generosity and investment in the lives of the youth and their care at camp. Your donations helped to partner with others and us to make Gem Lake Wilderness Camp a better experience for inner city youth.

Kevin Friesen

### Russia

## Krasnodar and Salekhard

We appreciate your friendship, your prayers, your support, and your notes of encouragement to us. We know we couldn't be here without the Lord working through you to be our partners.

The administration team for our company has decided that it would be more effective to establish their base in Moscow rather than here in Krasnodar (it almost feels like the rapture happened). A lot of people have left Krasnodar leaving three couples and two single girls from

our company. This little group in which we are involved is staying here because we are involved with national training along with the workers from three other businesses.

The apartment we have been living in is owned by our administration, but they recently sold it, so we will be moving out of here on January 1. The Lord worked out a wonderful situation for us where we will move right into a house previously owned by a family who is moving to Moscow. The house is only about five blocks from here, so the move should not be hard. God really worked out this miracle for us!

The Russian team north of here at Salekhard recently graduated from the national training program, and their overseers are on furlough. The leadership of the national training program asked Dave to be the temporary overseer of the Salekhard team (from here in Krasnodar) until their return, when we would then become teammates in this job. This job will involve travelling to Salekhard a couple times a year at least.

After the trip north and with prayer for the Lord's direction, we have agreed to this new job. We are very excited to help this team out in any way we can, and are looking forward to the many situations God wants to bring us through to mature us in Him and work through us.

Dave and Kim Field



Dave and Kim Field (Steinbach) are involved in Russian language study and in training of leaders in Russia.



Kevin and Jodi Friesen (Steinbach) serve as camp directors for the ministry of Inner City Youth Alive in Winnipeg, Man.

For information on Mennonites visit



Third Way Café

www.thirdway.com

# With Our Churches

## Region 3 gathers at Pelly

**Pelly, Sask.:** October 19 was the *Region 3 Family Get-Together*. Pelly had the privilege of hosting. Present were representatives from all six regional churches. It was a very nice day spent together. Conference Pastor David Thiessen was guest speaker.

Curtis and Bonnie Szakacs from Kennedy, Sask., were here with their three young children. They provided special music and also a time of leaning and entertainment for the three to 12-year-olds during each session. The school gym was used for afternoon youth activities with Pelly's Dan Johnson in charge.

he was a teenager, came to Pelly to teach Vacation Bible School in the mid-1950s.

Ben Friesen, the pastor at that time, announced to Marvin that he would be preaching the Sunday sermon. That made him nervous for a few days but, as happens, the weekend arrived and he preached his *first* sermon. Many years later, he is still proclaiming the message of salvation from the pulpit. The Thiessens have spent a number of years in Germany and Brazil, not only in crusades, but in camp and other areas of work as well.

Marvin's devotional touched on three questions God asked. In Gen. 3:9, God

translation works, then a live demonstration. Showing an object, Loren would identify it by the name of the tribal language, and from our congregation Mary Dyck would name the article in Low German. It was interesting and amusing, and it gave us an idea of what is involved in translation.

Beth then gave an informative talk, beginning with a question she has asked people of the Congo. "What do you think is the reason for having missionaries in Congo?" Their answer was to encourage them and the church and to tell the world what is happening in Congo. She related what is happening in Congo: people are very open and receptive to the gospel but still live in fear from the power of darkness. There is much hatred and mistrust.

Many live in dire poverty, despite a country with many valuable resources. Wars allow neighbouring countries to come in and take away these resources that should be providing wealth for the people of the Congo.

Hindering the work of the church are a poor economy (resulting in lack of finances), the effects of war (people are fearful to go any distance because there may be soldiers or bandits waiting to attack), and a lack of access to God's Word.

Sunday morning we had Grace Thiessen ministering. She is also with Wycliffe, doing translation work in Mexico among the Zapotec people. She had the attention of all as

she told of the challenges of translating, characteristics of the people, the beautiful country, the mountainous terrain, and the style of farming.

Her message was on faith. What is faith? Is it harder to have faith for the everyday mundane things than to have faith for greater things such as our salvation and eternity in heaven? She used many quotes from Scripture that assure us of the faithfulness of God.

It was a good weekend and we learned much. We trust it will cause us to be always grateful for what we have in this country and to be generous in doing what we can for others. Above all, we're not to neglect prayer. There are many needs in the world.

