

The Messenger

EVANGELICAL MENNONITE CONFERENCE
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Got Religion? Not Enough!

**Gord Penner
of SBC
ponders an
ancient
paradox
(page 3)**

Why am I a Christian?

WHY am I a Christian? Raised in the United Church, I find it to be challenging. It is strong on social justice and I have learned from this. It often seems weaker on basic Christian truths—Christ as Saviour, his needed atoning death and resurrection, our need to follow, heaven and hell. This disturbs me.

My ministerial training began within a Pentecostal denomination with a strong emphasis on evangelism and church planting. The early history of the wider Pentecostal movement gloried in the blessing of the Spirit. Later I learned that some early meetings were racially segregated, for which white leaders have since met with black leaders to ask for forgiveness.

I was baptized in a Baptist church that was strong on basic biblical truth; I appreciate that. It seemed weaker on wider church relations; I now question that.

When I entered the EMC as an adult in 1979, I was more aware of the Mennonite church's strengths than its flaws. I didn't know of its

splintered history or take seriously enough the depth of cultural issues that remained. And while Baptists and Mennonites discuss the modes of baptism, I focus more on its subjects—believers. It's surprising to learn that at times in both circles the practice of *believer* baptism has been clouded.

Yes, the Christian Church at times struggles with scandals, fragmentation, relevancy, teaching, colonialism, culture, and communication. Beyond that, we need to keep clear on the central reason why we should be part of it.

With my skeptical streak and imperfect example, I joined and remain in the Christian Church because of Jesus Christ. Jesus is a unique individual who is worth following in life and in death. Because of Him, we need to be part of the Church. Because of Him, the Church has a future beyond its weaknesses. The Church is His!

Jesus is why I am a Christian. In Him there is forgiveness, meaning, hope and togetherness. I park my imperfect frame on a pew with my brothers and sisters. Join me!

Terry M. Smith

A second case of BSE

WITH a second case of BSE, Canadian farmers aren't sure what the future holds. They fear trouble and hope for better times.

Farm advocacy groups as well as provincial and federal governments are working to reassure nervous markets worldwide. Farmers wait. Meanwhile, animals need to be fed, debts remain real, and families experience stress.

Dr. Cameron Harder, a Lutheran theologian and farm crisis specialist, says, "For a country that values 'multi-culturalism' we seem curiously indifferent to the cultures (especially aboriginal and rural) that have developed on our own soil." There is a "disregard for disappearing community," and Canadian society is weakened. We need to make other choices, he says (*Canadian Mennonite*, June 3, 2002).

Agriculture gets inadequate federal attention even in better times; now it's responding to tougher times. While the BSE crisis has put farming in the news, a farm advocacy spokesperson said recently that

some urban folk remain unaware of the stresses that farmers face.

Many EMCers should be able to touch base with farmers. When our denomination moved to Canada in 1874-75, most lived as farmers, and we remain predominantly (though not only) a rural denomination. Even newer EMCers, from varied cultural and church backgrounds, often have a farming connection in the near or not-so-distant past.

Dr. Harder and others would remind us that the Church must not abandon rural communities. We must support them through our prayers, acts of Christian community, and by social and political efforts.

The land, its food production, and the ability of farmers to make a living are foundational to Canada's well-being. Farming in Canada is a complex topic, but little is served by the silence of the church.

Farm advocacy groups, scientists, and politicians need to be heard. I agree with those who say the church also needs to have a voice, both pastoral and prophetic.

Terry M. Smith

The Messenger

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Terry M. Smith



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THE MESSENGER is the publication of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. It is available to the general public. Its purpose is to inform, instruct and inspire: inform concerning events and activities in the denomination; instruct in godliness and victorious living; inspire to earnestly contend for the faith.

Letters, articles, photos and poems are welcomed. Unpublished material is not returned except by request. The views and opinions expressed by the writers are their own and do not necessarily represent the position of the Conference.

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Got Religion? Not Enough!

Gord Penner

HAVE you been to church lately? I have!

I faithfully attend both Sunday School and church every week. I also learned to tithe when I was a child, and regularly deposit a cheque into the offering plate. King Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes, was a religious man too. He built the temple in Jerusalem—rated as one of the Architectural Wonders of the World. Yet, in the midst of a book describing the *vain* pursuits in life, Solomon includes *religion*. How can religion be meaningless?

The book of Ecclesiastes speaks about one man's search for meaning in life. Don Anderson, a commentator, suggests it represents Solomon's mid-life crisis, since it appears to be a thoughtful reflection on all that he has achieved in life thus far (*Ecclesiastes: The Mid-Life Crisis*, Loizeaux Brothers, 1987).

Looking ahead to more years of the same, Solomon asks, "Is there any real meaning in all I've accomplished in life?" He considers all his accomplishments, and includes his religious works in the evaluation. He concludes that religion, too, has become meaningless.

As Solomon evaluated many of his successes, he realized that they failed to provide real meaning. In a previous article, we looked through Solomon's glasses and viewed the meaninglessness (repeated thirty-seven times in Ecclesiastes) of life under the sun (repeated twenty-eight times). The article concluded that in order to live a life filled with meaning, it must be lived with eternity in mind. In fact, activity on earth *is* meaningless when eternity is ignored. An honest reflection of life and its stresses would bring the same evaluation from anyone. However, when we view life through the lenses of eternity, life begins to take on meaning.

King Solomon was known for his wives, wisdom, wealth, and building a magnificent temple. You would think that in the midst of his despair about the meaninglessness of life, he must have found some meaning in religion. Yet, in Ecclesiastes 5:1–7, Solomon uses two key arguments to convince readers that religion, too, is meaningless too.

Solomon advises people: First, fear God! When you go to the temple, go to listen rather than to speak. In your fear of God, avoid hasty thoughts or vows regarding religion. You might regret what you said or thought, and you cannot ever take it back. Why get God mad with you? Just stay quiet! At the end of the passage, he returns to this theme by saying, "Therefore stand in awe of God." This term does not merely speak of a proper respect for God, but that one should actually fear him.

Secondly, Solomon states that God is distant and indifferent. He is in heaven and you are on earth. He's so far above that you can not affect him for your own good. Why get God angry because of something you say? Don't say anything, and don't dream anything. At best, dreaming, vows, and hasty thoughts are meaningless. At worst, God will get you!

In Solomon's view of religion, God is a deity to be feared. This is reminiscent of other religions that believe in a god and then seek for ways to appease his wrath. No wonder he doesn't find his religion fulfilling!

When Christianity becomes more religion than relationship, it loses its meaning, and begins to feel empty. Unlike his father David, who spoke directly to His heavenly Father when trouble came, Solomon speaks *about* God. He attempts to advise his people on how to deal with this powerful deity.

Since he sees God as distant and indifferent, Solomon advises the reader to listen rather than sacrifice, not to speak too quickly, or have hasty thoughts before God. Solomon reasons that because God is "up there" and you are "down here," you won't be able to affect Him for your good, and you surely don't want to get Him mad. If you do act foolishly, and speak words in haste or if you have made a vow, pay it! If you don't, He'll get you! It is better not to make a vow in the first place. Don't do

When Christianity becomes more religion than relationship, it loses its meaning and begins to feel empty.

