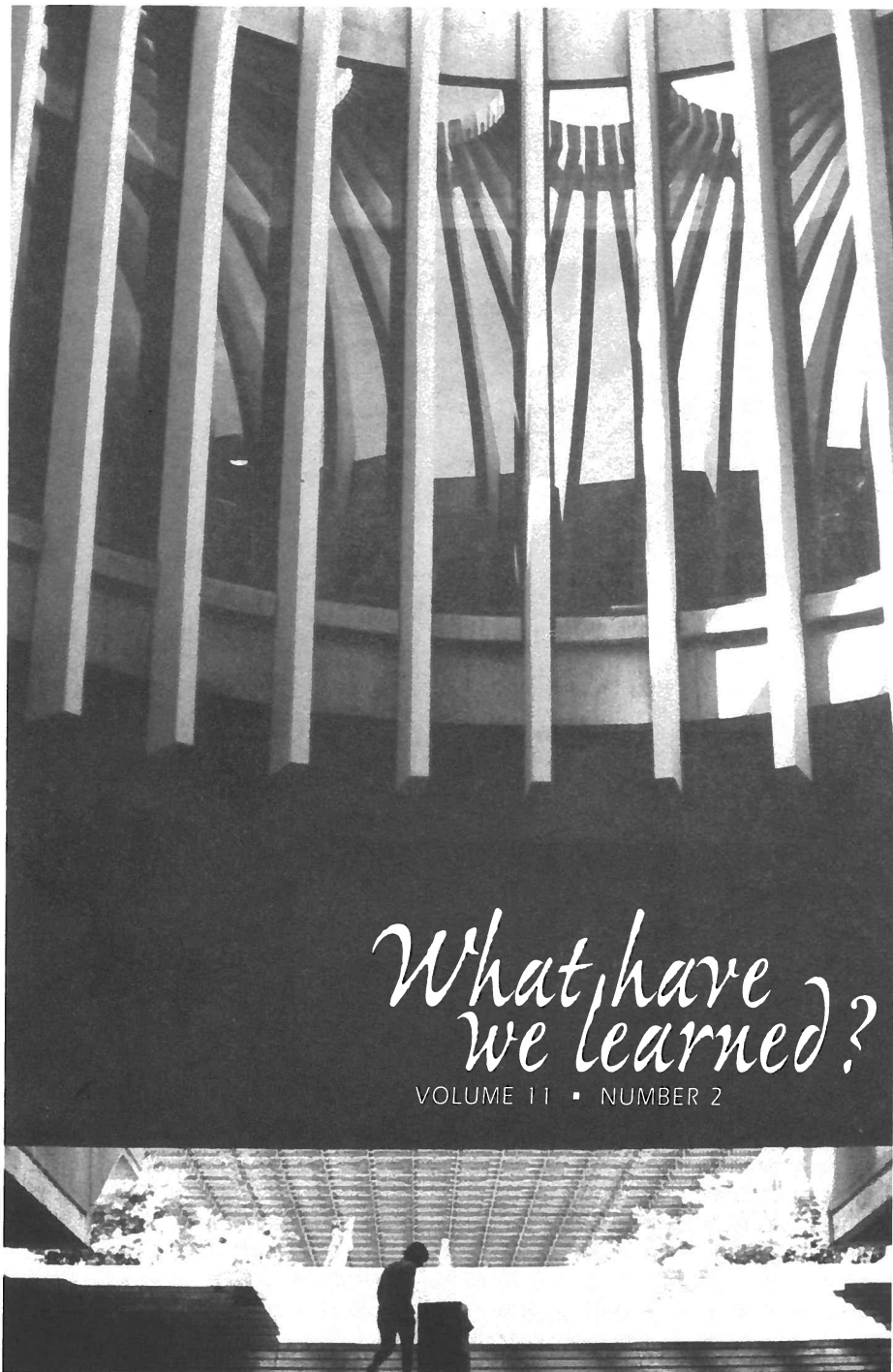


11/2

S O P H I A

W I S D O M

*Say to Wisdom, "You are my sister."
Proverbs 7:4a*



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SOPHIA

A Greek feminine noun associated with the biblical wisdom tradition, translated "wisdom" and personified in the book of Proverbs; equivalent in the New Testament to *logos*, the creative word that was with God in the beginning, creating and giving life to the world.

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SOPHIA Mission Statement

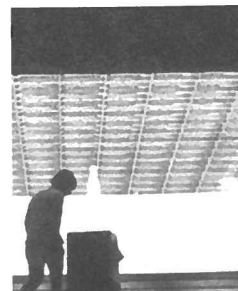
Sophia offers a forum for Christian women to speak to one another about the joys and challenges of living faithfully in an uncertain, changing world. Its pages give voice to women's stories – their experiences in church and society, family and workplace, their aspirations and disappointments, their successes and failures. It invites expressions of joy and sorrow, concern and outrage. In doing so it hopes to affirm women in their quest for spiritual, emotional and physical wholeness and for the full expression of their gifts in all spheres of life.

Sophia was conceived and brought to birth by Mennonite Brethren women and celebrates Christian sisterhood. Its desire is to welcome differing voices. It hopes to challenge women and men of all ages as they live together in Christian community. The name SOPHIA (wisdom) expresses our desire to search and know the wisdom of God through the Scriptures and our experience as followers of Jesus Christ.

Sophia acknowledges the authority of God, the giver of wisdom, and of the sacred Scriptures, the story of God's dealings with women and men. "Oh the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33).

On the Cover:

The photo was taken at Simon Frazer University, Burnaby, B.C., by Lis Vensel.



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EDITORIAL

What Have We Learned?

by Lori Matties

How do we educate ourselves? Are we responsible for what we learn?

I grew up in a family where education was very important. I always assumed I would attend university after high school. Perhaps there was an expectation that a university education would lead to a more prosperous professional life. But I also remember discussions around the dinner table about the value of "higher learning" as something in itself. Beyond career training, education could make us wiser, more able to cope with life's experiences, less likely to repeat the mistakes of the past.

As I look back on it now, what I actually experienced with my formal education was that it was often a backdrop for all kinds of learning that had little to do with the actual subject matter at hand. I learned much through the personalities of my teachers, and how they responded to me, a shy child who nevertheless had a strong desire to express my thoughts uniquely and to "colour outside the lines." My peers also taught me much, mostly about how a person who is "different" is outside the circle. I spent so much time trying to learn how to get inside that circle! I learned from teachers and peers that girls were not supposed to answer too many questions or argue a point very often.

I learned that I needed a reason to be interested in a subject if I were to do well in it, and that mentors were very important in eliciting that interest. I was much more interested in literature and stories than I was in facts and figures. To me the stories

that had survived through the ages revealed more about people's values and habits than the facts that were written about them.

Most importantly, during my years at high school I learned that I could be more myself if I gave my life away to Jesus Christ than if I tried to survive on my own. That discovery has coloured every aspect of my life and memory since then.

Some of what I learned was wrong, of course, and I have had to spend much time "unlearning." It's okay to express myself uniquely and "colour outside the lines." Girls and women should be encouraged to answer as many questions as they can and to join in arguments if they want to. Those are places where much learning occurs. Many of the subjects that didn't interest me in school are more interesting to me now. I regret the gaps that my disinterest created.

I'm still inspired by stories. (Perhaps that's why *Sophia* is important to me!) And I'm still most free to be myself when I submit my mind and imagination to Jesus Christ, who after all gave those things uniquely to me in the first place.

We are learning creatures. Learning creates meaning and shapes memory, both individually and collectively. I've often heard it said that when we cease to learn, life is no longer meaningful for us and we are ready to die. We *are* in many ways, responsible for what we learn. If we are not conscious of what we're learning, we often accept as true, ideas and habits that are destructive to us. As followers of Jesus, we take on a consciousness that is alternative

to the prevailing learning around us. We become apprentices (disciple means "learner") to the One who teaches a new way of seeing and helps us to relearn whatever is true, honourable, pure, pleasing, excellent and worthy of praise (see Philippians 4:8).

The articles in this issue are about that alternative consciousness. They help us to rethink what we have learned in various aspects of our lives. Whether we think about how far we have progressed as women (Mary Friesen, p 10) or in educating our children about peace and justice (Gareth Neufeld, p 22), whether we think about patriarchy and how it affects people (Tina Fehr Kehler, p 20) or how best to apply our passionate interests (Heather Prior, p 6 and Marcia Friesen, p 12), we are becoming conscious of that more true and honourable way. I hope you enjoy reading all the articles in this issue as much as I have enjoyed receiving and editing them.

One more thing. *Sophia* is ten years old! Our next issue will be a celebration of those ten years, and we would love to hear from you about how *Sophia* has touched your life. Please submit 100-300 word articles or letters by email, fax or snail mail (see inside cover for addresses) by August 1, 2000. And have a great summer.

Did Jesus Have a Philosophy of Education?

by Jean Reimer

We hear it being bandied about by the general public that “Jesus was a great teacher.” I wonder what they mean? Do *they* know what they mean?

I suppose some of them mean that he used enticing teaching methods, like unforgettable illustrations and stories with a "sting in the tale"¹ – an unpredictable ending that jolted the hearer as would a sharp scorpion bite and left a burning sensation for days afterward. Yes, Jesus used colourful, brilliant pedagogical methods; but, apart from that, what do non-followers of Christ do with Jesus and with what he actually taught? Normally, in their mouths, the phrase "Jesus was a great teacher" is a sort of saccharin sop intended to pleasantly pacify but firmly re-bury this rather dismaying and alarming person. Most of them don't at all mean that what he said should be taken seriously – they would cry "megalomaniac!" if one of their university teachers began to say what Jesus said – "I'm God I made the world Follow me and you'll live forever." C.S. Lewis put his finger on the nub when he said that Jesus was either insane, lying or telling the truth; there aren't any other options. Everything Jesus said about himself, and about himself in relation to our world and human condition, was absolutely ridiculous, if it weren't true.

But, what do we, Jesus' followers, think about this? Was he a great teacher? How can we tell? Michael Peterson, in his *Philosophy of Education*, says that a truly sound educator is going to base his curriculum design on a philosophy of education that nourishes a person's being, development and life by addressing three fundamental domains: *reality*, *truth*, and *value*.² That means that a healthy, comprehensive curriculum would address the issues of the real nature of our world and universe, of knowledge and truth and of the values that build a moral structure.