Vivian Anfinson



On November 21 to 23 Pelly held a missions conference with these missionaries present: Beth and Loren Koehler (Congo), Grace Thiessen (Mexico), Wendy and Marvin Thiessen (formerly of Brazil and Germany). (retouched)

On October 28 Pastor Kenton Penner officiated at a small wedding, when Amy Nahmybida and Eric Kozakevich, both of Saskatoon, exchanged vows. Amy is the granddaughter of Olga Nahmybida. She has spent time with her *Baba* (grandmother) on many occasions, which allowed all of us to get to know here. Some of the church ladies helped with the preparation and serving of the wedding supper. It was such a pleasure to be part of this young couple's special day.

Pelly was privileged to have missionary meeting November 21-23. Friday Marvin and Wendy Thiessen, who have ministered with Janz Team for just over 30 years, provided a very interesting evening. Marvin, relating back to when

had come to the garden, but Adam and Eve were hiding; fellowship was broken because of sin. God called, "Where are you?" God took the initiative to bring his creation back into fellowship.

After the first murder, God asked Cain, "Where is your brother?" teaching that we are responsible for our brothers and sisters. The third question was when God had a task for Moses. But Moses was coming up with many excuses. God asked, "What is that in your hand?" God taught Moses a lesson. Moses only had to believe and be available. Are we available?

Saturday evening Loren and Beth Koehler, having worked with Wycliffe Bible Translators for over 15 years in Congo, gave a presentation on how



# By the Way

Dave Schellenberg

AT A bereavement workshop we were told that “memories will be the most healing ministry for you.”

I found it difficult to put the two together. Some memories were so painful, the less I thought about them the better. My wife’s illness was prolonged. There were things that emotionally disturbed me to remember, especially her suffering.

Then I realized that memories could also come in a different form. It was my extremely good fortune to have a companion of over 62 years, a partner who shared with me the joys and blessings of service for the Lord. And there were many memories of that.

The first years of our married life we took life for granted. I had a job and my wife did the household chores. Children came along and kept her busy. Conditions were different than now. We had built our own house, but we had no running water, car, or electricity. But we were a happy newly married couple.

Then our lifestyle took on a different trend. The Lord spoke to us concerning my going to Bible school to prepare for service. This would result in sacrifice. By that time we had two children, two more precious children would come before we left for service, and our dream home was sold to help make ends meet. Through this my wife stood by me. We were in this

## The types of memories that heal in grief

together. Today, my heart is filled with thankful memories of this partnership and commitment on her part.

With my Bible school diploma in hand, we applied for home missions. She was completely with me. Her commitment and dedication showed that I was not the missionary alone.

After some six years of married life, the adventure of a life-time began. We spent much of our married life in different ways of serving the Lord—missionary and pastor, in Christian education and publication, to name some. This meant many moves and different living conditions, but she had a great trust in the Lord. Where I went, she went.

She shared living conditions that were certainly less than ideal. In northern bush camp living, there were few modern conveniences. There was running water—in the river—but I had to fetch it. We had an airtight heater. The children were, for the most part, small. In all this Helen was a faithful uncomplaining partner. This memory I cherish.

For a while the Lord’s service took me to another province, British Columbia, for a few weeks of church planting. She stayed in Manitoba. My faithful partner and companion made it possible. She bravely kept the home fires burning because we were one in this venture.

Later uprooted once more we were sent on a church-planting mission to Portage la Prairie. Faithfully she prepared for this and she fully participated in this new venture. Then, a new challenge presented itself. This meant serving as Executive Secretary of the EMC Board of Education and Publication, a board for which I was already working part-time. Again we were uprooted, and her dedication and commitment carried the day.

These moves and vocations make for



I have memories of our travels.

grateful memories for one who stood by my side all the way.

Then there are memories of our travels—especially to see family members, children and grandchildren. We had the joy of going to a foreign country where our daughter and son-in-law, serving the Lord there, presented us with a tiny addition to their family.

What mother’s heart does not beat for her children! Seven in all were born to us. One has gone ahead. I suppose it’s common that greener pastures beckon children to elsewhere in Canada. Many times we were privileged to meet family members elsewhere in our country. What joy it brought to both of us!

Now I can only look back and thank God for the memories of a dedicated and committed companion. With my faithful partner now gone to her deserved rest, I can relive those moments and thank God for our great fortune in being together for over 62 years.

