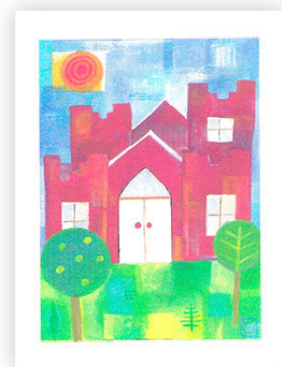


INSIDE...



Niagara United Mennonite Church

Haiti: Unspeakable tragedy – Unfathomable Wisdom

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It is difficult to imagine saying *anything* today without saying *something* about Haiti: its devastation and its miracles.

The earthquake in Haiti brings to light the multiple calamities of this Caribbean island-nation. Its plight goes well beyond the earthquake to embedded ecological devastation, economic dispossession, political dysfunction, and widespread social injustice. Its profound challenges are systemic, endemic, and chronic. Even before the earthquake there were reportedly tens of thousands of charitable organizations working to improve its conditions. It is difficult to know now how best to understand and to respond.

In many ways, Haiti confronts us with the dilemmas identified in the book of Job. How can we understand our humanness under God when what happens to us is not visibly linked to some cause that we can identify? Where is God when righteousness seems unrelated to reward and blessing? Or when suffering appears to be unwarranted punishment for faithfulness? Why is there no cause and effect relationship between innocence and blessing? Or between guilt and affliction?

There seems to be no good way to talk about the unrelenting, serial tragedy of Haiti. It is not right to speak lightly of it as deserved retribution, or as the beginning of redemption. It is not divinely-bestowed discipline; nor is it simply incidental or accidental. Categories such as bad luck and bad choices don't fit. It's not like a probationary period that will come to an end, or as an inevitable stage of development, like puberty is for maturity. It is difficult to be resolutely grateful for the profound celebration of life of the survivors even though the capacity to rejoice is one of the daily miracles we see, hear, and feel from Haiti.

We do not want to pre-empt the vital expressions of grief that witness to profound distress, with premature gratitude for those who are living. Yet, in the midst of unspeakable suffering, it is impossible to not be inspired by the incredible fortitude and resilience of spirit so clearly present in the Haitian soul.

It seems what we can best do, like Job, is lament and cry out to God that much of what is happening in Haiti is simply not right. With Job we say: Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul (Job 7:11). And, with Job, we can surrender to the mystery of God's wisdom and humbly confess: I know that you can do all things, And that no purpose of yours can be thwarted (Job 42:2).

Robert J. Suderman,
General Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada

Lent: Truth and Reconciliation

By Dave Bergen, Executive Secretary, Christian Formation

In the closing months of 2009, news media gave prominent attention to the re-institution of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, an initiative of Canadian aboriginal peoples and the government of Canada. This historic initiative is dedicated to seeking out and hearing the truth about a difficult chapter of Canadian history: the story of abuse in government supported and church operated Indian residential schools. The goal is to seek healing so that this will never happen again.

The season of Lent is a kind of annual Truth and Reconciliation Commission for believers. It is a time in the church year when believers are invited to be boldly truthful before God about the way things have been and the way they are. This process of truth-telling is undertaken through careful introspection, clear-eyed self-examination and humble repentance. When we reveal the whole truth about ourselves to the God who knows us, we seek out and welcome the forgiveness and reconciliation God offers to every earnest and penitent pilgrim. Only thus are we able to find healing from the wounds that sin has left on our lives and, with God's help, strive to live in the freedom of forgiveness and new beginnings.

Historically, Lent is the time in the church year when new Christians who were to be baptized submitted to a time of intensive learning, preparation, and prayer before their baptism early on Easter Sunday. This preparation took place in the context of the worshipping body of Christ, and so even as new believers were preparing for their baptism, the whole community was being called to re-examine their faith, and to thus restore and renew their own commitment to Jesus Christ.

I wonder how the body life of our Mennonite congregations would look if such a process of joint learning, reflection, and growth were to be re-activated. What opportunities for growth might emerge in such a context of mutual truth-telling under the guidance of the Spirit? What might new and experienced Christians learn from each other in the process? What new things might God achieve in the milieu of well-worn highways of discipleship and the unmarked paths of new faith vistas?

I pray that the truth-telling journey of this Lent season will lead to a deeper comprehension of the One who is the Truth, and make possible a greater joy as we anticipate the celebration of life, hope, and redemption in Easter.

