

Sending Blessing

As people chosen and blessed by God, go forth in confidence that you are not alone; that you are transformed and renewed through Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to touch your neighbours with unconditional love and inviting compassion. Amen

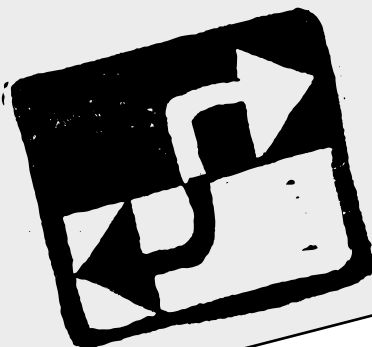
Thursday night's offering generously provided \$6052.65 for the Sichuan Earthquake Appeal.

Thanks be to God!



THE DAILY NEWSHEET OF THE MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA ANNUAL ASSEMBLY, 2008, WINNIPEG, MB

CROSSROADS CURRENT



... and more thanks

There are so many people to say thanks to... all the volunteers—planners, council and board leaders, worship folks, kids assembly planners and volunteers, musicians, writers, photographers, drivers, ushers, billet hosts, media producers, food service folk and cooks, registration, info and hospitality desks, CMU staff and faculty for hosting, transportation providers, break time snack and beverage providers and servers, delegates, everyone who agreed to participate in the “What makes a Mennonite?” YouTube video project, learning track presenters, entertainers and contributors to the People’s Party, all the contributors from a variety of Manitoba congregations, the prayer team... and after all that, we’ve probably missed some folks.

A GREAT BIG

THANK YOU

TO ALL!

A discerning people speak

—Dan Dyck, with files from Deborah Froese

New learning, new challenges, and new hope characterized responses from Mennonite Church Canada and USA participants during the closing plenary of the first ever bi-national People’s Summit for Faithful Living.

Respondents framed comments in the context of the three themes of the event: peace, creation care, and leadership development,

Marvin Wiens (Sask.) observed how during visits to the US, children are repeatedly told that the greatest things they can do is to die for their

country. Susan Mark Landis of MC USA responded how difficult it is to hear about America taking more than its share of everything, but felt compelled to ask for one more thing: “Please pray for the church in America.”

Darren Kropf (Breslau MC, Ont.) offered the only plenary comment to draw applause: “I propose we stop having assemblies where we talk about superficial things and have practical sessions to train us how to be peacemakers.”

(continued on page 2)



Outgoing MC Canada Moderator Henry Krause, demonstrating at the CPT prayer vigil for US war resisters in Canada on Thursday. Photo by Grant Klassen.



(continued from page 1)

Dan Kehler (Altona MC, Man.) observed how closely fossil fuel consumption is linked to violence. "Our addiction to easy cheap energy in all forms is about the environment but also about war. We need to connect those dots. Our use of energy is fueling an economy of war."

Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary and member of Bethel MC (Wpg.) confessed the struggle of knowing that the global church is built on personal relationships while at the same time lamenting the related impact of air travel. He expressed fear that "... somehow we won't be able to deal with this without becoming isolationist."

Palmer Becker (Waterloo, Ont.) encouraged congregations and schools to think about ministerial leadership development more generously than just meeting MC Canada's own congregational needs.

"One of the very real crossroads we are going to live for ourselves [is how] we are going to turn out [enough pastors] for the whole world," noting the rapid emergence and growth of Anabaptist congregations around the world.

"We're limiting ourselves by determining how to produce leaders for our own churches. We need to produce twice as many preachers to share with the world."



Darren Kropf. Photo by Dan Dyck

Young Mennonite brings CO Project to National Historical Fair

by Deborah Froese

Twelve-year-old Allegra Friesen Epp is bringing her project on conscientious objection to a national audience. She is 1 of 15 students chosen to represent Manitoba at the National Historical Fair in Victoria BC July 7-14, 2008.

A student from École Golden Gate Middle School in Winnipeg, Friesen Epp has family ties with conscientious objection. Her great-great uncle, Nick Friesen, went to prison during World War II when he was denied Conscientious Objector (CO) status.

"I heard a bit about his story and I wanted to gather the information that was all around me and put it into a project," Friesen Epp says. She realized that the topic of conscientious objection was something many people would not be aware of and she liked the idea of doing something different.