No doubt, her part in raising our children motivates them to frequently remember their Dad today. New memories are being made, which I wish I could share with Helen. Our children go out of their way to help me cope with my loss.

Yes, these kinds of memories might bring tears to my eyes, but I now see that they can be one means to healing and restoration. I would wish the same for all those who have suffered the loss of a loved one.



The moves and vocations since the Lord called us into service make for grateful memories for one who stood by my side all the way.



**BERNARD K. DUECK  
1915-2003**

Father was born Dec. 20, 1915, to Jacob I. and Anna Dueck in Kleefeld, Man. It was in this little network of family and friends that he received his education and also was introduced into his faith journey. As a young man he was baptized into the Evangelical Mennonite Church, at that time known as the *Kleinegemeinde*.

In July of 1938 he married Helena Barkman. This union was blessed with six daughters and two sons.

Dad will be known best for his beekeeping, which started in Kleefeld and later moved to Oak Lake, Man. Dad's other interests were hunting, trappings and sports activities, mainly hockey.

His interests also included the successes of his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He is survived by his wife, Helen; daughters Verna (Peter Thiessen), Phyllis (Reg Toews), Sharon (Lloyd Lesy), Janice (Vern Falk), Ruby (Ernie Hildebrand), Pat (Reg Morcombe); sons Wes (Jerlene), Earl (Val); 19 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. His two sisters, Gertie and Pete Friesen, and Martha and Jack Hiebert, also survive him.

He was predeceased by his daughter Louise in infancy; parents Jacob I. and Anna Dueck; four brothers Pete, Jake, Willie and Ed; three sisters Annie Barkman, Nettie Brandt and Tina Rempel.

The family wishes to express sincere thanks for the visits, prayers, words of encouragement and acts of love. Also a thank-you that cannot be expressed goes to Rest Haven staff for the compassionate care given to both Mom and Dad during Dad's sojourn with them. Thanks for your care to us as a family during Dad's final days. Your kindness and compassion will not be forgotten. A very special thank-you also to Dr. M. Thiessen and Dr. C. Krahn for the medical care they provided for Dad.

Ben K. Dueck passed away Sunday, September 28, 2003, at Rest Haven Nursing Home in Steinbach, Man. The funeral was held Thursday, October 2, 2003, at 2:00 p.m. at Kleefeld EM Church. Abe Bergen officiated.

His Family

**FRANK P. BRANDT 1912-2003**

Frank P. Brandt, age 90, of Riverton, Man., passed away at Rest Haven Nursing Home in Steinbach, Man., on October 21, 2003.

He is survived by his beloved wife Margaretha; children Levi (Yvonne), Erna (Dick Klassen), Mary Brandt and Barbara Brandt, Jacob (Mary), Ben (Rosa), Bertha (Glenn Martin), Margaret (Ben Klassen), Teena (Larry Wiebe), Peter, Leanne (Al Tonn), Laura (Gerald Dueck); 29 grandchildren and 41 great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The funeral service was held at Blumenort EM Church on October 26, 2003. Our family thanks Todd Harder at Birchwood Funeral Chapel, Rest Haven Nursing Home staff: Dr. Krahn; chaplains Mary Dyck, John Friesen and Dave Harms; and Tina Barkman, their home care worker. We also thank the many others who have cared for and loved our parents over the years.

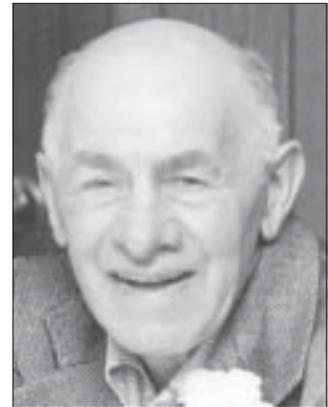
A life—a span of days and years: how can we describe the joy without the sorrow, the victories without the defeat? We need the contrast to bring clarity and meaning to Dad's story.

Dad had a jovial personality and loved telling stories. The oldest children recall Dad playing hide-and-seek with them; his flexibility made it possible for him to hide in small spaces. One memorable game had the children believing their Dad had vanished like someone out of a fairy tale. Years later it was a game of tag with the younger grandchildren with Dad in his wheelchair. His heart remained young, even in an aging body.

There were times when Dad's fun-loving disposition almost disappeared from our sight. Our Dad was not a very healthy man—that fact sometimes put a strain on day-to-day responsibilities—but that was a difficulty that could be overcome.

