

On the Horizon

Steven Farsaci, formerly pastor of the Mennonite Church in Americus, Georgia, USA, is expected to join the pastoral staff at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, in early 2005. Farsaci is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

Wilmer & Barb Froese, co-pastors of Laird Mennonite Church have resigned their position effective the end of April, 2005.

The **Emmaus and Zion congregations** have worked out an arrangement for sharing pastoral services. Ray and Sylvia Friesen started at Emmaus in late November.

February 25 & 26
MC Sask Annual Delegate Sessions at RJC.

News 'n Notes
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MC Sask Missional Workshop

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Twenty-eight persons from 12 congregations gathered at the Rosthern Youth Farm Bible Camp on Oct. 29 & 30 to engage in a Missional workshop. Leadership was provided by a group of seven that took the missional training course in Winnipeg in 2003. Eric Olfert, one of the organizers, said the goal of the event was to pass on the excitement and insights they gleaned in their training.

Friday evening's worship focused on aligning ourselves with God's desires and dreams. We spent time studying the 'bookends' of the Bible - creation in Genesis 1 & 2, and destination in Revelation 21 & 22, identifying stories from the Biblical account, history and our experience showing movement from Eden toward the New Jerusalem.

The Power of Prayer

Carolyn Vis shared the following in her opening devotional at the MC Sask General Council meeting November 20 at Grace Mennonite in Prince Albert (editor)

"I'll pray for you." The power of these words was made real to me this Fall. A colleague was dealing with a serious family issue - her daughter had attempted suicide and was in critical condition in hospital. We had shared our faith before and spoken about our beliefs - hers Anglican and mine Mennonite, but that morning we were just fellow Christians supporting each other. We stood in the hallway of the school and prayed before she left to return to the hospital and I promised to continue to pray for her. Over the next

As we headed to worship Saturday morning carrying items to share with the needy, the "deacons" challenged us at the door. "Why are you coming?" "Are you a believer?" From this early church style worship, we learned some new ways to be church, and what it means to be a 'Christ follower'.

Four presentations on the history of crumbling Christendom, post modernity, worship, and living through change in healthy ways, stimulated much discussion. "I really enjoyed it," said participant Gordon Nesdoly. "I took a lot away. One hope was to get a few more ideas for what direction we should go."

The workshop concluded with worship and communion.

week I felt called to pray during the day, between classes, late at night, and even was awakened during the night. Each prayer was not only for her, but also for different members of her family and I prayed for each by name. When she returned to work we were sharing our experiences of the week and she commented that at times when she seemed unable to continue she was enveloped by sense of warmth and caring and knew that I was praying for her. I agreed and commented that I had prayed for all in her family and shared some of those prayers with her. She paused and looked at me with a very puzzled look and said, "but Carolyn - I've only ever used their nicknames with you - how did you know their names?" The power of prayer.

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News 'n Notes



From the Moderators Pen

Why a Re-Covenanting Service?

Henry Block - Moderator, MC Sask

At the time of our baptism and being received into membership of the local church we made a public covenant. We covenanted to live faithfully for our Lord and to support and work with the local congregation. Meaningful covenant making seems to require that this be a public event. We conduct baptism services in public. We conduct marriage covenants in public. The idea is that the public needs to be aware of the covenant. The public is also asked to make a commitment to support this covenant.

Our Envisioning Team, at the request of the executive as well as the delegate body, has been working to bring us to a re-covenanting service. The plan is for this service to take place at our delegate session in February 25-26, 2005, at RJC.

All our congregations have been invited to have input into developing this renewed covenant. One might ask, "Why is a re-covenant being called for? Wasn't my first covenant meaningful?" These are good questions. There is biblical precedence in leading the community to a re-covenanting service. Moses gives the people of Israel a re-covenanting speech in Deuteronomy 29.

Receiving of the Ten Commandments was a covenant service in which the people promised to obey all that the Lord was asking of them. God promised them rich blessings if they would obey, But they would experience his wrath, a curse, if they would disobey. When the people were camping at the border between the wilderness and the promised Land they came to a moment of decision. Would they move forward in faith, or would they turn back? They had been this far once before, about 40 years earlier. At that time Moses sent the 12 spies into the land and ten of the spies said, "Its a great land, but we will never defeat the local people." In an act of disbelief in God, they turned away from this Promised Land. All the grown up people of the time, except for Joshua and Caleb, and Moses had since died. In Deuteronomy 29 we read that it was time to test their intentions again. Without a renewed pledge of allegiance the Lord could not move these people forward into the promised Land. They needed to renew their covenant with God.

Our history (COMOS, MC Sask) has led us to a time when re-covenanting is needed. This has come to our attention through the work of a task force that was in place several years ago. Out of their work came the "Joined in Faithfulness" paper which our delegates accepted. This called for a re-covenanting service (continued on page 2)

Learning to Become More Aware as Consumers



SMYO Junior High Retreat met at Shekinah to discuss important questions relevant to the Christmas Season.