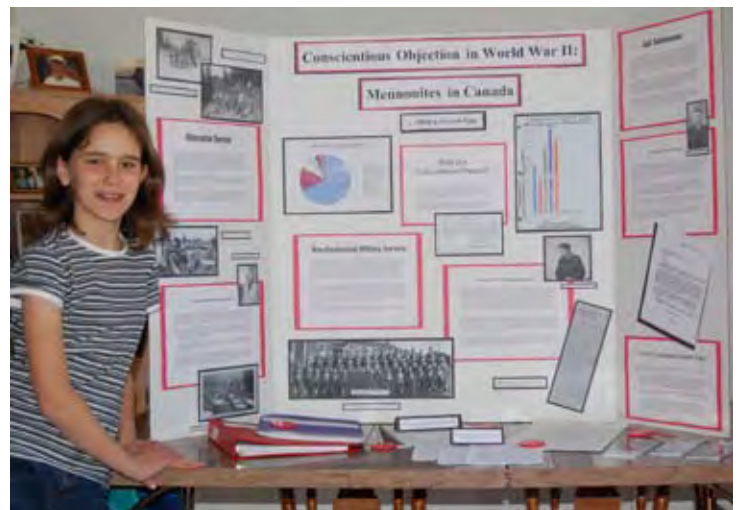
Friesen Epp divided her project into three sections; Alternative Service, Non-Combative Military Service, and

men who were denied CO status. With photographs, copies of newspaper clippings, and personal stories of COs, her project raised curiosity among her schoolmates. "Many of them asked questions," she says. "and I went into further explanation. They were really interested because they'd never heard of it before."

Her project was one of several chosen to represent Grades 6 and 7 at a school-wide fair, gradually progressing to divisional, provincial and national levels.

Undertaking this project has

enhanced Friesen Epp's personal commitment to peace. "There is another option or solution for conflict. You never need to go to war to solve arguments or problems. There are alternatives."



Bright red Mennonite Central Committee buttons reading "To Remember is to Work for Peace" scattered in front of Friesen Epp's project reminded viewers that there are alternatives to war. Photo by Judith Friesen Epp.

Preparing the Way

—By Deborah Froese

Most people would rather not consider the possibility of a pandemic, but scientists tell us it's coming. We just don't know when it will strike. But why should the church prepare for a pandemic when the government—at least here in Canada—is responsible for health care?

According to Janet Plenert, Executive Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada Witness, "As God's people we are God's hands and feet...only God's people can offer God's healing and hope."

Rather than focus on how to prepare for a pandemic, the Pandemic Preparedness seminar looked at why churches should prepare—from a theological *and* a scientific perspective.

Pam Drieger from Eden Mental Health Care said that Christ sent his disciples to heal people not only from disease, but from whatever prevents them from experiencing life fully. That's the responsibility of the church. The church must prepare to care for the marginalized by offering a different type of hope and healing. "In a crisis, we go into automatic mode," she cautioned, "So train your automatic crisis centre to be Christ centred."

She also noted that the early Christian church quite likely grew because of its care for the sick and dying during times of widespread illness.

To illustrate how a pandemic develops, Dr. Dan Nafziger, an infectious disease specialist from Goshen, Indiana, drew upon slides and scientific commentary.

Mennonite Church Canada is developing resources for proactive churches to develop coping strategies. A website, currently under development, is available with pandemic history, preparedness and information about flu prevention (www.churchpandemicresources.ca). It also includes an information booklet that can be printed out.

Further information is available on

DVD from the MC Canada Resource Centre or on-line at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/693.

The Mennonite Publishing Network is planning three related resources; a four-session study guide providing a theological background for pandemic response suitable for Sunday School or Bible studies (spring 2009), a children's book with stories of church history and contemporary churches, and worship resources.



Pam Drieger stresses the importance of responding to a pandemic with the healing and hope of Christ. Photo by Deborah Froese

THE MC CANADA RESOURCE CENTRE

...linking families and churches to available Christian resources.

A resource partner.