There were times when we needed assistance on the farm, in particular when we children were young. Dad came from a family that insisted on helping, in season and out of season, which helped to create a conflict within himself; he struggled intensely with how and when to set boundaries and be resolute in our need for independence.

Sometime in his mid-twenties, Dad began a personal search for a practical faith that involved regular Bible reading. The memory will remain with us of Dad sitting at the table each morning, somewhere between five and six a.m., before him a plate with a few slices of bread, a jar of jam with a spoon in it, a steaming cup of coffee, and the open Bible which he was reading in a barely audible voice. Dad saw the Bible as God's word, a practical guide to one's daily life. "Daut jet shoen daut



lesa" (It's enjoyable to read it), he often said.

Mom and Dad experienced the loneliness and misunderstanding that are the frequent bedfellows of those who suffer. How precious to us then that Dad turned away from bitterness and cynicism, developing a gentle, thankful attitude and firm faith in God. Dad spoke often about the need for everyone to repent of their wrongdoing as he so deeply saw that need for himself.

Dad respected and loved Mom dearly, and we children knew it. As they grew older, Dad relied heavily on Mom's memory while she relied on his eyesight as hers started diminishing rapidly in her late 30s. We children have the memory of almost nightly hearing the rise and fall of Dad's voice as he read to Mom. The recipe tapes Dad made for Mom so she could continue her baking are now our treasures.

Mom and Dad loved the outdoors, gardening together, cleaning up the bush around the yard, listening to birds, picking berries, or just going for leisurely walks.

Dad had a great interest and curiosity in his surroundings and acquainted himself with everything that grew on their land, and the wildlife that made its home there. Dad's Christianity was not limited to a building, but was lived out in his environment, with the land, with his animals, the people with whom he interacted, and most importantly, with his wife and family.

Frank P. Brandt was a strong and dignified individual. We love him and respect him and are deeply grateful to God to have had the honour of calling him our Dad.

His Family

Have you got your copy?



**Come See What God Has Done**

\$10 plus shipping from the EMC office.



Geoff Tunnicliffe

## EFC appoints director of global initiatives

Geoff Tunnicliffe has joined the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada as director of Global Initiatives. He is to promote partnerships among Canadian ministries committed to a global outreach and assist in efforts between Canadian and international ministries.

Tunnicliffe serves on the World Evangelical Alliance's Missions Commission and will continue his work with the Africa AIDS Initiative. He represents the EFC to government bodies and to the national media on international issues and global missions. He is available to consult with churches interested in developing strategic global mission plans and in the development of tools and resources to promote global missions.

The World Evangelical Alliance and the Micah Network are creating a global evangelical campaign to mobilize Christians against poverty. The campaign's goals look to a deepening of evangelical commitment to the poor and to influence leaders to implement policy changes that could dramatically reduce poverty.

The African AIDS Initiative is an alliance of North American and African churches to African communities, families and individuals infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

EFC

## Coming Events

Jan. 13 to Apr. 6  
*Perspectives on the  
World Christian Movement*  
Callsbeck Fellowship Chapel  
Winnipeg, Man.  
Bergthaler Mennonite Church  
Winkler, Man.  
Phone: 204-663-3453

# Shoulder Tapping

**Note: Because positions are numerous, short ads will appear. Please notify *The Messenger* when ads are not needed. An ad can be removed after two insertions unless prior arrangements have been made. Thank you. - Editor**

Rev. Mel Koop is open to **pulpit supply** ministry. He is also available for deeper life meetings, men's retreats, and camp events. Contact Mel at 204-326-6828 or 6 Bluejay, Steinbach, MB R5G 2C8. Mel has served as a pastor in Abbotsford, B.C.; Creighton and Swift Current, Sask.; Winnipeg and Steinbach, Man. He has also worked with World Vision.

Wymark EMC is a congregation of about 130, set in a rural, farming community in southwest Saskatchewan. We seek a **senior pastor** willing to serve the Lord by modeling and communicating an intimate relationship with God, His Word and His family. He must be able to equip and encourage local leadership, building them up so they can reach out and disciple others. For information, call Blaine Friesen at 306-627-3441; send a resume at Box 116 McMahan, SK S0N 1M0; or email blfriesen@t2.net.

**German teacher** wanted for school at Rio Verde in Paraguay starting February 2004. If interested call Willie Dueck, 204-364-2335, or mail to Box 700, Arborg, MB R0C 0A0.

