



THE BLAZER

CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE • SPRING 2006

3 *Graduation 2006:
Amazing and Remarkable
Journeys*

11 *Taking the Measure
of CMU*

14 *Friendly, challenging,
practical: Students give
CMU high marks*

Editor's note

CMU's mission is to graduate students who are prepared to lead lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society. In this, our graduation issue, you can meet some of the students who are on their way to doing just that—and learn how their lives have been changed by studying at CMU, *Outtatown* and at Menno Simons College, CMU's campus at the University of Winnipeg.

In a way, this issue is like an annual report. It's a chance to tell alumni, parents and others what your support has accomplished through the lives of students. If your goal in giving to CMU was to make a difference, we can say: What a difference you have made! Throughout the year students repeatedly shared how their lives were changed as a result of studying at CMU, they have grown academically, personally and—importantly—spiritually.

Not that it was always easy; some students also spoke about how they sometimes struggled to make their faith a real and vital part of their lives. But even then they said they are stronger and better people for it, ready to serve God in a variety of ways.

So we say thanks, and invite you to enjoy a glimpse of what your support for CMU has produced in the lives of our graduates.

John Longhurst, Editor

MOVING?

Drop us a line, fill out the web form at

www.cmu.ca/alumni.html or email alumni@cmu.ca

Design and Layout by:



Phone: 204.480.8233 | Email: info@samsonstudios.ca

www.samsonstudios.ca



Verna Mae Janzen vocal competition finalists with donor Peter Janzen. From left: Melinda Metzger, Meagen Reimer, Geung Lee, Peter Janzen, Pamela Derksen, Rebecca Woodmass, Julia Kehler. See story page 21.

Table of Contents:

- 3 *An Amazing and Remarkable Journey*
- 5 *CMU Part of God's Puzzle for Former Refugee*
- 7 *"I'm Glad This Is Where God Called Me To Study"*
- 8 *Seeing Poverty First-Hand a Life-Changing Experience for Outtatown Graduate*
- 10 *Preventing Bullying Is Graduate's Goal*
- 11 *Taking the Measure of CMU*
- 14 *CMU News*
- 20 *People & Events and Alumni News*
- 23 *President's message*

The Blazer is a publication of CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY, published three times a year.

Editor/Communications Director: John Longhurst | Alumni/Constituency Relations Coordinator: Jonathan Neufeld
Printed in Canada | Made with recycled paper (30% recycled, 20% post consumer).

Publications agreement number 40686550 | Vol. 1, number 3 ISSN-1715-5843

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Canadian Mennonite University, 500 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2
Ph. (204) 487.3300 | Toll-free: 1(877) 231.4570 | Fx. (204) 487.3858 | magazine@cmu.ca | www.cmu.ca

On the cover: *CMU's Class of 2006: Rooted in Christ, in order to move.*

An Amazing and Remarkable Journey

*Surviving a head-on collision changes
Jonathan Tiessen's life, career goals*

In 1998, as their son lay in a coma following a horrific car accident, Jonathan Tiessen's parents were told by doctors he would survive, but they'd be lucky if he ever learned to dress himself again.

The doctors were wrong. In April Tiessen—dressed in full graduation regalia—walked across the podium and received his Bachelor of Arts degree from CMU.

“My recovery was remarkable, considering the prognosis,” says Tiessen, 36, originally from Crystal City, Manitoba. “At best, the doctors hoped I would acquire basic living skills.”

In retrospect, it was more like a miracle. But arriving at this point wasn't an easy journey.

At the time of the accident, Tiessen was a farm reporter for the Golden West radio network. He was driving home late one night from Winnipeg when a drunk driver crossed the centre line and hit his car head-on. A friend on the passenger side suffered multiple broken bones, but Tiessen's only visible injury was a broken collarbone. But the worst effect of the accident couldn't be seen—his brain was severely injured.

“I'm told we collided at a combined speed of over 200 kilometres an hour,” he says, adding that he has no memory of the accident. “My brain was pile-driven into my skull. It immediately began to swell, and my body started to shut itself off.”

He was rushed to hospital by ambulance and, for two weeks, lay in an induced coma while doctors tried to reduce the swelling. After being awakened, he stayed in hospital another week, and then was allowed to go home.

Tiessen looked fine on the outside. But on the inside, things were terrible.

“My personality really changed,” he says. “My moods would swing from being completely low to being completely high.” The lows were worst of all. Before the acci-





dent, he says he was easy-going and kept his emotions under control. “But after, I was easily angered and frustrated. My boiling point was very low—I became violent, lashing out at people.”

The experience filled him with despair. “Imagine your worst day, a day when you feel completely awful and alone, abandoned by God—and times it by ten,” he says. “That’s the space I was in, much of the time. I would cry to God for help, but I felt nothing. I was completely empty and alone.”

For 18 months his moods vacillated wildly; medication finally helped him bring them under control. His recovery was enhanced by his employer. “Golden West was great to me,” he says. “They let me work at my own pace, allowed me to do research for the person who was filling in for me and to do a few interviews. It enabled me to focus on things other than my health.”

In September, 2002, he decided to go to university part time to obtain an agriculture diploma, and work at Mennonite Central Committee. But his progress was hindered by severe and chronic pain in his arms, the result of an unforeseen neck injury suffered in the accident. “It was very disappointing,” he says. “I had worked so hard to overcome my emotional problems. This was a real setback. Worse, nobody could do anything for me.” He tried everything—massage, chiropractic, physiotherapy, acupuncture. Finally, a form of deep massage provided some relief. “It helps, but I still have pain,” he says.

His trips through the medical system—both with his brain injury, and for his arm pain—started him thinking about a switch in careers. “My experience showed me both the plusses and minuses of the health system,” he says. “I learned what it is like to be caught in the system, and how hard it can be to find your way through it.”



He became especially interested in the plight of those struggling with brain injuries and mental illness. “It really hurts to see someone struggling with brain injuries,” he says. “I’ve been there. I know what it’s like. I know what I needed in terms of help. If there’s any way I can be of help to others going through that, I want to do it. I want to be an inspiration and an encouragement to others caught in that situation.”

But in order to work in health care, he needs a bachelor’s degree, and that led him to CMU. “I considered other universities, but after a while I came to see that this is where God wanted me to be,” he says.

Of his time at CMU, Tiessen says that “it was a real eye-opener for me. It expanded my way of thinking. It’s been a great place for me.”

One of the things he has most appreciated has been the friendships he’s made with other students. “I’ve met some wonderful people here, people who think like I do,” he says. “And that’s what we all want—people in our lives who support us, and build us up.”

Looking back, he can see that his recovery has been an intense time of walking with God. “It hasn’t been easy, but God is good. He wants us to succeed in everything we do,” he shares.

He declines to speculate about the reasons why a drunk driver crossed the lane and struck his car; all he can say is that “sometimes the negative decisions that other people make will have a bad impact on others.”

