

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Special Mental Health Issue

On becoming
a better person

pg. 4

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EDITORIAL

Walking toward wellness

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle.—various attributions

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, 20 percent of all Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime. Those statistics apply to people in our congregations as well, even if we don't always like to talk about them in church. One in five of us sitting in a Sunday worship service has experienced—or will experience—our own mental health crisis. And many more of us will walk in the valley of darkness with a family member, friend or colleague.

Illness of the brain and spirit are the result of complicated factors, some of which science can explain. Yet there is a lot about this class of illness that we do not understand. We do, however, witness some of its costs: loss of income, homelessness, fractured relationships, fear, a sense of shame and worthlessness, hopelessness, and sometimes death.

It is important to recognize that mental illness does not come from a lack of faith. In the complicated interplay of thoughts, emotions and physical processes, no one is going to “believe” themselves into wellness.

Neither is mental illness a punishment of God. John 9 tells the story of a man born blind, whose presence precipitated the question: “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born

blind?” Jesus would not pin the blame for physical illness on anyone's sin, and his actions show that he didn't blame those in mental anguish either. As Jesus demonstrated, our loving God is present in times of physical and emotional distress, seeking to restore health and rebuild relationships.

Here are some ways the church can be a part of Jesus' mission of mental healing and hope:

1. Help all congregants learn about mental illness in its various expressions. Explore together what the Bible says about wellness and illness. Draw on the knowledge of mental health professionals in your church and community. We fear what we do not understand, so basic knowledge about the realities of mentally ill people can release the people in the pew to better care for each other.

2. Equip pastors, elders, teachers and others to offer pastoral care, as their gifts and training allow. At the same time recognize when it is better to call on people with professional training—the physicians, counsellors, therapists and social workers in our churches and communities.

3. Support Christian counselling centres financially and encourage congregants to use their services. Offer financial assistance for members who are not able to pay for their own counselling.

4. Be a safe place where people can tell their stories and feel support. Worship services can deal with mental health

themes and give opportunity for members to share about their own struggles. Offer times for public anointing and prayers for healing. Churches can help create support groups for people who are mentally ill, and their families, offering a place where one's story can be told and prayers can be offered.

5. Encourage each other to respond with practical expressions of care to people who struggle with mental illness. People “waging a great battle” need to know that they are not forgotten—and that they are loved. Sometimes a simple act of kindness can represent the face of Jesus to someone in despair.

6. Recognize that no one can “fix” the mental illness of their neighbour. Be sure to set boundaries in relation to what you can and cannot do to support others in their struggles.

7. Teach and promote spiritual disciplines for everyone—adults, youth, and yes, children. Recognize the role of spiritual practices in promoting good health. When we are aware of God's love and presence, we can feel hope to take the next steps in our healing journeys.

In that great battle that we all face, here is the reminder: “Nothing is lost on the breath of God, nothing is lost forever; God sees with love and that love will remain, holding the world forever” (*Sing the Story*, no. 121).

Goodbye

Today we say farewell to Beth Downey Sawatzky, the *Canadian Mennonite* correspondent in Manitoba. She joined us in April 2016 and will conclude her time with us at the end of May. She plans to pursue masters' studies in the field of journalism. Thank you, Beth, for your contribution, and best wishes in your studies!



ABOUT THE COVER:

In our Special Mental Health Issue feature on page 4, ‘On becoming a better person,’ senior writer Will Braun explores the concept of ‘mindfulness’ as he grapples with the shift between the first and second halves of his life. ‘I feel foolish admitting this, but I believe life is, in part, a long lesson in letting go, with a big test at the end,’ he writes.

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CANADIAN MENNONITE,
490 DUTTON DRIVE, UNIT C5,
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Phone: 519-884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 Fax: 519-884-3331

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Facebook.com/Canadian.Mennonite @CanMenno

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Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will

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Head Office Staff:

Tobi Thiessen, Publisher, publisher@canadianmennonite.org

Virginia A. Hostetler, Executive Editor, editor@canadianmennonite.org

Ross W. Muir, Managing Editor, managinged@canadianmennonite.org

Barb Draper, Editorial Assistant, edassist@canadianmennonite.org

Dan Johnson, Graphic Designer, designer@canadianmennonite.org

Lisa Jacky, Circulation/Finance, office@canadianmennonite.org

Aaron Epp, Young Voices Editor, youngvoices@canadianmennonite.org

Advertising Manager: D. Michael Hostetler, advert@canadianmennonite.org,

toll-free voice mail: 1-800-378-2524 ext. 224

Correspondents:

Will Braun, Senior Writer, seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org

Amy Dueckman, B.C. Correspondent, bc@canadianmennonite.org

Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, Alberta Correspondent, ab@canadianmennonite.org

Donna Schulz, Saskatchewan Correspondent, sk@canadianmennonite.org

Beth Downey Sawatzky, Manitoba Correspondent, mb@canadianmennonite.org

Dave Rogalsky, Eastern Canada Correspondent, ec@canadianmennonite.org

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



MENTAL HEALTH MEDITATION

On becoming a better person

Meditation, true elders and a 'mindful' path to the cross: an antidote to striving and the corollary sense of inadequacy, an unholy duo that can put faith at odds with mental health

BY WILL BRAUN
SENIOR WRITER

*'We must be still and still moving /
Into another intensity /
For another union,
a deeper communion.'
(T.S. Elliot, from 'The Four Quartets')*

Although I had biked 21 kilometres to work and spent the hot day bent over in a vegetable patch just south of Winnipeg, I was still pushing hard on my ride home. I loved passing the hot-shot cyclists who frequented the same route.

