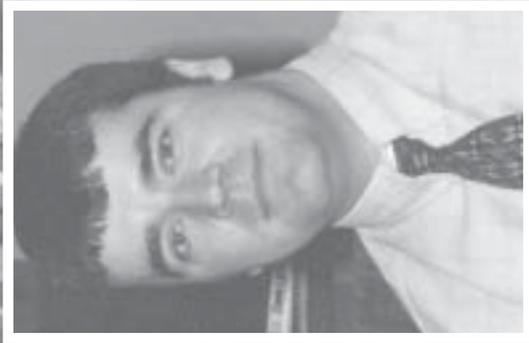


The Messenger



EVANGELICAL MENNONITE CONFERENCE
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Kent Dueck is passionate about inner city ministry. He wonders if the poor can save us. (page 3)

Beware a vague spirituality!

WHAT IS your faith grounded on? Thirty years ago Elizabeth Achtemeier, a Presbyterian minister and a seminary professor, cautioned against settling for belief in a vague, mystical presence (with each person's definition as valid as any other). She said that a popular view is that the mystical presence is largely felt in the emotions of the worshipper and that the presence can be found anywhere.

"The experience of the presence remains largely private, individual, undemanding, never clearly defined," she said, "and thus it may be isolated from every other realm of the worshipper's life."

"The development of such a popular" faith, she emphasized, "might have been much less widespread in American Protestantism if the church had vigorously taught and proclaimed the nature of the Biblical God to its adherents" (*The Old Testament and the Proclamation of the Gospel*, Westminster, 1973, pp. 41-42).

Sometimes people say they aren't

interested in *religion* (or *organized religion*) but that they are *spiritual* people. What does that mean? Vague talk isn't helpful.

The Christian Faith is rooted in Jesus, the revelation of God in history. The Word became flesh, the record of which is in the Scriptures. What happened in *history* is foundational to our faith.

From a Christian standpoint, faith is to be examined, tested, and accountable. Various interpretations of the Bible, Jesus, and the Christian faith are not equally true, valid, useful or proper; some are distorted, wrong, misleading and dangerous.

To build on Achtemeier's statement, faith in Jesus Christ is not vague, not largely private or individual, it is demanding, and it is clearly defined. It is to touch every realm of the worshipper's life.

This is basic Christianity, but such faith in Christ is in danger of being weakened by society's wider vague mysticism. Don't let it happen.

Terry M. Smith

The Christian need of togetherness

CAN A PERSON not practice their faith, but believe deep down in their heart? By Christian standards an unpracticed faith is a contradiction (James 2:14-26; 1 John 1:6, 2:3-4).

Pastor Ed Peters of Steinbach EFC recently mentioned a poll sponsored by Evangelical Fellowship of Canada that suggests that many Canadians separate faith in Christ from regular church attendance. Peters was concerned about this and I share that concern.

Christians cannot properly separate our vertical relationship with God from our horizontal relationship with people. For most people, the issue isn't *if* they seek to be with others, but *where* they seek it. Togetherness is needed. People try to find togetherness in many places—service clubs, bars, on-line chat rooms, somewhere.

Even Simeon Stylites, the ascetic who lived on a pillar for years, depended on people to bring him food and human contact. Hermits

who separated from human contact sometimes went crazy. Babies without human touch have died.

The Christian Faith is to be lived together. If a Christian's faith is lived in isolation, it remains flawed. Yes, individual Christians might temporarily withdraw from *somewhere* because of hurts, but if they stop going *anywhere*, there is a deeper issue. The church isn't to be avoided simply because it is imperfect.

Some people talk of the church more as an institution than as a community. Others separate baptism from membership, though baptism itself is an act of local and wider membership. Some people object to membership in any church. The issue isn't whether Christians are called to be members; we are members. The issue is how fully we will live out what that involves.

Togetherness is basic to the life Christ calls us to live.

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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Can the poor save us?

Kent Dueck



For 19 years Kent Dueck has been director of Inner City Youth Alive, a ministry in the North End of Winnipeg, Man. He was raised in Rosenort (Man.) Fellowship Church and attends Meeting Place in Winnipeg. Kent holds a B.R.E. (pastoral) from Briercrest Bible College and is working toward an M.A. (organizational leadership) at Briercrest Biblical Seminary.

JAMES 2:1-6 lays out a testing scenario for early believers: “Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in...” James lays out a plausible circumstance in order to caution believers about favouritism.

I would contend that to most churches today this illustration lacks relevance. It is out of touch with the modern church’s norms—when does a man with shabby clothes ever show up in our congregations? I recently heard of a pastor who enlisted a friend to dress up like a poor person and show up in church to test the goodwill of the congregation. The fact that it had to be orchestrated is telling in itself. Things have changed from those early church days. We live in a primarily wealthy country and truly “shabby” folks just don’t seem to come around (not including your youth pastor).

Richard Beals in his book *Beyond Hunger* contends that when Christ said to his disciples “the poor you will always have among you,” he was not saying “que sera sera, poor folks will always be there, that’s just part of life.” He contends that Christ was talking about a key distinctive of the Church.

Christ was saying that it was understood that the poor would always be fitting into the church; they would be mixed in and welcomed by the church. Not only was this the distinctive of the church, but the poor were, in many cases, the predominant group within the church. The early church was a relatively obscure group of underdogs. The church was not made up of the “beautiful people” or the upper echelon. Isn’t it amazing that these ne’er-do-wells became the biggest religious movement in human history? But then, Scripture tells us that “the stone the builders rejected will become the chief cornerstone” (Ps. 118:22).

A theology that abandons

C. Henk Koetsier contends that the modern church looks a lot different than the ancient church. “Today,” he says, “it seems as if theology has lost interest in the world of the inner city. Only recently have a few theologians left their ivory towers of theological erudition to confront the turmoil of inner city life.

“Churches have withdrawn from the cities sociologically by migration and theologically by similar abandonment. Churches simply have not been willing to reflect critically and creatively on the challenges posed to them by inner cities.” Not only are the poor not showing up in our churches, but we are not, for the most part, going out to meet the needs of the poor around us.

The Scriptures are clear on God’s heart for the poor. Isaiah says, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captive and release from darkness for the prisoners” (61:1). Our Lord quotes this passage in Luke 4, declaring it to be true of his mission for life as well.

In James we see deeper into the strategic purpose that God has for the poor. James 2:5 says, “Has God not chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised to those who love him?” The critical question for us as a church, then, is how can we align our hearts with God’s heart for the poor? How, also, can we see our work among the poor as serving some strategic cause in the world?

I have been serving on a national roundtable on poverty launched by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. This group is made up of people who have served among the poor for many years. I have, within that group, heard even more radical statements—statements like, “the poor have the power to save us.” They are suggesting that maybe the poor can save us from materialism, our addiction to power, and our paradigm of upward mobility.

I would guess that most people are ready to concede that God has a use for what some have called the “noble poor.” The noble poor are found in Third World countries. They are poor as a result of oppression. They have a form of dignified desperation that makes do with the little they have. They have not, in our opinion, made the bed they are sleeping in.