"Current partnerships with other Mennonite resource providers allow us to offer all of their titles for a preview loan. We also anticipate, in the near future, the launch of a Canadian "resource consortium" that will link the databases of 4 resource centers (MCEC, Columbia Bible College, Mennonite Brethren in Christ Resource Centre, and ourselves)."

~Arlyn Friesen Epp, Resource Centre Manager

CONGRATULATIONS TO NANCY MANN, RITA ENNS AND CHARLEEN JONGEYAN HARDER, THE WINNERS OF A BASKET OF RESOURCES!

Although the Assembly is over, we'll still be here for you via phone, email or online catalogue! A couple of reminders:

- We're a national centre—we send materials across Canada
- Our online catalogue (www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre) allows you to browse, loan, purchase or download items from one Anabaptist Centre
- Our collection is unique—and growing. We have multiple Anabaptist partners who supply us with all their titles, and we add, on average, 3 resources/day—so there's always something new
- All of our downloads are free
- We'll help link you with available resources on a theme or for an occasion
- We'll ship books free (both ways) anywhere in Canada
- Cheaper by the Dozen (see info in your tote bag) offers librarians an extended bulk-loan option
- We welcome your congregation's original materials (worship, education, etc.) for further circulation
- We have MC Canada, MPN and Canadian titles for sale electronically
- Keep abreast of new and seasonal materials by subscribing to the Resource Update - www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/347



The Anticipation of Promise

—By Jean Lehn Epp

Who knew that Deuteronomy could be so exciting! Derek Suderman, Professor at Conrad Grebel College, let his enthusiasm flow through the text as he encouraged us to “dig deep.” Like a nature walk, Suderman guided us through the book of Deuteronomy, stopping to smell the flowers of detailed language and look for the signs of life—or grace—as we read and discerned together.

As if at a crossroads, the people of Israel find themselves preparing to leave the wilderness behind after 40 years. Moses and the generation of people born in that wilderness stand on the edge of a mountain overlooking the promised land. What will they do without Moses? What does it mean to obey the law of God in this new land? Will God be different? Will they be different?

In Deuteronomy, Moses guides us through similar times of transition in

our churches and in our lives. Suderman pointed out three challenges in Deuteronomy; to remember, to equate listening with obedience, and to anticipate.

Remember

Remember the covenant that God made with the Israelites as God formed them in the desert. Yet remembering goes deeper than regurgitating the past. In Deuteronomy, remembering invites us to recall both the stories and the law. The laws and narrative from Genesis to Deuteronomy interpret and give understanding to each other. What would happen to our reading of Deuteronomy if we saw the law or Torah as reflecting or institutionalizing God’s grace?

Our past will only take us so far. We need to discern together the grace-filled word of God and reinterpret it for the new setting of the promised land. Moses reinterpreted the ten commandments for a generation that had not experienced Mount Sinai for them-

selves. Moses invited them to view this covenant with God as applicable for them and future generations, not only for their parents.

Suderman challenged listeners to embrace our traditions, examine their roots and interpret them with the next generation and the nations around us for “if you don’t live the law then you are not remembering it!”

Listen=Obey

Repeatedly Moses calls us to “hear,” which literally translated from Hebrew means to “listen and obey.” Keeping the law in Deuteronomy is synonymous with following God. We are called to do this with all our heart, soul and might, but Suderman encouraged us to hear Deut.6:5-9 with more than a touchy-feely reading. In Hebrew, the heart is the decision-making home of the person. The soul is the origin of our life-breath reflection of our entire being, both body and soul. So we were challenged to let our listening to God flow into whole-life obedience.

Anticipate

Anticipate the future of the promised land—the future of the church! We may be declining in numbers but those who are engaged in the church are committed and creative. Let’s dream together as a wise and discerning people so that we are faithful to the covenant that God made with us. May we remember, hear, obey and dream of what the church can be for our children and our children’s children. We are standing the edge of the mountain overlooking the unfamiliar promised land—but we have the word of God in our hands.

Jean Lehn Epp is a Associate Pastor at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church



Derek Suderman. Photo by Dan Dyck.

Gifts of God the Creator

—By Deborah Froese

"Whatever happens to our earth will happen to the children of the earth," she says. "The earth will provide for us as long as we respect and honour everything it offers."