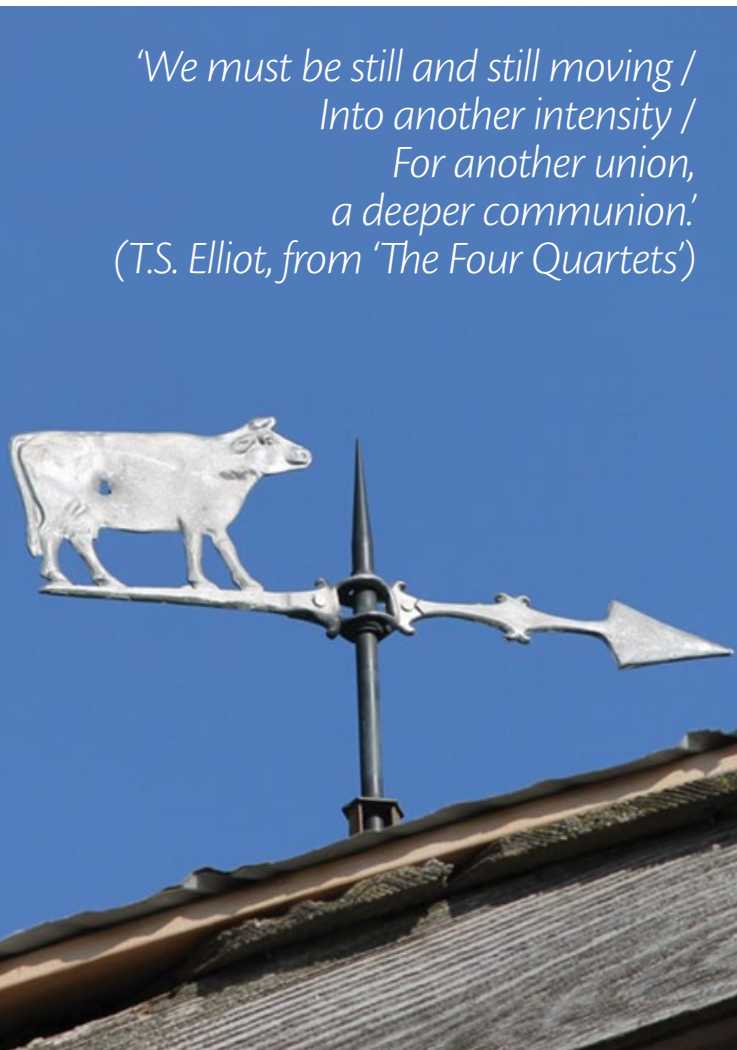
On that day of particular exertion and clarity, my sense of drive was mixed with the knowledge that I was 36 and had peaked physically. I would get slower for the rest of my life. I could barely stand the thought.

But as my legs pumped, a further thought came to mind: I'll push hard until I'm 40, then I'll turn the corner toward the second half of life. I will try to prepare to be an elder—a person of depth and presence—and I will prepare for death. I feel foolish admitting this, but I believe life is, in part, a long lesson in letting go, with a big test at the end.

I'm 44 now, and still grappling with the shift. At times, I feel eager to let go of ambition, busyness and comparisons. But most of the time I am still pushing hard, with tasks to complete and things to accomplish.

Maybe that's why it took me until now to read Richard Rohr's 2011 book, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, and to take a course that is actually helping me turn the corner.

Rohr is a Franciscan monk and author. He says that most of church life is limited to what he calls first-half-of-life spirituality: a stage of defining identity, setting ourselves up in life and establishing beliefs. This stage is important, but Rohr says a majority of Christians never move to the next stage in which we lose that life we built in Christ. "Our elderly are seldom elders," he laments, adding, though, "when they are true elders, we all fall in love with them."



PHOTOS BY WILL BRAUN



While 'mindfulness' has varied manifestations, I think of it in terms of meditation methods and a general orientation to life focussed on paying close attention: stopping to smell the flowers (God's wonders)....

Elders in my life

I don't grasp nearly everything Rohr writes. I'm not there yet. But I catch glimpses, partly because I've been blessed to be guided by various elders, particularly two Mennonite couples. In them I see the second-half-of-life depths that Rohr describes.

They are deeply rooted in church and Scripture but not wrapped up in debates and power structures. They exhibit great moral integrity but do not interrogate the morality of others. They rise above. They love and affirm. They listen. Rohr says, "If you talk too much or too loud, you are usually not an elder."

They are quick to laugh, alive with delight, fun to be with. They taste and see that the Lord is good. They may have many tasks before them but do not act busy. They give attention. They are composed.

Rohr speaks of people who no longer need to prove that their "group is the best" or their place in society deserves superior treatment. They have, in a sense, died to self, their lives now hidden in Christ.

I recall elders interacting with a college-aged friend of mine who was losing her faith. While I formed arguments and felt threatened, they listened and created a tender space for her journey. I was awash in my own insecurities; they were rooted in God's love.

Training for maturity

But it's easier to list qualities than to set a course for acquiring them. Rohr speaks of the need to "develop some concrete practices" for moving beyond the first stage of life, but does not expound on them.

In my search for such practices what I've found most helpful was an eight-week mindfulness course my wife and I completed last fall. Wary of self-help schemes, I accepted the recommendation of an equally sceptical friend because I wanted tools to become a better person, including help in taming my anger impulses. The obliquely named Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction course was offered by Eden Health Care Services, a Mennonite-based mental healthcare provider in Manitoba.