Gord Penner, B.R.S., M. Div., Th.M., is a professor of Biblical studies at Steinbach Bible College and a minister within the congregation of Ridgewood EMC, near Giroux, Man.



or say anything to get God mad!

Poor Solomon! He is seeking to find meaning in life, but he fails to see God as the one who provides meaning. When Christianity becomes more religion than relationship, it loses its meaning, life feels empty.

As I reflect on my own life, I can see how my religious experience can become meaningless as well. How much of what I do are simply actions and not a natural response based on a personal relationship with God? My devotions—are they done to appease the God I fear, or are they an honest search to have relationship with Him? Either reason can motivate me! Do I attend church because I “feel spiritual” by going, even though my mind may be miles away as I sing, pray, and appear to listen to the preaching? If writing this article is just another religious obligation to fulfill, it, too, is meaningless.

I heard a sermon recently on the prodigal son. The speaker referred to the *two* sinning brothers. While the younger sinned by disobeying the law, the older one sinned by *obeying* the law! Really? How can obeying the law be a sin? While faithfully going through the actions on the outside, the older son hated his father and shamed him in front of all the guests when he refused to attend the party. It is easy to note the outward sin of the younger son, but the inward sin of the older son goes unnoticed.

Eugene Peterson, in his book *Run with the Horses*, recognizes that the outside is a lot easier to reform than the inside. It's a lot easier to be “righteous looking” than righteous! Going to the right church and saying the right words is a lot easier than working out a life of righteousness, justice, and love among the people you work and live with. Showing up at church once a week and saying a hearty “Amen” is a lot easier than engaging in a life of daily prayer and Scripture meditation that develops into concern for poverty and injustice, hunger and war.

Peterson writes, “We live in a culture where image is everything and substance nothing” (*Run with the Horses*, IVP, 1983, p. 67). A vivid example of this type of thinking is

found in the Old Testament. Shiloh was located in the centre of Israel and it was the earliest focus for worship and consultation of Yahweh. By Jeremiah's day, Shiloh was merely a pile of rocks in a field of weeds that travelers between Galilee and Jerusalem merely glanced at casually as they passed by. Shiloh *was* the right place; at Shiloh the right words *were* spoken. But when the right place no longer launched a walk with God and when the right words no longer expressed love and faith, Shiloh was destroyed.

In our worship service, we sing the song *I'm Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*. It was written by Matt Redman, who was worship leader at *Soul Survivor* church in Watford, England. When their church lost its spark, they described the band as “connoisseurs of worship instead of participants of it.” Since they were performing for the audience instead of God, the church dismissed the band and began to meet with no singing at all. Out of this experience, Redman wrote the following words:

When the music fades and all is stripped away, and I simply come. Longing just to bring something that's of worth that will bless Your heart.

I'll bring You more than a song for a song in itself, is not what You have required. You search much deeper within through the way things appear. Your looking into my heart.

I'm coming back to the heart of worship. It's all about You, it's all about You, Jesus.

I'm sorry Lord for the thing I've made it. When it's all about You, all about You, Jesus.

*King of endless worth. No one could express how much You deserve. Though I'm weak and poor, all I have is Yours, every single breath.**

The Samaritan woman at the well asked Jesus whether she had to worship in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim. Jesus responded that true worship focused more on the “how” than the “where.” It occurs when we worship “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23). Today, in many church circles, discussion regarding true worship often centres on music styles: choruses or hymns. If I find that I cannot worship God unless it comes in my favourite music package, the writer of Ecclesiastes would say that the problem lies in my heart rather than in my vocal chords. When choruses become meaningless or the old hymns no longer speak to me, I can understand how Solomon could describe religion as another vain pursuit.

Attending church and being religious *can* become tiresome and empty. Solomon found it meaningless. Perhaps your church attendance or devotional times have been meaningless for too long. Religion will not fill the “God-shaped vacuum” in your life. A *relationship* with our living Lord will. This relationship does not consist of outward behaviour and much time spent in church, or even singing your preferred style of music. Meaningful worship can only happen when those actions and words come from a broken spirit and contrite heart. Then they do not *bring* meaning to our worship, but reflect the meaning we have found in our relationship with God. Only then can our “religion” be enough. ■

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How much of what I do are simply actions and not a natural response based on a personal relationship with God?

With Our Missionaries

Venezuela

To dance focused on the source of our joy!

Jesus said in John 15:17, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete."

Is my joy really complete? What does

EMC Social Concerns Essay Contest

Topic: **What is our Christian responsibility to the economic poor?**

Some questions you might probe in your essay: Who are the poor? What did Jesus mean by "the poor you have always have with you" and "blessed are the poor"? What responsibility does the church have for social change? How does it relate to the government in this?

The contest is open to senior high school students. Deadline for material received is March 29, 2004. The SCC is committed to social concern/justice from a Christian perspective and entries will be judged by content and writing skills.

The essay is to be 1,200 to 1,500 words, preferably typed and double-spaced.

First prize is \$150. Two honourable mentions of \$75 each. Winning entrants hereby give permission for the material to be published in *The Messenger* at the discretion of the SCC and the editor.

Please send entries to:

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complete joy look like?

Last Sunday morning I was waiting at the bus stop when a street vendor started up his music box and blessed us all with a loud and lively tune. I turned to face the source of the pleasant sounds, and saw an elderly gentleman, dressed in rather shabby looking clothes, facing the music box and moving to the rhythm.

At first I thought he was drunk and would lose his balance anytime. But to my surprise he continued, totally absorbed in his pleasure as he gracefully moved his whole body to match the lovely musical strains. He stayed not for one song only, but for the next as well, and until the bus took me out of sight.

Was he dancing to the Lord? Maybe, and maybe not, but it sure got me thinking. The man seemed totally oblivious to those around him. I'm sure he was not concentrating on his own poverty, nor on his country's political problems as he beautifully responded to the pleasure of the moment.

Is that what joy of the Lord looks like? I don't know, but I left that scene with a renewed conclusion: The man's joy at that



moment was more complete because he focused only on the source of his pleasure, the music. Do I live my life focused on the source of my joy? Problems abound, but praise the Lord for the source of eternal joy He sent us that first Christmas season. My prayer is that the Lord will bless you with His peace and joy this Christmas season and in the New Year too. Thanks for all your prayers and financial gifts.

Amanda Barkman

The Evangelical Mennonite Conference office has a new address!

Future correspondence for EMC and for *The Messenger* should now be addressed to: 440 Main Street
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Amanda Barkman (Blumenort) serves as a teacher with New Tribes Mission.

EMC church planting gets boost from Dueck foundation

The Dueck Family Foundation (Vidir) is pleased to announce the formation of a loan and grant fund that will greatly expand the impact of the EMC Building Loan Fund program. New congregations applying to and approved for a loan from the EMC Building Loan Fund will also be approved for a loan and grant from the Dueck Family Foundation Fund (DFF Fund).

The Dueck family initiative is intended to strengthen EMC church planting efforts in Canada by helping emerging congregations obtain a place of worship. It is anticipated that this will also encourage others to contribute to the EMC Building Loan Fund, making it a significant source of funding for emerging congregations.