But one thing that has come out of the experience is Tiessen’s deepening faith in God. “I could have died in that crash—I should have died. Or I could have needed permanent care. Today, for the most part, I have recovered. It’s been an amazing and remarkable journey. God has been faithful.” **B**

Jonathan and his wife, Indra, attend the Church of the Rock in Winnipeg.



CMU Part Of God's Puzzle For Former Refugee

Willy Mushagalusa wants to use international development degree to help poor people in the Congo

Fleeing for his life from a brutal dictator, living as a refugee, coming to Canada and finding his way to CMU—Willy Mushagalusa's life has been an interesting collection of puzzle pieces.

At times, it seemed that none of the pieces would fit. Fortunately, he says, "God is the best puzzle player I know. I don't believe in accidents and I know for sure that everything has a purpose because I trust in Him. God is putting all the pieces together for me."

In April, Mushagalusa graduated with a degree in International Development Studies from CMU. But 14 years ago he was a refugee, fleeing for his life from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), then known as Zaire. "I was among the

students who organized protests against the excesses and abuses of Zaire's then-dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko," he says. "When we received word our lives were in danger, we fled the country."

He ended up in a refugee camp in Kenya, where conditions were very hard. "There wasn't enough food or shelter, the climate was harsh, and there were no jobs," he says. "We had to build everything from scratch—our house was made from wood and plastic sheets."

While in the camp, he started his own bread making business, using a traditional charcoal oven. "I made about 50 loaves a day, and sold them to other people in the camp," he says. "It was very hard work."

The difficult conditions in the camp made him think about God more seriously than he ever had before. "I realized that I needed someone higher than



me,” he says of his decision to accept Christ. “The camp made many people realize the importance of a divine authority in their lives.”

In 1997, he was able to leave Kenya and immigrate to Canada, living first in Ottawa and then in Calgary. He helped at churches that ministered to people from Africa, but he felt called to help people back in his country to improve their lives. In 1999 a friend recommended Concord College (one of CMU’s predecessor colleges). He had never heard of it before, and knew little about Mennonites. He checked it out, and decided to enrol at CMU in 2003.

Today he realizes that enrolling at CMU was one of the best decisions he ever made. “CMU transformed my way of thinking. My worldview has shifted from seeing Christianity being limited to spiritual matters alone, to seeing that it applies to the every day human realities of our world.”

One of the most significant changes was discovering that peace and justice were integral to Christianity. “I had never thought that Christ had anything to say about politics or social issues before coming to CMU,” he

says. “Finding out that He does was very exciting for me. I now see the connection between faith, peace, human rights, justice and international development. I will leave this place with a Christian theory of development in one hand, and practical responses in the other.”

Of his time at CMU, Mushagalusa says that his studies “have given me more than just academic credentials. It has equipped me to be a compassionate and concerned citizen of the world. Every course I took, every person I interacted with, has enabled me to understand Christ differently.”

He was especially grateful for the support he received when his second child died shortly after being born. “The support of the CMU commu-

nity during that unfortunate event made me understand what it means to be part of a Christian school that is community oriented,” he says.


Two years ago, Mushagalusa became a Canadian citizen. His goal is to use his new citizenship to do community development work in the DRC. “God placed me in Canada and led me to take the international development degree for a reason,” he states.

As for the future, there are still a few pieces of the puzzle that need to fall into place. “But because of courses I took at CMU, I am progressively having a clear sense of the direction I should go in,” he says. **B**

Willy and his wife Ephemie and children Ashuza and Ahadi attend Winnipeg’s Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church.

“I had never thought that Christ had anything to say about politics or social issues before coming to CMU.”





For some people, choosing a university is a difficult decision. But not for Katherine Krehbiel. “I didn’t choose CMU,” she says. “God chose CMU for me.”

Krehbiel, of Goessel, Kansas, grew up believing she would attend a Mennonite college in her home state. But then, out of the blue, God changed her mind.

It all began when she attended the youth event at the Mennonite Church convention in Nashville, TN in 2001. While there, she entered her name at the CMU booth to receive a free T-shirt. She had forgotten all about it until a CMU admissions counsellor called and asked if he could visit.

At the time, CMU wasn’t even on her radar screen. “I was dead set on another college and wasn’t looking anywhere else,” she says. “But as we talked, it felt like a perfect fit for me. I was interested in pastoral ministry, and CMU sounded like an ideal place to prepare for that career. Before long, I knew that this was where I was supposed to go.”

Still, it wasn’t easy to leave home to study in another country—she was the only graduate of her high school class to leave the state for university studies. Plus, she didn’t know anyone at CMU when she arrived. “I came here not knowing a single person in Winnipeg,” she says.

But coming to CMU “turned out to be everything I hoped for,” says Krehbiel. “I made amazing friends, and the classes have been incredible. CMU has changed me—I’m not at all the same person I was when I first came here.”

“I’m Glad This Is Where God Called Me To Study”

Katherine Krehbiel feels prepared to enter pastoral ministry

Of her time at CMU, she says: “The whole experience has been amazing. My faith has grown. I see the world completely differently now. I have gained a much deeper and better appreciation for the Bible. I have learned what it means for the church to be the church, and how important it is to encourage community within the congregation. I have also developed a deep concern for social justice.

“I have never regretted my decision to come to CMU.”

Another highlight has been community life at CMU. “I made some amazing friends at CMU,” she says, adding that these friendships made her “all the more convinced that this is where I was supposed to be.”

It was also at CMU that she preached her first sermon. “This is something I would have never felt myself capable of doing before I came here,” she says.

Krehbiel, a member of Goessel’s Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, graduated in April with a Bachelor of Church Ministries degree; this summer she will do a practicum at Edmonton’s First Mennonite Church, serving as a pastoral intern. In the future, she expects to do seminary studies.

“I feel prepared to enter into the ministry that God has called me to,” she says, adding that “CMU has laid a strong foundation for the rest of my life. I’m very glad that this is where God called me to study.” **B**



Seeing Poverty First-Hand A Life- Changing Experience

“I can’t just live in a bubble anymore” says Outtatown graduate

W

hen you talk to *Outtatown* graduates, the word “amazing” comes up a lot.

That’s certainly true for Carmyn Hildebrand of Winnipeg. “It was an amazing experience. It was such a blessing to experience so much

in just eight months.”

Through *Outtatown*, students spend the first semester in Canada and the second semester in the developing world. Hildebrand spent her second semester in South Africa, where she not only saw lions and elephants up close—and had a baboon steal her lunch right out of her



Carmyn is a member of Winnipeg's Mclvor Mennonite Brethren Church.

hands—but also went bungee jumping and swam at some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. But that was only part of the *Outtatown* experience—she also saw first-hand the devastating effects of poverty, and the tremendous gap between rich and poor.