While "mindfulness" has varied manifestations, I think of it in terms of meditation methods and a general orientation to life focussed on paying close attention: stopping to smell the flowers (God's wonders), examining emotions, noticing my responses to various situations, and noticing the way the train of thought carries me off in various directions. It's not about emptying the mind or achieving some state of advanced relaxation.

We did simple exercises to hone our ability to pay attention: from eating a dried cranberry very slowly and focusing on our breath, to sitting and trying to sit on the banks of our thought stream

to watch how our minds jump from one thing to another.

The same course is offered by healthcare agencies throughout North America. It dates back to the 1970s, when Jon Kabat-Zinn adapted what he learned from the world of Buddhist meditation to try to treat those patients—many with chronic pain—for whom his colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Medical School could do no more.

Red flag

At one point in my life, I would have dismissed anything Buddhist. At college, I rejected a visualization exercise as "new age." These were good impulses. I cared about right and wrong, about purity and integrity.

With time, though, I noticed that the most devout and mature Christians I know do not get defensive. They are confident stepping onto slippery slopes—the only way to the mountaintop. Often in Scripture, wisdom comes from another camp. As Rohr notes, Jesus "made the sinner, the outsider, the gentile, the Samaritan, the woman, the Roman centurion . . . the heroes and heroines of his stories."

Although Rohr is thoroughly Christian, he says, "[T]hrough centuries of meticulous and utterly honest self-observation, Buddhism has helped people see [the

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On the Path to Wellness

Finding hope where hope is hard to find

by Angelika Dawson

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.— Brian Kroeker has two jobs and loves them both. He works as a Peer Support Worker (PSW), walking alongside people who live with mental health challenges. He also supports people through a program called Supported Independent Living (SIL). Both services are offered by Communitas Supportive Care Society, and these jobs give Brian the opportunity to pay it forward. He knows exactly how his clients feel because he's been there before.

Brian lives with schizoaffective disorder—bipolar disorder and schizophrenia combined. He knows what it's like to be paralyzed by sadness, to feel paranoid and suspicious of surroundings, to

hear voices in his head.

"I battled depression, experiencing feelings of sadness, hopelessness, no sense of worth and I even contemplated suicide," he says. "I had a plan to end it but could not see it through, thinking of my family finding me."

He has been hospitalized at different times in his life and given medication to help keep him stable. At times his condition has put a strain on family relationships, but he recognizes that his experience with mental illness was hard for them as well. Brian knows that his family has always loved and supported him. "I am really grateful for such a loving family," he says.

Brian has had some challenging times in his past but for the last several years his journey has led him to a place of stability. He went from psychiatric wards to group home settings where he had more freedom and took on more responsibility as he was able. While he was in one of these group homes, he worked with a PSW and found that it was helpful to be with someone who had gone through similar experiences. It gave him hope. He decided to take the training as well and became a PSW so that he could support others.

"I am passionate about being a positive influence in the lives of the people I serve, to help them grow, learn, accept and love themselves," he says. "My experience allows me to connect on a deeper level, to build trust, helping them to express their feelings so that they can

begin to heal."

Through his work with SIL, Brian helps the people he serves develop life skills so that they can become more independent. Helping with housekeeping or grocery shopping, managing money or looking for work are just a few of the ways that Brian offers support. He loves this work.

"There's so much satisfaction in knowing that you're making a difference and being able to help people get to a place where they can pay it forward too," he says.

Brian knows what it's like to be paralyzed by sadness, to feel paranoid and suspicious of surroundings, to hear voices in his head.

Micah Reimer manages the SIL program at Communitas. He first met Brian in 2011, when he came through the SIL program as a client. Micah remembers that Brian was determined to fulfill his goals.

"Brian is a really determined person, so he flourished in the program and soon became a mentor to other people," Micah says. "When he graduated from the SIL program, it was just natural for Brian to want to give back to others by becoming a Peer Support Worker and by serving through SIL."



God of All Comfort
Mental Health Resources for Church Worship

- Introduction
- Fast Facts about Mental Illness
- Materials for Worship
- Mental Health Stories and Videos
- Bulletin Insert
- Resources for Pastors
- Feedback

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SUPPORTIVE CARE SOCIETY

Download a free copy of "God of all Comfort," a resource focusing on mental health in worship at CommunitasCare.com/about-us/resources.



Through their work Brian Kroeker (left) and Micah Reimer (right) help the people they serve become more independent. They feel it is important for the church to talk about mental illness and create safe places for people to share their stories.

Micah has also lived with mental health challenges. Depression and anxiety are not uncommon in his family. “Having a sense of humour helps,” he says.

Although he has times when his mental illness is harder to deal with than others, he says it is manageable. He also says that working at Communitas has been a saving grace.

“Because I work here, mental illness has become normalized for me,” he explains. “The more people talk about it, the better.”

Both Brian and Micah feel it is important for the church to talk about mental illness and create safe places for people to share their stories. Brian feels that society in general is slowly changing, and he finds that when he shares his story, people do not judge

him. He hopes that this can also be true in the church context. “We have to get it out there, get rid of the stigma that surrounds mental illness,” Brian says.

Micah agrees, adding that the church is in a unique position to offer hope to those living with mental illness. “The saddest phrase I’ve heard in my work is ‘I’ve given up hope that I will ever change’ but people living with mental illness need to hold onto hope,” he says. “If we are persistent and recognize that supporting someone is a lifelong commitment, then things really can change.”

It is also important to acknowledge that supporting someone with mental illness is a journey of mutual transformation. Certainly Brian and Micah have had opportunities to impact the lives of others, but both men say that they have been deeply affected by the

opportunity to receive the stories of those they serve.