If we matched Jesus' teachings against these three

parameters, how would he do? Did he address, in any consistent and unified manner, these three essential questions of reality, truth and value? Let's have a look.

The first thing we encounter is that Jesus not only used the Old Testament Scriptures as his textbook but further insisted that their author was his Father, who was the direct source of his own teachings: *"My words are not my own, but come from the Father who sent me"* (John 14:24, author's paraphrase).

To find the continuity between Jesus' teachings and his Father's, we need to see what God said in the Old

Testament about the real nature of our universe, about truth and about morality: Genesis describes our physical environment – how God formed the universe and made humans in the divine image to govern and maintain the earth as regents under God's authority. Genesis also describes our spiritual environment. God is the true Spirit to which humans must be intimately related in order to live. Fallen, disobedient spirits exerted an influence on humankind to cause them also to disobey, thus cutting them off from the

	Full Marks	Winter Mark	Spring Mark	Final Credits
Math Days	9	1		
Conduct	10	10	10	10
Spelling	10	A	A	A
Arithmetic or Mathematics	A	A	A	A
Reading	A	A	A	A
Art		A	A	A
Practical Writing	B	A	B	R
Special Reading		A	A	A
Geography				
History				
Language Composition	A	A	B	A
Short Reading Literature	A	A	A	A
Music				
Work of Study				
Science		A	A	A
Physical Training				
Pen- & Ink		A	A	A
Handwriting			A	A
Writing			A	A
Memoizing				
Attendance				
Feticles				

90-100-A 90-99-B 90-79-C 90-59-D 90-49-E 90-39-F 90-29-G 90-19-H 90-10-I

REMARKS BY TEACHER
 Fall: Excellent in all things, good pupil, excellent penmanship, very good work.
 Winter: Excellent in all things, excellent student, always reaching to help.
 Spring: His sketch always does very good work.
 Final: Excellent in all things, very good pupil, excellent penmanship, always reaching to help.

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intentions and blessings of God. This destructive spiritual influence, and human sin, continue on in all succeeding generations. The rest of the Old Testament is a record of God's repeated attempts to re-establish the creatures' relationship with their Creator. God did this by forming the nation of Israel as the vehicle through which God desired to redeem all nations. God's provision for forgiveness and cleansing from sin was through blood sacrifice and a priestly system. Provision for moral living – to enable humans to live in harmony with God, with each other and with their physical world – came through God's instructions (the Law). God said, though, that in order to achieve true redemption and build a truly "spiritual nation," a greater Priest and King would have to come, a more effective sacrifice would have to be made, the Law would have to be written on people's hearts.

Jesus confirmed that this Old Testament picture of our universe was real and true; and furthermore he said that all these realities had their source and focal point in him. The quintessence of Jesus' teachings, from which hung all his actions and the events of his life, was: *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6). He was claiming that reality, truth and value all come together in him, are personified in him.

Reality

"I am Life. I am the Way." Jesus claimed to be God,³ the creator and sustainer of the universe,⁴ and the highest authority over all other spiritual beings.⁵ He proved it,⁶ by exhibiting power over his creation: he calmed sea storms, turned water into wine, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised people from the dead; he himself rose from the dead and became what had never existed before – an immortal human being. Jesus claimed to be the King, the Priest, the Sacrifice, that God had promised to send.⁷ He said he was the *only* bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds – only through him and his sacrifice on the cross could humans have their sin forgiven, re-enter a relationship with God,⁸ gain eternal life⁹ and be restored to what God had intended humans to be.¹⁰ He established God's desired "spiritual kingdom."¹¹

Truth and Knowledge

"I am Truth." Jesus claimed to be truth and knowledge incarnate – he saw himself not as a good teacher but as the only Teacher in whom all real truth, knowledge and wisdom could be found: *"... if you keep obeying my teachings, ... you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"* (John 8:31). *"In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God The Word became human and lived here on earth among us"* (John 1:1,14). Jesus taught and personified things previously hidden: *"This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet: "... I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world"* (Matt.13:16). The apostles affirmed this: *"God's secret plan ... is Christ himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Col.2:2-3).

Value

"I am the Way." Jesus taught a morality that flowed directly from his teachings on reality and truth and that had its source and validation in the Old Testament Scriptures and in his personal connection with God: *"I have not come to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them"* (Mt.5:17); *"I'm not teaching my own ideas, but those of God who sent me. Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether*

my teaching is from God or is merely my own" (John 7:16-17). Thus, only in obeying God's will, revealed through Jesus' teachings, can human beings return to the moral world that God intended. *"Our Father, ... may your kingdom come soon, may your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven"* (Mt.6:9,10); *"I have revealed you to them, ... I have given them your word ... make them pure and holy by teaching them your words of truth"* (John 17:26,14,17).

Jesus defined sin not simply as immoral actions but more essentially as unbelief in him: *"The world's sin is unbelief in me"* (John 16:9).

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" – all the rest of Scripture is comprehended in these three defining words of Jesus; they encompass Jesus as Creator, Son

of God, Word, Priest, Sacrifice, Redeemer, Mediator, Reconciler, King of a new "spiritual kingdom," "Firstborn" of immortal humans, Giver of eternal life, Judge. *"No one comes to the Father but by me"* – the Father wants us to come; everything God desires and intends for us is accomplished in Jesus. All the barriers to this reconciliation that sin and ignorance have erected are demolished by Christ.

Even this very brief glance at Jesus has shown us the stunningly integrated world of his teachings and actions. His death and resurrection are the culmination of his core teachings of reality (the real, desperate plight of the world), of value (our moral bankruptcy) and of truth (only a divine sacrifice and resurrection can cure the problem).

The implications are serious: it means that if I want to nourish my being, my development and my life in the best way possible, I must go to Jesus Christ, the greatest Teacher.

.....
Jean Reimer, a member of Sophia's editorial collective, works with Wycliffe Bible Translators. She lives in Steinbach, MB, and is a member of Cornerstone Bible Church in Steinbach and Church of the Way in Winnipeg.

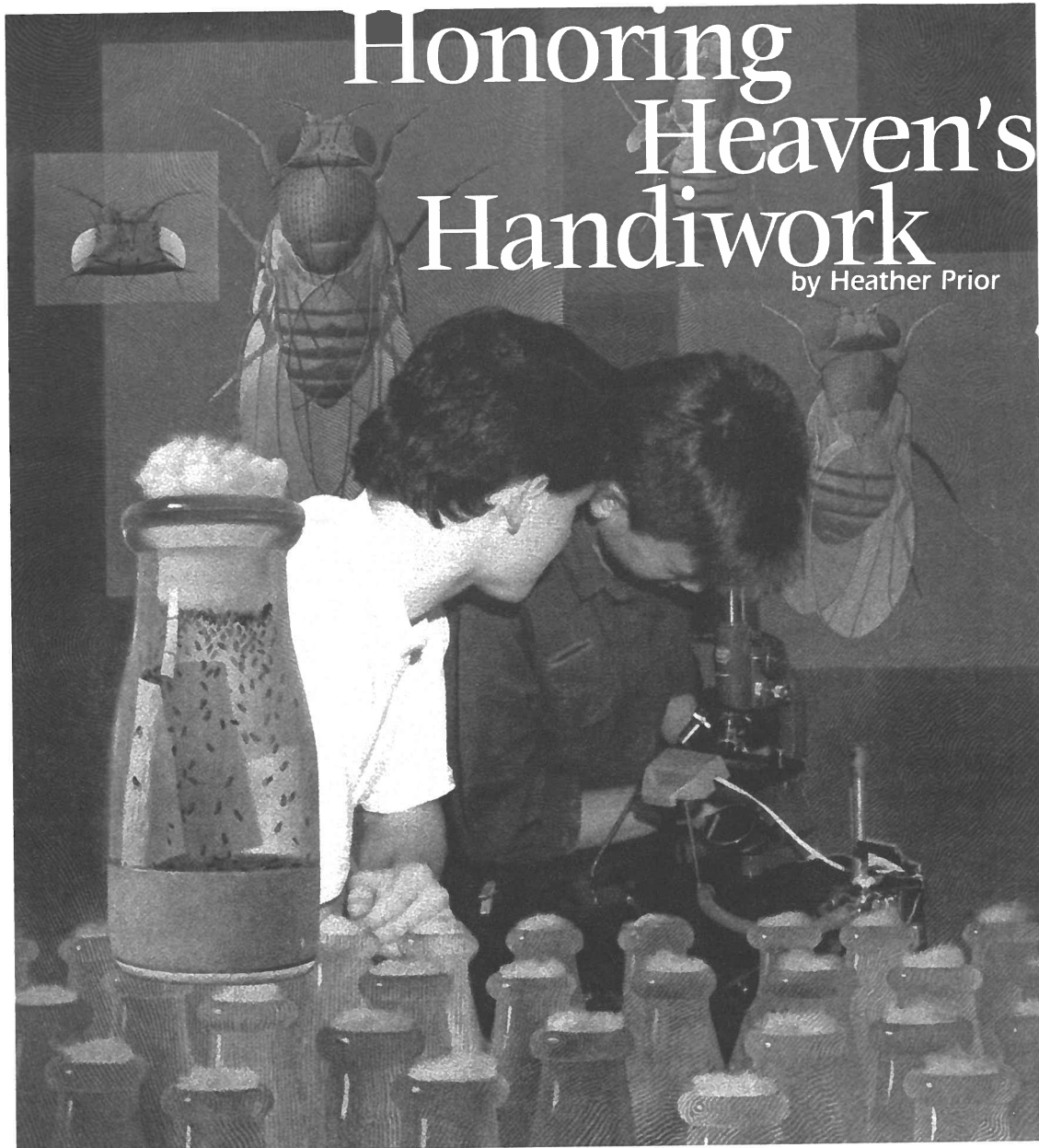
- 1 Clements, Roy, *A Sting in the Tale*, (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1995).
- 2 Peterson, Michael L., *Philosophy of Education: Issues and Options*, (Downers Grove, Ill., Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), pp 79-96.
- 3 John 4:26; 8:58; 10:36,30.
- 4 John 1:1-4; Col.1:15-17.
- 5 Col. 2:10; Matt. 12:28; 24:31.
- 6 John 10:25,37,38.
- 7 Heb. 2:17; 5:9,10; I Tim. 6:15.
- 8 John 14:6; 8:34-36,23,51; Matt.10:32; Rom. 3:23-25; Col. 2:19-22.
- 9 John 11:25-26; 14:2-3; Matt.17:8.
- 10 Col. 1:19-22.
- 11 John 18:36; Col. 1:18, 2:19.