“I was billeted in a home that was not much bigger than the living room and dining room of my house in Winnipeg,” she says of her time with a poor family in Durban. Yet the spirit of her hosts, and others she met, left an indelible impression. “These people have nothing to call their own, yet we were welcomed with smiles and open arms,” she says. “‘Feel welcome here,’ they told us. ‘Our home is your home.’ And they danced and sang with a spirit of happiness and love that could only come from something greater than themselves.”

The experience “definitely made me appreciate my life in Canada,” she says. But it also changed her. “My dad says that ‘with knowledge comes responsibility.’ I know that I can’t just live in a bubble anymore.” Among the things she intends to do is continue broadening her view of the world, and make sure she does something to address the issue of poverty both overseas and at home.

Among her best memories are

the times spent volunteering with children, digging foundations for new homes and painting existing houses. “When we left, the residents shed tears of joy and gratitude for the trenches we dug for the foundations. To us, they were simply holes in the ground, but to those families it was home.”

“It was great to be affirmed in gifts I didn’t know I had.”

She also appreciated time spent as a group discerning spiritual gifts. “It was an amazing week, seeing what God has blessed each of us with,” she says. “It was great to be affirmed in gifts I didn’t know I had. It really helped and encouraged me.”

Hildebrand, who plans to go to the University of Winnipeg in fall to study to be a teacher, viewed her time in *Outtatown* as a time in between high school and university where she could be in a “positive and safe environment in which to grow, explore faith and ask tough questions.” It turned out to be just that for her; “it was such a blessing to be in a supportive environment and to be with people who were always there for you,” she says. **B**



Taking the Measure of CMU

How does the university stack up against the annual MacLean's magazine survey?

By Gordon Zerbe



Every year, *MacLean's* Magazine publishes a list of what it considers to be Canada's top universities. And, every year, there is the predictable criticism of the magazine's methodology, questions and conclusions, and of the fact that it doesn't include every school in its survey.

The critique is correct—no single bit of research could possibly come up with a comprehensive ranking of all of Canada's universities. There are so many variables to consider: Size, location, funding, mission, to name a few. Despite this, some people may wonder: How does CMU stack up in that magazine's annual survey?

But before going there, it's important to note why we are even taking note of the survey. It's because we are a university. We are not a Bible college-plus—a Bible college that has added some arts and science courses. We offer university-level education, with a range of majors and degrees that prepares students for entering the workforce or continuing their education. Of course, we cannot match larger schools when it comes to the number of programs and professors. But we really believe we match



up very well in an area that really counts—the quality of our teaching—and that we exceed other universities in the area of community life.

So, how does CMU stack up in the areas that *MacLean's* likes to measure? Pretty well, I think.

Faculty

The quality of faculty is an important yardstick for any university. One way to measure that is the number of faculty with doctoral degrees. Of CMU's 49 faculty, 36 have achieved a doctoral degree and five are at the candidate level (83 percent). The remainder hold masters degrees or equivalent.

But it's not just the high level of education that distinguishes our faculty—it's the way they interact with students that is also important. Said one student: "The professors are incredibly dedicated and amazing in their roles as teachers, mentors, and community members at CMU. They are directly in contact with the students and are always available to discuss with or calm down bedraggled students when we get overloaded and confused."

Student grades

It's not just the calibre of the faculty that is important when measuring a university—the calibre of the students is important, too. In 2005-06, CMU's incoming first-year students had an average final grade in their last year of high school of 82.1 percent, more or less the same as all the other undergraduate universities surveyed by *MacLean's*. In terms of overall marks at CMU, our students have a grade point average that is comparable to other Manitoba universities. As one student said: CMU is "the greatest academic and student life experience I've ever had." Added another: "CMU offers the best opportunity to be challenged academically and personally."

Class size

Many universities claim to have small class sizes. But, for some, that means 50 students or fewer. At CMU, however, our average class size is 18. This ensures that students have plenty of opportunity to interact with faculty in class, and outside of it. Classes feel more personal, and students can get to know each other—they aren't a number here.

One student said that the smaller class sizes "has allowed me to interact with professors, ask questions, and engage meaningfully in the material. The faculty and staff know you by name, and take a sincere interest in your studies—not just the growth you experience in the classroom, but also in your personal life. It has been such a comforting thing to know that if I ever have questions or need help, they are willing to listen and advise."

Community Life

This is another place where CMU really shines. CMU isn't a place where you attend classes. It's a place where you can be part of a vibrant Christian community. It's a place where deep, long-lasting friendships are made. Time and again students say that community life is one of the things that drew them to CMU—and that keeps them here. Full credit for this goes to our student life staff, as well as to professors and staff who spend time with students and become their friends.

Facilities

The centre-piece for CMU is our magnificent Founders Hall, a classic structure that has been greatly renovated on the inside to provide quality teaching, administrative and community space. Our new residence is state-of-the-art, with features that make it one of the most energy-efficient buildings of its kind in the province. While we are justifiably proud of these buildings, we know there are areas for improvement—we need a larger and better-equipped library and chapel space. These new buildings are called for in our longer-term plans.



Other important criteria

But there are areas that *MacLean's* doesn't measure—areas that we think are pretty important. One of these areas is our unique faith perspective. CMU is a Christian university. At CMU, faith is part of learning. That doesn't mean we teach students what to believe. In the context of our historic Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage, we invite them to examine their faith, to put it to the test and to make it their own. At CMU they will encounter a variety of ways of viewing the world, and see how their own Christian beliefs stack up. In this way, faith grows deeper and is seen as part of all of life—not just something you take to church or think about when in trouble.

CMU isn't a place where you attend classes. It's a place where you can live and be part of a vibrant Christian community. It's a place where deep, long-lasting friendships are made.

At CMU, faith is foundational. It informs how we approach our mission of providing university education. For faculty, this is an important consideration, since they significantly shape the pedagogy, curriculum, ethos, and on-going program of the institution. But this doesn't mean that they have to adhere to a limited way of looking at the world; indeed, they are free and encouraged to pursue and share knowledge from various diverse viewpoints, while being responsible to the mission of the university.

For students, our emphasis on faith is important, ranking high among the reasons why they chose CMU over other universities. CMU is “a super place to nurture faith,” said one student. “An ideal place to get to know more about Christ,” added another. Said a third: “The thing I

found most valuable about my time at CMU was how I grew in my faith. The professors gave me a desire to serve the Kingdom of God above all else. My life will never be the same.”

Something else *MacLean's* doesn't consider is emphasis on service. This starts with our faculty and staff, who are expected to be active in their congregations and community, and extends to students, who are expected to do a practicum assignment in order to graduate. Through their practicums, students provide needed services in Winnipeg, across Canada and around the world; at the same time, they gain valuable experience and networking opportunities that prepare them for a career.

For these reasons, we think that CMU does pretty well by the measurements used by *MacLean's*. But why let that magazine have the final word? I am more interested in what students have to say about their experience here. And the news on that front is good. In our recent survey of student satisfaction, students gave high marks to areas such as the quality of teaching at CMU; to their ability to grow in knowledge in their subject area and to grow in their faith; to the availability of professors; for the facilities; for community life; and for the value of money for their studies.