Is it possible that we might actually need the other kind of poor person—

the one we joke about in the coffee shop? Could we possibly gain anything from a drug addict or a pockmarked prostitute that could help us to advance the cause of Christ or change us into better people?

A poor man's prayer

I was sitting in the congregation at the Meeting Place engaged in a wonderful service. The music was right and the speaker inspiring. Generally, that is a time when I feel centred—all was right in my world. I noticed the necks around me craning with a sort of sober concern at something they saw. A poorly dressed man was making his way to the front of the church. Our balance was off, something was not right.

Though it wasn't being spoken, the exchange of looks between parishioners said, "Who is going to do something about this? I don't feel safe." The man was now kneeling in front of the pastor who was trying hard to carry on. The man could not be ignored as he fumbled with something he was trying to retrieve from a ratty backpack.

I stood to my feet and made my way to the back. A sound person and three ushers pooled their ignorance on who he was or what he wanted. The sound person reported the smell of alcohol, which came as no surprise to me as I had watched his broken shuffle to the front.

Being the self-appointed expert on drunk people in church (something I certainly didn't learn at Rosenort Fellowship Chapel), I took the lead. I would go to the front and sit in the chair in front of where he was kneeling. I would monitor his behaviour and if he became unruly, two ushers were to rush in and help me escort him to the doors to the right. I would save the church from the poor.

He was now sharpening a pencil with a knife. By the time I was in position, the knife had been put away and he was scrawling a note on a piece of paper. I leaned over and quietly asked him if he was okay or maybe needed a coffee. That didn't help; he let me know in no uncertain terms that I was to just leave him alone. In my mind I agreed with that

idea, so long as he didn't become disruptive or dangerous.

In the next few moments, I would be privileged enough to hear this drunken man pray. The pastor called for a time of quiet prayer. Most of us did that inaudibly. I placed my hands within reach of this man and prayed for him and as I leaned in towards him, I heard him pray.

His prayer went something like this: "God, I can't stop drinking. I keep failing you. Please forgive me and help me change." In between words, he brushed away tears. With quiet descended upon the church, the man began to sing a sorrow-filled song in Cree with a gentle cadence. His song was beautiful—a sort of public confession of his pain.

As I looked around, I saw how people had softened to this man.

That prayer and moment will never leave my memory. A friend, who is a little more sensitive to these things, suggested that maybe God had brought me out of my chair to the front for the sole purpose of hearing this man pray. Maybe God wanted me to hear the heart of the very one that we have rejected as a church.

Roger Greenway in his book *Cities: Missions New Frontier* suggests that there is no more dramatic display of redemption than when the church moves compassionately to engage with the poor and oppressed. When the church brings light to the darkest corners of the world is when it is at its best. It is then that the world sees our relevance.

Proverbs 14:20 tells us that "the poor are shunned even by their neighbours," a fact born out daily in the media. Society has, for the most part, given up on the poor. Proverbs 14:21 goes on to say "but blessed is he who is kind to the needy." As the world rejects the poor, they should see the church step forward, as we are the only ones with hope to spare.

What's in it for the church?

If it is in fact true that the poor serve a strategic purpose in the mission of God in the world, and if it is true that we are to act on that mission, what is in it for the church? I know some of you don't like to think "bang for the buck" or do cost-benefit analysis on this call to mission, but let's try it.

In the natural, it would appear that churches have enough work to do on their own stuff; how on earth are we supposed to give more to the poor when we can't even get Sunday school teachers? Isaiah 58:7 says, "Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

Isaiah is reminding us of a deep and noble call. He is saying that caring for the most vulnerable is really important to God and not really added on after we have church matters in hand. The more exciting half of Isaiah 58 gives us a promise that when we are faithful in this matter, a lot of things will fall into place.

Isaiah 58:8–11 promises us that "then your light will break forth like the dawn." The world would see that, wouldn't they? "Your healing will quickly appear, then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call and the Lord will answer... You will be a well watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." Isaiah is promising us that as we become the hands and feet of Christ to the poor and oppressed, we will find our own healing.

It is believed that the measure of any society is how they treat their most vulnerable people. I believe our society is very interested in what we, as a church, are doing to address issues related to poverty and oppression in our country. How will we measure up? The answer to that question holds a lot in the balance. If caring for the poor is truly to be a distinctive of the church, then, as Soren Kierkegaard said, "By God's strength may we become ourselves." ■

With Our Missionaries

China

'I don't believe anything. I just work here!'

The steps were steep and we were out of breath! The smog and pollution rising up from the coal-burning city below us did nothing to help our breathing, but we were determined to climb to the top of this famous Taoist Temple in Linxia, a Chinese city.

As we neared the top, we made frequent stops and took advantage of the photo opportunities. We could see numerous mosques visited by the followers of Mohammed in the Hui minority people group.

Finally, with a sigh of relief, we took the last few steps. Immediately, an elderly man approached us and asked whether we wanted to offer incense. We politely declined since our mission was of quite another sort. With the help of translation by our Asian coworker, we began to ask the man some questions to see if he had ever heard the truth. He hastened to tell us, "I don't believe anything. I just work here!"

He told us that it did not pay to believe in religion because it merely resulted in imprisonment, referring to former times when any religious beliefs were severely punished. The state at that time had ruled supreme.

"Have you heard of Jesus?" was our next question. Through translation we learned that as a young child he had heard the truths about Jesus, his death on the cross and his resurrection. There had been messengers in this city of Linxia who had been scattering the seeds of the gospel,

and we were told that his grandfather had been a believer.

We were thrilled to learn that the gospel had been planted in this man's head, but we also recognized he had yet to have it transferred to his heart! He told us that there was a church in the city but that he did not attend. When asked if he had a Bible, he said no.

So we encouraged him to go to the church (which is a Three Self Church) and buy a Bible. With a promise sealed by a handshake, we gave him some money to get a Bible. We recognized that this 74-year-old man may not have many years left to let the truths of the gospel take root in his heart and life.

No, we did not burn incense at the temple, but we quietly continued around the pagoda and prayed for this man who had the seed lying dormant all these years. Will someone go to Linxia and tell him and his people that God loved him enough to die for him? Who is willing to invest his or her life in this minority group so that the Hui people will someday stand and worship the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in the heavenly city on another mountain?

Elvira Warkentin



Elvira and Elmer Warkentin (Steinbach) are SIM Thailand directors.

"SIM has an opportunity for business-minded people to set up a water purification plant in Linxia," Elvira writes.

They Met at the Cross

There is no one righteous
Not even one
Before the Righteous Judge
All men must come
A sentence of death
Against sin was done
To be borne in the body
Of God's only Son

Betrayed and abandoned
He was nailed to the tree
Despised and rejected
Silence, His plea
Cut off from the land
As God turned His face
The Obedient Lamb
Is God's mercy and grace

The curtain is torn
At the last breath He takes
The holy awakened
The earth trembles and shakes
Our freedom was purchased
His blood paid the cost
When justice and mercy
Met at the cross

Brigitte Toews

Brigitte Toews is a part of Prairie Rose EMC, Landmark, Man.