My identity as a woman in science has been evolving for many years. Bugs and frogs, explanations and experiments have fascinated me for as long as I can remember, and I recently reached a pinnacle of scientific achievement by pursuing and completing my PhD degree in genetics. During that time the birth of my son, Daniel, was a major milestone of womanhood and an awesome firsthand experience of divine creation. Now, as the first female science professor at a small Christian liberal arts college, I feel my identity evolving further as I wrestle with this new challenge of combining a career in science with a deep commitment to family.

Every day is a complex chemical reaction of woman and scientist, slowly creating the product of my identity. My lecture, the lab protocol, the students who need advising, two committee meetings and a new research grant proposal: these will demand my attention today, but now it is 6:00 am and my four-year-old son has just climbed into bed with us. Morning cuddles. Finding a pair of jeans for him that doesn't have holes (unsuccessful, go with sweats). Quickly eat breakfast before "The Magic Schoolbus" comes on! (These are my 20 minutes to dress and be ready for the day.) Where are his school library books? Where is the field trip permission form? Oh no, I can't believe it's school picture day!! Change clothes. Battle cowlick. Herd child into car. Lunch bag, purse, briefcase, three-inch-thick text book, playschool shoes, library book, permission slip, jacket. We make it to playschool with a minute to spare. Twenty minutes later I rush past the receptionist at college and try to look relaxed. I photocopy the handout for the day, dash to my office and

Honoring Heaven's Handiwork

by Heather Prior



dump my stuff. Class starts in two minutes. Grab blank transparencies and head down the hall.

My world weaves back and forth between motherhood and professorship. My students hear lots of cute preschooler stories. Everyone at the college knows Daniel, since he comes with me often when I can't quite stay on top of all the new responsibilities of professorship within my official halftime hours. Daniel keeps busy with his computer "work" or goes out visiting, coming back with treats or "toys" like the molecule building set from the chemistry professor next door. One minute I'm reading the latest paper on genetic eye development and the next I'm kissing a new owie and making a paper airplane.

Conventional wisdom sees science as rational, impersonal, objective, and women as emotional, relational, subjective. Scientists measure, theorize, and demonstrate, whereas women nurture, sympathize and communicate.

For many years I have struggled to identify meaningful role models for myself as a woman in science. Many top notch women scientists have chosen either not to have children or to put career first by relying on extensive child-care services. I am ardently seeking a more balanced alternative.

I hope that my life can be a testimony to the freedom we have as women in Christ to be productive, contributing members of whichever profession we choose. I love to do research as a child loves a new book; I'm always eager to see what might be waiting to surprise me on the next page. I love to share the excitement of my laboratory breakthroughs in the same way a child can't wait to proclaim a new discovery. I love to dream about the possibilities of where my investigations may lead, like a child dreaming of magical lands of fantasy. Are these passions the fruits of my femininity? Would my male colleagues feel differently? I'm not sure. We seem to lack the time for many heart to heart chats.

Perhaps a feminine approach can bring a fresh perspective to science. I have already been approached by several female students wanting me to be their faculty advisor. I sense that simply my presence as a female science prof gives them confidence and encouragement. I hope my students will catch some of the mystical sense of wonder and worship I feel as I study the intricacies of the genetic code. And perhaps they will gain a new awareness of physiology and development when it's taught by one who has felt the quickening of life from within.

My identity as a woman is impossible to separate from my identity as a scientist. Both of these facets of who I am are bound up in my greater identity as a Christian. Patience, creativity, curiosity, making connections between things. Months of frustrating work on a stubborn problem. Sudden delight in an unexpected observation. The sense of wonder at having a ringside seat on God's handiwork. Honouring creation. These feelings apply equally to my experiences of both womanhood and science. And by the way, I am delighted to report that there is now a second female professor in science at a small Christian liberal arts college in Edmonton. Time for coffee!

.....
Heather Prior lives in Edmonton with her husband, Dean, and son, Daniel. She has recently assumed a faculty position in the biology department of The King's University College. Her church home is Lendrum MB.

For many years I have struggled to identify meaningful role models for myself as a woman in science.

LETTERS

Margureta (Greta) Martens, whose story appeared in the Fall 2000 issue of *Sophia*, passed away April 3, 2001, at Samara, Russia.

*Tina Wiebe,
Edmonton*

Some comments from Renewal Forms in the past year:

I especially enjoyed the Music Issue (7:1) – would love to hear more stories of our elders and ancestors.

*Irene Deckert,
Ontario*

Very Good Publication. Keep up the good works. God bless you all.

*Egda S. deSnyder,
Argentina*

Keep up the good work. Take more risks when writing about the tough issues – readership will increase as you approach the fringe. I also support lots of visual language as well.

*Agatha Doerksen,
Manitoba*

Thank you for your dedication to the wonderful magazine! I love it and look forward to every issue. It is always uplifting and a great source to my spiritual journey. Many thanks for your hours of work and a publication I couldn't live without.

*Anita Shroeder-Kipfer,
Ontario*

I really benefit from the articles. They are Bible-based and I like that!

*Evelyn Reimer,
Manitoba*

The issue on "Fear Not" (10:4) was very powerful! An inspiration.

*Barbara Slater,
Manitoba*

We have had a wonderful response to *Sophia* and look forward to the coming issues.

*Carol Fornara, Librarian,
Lendrum MB Church,
Alberta*

I read *Sophia* from corner to corner.

*Ulga Dueck,
Manitoba*

Thanks for your work. I do sometimes feel it assumes all women are married and/or mothers.... Would you consider revisiting this focus?

*Esther Wieler,
Ontario*

If you have comments about the magazine or its articles, please feel free to write:

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Winnipeg, MB, R2G 4E9 or
email, lmatties@escape.ca or
fax (204) 668-2527.*

We'd love to hear from you!

Living Word

by Helga Doerner

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ...The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ...And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.
(John 1:1-4,9-10,14 NRSV)

The opening words of the Gospel of John glide effortlessly across the tongue. It is such graceful poetic prose, it seems we cannot help but understand the author's meaning. Yet, read it a little slower and it sounds like a riddle. How can the Word both be *with* God and *be* God? How can Word be flesh and live among us and still be God? Though I know the traditional doctrinal answers, my mind still probes this mystery.

Human speech has immense power. The sounds that come from our mouths create languages that have the capacity to shape cultures, social orders and self definitions. When used with precision, they can be richly nuanced with meaning. Somehow, somewhere across time, it seems that the deep respect for and understanding of the authority language wields has been lost. Similarly, an appreciation of the intense richness of this common form of communication eludes us. Even our vocabulary seems to be diminishing. Through these losses, our ability to respect the potency of the scriptural texts has also been reduced.

When I read the opening words of John, I knew this



mystery could only be approached if I were willing to retrace the tradition out of which the Word was born. As I began that task, Bernard J. Lee became one of my traveling companions. In his book, *Jesus and the Metaphors of God* (Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1993), he details his research of the dynamic pathway of our living language in reference to the creation of the Word. Through his work, I gained an appreciation of the kinetics of vocabulary – how it is shaped by cultures and traditions and is anything but static in meaning. Though I have seen this phenomenon at

work in our present context, even during the short duration of my own life span, I hadn't considered that the same pattern holds true for the Scriptures. Yet the biblical tradition encompasses many centuries and different cultural settings. And the Word, living through these changes, has also experienced a shift in translation. In the Hebrew Scriptures its meaning is shaped by the Hebrew language. In the Christian Scriptures, specifically in John, it is shaped by Greek philosophy. Today, we read it from an English text. Beginning with this reality as foundation, I return to the riddle.

Though I already knew the English "Word" was translated from the Greek *Logos*, until I met Lee I was unfamiliar with its Hebrew history. "Word" in Hebrew is *Dabhar*. It means more than the sounds that make up language or the letters drawn on paper that communicate a message. It also includes action, an outcome of the spoken word. This brings to mind the first chapter of Genesis. God created through the power of the spoken word. God vocalized a vision and the world came into existence. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being."

Through the Word, all things came into being. Without the Word, nothing would exist. Yet the Word did not work in isolation. Before God even spoke, a wind from God (God's Spirit - *Ruach* in Hebrew) was already whispering across the waters. "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2).

Through these two companions, Word/*Dabhar* and Spirit/*Ruach*, the creative work of God originated. The world came into being. The universe is God's visible Word animated or brought to life by the Spirit. Yet somehow we have missed that. "He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him" (John 1:10).

God tried again. This time the Word entered a community of persons in flesh. The Word took human form. The Word communicated vocally, using the dialect of the people - words. Through his presence, message and actions, he had the task of bringing God to visibility. Some knew him. Some did not. He remained in the flesh only thirty-three years.

Today there is a tendency to perceive scriptures as the Word. In different ways, over more than a decade, I've been challenged to recognize the Word as more. In part, I

feel indebted to my youngest son for my awakening. It was his question many years ago that caused me to ponder the communication style of God.

One morning about seven years ago James's young voice filtered through my dreams and roused me from my slumber with the question: "How does God speak to us?" The first answer that surfaced in my sleep-fogged mind was: "God speaks to us through the Bible." Even as I said the statement out loud, I knew it barely scratched the surface of my experience of God communicating he/rself to me. My son had started a process that continued long after I had so saturated him with answers that he quietly slipped away to play. I wanted to re-member how God had "spoken" to me.