The DFF Fund will function under the same terms as the EMC Loan Fund except for the grant feature. Whereas the EMC Loan Fund is fully repayable, the DFF Fund requires that only 50 percent of the original loaned amount be paid back. For example, if a congregation is approved for a loan of \$100,000 from the EMC Loan Fund, it is eligible to receive another loan of \$100,000 from the DFF Fund. Both loans are to be paid back over 10 years with half (\$50,000) of the DFF Fund loan being forgiven as the loan is paid off.

Both loan funds are managed by Mennonite Foundation of Canada. Further details are available by contacting either EMC (204-326-6401) or MFC (800-772-3257).

MFC

Remaining biblically faithful and socially relevant

How can a church remain biblically faithful and socially relevant? The ministerial pondered this on December 5, 2003, at Fort Garry EMC in Winnipeg, Man.

Devotional

Host senior pastor Layton Friesen said pastors should ask, "How good is the good in the news I preach?" or "How much would people give for my sermon to be true?"

In the Christmas story people "have the conviction that what has happened in this birth of Jesus is absolutely decisive and monumentally important," he said. "The driving force of the early Christian mission was not propaganda of beautiful ideals...it was the proclamation of the mighty acts of God." Associate pastor David Kruse led singing.

Main presentations

Darren Plett, Board of Ministers and Deacons chairman, said the day's goal was to be inspired and strengthened to walk back into our churches to encourage people to be socially relevant while "continuing to be biblically faithful."

Pierre Gilbert, Ph.D., coordinator of the Evangelical Anabaptist Seminary program in Winnipeg, Man., spoke twice.

"The first thing I want to say is that the Christian church has never seen a conflict between the proclamation of the gospel and humanitarian work," said Gilbert, a Mennonite Brethren minister. "The New Testament is riddled with exhortations to love others in word and deed."

"Throughout the history of the church the care of the poor and the improvement of social conditions has always been at the centre of the church's concerns," he said. He referred to examples from 17th and 18th century church history—including William Wilberforce's opposition to slavery and the American Declaration of Independence, though penned by a deist.



The ministerial ponders.

While 1910 to 1950 is often viewed as a period when conservative social concern waned in conflict with liberalism, "I am not completely sure that this was actually the case," he said. During this time evangelicalism redefined itself in favour of "pro-intellectualism and social action," he said, "and evangelicals have never looked back since then."

"Should evangelicals be involved in social action? Well, they should and they vigorously are. That's not the issue," said Gilbert. "I don't think that anyone, especially not Mennonites, would seriously argue the basic principle and necessity to be engaged."

Yet the church cannot operate on "auto pilot."

"In an area as complex as social or political activism it's absolutely necessary for the church to constantly and critically examine what it does and why it does it," he said.

"How can we fully address social issues without surrendering our commitment to the teaching of the Bible?" he asked, referring with concern to some denominations in Canada and the U.S.

Dr. Gilbert examined the book of Jonah and Jesus' deliverance of the demon-possessed man in Mark 5.

Jonah cared nothing for his own life, only that his enemies would die, said Dr. Gilbert. Jonah, a professional prophet, felt that his role was to speak to his people, not to contribute to the salvation of his enemies. God, however, was concerned for the whole of Ninevah—people, city, and animals—and not just their souls.

"Our intervention should be motivated by God," said Gilbert. "In fact, the great lesson of the book of Jonah is that God indiscriminately loves all men and all women."

In Mark 5, the relative value of a man and pigs is shown. The man received profound healing in all spheres of life—for he had been alienated from self, family, human society, from God. Jesus heals the poor man because he has compassion for him. Jesus' appearance in that "pagan territory" is no accident. "He appears there because there is a man in great need," he said.

"...I want to make myself perfectly clear," said Dr. Gilbert. "While the demon-possessed saw a marked improvement in his psychological and social condition, Jesus' intervention ultimately addressed his spiritual need. This man is reconciled to God."

Looking at needs in Canadian society,



Dr. Pierre Gilbert: Evangelicals should be and are involved in social action.

he asked, "How do we reach people who are sick, who have given up on traditional religion, and are embracing some other form of spirituality?"

When we engage in society, it's important that we know who we are and where we are coming from, he counselled. The church might hesitate to intervene in society because it fears a return to "Constantinianism" and because of the "separation of church and state." In Canadian society, though, the church cannot return to Constantinianism—it has no military or other formal authority to wield, he said.

Separation of church and state is more an American than a Canadian position, he said. In a democracy, Christians as citizens need to speak vigorously to defend their convictions. "That's how democracy works," he said. Christians should not give in to "bullying" that says they should not speak their views, yet the church has "swallowed this" completely.

When the church does speak, though, it needs to be careful to use language that society can relate to.

Examination committee

Menno Kroeker of Rosenort said the committee has been busy. The committee is to assess whether people are fit for the tasks churches call them to, but also to help them become familiar with the conference. In that light, the committee encourages youth pastors to meet with the committee, he said.



Gord Gilbey

Missionfest

Gord Gilbey of Missionfest 2004, in Winnipeg in February 6-8, said the theme is *How can they hear... unless...* The event encourages Christians to go as career and short-term missionaries. Featured speakers are Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth with a Mission; Joanne Shetler with Wycliffe Bible Translators; and Vishal Mangalwadi, a theologian-apologist from India.

Dr. Roger Gingerich

Dr. Roger Gingerich is involved in missionary medicine. If we are not socially relevant, he wondered how biblically faithful people are being; at the same time, he's aware of hospitals established a century ago that since have lost their biblical basis.

Gingerich sees it as the pastor's responsibility to work out theological issues. He focused on how physicians view three matters.

Clinical depression needs to be recognized as a chemical imbalance that needs medical treatment, he said.

Technological advances make decisions more complicated at the start and end of life. Partial birth abortion has been outlawed in the U.S. When does life end?



Dr. Roger Gingerich

Transplants, rebuilding, and diagnosis of genetic disorders are complicated matters. "Human cloning is a reality," he says.

God does not "micromanage," he said. Human beings are given an arena, parameters, to work within. We are to be guided by Micah 6:8—to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

As a physician, he has to accept shades of grey—for example, organ donation requires a semblance of life. He accepts death with dignity, but not euthanasia. "I'm talking about accepting and recognizing the inevitability of the situation," he said. Part of his task is to help families to accept realistic hope, death as reality, and grey areas.

Facing death, many people are open to a spiritual discussion, but we must recognize that not all people come to the Lord in the same way.

He advised pastors to know their theological framework and draw lines that they can't go beyond. Congregations need to respect their pastors. Pastors, in turn, should not shy away from the responsibility they are given.



Kent Dueck

Kent Dueck

Kent Dueck of Inner City Youth Alive in Winnipeg looked at how to be faithful in the inner city. He said a person cannot be relevant from a chair or their knees, though prayer remains important. The inner city and the urban poor don't need theorists, though good theory is useful. To be faithful, the church needs to do more than think right; it needs to move in a right direction, he said.

He quoted Stanley Moss: "There is nothing quite so crippling in evangelism and social action as to confuse them in definition or to separate them in practice."

Outsiders tend to look at the inner city and make quick judgments. Christians need to give up preconceptions and move

past thinking they are only givers, not takers.

Kent said some people say churches are in trouble because they have neglected the inner city, and that there has been inadequate theological reflection on what it means to be part of the inner city. The church has moved to the suburbs socially and theologically. It is often content to lob items over the wall, rather than become directly involved, he said. The poor are a major focus in Scripture and the church needs to give more attention to them.