Camp Assiniboia at Headingley, Man., seeks a **manager**. Responsibilities include personnel leadership, guest relations, and general oversight of physical operations and services. This busy year-round camp operates Christian summer camp programs and rental services. This position is ideal for a motivated couple with an Anabaptist faith commitment and a willingness to relate to a Mennonite Church Manitoba congregation. Strong communication and organizational skills are an asset. The camp also seeks half-time **rental secretary** to coordinate group schedules and to assist with hosting. Contact Mennonite Church Manitoba at 204-896-1616 or camps@mennochurch.mb.ca.

People seek friendship and a better life! Open Circle, a ministry of MCC in Manitoba, invites applications from volunteers willing to serve as **visitors** to inmates in Manitoba prisons and in **supportive roles** to newly-released prisoners who request support during their resettlement into the community. Call Murray Barkman at 204-772-5317 or e-mail opencircle@mts.net.

Riverton MCC Thrift Store seeks a **manager** to promote MCC's objectives and manage the shop as a service to the local and global community. Needed are vision, leadership and interpersonal skills. The shop has clothing and housewares, with a new furniture location to open in 2004. Mail resume to Riverton MCC Thrift Shop, Box 623, Riverton, MB R0C 2R0.

Pelly Fellowship Chapel (EMC) is looking for a full-time **lead pastor**. Pelly is a small rural community (300 people) in east-central Saskatchewan. The congregation averages 40 on Sunday mornings and is the only evangelical church in the community.

Please forward your resume or questions to the search committee by mail at Box 70, Pelly, SK S0A 2Z0 or phone Eugene Prokott at 306-595-2287, Lewis Anfinson at 306-595-4743 or Dan Johnson at 306-594-2151, or email worldlandsigns@sasktel.net.

Abbeydale Christian Fellowship (EMC) of east Calgary, Alta., seeks an **associate pastor** with strengths in counselling, teaching and preaching. Duties also include mentoring lay leadership in existing youth and college and career ministries.

ACF is medium-sized (180-220), a congregation seeking

to disciple members and attendees, encourage their gifts and involvement, and to reach out to neighbourhood and families of church adherents.

We have strengths in lay leadership and ministry. Needed are gifts and abilities complementary to the existing pastor and lay leadership. Submit resumes to Harold Friesen, search committee chairman at SearchCommittee@abbeydale.org. Description, qualifications and background, duties and responsibilities are posted on our website at www.abbeydale.org.

Vanderhoof Christian Fellowship (EMC) seeks a **full-time senior pastor** to serve a growing congregation of about 170 people in the centre of British Columbia. Our congregation is blessed with a large number of young couples, college and career, and youth. Home care groups are a thriving ministry here. The applicant will be a team player and work with other staff. If you feel the Lord calling you, contact Ron Penner at 250-567-9983 or email at vcfemc@telus.net. Applications must be received by December 20, 2003.

Morris Fellowship Chapel (EMC) seeks a **youth leader** for a half-time position to direct youth group program. Expansion in this ministry could include post-secondary age group. Contact Pastor Ward Parkinson at Box 219, Morris, MB R0G 1K0. Call 204-746-2424.

Kola EMC, serving a small community in southwest Manitoba, seeks a **full-time youth pastor** to work primarily with a group of about 25 youth. Contact Les Martens at 204-565-2604, email leskola@mts.net, or fax 204-565-2635.

Swift Current EMC seeks a **senior pastor**. Our congregation of approximately 180 consists of all age groups. Major areas of ministry include preaching, providing vision and developing leaders within the congregation. Contact search committee, 2150 Walker Street, Swift Current, SK S9H 4C1 or e-mail: emcsc@sasktel.net.

Riverton Gospel Chapel (EMC), a small rural town in Manitoba's Interlake, seeks a **half-time pastor**. This friendly and loving congregation has an average attendance of 75-100, with a high percentage of young families. The area provides other employment opportunities in various sectors, including farming and construction, and has good schools.

Contact Paul Peters, board chair, by mail: Box 356, Riverton, MB R0C 2R0, by e-mail: paul@vidir.com, or by phone: 204-378-2740 (home), 204-364-2442 (work).

Endeavour Fellowship Chapel (EMC), a warm, friendly congregation with 50 to 60 in attendance on Sunday morning, seeks a **pastor**. It is located in a small town/rural part of east-central Saskatchewan, between Yorkton and Hudson Bay.