A Taoist temple

Project Macedonia 2004

Belize, An Exciting Summer
Mission for July 2004

July 9 to August 2

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.

Contact:

Gerald D. Reimer
Conference Youth Minister
Evangelical Mennonite Conference
Emcger@mts.net
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With Our Churches

Missions, Christmas celebrations, pastor resignation

Roseisle, Man.: November 8 we held a Fundraiser Concert and Dessert Night. On February 28, Dennis and Marion Klassen plan to go on a two-week mission trip to Bluefields, Nicaragua, under Samaritan's Purse Canada. They will be part of a group of 25-30 people assisting with phase one of a church building project.

Dennis is a heavy-duty mechanic at Notre Dame Motors. Marion is a health care worker employed at the Carman Memorial Hospital. This trip will be the fulfillment of a long-held dream.

Dennis and Marion are long-time members of Roseisle EMC. While the November 8 evening helped to raise funds for building supplies, it was also a musical event featuring Manitoba singers Jamie Giesbrecht and Melodie Dawn Loewen.

During the month of November we were privileged to hear a number of visiting missionaries tell us about their lives and work. November 16, Grace Thiessen spoke to us. She has been working in Bible translation for 24 years with the Zapotec people in Oaxaca, Mexico, under Wycliffe Bible Translators. Her stories gave us a glimpse of the painstaking patience and hard-earned insight it requires for translation work from an oral language.

Carl Loewen, working with Action International in the Honest Hands program, spoke to us on November 23. He works mainly with evangelized street kids, particularly older teens, in a discipleship setting. Dante, one of the young men, was able to lead his grandfather to Christ. Carl

and Lisa Loewen returned to Philippines in January 2004 with their sons Isaiah, Jacob and Samuel David, born September 14, 2003.

November 30, John and Sharon Friesen reported on their trip to Bolivia at an evening service followed by coffee and a lunch.

Drama and Dessert Night, held on November 29 and organized by the Ladies' Fellowship, launched the season of Christmas festivities. *Candlewick Productions* presented the drama *On Such Things*. It was an opportunity to invite friends and neighbours to enjoy real live theatre and indulge in a luscious array of trifle desserts and coffee by candlelight.

The Advent Pizza Supper on December 7 was organized by the Christian Education Committee for the whole church family. Following a pizza supper, a frosty evening of sleigh rides and caroling in the community, everyone tramped into the warm church building to enjoy hot chocolate and Christmas baking. The annual Sunday school project collected 48 shoeboxes for Samaritan's Purse, Operation Christmas Child.

The December 8 Ladies' Fellowship Christmas Party was an evening of gift giving around the Christmas tree. One by one the women revealed who they had prayed for during 2003. New names were drawn for 2004, then we lingered to enjoy each others' company over coffee and dainties.

The Christmas program on December 22 featured a drama involving the whole Sunday school. *Christmas is Calling Me Home* was directed by Shirley Harder. Faith Krahn selected and recorded the music. Eleanor Friesen, CE Superintendent, coordinated. Everyone played their roles with verve and enjoyment. Ten-day-old Paige Cenerini, filling the role of the infant Jesus, kept our attention riveted on the nativity scene. Colorful costumes and the rich collage of Christmas music combined to create a memorable retelling of the world's best story.

On December 31 the church gathered for a fun-filled evening of voluntary items, games, food and prayer. Pastor Randall Krahn began the evening with a devotion based on Jeremiah 10, cautioning us "not to learn" or be terrified by the customs and "worthless idols" of the times. On a less serious note, he recited from memory Robert Service's poem, *The Cremation of Sam McGee*. At



Dennis and Marion Klassen are anticipating a two-week mission trip to Nicaragua in February 2004.

midnight everyone divided into small groups to pray for each other and the church.

On Sunday morning of January 4, Pastor Randall Krahn read a letter informing the Roseisle congregation of his resignation. Randall and Faith Krahn have accepted a call to pastor Swift Current EMC. The resignation will take effect at the end of April 2004, closing almost ten years of leadership at Roseisle.

In his letter Pastor Randall said, "The church has been good for us and our family." Randall and Faith are a much loved pastor couple and Roseisle church can attest that Krahns have been good for us.

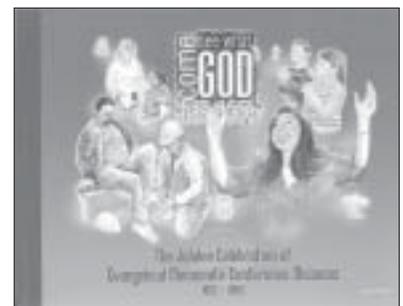
Nancy Peters



Calling Intercessors for Picture Butte!

God is doing a new work in Picture Butte, Alberta. You can become involved in this work by joining a prayer team. This prayer team will spend a weekend in Picture Butte on April 23-26, 2004. You will then commit yourself to pray for this church plant for one year and seek to involve your church in praying. If you would like to be a part of this team, please contact Peter or Trudy Dueck (Directors of Canadian Church Planting) as soon as possible. Call 204-376-3490 or e-mail tpdueck@mts.net

Trudy and Peter Dueck
Directors, Canadian Church Planting



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Pastors focus on church's purpose

Steinbach EFC: With Mo Friesen as our new associate pastor we have definitely seen changes in our worship service. The days of sliding up and down our chorus overheads and sermon outlines are slowly vanishing, making room for a more readable PowerPoint.

It is also encouraging to see our two pastors working at focusing our whole church on what is truly the purpose for our existence. They have chosen to preach five consecutive sermons on the purpose of the church, and then have taken it to a different level by offering a Thursday night study on this same topic.

It is our desire to set a clear and definite direction for our church and all of its existing programs. We are anticipating that God will present us with new challenges. We may be asked to think outside of the box and step out of our comfort zone to serve Him more fully.

In October about 35 women from our church had the privilege of going on a retreat to Moose Lake Bible Camp. The speaker for the two-day retreat was Linda Edwards from Winnipeg. Her topic was *Walk by Faith and Not by Sight*. The women in attendance were encouraged to spend more time reading their Bibles,



Jordan Stoesz is a king in the Christmas play *What Gift Will You Bring?*



Four-year-olds sing *Christmastime* and *Away in the Manger*.

memorizing Scripture and (as she put it) "scrap your plate and let God refill it."

On November 30, our church family grew when Sheldon and Christine Heinrichs and Ben and Marie Klassen chose to transfer their membership to our church. We are so glad you joined us!

Then it was time to begin our Christmas activities. Our Sunday school Christmas program *The Message of Christmas* took place on Dec. 14. The evening consisted of our preschool classes each doing their own small presentation, the grades 2 to 5 classes performing the drama *What Gift Will You Bring?* and a group of seven young ladies singing the most beautiful Christmas music in their own unique style. How

privileged we are to be able to teach our children the truth of God's Word and then watch them give glory to God for coming to earth as a Baby at Christmas.

