



"We are the church," Willard Metzger told those who gathered for an outdoor worship service on Wednesday evening at Waterloo Park.

We are the church

The end is not ours

Dave Rogalsky

"We are the church!" cheered Willard Metzger, General Secretary, inviting progressively younger age groups to join with him in an ever louder cheer.

"Being the church is not easy. In fact, there is little that is more difficult than being the church," he continued at Wednesday evening's service in the park.

Painting the picture of what the church is facing today, Metzger turned to the text from Revelation 21. The church of the 1st century was also having a difficult time. He wondered out loud if John the Revelator despaired, away from his community, worried about how things were going there. Did John remember Jesus' cry from the cross and contextualize it: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken us?" But, in spite of difficulty, and challenge, Metzger told the congregation, "**This is not the end!**"

"The book of Revelation is not an easy message. John was not telling the church to relax and that everything would be fine." In fact, Metzger continued, were there some who expected the church to be obliterated? "Would faith drown in the blood of the martyrs?" He wondered out loud if some in our "post modern, post Christendom context . . . entertain the same thoughts"? But this is not the end. God is not finished.

Putting his faith in God at work in our youth he said, "The youth will be the church who will speak the unthinkable and risk doing the unimaginable." God, through the Spirit is filling us with courage and hope for the task ahead.

This is not the end, and the end belongs to God. "It is God who will determine the end." Revelation makes it clear that no matter what happens in the world, God is in charge. "For now we struggle, swimming against the current, defying the calls to abandon hope."

The passion of God to restore and make things right in the world will always rise up within the hearts of God's people."

We are the church."

Let's make a difference!

Elsie Rempel

"Let's make a difference!" the kids sang out at the Children's Assembly Thursday morning as they were encouraged to focus on others who follow the dreams God puts in their hearts.

As Ilene Bergen retold John's vision of the New Jerusalem with the help of strong visual aids, we almost gasped at the wonder and beauty contained in the closing words to our Bible. Our hearts were glad for this hopeful conclusion.

A little later Jeff and Tany Warkentin, Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers recently returned from Burkina Faso, spoke about how their heart dreams grew into a ministry placement in Ouagadougou. We listened eagerly, and I suspect some dream seeds were germinating as we did so.

As the children went into their individual response groups, I settled into a bit of organizational work, but kept an ear tuned to the wit and wisdom emerging from the group who called themselves "disciples". I wondered what nicknames Jesus might have for the colourful members of this group. Sons of Thunder, perhaps?

I stepped into the hallway just as cleaning personnel came by. They told me how different the Assembly children and youth were from some

of their other guests, and expressed their hope that we would come back. They were deeply impressed by the friendly way they saw children working and playing together, by the respectful conduct they observed and experienced from them, and by the tidy state they left behind in all of the spaces they occupied.

Our children and youth are making a difference.

I took the opportunity to say a little about who we are as Mennonite Church Canada, and that I hoped it was the light of Christ that was making a difference in our lives. As we parted ways, their farewell words included "God bless you".

May this glimpse into Children's Assembly bless you too.

Harmony motion referred to General Board

Dan Dyck

The Harmony Motion was referred to the “care of the General Board” by its mover, Ben Borne, at today’s delegate session. The General Board will now work at incorporating the Harmony Motion into the Being a Faithful Church 3 discernment process on matters of human sexuality.

The Harmony Motion is “Not about what is right, but how we [non-heterosexuals] are treated,” Borne said in an address to the delegates.

The motion’s intent was to again draw attention to and hold congregations accountable to the 1986 Saskatoon Resolution on Human Sexuality. The Harmony Group says its members have been hurt and continue to feel excluded from right relationships with the church as a result of their sexual orientation.

Sam Steiner expressed qualms about referring the motion to the General Board, fearing the “tendency to bury it. I would have preferred respectful discussion in this body. To immediately take the sting out of a difficult discussion seems to be doing less than we are called to do.”

Rudy Dirks, Chair of the Christian Witness Council, seconded the motion to refer the Harmony Motion to the General Board. “A vote at this time would not be in the best interest of the Body of Christ,” said Dirks.



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

Numerous other speakers offered affirmation for Mennonite Church Canada’s leadership, prayers for the next phase of the BFC 3 process, and spoke of Borne’s courage in bringing the motion forward, and noted his grace in referring it to the General Board.

Judith Friesen-Epp challenged delegates. “We have been given a gift of grace. This is not only the responsibility of the General Board, but that

we seriously take this home with us.”