New resources:

1. A new three-book series from Alban Institute on the power of story in leading congregations. This three-book collection brings together authors, teachers, preachers and consultants to speak to the topic of narrative leadership and the impact it can have on a congregation. *Finding our story: narrative leadership and congregational change* *Teaching our story: narrative leadership and pastoral formation* *Living our story: narrative leadership and congregational culture* Available at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1251

2. *Under Construction: reframing men's spirituality*. Author Gareth Brandt, teacher at Columbia Bible College, argues that warrior imagery is inadequate as a Christian metaphor for men's spirituality, especially in a time of increasing global and local violence. Drawing from the stories of Joseph, Brandt reframes spirituality for men with the peace-builder rather than the warrior as primary metaphor. Available at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1250



March at a glance...

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 6:30 pm Marriage Prep. Class 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young women's bible study 7:30 pm Male Choir	2 9:00 am Women in Mission Quilt 7:00 pm Women in Service Quilt 7:30 pm Church Council Meeting	4 9:30-11:30am Lenten Prayer Retreat 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting 7:00 pm Men's Bible Study	5 9:30-11:30am Mom & Tots 7:00 pm German Choir 8:00 pm Choir Practice	5 7:30 pm Sr. Youth	6
7 10:00 am Dr. Alfred Fast 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks	8 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young women's bible study 7:30 pm Male Choir	9 9:00 am Women in Mission Quilt 7:00 pm Women in Service Quilt 7:00 pm Church & Spiritual Councils Meet	10 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting 7:00 pm Men's Bible	11 7:00 pm German Choir 8:00 pm Choir Practice	12 7:30 pm Sr. Youth 7:30 pm Revelation Bible Study	13
14 10:00 am Hans J. Wiens 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks	15 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young women's bible study 7:30 pm Male Choir	16 9:00 am Women in Mission Quilt 7:00 pm Spiritual Council Meeting 7:00 pm Women in Service Quilt	17 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting	18 7:00 pm German Choir	19 NO Sr. Youth	20
21 10:00 am Joachim Dau 11:00 am Pastor Rudy Dirks	22 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young women's bible study 7:30 pm Male Choir	23 9:00 am Women in Mission Quilt 7:00 pm Women in Service Quilt	24 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting 7:00 pm Men's Bible Study	25 7:00 pm German Choir 8:00 pm Choir Practice	26 7:30 pm Sr. Youth 7:30 pm Revelation Bible Study	27
28 PALM SUNDAY 10:00 am Hans H. Dau 11:00 am Stephen Cox Jr. Youth Event	29 7:00 pm Women's Bible Study 7:00 pm Young women's bible study 7:30 pm Male Choir	30 7:00 pm Women in Service Quilt	31 6:30 pm Pioneer Clubs 7:00 pm Prayer Meeting 7:00 pm Men's Bible Study			

Mennonite Church Canada – Prayer, Notes & News

Sunday Dates	Prayer:	Ministry Notes:	News:
Mar 7/10	Please pray for and with the Church	This is how your financial support of Mennonite Church Canada is ministering...from across the street to around the world!	Stay in tune with the wider church
Mar 14/10	Mennonite Church Canada Executive Board Members Andrew Reesor McDowell, Garth Ewert Fischer, Gordon Peters, Don Friesen and Hilda Hildebrand comprise the committee searching for a new General Secretary. Robert J. Suderman will retire from that position later this year. Please pray that members of the Search Committee will bring unique gifts and perspectives together for a harmonious, Spirit-inspired quest.	With your support, MC Canada Witness workers Phil and Julie Bender plus Jeanette Hanson were joined by a group of Chinese pastors for a winter conference of our partner ministry, Mennonite Partners in China (MPC). Thank you for helping us to build relationships with and among Chinese pastors.	What Makes a Mennonite? Find out how Mennonites across Canada responded to 6 FAQs in this newly released Mennonite Church Canada video at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1258 - and share it with your non-Mennonite friends and families.
Mar 21/10	Please pray for the seven participants taking part in the Mennonite Church Canada Learning Tour to the Philippines (Mar 4-15) as they prepare to engage, grow and learn through the Peacebuilders Community in Mindanao. (WoW Prayer Directory pg. 77-79).	MC Canada Witness and Native Mennonite Ministries (U.S.) are planning for Native Assembly 2010, “I Am the Potter; You are the Clay,” which will take place July 19-22 on the Northern Cheyenne reservation in Montana, Thank you for supporting this vital, relationship building ministry!	Got peace? Perform an Act of Peace this Easter and inspire others toward peace by becoming a member of the 1,000 Acts of Peace community at www.liveforpeace.org Come for the assembly, stay for the Stampede! Mennonite Church Canada is holding its delegate assembly in Calgary from June 29 – July 3. Visit www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1249 for details as they become available.
Mar 28/10 Palm Sunday	Join together in prayer for Joseph Liou , the newly installed pastor of Calgary Chinese Mennonite Church. Pray that Joseph and his family have the wisdom and gifts to give leadership to the congregation and reach out to the community. Thank God for the opportunities we have to serve as a multi-cultural church!	Youth Ambassadors are invited to attend Mennonite Church Canada Assembly 2010, June 29 to July 10! Thank you in advance for your support in encouraging high school students in your congregation to participate, and for your help in find a congregational mentor to guide them. Reduced rates and special activities for Youth Ambassadors are being planned. More details will be posted at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1249 as they become available.	Christians are a minority in the land where Christ walked. With your support, Mennonite Church Canada Witness is exploring short term assignment possibilities in Israel/Palestine. Thank you for helping us strengthen unity and fellowship among the various Christian denominations in the region. (WoW Prayer Directory, pg. 66 to 68).