On December 24 we had our second annual Candlelight Service. Again we were presented with the true meaning of Christmas through a drama by Pastor Ed Peters, his wife Ruth Anne, and their daughter Amanda. Interspersed in the drama were carols, solos, duets, and a trio.

The year 2003 has come and gone. We as a church are looking forward to what lives ahead in 2004. It is our desire to be faithful in whatever challenges God has planned for us.

Ruth Thiessen

Retired leaders gather

Steinbach EMC: On Tuesday, January 14, retired church leaders gathered for a joint meeting called by Pastor Ron Penner.

The gathering was unique. Nothing like it had been tried before. Present were 20 individuals—former pastors, missionaries and deacons.

In his opening remarks Ron explained the inspiration for this meeting. In observing the congregation, his eyes fell on a number of people who had been actively involved in ministry in the past and were now a part of the audience. His question was how can we be most useful and support the local church.

"I see you as important in the Steinbach EMC church," he said. He wondered what role we could play. "Are you happy

the way things are as to your involvement in the church?" he asked.

He wondered how we saw ourselves contributing. Is it social activity? The church needs prayer, he remarked. He also mentioned good old-fashioned singing. Or do we need to address church issues? Is there a need for a fellowship like this one?

He affirmed that retired leaders are a significant group in the church. "You are valued," he said. "You are needed."

Pastor Penner summed up once more that his purpose for this gathering was to acknowledge the presence of this group in the church and decide how we would like to participate in the church.

A follow-up meeting is planned for February 11.

Dave K. Schellenberg

Glimpses of Community Bible Fellowship in 2003

Swan River, Man.:



Margaret and Kevin Nemez transferred in and Nathan Buhler was baptized in April. Pastoral couple John and Connie Reimer stand with them.



The church surprised Jack and Winnie Dyck with a celebration in honor of their 25th anniversary in March.



Staff, students and parents gathered for the *See You at the Pole* prayer event in September. It turned out to be a rainy morning as CBF Christian School prayed for our country.



A carnival for kids was held in October, with the church family and community involved.



Chris Kuharski and Bethany Reimer were baptized in June by Pastor John Reimer.



Family camp at Madge Lake, Sask., is a highlight at the beginning of September.

RFC Retreat at Wilderness Edge

Rosenort (Man.) Fellowship: On October 18, 2003, thirty-one ladies from Rosenort Fellowship Chapel drove to Pinawa's conference centre The Wilderness Edge. Ranging in age from 25 to 78, the ladies anticipated a great weekend retreat.

The guest speaker Joan Van de Linde, with her friend Lynne Manikiel, shared openly with us how the Lord had made Himself known to them in their life (exercise) of faith. They opened themselves to us, relying on what it says in James 5: "Confess your sins to one another that you may be healed."

Their topic *SHAPES* (Something happens as people exercise spiritually) was based on three forms of spiritual exercise: spending time in the Word (Heb. 4:12), in worship (Ps. 95:6-7), and in prayer (Phil. 4:6-7). The Word of God gives understanding, light, and is our source of hope. Worshipping God brings freedom, obedience, and healing. When we pray, God comes to us; God may not be early, but He is never late with answers to our prayers.

Joan stressed over and over again that it is ultimately not in our striving but in our surrendering that we would know God's wonderful plan for each one of us.

The committee planned well. Pam Cornelsen, Tami Siemens, and Vanessa Siemens had interesting games that were played throughout the weekend. Crafts

were done by some "crafty" ladies. Much of Saturday afternoon was spent pampering each other with a massage, a pedicure, or a manicure. Then we went for a short tour of the old Pinawa dam that was in operation from 1906 to 1951.

Singing was led by Jeannine Schellenberg and Tammy Sanderson. Tina Driedger led us in a meaningful, emotional communion service on Saturday evening.

Sunday noon seemed to come quickly, as the whole weekend was a success.

Great accommodations, being touched by God, fine meals, fun, and togetherness were experienced by everyone in attendance. We praise God for His goodness and grace extended to us. We look forward to another retreat in the future, where we will seemingly get to know each other in a deeper way, as was meant for us to do. Thanks for all involved in making this a great weekend.

Judy Schellenberg



Ladies from RFC held a fulfilling retreat on October 18-20, 2003.

Fun evening at Prairie Grove

Lorette, Man.: Prairie Grove Fellowship Chapel youth hosted a fun-filled event for the entire family on October 31, 2003. Youth pastor Jason Dueck coordinated with the "teens" team to host an evening of games, face painting, activities, singing and (best of all) "snacking." Definitely, a fun time was had by all and that's no clowning around.

Carol From

Pauline Klassen, Jonathon From, Amanda Doerksen, and Stacy Klassen enjoyed the evening of October 31.



On December 14, 2003, Brian and Tricia Reimer transferred their membership to our fellowship. They are shown here with their children, Alex and Natasha, and pastor couple Darnell and Emily Plett. We welcome them to our congregation.

(photo by Darnell Plett)

Kingdom assignments

St. Vital (Winnipeg, Man.): In fall the 10 people who were given \$100 at Easter to see where God would have them do "His Kingdom Work" gave testimonials.

One person used the money to sponsor a camp speaker; another to have a

came forward to take on the task.

This fall the Sunday school children sold cookie dough as a fundraiser for the church building project. Our 500 units were sold bringing \$2,807 in for our building fund.

Many, many hours of volunteer labour have been done on the building site. The approximate value of volunteer labour already done by our congregation up until November 30 was nearly \$19,000! The roof is now shingled, the doors and windows are in and apparently the youth



Evelyn and Awln Davison are the new pastoral couple at St. Vital EMC.

room is drywalled! We hope to be meeting in our new building by spring.

Heidi Friesen



As a congregation we prayed for our deacons. Eileen Scharfenberg and Gordon and Mary Bueckert are in the foreground. Shawn and Merris Dyck and Jeff and Marcy Froese were also commissioned.

weekend camp for teenage girls called Make-up Bag Ministries! Someone will get to go to Urbana this winter. One person used his talents as well as his "talent" to raise money for the building fund by selling an entertainment unit he built. One saw the money as a symbol to encourage others to give to charities.

I need to mention one person in particular. Joseph Plett contacted many people about growing his \$100 for God's kingdom. Joe raised over \$2,000 for our church building project over the summer! Most of his donors were from outside our church.

This fall we accepted three new members into our church. Transferring in was Evan Falk; Leanna Boychuk and Tenniel Brischuk were baptized.

A big change in our church has been the hiring of Awln Davison as our pastor. Awln has been a big part of our church for years, starting off as college and career leader and lately serving on our ministerial team and as the church council chairperson. He actually was the chairperson of the pastoral search committee when God called him to be our pastor! Awln was ordained and they were commissioned as our pastor on November 23. We are so happy to have Awln and Evelyn using their gifts to serve our church.