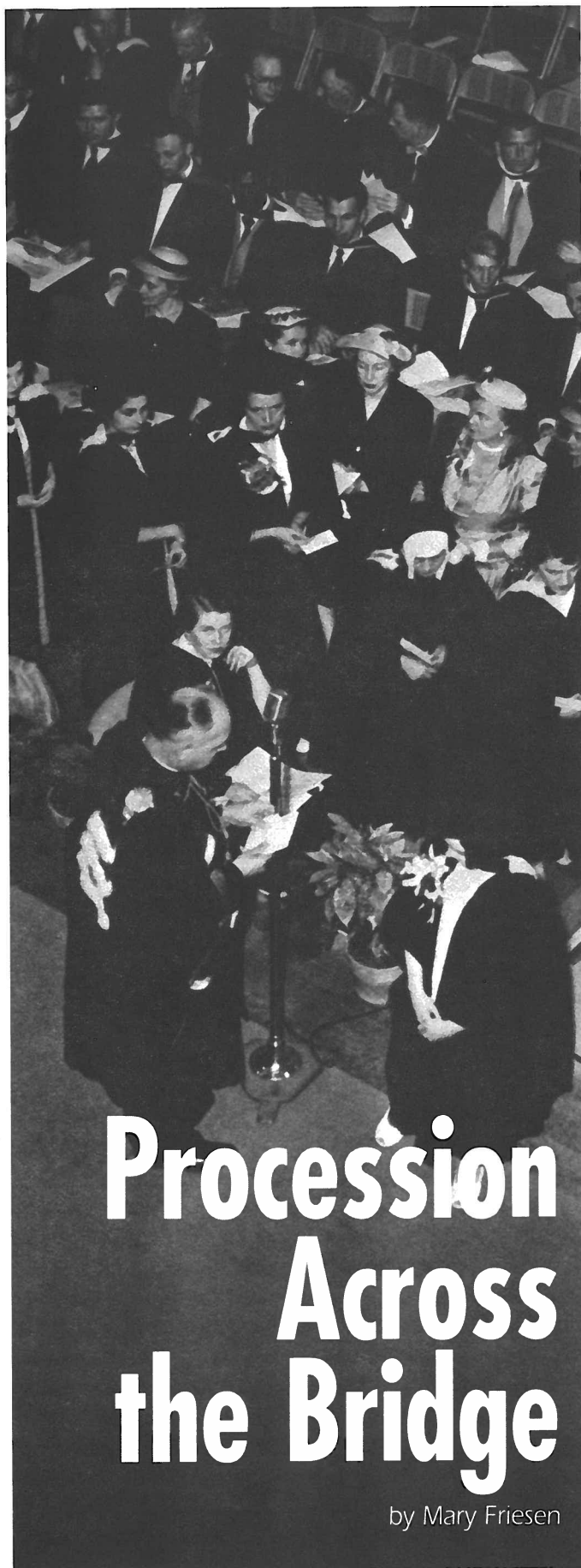
My experiences of God's speaking have been various and sometimes surprising. I share but a few. I've known the tug of the still small voice of conscience in my mind. Sometimes a message has come in conversation - with people accompanying me on my journey or even people passing through. It has taken the form of writing, which reached out to touch and heal, or challenge. Circumstances have guided me into unexpected places. Music has been known to play

my heartstrings. The images of my dreams have invited me to deeper understanding. I've been enfolded in the warm embrace of sunbeams around my shoulders - arms of God? The sigh of the wind has caressed my face - breath of God? I've been invited to catch a glimpse of Mystery in beholding a child living the delight and wonder of discovery. Volumes have been articulated in the ever-changing portraits of the rhythmic rising and setting of the sun and the marvel of perpetually changing seasons. When I witness the re-birth of creation in the tender unfurling of our spring the Genesis story of the earth begins all over again - life retrieved from barrenness.

As I dwell on these images of God speaking or communicating he/rself, I realize that God does not just communicate but is the communication - *Living Word*. The Living Word is an ongoing revelation of God. In the Living Word we espy God made visible: in creation, in the event of Christ and in a multitude of other ways that can be experienced daily in our lives.

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Helga Doermer is a member of Sophia's editorial committee and a regular contributor to this column. This spring, she completed the requirements for a Master of Divinity degree at the University of Winnipeg. If you have comments about this column you may write or email Sophia (see inside cover) or Helga at hldoermer@excite.com

*The Word took human form.
 The Word communicated
 vocally, using the dialect of
 the people - words.*



Procession Across the Bridge

by Mary Friesen

"As we begin the 21st century, we have an ideal opportunity to look back at the last decade of feminism to measure the gains that women have made." These words by the Honourable Hedy Fry, Secretary of State, were part of a speech to mark International Women's Day on March 8, 2001. During the celebrations that day, other speakers commented that "women have come a long way." This implies that we still consider gender discrimination to be a women's issue, when in fact it is a concern for all of society just like any other form of discrimination. How do we "measure the gains that women have made" in education, for example?

More than sixty years ago Virginia Woolf invited women to stand on the bridge connecting two worlds: private and public, home and professions, women's and men's. She invited women to fix their eyes upon the procession – the procession of sons of educated men. Considering the fact that currently in many universities about half of the undergraduates are female, we can safely say that women have joined the procession of educated men across the bridge. Woolf did challenge women to consider where the procession was leading them. One of the pertinent concerns for Woolf in 1938 was the prevention of war. Looking at the procession of educated men who were marching toward World War II, Woolf believed that women could best help prevent war not by repeating the words (of educated men) and following the same methods but by affirming the rights of all through new words and new methods.

Many of us have walked across that bridge and joined the ranks of educated men. What strikes me in this metaphor of the bridge as used by Woolf is the fact that the procession is going one way. If the bridge is connecting private life (domain of women) and public life (domain of men), why is the procession going only one way? If women leave the private domain to join men in the public domain, is it because what society values most is to be found in public life? Women who entered academic fields found quickly that they were outsiders in the sense that they had to learn to think, speak and act like the educated men who were at home there. In order to be successful in the public domain, women were asked to assimilate into the culture they chose to join, to adopt the values of the public domain. Have women who joined the ranks of educated men actually been able to create new words and new methods? How successful have we been in integrating experiences of women, their skills and language into the world-view of the public domain?

In the past our society has considered higher education as a way of assimilation of cultures, where an individual or a group replaced its original culture and values with new ones. Only recently have we in Canada acknowledged that schools for the aboriginal people

required of their students to give up their own culture and accept the values imbedded in the educational curriculum imposed on them. If we are "measuring the gains that women have made" in the last decade, we need to consider also how successful we have been in integrating

If we are "measuring the gains that women have made" in the last decade, we need to consider also how successful we have been in integrating the values from the private domain into the culture of the public domain

the values from the private domain into the culture of the public domain. In recent years, educators and researchers have expressed concern that women who have crossed the bridge into public life have not been successful in finding new words and creating new methods. Our society values education and encourages young people (girls and boys) to acquire this valued commodity. Have we considered the fact that our society continues to put low value on the work being done in the private realm? We still have not created new methods that would provide social benefits like pension plans or employment insurance for parents who choose to work at home while taking care of their children or aging parents. Just because women have opportunity to higher education and some career choices they did not have sixty years ago does not mean their experiences and ideas have equal value in design of curricula or public policies.

When we take a closer look at the content and structure of curricula in secondary and post-secondary schools, we find that the values of competition, academic achievement, abstract thinking and power are deeply imbedded in them. Those are the values of the public domain as described by Woolf sixty years ago.

Many parents and educators are concerned about violence, use of drugs and youth alienation in our society and are looking toward the schools for help. Most of us want our children, both girls and boys, to become caring adults who maintain meaningful relationships with others and become responsible citizens of our society. One way to accomplish this is to integrate caring, connectedness, compassion and spirituality (values traditionally embedded in the private domain) into the academic curricula for all our children.

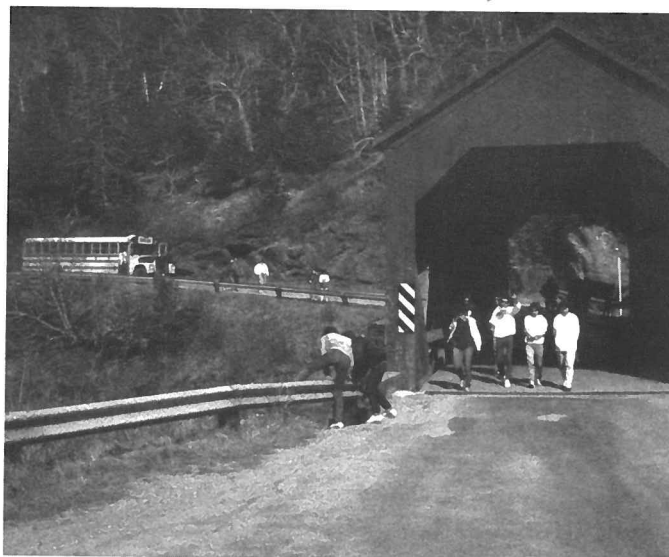
While women should have equal opportunity to work in areas that have traditionally been the domain of men, they should not do so simply because those occupations are valued more highly than the work that has traditionally been done by women. Caring for children, the aged and the ill must be shared by all capable adults. Our children,

boys and girls, need to experience care to learn how to care for others and to establish meaningful relationships. We can encourage girls to consider studying mathematics and science or to choose professions that have in the past been dominated by men, but we can also encourage boys to choose careers as care-givers and to enter into professions that allow them to care for children, the elderly and the lonely.

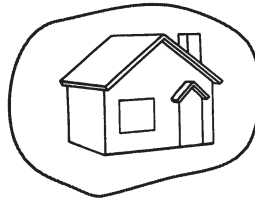
Since women have joined the procession across the bridge into the public realm, society has created institutions for childcare, for the elderly and for the disabled, yet most of these care-giving activities are as devalued in their new location as they were when they belonged exclusively to the world of the private home. The procession across the bridge needs to go both ways, and honest work in both domains must be respected and valued equally.

If we are going to "measure the gains that women have made," our society must also address the need to create a system that will value care, concern, compassion and connectedness as highly as academic achievement and competition. What is needed is not one or the other but integration of both for the benefit of all. When all our children, boys and girls, are offered equal educational opportunities in a system where caring for others is a valued priority, we will begin to serve the needs of all. I don't see this primarily as an issue for women in their struggle towards equality; rather, it is an essential step toward finding new words and creating new methods that will prevent war and any other form of violence.

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Mary Friesen resigned from her work as Vice Principal at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg last year. She is currently working on a Doctorate of Divinity at St. Stephen's College in Edmonton. Mary and her husband, Gerhard, have two children and two grandchildren. They are members at River East MB Church in Winnipeg.



