

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

April 11, 2016  
Volume 20 Number 8

## Dancing towards reconciliation

MCC Ontario Indigenous  
Neighbours Program facilitates  
symposium for local church  
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## EDITORIAL

## How strong is our DNA?

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

“Those of us who discovered Anabaptism experienced this encounter, as I did, as a homecoming,” wrote Stuart Murray in his now-famous book in our circles, *The Naked Anabaptist* (2010). “Here were other Christians who shared our convictions about discipleship, community, peace and mission.”

Murray is back—as the keynote speaker at the upcoming annual meeting of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, to be held in Leamington, Ont., on April 29 to 30, and at *Canadian Mennonite’s* annual meeting and fundraiser at Rosthern (Sask.) Mennonite Church on April 23. No doubt this modern-day advocate for our core beliefs will remind us again that, while some of us want to abandon the name “Mennonite” because it seems too sectarian or too cultural, or a hindrance to evangelism efforts, we should rather return to our spiritual roots with more enthusiasm than ever.

“Although Mennonite scholars during the 20th century embarked on a quest to rehabilitate Anabaptism, their passion and insights have not yet had the impact they deserve,” he laments. “Many Mennonites seem more interested in purpose-driven churches or the Alpha course.” Others outside our denomination are “urging Mennonites to value more highly their own heritage and to recognize its contemporary significance.”

For some of us, this is good news from

this British-born prophet who came to our faith roots through his own study and search for a faith-expression workable in a post-Christendom age. For others, it is something they’d rather not hear and want to write off as an aberration.



But we ask all of us to heed his warnings and to emulate his passion, a dynamic especially needed in our own time of transition and change of structuring. Never before in recent history have we needed a renewed mooring in our own core beliefs to keep the ship afloat during the rough sailing that lies ahead.

While structures are important, our identity as a distinctive Anabaptist-Mennonite faith community is primary as followers of Jesus. It gives shape and form to all aspects of our faith expression; is a voice and imprimatur to all our worship and teaching/preaching, and a guidepost for our children and developing adults; provides techniques for parenting, and comfort and hope for the aging; and offers foundational learning in our church-sponsored schools, universities and seminaries.

It should be part of our DNA when facing the cultural/political issues of nationalism, militarism, restorative justice in the criminal system, integrating our indigenous neighbours and caring for creation. Yes, planet warming is a reality we must face squarely and seriously, and with some urgency change our lifestyles.

How are we doing with our core

convictions? In a feature by Evelyn Rempel-Petkau three years ago entitled “Rethinking peace,” she quoted a member of a Manitoba congregation as saying “In the last 15 or 20 years, I have heard only one sermon on peace.” Earlier, Gordon Allaby, then a Saskatchewan pastor, was asked to do an audit of Mennonite Church Canada, and found “it surprising how many congregations, and even provincial churches, were kind of drifting away from a passion of connecting peace and justice to following Christ, almost as if peacemaking is being relegated or diluted to more humanistic reasoning.”

Not good indicators.

Why are we “drifting away” when Murray reminds us that a “commitment to peace is one of the gifts the Anabaptist tradition brings to the wider church”? “It represents a recovery of the practice of the early churches, a natural expression of what it means to be followers of Jesus in post-Christendom culture where the church is no longer compromised by its partnership with wealth, power, status and control.”

There are hopeful signs, however. If our recent readership survey is any indicator, our young people are “very interested in more Christian and theological teaching in responding to current issues.” They desire a stronger Anabaptist presence in our publication, more wrestling with the issues from the perspective of our spiritual roots.

This is profoundly good news, as are the efforts of the newly formed Emerging Voices Initiative, coming out of a group at Canadian Mennonite University that is gathering together younger voices from all across the country to test and stimulate conversation around the recommendations of the Future Directions Task Force.

More power to them. This is a sure sign that our spiritual DNA is strong and enduring. Praise be to God!

## ABOUT THE COVER:

**At the end of the fields past Bloomingdale (Ont.) Mennonite Church is the Grand River, placing the church well within the Haldimand Tract given to the Six Nations of the Grand River by the British Crown in 1784. It was a fitting location for an MCC Ontario ‘Dancing towards reconciliation’ symposium on indigenous-settler relations. See Cover Story on page 18.**

PHOTO: DAVE ROGALSKY, CANADIAN MENNONITE

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund for our publishing activities.

ISSN 1480-042X

Canada

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

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Please send all material to be considered for publication to:

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Paid obituaries: obituaries@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

Material can also be sent "Attn: Submissions/Readers Write/Milestones/  
Obituaries/Calendar" by postal mail or fax to our head office.

Reprint requests: reprints@canadianmennonite.org

**Mission statement:** To educate, inspire, inform, and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through an independent publication and other media, working with our church partners.

**Guiding values:**

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**One-Year Subscription Rates**

**Canada:** \$46 + tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)

**U.S.:** \$68 **International (outside U.S.):** \$91.10

**Subscriptions/address changes:** (e-mail) office@canadianmennonite.org

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Award-winning  
member of the  
Canadian Church Press



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

# Marriage in embodied mystery

BY BRUCE HIEBERT

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

*Mennonites are actually careful discerners of the Spirit of God even more than readers of the biblical text. We have a long history of making the text say what our experience of God's presence tells us it needs to say.*

**M**arriage has always been, and continues to be, a perplexing reality for Christians. From the Apostle Paul's confusing advice to the more recent agonizing over divorce, Christian marriage has been plagued by anxiety and confusion. The conflicts in the church today are only the most recent chapter in millennia of struggle.

Marriage has always been a dynamic and difficult reality for Christians. This shouldn't be surprising when we consider that marriage is an expression of our bodies at their most intimate and vulnerable, an expression with critically important socio-economic implications, and one that our experience leads us to interpret through the mystery of the Spirit of God.

Right now, our culture is redefining the meaning of marriage to include monogamous, non-heterosexual couples. So only recently having agonized our way to the recognition, as our culture claimed, that marriages can end other than through death, the church is required to agonize through the possibility of non-heterosexual marriages that violate an assumption that has been similarly unquestioned for millennia. Just as monogamous heterosexual sex acts have come to be understood as the heart of marriage in the Spirit, now we must answer the question posed by our culture: Can homosexual sex acts also be at the heart of marriage in the Spirit?

Of course, as any couple married for more than a few years can tell you, while a marriage may have begun with a sex act, what keeps a marriage vibrant is something else, a mystery that arises between the couple that can spark over a cup of coffee or taking out the trash as much as in the bedroom. Somehow, something emerges between the two that gives life to each other as their life together leads to life transformed.

There is grace in a true marriage, one that transcends sex and remains even in its absence. This grace is also directed outward to the community, as out of the mystery of mutuality arises the strength to face adversity, energy to take on challenges, and a creative drive to see life birthed or renewed. A true marriage releases the partners to the service of each other and the world.

For many Christians, the mystery in marriage is so powerful and good it is named a sacrament, a taste of the very grace and presence of God. According to this perspective, the Spirit



*Now that our culture defines long-term homosexual relationships as equivalent to long-term heterosexual relationships, the church must explore the possibility that such relationships are also marriages in the Spirit, relationships that carry the mystery the church has traditionally celebrated.*

does not merely bless such relationships, but imbues them with divine grace. Mennonites have not embraced the language of sacrament because it violates our traditional understanding of discipleship. Still, most Mennonites recognize there is some sacred power, quite independent of our own accomplishments, alive in our most central and intimate relationships. It is why we bless them in our congregations. The mystery is fundamental to the reality.

### **Saying 'no' to homosexual marriage is 'false biblicism'**

Now that our culture defines long-term homosexual relationships as equivalent to long-term heterosexual relationships, the church must explore the possibility that such relationships are also marriages in the Spirit, relationships that carry the mystery the church has traditionally celebrated. This will not be easy because the idea that homosexual marriages are spiritual relationships violates millennia of norms and seems intuitively offensive to many. It is outside of normal theological and ethical reflection about our bodies and how we use them, and engages Christians in a very difficult cultural, as well as intra-Christian, dialogue around gender norms, sexual display and sexual expression. A clear "yes" or "no" to this question is not easy, even if "no" rolls easily off the lips of many Christians.

For those in the biblicist traditions shaped by Menno Simons and John Howard Yoder, the Bible is the central source for responding to change. Unfortunately, there is little guidance

in the Bible regarding sexuality and practically none regarding marriage. We will need to proceed carefully and in community, testing the Spirit in mutual service as we discern the true answer. We will need to read widely and deeply, and with patience and great scholarly care, if we wish to find any assistance for our theological and ethical task. Above all, we will need to listen to each other and our stories. Through the careful discernment of the people of God over the generations, we will find the answer.

But there will be some who claim "no" is the biblical answer. That claim is a false biblicism. One cannot legitimately read the scarcity of material and declare a voice from God. Nor would it matter even if there appeared to be such a voice. Mennonites are actually careful discerners of the Spirit of God even more than readers of the biblical text. We have a long history of making the text say what our experience of God's presence tells us it needs to say.

An excellent example is the presence of women in church leadership, a practice so acceptable in the General Conference and Mennonite Church traditions that it no longer merits attention. The dominant message of the Bible is of women's fertility and subservience to men; however, having experimented with women in church leadership for over a century and finding through experience that women were indeed blessed by God with the gifts



of leadership, the church knit together the weakest of biblical arguments and accepted what had become the practice.

If a historical review took place, it would be obvious the church denied the traditional teachings of the people of God and the Bible to affirm what the culture indicated and experience taught, namely that God's Spirit could act through women in leadership. Then at the end of the process church theologians fabricated a biblical authority for this change. Once experienced for some time, a non-biblical innovation became canon—authoritative guide—and the biblical interpretation followed.

### **An ever-changing experiment in faithfulness**

This example indicates how little the Bible guides us, despite our official biblicism. However, that does not mean the Bible is meaningless. The Bible of the church is about the metaphors, images, stories and teachings that give us a common imagination as the people of God.

Despite our desire to find arcs of meaning to control our behaviour, such arcs are only in the mind of the perceiver. But there are lives filled with the text. When it comes to contemporary marriage, our task is to read and ponder the text, and then tell our stories about how it fills our marriages.

One marriage may be a reflection on the Song of Solomon; another, Paul's instructions to avoid desire; and another, Abraham and Sarah's wilderness companionship. Or perhaps a marriage may be a meditation on all three at one point

or another in its life. Every marriage is unique and informed in its own way by the text, and each becomes its own churchly meditation.

This approach to the Bible foundationally recognizes the church as an ever-changing experiment in faithfulness. As with women in leadership, it will be our stories that become the basis for the church at some future date to understand marriage. It will be a future generation that hears our stories and judges the correct way of living.

We struggle so the next generation has the evidence through our successes and failures to see where God is leading. We don't have answers because we can't have answers yet. The culture has presented us with a confusing environment around an important aspect of life, and now we must live out our responses with as much faithfulness as we can intuit as individuals, couples and congregations, so the next generation can find the true path of faithfulness.

### **A daunting task**

Of particular difficulty as we experiment with the meaning of marriage is the issue of bodies and how we exist through them. Bodies are mysterious, powerful and scary. We live in them, but even more so, in all their difficult, vulnerable complexity, we are them.