Also on November 23 we had a commissioning service for our new deacons. The church is growing so quickly that we needed to have deacons appointed. After prayer and a congregational vote Gordon and Mary Bueckert, Eileen Scharfenberg, Shawn and Merris Dyck and Jeff and Marcy Froese



"We light a thousand candles bright." A kids' choir was led by Shawn and Merris Dyck for the Sunday school Christmas program on December 14.



Our church building as of December 12.

Family Life seminar touches lives

Straffordville, Ont.: From October 29 to November 2, we were privileged to have Al Friesen come and share a Family Life seminar with us. We had two 50-minute sessions each evening, with a coffee break in between.

With the overflow being used almost every evening, it was evident that people wanted to hear how they could improve their family life. Many of our church members shared how the seminar touched their lives, and many made commitments to improve their family life.

On November 15, we had a Mystery Supper. We did this as a fundraiser for a new floor in our foyer. We had a lot of fun, and as a bonus, raised all the money we needed for our floor.

A baptism and membership reception service was held on November 23 and was followed by a communion service on November 30.

Our pastor couple John and Lorna Wall have felt the call to go to Durango, Mexico,



A baptism and membership reception service was held November 23. Participating were Pastor John and Lorna Wall, Annie Schmitt (membership), Abe Schmitt (baptism), Lena and Ben Krahn (membership), David and Gertrude Giesbrecht (membership), Abe and Lena Wall (membership), Frank Giesbrecht (membership), Pete Reddekopp (membership) and his wife Lisa.

to help in the EMMC church there for three months. We are thankful for our minister couple, Ike and Maria Froese, and the rest of the ministerial for being willing to lead our church while Pastor John and Lorna

Wall are gone. We will miss them, but look forward to their return.

The month of December was a busy one with all the banquets and programs. I trust that we can always remember the true meaning of Christmas and look forward to Christ's return.

Margaret Berg

SBC Leadership Conference



Empowered Leadership in a Congregational Church

March 19-20, 2004
Speaker Owen Burkholder

Call SBC to register 204-326-6451 or 1-800-230-8478
Register online: www.sbcollege.mb.ca
Pre-registration preferred

2004



Students, be on the lookout for these men!



Tim Rogalsky



Chris Eidse

Post-Secondary Events

**Canadian Mennonite
University**

Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2004
Noon-1:30 p.m.

Room C-11 South Campus

Speaker: Tim Rogalsky, CMU professor

Providence College/Seminary

Thursday, Feb. 26, 2004
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The Well (behind bookstore)
Speaker: Chris Eidse, ICYA

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



**Plan to attend the
54th 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*

Mennonites and Catholic study Anabaptist martyrs

A group of prominent Mennonite and Catholic scholars met July 15-17, 2003 at St. John's Abbey in Minnesota to begin an unprecedented joint historical study of 16th-century Anabaptist martyrs.

Entitled *The Anabaptist Martyr in an Ecumenical Context*, the conference was an outgrowth of the international Mennonite-Catholic dialogue that has taken place.

Brad S. Gregory, a Catholic historian at Notre Dame University in Indiana, presented the keynote address. His study of Protestant, Anabaptist, and Catholic martyrs in the 16th century is entitled *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Harvard, 1999).

Professor Gregory argued that understanding the motives and beliefs of the 16th century actors requires putting aside the modern position of condemning religious persecution. "Persecution" would have been viewed by the authorities as "prosecution of dangerous religious criminals." Diversity in religious practices was seen as a real threat to each community member's chances of salvation. Prosecution "was born of a dogged pastoral concern."

Professor Gregory's remarks stimulated a lively discussion. Reexamination of historical events and theological perspectives was a recurrent theme among respondents.

Neal Blough, director of the Paris Mennonite Centre and a participant in the international dialogue, reported that because every community needs its "collective memory," which reinforces group identity. Nevertheless, each community also needs to purify its memory—to eliminate false memories—so that a growth of shared memories is possible.

John Roth, a Mennonite professor of history at Goshen College in Indiana and editor of the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, suggested that the tenacity with which Anabaptists embraced the martyr stories was related to the authorities' efforts to suppress dissent on the validity of the prosecutions.

A. James Reimer, a Mennonite professor of theology at Conrad Grebel University College of the University of Waterloo, Ont., argued that the "act of prosecution and the authorities' theological doctrine cannot be easily distinguished." Continuing reflection, he suggested, could focus on whether something was wrong with the authorities' theology.

MWC



MEMORIES OF OUR MOM KATIE JANZEN HARMS MARCH 1, 1935 TO JANUARY 28, 1979

It is difficult to put down on paper the warmth of a hug, a mischievous smile, laughter, and love, but in some small way, these memories of Mom are a part of who we are and who we have become.

Our earliest memories go back to our childhood. When Mom would bake buns, she would give us some dough to make our own buns. We had these cute little pans, and she let us "bake buns" too. How grown up we felt and, of course, they tasted just wonderful, no matter how much we had played with the dough.

In March 1960, our Dad was ordained to the ministry. Mom's gifts of music, hospitality and love for children were terrific

assets to starting a new church in the town of Roseisle. She played piano and organ, served many meals (using pretty dishes!), visited the sick and suffering, and babysat other children in the church.

She also was a hard worker, planting an acre of garden and then later shelling "umpteens" gallons of peas under the shade trees in the heat of the day, and doing corn till the wee hours of the morning with her older daughters.

What fun she had preparing for special occasions such as Christmas; supposedly giving us hints (noises/actions) as to what they had bought for us. Grandma and her had the greatest time keeping these secrets and yet trying to make us extremely curious. It always worked. How they laughed and enjoyed themselves.

Mom and Grandma had a very close relationship. Grandma spent many days and weeks at our house. She was a very important part of our family. We took time to go and mow her lawn, take her for appointments, and visiting her was always important. We even took a family vacation with Grandma. When Mom got sick, Grandma came to look after her. She cooked, cleaned and looked after us when Mom was too sick. How fortunate Mom was to have her Mother there for her. They shared many special times together.

Mom never lost her faith and trust in God, even in the hard times. She knew that ultimately He was in control and, that no matter what, God had a wonderful place prepared for her heaven. During our Mom's lengthy illness, she never complained or blamed God. She continued to do special things for us. Heidi got her 7th birthday present in Mom's hospital room.

She always wanted to know what had happened at school that day. She continued to use her gift of music by playing the organ and piano for those who were taking care of her, particularly our Dad, grandmother and aunts. She still laughed at our antics, sometimes to the point where she would throw up.

In her last days, she and Dad made a list of the particular things that were to be passed on to her daughters. The thoughts she expressed to her sisters Sarah and Mary in her last weeks were, "This is not a time for dying, it's a time for living to see my children and grandchildren."

We remember the day she died. Mom took a long look at us before we left for church that Sunday morning. When we got home she was in a coma. We were at her bedside when she took her last breath at 1:15 p.m. Heidi walked to the kitchen and pointed to heaven to let our grandma and aunts know that she had passed on. We remember the long line of cars in the funeral procession, and it gave us comfort to know that our mom had meant so much to so many people.