Tye Gamey clarified some *don'ts* and *do's* regarding how we should act towards those who are living a homosexual lifestyle. He challenged us not to "attack a person's character, use stereotypes or clichés such as 'love the sinner but hate the sin.'" Then he encouraged us as a Conference and church to "know our official position on this issue, invite speakers to educate us, stick to verifiable facts, admit error, stay flexible when addressing theories, agree to disagree and ultimately show the love of Christ." Gerald Reimer Conference Youth Minister



David Thiessen

SBC leadership conference

David Thiessen, EMC conference pastor, said he encounters in his travels "a tension between a missionary leader working in a congregationally led church." The theme for March 19-20 is *Empowered Leadership in a Congregational Church*. How do we "do leadership in a congregational church" and "move forward and follow the mandate of Christ?" David asked. The speaker will be Owen Burkholder, a long-time pastor with roots in the Peace River area of northern Alberta.

Church reports and prayer

For the final hour, pastors shared from their congregational and personal lives and they prayed together.

Terry M. Smith



Crestview host pastor Vern Knutson gave the opening devotional.



Chairman Hans Rahn and other members and staff connected with the Board of Church Ministries highlighted the board's wide mandate in areas such as youth, Christian education, publication, and archives—as well as *The Messenger*.

December 6 Council

Council approves budget increase, hears panel

On December 6, 2003, the EMC conference council accepted a 4.2 percent increase to the conference budget and pondered the relationship between First Nations peoples and the Christian Church in Canada.

Devotional

Host pastor Vern Knutson of Crestview Fellowship read a devotional by Ellen White based on Jesus' ministry to the father with a demon-possessed son (Mark 9).

Board of Church Ministries

A 20-minute PowerPoint display highlighted how BCM's work goes far beyond *The Messenger*—into youth, Christian education, archives, music, and other publications. The board has vision and is looking at a substantial increase in a future budget, said chairman Hans Rahn.

Board of Ministers and Deacons

The BMD, along with BCM, is forming a steering committee to promote Evangelical Anabaptism as a biblical emphasis.

Board of Missions

Ernie Loewen, board chairman, said that ideas need to come from the churches. He encouraged churches to invite staff and board members to report.

The bookstore has improved in Cuauhtemoc, Lester Olfert said, though sales are down because of a poor economy. Steinreich Bible School is pleased with its new facility. Another teacher is needed for Camp 67. A couple

is needed for Spanish ministry. "Our missionaries in Mexico are aging," he said. In Paraguay, the AIDS centre is operating in a recently-purchased building.

Olfert referred to special projects as "above budget," suitable for projects for Sunday school, youth, women's and men's groups.

Ernie Loewen reported his impressions of visiting Nicaragua with Lester Olfert from Oct. 29 to Nov. 13. In Managua, he was impressed by local church leadership and mentoring. He was impressed by local development of Anabaptist Sunday school materials.

Dave Wiebe from Tillsonburg reported that people come to the church because they want to be discipled and helped with marriage and children. "That's been a very challenging...mandate," he said. A value of a new church is that people will try "things they have never done before."

Abe Bueckert reported on Vacation Bible School held at Picture Butte, north of Taber, Alberta.

Peter Dueck, Canadian secretary, said, "We're always inspired by what the Lord is doing." If church planting doesn't happen, "then all the rest of the stuff" won't happen either, he said. Church planting needs emphasis.

The Spanish work in Brandon is developing. Tilbury, which has "church planting built right into its DNA," needs a larger meetingplace, Peter said. Straffordville has reduced its debt, Conroy and Sheila Koop at Fish Creek (Calgary) "are church-planters to the core," and Taber benefits from Edwin Plett's good

preaching in Low German.

"Please report this when you go back," said Dueck. When a congregation adds churches at one or two percent per year, it disappears or holds its own. To "even have a modest rate of growth...we need to add one and a half or two congregations per year...." Church planters and tentmakers are needed.

Gerald Reimer said the EMMC will lead the inter-conference youth missions Project Macedonia in summer 2004 to Belize. In October he led a MissionX SBC student team for three weeks "of incredible times" in Mexico. He introduced his newsletter *eclipse* and highlighted the need to keep in touch with post-secondary students.

Len Barkman said AIMM is restructuring. There is a new work in Senegal. Paul and Lois Thiessen have returned to Burkina Faso. The suffering Democratic Republic of Congo has a vibrant church.

General Board

The next annual convention is in Swan River, Man., on July 2 to 4, vice moderator John Reimer said. The region is small numerically, but it looks forward to a good event.

Board of Trustees

The board presented a budget of \$1.798 million (a 4.2% increase). The budget was discussed and voted on; it was approved. The board is working to comply with revised government laws on privacy of information, Ben Wiebe said.

More feedback is needed on the level of

pastor pension plan contributions, Len Barkman said. David Thiessen encouraged churches to enroll their pastor in the conference's pension plan and liability insurance.

Churches received into membership

The council voted to receive two churches: Love in Action Church, Calgary (a transfer from the Northwest Mennonite Conference); and Hillside Christian Fellowship in Buffalo Head Prairie, a daughter church of La Crete, Alta.

Regional profiles

Region one (central-interior B.C. and northern Alberta) is going through a "60 percent" change in pastors, said Richard Klassen of High Level. In 2005 the region hosts convention and "we look forward to a great time" in Grande Prairie, he said. Growth is happening in many churches and a church start is being explored.

Mennonite World Conference

Ron Penner is the new representative to MWC. Don Thiessen, former representative, attended the General Assembly in Zimbabwe last summer.

Steinbach Bible College

President Abe Bergen said that EMC acts like it is a consumer of SBC, not a co-owner; churches take SBC for granted. "I would like to invite the EMC into a larger conversation about what does it mean to belong, to be an owner of SBC," he said.

SBC chairman Carl Heppner, pastor at Braeside, said many EMC leaders and members were trained at SBC. He encouraged the wider discussion. In three years "I have not received a single word of direction or anything from the conference itself as to what should we bring to the table at Steinbach Bible College."

Heppner said the conference budget should increase the amount for training leaders. In SBC's building expansion, the

"EMC conference" is "significantly under-represented in the giving to this campaign," he said.

Mennonite Foundation of Canada

Ed Friesen said the EMC and MFC have agreed on processing and repayment of church loans. Fresh materials are being developed for stewardship on "the spiritual nature of money," he said. "We want to move the discussion about stewardship away from professionals and into the context of the church."

MCC Canada

Thomas Mathew said workers are chosen on the basis of personal faith. A recent meat canning operation involved 350 volunteers that produced 20,500 cans of meat for North Korea. Stan Penner said children starve. Some people criticize MCC for removing identifying marks on some foodstuffs; it is an attempt to be sensitive. Try to help refugee people, Penner said.

Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Len Barkman said EFC is involved in marriage and hate literature issues. Uphold this in prayer, he said.

Eden Health Care Services

Ron Barkman said Trainex is considering its mandate: Should the shop serve as a fundraiser? East Eden is developing.

Panel discussion

The Social Concerns Committee presented a panel discussion on rebuilding the relationship between the Christian Church and First Nation peoples in Canada. Stella Neff, associate missionary under EMC, and Larry Wilson, pastor of First Nations Community Church in Winnipeg, served as panelists. Terry Smith moderated the discussion.

