

INSIDE...

Niagara United Mennonite Church



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The Responsibility of Reputation

"What church did you say you belong to?" The question caught me off guard.

"Mennonite Church Canada," I responded, and continued to explain that we are a Protestant denomination.

"Oh, I know the Mennonites," interrupted the US Border Patrol Officer. Then he continued to question me about some of our theological positions. I was a bit alarmed, not anticipating that a theological debate would determine whether I would be allowed to board the plane.

"I am just talking with you," explained the Border Officer. But he held onto my passport and fixed his gaze on me as well.

"I know the Mennonites," he continued. He explained how the Mennonites were good people who believed in service and helping others.

This is not the first time I have experienced such accolades for our perceived peaceful character. But this conversation was different. The Border Officer also proceeded to explain Anabaptist history to me. I was about to give him a passing grade, until he credited Menno Simmons with the selfless act of Dirk Wilms, pulling his pursuer from the frozen lake. He did seem to know a great deal about us. I almost suggested that maybe he should become a Mennonite as well. But he still had a firm hold of my passport.

The conversation ended and he wished me and my family of faith God's blessing and wisdom.

Each time such a conversation occurs I am left feeling somewhat overwhelmed. We do have a good reputation. Such a reputation has been formed by generations of faithful living and humble service to God.

To accept the benefit of a reputation is to also accept the accompanying responsibility. It is a responsibility to our past, present and our future. A good reputation bears accountability to our past. The sacrifice and testimony of past generations requires a consistent display in the present if the reputation is to remain intact.

But a good reputation is also accountable to the present. The repute of our current faith movement requires the on-going display of generosity and self-giving service.

This is not a responsibility unique to us as congregations and individuals in Mennonite Church Canada. It is a common responsibility for all who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. A cynical secular society demands more of faith movements. The integrity of service, generosity and joyful sacrifice is the only platform acceptable for faith claims of redemption, restoration and salvation. No matter what we say, or how we say it – the hearing will only come through the experience of radical, self-giving love. This is how the Word of God came to us.

I often shudder at the responsibility of living up to the expectations modeled by those of my past and present community. To be a church that bears the reflection of Jesus Christ is not an easy endeavour. Jesus is rarely restrained by rules. He rejects stereotypes and prejudices. He never plays it safe. But a church that resembles him is a church that awakens a divine hunger in all who experience it. The character of our engagement with life today will either solidify or erode a good reputation of the church.

May we continue to be a family of faith that will provide generations of commendations for our children and their children – so that all who speak of us wish to bless the God we serve.

By Willard Metzger, Executive Director, Mennonite Church Canada





March at a glance ...

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 10:00 am Hans H. Dau 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks 7:00 pm Hymn Sing	3 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:30 pm Male Choir Practice	4 9:00 am Women in Service Quilt 7:00 pm Church Council Meeting	5 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting	6 8:00 pm Choir Practice	7	8
9 No German Service 9:30 am Jr. SS March Blast 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks	10 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:30 pm Male Choir Practice	11 9:00 am Women in Service Quilt	12 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting	13 8:00 pm Choir Practice	14	15
16 9:30 am Jr. SS March Blast 10:00 am Alfred Fast 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks 3:00 pm Seniors' Time Out	17 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young Women's Bible Study 7:30 pm Male Choir Practice	18 9:00 am Women in Service Quilt 7:00 pm Spiritual Council Meeting	19 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting	20 8:00 pm Choir Practice	21 7:30 pm Sr. Youth	22
23 No German Service 11:00 am John Tiessen	24 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young Women's Bible Study 7:30 pm Male Choir Practice	25 9:00 am Women in Service Quilt	26 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting	27 8:00 pm Choir Practice	28 7:30 pm Sr. Youth	29
30 10:00 am Udo Woelke 11:00 am Stephen Cox	31 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young Women's Bible Study 7:30 pm Male Choir Practice					