Because of her death at a young age, we are very aware of how short life can be and how precious time spent with family is, and that being a loving wife and mother is one of the most important jobs in the world. We have more of an awareness of what it means to "enjoy the moment" because of what life dealt us.

How thankful we are for the rich and wonderful heritage we have. Mom lived her life in such a way that we saw Jesus in her and she left us a wonderful example to follow.

Mom will always have a special place in our hearts. We would have loved for her to meet our kids. We know she would have loved and been so proud of them.

Twenty-five years later, Mom's example, life and death continue to influence our lives and we in turn are passing her faith and life of service down to our children.

By daughters Lucille, Elaine, Eleanor and Heidi
Compiled by Heidi Friesen



Daughters Heidi, Eleanor, Elaine, and Lucille.



John K. Fehr
1927-2003

John Fehr was the sixth child born to Jacob and Sarah Fehr in Rhineland, Saskatchewan, April 1, 1927. He was raised in a small Mennonite farming community and spent his later teen years working for other farmers in Saskatchewan.

Work was scarce in winter on the Prairies, so at 21 Dad and some of his friends traveled by train to Burns Lake, B.C., to look for work. Upon his arrival at Takysie Lake, he worked in sawmilling operations for several winters. In his first winter, Dad was introduced to the George Wiebe family, where he picked his bride before she knew about it. After several winters of courting, he married Mary Wiebe on April 1, 1951.

Dad was baptized in his early twenties at Cheslatta.

Dad purchased some property and then went into business for himself—sawmilling in the winter and farming in the summer. In 1962, Dad and Mom moved from Cheslatta to Decker Lake where he was employed by George Hamp until his retirement. During those years, Dad bought property at Rose Lake which he logged and sawmilled with his sons.

Dad and Mom were blessed with 12 children: five daughters and seven sons.

Dad enjoyed spending time with his family, music, gardening, animals and birds.

In 2002, Dad was diagnosed with lung cancer. After courageously battling cancer for one year and seven months, he went home to be with the Lord on December 4, 2003.

He was predeceased by his loving wife Mary, two grandsons and four brothers.

Dad is lovingly remembered by: Helen (John) Froese of Riverton, Man., Tina (Glenn) Martin of Three Hills, Alta., Trudy (Ray) Boldt of Glenbush, Sask., Joe of Burns Lake, B.C., Ann (Mark) VanderGriend of Edmonton, Alta., Jake of Campbell River, B.C., Martin (Nora) of Burns Lake, B.C., Martha (Tom) Phillips of Calgary, Alta., Menno of Vernon, B.C., George (Rhoda) of Burns Lake, B.C., David of Campbell River, B.C., and Dan of Burns Lake, B.C.; twenty-four grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, four sisters, five brothers, and many nieces and nephews.

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands (Psalm 112:1).

His Family



MINNA REIMER
1932-2003

Mom was born to Peter and Gertrude Barkman on August 23, 1932, in Blumenort, Manitoba. She enjoyed a pleasant childhood until, at the age of 12, her home was devastated by the death of her mother. Her father remarried, family life was restored and two more sisters brought the total of siblings to four brothers and seven sisters.

In May 1948, Mom was baptized upon the confession of her faith in Jesus Christ in the Blumenort Evangelical Mennonite Church.

In 1952, the Barkman family moved to Riverton where they started a new homestead. Her siblings remember her easygoing personality and the many good times they shared.

On September 19, 1954, Mom married our father, Jake. They built their first home in Blumenort. Their lives were blessed with five daughters and two sons. Tragedies struck the family when two-year-old Eldon died accidentally in 1959 and in 1986 when Donald also died in a traffic accident.

Mom and Dad always enjoyed an active life, working diligently to provide for the family. In later years they did most everything together—yard work, traveling, shopping, playing table games and puzzling. Often Dad would read aloud as Mom quilted. They also helped us with garden work and preserving vegetables.

Mom was the family chauffeur and we remember family trips to Belize, Mexico, British Columbia and the east coast. They were active members in the various church communities they lived in: Blumenort, Mennville, Pansy, Okno and Morweena.

One of the ways in which Mom demonstrated love to us was in her careful selection of gifts. She loved giving and had a keen sense of what gifts would suit our needs or desires. She remembered each son-in-law's favorite dishes and would make our visits special by serving them.

Family, both immediate and extended,

was important to Mom. Her heart ached for those who seemed to be lonely or unhappy and desired for all to experience acceptance and the joy of Christ's love.

Mom and Dad have always had many friends, but in their retirement years they had more time to develop even deeper relationships. The senior care groups, in Okno and in Morweena, were a source of joy for them. They enjoyed going out for lunch or coffee with friends. Mom had really looked forward to living in the Morweena Apartments and the added opportunity to socialize. Now her social life is in a completely painless environment.

In 1999, Mom was diagnosed with cancer followed by major surgery in Seven Oaks Hospital. With hopes of a possible cure, she underwent chemotherapy and, in the spring of 2000, she went for a month of daily radiation. During this time Mom and Dad stayed with her sister Helen and John in Winnipeg, and she drove herself daily to the hospital.

Mom experienced a period of remission, but in April of 2002, her back started bothering her increasingly. In October the doctors found the cancer had returned. She was admitted to the Percy Moore Hospital in November. When her legs refused to carry her, she was transferred to Health Sciences Centre for further tests. There they discovered a tumor on her spine. Her back pain was finally eased by radiation, but she never walked again.

After her last hospital stay, where it was discovered that she had had a slight stroke at the end of December, she was discharged to their new home in the Morweena Apartments on January 9, from where she moved to her heavenly home on June 28, surrounded by Dad and the family.

Left to mourn her passing are our Dad and five daughters: Louella (Peter Toews), Grace (Joe Reimer), Rosanna (Peter Loewen), Verna (George Wiebe), Valerie (Milton Plett), 24 grandchildren, two great-grandchildren; her brothers and sisters, Frank (Helen), Annie (Abe Brandt), Abe (Mary), Helen (John Wiebe), Albert (Teena), Peter (Mary), Kathy (Pete Reimer), Trudy (John Kehler), and Dad's brother and sisters.

Besides her sons, she was predeceased by her parents, sisters May and Margaret and sister-in-law Lydia.

There is no life in Mom's body right now...but the resurrection is coming! Because of God's grace, she will rise again and live forever.

Her Family

There is no life in Mom's body right now...but the resurrection is coming! Because of God's grace, she will rise again and live forever.



**INFORMATION EVENING
FEBRUARY 19
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Complete Grades 7-12!

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E-mail: pgilbert@cmu.ca

Births

TOEWS-THIESSEN - to Rod Thiessen and Karen Toews of Steinbach, Man., a son, Liam Skye, on April 8, 2003.

PETERS - to Benny and Eva Peters of Mitchell, Man., a son, Tyson, on May 27, 2003.

THIESSEN - to Anthony and Teresa Thiessen of Rosenort, Man., a daughter, Gabrielle Lauren, on May 27, 2003.

FRY - to Ben and Krista Fry of Swan River, Man., a daughter, Emily Jane, on June 30, 2003.