Larry Wilson gave some historical perspectives. Barriers "we need to address today that happened yesterday that would

help us tomorrow" are ignorance, seeing people as a problem, and suspicion.

Holding up a talking stick, he illustrated how there is a tendency to look at things that are aboriginal in identity and attribute them to something negative. There is a need for understanding, seeing people as equals, and trust. Larry Wilson counseled "we need to move beyond mission-mindedness to partnership," moving away from seeing native people as a mission field.

Stella Neff spoke about where the church and First Nations people need to go from here. Within one or two generations, native people went from self-sufficiency to dependence, leading to a legacy of "abuse and violence, conflict with the law, neglect of children, lack of parenting."

How can the church respond? "Healing is where we have to begin," she said. "We have to learn about the history of our communities, we have to undo the damage, we have to discover the scars, and heal." Churches are called to walk as Jesus walked, among sinners, leading them to holiness and repentance. Jesus' "strongest rebuke was for self-righteous, religious autocrats who cared nothing for people," she said. "The church has to care."

During the discussion period that followed, people came forward with various comments and questions. Larry Wilson expressed the hope that people would not be motivated by illegitimate guilt.

- How do you like us to call your ethnic group as fellow believers? Neff: Cree. Government still uses Indian (not admitting to the mistake that they were not in India). Wilson: It's okay as long as it's not used in a derogatory manner.

- Saying we've been oppressed by the same people that you have helped to open doors.

- What are some things we can do to understand each other? Neff: Pray for us. Wilson: Let's start dating. We need to have a mutual relationship where we do things together because we are together.

- Is this not our journey together? It's really not about you and us; it's we are. Let's walk this journey together. Our desire is toward you. Wilson: Maybe we should intentionally cut out talking about you and us, but what can we do together.

- It doesn't matter the colour of the skin, but it is people need the Lord.

In closing comments Larry Wilson said we need to "somehow lead aboriginal kids and Mennonite people and Indian people to the same place of wholeness. Together we need to do it, not alone." Stella Neff said her strength is in being a Christian. "I know a lot of you pray for us, and I thank you, but that's what gives us the strength."

Terry Smith and Becky Buhler



Stella Neff responds to the council, while Pastor Larry Wilson (middle) and panel moderator Terry Smith listen. Stella is a retired educator. She has returned to Grand Rapids, Man.

REMC celebrates unity, additions and an eternal homegoing

Rosenort, Man.: Many years ago a preacher spoke of living life as a follower of Christ. He mentioned that the question being asked by many was, "Is this *okay* for a Christian to do?" In his message this minister pointed out that this was a poor question. "The right question is, he said, is this *best* for me to do as a Christian?"

His challenge, delivered in 1971, is as necessary today as it was then. With sorrowful hearts we celebrated the homegoing of that minister on November 20. He was our former pastor: Rev. Johnny Loewen. He served our community well, both as a teacher in the public school system and shepherding the REMC.

In 1977, while Johnny Loewen was serving as lead pastor in Rosenort, a request for help came from the Heron EMC for ministerial leadership. The church agreed to send their *head pastor* to help out in the interim with a lay minister taking over at home. From November 1977 till April 1978 he served in Heron.

His final pastoral role was in Low German ministry for Lowe Farm EMC until its closure. Rev. Loewen was proficient in High German and served for some time as editor for the *Familienfreund*, an EMC publication. As we reflect on Rev. Loewen's life, we are thankful that he offered his very best to his Master and to us.

On November 23 we had a baptism and membership reception. The testimonies were encouraging. Several of the new members mentioned grandparents as being spiritually influential. With the family unit in a state of crisis in Canada, it is very meaningful seeing three generations united as members in the same church! Pastor Toews challenged the candidates to remain faithful to their commitment to Christ for life. Rev. Amos Fehr conducted the baptismal service.

Parents and youth sponsors were invited to join the new members up front for prayers of dedication. After this Nadia and Olivia Penner shared their testimonies as they transferred their memberships from their church in Paraguay. It was a service of celebration! In the evening we met as a fellowship for communion and footwashing. Personal confession of sin was emphasized as we reflected on what Christ had done for us.

We celebrated the dedication for our

new addition on November 9 with guest speaker moderator Don Thiessen of Ridgewood, Manitoba. We saw highlights of the building project on PowerPoint, sang some songs of praise and enjoyed coffee and dainties in our new basement dining area.

We finally had a ladies retreat of our own October 3-5. It was a beautiful and ideal fall weekend spent at Winkler Bible Camp. Women of all ages took part—from a great-grandmother to a newlywed. We had an excellent speaker/comedian named Janet Lacroix, a great time swimming and visiting,

several unique workshops, a relaxing time playing games, and spirited fun killing flies and falling asleep in strange company.

The informal time was wonderful and many of us got to know each other better through long hikes, peaceful canoe rides and by singing songs around the campfire. The Sunday morning sharing, footwashing and communion was very intimate and meaningful. On the home front, line-ups of fathers and children at the local restaurant were apparently quite long.

Lorilee Scharfenberg



(Back) Daniel King (baptized on September 28), Jared Dueck, Jenna Waldner, Debbie Thiessen, Shane Kroeker, Olivia Penner (transfer), (Front) Michael King, Jillyayne Friesen, Christopher Dueck (baptized on September 28), Nadia Penner (transfer), Michelle Dueck and Kelsey Dueck formally joined the REMC church family.



HEBREWS 3:4 For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Come visit soon the newly expanded and renovated Rosenort EMC.

Interim pastor installed

Steinbach EMC:



After searching for a lead pastor for some time, the Steinbach EMC has hired a half-time interim pastor in Ron Penner, formerly lead pastor at Winnipeg's Braeside EMC. A commissioning service for Ron and Ruth Penner was held at the church on Sunday morning, Nov. 30, performed by Reyn Kroeker, church council chairman and Cam Rempel, minister of music.



The Eastman Male choir was in attendance as special guests at our church on November 23. This male choir is made up of singers from Steinbach and surrounding area. They sing in different churches about once a month under the leadership of John Enns.

Dave K. Schellenberg

Letters to the Editor

Letters for publication, commenting on issues raised in *The Messenger*, are welcomed. Their tone should be charitable, dealing with subjects rather than individuals. Letters may be edited for length, style and charity.



Farewell, Kenton, Lucille, and children!

Pelly, Sask.:

A farewell was held for Kenton and Lucille Penner who have pastored at Pelly for the past seven years. Their children are Bonnie, Ashley, Megan and Ryan. On the afternoon of November 30, 2003, a time of visiting, singing, and sharing was held with many words of appreciation given. A monetary gift was presented to them as well as a photo album. Each family in the church prepared a page with pictures and writing, filling it with memories and friendship. Penners have moved to pastor Treesbank Community Church (EMC), and began on January 1, 2004.

Vivian Anfinson

Parent-child dedication at High Level

High Level, Alta.:

A parent-child dedication was held on September 21 at High Level Christian Fellowship Church. Pastor Richard Klassen (left), on behalf of the congregation, stands beside these parents and children: Leanne and Robert Friesen with Natalie; Pete and Cindy Fehr with Eric; Frank and Tracy Doerksen with Emi, Maddi and Kaden; Darwin and Joanne Dyck with Branden; Lynda and Russel Peters with Brooklyn and Ashtyn.