Sharing Corner ...

Volunteer Stories - The women of our church held a lovely "celebration evening" in November where a variety of personal stories of involvement in the church were shared by women of different ages and experiences. Some of them gave us some valuable insight into the history of particular ministries of the church over the last 50 to 70 years! We thought that you would find some of those stories interesting, and so you will read about them in the newsletter from time to time as they are submitted for the benefit of the whole congregation. Sharon Dirks

Speech given at Fall Women's Meeting by Annie Falk.

When Peter and I came to this community 34 year ago, I had never heard of a church that had four ladies organizations. I knew some churches had two groups but four? Never! Since tomorrow is Remembrance Day in our country, I thought we would remember the women in our church tonight. They were called Verein (association) 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The oldest ladies' group was called Verein no. 1. They started around the time that the church was formed, during the difficult depression years. I don't know how many of you have noticed the quilt that has been displayed in Pleasant Manor for a number of years. Recently I saw it hanging in the Link. The quilt has embroidered squares with names of women. Some of these ladies were still living when I came here. They were an energetic group. They were involved in starting the Women's Conference of United Mennonite Churches in Ontario, the conference that many of us associated with in later years. They were also the ones with the vision of having an Altenheim, a home for the aged, now called seniors. These women knew it was difficult for seniors who could no longer care for themselves, to go to live with their children, as had been done in the past. The Ontario women's efforts eventually influenced the United Mennonite churches to build the Home for the Aged in Vineland, where some of these women could later live their last years.

After the war, when Mennonite refugees came from Russia to Germany, ladies of Verein #1 worked tirelessly to make quilts and found other ways of helping, for these refugees were their relatives or friends with whom they had no contacts for years. (I remember that time for I still had a grandpa in Russia). The Verein #1 members rejoiced when older women who came to Canada would join them. Though these women worked hard, they also had fun together, especially when they got to retirement age. They invited me to join them when they hired a school bus to take them to Marineland and also for a trip to African Lion Safari. I think it was the first time for many of them to see these places. By now the ladies of Verein #1 have all passed away. Tomorrow is Remembrance Day, when soldiers whose names are engraved on Monuments, are remembered. I suggest when you go to Pleasant Manor, take time to read the names of our heroic members embroidered on the quilt there. They were mothers and grandmothers of many members of our congregation, and were trailblazers for us.

Next, there was Verein no. 2. I don't know who started this group but obviously the other group was large and these women were younger. Many of us remember the second group. When I got to know them, Katharine Janzen (wife of Rev. David Janzen), Frieda Baergen, Olga Rempel and others were in leadership. I admired many women in that group. Many of them were immigrants, whose husbands, fathers or brothers had been taken from them during the hard years in Russia. During the war, they fled from Russia, often with young children, under very difficult circumstances. They were thankful for freedom in Canada. They worked very, very hard to establish homes for their children, and instead of despairing, they were strong in their faith, a tremendous example for us. In spite of hard work, and later in retirement, they were active in volunteering in the church.



The Verein #2 had an annual Christmas program to which the congregation was invited. The first year I was here, I was asked to tell about Christmas in Africa, in German. I hadn't spoken German for years. When I came to church Katharine Janzen told me that women were not permitted to speak from the pulpit in this church and there was a mike set up beside the pulpit where I should stand. I had a hard time holding my German Bible and struggling with the notes I had made. Shortly after this time, women were allowed to stand at the pulpit to speak. Most of the time that was the only place with a mike. If I remember correctly, Nettie Goerz was the first woman of the congregation to give an announcement from the pulpit!