Métis Elder Mae Louise Campbell shared this old proverb with those gathered for the seminar "The Spiritual Significance of Land and Water" facilitated by the Mennonite Creation Care Network led by Norman Meade, also a Métis Elder. Presenters compared the traditional Aboriginal view of Creation—with a particular emphasis on water—to what happens when Creation is misused.

Campbell said that aboriginal people believe God gave them the responsibility of caring for Creation—and they don't take this responsibility lightly. Traditionally, they showed thanks for whatever they used. If they took a bucket of water from the lake or gathered berries from a bush, they offered something in return - an offering of tobacco, perhaps. The first Europeans to arrive in North America interpreted Aboriginal respect for the earth and their expressions of gratitude as idol worship.

The phrase "water of life" has particular meaning to the Aboriginal people who note its relationship to the life-giving womb. It is not to be tampered with.

Greg McIvor from Crosslake knows intimately the damage inflicted by interfering with nature. His family has worked a trap-line in Northern Manitoba for generations. But through hydro developments, vast areas of the trap-line and the land around it were flooded. Caribou and some other species of wildlife have vanished. Trees sit in pools of water, slowly rotting.

Using his own resources, McIvor chartered a helicopter with film cameras and mapped out about 3100 sq km around his trap-line. He shared portions of the video; much of the landscape is muddy brown, barren land. The brown areas are flood lands, water pooling around the trunks of trees that once composed a lush forest.

He says that when Manitoba Hydro plans projects or measures the environmental impact of existing dams, it restricts reporting to shoreline damage. It does not look to the areas beyond.

McIvor is worried about more than the loss of wildlife or the trees themselves. When vegetation sits in water, it deteriorates, creating methane gas, carbon dioxide and other chemicals. By-prod-

ucts of decomposition sink back into the water, contaminating it and killing fish. He reports that in some northern areas, the affect of overland flooding is "the equivalent of a 300 megawatt coal-burning generating station."

"They say it's renewable energy," McIvor states. "I don't know where they got that from."

Manitoba Hydro has plans to build more dams. "Our people live along the rivers and lakes and depend on them and the bush for survival, to maintain who we are as a people," McIvor says. "We can't go into the bush anymore. It's all flooded, it's destroyed."

At the conclusion of the seminar, Campbell, Meade and McIvor were presented with gifts of appreciation—clay cups for holding water.



Métis Elders Mae Louise Campbell and Norman Meade, and Greg McIvor from Crosslake led the "Spiritual Meaning of Land and Water" Seminar. Photo by Deborah Froese



At Assembly 2008 MC Canada welcomed a new congregation—the Vietnamese Mennonite Church, in Vancouver, B.C. It began in August, 2001 with the leadership from Nhien Pham who came from Calgary, and received financial support from MCBC. In seven years it has grown from 19 to 70 adherents, and is currently exploring the possibility of extending its ministry to Abbotsford. The Vietnamese Mennonite Church formally joined MCBC on Feb. 23, 2008.

Counting Prayer Beads

Everything begins with one—including prayer. On the prayer bracelets the children are making, praying begins with the “invitation to praise” bead located just below the “south” bead on the lower side of the bracelet (see the Thursday morning edition of Crossroads Current). After circling the bracelet of beads, prayer ends on the cross directly below the “invitation to praise” bead. The cross reminds us of the prayer that Jesus taught us.



Over 100 bracelets were distributed, raising a total of \$764.78.



Home Street Mennonite Church youth raised \$228.88 for MC Canada's Youth Assembly Bursary by selling snacks at yesterday's People's Party. L-r: Eric Siemens, Peter Sawatsky, Jessica Klassen, Meara Sparling, Maxine Wagner, Kathy Giesbrecht (Associate Pastor, Home Street MC). Karen Peters, (MC Canada staff), right, accepted the gift on behalf of Anna Rehan, MC Canada Youth Ministries Facilitator. Photo by Dan Dyck



From the Archives

Concordia Hospital nursing and other staff, 1931. Service and healing are at the heart of Anabaptist/Mennonite understandings of the Christian faith, and the practice of those values has led to the establishment of programs and institutions such as hospitals and nursing homes. How will the church continue to respond to health care issues in the future?

—Alf Redekopp, photo from Mennonite Heritage Centre Photo Collection