The contemporary situation around marriage forces us to explore our embodied existence with personal integrity, collective courage and scholarly depth. But we are forced to do so with the caveat that we are embracing one of the most profound mysteries in God's creation, the mystery of how God works through our bodies to touch and transform us. This is a journey into deep questions regarding the meaning of grace itself in a world God created. The task is daunting and we have hardly begun.

For some within the Mennonite tradition, this situation encourages us to explore the language of sacrament. The sacraments are not a biblical phenomenon, but they are something that seems in retrospect to be a key guiding perspective to the way Mennonites engage in ethics.

Mennonites find holiness touching our

lives through acts of service, in hymns and in the community gathered. Through these experiences we feel something of God leaking into us and transforming us for the better. The language of sacrament seems the best way to talk about these experiences. Since marriage is one of the traditional sacraments, it only seems appropriate to engage that framework here. We must answer the question, "What of God breaks through to us through a true marriage?"

Through a new definition of marriage our culture has put a challenge before us that touches every aspect of how we live and what we believe. This is culture's right since culture has always been the fabric out of which we construct our marriages. As part of this experiment we are forced to explore the meaning of our bodies as vessels of grace.

Now it is up to us to discover what God might be saying through this

situation and these possibilities. We will struggle and a future generation will let us know where and how we succeeded as a faithful people. ❧



*Bruce Hiebert, Ph.D., is academic dean of Yorkville University's British Columbia campus and researches questions of gender, ethics and decision-making, especially in terms of biblical authority and church tradition. He is a member of Langley Mennonite Fellowship.*

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*Since marriage is one of the traditional sacraments, it only seems appropriate to engage that framework here. We must answer the question, 'What of God breaks through to us through a true marriage?'*

### **/// For discussion**

1. Do you think the proper place for weddings is in the church? What role does God's grace play in marriage? What role does the church play in marriage? Do you agree with Bruce Hiebert that "there is some sacred power, quite independent of our own accomplishments, alive in our most central and intimate relationships"? Are you comfortable thinking of marriage as a sacrament?
2. How have our expectations of marriage been changing over the years? Where has the church strayed from the path of faithfulness? Do you agree with Hiebert that we have come to accept the norms of the broader culture in terms of divorce and remarriage?
3. Hiebert says that on the issue of women in church leadership, "the church knit together the weakest of biblical arguments and accepted what had become practice." Do you agree? Is he right in saying that we take our direction from culture, rather than the Bible?
4. Hiebert suggests that when it comes to contemporary marriage we are in an "experiment in faithfulness" and only the next generation can determine "where God is leading." Do you find his rationale convincing?

— BY BARB DRAPER

## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, to be kept to 300 words or less, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. In light of the many recent letters on the topic of sexuality, we will edit any letter on this topic to a paragraph and post the rest online at [www.canadianmennonite.org](http://www.canadianmennonite.org). All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to [letters@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

## ✉ Jesus 'affirms' male-female marital unions

RE: "WHAT IS 'good' and 'acceptable'?" feature, Feb. 15, page 4.

We are greatly encouraged by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek's scholarly article on marriage. Using scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, he has convincingly shown that marriage as ordained by God is not negotiable: "The Jerusalem council, in redrawing membership boundaries to include gentiles, did not redraw moral boundaries in any way that deviated from the canonical arc concerning marital union and sexual practices."

It is also clear from the Genesis account that procreation was a major part of the whole creation story. God created man and woman for that purpose: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). God said it very

*(Continued on page 8)*

## FROM OUR LEADERS

Exciting times  
for our church

ERNIE ENGBRECHT

It is said that change is inevitable. As true as that might be, it doesn't have to leave us powerless, for we always have a choice of how we decide to respond to it.

In the four years I served as moderator of Mennonite Church Alberta and on the board of MC Canada, I observed considerable change and I see much more coming. The Future Directions Task Force's report is being discussed and debated with an intensity I haven't seen for some time, and to have the people in our church engaged in such a way is invigorating.

The Task Force asked for our ideas and reported its findings back to us. It suggests our strength begins in our congregations and area churches, and that covenants between them will create what

isn't possible alone.

This has been happening all along. A decade ago, MC Canada saved a substan-



*Over the last two years I have felt a shift in how our area church moderators and pastors work together.*

tial amount of resources by terminating its Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) program. There were a few who believed so strongly in the value of MVS that they brought it back to life. This program is run by volunteers and continues today.

Over the last two years I have felt a shift in how our area church moderators and pastors work together. These leaders have begun to detect a vision for our church that will only be limited by our imaginations. There is no doubt that these are exciting times for our church.

At our Alberta annual meeting in March, I was energized by the constructive way we reached decisions. The outcomes weren't always exactly how I had wished, but the honesty, respect and reciprocity that our people showed to each other entrenched even deeper my desire to be a part of our church.

I am grateful for the unique opportunity I had to work with such remarkable and gifted people who are passionate about their faith and about their church. I am thankful for all who I have had the opportunity to work, laugh, agonize and

empathize with. I can never be the same.

I have sometimes thought, "What is it that makes us different? Why would anyone choose to be a part of our church?" I believe it has less to do with our decisions and a lot to do with how we arrive at them. "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs" (Ephesians 4:39).

*Ernie Engbrecht is the outgoing moderator of Mennonite Church Alberta.*

(Continued from page 9)

plainly for all to read and understand.

If this does not fit into the reasoning of postmodern “innovationists,” “libertarians” or “revisionists,” it does not in any way change the fact that “[i]n the beginning God created male and female . . . and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 1:27, 2:24).

Jesus affirms this order, and adds that “[i]t would be

easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the smallest part of a letter in the law to be changed” (Luke 16:17, Matthew 5:18, New Century Version).

JAKOB HILDEBRANDT, WINKLER, MAN.

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

# Optimism in an age of ‘isms’

PHIL WAGLER

In 2015, for the first time in nearly two centuries of publication, Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary chose a suffix as its word of the year. That word was “ism.”

To name its winner, Merriam-Webster tracked two criteria: a high volume of look-ups and a significant year-over-year increase in look-ups. Who, pray tell, searches the meaning of suffixes? Will this year’s word be a prefix? Actually, I could see “anti” taking the prize now that I reconsider.

What’s instructive, however, is that Merriam-Webster discovered that “ism” was uniquely connected to words that people were quite curious about in 2015. Words like socialism, fascism, racism, feminism, communism, capitalism, and, of course, terrorism, were abundantly searched last year. If you think about it long enough, you can probably figure out the events that spawned these queries.

We are living in an age of “isms” and it’s not a fun game of Scrabble, for “ism” can be messy. The distinguished dictionary describes it as “a distinctive belief, cause or theory, or an oppressive and especially discriminatory attitude or belief.”

I suppose your preferred definition depends greatly on which side of the “ism” you fall. For instance, capitalism is a positive economic theory to some and an oppressive belief to others. Likewise, feminism can be a worthy cause in some contexts and a discriminatory attitude in others. Even among Christians the “ism” attached to evangel—meaning to believe the gospel or good news—can be an issue.

It seems, actually, that this age of “isms” is increasingly divisive and angry. We appear more and more divided by our “isms,” swift to judge those of others “isms,” and astonishingly ignorant of the “isms” we believe in or oppress others



*Even among Christians the ‘ism’ attached to evangel—meaning to believe the gospel or good news—can be an issue.*

with.

Thankfully, Jesus is no “ism.” At Lazarus’ tomb he doesn’t ask Martha and Mary if they believe the religious doctrine he is propagating. No, he says, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes

*in me will never die. Do you believe this?”* (John 11:25-26)

Is “this” an “ism?” No, look closely. He is calling us to himself. He is asking his friends if they believe he is beyond any “ism.”

As the church expands by the acts of the Holy Spirit, she does not call people to a set of doctrines, although these do necessarily develop. Repeatedly and simply, Christians beckon those of all “isms” to Jesus.

This is why the New Testament evangel is not primarily a declaration of propositional truths or philosophies, but the declaration of an event: “*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures . . .*” (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

The church is foremost a witness of the person of Jesus in the power of the Spirit to the ends of the earth. To reduce the good news to just another “ism” among many is to actually miss the point. It is, in

fact, to miss Jesus, who still calls, speaks and asks even those closest to him: “*Do you believe this?*”

*Phil Wagler (phil\_wagler@yahoo.ca) lives in Surrey, B.C., where there are lots of “isms,” and, because of Jesus, still optimism.*



## ✉ International partners deserve 'a more incarnational ministry'

**THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS** Task Force proposes to shift resources away from international to a more local focus.

I am deeply convinced of the importance of the local ministry my congregation does. At the same time, I believe that we move away from international ministry to our own detriment. Leaders in North America and Europe have pointed out that as the church declines in our regions, we more than ever need strong connections to the vibrancy and growth of the church in other areas.

We desperately need to see the poverty of our wealth through the eyes of others rich in commitment and faith in challenging settings. For that to happen, we need bridge people who truly have a foot firmly planted in two cultures. International ministry workers at their best have often played that role. Only a long-term presence in another culture has given them both the language skills and the cultural intelligence to create solid bridges in our global church family.

The report recommends reconfirmation of call for long-term workers, with congregational and regional support required. Some workers may choose not to serve under the new regime with its uncertainties. The call of others may not be supported or funded.

The future envisioned beyond existing ministries is for short-term assignments, with their opportunities but also serious limitations and pitfalls. I have participated in short-term resourcing ministry in Latin America and the U.K. But those assignments only made sense in the context created by long-term relationships and trust established by others.

There is a lack of humility in projecting our future ministry with the global church as persons parachuting in, and not slogging through, the difficult process of being humbled by language learning and cultural disorientation.

We owe our international partners a more incarnational ministry.

**REBECCA YODER NEUFELD,**  
WATERLOO, ONT.

## ✉ Task Force reminds us of 'years of unfaithfulness'

**AFTER READING ABOUT** the Future Directions Task Force in the three recent issues of *Canadian Mennonite*, I wonder if I have read the same document. I heartily agree with concerns raised by Witness workers (Feb. 1, page 4) and Derek Suderman (Feb. 29, page 12), but editor Dick Benner leads them in

misinterpreting several parts. Thus, they fear outcomes that are not prescribed. Rather than all the negativism expressed, I have hoped for suggestions that would help us move forward. The timeline is not "chiselled in stone," as Assembly 2016 will demonstrate.

Most comments failed to acknowledge several realities that "pushed" Mennonite Church Canada delegates to initiate this Task Force that has reminded us about years of unfaithfulness in regards to supporting delegate-approved ministries. I'll suggest two more:

**1. TOO MANY** congregations, like their individual members, have allowed the western culture of individualism and self-gratification to replace our profession of being disciples of Jesus our Lord. With changed loyalties, we act accordingly. Some larger congregations may act self-sufficiently, but we have a biblical tradition that highlights an interdependent church, an ideal that need not be lost with a leaner structure. We need constructive ideas, motivated leadership and loyal members.

**2. ALTHOUGH I** admit to not understanding the workings of our area and national church offices, I naively offer two alterations:

**A. OUR LOCAL** congregations need frequently to see their faces and hear their testimonials. In the past, it was possible when staff at all levels was about a 10th of the current size.

