

Leaders counselled to be emotionally smart

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

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The 1994 book, *Descartes' Error* by Antonio R. Damasio, explores how rational process alone—popularized by Descartes' maxim, "I think, therefore I am," since the 17th century as central to human existence—was an unhelpful separation of mind and body, thinking and feeling.

This is the basic theory of Daniel Goleman's 1996 book, *Emotional Intelligence*, and others that Wanda Wagler-Martin, executive director of Shalom Counselling, Waterloo, taught at "Being emotionally smart: The importance of emotional intelligence in pastoring." The Feb. 3 event was co-sponsored by Associates Resourcing the Church, Conrad Grebel University College's Peace and Conflict Studies Department, and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Wagler-Martin retold a story by Goleman, who noted that chief executive officers and pastors are hired for their IQ, but are fired for their EQ (emotional quotient). They are smart, but somehow don't relate well to others. The journey from birth in a family of origin, often full of immature emotional relationships, conflicts and reactions, to being able to know and manage oneself emotionally, is a long and incremental one, she said. But this is necessary for pastors and other leaders to function within the intertwined families and power relationships in institutions like the church.

Pastors need both personal competence, made up of accurate self-awareness, healthy self-management and social competence, in turn made up of empathy, organizational awareness, service and relational management.

They also need places with "low maintenance friends," where their needs are processed so that they will not see work relationships, or those whom they serve, as "there for them," Wagler-Martin said.

She ended the seminar with a quick look at Goleman's Five Discoveries:

- **MY IDEAL SELF;**
- **MY REAL SELF;**
- **MY LEARNING AGENDA;**
- **EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW** behaviours, thoughts and feelings; and
- **DEVELOPING SUPPORTIVE TRUSTING** relationships that make change possible. These last relationships will probably be intentional relationships, including counsellors, spiritual directors or support groups.

Finding and developing emotional



Wanda Wagler-Martin, left, executive director of Shalom Counselling, Waterloo, Ont., discusses her presentation on Emotional Intelligence with Jim Brown, pastor of Riverdale Mennonite Church, Millbank.

intelligence is the journey of a lifetime, Wagler-Martin concluded, full of experimenting, reflection, self-care and fruitful service. %

Mennonite Story incorporates

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The Mennonite Story, a visitors' centre, began in 1979 to interpret the local and worldwide Mennonite story for tourists coming to the St. Jacobs area. Since its beginning it has hosted more than a million visitors from more than 160 countries. With a renewed video, self-guided interpretive display, knowledgeable volunteers and \$250,000 in renovations, the centre re-launched itself in the fall of 2011 as an independent corporation. Formerly tied to St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, the centre is now run under a six-member board and has its own charitable number.

An appeal letter reads, "Many visitors experience the Mennonite Story as a gateway to gaining an appreciation and understanding of the Anabaptist faith for the first time. Others find a reintroduction to a faith tradition of their past. In addition, the Mennonite Story is regularly utilized by local congregations for their Faith Exploration groups, by local Mennonite families, churches and organizations hosting foreign visitors, as well as institutions

who wish to orient new employees to the Anabaptist history and faith of the area." It adds, "The genius of the Mennonite Story is that, instead of the incredible cost of sending people to the mission field to share our faith story, the world comes to St. Jacobs, eager and ready to hear our story."

The board is inviting local individuals, companies and congregations to contribute towards the annual \$40,000 operating budget. Through generous gifts it is currently debt-free.

One visiting group of more than a hundred Muslims arranged to tour the centre on Easter Sunday morning. Their imam had told them it was important to learn about another group that desired peace in the global village and that lived "modest and disciplined lives." The visit ended with a request from them to give greetings to the Mennonite community. The staff reported that the Muslim women felt a kinship with the women of the Old Order community, as both groups strive to dress modestly and wear head coverings. %

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