An Education in Engineering – and Other Things



By Marcia Friesen

As an undergraduate student at the University of Manitoba in the early 1990s, I remember attending a small, informal memorial service. 20 or 30 students gathered in the hall in front of the library. Someone played a song by the Wyrd Sisters on a small tape player, and someone else read a short speech. CKY5 television news was there, and a reporter cornered me after the service to get my thoughts on it. In a seven-second sound bite, I couldn't possibly describe how I felt about the killing of 14 women who had been studying engineering at École Polytechnique several years earlier. I found it personally risky to think about the massacre that had taken place on December 6, 1989, because if I really allowed myself to engage those thoughts, I'd realize that not much differentiated my own day-to-day studies as an engineering student at the University of Manitoba from those of the 14 women at Polytechnique in Montreal.

That same year I allowed myself a break from the heavy course and lab schedule to attend a conversation with the mother of one of the 14 women who died at Polytechnique. I felt as if I had entered another world, far from my normal one of numbers and formulas, as I listened to that mother speaking about losing her daughter without warning and extending the conversation to issues of misogyny, violence against women and gun control.

I became acutely aware that the University of Manitoba could just as well have been Polytechnique, and that the labs I attended daily were likely very similar to the lab the women had found themselves in. From that point on, I felt anxious on campus and especially in the engineering building on and around December 6. I wondered about copycat crimes and noticed the more subtle signs of misogyny around me.

After the first year of general engineering studies, I chose Agricultural Engineering as the discipline I would

pursue and entered the departmental program with a cohort of 11 other students. Atypical of other departments, we had five women and seven men in the cohort. Given the amount of time we spent together over the next three years, we certainly had the opportunity to become a close-knit group, but we didn't succeed. Various incidents served to split us along gender lines and to heighten the divisiveness between the sexes to the point that, in fourth year, the department head called a meeting in a half-hearted attempt at mediation. Hostilities grew around small issues like unwillingness to collaborate on assignments and projects. They also grew around bigger issues like the right of the men to display borderline pornography in the student

lounge and their growing hostilities around graduation time because of their misguided understandings about employment equity and the related perceptions that the women would have a much easier time finding career-related employment after graduation than the men.

Exclusion extended beyond the university as well. I attended a plant tour several weeks prior to graduation, where the management representative addressed only the

men in the group. Upon being questioned, he indicated that he had once tried to hire women, but it "hadn't worked out," and his competitive position couldn't sustain the increased costs of having women on staff. He didn't explain what the increased costs were, but he did let us know that we need not apply for work there. The male students revelled in the knowledge that we had been shown our place.

While I experienced misogynist overtones in my personal context in the Faculty of Engineering, I speak only for myself. I know that women in other cohorts and other departments had quite positive experiences in the Faculty of Engineering and may dispute allegations of sexism or misogyny from fellow students, faculty or industry.

I, too, probably wouldn't have stayed around for four

I became acutely aware that the University of Manitoba could just as well have been Polytechnique, and that the labs I attended daily were likely very similar to the lab the women had found themselves in.

years had there not been some positive interaction. I found the small group of professors that made up the agricultural engineering faculty to show genuine interest in students and our goals. They valued teaching and cared about the classroom and departmental climates. These men challenged the stereotype of faculty at a research university as single-minded researchers with poor social aptitudes and weak teaching competencies. I've been able to maintain contact with some of these professors and count them as authentic supporters and important members of my professional network.

An acquaintance of mine who is a pastor once told me about a conversation she had with a friend who is an engineer. They spoke about the notion of God's calling and the idea of secular and sacred professions. "How do you understand your work as an engineer in light of your faith?" she asked him. He spoke of having a genuine feeling of glorifying God when he applied his gifts and talents to creative engineering work and when he was able to produce something concrete that ultimately manifested those gifts.

After university, I worked in industry for five years, always hoping to capture the feeling that man spoke of. Somehow, though, I always felt that while I could do my job and was good at it, I didn't find it ultimately fulfilling. I thought maybe it was because of the specific work environment. I changed jobs to see if that would help. Finally I decided that although I was committed to the engineering profession – to its value to society, to its practitioners and its students – the involvement I'd had to that point wasn't the best environment for me.

In September 2000 I returned to university to begin a Master of Education degree, specializing in post-secondary studies and specifically in undergraduate engineering education. This time around I'm experiencing formal education to be completely different and, finally, to be very satisfying. I'm sure that's due partly to experience and maturity, partly to the difference between graduate work and undergraduate work and partly to the differences in faculty cultures. I feel free to be myself, to show my strengths and weaknesses and to open myself up to relationships with colleagues. Opportunities in the Faculty of Engineering have come up that allow me to focus my studies directly on engineering education. They also provide a wonderful cross-fertilization of academic cultures and disciplines. I feel grounded in engineering and believe that my contributions and potential are finally being recognized and valued more fully. In faith language, I may say that God has opened doors for me and has guided my path.

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Marcia Friesen and her husband, Stefan Fischer, live in Winnipeg, where they attend River East MB Church. They are parents of one son.

Next Time

(Luke 10:38-42)

by Kristen Mathies

"Martha, Martha," he says.
 Sure, he can say that.
 He can say that *after* the bread is baked,
after the smell of roasting meat fills the house,
after the wine is brought from the cellar and poured.
 Of course I love Jesus; he's been our friend since
 before I can remember.
 But if he cares so much,
 about me getting the chance to sit and listen,
 why didn't he get in here and help?
 I know his mother taught him better.
 More than any other boys in the neighbourhood,
 she had her sons helping in the kitchen
 stirring things, fetching what was needed, sweeping up...
 What made him forget so fast,
 about all there is to do, about all he could've helped me with?
 "Martha, Martha," he says.
 Fine. I'd love to get in on the conversation sometimes.
 Next time he comes we'll eat leftovers.



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Kristen Mathies is from Waterloo, Ontario, and is a member of the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren church. Currently living in New York City, she works at the MCC United Nations Office (through Mennonite Voluntary Service) and attends Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship.

Two Conversion Stories

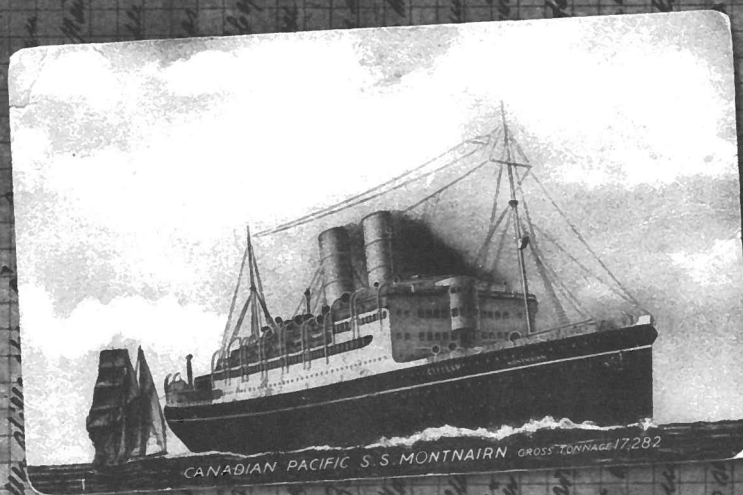
by Dora Dueck

Early in the life of the Zionsbote (1884-1964), the first periodical of the Mennonite Brethren, editor John F. Harms suggested that people submit their conversion stories for publication. Many women participated in this form of public autobiography. Conversion accounts detailed a chronology of the salvation quest, beginning with the first memories of spiritual longing and continuing through various struggles for understanding and certainty. The climax was reached by surrender or the assurance of God's forgiveness and freedom, but the story usually ended with baptism, or, in the case of the first generation of Mennonite Brethren in Russia, re-baptism. (This emphasis was probably intended to serve the group's particular separatist identity.)

The stories focused mainly on the inner spiritual journey. Sometimes, however, writers provided some context for their conversions or opened other small windows into their lives. The following accounts are quite different in tone and also reveal stark contrasts in social and economic circumstances.

Elisabeth Harder's conversion story was published 26 August 1903. I could not discover anything about her life besides what we are told here.

Already at age 15, the Holy Spirit urged me to be converted; I began to pray and to cry over my sins; but sin soon gained the upper hand in me again and I proceeded along the same old road to destruction. When I was



20, God's Spirit pressed me again, but I did not want to take him into my heart. Oh how I grieved the Saviour by this, he who faithfully sought me, the erring sheep, and who did not let me perish in the thorns. I joined the church through baptism, but my heart remained completely cold and I was simply thinking: when I am "big" I can marry and things will go better. But alas! The desired time came; I got [as husband] a widower Jacob Wiens from Schardau; he was a heavy drinker and my happy days were over. In about a year the Lord gave us a son, to whom

my husband became very attached. When the child was two years old, the Lord took him to himself after a 24-hour illness. Both of us were shocked by this and recognized that God's voice was speaking to us; we began to pray, but this did not last long and things were soon as they had been before. After we had been married 11 years, our eight-year-old daughter died; she was an especially affectionate child. Then my husband said, "Now I will soon die too." These words pierced my heart and I called upon God not to let my husband die in his sinful condition. I thought surely he would first get sick and could then be converted. But I was quite mistaken about this. A terrible day came upon us. It was November 15. We were living in Libenau at the time. My husband had already been drinking for two days. On this day he went to the other end of the village to borrow a horse – to ride, he said, to the doctor. But his errand took him into the tavern. When he returned home, I opened the door but immediately angrily slammed it shut, for I saw he was drunk again. Inside, I wept and cried, "O God, how will we manage? We are so very poor and he just keeps drinking." That was 3 o'clock in the afternoon. At 6 o'clock someone brought me the terrible news that my husband had fallen into the well. I cannot describe how much this news hurt me. But I thought, maybe he's still alive! I ran as quickly as possible to the accident site. My entire body shook. When I arrived, they were just pulling him out of the well and to my horror I saw that he was truly dead. Within me I felt this: he is lost and it's my fault; if I had been converted and set a good example, perhaps it would not have happened. My heart wanted to break for fear and pain. But I had to return home again to my five little children and when I told them Papa was dead, they began to cry bitterly, and the neighbors and I cried too. The Holy Spirit worked strongly in my heart during this time. He showed me my corrupt and sin-besmirched heart; I was near to despair. In my fear I cried out to God for help. But the Lord could not reveal himself fully to me because I did not want to let go of everything [in my life]. It cost me too much to open myself before people and reveal who I was. I also believed I could live happily without confessing my sins. But how very mistaken I was. My heart grew increasingly darker. The Lord had to go even deeper with me. My smallest son and I had to endure a long illness before I gave myself completely to him.