The church is flexible both in standards for both candidate education and experience. As an evangelical church in town, it serves a wide range of people. Contact chairman of elders Neil Fenske at 306-547-4738 or Box 263, Endeavour, SK, S0A 0W0.

Fish Creek Christian Fellowship (EMC) in Calgary, Alta., is looking for someone or a couple to give **ministry leadership to our youth/college and career**. This is a self-supported position. Contact Garry Kornelsen, 55 Woodford Cres. SW, Calgary, AB T2W 4C6 or phone 403-281-3747.

Union Gospel Mission in Winnipeg, Man., would like to hire a full-time **food services manager**. Duties include kitchen staffing, cooking and stock control. This position is salaried with benefits. Contact John Hiebert at 204-943-9904 if interested.

# Baby Jesus born in the Auction Mart?

Heather Plett-Laurendeau

**I**T'S AN idyllic picture we paint. There's clean hay on the floor. The animals look like they've been bathed and combed. Mary's white clothes are never soiled.

I've never seen a barn like that. Animals tend to be noisy and dirty. They're not toilet-trained nor have many of them been exposed to Miss Manners. White clothes, in a place like that, don't stand a chance. And the odour—well, it can almost suffocate you.

The Gladstone Auction Mart where my Dad, Art Plett, worked for many years, is a place that has all those barn qualities intensified. The drone of the auctioneer blends with the shouts of the buyers and the bawling of frightened animals. There's a pungent aroma from many years of animal droppings.

Dad used to say that if Jesus were born today, He might be born at the Auction Mart. It's a place where common people meet—just the kind of people Jesus chose to associate with. There are no airs of sophistication there. Rough language is commonplace, and you're allowed in the door even if your boots are soiled. Mary's clothes would have gotten dirty, and the noise might have kept baby Jesus awake.

I've often wondered why Dad worked at the Auction Mart. He was an intelligent man, with an abundance of wisdom to offer. He could have been a writer, a professor, a pastor—someone with influence and prestige. It seemed like such a waste that choices and circumstances landed him in a place like that.

During Dad's lifetime, I never quite reconciled this conflict in my mind. For many years, Dad toiled to exhaustion—trying to keep a failing farm afloat,

working away from home because the farm wasn't enough, and all the while trying to shepherd a tiny congregation, *Arden Community Bible Church* that gradually faded into extinction.

At the end of his life, he had no tangible earthly successes to take pride in. The farm was never paid off, and the church he'd cared for had disappeared. And then, as if to add insult to injury, he died in a farm



Art Plett

accident—killed by the very farm he'd never been able to conquer. What was the use of a lifetime of labour?

Then something happened at Dad's funeral that made it all start to make sense. Seven of his Auction Mart buddies served as his pallbearers. Sitting at the front of the church, those men, who were more at home in a barn than a church, looked awkward and uncomfortable. At the graveside, after Dad had been lowered into the ground, we—his children—began to

shovel dirt on his coffin. After we'd shovelled our share, we passed the shovels around. His Auction Mart buddies dug into the dirt with an earnestness that belied the emotions they fought to hide.

Over the weeks to follow, we heard many stories about Dad—stories we'd never been privy to before. We heard about the great admiration people had gained for him at the Auction Mart. We heard from those he'd cared for, and those he'd taken time to listen to. We heard of the respect he had for people most of the world would overlook. We heard of changes and growth in people he'd probably never known he had an impact on.

Finally, with Dad's death fresh in my memory, and talk of Christmas beginning to fill the airwaves, I saw Dad's life with new clarity. He lived the way Jesus lived. He'd chosen to associate with common folk and labourers rather than scholars and kings. Along the way, he'd touched people with his kindness, his integrity, his wisdom, and his respect.

After all these years, I've let go of the regrets. I've come to terms with Dad's place in the world. His legacy was not a large church, a successful farm, diplomas, or publishing credits to his name. His legacy was found in a simple place called the Gladstone Auction Mart. He lived out the call of Jesus and touched many people in his 69 years of life—not least of whom is me. ■

Heather Plett-Laurendeau was involved for many years in *Arden Community Bible Church (EMC)*, where her parents Art and Margaret Plett were pillars in the congregation. Heather lives in Winnipeg.



*Do you have a story for The Personal Touch? It must be a true account (although names may be changed, if necessary) illustrating the Christian life or character. Send your 700-word story and a photograph of yourself or suggestion for a story to the address below.*