“You just have to be willing to be open,” Micah says. “And with that comes knowledge, redemption and healing.”

Today, Brian is symptom-free and says his life is great. He credits his success to his family, a supportive community and his strong faith in God.

“I am truly blessed. I believe God has a plan for me and everything that happens in life happens for a reason,” he says. “That’s why I’ve experienced the things that I have and am able to share with others.”

For more information about Communitas Supportive Care Society and its services for people living with mental health challenges, visit CommunitasCare.com.

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deeper, truer realities] in themselves probably better than most of the world religions.”

With confidence in my faith, I am happy to consider meditation practices rooted in millennia of experience. I also accept that some Christians see it otherwise.

Judgment and gentleness

We were asked to try to “suspend judgment and striving for the duration of the course,” and to “refrain from deconstructing” the course. I welcomed this challenge, recognizing that my soul was tired from a lifetime of analytical scepticism. The non-judgmental approach is about a calm acceptance of reality.

If my hammer drops when I am up a ladder (again!), I can curse the thing and give rein to thoughts of how little I am accomplishing (again!), or I can say in my mind: “I feel frustrated. It will pass. All I can do now is get the hammer. Accept reality. Take a breath. Take the next step. Let go of frustration. Like weather, it will pass.”

If I’m running late, fretting will not help. Breathe, proceed, perhaps give attention to why exactly tardiness irks me. Mindfulness can create a buffer between our feelings and responses. It can also create space in which to investigate and work with emotions.

Sometimes this approach works. Often it doesn’t. On a day when my composure was wanting, my nine-year-old said, “Dad, I don’t think that course is working very well.” That, too, was a reality to gently accept.

Non-judgment is not abandonment of discernment, but simply recognition that constant assessments often send our minds on harmful and soul-corroding tracks. Judgment distracts us from presence.

Gentleness—a non-judgmental posture to ourselves—is another value essential to mindfulness. In one class we were asked to consider the common refrains we return to. Nearly everyone mentioned some version of “I am inadequate.” The mindful approach is to accept what is, believing there is more good in us than bad.

With confidence in my faith, I am happy to consider meditation practices rooted in millennia of experience.

That is important because mindfulness practice entails endless failure. One set of tips we were given included Step 3: “When the mind wanders, gently bring it back to what you are doing.” Followed by Step 4: “Repeat Step 3 one billion times.”

It was profound relief to put aside judging and deconstructing, and to give myself permission to falter 70 times 7. Rohr gets at something similar when describing a movement from being right—by judging—to being in right relationship. “Every time God forgives us,” he writes, God is saying that rules matter less than “the relationship that God wants to create with us.” That is a path past judgment to gentleness.

Getting past ‘an unholy duo’

Mindfulness practice also invites us to put aside striving. Too much of my Christian experience, especially early on, was characterized by striving and the corollary sense of inadequacy, an unholy duo that can put faith at odds

with mental health. Of course, we apply effort to life and to inner work, but we can let go of the need to control and the need for things to be ever different. True elders do not exhibit self-obsessed drive or distracted restlessness.

I try to remind myself each morning that the most important task on my list is the inner work of becoming a better person. Still, I find it incredibly hard to sit still and do the guided meditations. I try to quietly examine why that is, why I still strive and push.

Recognizing that neither Rohr nor mindfulness will suit everyone, my prayer is for faith communities that can nurture the profound letting go that might let us say, some day, that we have been crucified with Christ.

Like Rohr, T.S. Eliot, in “The Four Quartets,” points us tenderly onward, ever further in this quest: “We must be still and still moving / Into another intensity / For another union, a deeper communion.” ❧

/// For discussion

1. What are the qualities that make a person an admired elder in a family or community? What elders do you know and appreciate? Will Braun describes elders as people of “depth and presence” and says they are people who “exhibit great moral integrity but do not interrogate the morality of others.” Do you agree?
2. Braun says that life is a “long lesson in letting go, with a big test at the end.” Can you relate to this description? Is maturity something we can train for? Do you agree with Braun that devout and mature Christians do not get defensive?
3. Have you tried meditation or mindfulness training? In what ways can it be helpful? Braun says, “Mindfulness can create a buffer between our feelings and responses. It can also create space in which to investigate and work with emotions.” Why is it important to investigate our emotions?
4. Is a calm acceptance of reality something you strive toward? What suggestions do you have to foster good mental health in our families?

—BY BARB DRAPER

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VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

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✉ Alberta is an example to us all

RE: "A SEASON of change and a search for vitality," April 10, page 16.

I would like to commend Mennonite Church Alberta, the Calgary Chinese and Vietnamese Mennonite churches, and Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church.

Although I don't consider it good news to see churches leave their area or national church because of disagreements over topics like the Being a Faithful Church 7 resolution, it is refreshing to read about these churches that have chosen to show the love of Christ in the midst of separation. As optimistic as I was that our churches could stay unified, I have realized that it simply doesn't happen when we encounter issues so close to our hearts, like sexuality.

But disagreement comes in many forms. Our

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FROM OUR LEADERS

Hope in a dark-sky world

KAREN MARTENS ZIMMERLY

I grew up with a prairie view of wide open sky and grain fields dotted with cattle. In the living room, however, hung a painting of fishermen hurriedly pulling their boat to shore, racing against turbulent waves and a storm-blackened sky. My father, a life-long farmer, chose the painting for the hope of rain that it portrayed.

Something is brewing in the church these days, too, but we aren't sure what to expect. How can we find a future of hope in our current reality?