And that, for me, is the best ranking of all. **B**



Gordon Zerbe is Academic Dean at CMU.

Survey finds students pleased with quality of education at CMU

MAJORITY WOULD RECOMMEND UNIVERSITY TO OTHERS

If satisfied customers is one important hallmark of success, then CMU is doing pretty well—84 percent of students say they would recommend the university to their friends.

That was one of the findings of a student survey conducted in February at the university by The FaQtory, a Winnipeg branding and creative services firm. Almost 38 percent of students at CMU's main campus answered the survey, which asked them to rate their satisfaction with a variety of aspects of their life at CMU.

Among the reasons for why students would tell friends to come to CMU are the sense of community at the university, the high quality of teaching and their ability to grow in faith.

“This indicates that students believe in the value of the experience and learning they have had at CMU,” says project leader Doug Chimuk of The FaQtory, adding that “CMU is

delivering value to its students, and that value is being recognized.”

Other findings from the survey:

- Family, friends and church are the most influential group for students when making a decision to come to CMU.
- Academics, quality of the faculty, a desire to grow in faith and the importance of community life (in that order) were the most important reasons for choosing CMU.
- Students are quite satisfied with their education at CMU, with the average satisfaction score being 5.9 out of seven.
- Students gave excellent ratings to the advancement of their knowledge of subjects; the quality of teaching at CMU and the availability of professors; facilities; and the value for money of their studies.

With regards to the students themselves, about 60 percent come

from Manitoba, over 60 percent are Mennonite, with others coming from evangelical, United, Baptist, Catholic, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Anglican, Alliance and Christian Reformed congregations. Most students pay most or part of their tuition.

In addition to the accolades, there were some concerns. Students expressed appreciation for how CMU challenges them to deal with difficult questions of faith, but some seem surprised by the extent of the challenge. “New students encounter ideas and beliefs they may have never met up with before, and have to re-evaluate their experience and faith in light of this new information,” says Chimuk. “The problem is not so much whether they are ready for the challenge, but that they don't appear to be expecting it. CMU needs to be more clear about how students will be expected to wrestle with questions

Cont'd on next page

STUDENTS SAY Statistics tell only part of the story; respondents to the student survey were also given an opportunity to share comments about their experience at CMU. Here are a few:

- CMU is a great, friendly, inviting, warm, awesome, wonderful and amazing community.
- Professors care about students as people.
- The attention I get as student is excellent—I know I'm important.
- The professors care about my spiritual development.
- It's the greatest academic and student life experience I've ever had.
- The classes are challenging and have practical value.
- CMU is a super place to nurture faith.
- By letting us question, faith grows and becomes stronger.
- CMU offers the best opportunity to be challenged academically and personally.
- Coming to CMU has been essential to my growing as a person, and in my faith.
- CMU has been a huge growing and learning experience for me.
- CMU prepares you for life.
- It's an ideal place to get to know more about Christ.
- CMU makes you think about life, the world and what you believe.
- It's a great Christian environment, with a sound university education.
- It's a great school with Christian values.
- CMU provides an excellent environment that is conducive to learning and success.

Cont'd from previous page

of faith and make their faith their own.”

Other areas of concern were academic advising; the need for a larger library; and the need to offer more programs like education, and more courses in areas such as science, art and business.

“Adding additional courses at a measured pace would help CMU to grow the list of offerings,” says Chimuk, adding that the university has to be careful not to overextend itself by adding too many new things. This has to be balanced, he says, by deepening the programs that it already offers.

“The results of the survey are very gratifying,” says CMU President Gerald Gerbrandt. “It affirms what we have been hearing anecdotally from students and graduates about how much they appreciate and value their time at CMU.”

At the same time, he says that the university wants to take concerns seriously. “We are making efforts to strengthen academic advising, making plans for a new library and want to find ways to add more courses and programs,” he says. **B**

WANT TO SUPPORT CMU?
It's easy! Just visit www.cmu.ca/support



2006 CMU graduates: A life lived in Christ participates “in the reconciling work of God.”

Graduates Told To Be Rooted In Christ

64 STUDENTS RECEIVE DEGREES IN ARTS, MUSIC, CHURCH MINISTRIES AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

“Be rooted in Christ, in order to move. That is what CMU is all about, whatever you studied.”

With those words, Tom Yoder Neufeld encouraged CMU graduates to be rooted in faith as they “leave one place and go to another.”

Yoder Neufeld, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, ON, was speaking April 23 at the university’s sixth annual commencement exercises in Winnipeg.

For him, the Christian life is about “walking in Christ . . . a life lived in Christ is mobile, participating in the restless, inventive and reconciling work of God in the world.” Such a walk, he said, “is not always an even gait. It can be exhausting, scrambling up loose rock, slipping and sliding down ravines you think you’ll never get out of, or slogging through mud. “Other times, he stated, “it is a breathless dash.”

It’s the kind of walk, he suggested, that will “take you to Iraq with Christian Peacemakers Teams, or to New Orleans to do clean-up with MDS, to shelters for

people afflicted by disease or violence, to refugee camps, slums or to the halls of government, to hospital rooms, businesses, classrooms, choir lofts, artist studios or pulpits . . . anywhere and everywhere that God wants to reconcile people to himself.”

At the same time, he said, the life of faith requires a good foundation. “Our age is marked by rootlessness,” he said. “Having deep roots today is a rare thing. CMU has provided you with a rock solid foundation.”

Before Yoder Neufeld spoke, valedictorian Joani Goerzen of Carstairs, Alberta told the large audience at the Portage Avenue Church that she had experienced personal, communal and Christian growth during her time at CMU, and that her studies had allowed her “to see with new eyes, with eyes guided by Christ . . . we are like young trees, with deep roots, starting to reach to the heavens.”

Goerzen, who received a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies, added that she couldn’t imagine where her fellow graduates would be in five years—pastors, nurses, doctors, teachers and “many other careers that I do not know.” But, she said, “wherever we are,

Cont'd on next page

Cont'd from previous page

whatever we do, our roots are in Christ.”

Altogether, 64 students from across Canada and the U.S. received bachelor’s degrees in the arts, music, church ministries and church music during the exercises.

Earlier in the day, at the morning baccalaureate service, Gerry Ediger told graduates that, at CMU, they had been exposed to the truth, because “CMU is a truth-based university, however difficult and counter-cultural that is to

say today.”

Ediger, an Associate Professor of Christian History, went on to say that “at CMU, we taught you to ask questions. But if all we have done is teach to ask questions, we have failed you, and we have failed the churches that sent you.”

Asking questions about faith is important, he stated, but it is just as important to live and practice faith and “be a witness to the truth . . . questions will not sustain you in the long run, when crisis hits—and

it will. In those times, you will have questions aplenty. In those times, only truth will sustain you.”