Sunday Dates	Prayer Requests: Please pray for and with the Church	Ministry Notes: This is how your financial support of Mennonite Church Canada is ministering...from across the street to around the world!	News/Announcements: Stay in tune with the wider church
Mar. 2	Pray for peaceful resolution of tensions in the Ukraine and safety for all, including Mennonite Church Canada partners: Zaporizhzhie Mennonite Church, Pastor Sergey and Lena Deynekin in Kherson, and Mary Raber, a partner through Mennonite Mission Network.	The Mennonite Congregation of Ouagadougou recently moved into a new facility that includes a place of worship and a hostel that provides a safe, faith-building home for university students. Thank you for making this possible!	Registration is underway for Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2014: Wild Hope: Faith for an unknown season. It takes place July 3-6 in Winnipeg. Find more information and register at home.mennonitechurch.ca/events/Winnipeg2014 . All are welcome!
Mar. 9	Indian Residential School Survivors Honour Walk: Winnipeggers Brad Langendoen, Erin Sawatzky, Laurens Thiessen van Esch and Ann Heinrichs are walking from Stoney Knoll, Sask. to Edmonton, Alta. March 7-26, arriving in time to attend the final Truth and Reconciliation event. Pray for energy, strength and opportunity as they walk to raise awareness for improved relations among host and settler people.	Nathan and Taryn Dirks are Mennonite Church Canada workers in Gaborone, Botswana, who focus on young adult ministries with African Independent Churches. With your prayers and financial support, they connect weekly with inmates of the Village Prison in Gaborone. Thank you for helping them to share Jesus' way.	Africa, Asia, South America, and the Holy Land are calling you! If you can: do renovations, property maintenance, administrative work, teach English, practice hospitality, assist a pastor or librarian – or are a young adult looking for a cross-cultural adventure in a Christian context, then Mennonite Church Canada has opportunities for you – right now! Visit www.mennonitechurch.ca/serve/ for details or contact Tany Warkentin at twarkentin@mennonitechurch.ca .
Mar. 16	Pray for Mike and Cheryl Nimz as they connect people with the Anabaptist Network in the UK. Mike works with the Mennonite Trust, a ministry partner of Mennonite Church Canada. Cheryl is a volunteer networking dynamo who says that she and Mike are making ministry connections wherever they go—even at Costco!	A recent fundraiser for Mennonite Church Canada's Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives raised \$4,000. Thank you for helping preserve the pages of Mennonite history.	
Mar. 23	Robert J. and Irene Suderman recently returned from a Mennonite Church Canada short term assignment to the Philippines, China and Korea where they taught and encouraged church leaders. Your generosity made this assignment possible. Thank you!	Thank you for remembering the people of the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan through your support of Mennonite Church Canada workers Dann and Joji Pantoja. Although headlines have faded, the need for restoration and healing will continue for years.	
Mar. 30	Please continue to pray for the members and the work of the Being a Faithful Church Task Force and the Future Direction Task Force as they seek answers to questions about faith and our future, and prepare for plenary sessions at Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2014 (July 3-6): Wild Hope: Faith for an unknown season.	Henry and Erna Funk are working in Israel through SERVE Nazareth as hospital chaplains from January 5 to April 1, 2014. Erna is also teaching English. Thank you for your support of the Funks in this Mennonite Church Canada assignment.	



Sharing Corner ...



The lovely bunch of fair maidens pictured above are the ones who took the course – **Experiencing God by Henry and Richard Blackaby**, from Dec. 2013 through February 2014. It is a 12 week course. At the finish, we were to respond about the course and what we thought of it. Below is a combined answer from all of them of how they felt.

First of all I would like to say it was enjoyed by all, even if we did have to do homework, plus we found time for prayer, song and laughter. The course opened our eyes to what God really wants from all of us and that He is always at work around us.

Having a personal relationship with God is really emphasized and I feel we all came away with a better understanding of God and His son Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. We learned how to pay attention to our heart and mind whether listening or studying. We are not be afraid to ask God what He wants from us and what we need to do to enhance our relationship with Him.

We enjoyed our sharing time about what spoke to us each week. The God moments, were awesome, along with our prayer concerns for us and others. The discussions after each lesson were also very helpful. Working toward a personal relationship with God, makes it a lot easier to stay focused on Him and He gives us the ability to conquer our foes and woes and enjoy the good times. Thank you Jesus.

Submitted by Susan Fast (facilitator)

For the women's bible study (open to all) Monday evenings – 7:00 pm in the Meeting Room
We will be starting a new study on Ephesians and Philippians – starting on March 3, 2014

An invitation to all:

Men or women, if you want to learn more about yourselves and what God wants from you, I recommend you take this course, (**Experiencing God by Henry and Richard Blackaby**). You will not be disappointed.

Call the church office if you are interested, with your name and phone number or email, thanks. We will put something together, when we have enough names. It can be either a mixed group, men or ladies.

OPERETTA IN THE SPRING Friday, May 2, 2014.

"Der Vetter aus Dingsda" by Eduard Kuenneke presented in English "The Cousin from Nowhere" -- A love story.

Please contact Martha Bartel, [905-468-7029](tel:905-468-7029), by April 3, 2014. Bus pickup at NUMC

Not Okay With Violent Play, from the March 2014 Equipping #144

Every day, Cody and Makai are exposed to violent play as young children, even toddlers, fight, shoot and kill with tablet and smart phone games. Christina wrote in a blog post. Real guns are just as common.

That reality prompted Christina to list the reasons why she is not okay with violent play.