FRIESEN - to Kurt and Audrey Friesen of Winnipeg, Man., a son, Cameron James, on July 7, 2003. He was placed in their home July 9, 2003.

PETERS - to Scott and Elisa Peters, EMC missionaries in Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, a daughter, Avery Leigh, on July 14, 2003.

HILDEBRANDT - to Jim and Melanie Hildebrandt of Steinbach, Man., a son, Cole James, on August 26, 2003.

LOEWEN - to James and Marci Loewen of Winnipeg, Man., a daughter, Jessicah Rae Maire, on September 6, 2003.

WIEBE - to Craig and Michelle Wiebe of Winnipeg, Man., a daughter, Logan Olivia Marie, on September 24, 2003.

MURRAY - to Luke and Lisa (Siemens) Murray of Australia, a son, Oscar Jack, on October 4, 2003.

TOEWS - to Larry and Kerry Toews of Camp Arnes, Man., a son, Devon Alexander, on October 16, 2003.

DUECK - to Ben and Kendra Dueck of Niverville, Man., a daughter, Anika Elisabeth Joy, on October 22, 2003.

REIMER - to Darren and Melaney Reimer of Winnipeg, Man., a daughter, Ava Christine, on December 1, 2003.

KLASSEN - to Dwayne and Shannon Klassen of Swan River, Man., a son, Jasper N., on December 2, 2003.

JOHNSON - to Dan and Twyla Johnson of Norquay, Sask., a son, Micah Reuben Theodore, on December 4, 2003.

CENERINI - to Norm and Michelle Cenerini of Notre Dame, Man., a daughter, Paige Nicole, on December 12, 2003.

WALL - to Isaak and Trudy Wall of Milverton, Ont., a son, Oscar Henrique, on December 14, 2003.

BERGEN - to Wes and Kellie Bergen of Winnipeg, Man., twin sons, Nicholas Grayson and Tanner Joel, on December 15, 2003.

POT - to Willie Pot and Kristen Cleaver of Swan River, Man., a daughter, Morgan Lea Katherine, on December 19, 2003.

PAYNE - to Larry and Leanne Payne of Arborg, Man., a son, Isaiah Joseph, on December 21, 2003.

ZELISKO - to Joe and Christina Zelisko of Arborg, Man., a daughter, Kennedi Payton, on December 23, 2003.

FRIESEN - to Jason Jennifer Friesen of Winnipeg, Man., a son, Aaron Parker, on December 27, 2003.

THIESSEN - to Delmer and Judy Thiessen of Tolstoi, Man., a daughter Ainsleigh Elisabeth, on December 30, 2003.

Weddings

BRANDT - CONTOIS: John Brandt and Loretta Contois were married on December 15, 2002, in Swan River, Man., with Pastor John Reimer officiating.

THIESSEN - LEASK: David Thiessen and Emma Leask were married on July 13, 2003, at Primrose Park in Birch River, Man.

DYCK - PARROT: Joey Dyck and Lanna Parrot were married on July 23, 2003, in Denver, Co., with Don Parrot officiating.

SCHULLMAN - GILLES: TJ Schullman and Erin Gilles were married on August 2, 2003, in Swan River, Man., with Pastor Nigel Packwood officiating.

BROWN - BARKMAN: Chad Stuart Lynn, son of Garry and Vi Brown of Steinbach, Man., and Cynthia Kelly, daughter of Walter and Dianne Barkman of Steinbach, were married on August 8, 2003, at Blumenort EMC, with Rev. Barry Plett officiating. The couple lives in Steinbach, Man.

KROEKER - DERKSEN: Steven, son of Richard and Lavina Kroeker of Rosenort, Man., and Carri, daughter of Jake and Ruth Derksen of Morden, Man., were married on August 16, 2003, with Rick Neufeld officiating. The couple lives in Winnipeg, Man.

KLASSEN - KLASSEN: Kevin, son of Ben and Lena Klassen of Lorette, Man., and Pauline Klassen, daughter of Paul and Eveline Delorme of Winnipeg, Man., were married on September 13, 2003, at Prairie Grove Fellowship Chapel, with Darnell Plett of Lorette, Man., officiating. The couple lives in Winnipeg.

DEACON - GIESBRECHT: Paul, son of Paul and Fern Deacon of Winnipeg, Man., and Aganetha, daughter of Peter and Susie Giesbrecht of Rosenort, Man., were married on September 27, 2003, in Winnipeg, Man.

REDDEKOPP - FROESE: Pete, son of Abraham and Susana Reddekopp of Mexico, and Lisa Froese, daughter of Antonio and Susana Fehr, were married on October 26, 2003, in Straffordville, Ont., with Leonard Barkman of Pansy, Man., officiating. The couple lives in Aylmer, Ont.

KEHLER - PETERS: David Clifford, son of Cliff and Suzanne Kehler of Steinbach, Man., and Kristy Rose Peters, daughter of John and Rose Friesen of Steinbach, Man., were married on November 8, 2003, with Rev. Ed Peters officiating. The couple lives in Manitou, Man.

ARANCIBIA - KOOP: Claudio Estaban, son of Carlos and Ruth Vera of Calgary, Alta., and Heidi Michele, daughter of Charles and Lorraine Koop of Calgary, were married on December 27, 2003, at Abbeydale Christian Fellowship, with Pastor Charles Koop and Pastor Carlos Vera officiating. The couple lives in Calgary.



**Reporters,
keep the news
coming!**

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

Roseisle EMC, a warm, friendly congregation serving a diverse community, seeks a **full-time pastor**. Roseisle is a small rural town in south-central Manitoba. The church's average Sunday morning attendance is 85.

The applicant should be familiar with the Mennonite perspective and willing to be guided by the EMC Statement of Faith. Previous pastoral experience is an asset. Please submit resume and cover letter to Peter Dyck, Box 4, Roseisle, MB R0G 1V0, phone 204-435-2068; or Frank Peters, Box 94, Roseisle, MB R0G 1V0, phone 204-828-3571.

Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary Schools, Inc. seeks a **senior principal/ CEO** for August 2004. This person is responsible to the board of directors and provides overall leadership. The person will have a broad educational background and experience; support WMES' mission and mandate; have or qualify for a Manitoba teaching certificate; be a good communicator; be interested in development; relate well to the public, to staff and to the board; and be self-motivated with a passion for leading a superior team of educators.

WMES is church-related and independent, operating two campuses (Bedson K-8 and Agassiz K-6), with a total enrolment of about 500 students. Its mission is to "provide Christ-centred education, integrating faith and life, within a caring school community." These vibrant, energetic educational centres reflect an open admissions policy. Submit resumes by March 31 to WMES, 250 Bedson St., Winnipeg, MB R3K 1R7 Attention: Bob Peters, board chair, or by email to boardchair@wmes.ca.

Inner City Youth Alive is an organization in the North End of Winnipeg, Man., that reaches youth and their families in the community. It seeks a **community ministry coordinator** that will work with adults from the surrounding community, and with volunteers and staff to be the hands and feet of Christ. It also is seeking a **program director** that should possess pastoral gifts and be ready to support and encourage the staff team. Phone: 204-582-8779. Email: icya@mts.net. Website: www.innercityyouthalive.org.