**B. WE NEED** to stop building bureaucrats. Inspirational and motivational public relations was of exceptional quality when we had many more mission workers and only two or three North American mission office staff.

**IVAN UNGER, CAMBRIDGE, ONT.**

## ✉ Pastor feels Evana Network was misrepresented by article

**RE:** "EVANGELICAL ANABAPTIST Network generates hope and frustration," Feb. 15, page 20.

I am disappointed that *Canadian Mennonite* elected to misrepresent the January Evana preview weekend and the Evana Network as a whole. Even as it stated at the onset that interest in Evana is due to a number of issues, the article proceeded to over-emphasize concern regarding same-sex relationships as the primary driver. I'm concerned that ill-will and unwarranted conflict due to false assumptions will be exacerbated by this.

It should be noted that same-sex relationships were not mentioned publicly even once throughout the weekend, nor does the Evana website mention this issue on its website outside of one brief line in both

*(Continued from page 9)*

the personal and congregational covenants. The focus, instead, has been on equipping evangelical Anabaptist churches for evangelistic mission within holistic community engagement.

There's no question that concern regarding the acceptance of same-sex relationships is an undercurrent. However, it is only one of many issues. Evana rightly understands that clarifying and living out our convictions together regarding Jesus, salvation and mission ought to be our primary focus, even as we discern various other critical matters along the way.

**RYAN JANTZI, ZURICH, ONT.**

*Ryan Jantzi is pastor of Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite Church.*

### ✉ **Marriage shouldn't be confused with wedding**

**RE:** "COHABITATION FOCUS of discussion event at CMU," Feb. 29, page 29.

I applaud Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) for hosting this important discussion. However, in my view and experience, becoming married is a process that begins before a wedding and continues afterwards. Thus, the question posed at CMU, "Cohabitation: The question of living together before marriage," could have been better focussed as "Living together before the wedding," or as "Living together while becoming married." The conversation, as reported, confused marriage with wedding.

Additionally, I applaud the unnamed congregation that blessed a couple as they took the next step of "becoming married" by forming a home together. May we continue these conversations.

**TIM SCHMUCKER, TORONTO**

*Tim Schmucker is a member of Toronto United Mennonite Church.*

### ✉ **More than 'reasonable doubt' about climate change is necessary**

**RE:** "IS CLIMATE change real?" by Will Braun, Feb. 29, page 17.

Maybe because a criminal trial is a relatable context for a wide audience, we can easily think science operates similarly: If a reasonable doubt about the accused's supposed guilt can be established, then a prevailing scientific theory must be acquitted or discarded.

But a critical difference is that, unlike in a court of

law, merely casting reasonable doubt on one—or even several pieces—of evidence is not enough to discard a prevailing scientific theory. To effectively discredit the claim that we're contributing substantially to climate change, an alternative theory explaining the data better is needed, which, in the case of climate change, means a theory explaining what, other than human activity, accounts for the converging lines of evidence consistent with human forcing of the climate system. "Poking holes" in segments of data or individual model assumptions is not the same as demonstrating the improved explanatory power of an alternative theory.

Like Braun, I, too, can feel defensive when someone questions climate change, because, in my experience, such questioning never includes a presentation of a convincing alternative theory that indicates our current one should be replaced.

**BRIAN LADD, EDMONTON**

### ✉ **Climate change column makes the church seem irrelevant**

**RE:** "IS CLIMATE change real?" by Will Braun, Feb. 29, page 17.

Disappointment is the word that I would use to describe my reaction to this Viewpoint column, because how is this article helpful to anybody? How is asking this question helpful to Indigenous Peoples in Canada dealing with the loss of permafrost, to economically important forests ravaged by pine beetles because of warmer winter temperatures, or to food producers worldwide concerned with irregular weather patterns?

Certainly to say that climate hasn't changed on its own over time would be wrong. But to also suggest that we haven't had an impact on climate would also be wrong. This column isn't helpful for us to move ahead in an ever-more-complicated world.

If our church magazine prints material like this, I would say it is no wonder that some find the church to be irrelevant.

**JAY REESOR, MARKHAM, ONT.**

### ✉ **Listening to other points of view can lead to 'irresponsible journalism'**

**RE:** "IS CLIMATE change real?" by Will Braun, Feb. 29, page 17.

I appreciate Braun's commitment to seriously considering other people's points of view and listening to their arguments with an open mind. We need more journalists who are willing to do that.

However, it's problematic to take an issue like climate change and pretend that there are two opposing

views, each carrying equal weight. I've met intelligent, kind and reasonable people who can marshal all kinds of facts to "prove" that the moon landing was faked. I try to respect these people and listen to them, even though I don't trust their arguments.

I think it's pretty clear to anyone who's paying attention that the majority of serious scientific inquiry has confirmed that indeed the planet is warming up at levels that threaten human habitation and that humans have contributed significantly to that trend. Fresh research by NASA shows that February 2016 was by far the hottest February on record and a new report from the World Meteorological Organization tells us that humans are currently putting carbon into the atmosphere at a rate 10 times faster than at any point since the extinction of the dinosaurs.

It's worth listening respectfully and openly to those we disagree with. But we also need to weigh what we learn against what we already know. To suggest that there are two answers to the question Braun poses in his headline, each supported equally by scientific inquiry, is irresponsible journalism.

JOSIAH NEUFELD, WINNIPEG

### ✉ Should we really listen to an angry God?

**RE:** "TO WHOM do we listen?" by Phil Wagler, March 14, page 8.

I began by being interested and curious, but as I read and thought about the column in the light of my own experience and the experience of others, I became puzzled and disappointed.

I was puzzled by his apparent change of focus. At the outset, I had the clear impression the column was about the importance of heeding Scripture (the "authoritative canon"), but later on the focus seemed to shift to Jesus—that he was the one we really ought to listen to and heed.

Wagler wrote that we need "an authoritative canon for faith and life. We disregard Scripture to our own demise . . . for it is God's speech to us." It is Scripture that reveals the nature and character of God, he states, but the complexity of this claim is not explored; it is only stated.

This puzzles me and leaves me wondering what I am to make of disturbing passages in which God is presented as violent, rather than loving? How am I to reconcile God being "*slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love*" (Psalm 103:8), and the response of God's immediate anger when Uzzah tried to steady the cart carrying the Ark (II Samuel 6:1-8)? When we come across such passages—and there are many—we join the teenager who commented, "Sometimes I'm afraid of God when I

read the Bible. God seems so angry."

This is where my disappointment comes in. Where are the suggestions for interpreting such quite different portrayals of God in Scripture? How are we to distinguish views of God that are found in Scripture, but are definitely not Christian? Not only are there no suggestions about this, there seems to be no hint that a problem exists and that interpretation is desperately needed. How is it possible to read an ancient collection of literature without interpretation?

JOHN H. NEUFELD, WINNIPEG

### ✉ Star Wars review promotes violence against women

**RE:** "HOLLYWOOD FEMINISM and the decline of cinema," Feb. 29, page 21.

I am in shock that a publication that is supposed to represent pacifism and social justice would print an article that is so harmful to women.

Let's examine the statement that you not only printed, but highlighted: "Female leaders like Rey could be teaching men that there are other ways to handle conflict, and to challenge evil and oppression, rather than through violence."

Here are the problems with that sentence:

1. **IT IS** based on the sexist assumption that women are inherently nonviolent, rather than having been conditioned by a male-dominated society to behave in a passive way, in order to maintain their control.
2. **IT IS** based on the sexist assumption that men are inherently violent. Men are fully capable of being nonviolent; look at Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela.
3. **IT PUTS** the responsibility of "fixing" men's problems on women. This attitude has led to decades of women being taught how not to be raped and to victim blaming.
4. **IN THIS** scenario, men have no responsibility for their actions.

I realize that there are qualifications surrounding this statement that make it seem like it is legitimate and maybe even respectful towards women. I guarantee you it is not.

I assume that Vic Thiessen, who wrote the review, and Dick Benner, the editor, who allowed this to be printed, are not violent towards women. However, these attitudes are responsible for violence against women every day. Sexism contributes to violence against women and that is why it is never okay to publish—let alone highlight—a statement like that.

*Canadian Mennonite* needs to acknowledge that

it has contributed to the victimization of women and needs to apologize for doing so.

**BEV HUNSBERGER, THUNDER BAY, ONT.**

### ✉ A thank you is in order

**RE: "PRAISE HER at the city gates,"** March 14, page 13.

I want to thank Meghan Florian for a helpful and meaningful article in *Canadian Mennonite*. It is reassuring to all of us who can feel overwhelmed both in community and church from time to time. Please tell her how much that column meant to me.

**BARBARA ENS, SASKATOON**

### /// Milestones

#### Births/Adoptions

**Drudge**—James Norman (b. Feb. 11, 2016), to Darryl and Ashley Drudge, Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Olfert**—Evelyn Mary (b. March 10, 2016), to Nate and Brandy Olfert, Ottawa Mennonite.

#### Baptisms

**Lauren Horst, Emily Martin, Sonya Wideman**—Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont., March 6, 2016.

#### Deaths

**Enns**—Margaret, 90 (b. June 2, 1925; d. Jan. 15, 2016), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Fehr**—Katharina (nee Klassen), 97 (b. Oct. 2, 1918; d. March 15, 2016), Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.

**Hohner**—Arlene Karen, 68 (b. March 27, 1947; d. March 1, 2016), Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

**Klassen**—Helen, 94 (b. Oct. 12, 1921; d. Feb. 20, 2016), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Kuepfer**—Beatrice (nee Roth), 81 (b. June 27, 1934; d. Feb. 25, 2016), Cassel Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

**Minor**—Isaac, 22 (b. Feb. 8, 1994; d. Feb. 20, 2016), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Penner**—Martin Victor, 71 (b. March 10, 1944; d. March 9, 2016), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Peters**—Lorraine (nee Neufeld), 82 (b. Feb. 4, 1934; d. March 8, 2016), Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Rempel**—Jake, 87 (b. April 17, 1928; d. Feb. 10, 2016), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Scheerer**—Russell, 83 (b. Oct. 5, 1932; d. March 16, 2016), Wanner Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.

**Siemens**—Anna (Anne), 90 (b. Aug. 22, 1925; d. March 7, 2016), Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont.

**Wiebe**—Roger, 66 (b. Oct. 1, 1949; d. March 13, 2016), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Wiebe**—William W., 95 (b. June 13, 1920; d. Feb. 2, 2016), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to [milestones@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:milestones@canadianmennonite.org) including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please also include birth date and last name at birth if available.**

## A moment from yesterday



Dianne Bailey, Mary Bechtel and Beth Good play Mennonite pioneer women in the 1970 production of *Trail of the Conestoga*. Several ambitious drama projects were undertaken by Ontario Mennonites during this time, spurred on in part by Canada's centennial in 1967 and a new emphasis on multiculturalism. *The New Commandment* by Barbara Coffman was produced in 1967. Urie Bender's *This Land is Ours* was performed on the Stratford Festival stage in 1972 to celebrate 150 years of the Amish in Canada. If similar dramas were produced for Canada's upcoming 150th birthday, how might our versions of the pioneer stories be different?

*Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing, Mennonite Archives of Ontario*

*Photo: David Hunsberger, Mennonite Archives of Ontario*



[archives.mhsc.ca](http://archives.mhsc.ca)

## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# Remembering Jesus' Good Friday journey

*Blues music service a popular new tradition*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

It's a Holy Week tradition by now in Abbotsford. On Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, a local bookstore/coffee shop is packed with an audience enthusiastic to hear blues music telling of Jesus' journey to the cross. And it's all for a good cause.

The Good Friday Blues Band, which forms each year only for this event, doesn't earn a penny in profits for its members. Instead, all proceeds from ticket sales and contributions go to the Cyrus Centre, a shelter for homeless and at-risk youth in the Fraser Valley.

The band, comprising mostly Mennonite musicians, considers its annual musical offering as a service, rather than a concert. This year's theme was "Tell the story," with narrators relating the biblical crucifixion and resurrection stories between the musical numbers.

In 2012, mother-and-son musicians Angelika and Aaron Dawson were inspired by Randy Stonehill's "Didn't It Rain" and thought it would be a perfect song for

Good Friday. Blues fans themselves, they considered how they could share this and similar songs with a wider audience. Once they handpicked their "dream team" of talented musicians, they approached Lando Klassen, owner of House of James Christian bookstore, about using his facility to host the event. He readily agreed.

That first year, the free event was only on Good Friday and proved so popular that dozens of people had to be turned away at the door because of limited space. The next year, the group decided to do the service two nights and sell \$5 tickets to control the audience size each night. They selected Cyrus Centre as recipient of the proceeds.

Audience members have also been generous each year with additional donations to the charity. This year, three couples agreed to match funding up to \$3,000, and by the end of the two services, held on March 24 and 25, \$6,520 had been raised. The five annual blues services have raised \$50,000 for this cause.



*Art Janzen, left, holds up the cross with people's prayer concerns nailed to it, as Good Friday Blues Band members Daniel Wagner and Angelika Dawson offer them up to God.*

Many who attend consider the Good Friday Blues experience a not-to-be-missed tradition. Another tradition is for those present to write their "blues" anonymously and nail them to a cross, where the audience and band pray for them.

Band members give of their time purely for the joy of performing and serving. Each member has to commit to the two-month rehearsal process, including learning the music at home, by ear. They do a mix of old favourites along with new material, including some original arrangements.

"For me, it's a tonne of work and this year I felt that work more than other years," said Angelika, "but being on stage with my favourite musicians, and especially with Aaron, that is just icing on the cake for an event that already seems to be meeting a felt need and that does such good for a worthy organization." ❧



*An audience member nails his personal 'blues' to the cross at the Good Friday Blues service in Abbotsford, B.C. This meaningful activity is an integral part of the annual Easter event.*



*The Chin Church of Calgary shares about their growing congregation and leads the Mennonite Church Alberta assembly in enthusiastic singing to kick off the 2016 annual general meeting at Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary on March 18.*

## MC Alberta defers approval of Future Directions report

*But delegates urge congregations to continue financial support for the national church*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent  
CALGARY

**“T**ake heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.” Chuck Neufeld’s confident voice set the tone for the 2016 Mennonite Church Alberta delegate assembly as he sang the theme words from Mark 4:50.

Assured that where Christians gather, Christ is near, discussions at the annual general meeting were frank but constructive. Concerns around possible implications of Mennonite Church Canada’s Future Directions Task Force report dominated both the assembly and the pre-assembly meeting of pastors. As the smallest area church, Alberta feels particularly vulnerable when considering a decentralized organization.

Chau Dang, pastor of Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church, summarized what was on many minds when he said, “How much difference does Alberta make?”

MC Alberta—unlike the area churches in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba before it—did not “approve in principle” the Future Directions report at either of its General Council meeting

on Feb. 6 or its delegate assembly, held on March 18 and 19 at Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary. General Council concerns included:

- **THE NEED** for greater articulation of national church vision and identity;
- **MC ALBERTA’S** viability as a regional entity; and
- **FUNDING LEVELS** that may not translate from the current structure to a regionalized one.

Issues expressed during delegate discussions added to these:

- **A PERCEPTION** that changes are primarily finance-driven;
- **LOSS OF** worship and teaching resources; and
- **CONSIDERABLE CONCERN** for an ongoing and healthy international Witness program.

With “competing priorities by area churches, how will this thing work?” asked

Marvin Baergen from Trinity Mennonite in DeWinton, adding, “I don’t like the idea of short-term mission.”

Willard Metzger, MC Canada’s executive director, responded to questions throughout the day. In response to a concern that restructuring is driven by finances, instead of vision, Metzger replied, “Our commitment is to make sure whatever structure is envisioned is what we can afford. . . . [The proposal] is not driven by finances, but it is the reality that brings the discussions on. . . . Every denomination is doing the same thing.”

A motion to accept the Future Directions report was replaced with one that said, “[I]n light of the number of significant concerns that have been expressed, we are not



*Keynote speaker Chuck Neufeld, left, singles out Hugo Neufeld to play the part of a seven-year-old boy as he tells a story. Unlike the silent adults, the boy had yelled out when Neufeld had deliberately mis-told the story of the paralytic lowered through the roof of a home so that Jesus could heal him. ‘Your job is to tear the roof off the structures that are keeping people from Jesus,’ he said.*

ready at this point to approve the report and all of the directions and details proposed. We understand that our concerns have been recorded and will be shared with the MC Canada board. We continue to be in support of current MC Canada and encourage congregations to continue their financial support.”

The amended motion was carried unanimously at the delegate assembly.

### **Financial and other matters**

Finance Committee chair Bill Janzen introduced MC Alberta budget discussions by saying, “It is a good news story. Even with the economy the way it is . . . annual numbers for 2015 are good. The projected budget will remain on the positive side.”

MC Alberta ended the fiscal year with a small surplus. One adjustment to the 2016 budget came near the end of the March 19 business session. Barry Andres, chair of the Camp Valaqua board, commented that the camp was budgeting a \$6,000 deficit for this year. He made a motion to add an extra \$5,000 for Valaqua, to realistically reflect projections. The motion passed with one vote against.

Other highlights of 2015 included:

- **CAMP VALAQUA** reported a 7.5 percent growth in camper numbers; appreciation for 10 new cabins; a successful garden project that educated and fed campers; acknowledgement of the camp’s outreach ministry, as half of the campers are non-churched; and gratitude for a strong and dedicated staff.

- **THE CONGREGATIONAL** Leadership Committee’s workshop was well attended by delegates wishing to discuss the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process. Chair Tim Wiebe-Neufeld commented after the workshop, “We discussed the idea [presented in the BFC 7 document] of finding a way to disagree and maintain relationships.”

Assembly came to a close with a commissioning service to bless those coming on to committees and thank those finishing their terms. Dan Graber, MC Alberta’s area church minister, got a little emotional as he thanked those who were finishing, remembering good discussions, arguments

and learning together. “The last five years have been rewarding and have advanced my life and faith,” he said. “Thinking about moments that I treasure . . . moving a General Council meeting outside on a beautiful day, I remember thinking it matched the people I was with.”

Ernie Engbrecht of Lethbridge is the outgoing moderator. Dan Jack of Calgary First Mennonite replaces him. There

are currently four vacancies on the Congregational Leadership, Mission and Service, Community Building and Finance committees. ❧

See more on *Future Directions* at [bit.ly/future-directions-alberta](http://bit.ly/future-directions-alberta).



## **Rosthern Junior College unveils renovation plans**

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
ROSTHERN, SASK.

**W**hen the Rosthern Junior College (RJC) board of directors unveiled its “Do more be more” fundraising and development strategy in November 2014, it knew the plan was ambitious. The goal was to raise \$1.5 million in five years toward enhancing the school’s learning environment. To date, nearly \$500,000 in pledges and donations have been raised.

“Our supporters are seeing the importance of investing in the future by contributing with their financial support,” says board chair Tammy Forrester.

Funds raised have purchased a new grand piano and refurbished existing pianos. They have also purchased a new

score clock, bleachers and wall padding for the school gymnasium, along with new team uniforms.

In a January 28 press release, RJC announced plans to renovate and upgrade the school’s biology and chemistry labs. Work on this project is slated to begin this spring and to be completed in time for the 2016-17 school year. The project marks the final stage of Phase 1 of the “Do more be more” campaign.

“The future at RJC is exciting as we are all participating in building hope for future generations,” says principal Jim Epp. “We are so grateful for the support of the community.” ❧

ARTIST’S RENDERING COURTESY OF ROSTHERN JUNIOR COLLEGE



*A computer-generated image of what RJC’s new biology lab will look like.*

# When the church listens

*New film tells tender tale of LGBTQ Mennonites*

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

A new half-hour documentary gives voice to lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer (LGBTQ) people in Mennonite Church Canada congregations.

*Listening Church*, which weaves together interviews with 22 LGBTQ people from across the geographic and age spectrum, was produced at the request of MC Canada leadership and was financed by \$5,000 from an anonymous donor. Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) freed professor Irma Fast Dueck to work on the project and MC Manitoba contributed some of Darryl Neustaedter Barg's time.

Setting the tone for the film, Gini Bechtel sits comfortably in a church pew and says softly and confidently, "The level of acceptance I've felt [in church] has exceeded my expectations."

Similarly, Craig Friesen says his experience in the Mennonite church has been "very positive, very welcoming," and John Rempel, who retired last year as director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre in Toronto, says, "I was a recipient only of kindness."

While those in the film speak also of

difficult times, the tone is decidedly positive. This surprised co-producer Fast Dueck, who has heard from many LGBTQ students at CMU of their struggles in church. She says of her conversations with people in the film: "It gave me a hope for the church I hadn't had for a long time."

She notes that the tone would have been different had they included LGBTQ people who had left the church. The people in the film are those who have found a place of belonging, although often only after intense struggle.

"I prayed for a number of years that God would make me straight," says Mark Brubacher, "but it didn't happen."

The film is marked by a tenderness that comes when people who care about the faith community share in a deeply personal way. The film comes across not as a theological argument or ethical affront, but rather as people simply telling their varied stories of church involvement.

In that telling, some of the underlying hurt surfaces. In reference to letters in this magazine, Maggie Perquin says, "We repeatedly get Bible passages put in front

of us that say why we shouldn't be here or why we're dragging the church down."

"Reading those letters to the editor is incredibly difficult," echoes Sharon Campbell. "I feel like people forget they are talking about people."

Indicative of both the hurt and the hope is the story of Clare Schellenberg, a 2015 CMU grad. "Since I was young, the church has been the place that has shaped who I am," she says sitting in a hard wooden pew. But when she came out five years ago, what she knew of the church was "completely shaken and stripped." Church "suddenly became a place that held a lot of fear." She felt for a time that it taught her that God didn't love her any more.

"As much as coming out to friends and family was very difficult," she says, "it has by far the church that has been the hardest and has hurt me the most." Yet she has stayed, saying, "I do think that if Jesus was here today . . . I would be invited to the table to eat with him."