Willard Metzger, General Secretary, asked for and received permission to deviate from the agenda and invited Borne to the podium to pray for the church. Ben Pauls led the congregation in “Gentle Shepherd,” concluding the formal discussion portion on the Harmony Motion.

Delegates approve biennial assemblies

Dan Dyck

The Mennonite Church Canada Assembly in 2012 will mark the start of a two year cycle of national church gatherings, followed by assembly 2014, 2016, and so on.

While the motion to make this change passed with a strong majority, some delegates were not enthused about meeting biennially. They did, however, understand the financial impact of annual assemblies and the related demands on staff. Diminished personal connections and fewer opportunities for Area Churches to host an assembly were noted concerns.

Joanne Moyer pointed out the environmental impact of meeting annually. “It costs a lot to the environment every year, so it is also a creation care issue,” she said.

Less clear to some would be the impact on youth assemblies, which already occur biennially. Delegates heard that there are no plans or resources to produce another youth assembly again next year, so the next youth assembly would not occur until 2014. Lisa Carr-Pries, volunteer Chair of the Christian Formation Council, and Dave Bergen Executive Secretary of Christian Formation

(staff) asked for further delegate discussion on this matter, observing that this decision means that one group of teens will likely miss out entirely on a national youth assembly experience during their high school years.

It was not clear whether delegates grasped this implication.

Press deadlines did not allow time to seek responses from youth and youth sponsors.

Epic News is the daily news sheet for the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2011 in Waterloo, Ontario. It will be brought to you daily from July 4 – 8, 2011. Full colour editions of *Epic News* will be available in PDF format at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1389. We will print an ecologically friendly quantity of hard copies for distribution on site – please share. Comments, questions, and affirmations can be sent to ddyck@mennonitechurch.ca.

Editors: Dan Dyck, Deb Froese; **Design by** Megan Kamei, Ryan Roth Bartel

Christ-like responses to lack of Middle East peace sought

Dan Dyck

Peace has avoided this place for 60 years, said delegate Palmer Becker in response to a motion being advanced by Leon Kehl, Floradale Mennonite Church.

Seconder Rick Cober Bauman, Director of MCC Ontario, spoke to the motion, indicating that a similar motion had already been passed at the delegate sessions of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

The motion asks that Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Central Committee work together to “provide resources to help churches and individuals discern and seek Christ-like responses to the ongoing lack of peace in Palestine/Israel.”

There was no discussion on the budget implications of the motion. The motion easily passed.

Walk for International Peace

Rachel Bergen, National Correspondent for *Canadian Mennonite*

Though many Mennonites have been involved in or supportive of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), many say they feel God must be brought into the equation through prayer for their First Nations brothers and sisters.

Hundreds of Mennonite Church Canada Assembly participants gathered to walk and pray for people from all corners of the world, including those in their own backyard – the First Nations people of Canada.

The prayer walk also involved singing hymns from around the world.

For Melanie Kampen, a delegate from Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, being a part of

the prayer walk was “an opportunity to show solidarity with our Aboriginal neighbours. The prayer walk was a liturgical practice; as we stepped together across broken land we trusted that our prayers to our Creator would be for ‘the healing of all nations.’”

Hundreds of Mennonite Church Canada Assembly participants gathered to walk and pray for people from all corners of the world...

During the prayer, walkers faced one another recognizing that we are a part of many peoples living in North America, what the First Nations refer to as Turtle Island.

“We are people who often struggle with addiction, poverty, affluence, and a lack of purpose in life,” they prayed. “Loving God, pour your blessing on North America.”

According to Neill von Gunten, who recently retired as Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry Co-Director, “for the First Nations community, knowing that the Christian community is praying for peace, reconciliation and restoring justice is very important... prayer is also very important in their culture.”

Those taking part in the walk also prayed for people in South America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East through liturgy and song.



Transitions

-Dan Dyck

The Gathering Church in Kitchener-Waterloo was officially accepted into membership of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, and by extension, into Mennonite Church Canada.

David Martin, Executive Minister of MCEC, also acknowledged the closing of a Eglise Evangelique Mennonite de Rawdon, Quebec, as well as two new emerging churches, Refuge of Peace Sherbrooke, Quebec, and Freedom Gospel Ethiopian Church, Toronto, Ontario.

Pastor Jim Loepp Thiessen receives a wall plaque symbolizing The Gathering Church's new membership in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, and by extension, Mennonite Church Canada. – photo by Dan Dyck

Planes for Peace

Emily Loewen, Canadian Mennonite Young Voices Editor

Paper planes may not fly themselves to Ottawa, but with help from Canada Post, these planes will deliver a message to Stephen Harper — spend less money on war.

