

# CL

MAY 2008

CHRISTIAN  
LEADER

OF MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES

## U.S. CONFERENCE CONVENTION REGISTRATION INSIDE

- 19 What brothers do for brothers
- 21 Flying to where God wants Tabor to be
- 24 Ministry Quest goes to college



# New Life

## Researching labyrinths

Reading the "New Old Spirituality" by Tim Neufeld (March 2008) left me a bit puzzled. Why is the prayer labyrinth, an ancient pagan practice, entering into Mennonite Brethren circles? After reading the article, I decided to do a little research on the labyrinth, its history and uses.

The first place we should look, as believers, for spiritual guidance is to the Bible itself. I can find no reference anywhere in Scripture to a labyrinth or any other "tool" being used for prayer. In fact, we are severely warned by God not to use any tool for prayer as we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus himself, who allows us to come directly unto the throne of grace. The location of our praying is to be alone but there is no other directive given. In fact, when Jesus taught his disciples to pray in Matthew 6 he was extremely specific.

Tim Neufeld tells us that the labyrinth was "adopted from Greek culture by Christians in the first centuries following Christ's death as a tool for prayer." I have found in my own research that the first known incidence of the labyrinth occurs in Greek mythology. From the crystalinks Web site comes this information: "Something was being shown to visitors as a labyrinth at Knossos (an island of Crete) in the first century. There was a Lady who presided over the Labyrinth. A tablet inscribed in Linear B (early form of Greek) found at Knossos records a gift 'to all the gods honey; to the mistress of the labyrinth honey.' All the gods together receive as much honey as the Mistress of the Labyrinth alone. 'She must have been a Creational Goddess.'"

Tim also mentions the labyrinth embedded in the floor of the Catholic Chartres Cathedral in France. The main purpose of this labyrinth was to be a substitute for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which most people could not make. Walking the labyrinth on one's knees was considered more pleasing to God. This implies justification by

works and clearly is not biblical. Labyrinths are used in virtually all pagan religions, including the Hopi Indian "Symbol of Emergence." It is inconceivable to me that born-again Christians would be lured by such things.

We need to remember that Menno Simons wrote a renunciation of the Roman Catholic Church, in which he was a priest, and it nearly cost him his life. He was willing to become culturally irrelevant in order to be true to God's Word. Of course, this only happened after he began reading the Bible for himself. "At length I resolved that I would examine the New Testament attentively. I had not proceeded far therein, ere I discovered that we (Catholic priests) were deceived," he writes in his renunciation. Should we be any less careful as stewards of our faith? Just because something is new and attractive does not necessarily mean it is biblical.

Melody Unruh  
Reedley, Calif.

## "Old" practices dangerous

Reading your PDF article online "The New Old Spirituality" (March 2008) was shocking. These "new old practices" you are advocating are dangerous and experiential of old forms of mysticism. It sounds no different than promoting Ophraism and her influences with new age gurus.

Have you read *The Martyrs Mirror*? You will be enlightened to what persecution and martyrdom the Anabaptist/Mennonites endured for the cause of Christ because they resisted the false pagan practices of the Romist, Luthernist and Calvinist of the early church. Yes, Menno and our Mennonite ancestors would be rolling over in their graves to learn of the ungodliness forming within the Mennonite Brethren Church of the 21st century. Our heritage is based on being profound witnesses of the gospel of Christ alone, not add-ons to appease the times in presenting another gospel.

Carol Barker  
Surrey, B.C.

*The editors invite readers to share their thoughts and opinions on topics relevant to the Mennonite Brethren Church using letters to the editor. Letters should be on one topic, not exceed 300 words and include the writer's name and city. Letters will be edited for clarity, appropriateness and length.*