Where Would Jesus Shop (WWJS)?

Teresa Warkentin - Wildwood Youth Worker

This was the theme for the SMYO Junior High retreat held September 10-12, 2004 at Camp Shekinah where 138 youth, sponsors and youth pastors gathered. Aiden and Karen Schlichting Enns, guest speakers from Winnipeg, challenged us to be more aware as consumers. This was done through a fashion show, video clips, small group dissections of advertisements, skits, and speaking to us about how Jesus would expect people to be treated in the work place. Definitions of "fair trade" and "sweatshops" (did you know that they exist in North America as well?) were clarified for the youth so that better shopping habits could be formed. Some ideas of how to be a more responsible shopper were shared on the last morning session. Before final lights out at bedtime, a short devotional was done in each room to cap off the days learning's. This caused some further discussions and questions.

Each session began with rousing singing led by musicians made up of youth pastors and members of the SMYO committee. They did a great job of leading us with enthusiasm and choosing songs that could relate to the theme.

Many youth come to the retreat to bond with their youth group as a first event of the fall, to join with those that they were at camp with during the summer, and to meet new friends. The mixer games, walk-a-mile, Saturday afternoon games, free time, conversation at meal times (the food as usual was wonderful) and talent night serve to allow the friendships to build and gifts to be shared.

A big thank you to the SMYO committee led by Anna Rehan for organizing and running the weekend. The retreats are one of the great opportunities for the youth to experience and feel a part of the larger church of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

to be held no later than 2004. Our delegate body at our sessions last February gave permission to postpone this one year. The final draft has now been prepared.

General Council is asking congregations to study the covenant before the February 2005 annual

sessions and to come to decisions as to the local congregation's support for this covenant. Perhaps, like Israel, it is time to renew our covenant. May God give us all wisdom and direction as we together endeavour to be His faithful church with a clear witness for Jesus Christ, in our neighbourhood, across the street, and around the world.

Laird Mennonite Profile

Derek Froese an environmental consultant, and his wife Inna live and work in Regina.

Laird Mennonite Church is the church where I grew up, and the church where my parents have been pastors the past 14 years.

A challenge for any church is to reach outside of itself and to demonstrate God's love to a hurting world. Even in a small community of 250 people it can be a struggle to spread Christ's message beyond the borders of the church parking lot.

Gordon Nesdoly, who has taught adult Sunday school at the church for many years, shares some of my concerns.

"You don't realize it when you're stuck in a small community how much you can help out there," he told me. "People are living in such a different world, and we don't understand that world. It would be nice to understand it, but it's scary."

I appreciated his honesty when it came to describing the church's weak points. "I believe that our ministry outreach isn't very great outside of the community. That would make us grow more."

Although Laird Mennonite has experienced both spiritual and numerical growth over the years, the pastors emphasize the importance of never staying stagnant as a church body.

"Our goal is to become more like the early New Testament church in commitment, conviction, and passion," explained Co-Pastor Wilmer Froese. "We must try to be a church that is always open to the new in order for new growth to take place. We can't be complacent or stagnant, but be willing to be stretched. The challenge is always to overcome the status quo - that is the ongoing leadership challenge one faces."

I could be wrong, but flexibility is not the strength of most churches. Churches are known for their conservatism, their steadfastness, their unwillingness to change in the face of societal change.

Isn't it kind of radical to always be welcoming change?

"Jesus always went outside the status quo for the sake of furthering the kingdom and disciplining others," responded Co-Pastor Barb Froese.

A willingness to change involves welcoming and including new people from outside of the church, the two pastors explained.

"Some of our challenges have been to integrate new people, even though they may have come from different backgrounds, and to make them a part of the church," said Wilmer.

"A church is similar to a quilt," explained Barb. "There are a lot of different patches, but they all make one quilt, with the same identity in Christ. The way a church welcomes others says a lot about a church."

Youth leader Kevin Peters agrees. "One of our main goals is to be open and welcoming - holding onto our beliefs while keeping the door open to others."

Laird Mennonite's youth group welcomes young people from all kinds of backgrounds. Young people enjoy the many activities that Kevin and Bonnie Peters hold - fun activities that also include a spiritual element.

Youth are a big part of any church's future. A key part of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's role in Laird Mennonite is providing youth Bible camp programs, according to Peters and Nesdoly.

"Everyone understands that the camp program is part of MC Sask," said Nesdoly. "There is a strong connection through the Bible camps, and it is a good way to help the church to grow with our youth."

So what is the vision for Laird Mennonite Church? Pastor Wilmer sums it up this way: "Our goal is to develop leadership and spiritual depth in the church that will help it survive the storms of time, so that it will be there for future generations, and a source of light for all in the community."

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