The women of Verein #2 have all passed away by now. Last week as I thought about them, only Mrs. Nordheimer was still living, but when I was in church on Sunday, I heard that she too had passed away.

Next is Verein no. 3, which is now called Women in Mission. That group was started by Katie Willms. Katie Willms again gathered the younger women of that time, 57 years ago. I joined that group and most of us are still here. I'm told that Katie Willms emphasized the importance of taking time for Spiritual input and not get involved only in service activities, and that has been followed through the years. When I asked recently what I should say about Women in Mission, somebody answered, "Say that we are old." I don't know if that is necessary, it's quite visible. When I go to MacDonald's to order coffee, they take one look at me and charge me for senior's coffee, a privilege for old people!

Little by little, the Women in Mission had to withdraw from activities we formerly did. However, though most of us are 80 to 87 years of age, we still have about 20 members who come to quilt when possible. On the contrary, the ladies group my sister attended in Winnipeg, already disbanded when they were in their seventies! Much credit for keeping us going is due to our very active service committee, who work year round to prepare quilt tops and cut bags. Besides quilting, we also make many bags for school kits and other purposes. These have been used locally for projects and what is left is sent to MCC. Some members of Women in Mission go to the Christian Benefit Shop for pricing merchandise, another group goes to cut rags there. One member collects stamps for an institution in Germany and one volunteers with the Niagara Regional Literacy Council.

The Verein no. 4, now called Women in Service, are the ladies responsible for the program this evening, and they can speak for themselves.

Many things are changing in our world today, and women's groups may take different forms. However I hope that there will always be women who will carry on the challenge of reaching out through volunteering and supporting missions, MCC and other charitable organizations.

PS. After the meeting somebody reminded me that Olga Rempel was instrumental in starting the first Christian Benefit Shop in St. Catharines. Women in Mission started the library in our church, with much work by Lora Janzen.



Thank You

From Rick Cober Bauman, MCC Ontario Executive Director

Friends,

Many of our neighbours with no connection to the Anabaptist or any Christian church community are choosing MCC as their way to respond to the earthquake in Haiti. We are grateful and humbled.

But why does such awareness and trust of MCC exist?

This trust does not come from how MCC has responded to this disaster in Haiti in these recent weeks. Rather this trust is built on the work of MCC and its multitudes of "owners" over the last 90 years. One of my colleagues has commented that we who are currently at MCC are "on the shoulders of giants"...giants who went before us with integrity, building trust, leaving a legacy that MCC would get the job done well, efficiently, and effectively.

This trust is a gift of grace.

We who are here now did not earn it. We had it given to us by the giants who went before us. Mennonite and Brethren in Christ people and churches built MCC into an organization that they and their neighbours trust.

When I asked a Kitchener City Councillor why they chose MCC for their Haiti Earthquake donation he said simply: "MCC is our trusted local charity".

But the generous giving of money, time, blankets, relief kits...these gifts from across our community call for a response.

We cannot say "thank you" in our churches alone. We need to say a broader public thank you.

We cannot report to our churches alone. Hundreds of others deserve to know how their gifts were used.

And yet, we will remain grounded in the church. We know that the word "Mennonite" in our name, connecting us to the whole of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ history and life, is a huge part of why MCC is trusted.

So what does this mean for you in the churches? Is MCC making you a stronger congregation because we provide an opportunity to share with Haiti "in the name of Christ"? We hope so. We believe we are about strengthening the church, both in Haiti and here. That is our commitment as we continue on this journey of being good stewards in Haiti and beyond.



Faith Challenge

By Robert J. Suderman, General Secretary, Mennonite Church Canada
(packet referred to are available at the [Welcome Centre](#))

Dear Friends in Mennonite Church Canada:

On June 25-27, 2010, the Canadian government will host a meeting of leaders of the G8/G20 countries. Just prior to that – from June 21-23 in Winnipeg, the Canadian Council of Churches will be one of the hosts of an interfaith meeting of religious leaders in the G8 nations. These leaders will advocate that their governments keep their pledges to eight important Millennium Development Goals they promised in 2000. These pledges to some of the world's most vulnerable people are congruent with exhortations of Christian scripture and with what churches have been working toward in many parts of the world for two millennia. A re-commitment by the G8 nations is needed in order to meet their pledges by their deadline of 2015.

This is an important coming together, for the common good, of a wide range of faith traditions. The Canadian Council of Churches – of whom Mennonite Church Canada is a member – is inviting our Area Churches and Congregations to join with all their member denominations, and partners of other faiths, to send a single, strong message to world leaders: Keep the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) pledges made to less developed nations over ten years ago and address global poverty, invest in peace, and care for the earth.