At CMU, he said, graduates “have received Christ,” adding that he hoped their futures would be “profoundly shaped as you are rooted and established in the truth of Christ.”

The baccalaureate service also featured sharing by graduate Jeremy Zehr, of Deer Creek, Illinois and Talitha Kaethler of Steinbach, Man. Zehr said that he felt God’s spirit

while playing basketball at CMU, in his studies and during his practicum in South Africa, where he worked at an orphanage. “My time at CMU allowed me to see the world differently,” he said.

Kaethler added that she had “fallen deeply in love with studies” at CMU, due in part to the “genuine interest of professors in my life . . . I found the presence of God in every person, place and discipline, and the invitation to participate in God’s redemptive work.” **B**

Author Rudy Wiebe Discusses Life, Faith And Writing At CMU

Rudy Wiebe has never understood why so many Mennonite authors seem to think they have to leave the church in order to be writers.

“It’s a profound fallacy to think that thoughtful and imaginative people can’t be Christians,” Wiebe told about 80 people who came to hear him speak

about life, faith and writing at CMU on April 21. “Jesus was a great story teller.”

Wiebe, who graduated from MBBC in 1962, said that religion had played a positive role in his life, noting that he has good memories of how the lay ministers in his boyhood home emphasized the goodness of God.

At the event, held to mark the publication of his newest book, *Of This Earth: A Mennonite Boyhood in the Boreal Forest*, Wiebe talked about growing up in the mid-1930s to late 1940s in the pioneer community of Speedwell, Saskatchewan, home to about 200 Mennonite homesteaders who came to Canada as refugees from the former Soviet Union.

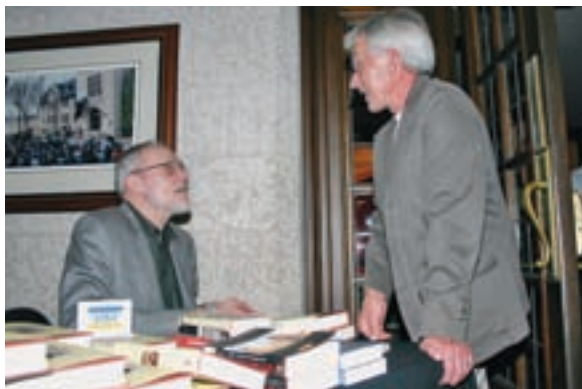
During a question and answer period, Wiebe talked about the negative reaction to his first book, *Peace Shall Destroy Many*. “There is something very powerful about words,” he said, noting that he had not anticipated the controversy that the book generated. Part of the problem, he said, was the leadership in Mennonite

churches at the time was still in the hands of people who spoke German better than English, with the result that “they couldn’t read English very well—they couldn’t understand the nuances. In fiction, there is more going on than the surface words.”

Wiebe also talked about the criticism that writers shouldn’t include things that are negative in their books. “A lot of life isn’t pretty,” he said. “We struggle through it, and we struggle on.”

And as for being considered a “Mennonite writer,” Wiebe said that it’s “just part of who I am. I am also a western Canadian writer, and a North American writer.”

Wiebe’s visit was part of the commencement weekend activities at CMU. **B**



Author Rudy Wiebe signs a book during his April 21 visit to CMU. While at the university Wiebe read from his new book and talked about his life, faith and writing.

Outtatown Graduates Encouraged To “Bring Home” What They Learned

“THESE HAVE BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MONTHS OF YOUR LIVES”

They spent eight months living in places like north-western Ontario, the Rocky Mountains, Guatemala and South Africa. They swam with sharks, did bungee jumping, rode horses and climbed volcanoes. They planted gardens, built houses, played with children and had their hearts broken by the poverty that many people around the world live with every day.

And, on April 8, they gathered together one last time to reflect on and celebrate their incredible experiences through the CMU *Outtatown* Discipleship Schools program.

“This is the beginning of interpreting their new experience at home, as they think of what God wants them to do and be now,” *Outtatown* Director Paul Kroeker told the crowd of parents, relatives and friends who came to see the 95 graduates receive their certificates. “They have returned home as changed people.”

Graduation speaker Jamie Howison used CMU’s theme verse for the year from Jeremiah 29:11 as the basis of his presentation to the graduates: “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for



Outtatown graduates Michael Bueckert and Charisse Eisbrenner play d’jembes at the *Outtatown* graduation in April.

your welfare and not for harm, to give you future with hope.”

Howison, pastor of St. Benedict’s Table, a Winnipeg Anglican church, and father of one of the *Outtatown* students, compared their experience to that of Israel in exile in Babylon—one of the most significant events in the life of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament.

“This story has everything to do with you,” Howison said. “These have been the most significant months of your lives. You were uprooted from home, and from what was left of the safety of childhood and

adolescence. You have seen and experienced things that the rest of us can only imagine. Your world has exploded and expanded. God has been active in your life. You have tasted the deep pain and brokenness of the world.”

Their challenge now, Howison stated, was to “bring home” what they had learned. “God has plans for you, for your life, faith and ministry—a future with hope,” he said. “Bring what you know back to us, dare to live what you saw.”

Outtatown leader Dale Friesen told the gathering that the past eight months were “a chance to

see God in a whole new way.” Tamille Richardson, who was in Guatemala, said “the things I learned and experienced will last forever.” Added Carmyn Hildebrand, who was in South Africa: “Thank you to CMU for thinking that *Outtatown* was something we needed to experience.”

The goal of CMU’s *Outtatown* Discipleship Schools is to help students know God, know the world and know themselves through Bible study, adventure and service. There are still openings for the 2006-07 program; visit www.cmu.ca for more information. **B**

Donor Profile



Bill and Ruby Sawatzky

Ten years ago, when the Ebenfeld Mennonite Church in Herschel, SK needed a pastor, the congregation found that it wasn't easy to find someone—the much-talked about pastor shortage was real. That's when Bill and Ruby Sawatzky of Rosetown, SK decided they better do something about it.

What they did was decide to remember CMU in their will by creating a bursary for students with financial needs. "It's important to us that there will be young people who can carry on our Mennonite faith tradition as pastors," says Bill, a retired farmer. "We want to encourage any students who might be interested in ministry," adds Ruby.

The Sawatzky's chose CMU because, as Bill says, "we've always held a great appreciation for the school—for how it exposes students to all areas of study." Adds Ruby: "It's a great place for them to build a foundation for life."

Do you want to help students build a foundation for life? Learn how you can leave a legacy by contacting Len Sawatzky at 204.487.3300 or 1.877.231.4570 or by e-mail at lsawatzky@cmu.ca

CMU Athlete Receives Award For Combining Sports, Academics, Service

When he graduated from high school, Jeremy Zehr wanted to play competitive university basketball. But he didn't want basketball to dominate his life.