Perhaps it would be more helpful to ask: Will the world see in us a people of hope? A joyful people? A people who can adapt and respond to a groaning world with imagination and creativity? Will they see a people of integrity and compassion? Will they experience a welcoming and generous people of broad diversity? Will they experience the hope of Christ through our presence?

In Matthew 13, Jesus says to the

disciples, "[E]very scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and old."

We are a church with a rich treasure chest. We must discern which of those treasures to retain, which to discard, and what new treasures will enable us to live with hope in a world clouded by dark skies.

To discern what new treasures God might be calling us to, and what we must let go of, we need prayer and the wisdom of God's Word. To live into our future with hope, our pastors will need to say "no" to increasing busyness and say "yes" to the more important work of helping us immerse ourselves in biblical stories, allowing those stories to shape how we live in the world. We must embrace the practice of prayer, becoming still enough to hear God's voice and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In times of uncertainty, we tend to seek security by protecting what we hold dear,

yet the model of the poor churches of Macedonia (II Corinthians 8:1-15) modelled generosity, sharing their meagre resources with the church in Corinth. We are a church rich in people of faith from a wide variety of cultures, and we are rich in material resources and institutions. Can we coach each other to become a people of God who mentor generosity and partnership while sharing resources beyond our own walls?

On a recent flight, the airplane moved through an overcast sky into clouds of white fog and, eventually, into brilliant sunshine above the clouds. Like my father, I choose to be hopeful. I trust our faithful God will lead us through the fog of our current reality. May we be faithful in our response!

I wrote an earlier version of this article for *Canadian Mennonite* nearly nine years ago when I began as denominational minister for Mennonite Church Canada. It still seems appropriate now as I leave and return to pastoral ministry.

Karen Martens Zimmerly is Mennonite Church Canada's executive minister of formation and pastoral leadership.



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history has been one of denouncing and walking out, believing the others to be heretics. Alberta has shown us another way, that even when churches cannot worship together because of their theological convictions, there is room for blessing, best wishes, sending, prayer, lament, and the unity of Christ that transcends denominational walls. This kind of separation

acknowledges that our area and national churches are much more than just membership clubs like the YMCA.

Our Mennonite church is nothing more than what we, as local congregations, have covenanted to do together. When local churches leave, it affects the whole body, from our decision-making to what we are able to do together in Canada and around the world.

FAMILY TIES

Spanish lessons

MELISSA MILLER

Walking to my conversational Spanish class, I rehearsed phrases in my head, hoping practice would strengthen my fledgling skills. In spite of my efforts, I knew I would stumble to find and pronounce the right word. Sure enough, in class I attempted to say I had eaten lunch with friends, but instead said I had eaten my friends for lunch. We all chuckled, commiserating about our incompetence.

An hour later, we did the same when a classmate told us she had 11 children, when she meant to say she had that many siblings. Guided by our kind teacher, we humbly shared our best attempts, our earnest desire to learn and our many mistakes. Humbling as it is, there is much to be gained about learning another language.

I enrolled in the class because of family connections. My niece and her spouse are working for Mennonite Central Committee in Mexico. She and her family members are bilingual, a skill I admire. I imagined Spanish studies would help prepare me for a visit with them. Of course, a few classes do not make one fluent. While my one-month visit to Latin America did immerse me in Spanish, I could only manage a few words and phrases, and relied on my hosts to navigate transportation, directions, restaurants and shopping.



Apart from learning Spanish, I have learned other lessons along the way. For starters, I have learned that one doesn't have to be perfect to enter into a bilingual conversation. On my trip, I encountered many people who engaged with me using their imperfect, accented English. In most cases, their message was completely understandable. From them, I acquired encouragement to try, even with my limitations.

My sympathy for speakers of non-native languages has increased greatly. I better understand the reasons for errors made in English by native Spanish speakers. For example, G, J and V all sound differently in Spanish than they do in English. This same difference also makes me prone to mispronounce Spanish words.

Language study offers a window through which to glimpse someone else's perspective. One day in class, we were

Guided by our kind teacher, we humbly shared our best attempts, our earnest desire to learn and our many mistakes.

discussing pronunciation. A woman originally from Burundi related that many Canadians feel a need to correct English that is "heavily accented." She said this in perfectly correct, accented English that she had learned in her native Burundi. There was a pause as we absorbed her critique. One person responded, "Maybe

they're just trying to be helpful."

"No," said the woman firmly. In the silence that followed, I wondered about how many misguided corrections native-born Canadians had imposed on this woman and others similar to her. I also with chagrin recalled my own moments of offering such "help." In such cases, rather than accepting her English as valid, and focussing on her message, I inserted my "superior" speech. By doing so, I emphasized that I belong, and that she is a less capable newcomer.

Christians at this season celebrate Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the Christian church. Reading through the biblical account in Acts 2, we see that the miracle of Pentecost included both the capacity to speak other languages (verse 2) "*as the Spirit gave them ability*" and the capacity to hear and understand "*in our own languages . . . God's deeds of power*" (verse 11). A unity was created in the midst of far-flung diversity, as the Spirit gave people the power to speak and understand other languages.

Maybe the lessons gained from learning a new language can be applied to

other times of stretching across differences, to listen to, respect and learn from others.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) has a passion for helping people develop healthy, vibrant relationships with God, self and others.

So, although I'm sure it wasn't easy in Alberta, and although I'm sure there was a lot of hurt, their actions demonstrated a way forward in Christ when unity is not seen as possible.

MOSES FALCO, WINNIPEG

✉ 'Supper club' headline misleading

RE: "SUPPER CLUB for seniors and inmates in danger of closing," March 27, page 17.