Throughout the week youth have been folding paper planes, covering them with words and pictures of peace. After the week is finished these planes will be sent to the capital.

The act of folding paper is “something really simple,” said Renae Friesen from Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, but in big numbers it could make a difference. Though they likely won’t meet the goal of thousands, by Thursday noon teens had already completed 455, some including messages like “this plane doesn’t fly, and neither should yours.”

Though the teens hope that Canada’s leaders will consider their message, they are also realistic about the immediate impact. “It’s not like they’re going to return [the fighter jets],” said Micahela Epp, from Altona Bergthaler, but if we don’t do anything they won’t know that we disagree.



Throughout the week, youth have folded and decorated planes to send a message of peace to Ottawa. Photo by Emily Loewen

Epp, Friesen and Benita Bage felt that it was important to get involved in politics like this because it’s their future at stake, and if they don’t work for change now they will have to live with the consequences when they’re older. The teens suggested that the government would be better off spending money used for war on things like

education, textbooks, social programming and foster care.

Kathy Giesbrecht, Associate Pastor at Home Street Mennonite Church, says the government should be using the billions spent on conflict to establish a Department of Peace, a movement with chapters in over 30 countries (www.mfp-dop.org). Creating a peace department wouldn’t mean doing away with defence entirely, “we’re not naive,” Giesbrecht said, there is conflict in the world but we think they “might want to experiment with some solutions” and find options that don’t include violence.

Though Giesbrecht thinks the government tends to write off pacifists, she said she has hope “my own government and the world can live in different ways in my lifetime.”



Anika Bartel, Trang Tan, Eric Siemens and Fiona Mo fold and decorate paper planes to be sent to Ottawa with a message of peace. Photo by Emily Loewen

Science Fiction Films and God’s Future - seminar

Dave Rogalsky - Eastern Canada Correspondent for Canadian Mennonite

Can Neo from the Matrix (Larry and Andy Wachowski, 1999) be seen as a ‘Christ-figure’?

The discussion at the end of Thiessen’s seminar was going strong with some digging into the questions of redemptive violence, while others were asking whether Neo was a Messiah-figure and not a Christ-figure, while others were saying that was just semantics . . . Over it all Thiessen was smiling as the group was doing what he hoped – talking about what they are watching, discuss, argue, and finally apply.

Another discussion had to do with whether we can learn about not watching our ‘screens’ all the time, while over consuming, from movies like Wall-E, watched on a screen and created by a company interested in increased consumerism. The message of Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1927) is that technology can and will be used to oppress. Thiessen asked why we haven’t learned that lesson, even though movie after movie has repeated that message, and movie after movie has suggested that there is much more to life than rationality, things and individualism.

Loren Johns en'light'ens during Thursday's Bible Study

Dave Rogalsky – Eastern Canada Correspondent for Canadian Mennonite

Revelation 21:22-26;

22 I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 People will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations.

Focusing on Revelation 21's description of the New Jerusalem Loren Johns took the congregation through the background of symbols in the text. The sea and night are both gone. The sea, a god named Yam, has been defeated by God, as has the terrifying god of the night Nyx. This is God's final victory over evil. Johns wondered if this was John's experience on Patmos, surrounded by sea and the deep darkness of night. In God's future, neither will be present. Even the nations, the gentiles who are sometimes

God's enemies and sometimes already among God's people, will walk in the light. They will bring their glory into the city of God, joining God's glory. The nations will come and be healed in the city. Revelation 7:9-10 declares that people from every nation, tribe, people and language will receive salvation from God.

Johns concluded, drawing a practical application from Revelation 22:17 which he called a remarkable shift of perspective. After multiple calls inviting Jesus to come, the invitation is extended to "anyone who is thirsty to come and drink" of the living water. Even though Jesus has not yet answered the call to come, the water of life is already available, for anyone who wishes to drink. Even before the city has come, or the kingdom has come, the water of life is available.

Church must wrestle with Scripture says Suderman

Barb Draper, Canadian Mennonite

The account of Jacob wrestling in Genesis 32 is an analogy for Bible study, said Derek Suderman in his seminar, "Wrestling with Scripture: Moving from Biblical Illiteracy to Biblical Engagement."

He pointed out that it is not clear from the text whether Jacob was wrestling with God, with a man, or, as suggested in Renaissance paintings, with an angel. When we ask questions about specifics in the Bible, it challenges us to pay attention and to have another look.

"I'm not sure what a believers' church looks like if we don't wrestle with the Bible," said Suderman. "The goal of Bible study is to encounter God through something that seems human and nitty-gritty."