How can we do this? The Canadian Council of Churches suggests a variety of ways:

- Write a letter to your Member of Parliament (MP) in support of Canada's commitment to the MDGs;
- Ask to meet your MP for a short conversation on this topic in their constituency office;
- Host your MP in your home or with others in your church for a conversation over coffee, a snack, or a meal.
- Invite your friends of other faiths and host an interfaith dialogue/dinner with your MP.

We in Mennonite Church Canada can and should embrace this invitation to participate – and I strongly encourage you to do so. We can do so under the authority of the teaching of Jesus, often described as the “Golden Rule”:

In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law of the prophets (Mt. 7:12).

Approximations of this sacred wisdom are shared by over a dozen faith groups around the world.

Included in this packet of information are a few resources developed by the Interfaith Partnership of the Canadian Council of Churches that I commend to you. I urge you to read through these resources and consider how you might take actions and advocate on behalf of the world's most vulnerable people. Please share your intentions and experience with us via email (office@mennonitechurch.ca) or blog about it at www.liveforpeace.org under the “1,000 Acts of Peace” tab. I hope that your story will encourage and inspire other sisters and brothers to act as well.

PS: In 2009, we interviewed Karen Hamilton, General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, about this project for our podcast program, Church Matters. You can find that interview here: www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1248

March Birthdays...

3 – Frank Lammert (81)
 6 – Franz Neufeld (80)
 8 – Franz Friesen (82)
 23 – Jacob Friesen (85)

4 – Henry Esau (87)
 7 – George Dyck ((82)
 19 – Maria Enns (83)
 31 – Catherine Wiebe (87)

Change of Address



Jim & Lolita Hale
 RR#6, 1242 Line 3
 Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
 L0S 1J0
 (905) 468-8392

Change of Address



Willy & Denise Janzen
 PO Box 14, 772 Line 2
 Virgil, ON
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 (905) 468-2754

Other news...

Visiting Winnipeg in March? Plan to attend a special evening March 14 with The Four Choirs of Canadian Mennonite University - the CMU Singers and Women's Chorus with Derek Morphy, conductor, and the CMU Chamber Choir and Men's Chorus, with Rudy Schellenberg, conductor - and the Mennonite Community Orchestra, with Eric Hemmerling, conductor, as they present Choral Connections, featuring Mendelssohn's Hear My Prayer and Haydn's Mass in Time of War. 7:00 pm, CMU Loewen Athletic Centre, 500 Shaftesbury Blvd. Tickets are available in advance at CMU and at the door. \$10 / \$5 Students

Upcoming Fraser Lake Camp Events:

April 10th - 6 pm - Fundraising Dinner and Auction featuring guest speaker Rick Tobias from Younge Street Mission

April 17th - 6 pm - Fundraising Dinner and concert featuring musical guests 'Rouge River Connection'

Email info@fraserlakecamp.com or call 905.642.2964 today to purchase tickets or for more information.

The School of Writing at CMU invites applications for its 2010 program, held May 10 – 14 on campus at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. The School offers participatory workshops on Poetry, Fiction, Life Writing, and Writing for Children & Young Adults. Participants learn from well-known writers and authors from across Canada and abroad who visit for special readings and question periods. Enjoy time for writing and reflection on CMU's inspiring north campus: visit www.cmu.ca/schoolofwriting

Register now to join local, national and international practitioners and students of peace, justice, and development at the second annual Canadian School of Peacebuilding to be held at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, MB, June 14 to July 2, 2010. Three 5-day sessions, each with two or three courses running concurrently, are offered for academic credit or for training for practitioners. Visit www.cmu.ca/csop; email csop@cmu.ca.

Inspired by Assembly 2009's promotion of "1,000 Acts of Peace," mindful of Assembly 2010's focus on Colossians 3:15-17, textile artists are invited to consider participating in Acts of Peace/Art for Peace. This exhibition will take place during the MC Canada assembly in Calgary (June 29-July 3). For more details, email Ray Dirks at rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca or Bev Patkau at lpatkau@shaw.ca. Or, visit <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/gallery>.

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) invites inquiries and applications for a full-time employment position of IT Technician. This and other opportunities are posted on the CMU website at www.cmu.ca. CMU has over 1,800 students at its Shaftesbury Campus in Southwest Winnipeg, at Menno Simons College in downtown Winnipeg, and through its Outtatown discipleship program. Visit www.cmu.ca

Visit the following website <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resources/equipping/index.htm> 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.