1. I want my kids to love like Jesus did. Instead of responding to hate and violence with aggression or passivity, Jesus loved people and found creative ways to end cycles of violence. When kids play with guns, they pretend to shoot and kill. That doesn't teach loving behaviour.
2. I want my kids to practice forgiveness—not only to apologize for the hurt they have caused others, but to forgive those who have hurt them, as Jesus taught us. Violent play exerts power over others and increases the divide between people. It leaves no room for forgiveness.
3. War is not a game. In the Philippines we have been mere kilometers from armed conflict and have witnessed its devastating effects. Families without homes. Brothers and fathers killed in battle. Children whose deaths are “justified” as collateral damage. We have driven past tanks and under helicopters. We've seen bomb smoke lingering in the distance.
4. My grandfather is a WWII veteran who became a pacifist. He described his experience as nothing short of hell. Although he found forgiveness for his actions at the foot of the cross, he struggled for years with the role he played in it as a Captain in the German Army. How can I let my kids pretend to shoot when my biggest role model suffered the realities of war?
5. Violence doesn't solve problems. We all have tendencies toward violence and my young sons are no different. But responding to violence with violence perpetuates the cycle. If I don't want my kids to strike out when they are angry, then I don't want them to “pretend” to strike out either.
6. While our actions might be good or bad, there are no “good guys” and “bad guys.” Concluding that people are either one or the other is contrary to Jesus' view. It is dehumanizing and fuels war.

“Playing with guns won't necessarily cause my children to choose violence as they grow up, but it certainly won't teach them anything about love and forgiveness,” Christina wrote in a recent article. “For us, teaching our kids this radical Jesus-way means we are not okay with violent play.

March Birthdays ...

6 – Franz Neufeld (84)
12 - John Harder (81)
19 – Maria Enns (87)
25 – Arno Bartel (85)
30 – Peter Siemens (82)

8 – Franz Friesen ((86)
15 – Jake Enns (82)
23 – Jacob Friesen (89)
30 – Erika Martens (83)
31 – Catharine Wiebe (91)

Change of Address



Erika Teichgraf
Pleasant Manor Arborview Apts.
Box 500, 15 Elden St., AV-163
Virgil, ON L0S 1T0
(905) 468-7488

Happy 25th Wedding Anniversary



John & Kaethe Tiessen
(March 11)

Other news...

CMU Campus Visit Day / March 14 / 8:45 - 3:00 PM / 500 Shaftesbury Blvd Investigating universities? CMU has big opportunities and a welcoming, dynamic community. The day will focus on Social Science and Psychology. Travel assistance is available. For more details visit cmu.ca/become.php?s=campusvisit

The Christian Benefit Thrift Shop is celebrating 40 years of business in St. Catharines! If you are or have been a volunteer with us, we want to celebrate with you. Our Volunteer Appreciation Dinner will take place on Monday, March 24 at 6:30pm at Niagara United Mennonite Church (1775 Niagara Stone Rd., N-O-T-L). Volunteers past and present are free, guests are invited for a fee of \$12. Potluck dessert. Join us as we celebrate God's faithfulness to us and Mennonite Central Committee through 40 years of hard work and dedication. Please RSVP to the store by phone ([905-682-8944](tel:905-682-8944)) or in person.

2014 CMU Essay contest for High School Students interested in the Humanities is accepting submissions. The contest invites students to engage with important questions about literature, visual media and international development. Prize money will be awarded. Visit cmu.ca/become.php?s=counsellors for full details. Essays are due March 31.

We invite you to a weekend retreat here at Niagara United Mennonite Church on **April 4-5**. Wholeness Through Christ (WTC) is a scripturally-based, Spirit-led ministry to the whole person. As Jesus came to bring forgiveness, healing, freedom, and release to those who are wounded and weary, WTC seeks to gently minister to believers who earnestly desire to be free from all that would hinder their spiritual life and ministry. The sessions will begin on Friday evening and end on Saturday afternoon. Talk to Rita Epp, Kaethe Tiessen, Sylvia Tissen or Sharon Dirks if you have any questions. Applications are online on the WTC website or hard copies at the Welcome Centre.

RSB International Study Tour: Europe / April 27 - May 11, 2014. Join the Redekop School of Business at CMU for an exciting 2-week study tour looking at business, politics and culture in Europe. Visit cmu.ca/business.php?s=studytour for more details.

Ancient Stones, Living Stones: The Holy Land in Perspective. Join CMU Professor Gordon Matties on his eighth study tour to the Holy Land (April 28-May 19, 2014). Register now; space is limited. For details, see cmu.ca/studytour

Visit the following website <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/> to learn more about Mennonite Church Canada. Also visit our area conference's website, <http://mcec.ca/> to learn more about Mennonite Church of Eastern Canada.

If you would like to submit any photos or articles for the newsletter, please contact the office at 905-468-3313 or e-mail at office@redbrickchurch.ca. Deadline for the April newsletter is March 27, 2014.