The supper club known as "Three Communities, One Hope," which reflects the participation of Fairview Mennonite Home, the Grand Valley Institution for

(Continued on page 12)

GOD, MONEY AND ME

What is your passion?

PAMELA MILES

How often have you heard the question, "Will you sponsor me?" I'm sure you've heard it many times, from a family member, a colleague or someone in your church. For many charitable organizations, organizing events in which their supporters can actively participate is a wonderful way to raise funds, get people engaged and create awareness of their causes.

However, there are occasions when I feel bombarded by these requests for generosity. To ease this, I now set aside funds each year to support my adventurous family and friends who are willing to run a marathon, climb Kilimanjaro, grow a beard or pour a bucket of ice water over their heads for a cause that's important to them.

I want to be generous. And, more importantly, I want to be a good steward of God's gifts. Because God is generous, he invites us to share.



around when he decided to follow Jesus. He immediately began working with the homeless, prostitutes, those addicted to drugs and alcohol, and those struggling with mental illness. He opened a coffee-house, which still operates today, and this led to opening care homes and a residential addiction treatment program.

I've supported Ray for many years because his personal story of transformation and helping others resonates with me. Although he is now retired and has passed the torch to new leaders, I remain connected and involved by consistently reviewing the effectiveness and impact of the charity. This is one of many reasons why people give; they want to see that their donations and support are effecting change.

I want to be generous. And, more importantly, I want to be a good steward of God's gifts.

The invitation to give often causes me to reflect on the charities I support: Why did I choose them? What would I be willing to do for them or what do I know about them?

Ray, a family friend, started his locally run charity 30 years ago. Before starting it, he maintained a public image of a successful businessman, while privately his life was one of frustration and alcoholism. At the age of 35, Ray's life was turned

Selecting which charity or cause to support ultimately boils down to this: What are you most passionate about? What matters to you? Your preferences may range from giving to your local church, a national or international cause, medical research, or even a centre for learning, a community group or local charity.

Perhaps you're already giving to your local church or another charity, and you're wondering how you could make

a greater impact or be more strategic in your giving.

Rebecca Riccio, a university professor, developed an online course called Giving With Purpose. To help people donate more effectively, she invented the RISE framework. RISE stands for:

RELEVANCE: How well does the charity understand the needs it's addressing and know what works in response to the need? How connected is it to the community it's serving?

IMPACT: Does the charity hold itself accountable? Will supporting this charity allow you to make a difference with your resources?

SUSTAINABILITY: Does the charity have reliable revenue sources, and how effectively does it manage its money?

EXCELLENCE in management and operations: How well-qualified are the executive director and board members?

Whatever charities you choose to support, gathering relevant information

about them will help you determine to what degree you want to get involved.

It is a personal journey to discover what causes you and your family are most passionate about.

Pamela Miles is the director of gift planning at Abundance Canada. For more information on impulsive generosity, stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, call 1-800-772-3257 or visit abundance.ca

(Continued from page 11)

Women and Pioneer Park Christian Fellowship in Kitchener, Ont., is in no danger of closing.

Among the many participants, hope for its future is robust. There are currently fewer volunteers in the program than in the past, and there has been discussion in this multi-generational congregation about how to boost interest and attract more volunteers.

Anyone who would like to participate in the deeply meaningful supper club program should contact Ruth DePeazer or Carol Hilborn at ppcf.mc@gmail.com or 519-748-5241.

**RUTH DEPEAZER, CAROL HILBORN
AND JOHANNA WALL, PIONEER PARK
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP,
KITCHENER, ONT.**

VIEWPOINT

Building a place for God

*MWC Global Church Sharing Fund helps
build mission church in Tanzania*

STEVEN W. MANG'ANA

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

A church building is a space to encounter God. This encounter is one of the most basic acts of drawing the kingdom of God into the heart of a community.

When we build a church building, we set a place for God. People go there to seek God together, pray, mourn, celebrate, and ask for and seek God's blessing. God responds.

Kanisa La Mennonite Tanzania Eastern Diocese is driven by its vision and mission of seeing our community changed and reconciled through Jesus Christ—spiritually, physically and mentally—for the glory of God. We do this through preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ that brings salvation, love, forgiveness, righteousness and peace to all people, and by making them disciples of Jesus Christ. We encourage them to be at peace with God, people and with creation as whole.

Through the efforts of the diocese in 2010 to do church planting in the southern part of Tanzania and reach out to the unreached, we were able to establish three congregations in an area predominantly populated by Muslims. In Msikisi, the largest of the three mission congregations, the diocese is constructing a church building.

PHOTO BY STEVEN W. MANG'ANA



A new church building for Msikisi, Tanzania, is under construction.

We construct our church building according to the foundations set by heroes of faith who built a house for the Lord: the Shunamite woman (II Kings 4:10), Moses (Exodus 33:7-11), David (II Samuel 6:17) and Solomon (I Kings 5:4-5). Elijah built a sacrificial altar on

which God's fire fell (I Kings 18:32-38).

A building project requires a church to mobilize resources from internal and external sources. Many church buildings fail to reach the completion stage because of budget constraints to fund the entire project. In the case of the Msikisi church, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) contributed project funds amounting to \$10,000, and the diocese contributed \$15,000. The contribution from MWC's Global Church Sharing Fund gives us assurance of completing the project. It is a great joy to partner with MWC to meet the needs of our people.

Through this building in Msikisi, the church will achieve four goals:

- **REACH THE** unreached;
- **PROVIDE THE** community with a space for worshipping God and fellowshiping together;
- **SUPPORT THE** local church holistically by establishing participatory social services; and
- **STRENGTHEN THE** newly converted Christians by equipping them with fundamental biblical principles.

