

## Mennonites, Melancholy and Mental Health: an Historical Critique

Like all social groups, the Mennonites have experienced mental health issues in their history and

- suffered from mental illness and subsequent marginalization
- stigmatized mental illness
- faced the gravest consequences of mental illness, including suicide
- worked as mental health nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, etc.
- built mental health facilities
- worked to integrate people living with mental illness into their communities
- been clients, consumers or psychiatric survivors of mental health care services
- theologized on melancholy and sadness
- deconstructed medical authority using "madness studies."
- engaged in creative ways (painting and writing) to seek healing.

Papers of this conference were published in the 2011 issue of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*.



An Academic and Community Education Conference

# Mennonites, Melancholy and Mental Health: An Historical Critique

Hosted by the Chair in Mennonite Studies

## Oct. 14-16, 2010

Convocation Hall, The University of Winnipeg

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14: (7:00 pm- 9:00 pm)**  
Conference Introduction  
Melancholia and Mennonites in Literature

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15: (8:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.)**  
Contexts: British Quakers and Canadian Psychiatrists  
Europe: Anabaptist Radicals and Mennonites in Russia  
The Old Order, Old Colony and Mental Health  
Russlaender Refugees and Trauma  
The 'Mennonite' Praxis of Mental Health  
Pioneers in Mennonite Mental Health

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16: (8:30 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.)**  
Canadian Churches and Mental Health  
Diagnosing the 'Mennonite' Patient  
Children and Mental Health  
Eden Mental Health: Reflections

For more details visit <http://mennonitestudies.uwinnipeg.ca/events/>

**FREE ADMISSION      NO NEED TO PRE- REGISTER**

**Thursday, October 14: 7:00 pm: Opening**

Welcome, David Fitzpatrick, Dean of Arts, University of Winnipeg

Introduction: "Presenters, Conference Themes, and Divergent Voices," Royden Loewen, University of Winnipeg

Invocation, Rev. Pam Driedger, Petitcodiac, NB

**7:20-9:00: Melancholia and Mennonites in Literature**

Chair: Royden Loewen, University of Winnipeg

Grace Kehler, McMaster University: "Representations of Melancholy and Martyrdom in Canadian Mennonite Literature."

Brad Born, Bethel College: "When the Bruised Reed Breaks: The Art of Consolation in Four Mennonite Women's Writing about Familial Mental Illness."

**Friday, October 15: 8:30-9:30 am: Contexts: British Quakers and Western Canada Psychiatrists**

Chair: Grace Kehler, McMaster University

Barry Edginton, University of Winnipeg: "The Influence of British Quakers on the Treatment of Mental Illness."

Chris Dooley, York University: "The Shame of the State: From Asylum to Medicare in Western Canada."

Coffee: 9:30-10:00

**Friday, October 15: 10:00-11:45: Mental Illness in Europe: Anabaptist Radicals and 'Russian' Mennonites**

Chair: Janis Thiessen, University of Winnipeg

William Klassen, Waterloo: "Duke Ferdinand vs Pilgram Marpeck: Lunatics or Preachers of Care."

Helmut Huebert, Winnipeg: "The Story of Bethania in Russia: A Centennial Celebration."

Elsie K. Neufeld, Abbotsford: "Madness in my Family's Journey: Ukraine, Germany and Canada."

Lunch 11:45-12:45

**Friday, October 15: 12:45-2:30: Old Order Groups, Tradition and Mental Health**

Chair: Tina Fehr Kehler, MCC Low German Services

Margaret Reimer Loewen, Kitchener ON: "Murder, Suicide and Mental Illness in a Manitoba Mennonite Village, 1902."

Steve Nolt, Goshen College: "Old Order Mennonite Mental Health Care: A History."

Judith C. Kulig and Ling Ling Fan, University of Lethbridge: "The Meaning of Suffering and Mental Well-Being among Low German-speaking Mennonites."

Coffee: 2:30-3:00

**Friday, October 15: 3:00-4:00: Russlaender Refugees and the Trauma of War**

Chair: Maria Cheung, University of Manitoba

Hans Werner, University of Winnipeg: "Canada's Expulsion of Mentally Traumatized Russlaender Immigrants."

Elizabeth Krahn, University of Manitoba: "Lifespan and Intergenerational Effects of Soviet Oppression: An Autoethnography of Mennonite Women and their Adult Children."

**Friday, October 15: 4:00-5:30 The Praxis of the Mennonite Practitioner**

Chair: Vonda Plett, CMU

Irma Janzen, past program director, MCC

Randy Goosen, psychiatrist, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

Carolyn Epp-Fransen, nurse, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

Annie Wenger-Nabigon, psychotherapist, Laurentian University

Dinner Break: 5:30-7:30:

**Friday, October 15: 7:30-9:30: Pioneering a Modern Era Mennonite Mental Health Ethos**

Chair: John Friesen, CMU

Conrad Stoesz, Mennonite Heritage Centre/Centre for MB Studies: "Canadian Conscientious Objectors and the Mental Hospital, 1939-1945."

Titus Bender, Eastern Mennonite University: "The Mennonite Mental Health Movement and the Wider Society, 1942-1971."

Aldred H. Neufeldt, University of Calgary (Toronto): "Mennonite Mental Health Services and an Ethos of Faith, 1947-1978."

**Saturday, October 16: 8:30-10:30: Mental Health and Canadian Churches**

Chair: Irma Janzen, Fort Garry EMC Church

Glen Klassen, University of Manitoba and Charles N. Loewen, Winnipeg: "Eden Mental Health and the Evangelical Mennonite Conference."

Ellen Paulley, University of Winnipeg (student): "Mental Illness in the MB Herald, Canadian Mennonite and Mennonite Mirror."

Lucille Marr, University of McGill: "The Brethren in Christ and Mental Health."

Ken Reddig, Eden Mental Health: "Bethesda Mental Hospital and Ontario Churches."

Coffee 10:30-11:00

**Saturday, October 16: 11:00-12:30: Diagnosing the Mennonite Mental Health Patient**

Chair: Vonda Plett, CMU

John W. Elias, Saskatoon: "Love and Work: Itinerant Perspectives on the Well-being of Mennonites in the Americas."

John D. Friesen, UBC, and John Konrad, Abbotsford: "A Biopsychosocial Model of Depression Grounded in

Personal Experiences".

Terence Hoorman, University of Winnipeg (student): "'Mennonite Psychosis' and Canadian Academia"

Lunch: 12:30-1:30

**Saturday, October 16: 1:30-2:30: Children and Mental Health**

Chair: Chris Dooley, York University

Erika Dyck, University of Saskatchewan: "Madness, Mennonites and Medicare: An Historical Look at the Mennonite Youth Farm in Rosthern, Saskatchewan."

Allison Penner Harder, University of Winnipeg (student): "Attitudes to Children and Adults with Disabilities in Southern Manitoba: An Oral History."

Coffee: 2:30-3:00

**Saturday, October 16: 3:00-5:00: Critiquing and Celebrating Eden**

Chair: Ken Reddig, Eden Mental Health Care Services

Bernie Loeppky, Eden, first CEO

Eckhard Goerz, Eden, former CEO

Pam Driedger, Eden, former chaplain

James Friesen, Eden, present CEO

The Planning Committee consisted of Chris Dooley, Irma Janzen, Elizabeth Krahn, Royden Loewen, and Ken Reddig