To have an effective Bible study, it is helpful for the facilitator to know something, otherwise the Bible study is reduced to a pooling of ignorance. He also encouraged leaders to ask questions that are open-ended and that draw attention toward, not away from, the Bible. A wide-ranging discussion over coffee and doughnuts that wanders far from the text is not a good model. An engaging Bible study calls people to be part of the interpretation. Resources should be used judiciously; the Bible should not be a secondary resource.

It is obvious that Suderman's familiarity with Hebrew and his knowledge of Old Testament culture makes him a wonderful Bible study facilitator. He himself clearly enjoys wrestling with the text and raising questions that encourage others to also become engaged.

Bylaw changes reduces quorum

Dan Dyck

Delegates approved a bylaw change that would reduce the quorum required for Mennonite Church Canada national assemblies.

"I've moderated assemblies where I have quite literally been handed a slip of paper during opening ceremonies that indicated whether or not we had quorum," said Moderator Andrew Reesor McDowell,

The bylaw change reduces congregational delegate quorum from 200 to 150, and Area Church delegates from 50 per cent of total voting delegates to a fixed number of twenty.

No delegates responded to an invitation to discuss the motion.

Number of the Day 3.5

3.5 million Canadians – or about 10% of us – live in poverty. In First Nations and Inuit communities, one in every four children grows up in poverty.

Every month, 770,000 people in Canada use food banks. Forty percent of those relying on food banks are children. See www.makepovertyhistory.ca



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Serve with your eyes open

Emily Loewen, Canadian Mennonite Young Voices Editor

Traveling to Haiti to help with rebuilding sounds like a great service trip right?

Maybe, maybe not — that was the message at Thursday afternoon’s “Serve – But With Your Eyes Wide Open” seminar.

“We may think or want things to come out of it, but it’s not automatic,” said Allan Reesor-McDowell.

Reesor-McDowell was clear that service and learning opportunities, like SALT or Enlace, can be extremely valuable for young people and adults alike when executed properly. Such exchanges can promote cross-cultural learning, compassion, inspire a vocation, spiritual discipline and a sense of perspective.

Attendees suggested that many youth need to get out of their bubbles and come back from such trips with new priorities and a desire to get involved in the church. But service trips also risk becoming glorified vacations – adventure-filled weeks or months that can have negligible or even harmful effects, said Reesor-McDowell.

According to a Princeton University study, \$2.4 billion was spent on service trips in the US alone in 2005, and some scholars wonder if that money might be better donated straight to the cause. There are also worries that these exchanges might leave participants promoting the cultural stereotypes the trip was designed to break down, said Reesor-McDowell.

Despite these and other concerns, he was clear that there is a place for service and learning adventures. But participants should be very clear on



Participants discussed the pros and cons of service trips in Thursday afternoon’s seminar
Photo by Emily Loewen

the purpose of the trip (learning and relationship-building rather than vacation), and there needs to be significant pre-trip training and post-trip debriefing to make sure the lessons stick.

“If you expect the trip to be everything, you’re probably going to miss some great opportunities for discipleship and growth,” said Reesor-McDowell. He also suggested that these trips be co-directed by a church in the destination community to ensure the work is helpful.

Though there is worry that these trips could be damaging Reesor-McDowell encouraged participants, “you shouldn’t not do anything because you’re afraid of mistakes”





Erb Transport is pleased to support the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2011 in Waterloo, ON.

Don't feel bad about that extra piece of dessert...

Mennonite Church Canada staffer Coreena von Kampen did some rough number crunching for the week on behalf of assembly goers. If you...

- ... walked to and from Ron Eydt Village to Hagey Hall Tuesday through Friday for meals, plus went to the picnic, you walked 33.4 kms this week.
- ... were here on Monday and attended the Monday evening worship and you walked 3.8 kms
- ... were part of the peace walk or the Sarah Harmer concert you can add an additional 3 kms for each.

Our 515 adult attendees collectively walked a total of 17,201 km/day, for a collective total of 68,804 kms over 4 days!

About that waistline...

Each of use burned approximately 5500 calories over the entire week, for a grand collective total of 2,838,165 calories burned.

Now if only that energy could be fed back into the power grid. ☺

(These calculations do not include youth, those who drove between locations on campus, or any walking during the sessions or an recreational walking.)

Hanging on to the Rock

Rachel Bergen, National Correspondent of *Canadian Mennonite*

The great commandment states in part to “love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul and mind,” but for Gayle Gerber Koontz, it’s easier said than done, especially if you don’t have your mind.