Gert Knelsen



A growing church with developing programs

Tilbury, Ont.: Greetings from Tilbury. What a joy it is to be involved in a growing church. We seem to be growing in every way, whether it's new members or couples having babies. Our church attendance is usually between 80 and 90 on Sunday. We've had 110-120 on some summer Sundays. We're also becoming a bigger part of the community. We try to help out the Tilbury Help Centre with donations, especially during the Christmas season.

We're also getting to know each other better in the church through lunches at the church and prayer meetings.

The youth went on a three-day camp retreat in August at St William's Bible Camp in Iona. About 20 youth went and they had the privilege of hearing guest speaker John Neufeld from the Church of Living Water in Tillsonburg.

John spoke about God passing by in our lives; a lot of times we just allow God to pass by without us responding to Him at all. John had the youth's attention during his humorous, yet always serious talks. Youth also went on trails, swam, and played games (from blind volley ball to Russian Mennonites). It was a fun trip. The youth meet weekly.

We are also starting a college and career group. In past months our college and career has had events with Leamington EMC's group. We've gotten together for bowling, canoeing, and hotdog roasts. It's nice to have another church close by with whom you can come together for fellowship.

Something that is not new is our fishing derby. This event is becoming an annual event for our church. During this event we enjoy fun, fish, and fellowship. Prizes are given to people who catch the most, the biggest and smallest fish. This event gives us a good opportunity to invite people who are not comfortable in a church setting. The event's host is church member Corny Niekoley.

It's good to see people help out with church events, whether it is the fishing derby, Vacation Bible School, Christmas Choir or other events. We've come a long way from when the church started in 2000. We look forward to the upcoming year.

Cornelius Banman



Jacob and Anna Enns serve as pastoral couple at Tilbury.

Some people could lose their Canadian citizenship!

What can happen?

Some people who were born outside Canada and who have Canadian citizenship will lose that citizenship if they do not apply for Retention of Canadian Citizenship before their 28th birthday. This loss will happen regardless of whether such people live outside Canada or if they have lived inside Canada for many years already.

Who will be affected by this law?

This is complicated. First, this law will not affect any person who became a Canadian citizen on the basis of having been a Landed Immigrant. The term landed immigrant is the same as permanent resident.

Second, this law will affect only people who were born outside Canada, of parents both of whom were also born outside Canada. But it will not affect all such people.

Since this law is complicated, answer the following questions, first for yourselves and then for your children. Even if this law does not affect you, it could still affect some or all of your children.

Were you born outside of Canada after February 14, 1977?

If you answered *no* then you will not lose your citizenship and therefore you need not apply for Retention of Canadian Citizenship. Only if you answered *yes* should you go to the next question.

Was at least one of your parents born in Canada, and if both of your parents were born outside Canada, did at least one parent obtain a Certificate of Retention of Canadian Citizenship before February 15, 1977?

If you answered *yes* to either part, then you will not lose your citizenship and therefore you need not apply for Retention of Canadian Citizenship. Only if you answered *no* to both parts should you go to the next question.

Did one of your parents obtain Canadian citizenship on the basis that he or she was born outside Canada between January 1, 1947 and February 15, 1977 but was registered as a Canadian citizen only after February 14, 1977? Or was one parent born outside Canada, after February 14, 1977, of parents of whom at least one was a Canadian at that time?

If you have come to this, and you have

answered *yes* to either part, then it is almost certain that you will lose your Canadian citizenship on your 28th birthday, even if you have lived in Canada for many years, unless you apply for Retention of Canadian Citizenship.

How can you get help with this matter?

If it appears that this law will affect you, or some of your children, or all of them, then we suggest that you go to an official of the Canadian government's Citizenship and Immigration department, or to an MCC office, or to a different person who is familiar with Canadian citizenship law. You can also go on the internet to the web site: www.cic.gc.ca and click on Application to Register and Retain Canadian Citizenship Under Section 8 (CIT 0300-E). Information can also be obtained from a toll free telephone number: 1-888-242-2100.

The law says that it is possible to apply for Retention from inside or outside Canada but applicants from outside Canada must meet many more conditions. They must be able to show that they lived in Canada for at least one year after the age of 14; that they lived here either with family members or attended a recognized secondary or post secondary school in Canada; and that they have enough knowledge about the English language, about Canada's history and geography, and about the responsibilities of citizenship, so that they can pass an oral test in an interview with a Canadian government official.

It is easier to apply from inside Canada. Applicants need only show that they have been in Canada for one year. They do not have to meet the conditions mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Also, applicants from inside Canada can be well under 14 years of age, as long they have been in Canada for one year. However, whether applying from outside Canada or from the inside, the matter must be dealt with before the person is 28 years old.

We urge people not to delay on this matter. The government of Canada is planning to change the law so that instead of having to be in Canada for one year, an applicant will have to be in Canada for three years before making an application for Retention of Citizenship.

Bill Janzen
MCC Ottawa



In memoriam
Aganetha (Nettie) Fast (nee Plett)
December 3, 1917 to January 5, 2003

It pleased our Lord Jesus to take our dear mother and grandmother to her eternal home on January 5, 2003, on the 26th anniversary of her beloved husband Verner Fast's funeral.

Aganetha (Nettie) Plett was born December 3, 1917, to her parents, the late Abram and Justina Plett, on her maternal grandparents' (Cornelius Unger) homestead in the Rural Municipality of Hanover. Nettie was the eldest granddaughter of the Henry E. Plett and C. F. Unger families.

She was also predeceased by her stepmother, her sister, four nephews, and one niece as well as numerous in-laws. Mother is survived by her daughter Wanda (Tim Kretchmer) of Blumenort, grandchildren Sonya (Greg Siemens) and Chad (fiancée Jolene Martens); son Lloyd of Steinbach area, grandchildren Dawson, Mica (Curtis Unger), Devery and great-granddaughter Ashlyn; son Rod (Liz) of Gardenton, grandchildren Leila and Dana, and Lucas and Matthew; and son Kevin of Steinbach, children Kristopher and Kazz. Mom will be deeply missed.

Our mother grew up on her parents' farm in Greenland, Man. When Mom was only two years of age, her mother passed away. Her father then married Elizabeth Kornelsen. Mom was baptized on the confession of her faith in July 1936 by Rev. Peter P. Reimer and became a member of the *Kleine Gemeinde* Church located one-mile south of Blumenort. On June 22, 1941, our mother married Verner Fast with Rev. Peter D. Friesen officiating. Vern and his brother Cornie were the founders of Fast Brothers Road Construction, of which she kept the books for many years.

Our parents adopted four children whom they loved dearly. Mom tried to instill strong biblical values in all her children and grandchildren by modelling a godly life, praying for them diligently, and loving each

one unconditionally. Although the family dynamics were at times difficult, changing and complex, our mother continued to be *Mom* to those who were no longer formal family members.

The church was a very important component of Mom's life. She attended faithfully as long as her health allowed and was an active participant in numerous facets: teaching Sunday school, corresponding regularly with missionaries around the world, making patchwork quilts and blankets for MCC, as well as knitting scarves and toques for inner-city children, to name a few. Her legacy as a prayer warrior is God's gift of grace to cherish and will never be forgotten.