While *Listening Church* is obviously related in content to the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) process, the producers have minimized the link. Fast Dueck says some interviewees feel let down by the BFC process and didn't want this film to stand as their implied affirmation of it.

"I've lost patience with the discernment process the church is going through," says Perquin in the film. "It just seems like it's endless."

According to Fast Dueck, some interviewees feel a project like this should have come at the outset of the BFC process, not at the end.

She says that she and Neustaedter Barg have thought about a follow-up event that would provide church leaders the chance to hear from people, both in and out of the church, who have been hurt as a result of church attitudes and actions toward LGBTQ people. She said the aim would not be discernment or coming up with recommendations, but simply the spiritual process of reconciliation. ☞

*The film, which can be watched online at [listeningchurch.ca](http://listeningchurch.ca), is receiving considerable attention, with nearly 2,800 views.*







*Phase 2 of the Prairie Meadow Place construction project will add another eight single- and four double-rooms to the assisted living facility.*

## Prairie Meadow Place is 'a wonderful place' for seniors

*New church-supported assisted-living facility replaces aging structure*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
ROSTHERN, SASK.

**D**orine Russell sits in a comfortable armchair in her new room at Prairie Meadow Place, a cup of coffee by her side. "This is a wonderful place," she says. "I love it here." Russell moved to Rosthern, Sask., from Ontario a year ago to be near her daughter, who lives in Waldheim.

She is one of 17 residents who moved into the new assisted-living facility from the old Home for the Aged in December 2015. When every room is occupied, the residence will be home to 20 seniors.

Prairie Meadow Place is a self-sustaining facility, explains board chair Art Klaassen, but it receives support from five local churches. Rosthern, Eigenheim, Tiefengrund and Horse Lake Mennonite, all part of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, and Hague Mennonite, a former MC Saskatchewan congregation, provide about 10 percent of the facility's funding, with the remaining 90 percent coming from residents' fees.

The five churches were part of what was once called the Rosenort Group of Churches. In 1944, they realized a need for a seniors residence. I. P. Friesen donated his two-storey family home and the land

on which it sat to be used for that purpose. In 1957, the Rosenort Home for the Aged changed its name to the Rosthern Mennonite Home for the Aged. The facility was expanded in 1959, '65 and '67. At one time, it housed 40 residents, but when healthcare reforms were introduced in the 1980s, the facility had to be renovated again, making larger suites for fewer residents.

Around 2008, plans were developed for a new facility, but the board lacked funds to make them a reality. In 2013, Aaron and Verna Friesen approached Klaassen and offered to fund the project with a \$2 million donation. The Friesens, who are members of Eigenheim Mennonite, were planning to sell their farm and wanted to give something back to the community. This was a project they believed in. Additional funding came in the form of a \$100,000 bequest from the Jake Loewen estate and a mortgage from the Mennonite Foundation of Canada.

Construction began in the fall of 2013. Phase 1 was to consist of three floors on a full basement. The main floor would house the assisted-living facility, while the upper

two floors would contain 12 independent-living condominium units, which would be available for purchase.

Work is already underway on Phase 2 of the project, a wing off the south end of the building that will add another eight single- and four double-residence rooms to the existing structure, bringing the facility's capacity to 36 residents.

The Friesens are also financing this second phase of construction, but with a loan to be repaid after one year. The board hopes to secure an additional loan from a financial institution to cover the costs. "In many ways we're going on a wing and a prayer," says Klaassen.

Residence director Pam Wieler is confident the rooms will eventually be filled and the facility will be able to sustain itself. "There is a great need for a place like this," she says. ❧

*To view more photos, visit [canadianmennonite.org/prairie-meadow](http://canadianmennonite.org/prairie-meadow).*



*Prairie Meadow Place occupies the main floor of this new three-storey structure, with 12 condominium units making up the second and third stories.*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

## COVER STORY

# Dancing towards reconciliation

*MCC Ontario Indigenous Neighbours Program facilitates symposium for local church*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
BLOOMINGDALE, ONT.

Jules Koostachin began her journey to dance in a jingle dress as an act of inter-generational healing, thinking that she would complete it in a year. Filmmaker James Buffin decided to follow her on this journey with his camera, he says, “entirely out of friendship.” Little did either of them know it would take six years before she danced, having moved through many steps of learning and healing.

When Koostachin was born, her mother was relieved at her daughter’s light skin and red hair, feeling this would help her to fit into white culture and face less prejudice, a poignant example of internalized racism that keeps many indigenous Canadians trapped in depression and self-hatred. Koostachin’s journey led her not only to dance at a powwow at Eagle Lake in northwestern Ontario, in the area where the jingle dance originated, but back to school and back into the arts.

Buffin’s film *Jingle Dress* was shown as part of a “Dancing towards reconciliation”

weekend at Bloomingdale Mennonite Church recently. He told those gathered that when he began the project he had known nothing about the Indian Residential School System or the racism behind it. Through its making he was educated in systemic racism and cultural genocide, and found healing in his own fractured spirituality.

Bloomingdale Mennonite Church was founded in homes in the early 1800s on Snyder’s Flats, about a half-kilometre east of the Grand River, placing it well within the Haldimand Tract given to the Six Nations by the British Crown in 1784. This tract was made up of all the land within 9.6 kilometres on either side of the Grand River from its mouth to its source.

It was with this knowledge that Pastor Barb Smith Morrison contacted Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario, to see if her congregation could sponsor an event to learn more about indigenous/settler reconciliation in light of Canada’s Truth and



*Pastor Barb Smith Morrison of Bloomingdale (Ont.) Mennonite Church, left, is pictured with Lyndsay Mollins Koene, MCC Ontario Indigenous Neighbours Program director; and Esther and Andrew Wesley, native elders and storytellers.*

Reconciliation Commission report that was released last year.

The event was held over two evenings, at which elders Esther and Andrew Wesley told stories that comprise part of the teachings that indigenous children receive to learn to honour the land as sacred and use its resources the way the Creator wishes. Because so many children missed these teachings due to their time at residential schools, Andrew, an Anglican priest, confessed that many indigenous people have failed to use the land well. He returned to his people after many years in the residential school system and asked the elders to teach him the stories he had missed.

On the second evening, a *potlatch* feast was held to celebrate renewed relationships between indigenous and settler peoples. This was followed by a viewing of *Jingle Dress*, with Koostachin available from B.C. via Skype, and Buffin and dressmaker E.J. Kwandibens from Toronto at the screening. Kwandibens estimates that he has made in excess of 350 jingle dresses to this time.

A key lesson for the participants who numbered more than 100 was the idea of being an ally to indigenous people. Instead of speaking for them and telling their stories, dis-empowering them even while attempting to help, settlers are asked to make room for indigenous people to tell their own stories in their own way, just as Koostachin was able to do with the help of her ally Buffin. ❧

For more information about *Jingle Dress*, e-mail [info@mcnabbconnolly.ca](mailto:info@mcnabbconnolly.ca).



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## FOCUS ON BOOKS &amp; RESOURCES

## BOOK REVIEW

# Unpacking seven myths about youth sports

*Overplayed.*

By David King and Margot Starbuck. Herald Press, 2016, 231 pages.

REVIEWED BY NATASHA J. KRAHN  
SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

We just dipped our toe into the world of youth sports by signing our seven-year-old son, Sam, up for a T-ball team. Last summer he discovered a love for baseball and loves playing in the backyard with his little sister and my husband. He even sleeps with his baseball glove, so joining a team seemed like the next logical step.



values;

- **GOOD PARENTS** attend all their children's games; and
- **THE MONEY** we are investing into youth sports will pay off.

In unpacking these seven myths the authors offer sound advice, provide good questions to ask ourselves and our children, and give families permission to not get caught

up in the world of youth sports solely because we believe these seven myths.

They don't only point fingers at the people behind youth sports organizations, but also make us take a hard look at ourselves as parents to see what kind of pressure, either intentional or unintentional, we put on our children.

Although the authors provide sound ideas on how to live out our faith in the world of sports, I would have liked to see a little more discussion about the impact of sports involvement on faith. To its credit, Herald Press provides a study guide that I would love to use in a Sunday school class sometime.

As a Canadian reader, I felt like some of the ideas in this book are for an American audience. I'm not sure that the goal of achieving an athletic scholarship to help pay for university is at the forefront of many Canadian parents' minds, for instance. King and Starbuck do acknowledge the American focus of the book, although they provide a brief note about hockey in Canada that was so spot

After reading *Overplayed*:

*A Parent's Guide to Sanity in the World of Youth Sports*, however, I am going into this experience with my eyes wide open.

In *Overplayed*, authors David King and Margot Starbuck look at seven myths surrounding youth sports and how sports affect family involvement in their church and local communities. King, a university athletic director, has worked in the world of sports and education for 35 years, and Starbuck is an author with three children who have been involved in sports. They know what they are talking about and, in my opinion, provide a balanced perspective.

The myths King and Starbuck look at are:

- **BECAUSE WE** owe our child every opportunity, we can't say no to youth sports;
- **MY CHILD** deserves to play with the most-skilled athletes;
- **MY CHILD** should specialize in one sport;
- **THERE'S NO** harm in participating in youth sports;
- **YOUTH SPORTS** instill our family's

## /// Briefly noted

### CMU Press to release hundredth book this year

WINNIPEG—A *University of the Church for the World: Essays in Honour of Gerald Gerbrandt* will mark the hundredth CMU Press publication when it is issued later this year. Since 1974 CMBC



Publications (Canadian Mennonite Bible College) and its successor CMU Press (Canadian Mennonite University) have published a variety of scholarly, reference and general interest books that address and inform interests and issues vital to the academy, its constituency and society. Hedy Martens' second biographical novel, *To and From Nowhere*, has been a highlight for readers as she portrays the gripping story of Greta Enns and her struggle to survive in the Soviet Union from 1941-76. Other recently produced CMU Press titles include *Business Ethics Rooted in the Church* by Werner Franz and *Voices of Harmony and Dissent: How Peacebuilders are Transforming their Worlds*, edited by Richard McCutcheon, Jarem Sawatsky and Valerie Smith. CMU Press is about to release *Empire Erotics and Messianic Economies of Desire* by Travis Kroeker, the latest title in the J.J. Thiessen Lecture series. To learn more about CMU Press and the books it publishes, visit [cmupress.ca](http://cmupress.ca).  
—CMU Press

on it made me cringe. In general, though, there is a lot of good advice for any family with children involved in organized sports, no matter the nationality.

After reading *Overplayed*, I am confident that our decision about Sam and T-ball is a good one for our family, for now. However, I am going to be very aware of how my behaviour will affect his enjoyment of the game. And, taking King and Starbuck's advice, I might even miss a few of his games to read a good book! ///

## FOCUS ON BOOKS &amp; RESOURCES

# 'Wrongs to Rights'

*MC Canada provides educational resource on indigenous-settler reconciliation*

BY DEBORAH FROESE  
Mennonite Church Canada

Steve Heinrichs is passionate about healing broken relationships between indigenous and settler peoples. As Mennonite Church Canada's director of indigenous relations, he is committed to responding positively to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Call to Action No. 48: Adopting and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

But he also wrestles with how to do that. "If we are going to truly honour indigenous rights and build mutual relationships with indigenous sisters and brothers—let alone indigenous nations—we have to raise awareness about the need to recognize indigenous rights, what those rights entail and how this can nurture healing and hope for all of us," he says.