The partnership with MWC gives the diocese the assurance of working with an organization that shares our values of faith, integrity and dignity. This collaboration with MWC strengthens networking, results in the sharing of gifts and blessings, and helps us to reach our goals in saving God's people for his glory.

Steven W. Mang'ana is bishop of Kanisa La Mennonite Tanzania.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

O Wisdom, where art thou? (Part 8)

TROY WATSON

Doubt has a good public relations manager these days. The world seems awash with books, articles, sermons, even a few TED talks, praising its beneficial goodness. I too have tried to redeem the sullied reputation of doubt in the church with my preaching and writing. Over the past year I've started to wonder if the pendulum has swung too far though. Have we naively overestimated and championed the virtue of doubt without fully appreciating its destructive power?

The book of James (1:6) names one thing that will prevent us from receiving divine wisdom. Doubt.

So who is right? James or TED? Is doubt good or bad?

There are two primary modes of doubting. The first mode utilizes doubt as a tool to seek understanding. I call this "sincere skepticism." This mode analyzes ideas, beliefs, stories and arguments with logic and critical thinking, testing for validity and reliability. This mode of doubting is healthy and essential to understanding.

I call the second mode of doubting "toxic skepticism." Doubt, like most tools, can become deadly if used inappropriately. There are many genres of this deadly "toxic skepticism," but one of the ways doubt turns toxic is when it becomes our primary tool for life. For instance, if you wake up doubting gravity every morning, wondering if it's safe to get out of bed without putting on the NASA space boots you picked up on eBay, your doubt is no longer productive and healthy. It's pathological.



Many Christians are being conditioned to approach their faith with pathological doubt. Certain cultural influences equate intelligence with doubting the existence of God and Christian beliefs. However, doubting the existence of God is only rational if it is seeking to discover and understand. As soon as doubt isn't seeking to discover and understand, it's pathological, and pathological doubt is never rational. It's lazy. It just wants to doubt.

Healthy doubt wants to discover a new or better understanding of reality and adjust to what it discovers. In order to do that it can't always be doubting.

Doubt can help us discover the truth about ourselves, reality and God, but it can also become the very thing that holds us back from discovery. Doubt, as a tool to discover, renews life. Doubt, as a way of life, is death.

Sincere skepticism requires us to be good stewards of doubt. Too much of anything, even good things, can be harmful. For example, plants need water to grow but overwatering plants can kill them. Like water, doubt is good but too much is deadly.

Our relationship to "self" illustrates the need for balanced doses of doubt. A certain degree of self-doubt is necessary to have healthy relationships with other people and reality, because all of us are wrong about a great many things. If I'm unable to doubt my opinions, abilities, beliefs, knowledge, then I'm unable to adjust to reality. If I resist everything that

contradicts my view of myself and the world, I'm not able to learn, grow and live in truth.

On the flip side, if self-doubt becomes excessive, it destroys my confidence, purpose, meaning and passion. It also kills my ability to take risks. We can all find "logical" reasons to doubt ourselves, causing us to avoid taking risks like starting up a business, confronting a bully or trying something new. But at some point we need to defy our doubts and take the necessary risks required to develop confidence and discover what we're really made of and what we're capable of. If not, our self-doubt becomes pathological and we lose the desire and ability to discover more about ourselves.

While it's true that doubt is beneficial to our lives, taking risks that defy our doubts is even more beneficial. You will never have enough answers to eradicate all your doubts about yourself. You can never be certain you won't fail if you try out for a sports team, enrol in university, ask someone out on a date, submit your name for a job promotion, become a parent, or try to lose weight.

There is no certainty in life. So it makes no sense to expect certainty with our faith.

Doubt can help us discover the truth

about ourselves, reality and God, but it can also become the very thing that holds us back from discovery. Doubt, as a tool to discover, renews life. Doubt, as a way of life, is death.

We need to take risks of faith to discover who we are and who God is. In order to do this we need to remember to doubt our doubts sometimes.

(For an inspiring message on doubt and faith, check out Joseph Solomon's spoken word presentation entitled, "A Shadow of a Doubt" on YouTube.) ❧

Troy Watson is pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bauman—Macie (b. April 20, 2017), to Mike and Alli Bauman, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.
Dutta—Cayden (b. April 24, 2017), to Tilak Dutta and Tonya Martin, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.
Falk—Levi David (b. March 20, 2017), to Tyler and Heather Falk, Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.
Friesen—Finnley Snow (b. Feb. 22, 2017), to Jacy and Carmen Friesen, Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.
Grunau—Llewyn Albert (b. Feb. 22, 2017), to Corinne Klassen and Darren Grunau, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.
Hebert—Rylie Mae (b. April 4, 2017), to Amanda Hebert (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Matt Hebert.
Horniachek—Anna (b. Jan. 8, 2017), to Angela Schellenberg (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Burl Horniachek.
Martin—Molly Leanna (b. March 30, 2017), to Phil and Katie Martin, Elmira Mennonite, Ont.
Namegabe—Alvin Emmanuel (b. Dec. 9, 2016), to Anifa Kavucho and Bagula Rubasha, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.
Reimer—Thea Sonja (b. Dec. 28, 2016), to Amy and Shawn Reimer, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Deaths

Beckert-Wiens—Joanne (nee Wiens), 93 (b. Jan. 12, 1924; d. March 30, 2017), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.
Bergen—Patricia (nee Adams), 62 (b. Sept. 21, 1954; d. April 26, 2017), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.
Enns—Walter George, 64 (b. Feb. 5, 1952; d. Jan. 15, 2017), Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.
Fehr—Helen (nee Klassen), 101 (b. March 25, 1916; d.