Our mother's strong faith in Jesus carried her through much hardship and adversity. For most of her life she experienced good health and was a harder worker. She enjoyed handwork, cooking, sports, politics, reading and music.

Mom moved into her apartment at Oakwood Place in June 1987. After her 80th birthday, her health deteriorated steadily and she had to be hospitalized on July 19, 2001, until she was placed in Rest Haven Nursing Home. As her health declined, Mom struggled in the transition of giving up many liberties and privileges to the point of becoming totally dependent on the assistance of others. Mom was a gentle and quiet spirit who, amidst struggles, persevered, being thankful for all the help she was given.

With her daughter by her side, Mom passed away at Rest Haven Nursing Home in Steinbach, where she had been a resident for just over a year. The family sincerely thanks Dr. Mark Duerksen and the home care coordinators and workers who did what they could to meet Mom's needs while she still lived in Oakwood Place. The family is grateful to Drs. Krepert and Lotocki and the caring staff at CancerCare HSC, the EMS attendants who transferred Mom frequently to Winnipeg for her appointments and, more recently, Dr. Curtis Krahn and the dear staff at Rest Haven for taking care of our mother with dignity, love and compassion.

Funeral services were held at Blumenort EMC on January 8, 2003, at 2 p.m. Viewing was held at Birchwood Funeral Chapel, 150 Penfeld Dr., at 7 p.m. on January 7, 2003, in Steinbach.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the EMC mission fund, 440 Main St., Steinbach, MB R5G 1Z5 or to the Rest Haven Nursing Home, 185 Woodhaven Ave., Steinbach, MB R5G 1K7.

Our mother's strong faith in Jesus carried her through much hardship and adversity. For most of her life she experienced good health and was a harder worker. She enjoyed handwork, cooking, sports, politics, reading and music.

A half-century on behalf of the poor

On December 10, 2003, MEDA celebrated its 50th anniversary. It was on that date in 1953 that eight Mennonite businessmen met in the Atlantic Hotel in Chicago to form a new organization to provide capital funds for new enterprises in Paraguay.

On December 10 MEDA staff paused to celebrate. They thanked God for the vision of MEDA's founders, for their willingness to take a risk to try something new to help poor people. At the same time we will be thankful for you, our members and supporters, for your faithful and generous support. Without you, MEDA's work would not be possible.

They also recalled God's message to Isaiah: "If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always (and will) satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings" (58:10-12).

Thank you for spending yourself on behalf of the hungry through MEDA!

MEDA

Students in Winnipeg, be on the lookout for this man!

- friendly
- believes in ministry of young people
- eats pizza and chats



Gerald D. Reimer
Conference Youth Minister

Post-secondary events are being planned for **February**.

They will be held at **Canadian Mennonite University** (date TBA)

The **University of Manitoba**
 Feb. 12, Room 224A-C,
 11:30 a.m.—1:30 p.m.
 University Centre

Details will be sent to churches. Check your church bulletin or contact your pastor.

Gerald can be contacted at emcger@mts.net or 204-326-6401



HENRY A. REIMER
1914-2003

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day. And not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

It has pleased our Heavenly Father to call home his faithful servant Henry A. Reimer, beloved father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother and friend. He passed away peacefully on October 25, 2003, at the Rest Haven Nursing Home in Steinbach, Man., surrounded by his loved ones.

Dad was born in Giroux, Man., on May 27, 1914, to Abram P. and Anna Reimer, the middle child in a family of 15. He was a diminutive man, small of stature, but he had the biggest heart and left large footsteps as a legacy for his family to follow.

His faith in his Lord was strong until the end and he was an incredible witness to one of his favorite Bible verses and the credo he lived by was "to be content in whatever situation God places you" (Phil. 4:12). He was a humble man, a man of few words, but when he spoke his deep thought and wisdom shone through. He also had a dry sense of humor which we enjoyed.

He worked most of his career as a carpenter, specializing in cabinet making of exceptional quality.

He was on the Building Committee of Steinbach EMC and played a large part in the planning and construction of its building. He also served on the Rest Haven board for many years and was part of the planning board for the current Rest Haven building where he passed away. He had a hobby farm for most of his career. He loved working the land after a hard day in his shop.

Dad married Mom, Tena Neufeld, on November 2, 1947. He had the courtship we hear about in fairytales; he married the beautiful Reimer maid. He told us his mother had strongly encouraged him in this direction! They lived in Steinbach all their married life and were blessed with two children, Ken and Gloria. Dad and Mom were members of the Evangelical

Mennonite Church in Steinbach. They were married almost 50 years when Mom passed away on February 24, 1997.

Dad's favorite hobby was fishing. He loved nothing better than to get up on a beautiful summer day and decide it was a perfect day to be out on the lake in his boat with a few fishing buddies and his fishing rod.

He and Mom also loved to travel and they had dreamed of traveling a lot after retirement. Unfortunately, due to Mom's poor health this was limited to a few trips to the southern states and quite a few trips to Red Deer, which they always loved. Dad loved doing puzzles the last number of years and he had to finish at least one puzzle together with his granddaughters on every trip to Red Deer.

On April 27, 2001, Dad had a serious pedestrian accident and shattered his right hip. He never fully recovered from this traumatic injury. His running days were over. This accident resulted in two major operations and a 10-month hospital stay. He lived with Ken and Grace for five months and then moved into the Rest Haven Nursing Home in May of 2002.

Dad was predeceased by his beloved wife Tena as well as his parents, six brothers and four sisters.

Dad will be lovingly remembered by Ken and Grace Reimer and their family: Christy and Stephen (children Sarah and Joshua), Shannon and Jason (daughter Hannah), Suzanne; Gloria and Abe Derksen and their family: Angela and Noah, Jennifer and Trevor (daughters Abigail and Bethany), Josy and Bernard. He is also survived by four sisters: Katherine Toews, Minna Anthony, Helen (Alex) Tarasenco and Margaret Kroeker; one sister-in-law Mary Reimer; many nieces and nephews as well as Mom's family and many friends.

Special thanks to Dad's friends who faithfully visited him or took him out, especially Peter K. Reimer and Margaret and Denis Cote. This was especially appreciated since Dad's accident. We also wish to thank Dr. Kaethler and the Bethesda Hospital and Rehab staff, Home Care staff who took special care of Dad at Ken and Grace's.

Finally, our heartfelt thanks to the Rest Haven staff and Dr. Krahn for their loving care. In particular, the family appreciated your care and concern during the last few days of his life.

Funeral services were held at the Evangelical Mennonite Church, 422 Main Street, Steinbach, Man., on Wednesday, October 29, 2003, at 2 p.m. with viewing prior to the service and on Tuesday, October 28, from 7-8 p.m. at the Steinbach EMC chapel. Officiating were pastors Hans Rahn, Larry Hirst and Melvin Penner. Interment was held at the Steinbach Heritage Cemetery. Birchwood Funeral Chapel was in charge of arrangements.

His Family

Project Macedonia 2004

Belize, An Exciting Summer
Mission for July 2004

July 9 to August 2

We are looking for energetic, enthusiastic and committed young adults who are willing to give of their time and talent!