In her seminar entitled “Life Flows On: Church Families and Mental Illnesses,” the Professor of Theology and Ethics at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) recounted stories of her family members who have struggled with mental illness. A church community can make all the difference, she said.

Gerber Koontz shared the utterly terrible experience her family has had with mental illness, but said that through many approaches to care including medical intervention, patience, meaningful work, a supportive community, and strength, they were able to see the light at the end of an otherwise dark and hopeless tunnel.

“In the midst of pain that doesn’t go away, pain, suffering and joy can exist together,” she said.

This can happen when the church helps families with mental illnesses abide in the love of Christ.

During discussions, participants determined that people in the church can often get caught up in their own misunderstandings and misinterpretations, and end up handling a situation poorly.

The situation becomes especially difficult when family members suddenly have to cope with a mental illness that they have not experienced before.

“I didn’t know how to ask for help... I didn’t know what I needed,” Gerber Koontz said.

What families really need are educated friends, a small group of very devoted friends, physical acts of kindness, honesty, and perhaps even the anonymous availability of funds to access so that financial burdens can be lightened.

The support from a church community can mean so much to a struggling family, Gerber Koontz says.

According to the lyrics of Hymn 580, “My life flows on,” which was introduced during the seminar, “No storm can shake my inmost calm – how can I keep from singing?”

Gerber Koontz says that “I’ve sure been shaken, but I have held onto a rock that indeed God is Lord.”

“In the midst of pain that doesn’t go away, pain, suffering and joy can exist together,”

She has since come to believe that her experiences have been blessings. Though she would never wish such suffering on anyone, she has gained a new understanding and awareness of mental illness. She has learned about courage, the ability to accept help gratefully, to feel hope that it’s possible to survive crises, and developed connections with other families who have had similar experiences. She has also developed new sensitivities in teaching and a profound sense of Christian community.

“I learned how to live with joy and hope and with thanksgiving in the midst of suffering,” Gerber Koontz said.



“You can’t get there from here,” might be the most common response provided by volunteers at Assembly 2011 - Mennonite Church Canada Staff are very thankful to the dozens of volunteers and onsite staff who helped this week. We could not have done it without you! Photo by Dan Dyck

Voices from the past

Moreover, the gospel and its adherents are not to be protected by the sword, nor are they thus to protect themselves....

Conrad Grebel (c. 1498–1526)

Announcements

Seminar Room Changes

Please note the following changes to Seminar room locations:

Friday, 4pm Seminars:

- “Is the end near?”HH150
- “Humour Me” ML 246
- ”Join the Anabaptist Party” ML349
- “In the Spirit of Humanity” ML212
- “On the Hot Seat”HH336
- “We Have \$\$\$ For You!” ML311

Note: Please pay careful attention to verbal announcements regarding additional seminar location changes.

Due to the mail strike you probably have not received the last edition of the *Canadian Mennonite* dated June 27. Feel free to pick up a copy at our display on second floor of Hagey Hall next to the refreshments area. We had extra copies printed for you to take home with you. --Dick Benner

The final Saturday, July 9, 2011 edition of

Epic News will be compiled and posted on line at www.mennonitechurch.ca/events/waterloo2011 after July 14.

Today’s edition (Friday, July 8) is the final hard copy edition you will receive on site.



During the Friday (July 8) afternoon break time.

Kids from the Children’s & Jr. Youth Assembly will be selling bracelets and necklaces created from seeds and carved clay beads indigenous to the West African country of Burkina Faso. Proceeds will be used for a church building for the Foyer Evangélique Mennonite de Ouagadougou (FEMO), and a proposed Children’s Ministry program there.

We want to hear from *you!*

Please fill out an evaluation form and hand it in. We value your help in making future Assemblies an *Epic* experience!

From the Archives

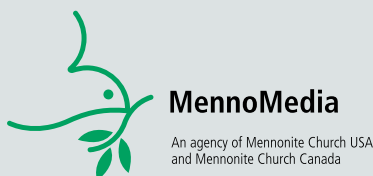


Warm Relief

A behind-the-scenes view of the quilt auction at the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale in 1970. Held annually at the New Hamburg fairgrounds since 1967, this is the oldest Mennonite relief sale in Canada.

Prepared by Laureen Harder-Gissing, Mennonite Archives of Ontario

Photo credit: MCC Ontario photo collection, Mennonite Archives of Ontario (grebel.uwaterloo.ca/mao)



Visit the MennoMedia Book Table in Hagey Hall Room 139. Open daily from 8 till late!
Check out new title specials; meet authors, enter draws and browse and buy great books, CD’s and DVD’s!