After some time I married again, to the widower Gerhard Harder from Sparrau. He was converted but not

I believed I could live happily without confessing my sins.

yet baptized. My husband prayed much for me but I could not attain complete peace, because my heart was not pure. We moved to Sparrau. We wanted to build ourselves a house there, but did not have much; on top of that my husband got sick again. God helped us wonderfully through the ill Sister Klaas Enns. I visited her often and she was the instrument in God's hands for my salvation. She also greatly assisted us toward the building of our house. I have often regretted that I resisted my Saviour so long, for he did so unspeakably much for me. May all, especially those who are young, follow this wonderful Saviour.

Greetings with Psalm 40:2,3. Your humble sister,
Elisabeth Harder

Maria Dyck's conversion story was published 17 May 1893. She was the granddaughter of Heinrich Heese, a leader in educational reform among Russia's Mennonites and daughter of Martin Riediger, a secondary school teacher. She worked as a governess/teacher, an unusual role for a young Mennonite woman. Her husband, Wilhelm Dyck, became well known as a minister and itinerant evangelist in the Mennonite Brethren church. The effort to immigrate to America, to which she refers, failed. Maria Dyck died of typhus in 1896 at age 38, survived by seven living children. (Note: She is the grandmother of Esther Reimer, our Sophia treasurer.)

Since my husband is absent and the Adversary has been especially busy during this time, troubling my soul with various doubts about my conversion, I was led by the Spirit one night to the idea of writing down my conversion story and publishing it in the *Zionsbote*.

My longing for the Kingdom of God was first aroused by the death of my dear father Martin Riediger. I was just barely seven at the time. After that I felt an emptiness in my heart and liked to find a quiet spot to be alone; there I would sing stanzas that were especially meaningful to me like, "Beyond that sea of stars, lies a beautiful land," and with tearful eyes think, if only I could also be with all the deceased and my dear father some day. As youngest daughter I had been my father's favorite. But then, when I taught the daughters of an estate owner in my 16th and 17th years and explained the stories of the Bible to them, I could not grasp that the Lamb of God had atoned also for my guilt. In my 20th year I entered marriage and the Lord led me so wonderfully to a man who also wanted to be saved and was in a state of repentance at that time. We prayed together from the very beginning. We drew near to

God as partners, even though our prayers were silent.² At the time of my marriage my mother was living in Ekaterinoslav, so I had to move to a new home, namely in the district office at Nikolaifeld where my spouse was working as the clerk. Because I was young and unknown, I wanted to become acquainted with the people of my new place of residence and when someone came to see my husband, I would usually make some excuse to go out to them. One day two men with beards, which was relatively new among the Mennonites at that time, came into the office. I soon presented myself as well and listened as they conversed with my spouse about spiritual matters and then at the end broached the theme of full assurance of eternal salvation. My attentiveness grew, for such talk was completely new to me, a city girl. Naturally I remained completely quiet. When the men (they were the Brothers Dietrich Martel and P. Peters) were gone, however, I burst out, "If it is possible for these men to know they are going to heaven, why not us also?" My husband had indeed been struggling in the quiet hours of night over the salvation of his soul, and if waking, I had prayed for him too, but from this time on we began to struggle together, with fear and trembling, for our salvation. Through this I learned to recognize my true sinful condition and to repent, but the Lord did not fail in his faithfulness to me and taught me also to believe that my sins were forgiven. But I did not yet know true joy and the power of the Spirit to pray openly, which had been released in my husband. Some time passed – indeed the Lord had already allowed me to become mother of four little daughters – and then we visited a service in the Nikolaifeld schoolhouse one evening. The text from Numbers 10:29, "Come with us and we will do you good," gripped my heart. It drew me towards God's people, my tongue was loosed, and I felt compelled to publicly offer praise and thanks to God, and to tell people what the Lord had done for me. We now submitted our understanding to the obedience of Christ and were buried through baptism

My tongue was loosed, and I felt compelled to publicly offer praise and thanks to God, and to tell people what the Lord had done for me.

in his death, in order to walk in a new life. I resisted the temptations of the Enemy before baptism with the lines of a song: "Soon all is overcome, oh, then we will rest in blessedness."

Here, however, I still often experience the valley of tears, for as another poet puts it, "The path to the heights of Zion leads through deep places here." The first winter after our baptism all our children died of diphtheria and I also was close to death because of illness. Presently we are once more in possession of six precious trusts [children] from God's hand, which cannot be paid off without suffering and trouble. We are living at Reinfeld now, but only temporarily, for it is our wish to found a new home on the other side of the ocean. Accomplishing this with our six daughters, the oldest just coming nine next month, looks very difficult to me. But if [emigration] is the Lord's will, He will help us over these difficulties.

Greetings with Psalm 23, dear *Zionsbote* and your friends, from your friend,
Maria Dyck

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Dora Dueck is a regular columnist for Sophia. This spring she completed the work for a Master of History degree at the University of Winnipeg. Congratulations, Dora! If you have stories you'd like to share in this column, or comments you'd like to make to Dora, she can be reached by email at ddueck1@callisto.uwinnipeg.ca

- 1 The Mennonite Church of Russia required baptism for marriage, thus the expression "becoming grown up" was often associated with baptism.
- 2 The religious practice of the time was silent prayer; the Mennonite Brethren adopted the initially controversial practice of audible prayer.

Where and how do we learn to serve? This is a question that often arises for those of us involved with Christian higher education. The call to service begins with the earliest formation of our identity. As followers of Jesus, we take seriously the command of our leader when he said: "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45 NIV).

Communities of Christian higher education have a unique opportunity to contribute to their students' growth as servant leaders. By assisting students to develop an identity that is caring and willing to serve others, these communities provide an alternative to the dominant attitudes of individualism and self-gain that pervade our society today.

Service is influenced by a multitude of motivations, some of which are more noble than others. We may serve out of self-interest, out of our need for achievement, out of a sense of responsibility, out of a desire for recognition, out of a respect for authority, because the task is intrinsically satisfying or out of loyalty to a person or organization. We may serve because of our religious values, our family and personal value systems, our commitment to the ethic of caring, our respect for the value of community, our sense of what is good and right, our desire to serve and our desire to serve ideals. These diverse motivations come together to form our personal identity – that is, the way we think about ourselves and who we are – and this is the basis upon which we learn to serve. In an interview with Robert Coles, one civil rights activist put it this way: "It matters...to me and my family, [because] that's the kind of people we are and this is what we believe in doing."

To serve effectively we must consider carefully the way in which our life experiences interact with our belief systems. Servants must come to see personal gains such as money and prestige as less important than serving others. Those who feel that their personal satisfaction lies in getting as much as possible for themselves rather than in serving others are likely to seek impatient and superficial self-fulfillment and achievement rather than service.

Those who would serve must come to think for themselves against the current of popular opinion. This is because service stands in direct opposition to the radical individualism of our culture, in which individuals are seen as sovereign and without obligation to one another. In such a setting, if the community meets the expectations of the individuals within it, the individuals remain; if the community does not meet those expectations, they go elsewhere in search of more for themselves. In this view, community has no meaning or value except as a vehicle to deliver

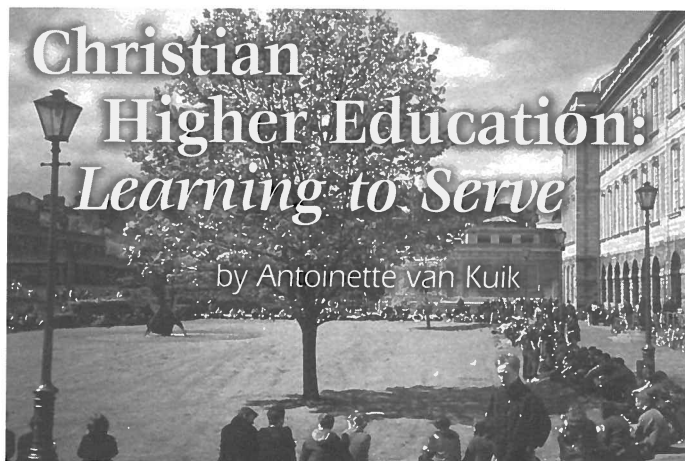
goods and services to individuals. This community can place on individuals only those obligations they are willing to accept. Such a system promotes the dissolution of community bonds and results in isolation within which service cannot be effectively fostered.

This mode of operation is one our world presupposes. It is seen in secular educational institutions when they speak in

terms of marketable skills and levels of remuneration rather than human need, giving, caring and service. In contrast, Christian higher education communities have the opportunity to offer something different: "Come and learn to give yourself away, come and learn so that you can give more, come and learn what needs you are uniquely equipped to address."

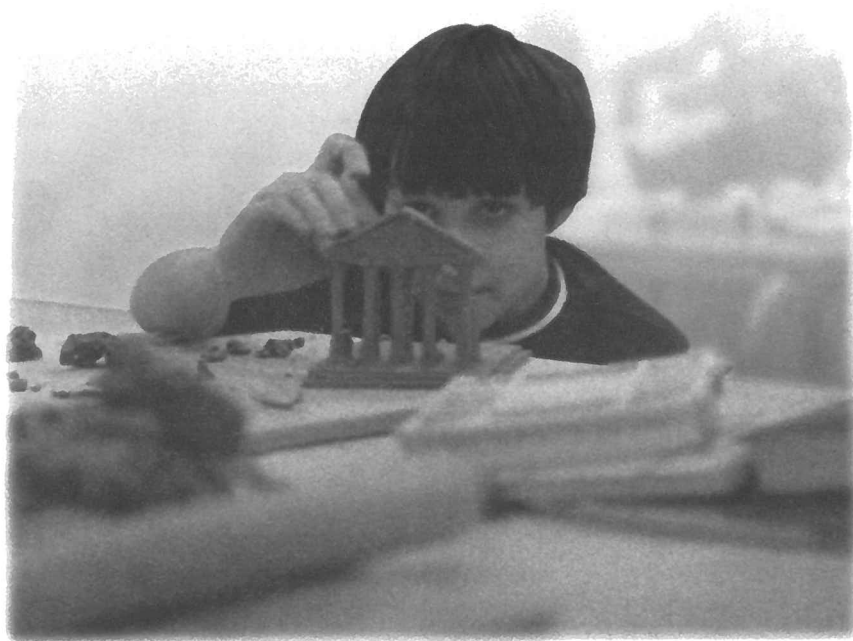
A Christian college has the opportunity to build a community in which everyone gives as well as receives service. When long-term, healthy community relationships are valued, cultivated and maintained, faculty, staff and students alike can explore service opportunities. They can try different ways of serving and be given honest feedback about their involvement, all in an environment where reciprocally trusting relationships are fostered. Where such service is modelled, students can observe and then move to guided participation in activities that will teach them to embrace the values and world-view commanded by Christ in Mark 10. It is this kind of commitment that forges a generous, altruistic alternative to the individualistic, self-serving identity of the world around us.