That concern prompted the publication of "Wrongs to Rights," a 164-page special edition of *Intotemak* magazine that explores how church groups can act on the Declaration and Call to Action No. 48.

"To be honest, I would say that 95 per cent of us in the church never knew about the Declaration before the TRC lifted it up in their Calls to Action this past year," he says. "So we're in the process of educating ourselves. This will take time."

When the TRC submitted its final report in June 2015, it offered an executive summary stating that "Canadians must do more than just talk about reconciliation; we must learn how to practise reconciliation in our everyday lives—within ourselves and our families, and in our communities, governments, places of worship, schools and workplaces."

It also submitted 94 Calls to Action summoning all of Canadian society—including government, health, legal, media and faith institutions—to adopt the Declaration as a



blueprint for reconciliation.

Churches from all denominations and other faith groups were invited to issue a statement no later than March 31, 2016, stating how they will comply with and implement the Declaration. "Wrongs to Rights" was published ahead of

that deadline as a first step in responding.

With contributions gleaned from a wide array of respected indigenous and settler leaders, thinkers and activists—from TRC chair Murray Sinclair to theologian Walter Brueggemann—"Wrongs to Rights" has real potential for inspiring Christians across the ecumenical spectrum.

Some Christian groups have issued statements agreeing to embrace Call to Action No. 48 and its summons to adopt the Declaration. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, of which Mennonite

Church Canada is a member, instead acknowledges a commitment to respond to the call through education. This posture is similar to the one that Heinrichs envisions for the MC Canada family.

"We have pockets of people who are aware of past and present colonial realities, people who would like to see their congregations honour the indigenous rights recognized by the Declaration," says Heinrichs. "But there are other pockets of people—the majority, in fact—for whom this conversation is new terrain. "Mennonite Church Canada can't publicly commit congregations to an embrace of the Declaration if they don't know what it is about, and why it's both necessary and life-giving. That wouldn't be fair to them, and, more importantly, it wouldn't be honest to Indigenous Peoples [in Canada] to say we are fully on board, when we really aren't there yet. We need to engage our faith family in a significant, broad-based conversation so that we can eventually move forward together. My prayer is that 'Wrongs to Rights' will be one of the tools that we can use to move that process along." ❧

To order online, visit [bit.ly/wrongs-to-rights](http://bit.ly/wrongs-to-rights).



## /// Briefly noted

### Women's Bible series explores 'Abundant Faith'

Courage. Generosity. Abundance. These and other positive aspects of Christian faith are explored in the new Herald Press women's Bible study series, "Abundant Faith." Herald Press has released four titles in this new study series. Using "Abundant Faith" as a



guide, women can revitalize their faith and connect with God and each other through theme-centred studies that relate to everyday life. Each of the four titles includes 12 Bible study sessions and one closing worship service. Money is the new "taboo topic," some say; "Bountiful Hearts" opens the Scriptures as women talk about money and what they should do with it. "Courageous Women" uncovers stories of biblical women who were unflinching in the face of difficulty; these women speak boldly, seek justice, and prove themselves brave partners and friends in faith. "Generous Gifts" explores God's lavish generosity in creation, healing and relationships, so Christians can join with God to offer healing and hope. To offer supportive care to others, Christian women first need to care for themselves; "Wonderfully Made" uses the Bible as a resource for participants in caring for their bodies, minds and spirits. For more information, visit [heraldpress.com](http://heraldpress.com).

—MennoMedia



# Spring 2016 List of Books & Resources

## Theology, Spirituality

*Deuteronomy: Believers Church Bible Commentary.* Gerald E. Gerbrandt. Herald Press, 2015, 600 pages.



This is the 29th volume in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series.

Deuteronomy, a collection of speeches by Moses that reflect on Israel's past and future, explores the meaning of faithfulness. Each section of text has explanatory notes, comments about the biblical context and what the text has to say in the life of the church.

*Disarming Conflict: Why Peace Cannot be Won on the Battlefield.* Ernie Regehr. Between the Lines Books, 2015, 217 pages.

Reflecting on the wars of the past 25 years, Ernie Regehr concludes that wars do not bring peace and stability. While wars bring destruction, security is built around the negotiating table with the consent of the local population. While Regehr does not argue that Christians should be peacemakers, he presents an argument about the futility of war.

*The Meaning of Sunday: The Practice of Belief in a Secular Age.* Joel Thiessen. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015, 228 pages.

Joel Thiessen has researched Canadian Christian religious beliefs and behaviours using in-depth interviews. As well as interviewing the non-religious, he interviewed those actively affiliated with Christian churches and marginal affiliates. One of his conclusions is that we should stop blaming churches for dwindling demand.

*Rooted and Grounded: Essays on Land and Christian Discipleship.* Ryan D. Harker and Janeen Bertsche Johnson, eds. Pickwick

Publications, 2016, 282 pages.

The essays in this collection were presented at a conference hosted by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in September 2014. Contributors reflect on the theological implications of how we use the land God has given. This book is part of the Peace and Scripture series of the Institute of Mennonite Studies.

*Spiritual Companionship: A Guide to Protestant Theology and Practice.* Angela H. Reed, Richard R. Osmer and Marcus G. Smucker. Baker Academic, 2015, 186 pages.

The seven chapters of this book include lots of case studies and suggestions on how Christians can help each other be in tune with God. Each chapter concludes with practical exercises for cultivating spiritual relationships.

*Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism.* Drew G. I. Hart. Herald Press, 2015.

Hart argues that white Christians don't understand how racism works because white privilege has shaped their perceptions. He offers some ideas on how churches can work at racial justice and stand with those who are oppressed.

*Words that Enlighten.* Hugo Neufeld. Privately published by Millrise Publishing, 2015, 198 pages.

Using lots of anecdotes and reflections from his own experiences, Neufeld examines how we use words to communicate faith. He writes that we must speak authentically and engage those around us. Each of the 19 chapters ends with a few questions to ponder. Books can be ordered by calling 403-201-4358 or by e-mail at hugoanddoreen.com.

## History



*An Increase in Time: Story Lines of Germantown Mennonite Church and its Historic Trust, 1683-2005.*

Richard J. Lichty. Institute of Mennonite Studies (AMBS), 2015, 428 pages.

Germantown Mennonite Church, the oldest Mennonite Church in North America, has had its share of challenges and conflict. This history explains those times as well as times of spiritual renewal. To order, e-mail [ims@ams.edu](mailto:ims@ams.edu).

*Martyrs Mirror: A Social History.* David L. Weaver-Zercher. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016, 440 pages.

This book tells the story of how *Martyrs Mirror* was created in the Netherlands in the 1600s, how it came to be adopted by other Anabaptist groups and eventually was translated into German and English. Weaver-Zercher also traces the story of how this book has shaped the Mennonite church over the centuries.

*My Loyalist Origins.* Herb Swartz. Self-published through Friesen Press, 2015, 273 pages.

With a mixture of historical fact and imagination, Swartz reflects on the journey of early Mennonite immigrants to Waterloo Region.

*Peace, Progress and the Professor: The Mennonite History of C. Henry Smith.* Perry Bush. Herald Press, 2015, 457 pages.

C. Henry Smith, who grew up in a rural Amish congregation, went on to become an important early Mennonite historian. Smith taught at Bluffton College, Ohio, for many years and helped the church to recognize the importance of teaching its history. By the mid-20th century, Mennonites had mostly rejected his progressive approach.

*Pennsylvania Dutch: The Story of an American Language.* Mark L. Loudon. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015, 473 pages.

Loudon takes an academic approach to the Pennsylvania Dutch language, still spoken by Old Order Amish and Mennonites today. He argues that it is more than a German dialect. This hardcover book includes stories and poems in Pennsylvania Dutch.

## FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

### Other Books

*Mandy Sarah.* Mary Christner Borntrager. Herald Press, 2016.

These are two more books from the Ellie's People series about Amish young people that have been updated and re-published. They are designed for readers 10 years of age and up.

*Mennonite Cobbler: Balancing Faith and Tradition in a Turbulent World.* Kenneth David Brubacher. Privately published, 2015, 257 pages.



Ken Brubacher, who grew up in Elmira, Ont., reflects on his life with whimsy and insight. Although not a Mennonite by faith, he writes a critique of an old-fashioned Mennonite view of the world. Copies of this hardcover book are available at [mennonitecobbler.com](http://mennonitecobbler.com).

*Overplayed: A Parents' Guide to Sanity in the World of Youth Sports.* David King and Margot Starbuck. Herald Press, 2015, 230 pages.

Parents often find it challenging to balance family time, church commitments and their children's involvement in competitive sports. This book provides some down-to-earth advice as it explores seven myths about youth and sports. King is athletic director at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va.

*Simple Pleasures: Stories From my Life as an Amish Mother.* Marianne Jantzi. Herald Press, 2016.

Marianne Jantzi, from the Amish community near Milverton, Ont., writes about her life with four young children. She is a former teacher in an Amish parochial school. As part of the Plainspoken series, this book provides a glimpse into the everyday life of an Amish mother.

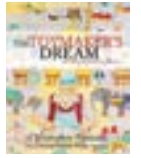
*To and From Nowhere.* Hedy Leonora Martens. Canadian Mennonite University Press, 2015, 503 pages.

This biographical novel concludes the story told in Martens's earlier book, *Favoured Among Women*. In this story, Greta and her family are among those displaced by Stalin

in the Soviet Union and struggle to survive. It covers the 1940s to the 1970s.

### Children's Books

*The Toymaker's Dream: An Allegory for Young Hearts.* Christopher Shennan, illustrated by Anita K. Willms Stephen. Xulon Press, 2015, 110 pages.



This story is an allegory designed to help children understand the biblical story of God's plan of redemption from creation to Christ's death on the cross. Copies are available from the illustrator by calling 905-685-4974 or e-mailing [christophershennan@gmail.com](mailto:christophershennan@gmail.com).

### Resources


*Abundant Faith Women's Bible Study Series: Courageous Women. Wonderfully Made. Bountiful Hearts. Generous Gifts.* Herald Press, 2016.

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to relate the Bible to the everyday lives of women. Each of these four titles includes 12 Bible study sessions and one closing worship service.

*"God of all Comfort: Mental Health Resources for Church Worship."* Communitas Supportive Care Society, Abbotsford, B.C., 2015, 40 pages.

This worship resource includes a variety of prayers, stories and readings, as well as sermon suggestions to make the church more aware of how to support everyone towards mental wellness.

*Minister's Handbook of Reproductive Loss: A Guide to Care Following Loss at the Beginning of Life.* Alicia Buhler. Privately published, 2016, 110 pages.

This short book offers very specific suggestions for providing pastoral care to those struggling with reproductive loss. It includes prayers and rituals for situations such as miscarriage, stillbirth and infertility. It is available as an e-book or hard copy at commonword.ca.

*Surprise! Stories of Discovering Jesus.* MennoMedia. 2016.