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 McMahan, SK S0N 1M0; or email blfriesen@t2.net.

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 a 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.

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.

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 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.

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.

Reserve Fellowship Chapel (EMC), located in Sioux Valley, Man., seeks a **part-time senior pastor**. The smaller 47-year-old congregation is part of the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, a community that has a Christian history going back to 1879. The church serves people of various church backgrounds and experiences. Current there exists ministries through

a small Sunday service, Sunday school, Bible study and a summer VBS program. The congregation is located about 45 minutes from Brandon and Virden, where a variety of work opportunities exist. For information about this opportunity, please contact the EM Conference office at 204-326-6401.

Action International Ministries needs a **business administrator** to serve in Manila, Philippines. This position is open immediately for someone who loves the Lord and people, is an administrator, and can trust the Lord for their support. Other ministry opportunities exist. Learning Tagalog is encouraged, but not required. You would work with about 25 missionaries and 12 Filipino staff who minister to urban poor, street children and to strengthen churches. Two years is required, four or more preferred. Check our website: www.actionph.org or email Mary Ann at maryann@actionintl.org.

Gospel Mission Church (EMMC) seeks a **full-time senior pastor** to serve a growing congregation of about 170 in the city of Winkler, Man. Primary responsibilities are preaching, teaching, training, and developing leaders within the congregation to reach out and disciple others. This congregation has a large percentage of younger families. We have active youth, Sunday school, home bible studies and ladies ministries. Contact Jake Giesbrecht, Gospel Mission Church, R.R.1, Box 565, Grp 39, Winkler, MB R6W 4A9. Phone 204-325-5414; e-mail at jgiesbrecht@gvgsd.mb.ca

Coming Events

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| <p>Feb. 28 EMC All Boards Meeting Ridgewood EMC Giroux, Man. Phone: 204-326-6401</p> <p>March 5 <i>Peace that passes all understanding</i> Eden Foundation benefit concert, 7:30 p.m. Mel Braun (baritone) Laura Loewen (piano) Mennonite School Choirs First Presbyterian Church Winnipeg, Man. Phone: 204-325-5355</p> <p>March 5 to 7 <i>Our Story, God's Story</i> Speaker: John H. Neufeld Retreat for families with a person with mental and physical challenges Camp Assiniboia Headingley, Man. Phone: 204-896-1616</p> <p>March 6 New Direction for Life Fundraiser Kilcona Park Alliance Winnipeg, Man. Phone: 204-452-1826</p> <p>March 7 <i>Peace that passes all understanding</i> Eden Foundation benefit concert, 3 p.m.</p> | <p>Mel Braun (baritone) Laura Loewen (piano) Mennonite School Choirs Winkler Berghthaler Mennonite Church Winkler, Man. Phone: 204-325-5355</p> <p>March 19-20 <i>Empowered leadership in a congregational church</i> Speaker: Owen Burkholder SBC Leadership Conference Steinbach Bible College Steinbach, Man. Phone: 800-230-8478</p> <p>March 29 Deadline for Social Concerns Essay Contest <i>What is our Christian Responsibility to the economic poor?</i> Open to high school students Phone: 204-326-6401</p> |
| <p>July 2 to 4 54th EMC Annual Convention <i>Reproducing the New Testament Church</i> Swan River, Man. Phone: 204-326-6401</p> <p>July 9 to August 2 Project Macedonia Belize, summer ministry Phone: 204-326-6401</p> | |

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Third Way Café
www.thirdway.com

The Personal Touch

Sierra Leone

From Brokenness to Service

Menno Plett

WHEN traveling in Sierra Leone, the impressions one receives belie the recent past. Sierra Leone is a rather peaceful place, but we know that it has come through 10 years of civil war where the population suffered displacement, injury and death.

The general impression now is that people are busy putting their lives back in order. Farmers have moved back to their villages. By now they are harvesting rice, cassava and sweet potatoes after years of living in displaced camps within Sierra Leone—in camps outside the country, or in the bush, far away from the reach of armed factions who loot and plunder everything in their path.

Although life appears normal, one knows that the trauma and desolation people experienced during the war do not somehow magically disappear. Many have been scarred physically. Thousands more have suffered mentally, psychologically and spiritually.

One fellow I know works as a project coordinator for the Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone (EFSL) in the northern region. EFSL is World Relief Canada's partner in Sierra Leone.

His work is to oversee the distribution of seeds and tools to farmers who have recently returned to the region, many from neighboring Guinea. I asked him to tell me about the years of civil war and how he had been affected. He related his story to me:

"I was teaching in a town in central Sierra Leone, when as a result of the fighting, I suddenly found myself behind rebel lines, unable to get back to the capital city of Freetown. As an educated person, I knew that my life was in danger. I knew of no other way than to try to go unnoticed. I moved to the village, and made every effort to blend into the environment.

"I grew my hair long and had a scraggly beard. My clothes

were tattered, and I lived life as a villager as best I could, in order for my life to be spared. When the rebels came, they would force us at gunpoint to carry loads for them. We had to do their bidding or suffer the consequences. They would loot villages, and we would be forced to carry the stolen goods for them. Women and young girls were abused, and young boys were given guns and forced to join the rebel factions."

For three months he lived in the bush in order to escape the kind of treatment country dwellers were subjected to. My comment to him was, "Surely, no one can be subjected to this kind of treatment and not have some kind of scars, some issues of trauma and hurt to process. How did you deal with those experiences and those memories?" He recounted that once he was able to get back to Freetown, he was basically immobilized.

"I was so traumatized," he said, "that I spent much of my time remembering and crying. I didn't know how to carry on with life. All of life seemed so meaningless. I had a very difficult time understanding these experiences, and somehow incorporating them into my life. I grieved for the many friends and family I had lost during the years of fighting. It was not easy for me to get a handle on how to go on living."

For him, service to others in need became a key in helping him process his own grief. The EFSL invited him to join them as a volunteer, to respond to the needs of the Internally Displaced People community in Freetown. By moving alongside others who had suffered a similar fate, he was better able to deal with his trauma. His experiences helped him to respond to others who had suffered similar atrocities.

He helped others gain strength on their road to physical, mental and spiritual healing. From his position as a volunteer, he was later hired to direct the rehabilitation project in northern Sierra Leone.

His life story exemplifies, in a very personal way, how World Relief Canada's indigenous partners spread the salt and light of the gospel. Doing Christian development work involves many technical aspects such as making program plans, drawing up budgets, and doing assessments. But at a fundamental level, it is a way for people to reach out to help their neighbours in need.

Sometimes this reaching out is done from a position of strength, but often, as in the case of this man, help is offered to others from a point of brokenness. ■



Menno Plett (Prairie Rose) is Africa program coordinator for World Relief Canada, the relief agency connected with Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, of which EMC is a partner. Before that, Menno served for many years with MCC, a relief and development agency.

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.