"I wanted a university experience that was more than just basketball," says Zehr, of Deer Creek, Illinois. "I wanted to go to a school where I could play competitively, but have it balanced with my studies, social life and interest in service."

Zehr, who graduated in April, was able to do that at CMU. In March his ability to combine studies, services and sports was recognized when he received the David Terry Award, the highest honour given by the Association of Christian College Athletics (ACCA). The award is given each year to a player from a member school who shows not only success on the court, but also

in the classroom and by serving others.

"Jeremy is an outstanding example of what a Christian student-athlete is supposed to be," says his coach and CMU Athletics Director, Curt Warkentin, noting that Jeremy has maintained a 3.5 grade point average while at CMU, was the team's captain and leading scorer, served for three months in South Africa and also volunteered regularly with youth in Winnipeg's inner city.

Of his time at CMU, Zehr says he liked how sports didn't dominate his life. "I didn't want to go to a school that demands you put your sport first," he says. But, he adds "that doesn't mean I didn't take basketball seriously—I played to win."

After graduation, Zehr, a member of the Calvary Mennonite Church in



Jeremy Zehr with the David Terry Award: An outstanding example of a Christian student-athlete.

Washington, Illinois, plans to stay in Winnipeg to work in the inner city. As for a long term goal, "I want to do development work full time," he says. **B**



PLANNED GIVING OPTIONS Through Canadian Mennonite University

When you establish a planned gift at CMU, you give a gift that keeps on giving—touching the lives of students now, and for years to come.

Bequests | Appreciated Securities | Life Insurance | Trust deposits | RRSPs and RRIFs | Endowments

For more information, please call:

Len Sawatzky

Development Department

Canadian Mennonite University

204.487.3300 or 877.231.4570 • lsawatzky@cmu.ca



Come “home” to CMU Sept. 22-23 for Homecoming and Opening Program

Who says you can't come home again?

If you attended CMBC or MBBC/Concord, it may seem that way, now that that your former alma mater has been merged with Menno Simons College to create CMU. But the rich traditions that made those two schools so special live on at CMU, and we invite you to join us September 22-23 for CMU's Opening Program and Homecoming.

Homecoming is especially designed for people who graduated in years ending in the same num-



CMBC graduates of 1965 meet at 2005 CMU Homecoming.

ber as the current year—in this case, 1956, 1966, 1976, 1986 and 1996. There will be opportunities for reunions and reflections as you meet old friends and remember good times together.

But the event isn't limited to people who graduated in those years—everyone is

welcome. Activities include a special Homecoming concert; the opening program; alumni sports events; and a bicycle rally.

For more information, visit www.cmu.ca or call 1.877.231.4570 (487.3300 in Winnipeg)

You *can* come home again! **B**

A Gift That Keeps On Giving

“The professors, staff and faculty are incredibly dedicated and amazing in their roles as teachers, mentors, and community members at CMU.”

“The classes here don't simply give me information to fill my mind—they offer me skills for life.”

“It's great to be at a place that teaches the Bible and has strong academics, too. Thanks to generous gifts from faithful CMU supporters, I can study in a university that is committed to academic excellence, and is firmly rooted in the love of God.”

“Coming to CMU was the best decision I have ever made!”

Those are just a few of the comments from students about their experience at CMU—experiences made possible because of the generous gifts from people like you. We invite you to give a gift that keeps on giving through the lives of young adults—people who are preparing to serve the church and the world through their studies at CMU. **To make your donation, just use the envelope in this issue. Thanks!**

Special note about giving stocks: The recent budget makes it possible for Canadians to donate publicly traded stock to charities without paying any capital gains tax on the disposition of those shares. If this is something you'd like to do, contact planned giving director Len Sawatsky at 487.3300, 1.877.231.4570 or at lsawatsky@cmu.ca

The Good Life on God's Good Earth: A Creation Care Conference Sept. 29-30

Canadian Mennonite University | Winnipeg, MB

Sponsored by: CMU, Providence College, A Rocha.

Keynote speaker: Steven Bouma-Prediger, author of *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*.

Christ came to bring healing and redemption to every corner of the earth, including creation itself. But what does that mean? Come to **The Good Life on God's Good Earth** to explore biblical resources that address this question, and to find ways to apply the transformative power of Christ to this very important aspect of our lives.

For more information:

visit www.cmu.ca or call **1.877.231.4570**.

Registration: \$75 by Sept. 8 (\$45 for students)

\$90 after Sept. 8 (\$60 for students)

The support of the C. P. Loewen Family Foundation is gratefully acknowledged.

Christians and writing.

"Writing is a way of figuring things out," Giller Prize winning author David Bergen told a forum on life, faith and writing at CMU in February. "If you can't ask certain questions in church, maybe you can ask them in fiction—there's a certain safety in that." Although Bergen is only an occasional churchgoer now, he said his Mennonite Brethren upbringing influenced his decision to become a writer. "We were so entrenched in the Word, in the stories of the Bible," he said of his early years. "It's inevitable that it would find its way into my writing."

Importance of generosity.

That's why the Mennonite Foundation of Canada gives the Spirit of Generosity Award to students who have demonstrated a spirit of generosity in their lives. This year's winner of the award at CMU is **Heidi Koop**, a second year math major and member of Winnipeg's First Mennonite Church, who is known for being "always willing to help out any-

one who asks," and for exhibiting "a genuine spirit of generosity in everything she does."

CMU student wins music trophy.

Congratulations to **Andrew Richert**, a second year Church Ministries major from Swift Current, SK, who won the Winnipeg Music Festival's Alice F. Mills Memorial Trophy for best performance in the Folksong class in March. Andrew attends Zion Mennonite Church in Swift Current.

Athletic award winners.

Athletic ability, leadership and service were celebrated April 6 at the annual CMU athletic awards ceremony. Receiving awards were **Christie Anne McCullough** of Outlook, SK (Female Rookie of the Year); **John Neufeld** of Winnipeg (Male Rookie of the Year); **Kara Fuchs** of Winnipeg (Female Athlete of the Year); **Lucas Redekop** of Floradale, ON. (Male Athlete of the Year); and **Jeremy Zehr** of Deer Creek, Illinois (CMU Trailblazer Award). The event capped off a successful

year of inter-collegiate athletics, which saw the CMU women's volleyball and men's soccer teams win the Central Plains Athletic Conference championships. Teams also performed service in the community by playing games with inmates at a local prison, with inner city kids and with newcomers to Canada.

Grants awarded. Wilder

Robles, Assistant Professor of Conflict Resolution and International Development Studies, received a grant of 1.8 million Euros (\$2.5 million Cdn) from Fondation Misericorde in Belgium for a program of research, development and education with Agrarian Cooperatives in Brazil. Also receiving an award was **Jerry Buckland**, Associate Professor of International Development Studies. Buckland received \$100,000 from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for a research project to examine access to banking and other financial services in low-income communities in three Canadian cities.