This year's Vacation Bible School material focusses on Jesus and his teachings. It is designed for children aged 4 through Grade 5 with options for junior youth available online at mennomedia.org/vbs. The package, written by a team from Ontario, includes material for worship, drama and a variety of activities relating to the story. Items are also available separately.

*Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology.* Karl Koop, ed. Jointly published by Canadian Mennonite University and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Spring, 2016.

The editorial and 12 articles of this issue of *Vision* centre around discernment and how the church comes to a decision when there is disagreement. Rather than trying to resolve a specific issue, the writers reflect on how to discern and how to live faithfully when we don't agree.

**Compiled by Barb Draper, Books & Resources editor**

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### How fear and mistrust gave way to friendship

A new documentary tells a story of conflict and reconciliation between the Young Chippewayan First Nation and European descendants.  
[canadianmennonite.org/reserve-107](http://canadianmennonite.org/reserve-107)



### European Mennonites reject violence against Syrian refugees

Mennonite churches in Europe are responding to the violence and displacement in the Middle East that is affecting their society.  
[canadianmennonite.org/europeans-reject-violence](http://canadianmennonite.org/europeans-reject-violence)



### Sir James MacMillan finds 'the spiritual in music'

At Conrad Grebel University College, a distinguished composer and conductor lectures on the place of religious works in an increasingly secularized culture.  
[canadianmennonite.org/finds-spiritual-music](http://canadianmennonite.org/finds-spiritual-music)

### Uncovering a historic Mennonite costume collection

A history major is cataloguing Bluffton University's historic clothing collection to learn more about what it means to dress like a Mennonite.  
[canadianmennonite.org/mennonite-costumes](http://canadianmennonite.org/mennonite-costumes)



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# Custodians can be teachers too

## Rosthern Junior College

When Mel Siemens graduated from Rosthern Junior College (RJC) in Saskatchewan in 1978, he never saw himself as a teacher. Over the years, he has worked as a herdsman in a large dairy barn and a tile setter. Since 2001, he has worked as a custodian at RJC. While he would modestly take credit for shiny floors and a clean facility, his contributions to the learning at RJC are considerably more.


Siemens embodies the truth of the statement that “actions speak louder than words.” He consistently models for students a quiet and patient servant leadership. He is their go-to guy for anything misplaced. He can be seen putting in long hours after work making sure

(Continued on page 26)



Mel Siemens

## Post-Secondary



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Promotional Supplement

(Continued from page 25)

all of the playing fields for soccer and football are ready to go. He responds to all manner of requests with a smile and his best effort to get it done. He chauffeurs, coaches, cheers and encourages.

His resume of service to the church and community is equally impressive. Siemens has used his holidays on a number of occasions to volunteer for Mennonite Disaster Service and Habitat for Humanity assignments. He is heavily involved in his home congregation, Eigenheim Mennonite, and currently serves on the board of Youth Farm Bible Camp, one of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's camps.



**For more than 15 years Mel Siemens has been a dedicated volunteer and coach for the Rosthern Soccer Association.**

Siemens continues to show himself to be a master teacher at RJC, demonstrating daily to the rest of the school community how worship and work can be one when tasks are taken on with a true servant's heart.

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**CANADIAN MENNONITE**

# Take a look, it's in a book . . .

*Podcaster Katrina Sklepowich talks about the novels that have most impacted her*

BY AARON EPP  
Young Voices Editor

When Katrina Sklepowich was assigned to write a weekly blog as part of her school work, focussing on literature was an obvious choice.

"I love books and I'm always reading, so I thought I would have endless source material," says Sklepowich, 26, who is finishing a diploma in creative communications, with a concentration in public relations and communications management, at Winnipeg's Red River College.

When she was 13, Sklepowich won a contest run by the Chapters bookstore chain. For the next three years, she was one of a handful of "junior book lovers" nationwide who reviewed books for the company and provided insight into how to market upcoming books to teenagers.

Her passion for reading has only grown since, as evidenced by her podcast, "Literally, Katrina." Consisting of 15 episodes, the podcast served as Sklepowich's creative thesis at Red River College and gave her the opportunity to interview a wide range of writers.

The podcast has featured interviews with everyone from novice writers working on their first novel, to established wordsmiths like Mennonite humourist Armin Wiebe and *Life of Pi* author Yann Martel.

For Sklepowich, the best part of producing the podcast has been meeting people from Manitoba's rich literary community. She enjoys getting to know her guests not only as writers, but as people.

"I think if you listen closely enough, everyone has an interesting story,"

Sklepowich says. "Every single one of them has said over and over again that storytelling and narrative is what connects us as humans. . . . That's my favourite thing about reading, and that's my favourite thing about writing: making those connections."

For Sklepowich, who worships at Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, producing the podcast has led to writing book reviews for the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

*Canadian Mennonite* asked Sklepowich to talk about some of the novels that have had the biggest impact on her life and faith:

- **THE HARRY POTTER** series by J.K. Rowling (1997-2007).

Sklepowich read the first book in the series when she was nine years old. "It's the first book I read and I loved and I wanted more of," she says. The seven books in the series connect to her faith because if she hadn't discovered them, she wouldn't be the avid reader she is today. While some Christians have taken offence to the supernatural elements in the series, Sklepowich praises its themes of love, family and good triumphing over evil.

- **LES MISÉRABLES** by Victor Hugo (1862).

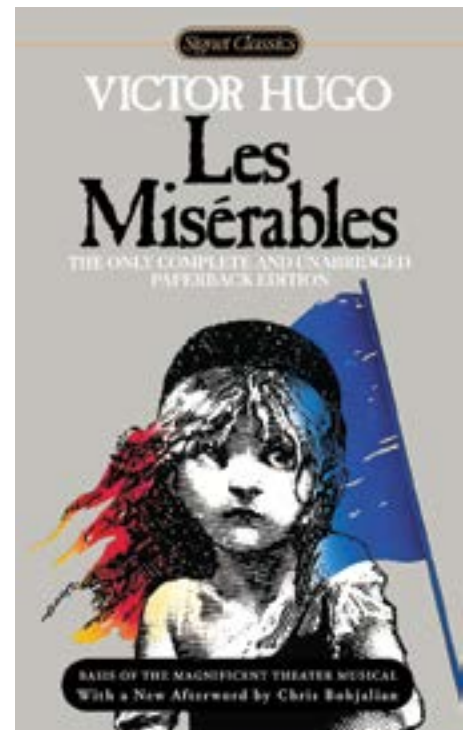
The epic French historical novel tells the story of Jean Valjean, an ex-convict who decides to turn his life around. "It is so beautiful," she says. "There are so many mini-stories in [the novel] that have stuck with me." She recommends it for readers

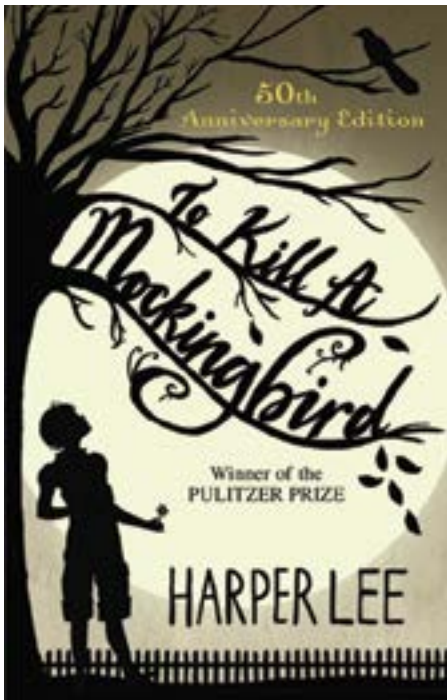
*(Continued on page 28)*

PHOTO BY MIRANDA LYNN PHOTOGRAPHY



*A lifelong reader, Sklepowich writes book reviews for the Winnipeg Free Press.*





(Continued from page 27)

looking to boost their faith: “It’s all about forgiveness, God’s love, second chances and beating the odds despite horrible circumstances.”

- *THE FORGOTTEN GARDEN* by Kate Morton (2008).

Set in Australia at the beginning of the 20th century, this novel explores the mystery that unfolds when a four-year-old child is found abandoned on a ship headed for Australia. Sklepowich says the book hasn’t impacted her faith, but she does love the story. “The storytelling in *The Forgotten Garden* is transportive,” she says. “All of a sudden . . . you’re wrapped up in this mystery. It’s so good.”

- *STATION ELEVEN* by Emily St. John Mandel (2014).

This critically acclaimed, award-winning novel tells the tale of a travelling Shakespearean theatre company in post-apocalyptic North America. “Everything

falls apart in that book, and yet there’s a group of people that survive,” Sklepowich says. “It reveals the darkest parts of humanity and what can happen, but also shines a light on how we should be behaving already and [reminds us of] what we take for granted.”

- *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* by Harper Lee (1960).

Regarded as a masterpiece of American literature, this novel tells the story of Atticus Finch, a lawyer in 1930s Alabama who is appointed to defend a black man accused of raping a white woman. “It’s so chock-full of the best advice,” Sklepowich says. “[Atticus Finch] is so wise.” Even though the novel takes place more than 80 years ago, the themes of courage and compassion are still relevant today. “I really like coming back to that one.” ❧

To read—and listen—online, visit [literallykatrina.com](http://literallykatrina.com).



## Flipping on the pastor switch

*Once a reluctant church leader, Amanda Zehr hopes for a future in ministry*

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

Ask Amanda Zehr what her favourite Bible story is, and she points to John 9, where Jesus heals a blind man.

“It really questions who the blind one is,” says Zehr, associate pastor at Listowel Mennonite Church in southwestern Ontario. “In the end, it was the spiritual leaders who were blind, not the actual blind man. That [story] is important to me as a reminder to see things clearly.”

Zehr hasn’t always seen things as clearly as she would have liked. The 29-year-old grew up at Zurich Mennonite Church in the same part of the country and was 16 or 17 when the lead pastor there suggested she could be a pastor some day. “It was mostly a reaction of denial,” Zehr says of her initial response. “It was quite a long



time before I said yeah, this is good. This is a calling.”

Growing up, Zehr always took church seriously. She was baptized at 13 and recalls feeling safe at church. “I can remember feeling just as familiar and safe in the church building as I did in my own home,” she says.

The summer after she graduated from high school, Zehr took part in !Explore, a theological program for high school students during which they study at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., and then spend a month

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMANDA ZEHR



*Amanda Zehr was in high school when her pastor suggested she could work in the church some day.*

working as interns in their home churches.

After that summer, Zehr went to the University of Waterloo, Ont., where she lived at Conrad Grebel University College. She earned a degree in recreation and business studies, and became heavily involved in the chapel program at Grebel during her third year, when she served as a chapel leader and helped organize the college's weekly chapel services.

One of the first times Zehr ever preached was during one of those services. "I was surprised at how much I enjoyed that leadership aspect of the chapel program," she says.

Zehr got another taste of ministry dur-

an eight-month ministry placement at Preston Mennonite Church in Cambridge, Ont., Zehr applied for her current job in Listowel.

Zehr has worked at Listowel Mennonite Church for a little more than four years, and says connecting with young people is her favourite part of the job. Pastoral work can be challenging because the results aren't always tangible or obvious, but Zehr recalls the day a teenager in her junior youth group came up to her and said, "I was reading my Bible, and I don't understand this part. Can we talk about it?"

