

Christian Education Update

October 2006



Isolation and Shame in Rural Churches

Dr. Cam Harder, a professor at Lutheran Theological Seminary (Saskatoon), says rural churches and families often find it difficult to talk about farming financial **pressures**, the rural code of honour, and the shaming of farm people who struggle. His doctoral thesis *The Shame of Farm Bankruptcy: A Sociological and Theological Investigation of Its Effect on Rural Communities* is available on-line (233 pp.) at www.cameronharder.com. It's a helpful tool for pastors, churches, and farm families to break down the isolation, underlying thoughts, and behaviour patterns that contribute to some farm families' sense of shame and failure. There are other resources on rural ministry at the site as well.

Discussing Anabaptist theology

The Evangelical Anabaptist Committee **continues** its work. In December 2006 it will present a further look at the theological survey. The committee serves by authority of the BCM and the Board of Leadership and Outreach. Pastor Kenton Penner (Treesbank) is the committee's chairperson (204-824-2268).

Follow Me available for orders

The thirteen-lesson discussion guide was produced by our Education Committee, supported by the Board of Leadership and Outreach's Social Concerns Committee. The guide is topical but focuses on **biblical social justice**. The booklet can be used by cell groups, senior youth groups, older teen/adult Sunday school classes, as a pastoral preaching aid, and in other ways. Discussion questions are scattered within the lessons and there is a list of resources in the back. The booklet's cost is \$2.50 (shipping is extra). BCM encourages all EM churches to use this resource.

Worship/Music Committee

The BCM is interested in looking at the music and worship within our churches. If you are aware of people who might be **helpful** on such a committee, please contact Conference youth minister Gerald Reimer or me.

Theodidaktos: Journal for EMC Theology and Education

Editor Darryl Klassen, senior pastor at Kleefeld EMC, continues to work to see the journal move ahead. Its name *Theodidaktos* means *learning from God*. The proposed publication date is late fall. He can be contacted at 204-277-7443. Copies will be made **available** to each church.

Discussion Opportunities

Both Gerald Reimer and I are available for Sunday School discussions. As staff members who serve the Board of Church Ministries, we have responsibilities in areas of Christian education (Gerald also works with the Board of Missions). If you have **suggestions**, concerns, or program ideas about Christian Education in our conference, let us know.

Sunday School Seminars

The Education Committee is willing to work with churches and regions to provide **training seminars** in Sunday school teaching and other areas. EMC involvement happened in Region 1. Region 2 has expressed an interest. Coordination is a joint effort of national office and region, with costs to be covered by the region. Should regions or churches be curious about or interested in seminars in your

area, please be in contact with me (emcterry@mts.net) or conference youth minister Gerald D. Reimer (emcger@mts.net).

Social Concerns Committee

The EMC Social Concerns Committee is willing to make **Sunday School presentations** on various topics (social justice, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and more). Contact Chair Wally Doerksen (Good News Community Church, Steinbach) at 204-326-9444

Sunday School Curricula

The Education Committee of the BCM **encourages using Anabaptist materials** or, at least, the supplementing of interdenominational materials. Anabaptist materials are available through Mennonite Publishing Network, Kindred Press (check the *Word Wise* and *Luminaire Studies* produced by the Mennonite Brethren), and Steinbach Bible College (six sets of study and leader's guides are available from the college). SBC's titles are *Radical Discipleship*, *Come Let Us Worship*, *The Last Trumpet*, *Minor Prophets*, *Hebrews*, *Living Truth*, and *The Church that Christ Builds*. *Gather 'Round* is a curriculum for children, youth and adults, put out by Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Church USA, and Church of the Brethren (www.gatherround.org).

Militarism Resource

Esther Epp-Thiessen, who works with the Peace Ministries Program of MCC Canada, is preparing a **brief resource guide** on militarism in Canada. I have seen a draft and found some of the material within it to be surprising. The material will be made available to EM churches when it is finished. You might want to watch for it.

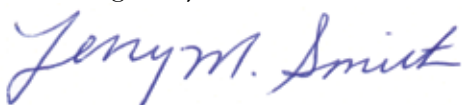
A Strange Inclusion?

Walter Burghardt, an elderly Jesuit priest, has published many books of sermons, often focused on what Scripture says about social justice. He started an organization called *Preaching the Just Word*. I have three books by him (two of sermons, one on homiletics). Anabaptists, Evangelicals, and Protestants (and those of us who fit all three terms) will, at times, weed out some unhelpful Catholic emphases. Still, his style of using the lectionary (three Scripture passages) and taking Scripture **seriously** as the basis for his sermons can be helpful for some people. His books in print can be located at Paulist Press (www.paulistpress.com). The program *Preaching the Just Word* can be found at Woodstock Theological Center.

Music-Worship Committee

The Board of Church Ministries seeks to start a music-worship committee. It would look at music-worship trends and their underlying theologies within our conference churches and respond with thoughtful guidance in this area. The constitution allows the BCM to "provide resources and services to help congregations with Christian education" and "music ministries" (p. 37). If you know of people who are skilled, thoughtful in this area, and **willing to serve** on a committee, please considering forwarding their names to Gerald Reimer or to me.

Blessings on your churches!



Terry M. Smith (Rev.)
Executive Secretary