Ministry: in Spanish villages; in Blue Creek, Spanish Lookout, and Shipyard; youth ministry; work project: build a school on the colony of Shipyard.

Applicants must be 18 or a high school graduate. Each member needs to raise about \$2,000 Canadian for travel, passports, inoculations, accommodations and insurance.

Application deadline is May 15.

Project Macedonia

is a joint venture of
Evangelical Mennonite Conference
Chortitzer Mennonite Conference
Evangelical Mennonite
Mission Conference
Steinbach Bible College

Contact:

Gerald D. Reimer
Conference Youth Minister
Evangelical Mennonite Conference
Emcger@mts.net
204-326-6401

Answers to November 19 Kids' Corner crossword:

Across

4. nativity
5. stockings
6. carol
8. magi
9. donkey
10. angel

Down

1. wreath
2. gingerbread
3. stars
7. poinsettia



Been told to 'act your wage' lately?

HAS anyone at your church told you to "act your wage" lately? Has it *ever* happened to you? Have you ever heard the suggestion being made to anyone else?

Chances are very good that the answer to all of the above questions is no. That's unfortunate, given the ever-increasing inclination of our society to become slaves to debt, with unseemly but all-too-real spiritual and relational fallout.

Average North American indebtedness is 110 per cent of income, up from 103 per cent a year ago, says an article that crossed my desk recently.

Doug Pagitt, writing in *Christianity Today*, points out that "many young adults know more about moving their debts between multiple no-interest credit cards than they know about God's view of money." But in the midst of this debt crisis, "the church wants only to talk about how to motivate people to give more."

We need different conversations. We

need our faith communities to be places of positive modeling, of preventive vaccines against over-spending and the relational carnage that is often the result of people living beyond their means.

Scripture makes it clear that faithful use of material things can bring us closer to God. Unfortunately, the reverse is also true. Handling money poorly will damage our relationship with Christ, as people retreat into deserts of pride, shame and doubt.

But where do people go to get inoculated, to get answers to their questions, and warnings before they spend past the point of no return, into bankruptcy, marriage breakdown or both?

Harold Percy, an Anglican minister who pastors in the town of Streetsville, an area long ago subsumed into the Toronto suburb of Mississauga, likes to talk about "Mississauga Madness" in describing the excessive materialism that he sees around him every day.

For Percy, being open to God's leading and being in a position to respond to nudges from the Spirit requires an antidote to "Mississauga Madness."

If we want to follow the societal convention of "pay yourself first," of saving 10 per cent of income towards retirement

or other goals, yet remain faithful to God's call that we honor him with the first and best of what we receive, the math is quite simple. The application of the equation is more difficult.

We need to work toward learning to live on 80 per cent (or less) of our income, not the trendy overheated "charge it" world of living on 110 per cent of our earnings.

Mennonite Foundation of Canada's *Money Management and Financial Planning Guide* can be a good resource for pastors and other church leaders to use when working with baptismal candidates, or doing pre-marriage counseling. It's also a good primer for anyone who has questions about being faithful in their interactions with material things.

Ask for a copy from your regional MFC stewardship consultant to help get the conversation started.

For stewardship education and services, contact your nearest Mennonite Foundation of Canada office. Abbotsford – Dave Kroeker, 1-888-212-8608; Niagara – Darren Pries-Klassen, 1-888-212-8731; Kitchener – Mike Strathdee, 1-888-212-7759; Winnipeg – Edwin Friesen, 1-800-772-3257.

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

A **director** is sought for a new addictions treatment rehabilitation centre in Cuauhtemoc, Mexico. The director will work with MCC workers and a program committee. An ability to speak Low German, High German, or Spanish is an asset. Contact Mary Friesen at maryf@mennonitecc.ca or 204-261-6381.

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 McMahon, 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.

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 woodlandsigns@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.

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

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.

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 204-556-2635, email leskola@mts.net, or fax 204-556-2604.

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).

Open Circle, a ministry of MCC in Manitoba, seeks 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.

The Personal Touch

Happy Birthday, Professor Harv!

First Impressions to Lasting Impressions

Andrew Coates



Dr. Harvey Plett in action.

“YOU KNOW, it’s funny what a young man recollects,” Forest Gump said. I suppose there are just some things worth remembering.

I remember sitting in my first chapel at Steinbach Bible College, hearing someone announce that this man will be my first college professor. I sit and I wonder, “Why him?” Although he looks like he’s been around the building for quite a while, by all objective standards he is an unassuming man. He stands barely above my shoulders. He walks with his head down. He knows everyone else’s grandparents; I am not even culturally Mennonite. His journey and mine seem very far apart.

I remember sitting in the first day of his class, waiting to see what this “teaching man” would be like. The whole experience was very overwhelming so I didn’t bother to remember many of the details. But I remember the spark of youth in his eye. There was something about this teacher that told me he knew more than he let on, and that all I had to do was dig a little deeper to find it.

Harvey Plett is my teacher. Several thousand people have called him that by now, but he still takes the time to show all of us the kind of pure joy that comes from walking the narrow path for a lifetime.

I remember sitting one morning with my coffee in hand, waiting for class to begin.

“How’s your ministry going?” he asks me, his brackish tone reminding me how far apart we seem.

“Pretty good,” I reply. Banter.

“Well, I’m glad to hear it,” he says, “I just wanted you to

know you’re doing a good thing.” He looks me in the eye, smiles, and walks away. I am taken aback and can’t help but smile.

If this conversation had been with any other person, I would say he was just being polite, but there was something in Professor Harvey’s tone of voice, or in his eyes, that made me really believe he cared. This was not a cordial formality, but a sage expression of good will. Harvey Plett really noticed me.

I remember the one occasion that I tried to argue with him in class. I tried to prove a point; I failed. He was very kind about it, and I remember feeling comforted by the loss. It was as though he passed me the torch through defeat: *Better luck next time, kid. But, hey, you’re all right.* That day, I realized that Professor Plett teaches the kinds of lessons that don’t come from syllabi. “Professor Harv,” as he’s affectionately known, was going to teach me about the goodness of humanity.

Too many people in the world today are looking out for their own gain. They push through crowded halls, searching to find the unnamed, the unattainable. I am probably one of them; but I hold to the thought that there are still honest people in this world, people who believe that the reason to be good is that it’s good. I’ve been privileged enough to have been taught by one of them, one of the genuine servants.

It would be arrogant of me to say I’ve learned all I can from Professor Harvey. There is more about life in him than I could ever hope to learn. For now, we walk on, our journeys stride-for-stride.

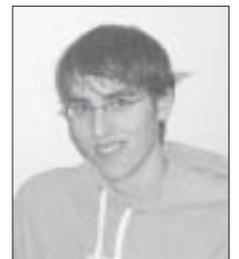
I know that one day I will have to move on. I only hope that when I do, someone else will come along and see the unassuming man. Some of the most important things in life are the things you have to search to find. He that has eyes to see, let him see (Matt. 11:7-19).

There are an extraordinary few who affect our lives in ways we don’t fully appreciate until we look back years later and smile. If this is true, I’ll be one smiling old fool.

It’s funny what a young man will choose to remember.

Happy 70th birthday, Professor Harv!

Andrew Coates is a first-year student at Steinbach Bible College. He is part of St. Vital EMC in Winnipeg, Man.



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.