Antoinette van Kuik is the Vice President for College Academics at Providence College and Seminary in Otterburne, Manitoba. She and her husband have two children, and they attend Church of the Way in Winnipeg, where Antoinette serves as organist.



My Coat of Many Colours

by Donna Neufeld



When did I start believing that Bad was bigger than Good? It could have been one of the beatings I got when I was five for using more than one finger at a time to finger paint. Was it instilled in me already by grade four? My parents separated, and when they reunited, Dad's drinking hadn't stopped but became a dark and secret thing; a snake slinking poisonously underfoot. Something in my volatile world of chaos impressed me with the power of people to hurt and maim and destroy those they lived with.

It's no wonder I came to expect and fear the same results from my own hands. My siblings neatly dealt with their own concerns by never having children. Though I chose to have offspring – four times – I was devoid of confidence that within me lay any ability to truly, deeply impact my kids for Good. I dissuaded a friend from home-schooling her child as I sent my firstborn off to kindergarten.

"I'd never keep my kid at home!" I scoffed, "he needs to be around other people who can be a good influence on him, and counteract ME!"

I almost did it. I almost went down that road, which would have looked like a normal release of the kids while I sought deeper church involvement and vital, stimulating, soul-candy activities. I would have pursued the worst in myself and fled from the best. There always would have been a cold-hearted centre in the midst of my love-words.

Then Father stepped in, and did an utterly shocking thing: he invited me to meet my kids.

My response was even more surprising: I accepted.

It was like a stage play, where the script notes read: "sudden scene change." Props and players shifted rapidly around us while we whirled through moving and counselling and overseas and back and finally there we were: with two elementary students and two preschoolers. I gingerly stepped into a strange new world where "what are

you using?" referred to curriculum, not birth control.

It was a slow process to learn to keep my attention in the same room as the kids. Like trying to match the polar ends of magnets – my focus kept shifting, sliding, never still. At some point I realized that I could still do some of the cool projects I wanted to try my hand at by involving a kid or two along with me. Thus I stumbled upon my own interpretation of apprenticeship – not for a specific trade, but for Life. My children created a neighbourhood pet show, painted backdrops at a local school and designed bulletin boards for the children's church ministry – all while still in elementary school. As children are invited to work at an adult (read: Real Life) project in kid-sized portions, they see themselves as competent, capable, approved; and then act out of that solid core of beliefs to impact their world.

Homeschooling has been my coat of many colours woven with common thread: pencil and paper, schedules and chore charts, and dozens of creased paperbacks rescued from secondhand book stores ("someone gave away a Newbery award winner?!"). There have been golden threads; moments that capture the ideal: Children happily engrossed in pattern blocks on the rug with the afternoon sun running warm fingers through their hair, Mozart in the background...half-lit winter mornings with kids tucked into blankets on the couch to have breakfast by candlelight while I read aloud...a teenager thumping eagerly down the stairs, algebra text in hand, calling: "Hey Mom – lookit this cool formula!" But more common are the dull threads of black and grey, as we struggle through whining and fussing (some of it done by the kids) and learning to live together.

The years have forged an eclectic homeschool technique, drawing some elements from trusted sources while others are born of experience. Some tenets of my creed are:

- Read a lot of really great books aloud.
- Gift children with cultural literacy – memorize classic poems, expose them to the artworks of the Masters, learn Shakespeare, attend a few of the favourite operas (somebody in the next generation should be able to identify *The Barber of Seville* with more than just Bugs Bunny!)
- Celebrate good weather: take the day off
- Surround them with high-quality Christian media - *Adventure in Odyssey* audio tapes, cool teen magazines, music CDs – then let 'em soak in it
- Enter a LOT of contests – not only good as a built-in deadline for projects actually to get finished, but the kids begin to see themselves as winners
- Biographies: lots of them
- Volunteer in the community – dual purpose of building up kids' portfolios for when I'm applying for future

scholarships and encouraging people around me to see homeschoolers in a positive light

- Enlist friends to fill gaps in skills – I have traded art lessons for sewing, art for french and essay writing for basketball – it solves my brain drain, while allowing the kids to really know and appreciate friends dear to me
- Never make purple paper pulp in a white kitchen without clarifying that the blender lid must be ON before we touch that button. Trust me on this.

It is easy to put together a list of homeschool accomplishments – academic and otherwise – that look impressive on the page. Time is spent efficiently moving at each child's pace, and we can focus on strengths and highlight personal abilities to a much greater degree than classroom school. For instance, this year, my Junior High students have written essays on Abortion and Genetically Modified Foods; joined a Shakespeare workshop on Romeo and Juliet, which included attending a performance at a theatre in the city and a final "Capulet's Feast" where we all dressed in character, gave recitations from the script and ate

Renaissance food. One of them won three Art contests – local, provincial and national, and the other placed first in a provincial short story contest and won a spot in the Provincial Honour Band this year. Not even to mention the Duct-Tape Sculpture contest they won (don't ask). We did nothing uncommon to harvest this wealth; it simply reflects the effectiveness of homeschooling to direct attention to subjects that matter and to explore joy to the point of fulfillment.

Yet beyond academics is where homeschooling really begins to shine. It builds health into a family's bones. It has been a road to healing for me and my children – an agent of change whereby I passed from beneath one father's influence into the realm of Another's. I read somewhere: "among Christians so much prominence has been given to the disciplinary effects of sorrow, affliction...that they have been in danger of overlooking the other side: that by every joy, by every favour – yea and by these chiefly – God designs to educate and discipline His children. This one-sided view of the truth has made many morbid Christians, who look for God's hand only in the lightning and never think of seeing it in the sunlight."

I believe – I know – that Good is bigger than Bad.

I've taught my children to feel the sunshine on their faces.

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Donna Neufeld is a frequent contributor to Sophia. She lives with her four children and her husband in Winnipeg.

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Beyond Patriarchy: The Power of Shalom

by Tina Fehr Kehler, B.A.H.

Though it may seem that our society has progressed in the area of gender issues, inequalities and oppression continue. Some do not want to admit the imbalances exist. They believe they have been dealt with or they are not the church's problem. In our society, and generally in all others, the male population has the most power. Patriarchy is the structural system that is at work in our society to keep men in power. Our society is ordered so that white men have more power and will continue to keep it. Men and women both work to keep the status quo. Some say patriarchy, literally the father's rule, is God's intention for the world. But I strongly believe that patriarchy is an evil system that legitimizes inequality and perpetuates abuse and violence. We in the church need to examine critically the world's systems and how we collude with those systems that harm the powerless and maintain the position of those in power.

Patriarchy distorts human relationships and is antithetical to Jesus' teachings. It widens the God-created distinctions between women and men, exaggerating our differences and denying our similarities. Instead of viewing women and men as created equals in God's image, we become defined wholly by our biology. Patriarchy denies Jesus' words that all are equal, no one is to lord him/herself

over another, and each is to be a servant to the other.

The patriarchal system justifies the control of the weak by the powerful. Abuse and violence result for various individual reasons that are beyond the scope of this essay; however, collectively it is often the result of this power imbalance. The rest of society often sides with those in power, the perpetrators. Victims are often not believed, or they are thought to have invited abuse on themselves by dressing or acting a certain way. Programs exist to help offenders, but rarely are services offered to victims. Instead their integrity is questioned. The victim is blamed and the offender is let off the hook.

It is the church's place to turn the patriarchal order on its head by following Christ's model of empowerment (See Mark 10:43-45; John 10:10,11). Jesus challenged the authorities of his day; he rebuked them for their abuse of

power, and for legitimizing oppression and hierarchy. Jesus talked about love, grace, forgiveness, equality, laying down one's life for others and being a servant to be great in God's kingdom.

Those with power and authority help those with less power to gain power. This idea is radically different from the systems used by and in the world. The world's idea is that power is in limited supply. In relationships this means that one person will try to gain leverage at the expense of the other by force, manipulation, etc.

The way Jesus lived and taught empowerment, power is unlimited because its source is from God. Instead of shoring up one's own power, one uses it to increase that of others. That means that in our society, where men generally have more positions of authority, they must be more willing to encourage women, and, importantly, to take on more of what has traditionally been understood to be women's responsibilities. This will give women the freedom to share in men's power.

At one level, abuse happens when there is a misuse or imbalance of power. Because of our sinful natures, the potential for misuse is ever present. We need to examine our own lives, churches, workplaces and relationships to uncover the misuse or imbalance of power. Are we trying to control our children, spouses, co-workers, committee members? We can work against patriarchy by empowering – encouraging, teaching, building each other up, giving others opportunities – instead of controlling. Hoarding power denies it to others, robbing them of their dignity and self-worth.

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Empowerment works at the level of the individual as well as at the structural level. It works for victims and offenders, for the oppressed and their oppressors. As ambassadors of Christ we are called to empower victims of abuse by showing compassion to the afflicted. We must be willing to listen to their stories and walk beside them on their journey toward healing. Offenders must also be empowered; that is, their wrongs must not be excused. In the journey toward forgiveness, we must also walk alongside them.

A theology of peace that speaks against violence and abuse and for the oppressed and victims needs to embrace the biblical idea of *shalom*. *Shalom* is characterized by healthy material and physical well-being, the prevalence of justice or right relations and honesty between people. *Shalom* is a holistic concept that addresses every aspect of life. It works actively to create harmony while not shying away from conflict. *Shalom* does not leave room for patriarchy.