"That was a really good moment for me," Zehr says. "It showed they were comfort-

*'I knew pastoring is an important role. Even if it's an interim youth pastor [position], you're a pastor and [it's] not to be taken lightly if you have that role and that title.'*  
(Amanda Zehr)

ing her final year of undergraduate studies when First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., was looking for an interim youth pastor, and someone at Grebel suggested she look into it. She agonized over whether or not to apply.

"I knew pastoring is an important role," she says. "Even if it's an interim youth pastor [position], you're a pastor and [it's] not to be taken lightly if you have that role and that title."

Zehr eventually applied and was hired. During her time at First Mennonite, she discovered that connecting with teenagers came easily to her. That role at First Mennonite started a slew of interim ministry assignments, including stints at Nairn Mennonite Church in Ailsa Craig, and a part-time position at Hillcrest Mennonite Church in New Hamburg, both in southwestern Ontario.

Zehr recalls sitting in her office at Hillcrest one day and realizing that she wanted to be a pastor full-time. While she had initially shirked off the calling as a high school student, her experiences since then had created a desire in her to dive all the way into pastoral work.

After earning a master of theological studies degree at Grebel, which included

able enough with me that I was someone they could ask [for help]."

Being able to work with Norm Dyck, the lead pastor, over the past four years has been formational for Zehr. Participating in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Transitioning into Ministry (TiM) program, which brings beginning pastors together for two retreats each year and for regular face-to-face coaching sessions between retreats, has also been important.

"I cannot speak highly enough of the TiM program," she says. "That program has helped me process things about being a new pastor, and to get to know people in a similar place in life."

Zehr recently announced her resignation from Listowel Mennonite, and will end her time there in July. She isn't sure what comes next, but feels called to move to the Kitchener-Waterloo area. There are not a lot of open pastoral roles there right now, so Zehr isn't sure what the move will mean for her work life.

No matter what sort of work she does after July, though, Zehr hopes to return to pastoral ministry at some point. "I feel like a switch has been flipped on within me—the pastor switch," she says. "It's on now. You can't really turn it off." ❧



*During her first pastoral assignment, Amanda Zehr discovered that connecting with teenagers came easily to her.*



*Amanda Zehr's ministry experience includes stints in five Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregations in southwestern Ontario.*



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## Calendar

### British Columbia

- April 30:** MC B.C. Women's Inspirational Day, "Wisdom in legacy," with Ingrid Schultz at Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- April 30:** Wild Salmon Justice Concert, at Coqualeetza Longhouse, Chilliwack, at 6:30 p.m. Featuring Holly Arntzen, Kevin Wright, Lilloet Bear Dancers and George Manuel Jr.
- May 12:** "Relationships with integrity" seminar, at MC B.C.'s office, Abbotsford, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; for pastors and ministry workers. For more information, or to register, e-mail [admin@mcbc.ca](mailto:admin@mcbc.ca).

### Alberta

- April 30:** Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta is hosting its annual general meeting and spring conference, "Rethinking Mennonite history in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," at Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton. For more details, or to register, call 780-318-4186 or visit [mennonitehistory.org](http://mennonitehistory.org).
- May 20-22:** MC Alberta women's retreat at Sunnyside Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake. Speaker: Carol Penner. Theme: "(re)make: making and remaking our stories." For more information, visit [mcawomen.com](http://mcawomen.com).

### Saskatchewan

- May 13:** RJC spring choir concert, at 7 p.m.
- May 28:** RJC golf tournament at Valley Regional Park.

### Manitoba

- April 30, May 1:** Faith and Life Choirs spring concerts: (30) at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.; (1) at Steinbach Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m.
- May 9:** Westgate bursary fundraising banquet.

### Ontario

- April 18-21:** MCC Meat canning in Leamington.
- April 25-29:** MCC meat canning in Elmira.
- April 29-May 1:** Spring work weekend at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Sauble Beach. RSVP to 519-422-1401 or [fun@slmc.ca](mailto:fun@slmc.ca).
- April 29-May 1:** Mennonite and Brethren Marriage Encounter weekend at Jericho House, Pt. Colborne. For information, go to [www.marriageencounter.ca](http://www.marriageencounter.ca) or call 519-669-8667.
- April 30, May 1:** Soli Deo Singers perform their spring concert, "Wind and Water" (30) at UMEI, north of Leamington, at 7:30 p.m.; (1) at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For more information, call 519-326-7448.
- April 30, May 1:** Pax Christi Chorale and Menno



Stuart Murray

## Announcing the 2016 Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service Annual Meeting

The 45th Annual General Meeting of the members of Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service for the year ending on Dec. 31, 2015, is scheduled for Saturday, April 23, 2016, 4 p.m. at Rosthern (Sask.) Mennonite Church. Banquet to follow at 6 p.m. Tickets

to the banquet are free of charge but must be ordered in advance from [canadianmennonite.org/banquet](http://canadianmennonite.org/banquet) or [brycelm@gmail.com](mailto:brycelm@gmail.com). A \$25 donation at the banquet is suggested. The AGM is open to members of Mennonite Church Canada congregations.

Stuart Murray, British author of the popular book, *The Naked Anabaptist*, is the featured speaker at the fundraising dinner for *Canadian Mennonite*. Murray lives in Bristol, England, where he is a trainer and consultant with the Anabaptist Network. His interests include urban mission, church planting and emerging forms of church. He served 12 years as a church planter in London, and for nine years as director of church planting and evangelism at Spurgeon's College there. Murray has a Ph.D. in Anabaptist hermeneutics.

Entertainment for the evening will be provided by the Caspian Trio, a nationally competitive classical trio of siblings Simone, Godwin and Amos Friesen. The public is invited to attend the event.

Singers present "A Cappella Masterworks," featuring Josef Rheinberger's "Mass in E Flat"; (30) at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, at 7:30 p.m.; (1) at Grace Church on the Hill, Toronto, at 3 p.m. For tickets, e-mail [boxoffice@paxchristichorale.org](mailto:boxoffice@paxchristichorale.org).  
**May 1:** Wideman Mennonite Church, 200th-anniversary hymn sing, Markham, Ont., at 7 p.m.

**To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by e-mail to [calendar@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:calendar@canadianmennonite.org). For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](http://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).**



## Classifieds

### Travel

**Visit Europe the Mennonite Way!** Faith-based Hotel Tours to Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland and Ukraine, focussing on the Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage. More information online: [mennoniteheritagetours.eu](http://mennoniteheritagetours.eu)

**FRIENDS OF SABEL HOLY LAND WITNESS TRIP**  
 You are invited to join us for a rich and meaningful trip to the Holy Land: worship with Palestinian Christians, visit holy places, experience Palestinian life under Israeli occupation, meet with courageous Palestinian and Israeli peacemakers, and consider what is needed for a just peace. Led by Rev. Naim Ateek, founder of the Sabeel Center ([www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org)) with Kathy Bergen [bergenkathy@gmail.com](mailto:bergenkathy@gmail.com) and Joy Lapp [lappj@earthlink.net](mailto:lappj@earthlink.net), May 10-22, 2016.

### Shared Living

Will you be attending a Winnipeg university or college in the fall or know someone that will? Finding the right place to live is important! Located in the heart of Winnipeg, Emmaus House is a place where students can find support academically, spiritually, in lives of service, healthy living and relationship. If you are interested in exploring what it means to live in intentional Christian community with other students, check us out at: [emmaushousewinnipeg.ca](http://emmaushousewinnipeg.ca)

### Advertising Information

Contact  
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### Employment Opportunities



#### Employment Opportunity

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary located in Elkhart, IN seeks a full-time admissions counselor to recruit prospective students and help oversee the admissions and enrollment process.

Engaging communication skills and bachelor's degree required. Experience in recruitment, sales or fundraising highly desired. Knowledge of MC USA and MC Canada and/or United Methodist structures a plus. Full description at [www.ambs.edu/jobs](http://www.ambs.edu/jobs).

To apply, send letter of application and resume to: [dbgrimes@ambs.edu](mailto:dbgrimes@ambs.edu). Review of applications begins immediately.

### PEACE MENNONITE CHURCH



[www.peacemennonite.ca](http://www.peacemennonite.ca)

Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, British Columbia is seeking a **FULL-TIME LEAD PASTOR** with pastoral and/or other work experience.


We are a church with about 200 attenders. We intend to continue to grow and be an evangelizing influence for Christ in the multi-cultural community of East Richmond.

Applicants must have a strong commitment to Anabaptist beliefs centred on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. The candidate is expected to have proven skills in:

- Effective preaching and communication;
- Congregational care and counselling;
- Pastoral team leadership and developing lay leaders; and
- Working with and relating to a multi-cultural community.

This position is available starting summer 2016.  
 Please send applications to [pastoralsearch@peacemennonite.ca](mailto:pastoralsearch@peacemennonite.ca).

### PEACE MENNONITE CHURCH



[www.peacemennonite.ca](http://www.peacemennonite.ca)

Peace Mennonite Church (PMC) in Richmond, British Columbia is seeking applicants for the following **PASTORAL STAFF ROLES**. Some of these roles could be combined in one qualified staff person.

- **Youth** (half time): to build relationships with church and community youth and young adults; to provide relevant activities for their growth.
- **Worship Coordinator** (10 -12 hrs/wk): to shape and facilitate the public worship life of the community; to provide administrative support to this aspect of church life.
- **Community Outreach** (half time): to give leadership to our community engagement plans and initiatives, including families, our Community Meal, and the building of relationships and partnerships with the community (e.g. Food Bank).

PMC intends to continue to grow and be an evangelizing influence for Christ in the multi-cultural community of East Richmond. We are a church with about 200 attenders.

More detailed information is available from:  
[pastoralsearch@peacemennonite.ca](mailto:pastoralsearch@peacemennonite.ca).

# God at work in the World Snapshots

PHOTO BY VALERIE PROUDFOOT / TEXT BY BRENDA TIESSEN-WIENS



*Donna Entz, who works with Mennonite Church Alberta's North Edmonton Ministry, was recently awarded the Interfaith Advocate Award from the Edmonton Interfaith Centre. The Centre is made up of people from more than a dozen different faith traditions who seek to promote respect, harmony, friendship and understanding. Entz's work in building bridges among faith communities was recognized by the Centre, which noted that 'the world is a better place' because of her dedication and commitment.*

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



*Earl Martin, left, David Brown and David Roth stand outside the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) used furniture outlet in downtown Elmira, Ont., on March 3. The outlet was established late last year as the Canadian Government ramped up the number of Syrian refugees coming to Canada. Since local Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) thrift stores were being overwhelmed with offers of furniture and household goods for the refugees, MCC wondered if MDS might be able to help with furniture for them. Martin, who works with MDS as a project director, thought of a store standing empty in downtown Elmira owned by his brother-in-law. Originally open six days a week, the outlet has since reduced its days of operation to Thursday to Saturday. Martin notes that it will stay open until one of three things is lacking: volunteers, donations or need. MDS notes that, 'although this project is a little out of the rebuilding box, the partnership with MCC is fulfilling an MDS goal to nurture hope, faith and wholeness, by bringing people home.'*