Vocal Competition a success.

Vocal music hit a high note March 29 when six CMU students competed in the finals of the Verna Mae Janzen Vocal Competition, the first-ever event of its kind at the university. The winner was soprano Rebecca Woodmass, a second year voice major from Steinbach, Man. The competition was made possible by Peter Janzen of Deep River, ON, and named in memory of his wife, Verna Mae, who died of cancer in 1989 at age 53. "I had always dreamed of someday dedicating a memorial to her,"

he says, noting that he selected music because of the important role it had played in their lives.

CMU students win awards.

With over 600 students from over 40 universities from across North America attending the March 1-4 Canadian International Model United Nations Conference in Ottawa, it would be easy for ten students from a little school like CMU to be overlooked. But when the conference was over, CMU students came away with three awards. Winners were **Cameron Derksen** of Brandon, Man., who is studying at Menno Simons College (CMU's campus at the University of Winnipeg), and **Cordella Friesen** and **Michael Alty** of Winnipeg. "Considering the size of our delegation, along with the fact that most members of the group were new to this type of event, we did very well," says Alty, who organized the trip.

First for CMU. In a first for CMU, the Men's Chorus performed with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra in March, singing in the Manitoba premiere of Ferruccio Busoni's Piano Concerto. Still with CMU choirs, the Elmer Iseler Singers, one of Canada's premiere chamber ensembles, took time from their busy western tour to visit CMU in February to conduct a workshop for 80 choral students.

Female clergy in the movies. "Keeping Silent in the Church: Cinematic and Literary Representations of Female Clergy" was the title of a presentation given by Assistant Professor of English Sue Sorensen to the Christianity and Literature Study Group at the



CMU students Nathan Enns of Calgary, AB and Rebecca Woodmass of Steinbach, MB talk to author David Bergen at the forum on life, faith and writing at CMU.



Peter Kroeker and Alvina Block (front) with recipients of the Ruth Kroeker Memorial Bursary. The Bursary, given in memory of Peter's late wife, is awarded to students in music, international development studies or peace and conflict studies who have a special interest in serving others who are experiencing difficulties. This year's recipients are (l-r) Odette Mukole, Ashley Klassen, Matt Wiebe, Meagen Reimer and Charissa Griffith.

Social Sciences and Humanities opening weekend, September 22-23.

Paintings donated to CMU. In God's Image: A Global Anabaptist Family, a unique collection of about 100 pieces of art from 17 countries, has found a permanent home at CMU. The donation of the paintings and photographs, which show daily life around the world, was made possible by CMU supporters Herb and Erna Buller, Frank and Agnes DeFehr and Bill and Margaret Fast. The collection will be officially unveiled during CMU's

New music and arts school started. The Community School of Music & the Arts is the name of a new program at CMU that aims to encourage excellence for children, youth and adults who are looking for quality music and art instruction. Classes at the new school begin in fall; they will include voice and various instruments, ensembles (vocal and instrumental) and art classes in water colours, acrylics and mixed media. "I believe that young

people deserve the best when it comes to music education," says director Arlene Kroeker, adding that "working with CMU, with its fine tradition of music education, is a great way to offer quality music instruction to students." For more information, visit www.cmu.ca

Faculty notes. Luke-Acts: Alternative Reading is the proposed title of a new book by **George Shillington**. As well, George presented a paper titled "Reading Jesus' Parables in Light of His Crucifixion" at the Mid Western Region meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in April. Sessional instructor **Marilyn Houser-Hamm** was the featured liturgist at the Festival of Homiletics in Atlanta, Georgia in May. On sabbatical this coming year will be professors **Pierre Gilbert**, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, **Karl Koop**, Associate Professor of Theology and History, **Rudy Schellenberg**, Associate Professor of music, and **Paul Dyck**, Assistant Professor of English. Pierre will write a book

on the problem of evil. Karl will be working on a book about contemporary Anabaptist-Mennonite theology. Rudy will spend time in Paraguay providing music resources for Mennonite churches and schools in that country, and plans to write a history of choral music at CMBC from 1946-93. Paul will be continuing his research on the gospel harmonies of the community of Little Gidding, and will also work on a web-based tool for teaching the history of the book. **Dan Epp-Tiessen**, Assistant Professor of Bible, spent part of his sabbatical in Israel and Palestine learning about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He also contributed three chapters to an MCC publication that reflects on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in light of a biblical theology of land. And finally, **Gerry Ediger**, Associate Professor of Christian History, was honoured May 29 on the occasion of his retirement. Ediger taught at both MBBC/Concord College and CMU for over 20 years.

For more about these and other items, visit www.cmu.ca

Events@CMU

All events at CMU unless otherwise indicated.

June 20: President's Golf Tournament. Kingswood Golf and Country Club, La Salle, Man. Call 487.3300 or 1.877.231.4570 to sign up.

Aug. 21-25: 2006 CMU Blazers Multi-sport Overnight camp. Call 487.3300 or 1.877.231.4570 for more info.

Aug 28-Sept. 1: CMU Blazers Multi-sport Day Camp. Contact cu@cmu.ca for more info. Call 487.3300 or 1.877.231.4570 for more info.

Sept. 22-23: Opening Program and Homecoming

for graduating classes ending in the number 6 (1956, 1966, 1976, 1986, 1996). Call 487.3300 or 1.877.231.4570 for more info.

Sept. 29-30: The Good Life On God's Good Earth: A Creation Care Conference. Sponsored by CMU, Providence College, A Rocha. For more information, visit the Conference and Events page at www.cmu.ca

Oct. 17-18: J.J. Thiessen Lectures with Joel J. Shuman, King's College, Wilkes-Barre, PA. Topic: Worship and Bioethics.

Nov. 15-16: John and Margaret Friesen Lectures on Mennonites and Architecture with Rudy Friesen, Harold Funk, and Roland Sawatzky.

For more news, visit www.cmu.ca

WEDDINGS

Funk-Wight – Katherine (CMU 2002) and Trevor, December 29, 2005.

Reimer-Sportack – Diedre (CMU 2004) and Aaron (CMU 2004), Toronto United Mennonite Church, January 2, 2006.

Reist-Gladding – Deanne (Concord '99) and Luke, July 16, 2005.

BIRTHS

Karis (Schmidt) (CMBC 1991) and Jeff Boetto welcomed their son, Jase Nolan, on March 28, 2006. He is the younger brother to Rylan, 2.

NEWS

After teaching in CEMTA Paraguay and serving in the Mennonite Church of Asuncion, **Heinz Fast** (CMBC '89) moved with his spouse Marie-Lu and children Michelle (7) and Joel (5) in August, 2005 to Lubbock, Texas, where he is working on a Doctorate of Musical Arts Degree in Choral Conducting.