With respect to physical well-being, we must not accept abuse of any kind. For example, women should not feel they must endure a violent relationship for the sake of a "marital union." We as individuals and collectively as the church must support those escaping intolerable situations.

Throughout the Old Testament, *shalom* refers to relations that are marked by equity – the needy are cared for and there is no oppression of the weak and vulnerable. The world's message is that those with power will prevail. Jesus embodied the opposite. He gave up his power and gave it to others, setting a standard for the reversal of the fortunes of the afflicted.

Honesty, straightforwardness and openness must be the hallmarks of dealing with situations of abuse. Victims and their offenders live in a silence that needs to be broken.

Working toward *shalom* often means confronting the status quo; that is, it may not be "peaceful." For the oppressed and powerless to find *shalom* there will have to be struggle. The larger social structures, such as patriarchy, form the basis for mistreatment. For real change to take place, these structures must change. Since we as individuals make up the larger society, we must do all in our power to change the world around us.

True *shalom* will not be a reality unless all live in peace, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Those of

us in the Mennonite church are called to make *shalom* part of our peace theology, a theology that speaks out against patriarchy and all other oppressions and encompasses Jesus' ministry of empowerment.

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Tina Fehr Kehler, a member of *Sophia's* editorial collective, is currently working on a Master's degree in sociology at the University of Manitoba. She and her husband, Bud, live in Altona, where they are members of Altona Mennonite Church. They have a one-year-old son.

SHELF LIFE

Wisdom Searches: Seeking the Feminine Presence of God

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by Nancy Chinn and Harriet Gleeson
(Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1999)
85 pages.

Reviewed by Helga Doermer

For those lonely wanderers who have not found a resting place in the tradition of "God the Father," *Wisdom Searches* moves in a different direction. Nancy Chinn and Harriet Gleeson begin the book by speaking of their roots within the Protestant and Catholic church, respectively. Eventually feeling confined and restless within those boundaries, they found themselves called to explore a long lost legacy. Initially, they felt alone in their exploration. They experienced turmoil, and felt isolated from their primary faith communities.

In *Wisdom Searches* these two women become the traveling companions of anyone who wishes to walk with them. The scriptural texts, focus of their study, are drawn from the Catholic Canon. They share the discoveries of their search for the feminine presence of God – through

artwork, poetry and prose reflections.

One cannot help but be drawn to the surreal drawings as a first reading. The fluid forms and inviting colors depict an unusual dimension of Divine Wisdom. And this invites the reader to more fully enter the writings, if for no other reason than to gain an understanding of the paintings.

The cadence of poetry, dripping rich with sensual (sensory) images, connects the world of substance to the Unseen, and Lady Wisdom appears through another medium. The prose of the journalized journey invites the reflective reader more intimately into the lives of the authors, as they chronicle their experiences and discoveries in this travel. The one who already wanders this same path may see reflections of he/rself.

The book is best partaken of in morsels. It is for souls starving for Divine images that reach into the ordinary and move beyond. The meditations are meaningful, nourishing in their offerings, for those who wish to know God as more than Father.

Learning from the Master

by Gareth Neufeld

The call to ensure a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for all students in public schools is heard again and again today. I am encouraged by this. These goals of inclusion and equity for all are directed not only toward academics, though the move toward integration of students with special needs and the challenge of providing differentiated instruction that recognizes the multiplicity of intelligences and learning styles is certainly a significant part of this important discussion. At the same time, however, schools are exploring ways to support a climate of inclusion toward those students who, by virtue of their culture, race or gender, are too often on the sidelines of full participation in school-life. This issue is particularly urgent in light of recent violent tragedies in a number of North America's high schools.

In the Canadian context, there is a great need to widen our pedagogical approaches and adapt our materials to move beyond the eurocentrism that has marked our teaching and learning in the past. The last Canadian census reported that nine of the top ten groups of new Canadians arriving during the previous ten years came from non-European points of origin. The same census report projected that by 2015, 25 percent of all school-age children in Manitoba will be of aboriginal descent.

Add to this call for cross-cultural integration the ongoing goal of increasing the number of female students in traditionally male-dominated fields of learning. Recent indicators suggest that there still is work to be done. An American study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress

shows that differences in academic achievement between male and female students appear as early as age nine, with boys soon outperforming girls in math and science. At the graduate studies level, women earn a tiny proportion of the doctorates in areas like Physics and Engineering. A Canadian study showed last year that the number of girls and women in Information Technology courses has significantly declined in the past five years.

Given these trends, I am encouraged that the discussion around creating safe, caring and inclusive

I am encouraged that the discussion around creating safe, caring and inclusive schools for all students has acquired a sense of urgency. After all, our church's first teacher wouldn't have had it any other way.

schools for all students has acquired a sense of urgency. After all, our church's first teacher wouldn't have had it any other way. In the Gospels we find numerous examples of Jesus functioning "outside the box" of his own tradition, whether it was identifying with the compassionate Samaritan, breaking the rules of the Sabbath when caring for those around him demanded it or surrounding himself with outcasts and the marginalized.

Unfortunately Jesus' disciples didn't always understand their teacher's

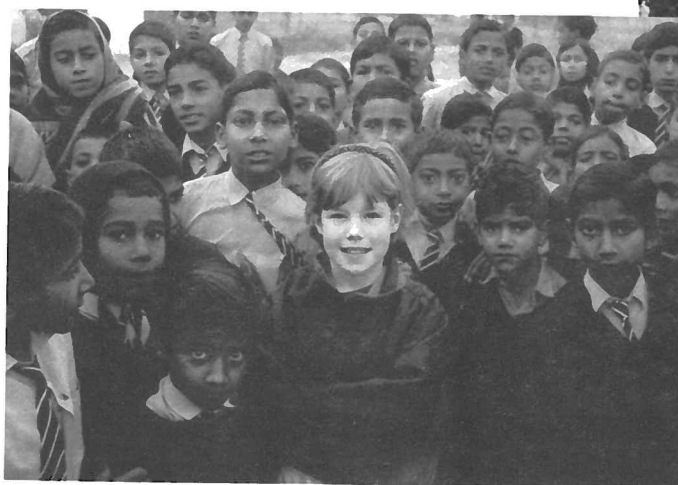
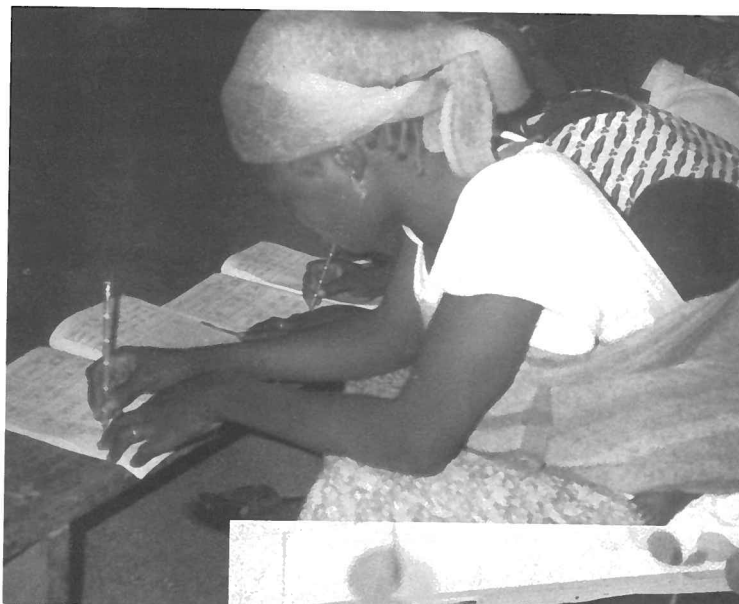
openness to others, and I fear too often we, in our day, misunderstand as well. As I consider my work at school, I find that Jesus' way points toward the creation of a peaceful and caring learning community in which students' interaction with each other is marked by mutual respect. The hallmarks of this way of thinking are encouraging students to respect the identities of those different from themselves (without wishing they would be more "like me"), fostering a kind of dialogue between students that views everyone as an equal participant and facilitating contact between groups that, if done carefully, can nurture the habits of behaviour and character necessary for positive participation in public life. Bridging barriers of culture, race, gender and religion (so often divisive at the high school level, when students are securing their identity) is a daunting challenge that needs to be met.

Efforts at River East Collegiate to foster cross-cultural inclusion have involved a number of initiatives, a few of which I'd like to mention. The creation of a Peace Garden in the courtyard at the center of the school, in which students have planted flowers, bushes and trees has been one highlight. As the space converts into a vibrant, multi-coloured park each spring, the garden becomes a symbol of unity in diversity. I have also found it useful to schedule occasional "Listening Lunches." Ten to twelve students, representing different groups in the school, share lunch with me in order to talk about issues of relevance to them. I listen and ask questions, but they provide the input. Later this year, we are anticipating being among the

first group of Canadian schools to join the international Associated Schools Network, sponsored by UNESCO. Associated Schools commit themselves to emphasizing the project's key principles of peaceful conflict resolution, cross-cultural understanding, care for the environment and human rights education. As these kinds of initiatives infuse the culture of our school with the sense that our community of learners is enriched by diversity, students have the chance to develop the intellectual and social skills they will need to interact courageously, equitably and redemptively in an increasingly diverse local and global community.

I am writing these reflections during the Easter weekend. Jesus died at the hands of an intolerant majority. But Jesus rose again to call us all, through the life he lived, to interact openly and mutually with those around us, working and dialoging with them to establish a peaceful and caring community.

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Gareth Neufeld is Vice-Principal at River East Collegiate, a public high school in Winnipeg. His current university studies have focused on multi-cultural education from a global perspective, and he is also working with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to bring about Canadian involvement in the Associated Schools Project. Gareth and his wife, Elsie, have two grown children, and they attend River East MB Church.





Of MAKING MANY BOOKS THERE IS NO END,
AND MUCH STUDY IS A WEARINESS OF FLESH.

THE END OF THE MATTER, ALL HAS BEEN HEARD

FEAR GOD, AND

KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.

ECCLESIASTES 12:12B-13A NRSV



Remember Dick + Jane?