

February 2015, *Equipping* #153

## CommonWord Debuts!

Walk-in users in need of Anabaptist resources now have access to the same range and quality of services online users have enjoyed for some time – with coffee on the side – thanks to the generous contributions of congregations across the country. On January 5, 2015, the Resource Centre officially became CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Centre, a new collaboration of Mennonite Church Canada and Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). It is located across from the new coffee shop, Folio Cafe, in the new CMU library building, Marpeck Commons.

Funding for the new CommonWord space is being raised through the support of congregations across the country. Some of those congregations have already made a three year financial commitment in response to a joint invitation from Mennonite Church Canada and CMU.

CommonWord is now a better equipped ministry that extends well beyond Winnipeg and shares Anabaptist theology ecumenically by serving up the largest curated collection of Anabaptist resources in Canada. Materials for sale are competitively priced. Items are also available for loan, sale and download. Free shipping is available on loaned books. In addition, it offers Ten Thousand Villages merchandise on site. Materials are available through [www.commonword.ca](http://www.commonword.ca) and at the new physical location, 2299 Grant Avenue. Come visit if you are in Winnipeg.

We are grateful for all that can be accomplished by communities working together!



*CommonWord is located in the bright, spacious new CMU library building, Marpeck Commons.*

## Ministry by the Numbers

While it may be tough to quantify ministry, Nathan and Taryn Dirks reflect on 2014 with some terrific numbers – and many of those numbers illustrate how Mennonite Church Canada congregations are walking with this young Witness Worker couple in Botswana.

**38** Prison inmates completed the year long “Bible Timeline Series”

**5** Youth from Mennonite Ministries Bible studies were ordained as preachers at Spiritual Healing Church

**\$19,932** was raised by Mennonite Church Canada congregants in the “Ride for Refuge” last October, supporting the Bontleng Futsal (soccer) Court Project

**4** Regular Bible study sessions held for individual groups of youth, young adults and prison inmates

**55** Bibles gifted to serious students of scripture who previously had no Bible of their own, made possible by support from Mennonite Church Canada

**258** Christmas gift bags packaged and delivered to First Offenders Prison in Gaborone—with thanks to supporting brothers and sisters in Mennonite Church Canada who made it financially possible.

Thank you for walking with Nathan and Taryn as well as other Mennonite Church Canada workers as they serve God!



*Photo by Nathan Dirks. See [ntdirks.com](http://ntdirks.com) for more information.*

*Mennonite Church Canada invites you to share with your congregation these Celebration Snapshots. They should take no more than 2 minutes to read aloud. You might also consider sharing them through your church newsletter, bulletin board, website or other communication avenue.*

*“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 3:11*

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## Sky Pilot

In the 1800's, church clergy were often called "Sky Pilots," possibly in reference to heavenly themes from the pulpit. Aviator Gerry Binnema, the new pastor at the United Mennonite Church in Black Creek, brings a contemporary meaning to this old nickname. As a professional aviator and safety consultant to the industry, he is part of a new trend of bi-vocational pastors.

Gerry brought his skills of clear vision and good planning to UMC in a visioning process to find the place where the gifts and passions of the congregation intersected with the needs of the community. The congregation found an opportunity to serve low-income single-parent families by looking after the kids for an evening and giving parents a break. In addition, UMC hopes to open the church building for use by other people and groups in the community with music evenings.

Praise God for the many ways church leaders pilot their congregations toward new opportunities.



*Gerry Binnema, the new bi-vocational pilot/pastor of United Mennonite Church in Black Creek, B.C. with his wife Elaine, a counselor. Photo by Ingrid Thomas Photography.*

## Growing leaders, One Assignment at a Time

In June of 2014, Dr. Shekhar Singh, the president of Union Biblical Seminary (UBS) in India, contacted Mennonite Church Canada to ask whether Ben and Patti Wiebe could spend some time at the seminary as visiting faculty.

It's not the first time these appreciated and wise teachers have been invited to UBS. For the past 20 years, the Wiebes have played an important role in growing leaders for the church in India through a series of Mennonite Church Canada short term ministry assignments.

"They have been a tremendous source of blessing to the UBS community over the years," Dr. Shekhar Singh said.

In response to this invitation, the Wiebes are returning to India from January 8 to March 16, 2015. Ben will teach four seminary courses for the winter semester. Patti plans to draw from her previous experience of teaching Bible classes and providing English tutoring, to respond to various opportunities that arise in the Women's Ministry Department.

They also hope to visit several Mennonite churches in central India. Ben and Patti live in Beamsville, Ont.



*Ben and Patti Wiebe, Mennonite Church Canada short term ministry workers in India.*

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