Harold Dick (attended MBBC from 1978-80) works as a lawyer for the City of Winnipeg's Legal Services Division. Prior to that, he practiced law for two years, worked for the Manitoba Law Reform Commission and as a policy analyst for the Manitoba Department of Urban Affairs. He married Donna Parry on Sept. 11, 2004; they attend St. Margaret's Anglican Church, where Harold has served in numerous capacities, including singing in the choir, sitting on Vestry Council and serving as Rector's Warden.

Deanne Gladding (Concord '99) teaches Vocal Music, Drama and English at Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School in Waterloo, ON. Deanne and her husband Luke are both involved in leadership in worship and with the youth group at Bethel Evangelical Missionary Church in New Dundee.

Katherine Wight (CMU, 2002) is working at Columbia Bible College, teaching voice and keyboard theory. She is also singing in two choirs and teaching private piano students in Abbotsford.

It's off to Ireland in September for **Jason and Niki Fehr**, who both graduated from CMU in 2005. They will be volunteering at the Corrymeelah Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in Bally Castle. This summer they will be working at Camp Valaqua in Alberta, where Jason will be Assistant Director and Niki will direct the Counselor in Training program.

GOT NEWS?

Please drop us a line, fill out the web form at www.cmu.ca/alumni.html or email alumni@cmu.ca

Erna and Larry Schram are celebrating their 25th anniversary this year. Erna (MBBC 1979) and Larry (MBBC 1982) live in Kelowna, B.C., where she works in pre-press production and graphics for The Real Estate Book magazine and he is senior pastor at Kelowna Gospel Fellowship Church. They have two children: Laura, (married to Aaron Abraham in 2005) and Alan.

Bruce Guenther (CMU 2003, MSC 2005) is enrolled in the Development Studies program at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex in Brighton, England. Bruce, originally from Saskatoon, also did a one-year CMU practicum with MCC in Kingston, Jamaica, where he worked for a Jamaican human rights organization.

John Siebert (attended MBBC 1977-80) is the new Executive Director of Project Ploughshares, an ecumenical peace centre of the Canadian Council of Churches that is affiliated with the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, ON. Prior to starting this position in August, last year, John was a consultant and, from 1992-98, worked for the national office of the United Church on Aboriginal rights and human rights. John is married to **Carolyn Wiens** (attended MBBC 1978-79); they have two children: Dylan, 16, and Cora, 14.

You can always come home again!

CMU 2006
Homecoming & Opening Program
 SEPTEMBER 22 & 23, 2006 - C'mon Home!

For more information, visit the Alumni section at www.cmu.ca or call 877.231.4570

Graduation Emotions



Another CMU commencement weekend has come and gone; another set of students has completed their studies at CMU. Although I have experienced many such weekends, the complex set of emotions those weekends generate remains intense.

The exhilaration and delight of the Saturday evening Spring Concert is contagious. It may be a smorgasbord event, with a mixture of classical, traditional, contemporary, jazz and Gospel musical styles, but unifying it all is the energy and enthusiasm of students who produce amazing music from their hearts. As in previous years, the audience recognized this once more, and demonstrated its approval through repeated and boisterous applause.

The Baccalaureate Service on Sunday morning serves as the last chapel service of the year, with the CMU community augmented by the family and friends of the grads.

Consistent with the more intimate atmosphere of the service, each graduate is introduced, and all family members who have come for the event are identified. Not only is it moving to observe the distances people have travelled to participate in the festivities—this year's class drew people from Paraguay, Kansas, Illinois, and across Canada, from New Brunswick to British Columbia—but one discovers all sorts of connections and relationships among them. Graduation is a powerful family event.

The Baccalaureate sermon is delivered by a faculty member leaving the institution for the coming year. This year that responsibility and privilege fell on Gerry Ediger, Associate Professor of Christian History, who earlier had announced he was taking early retirement. His study of Colossians 2:6-7, the thematic verse chosen by the grads, was provocative. As he spoke, I reflected on the tremendous contribution he has made to Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Concord College and CMU. Over the past 20 years or so he has inspired and taught countless students, and had an immeasurable impact on the church and larger community. We are fortunate that he will continue teaching part-time at CMU for the next number of years, but his speaking at Baccalaureate reminded me of the transition beginning to take place, and the loss we will experience at CMU. Graduation is not only about celebration, but also about moving on, and change.

On Sunday afternoon, 64 students were recognized as having completed their CMU programs. That was exciting. At the same time, that excitement also was coloured by the realization that, in most cases, those students now were leaving the university. This is as it should be, but

nevertheless a sense of sadness fills me as I think of CMU without them. One negative aspect of my position as President is that I do not get to know students as well as I would like to. And yet, as the students walked across the stage and received their degrees, I was struck by the number I had come to know and appreciate. I will miss them.

Grad weekend would not be complete without students telling their stories. For those of us who work at CMU, it is a reminder of why we are here. There is tremendous satisfaction in hearing a student say that the decision to come to CMU was the "best decision I've ever made." Or that at CMU "I have regained faith in Christ's love for the church." Or that "this place has compelled me to continually ask myself what it means to be the church, and how this affects who I am and the choices I make." Satisfaction also comes from hearing them say that, through their experience at CMU, they have come to understand the world and themselves, their relationship to Christ and the church differently.

But it is also humbling to hear their stories. These changes go beyond what we as faculty and administration have been able to accomplish. It is also due to the Spirit moving within the community in a way that cannot be controlled, where the only appropriate response is to stand back, observe and marvel. Thank-you God, and thank-you students and CMU community, for these emotions. **B**

Gerald Gerbrandt

What do students say about CMU?

- Classes are challenging and have practical value.
- A super place to nurture faith.
- The best opportunity to be challenged academically and personally.
- Prepares you for life.
- A great Christian environment, with a sound university education.
- The greatest academic and student life experience I've ever had.*

Become a CMU student and find out for yourself!

At CMU, we prepare you for life in the real world through programs such as: **Bachelor of Arts** (English, Geography, Philosophy, Political Studies, Psychology, Computer Science, Mathematics, Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies, Economics, History, International Development Studies, Biblical & Theological Studies, Music); **Bachelor of Music Therapy**; **Bachelor of Music** (Composition, Music Education, Music Ministry, Musicology); **Bachelor of Theology**; **Bachelor of Church Ministries**. Also begin these professional programs: Agriculture, Architecture, Education, Human Ecology, Law, Management, Medical Rehabilitation, Medicine, Nursing, Social Work, Physical Education & Recreation Studies.

CMU: Christian University Education

* Comments from the February, 2006 student survey



CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

www.cmu.ca

500 Shaftesbury Blvd. | Winnipeg, MB | R3P 2N2 | 204.487.3300 or toll-free 1.877.231.4570 | cu@cmu.ca

Publications agreement number 40686550

Return undeliverable Canadian address to:

Canadian Mennonite University

500 Shaftesbury Blvd.

Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2

Ph. 204.487.3300

Toll-free 1.877.321.4570

cu@cmu.ca

www.cmu.ca