March 28, 2017), Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.
Giesbrecht—Peter, 91 (b. July 27, 1925; d. April, 2017), Osler Mennonite, Sask.
Gingerich—Samuel, 58 (b. Aug. 4, 1958; d. April 19, 2017), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.
Guenther—George, 76 (b. March 21, 1941; d. April 17, 2017), Osler Mennonite, Sask.
Horst—Orvie, 87 (b. April 30, 1929; d. April 14, 2017), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.
Janzen—Susan (nee Driedger), 93 (b. June 23, 1923; d. March 11, 2017), Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.
Kinzie—Orpha, 96 (b. May 7, 1920; d. April 6, 2-17), Preston Mennonite, Cambridge, Ont.
Martin—Floyd, 80 (b. March 23, 1937; d. April 9, 2017), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.
Martin—Reta, 81 (b. Aug. 15, 1935; d. April 11, 2017), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.
Suderman—Victor, 83 (b. June 19, 1933; d. March 27, 2017), First Mennonite, Edmonton.
Weber—David (Dave), 78 (b. March 6, 1939; d. March 30, 2017), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.
Wieler—Alfred Theodor, 81 (b. May 5, 1935; d. Jan. 25, 2017), Blumenort Mennonite, Rosetown, Man.
Wolter—Dorothy Elsie (nee Jeschke), 83 (b. Dec. 9, 1933; d. April 22, 2017), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to 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



The Isaac S. Wiens real estate office in Herbert, Sask., is pictured in 1911. Wiens (1874-1958), left, was born in Russia and came to Canada as an infant. His family became part of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church and lived in the Gretna, Man., area. He married Katharina Friesen in 1897, and they had 10 children. The family joined other Mennonites who moved to Saskatchewan looking for land and opportunities. Wiens settled in the community of Herbert. By 1911, Wiens was the village secretary. In Herbert, Wiens established a successful real estate business and in 1912 built an elaborate home with running water, a sewage system and a library.

Text: Conrad Stoesz / Mennonite Heritage Centre

Photo: Isby Bergen Photograph Collection / Mennonite Heritage Centre



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FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

MENTAL HEALTH REFLECTION

Shimmering peace in the midst of darkness

SUE NICKEL

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

“A rgh!” I cried out, as I slammed my fist down hard onto the kitchen counter. “I hate this! I’m so tightly wound up my body feels ready to split open. I can’t stand the tension anymore!”



forgetting the things that were just said that weren’t congruent with who someone knew me to truly be. I am one of the richest people alive when I recall truths such as these. I cannot imagine what hell it would

be to have to suffer depression all on my own. My neuro-psychiatrist so very aptly defines depression as that which “brings you to your knees and is trauma to your soul.”

Surprisingly, there is a gift to depression, and that was a gift of time; time to look at myself and my world from a different perspective.

What takes place when I find myself on my knees? It is a humble and humbling posture, very uncomfortable for me. On my knees is a pretty difficult position to retain for very long. I feel small and insignificant, invisible and powerless. One of the most difficult aspects of depression for me is the emotions, and I include numbness among them; they can be very powerful and paralyzing. They distort thought patterns and arrest decision-making abilities, and these emotions make my mind feel pretty crazy. To rest and experience silence and solitude is almost impossible in the midst of them.

So the goal is to somehow move through these emotions in a safe way and in a safe place, because the times that I have been able to do this, I have come out on the other side to some kind of ease-filled peace.

Surprisingly, there is a gift to depression, and that was a gift of time; time to

look at myself and my world from a different perspective. Because I was on my knees and unable to do the things I normally could, I found out what was most important to me, but, more significantly and life-giving, what was most important to God. This blew apart the myth that I was only worth what I could achieve and attain through my job, degrees, promotions and kids. It led me to a deeper and surer definition of life as a follower of Christ.

When I was on my knees, my head drooped, my eyes closed, and I began to surrender. Tears came. Anger also. Frustration. Grief. Anxiety and fear. If I could stay like this a while, stay with all the stuff I had feared for so long, I found I did indeed survive. And then somehow, there was a peace, and my body sank into the floor. I thought, I have done it! I have stayed with what scared me for so long. And I thought myself very brave. Most of all, I thought God so very gracious. It was on my knees that I began to hear whispers of worth, purpose and love. The gift

of time led to the healing of many of my fears, which, in turn, bathed my traumatized soul with a holy balm. I thank God that depression brought me to my knees. Because of it I have lived this sure and steadfast anchor-hope.

In *God in Pain: Teaching Sermons on Suffering*, I read, “[W]hat the cross teaches us is that God’s power is not the power to force human choices and end human pain. It is—instead—the power to pick up the shattered pieces and make something holy out of them—not from a distance, but right close up. . . . That is the power of a suffering God, not to prevent pain but to redeem it, by going through it with us.”

Right there alongside us, our Triune God offers us a shimmering glorious peace, which I do not begin to understand, but I know what it means. ❧

So my brain screamed within the turmoil of what seemed like the world’s worst case of PMS. This episode of depression was lingering for months and I was exhausted, drained of all patience. I am a walking black storm cloud on the verge of a mighty outpouring of torrential growling. Notably, there is also an underlying heavy cloak of deep sadness stemming from a staggering set of losses: of hope, of self, of power and mastery over one’s life, and of protection and predictability. A deep melancholy folds over my brain like Saran Wrap clinging to its surface; airtight, it suffocates joy and snuffs out all light.

So, in the midst of all this turmoil, how have I experienced peace? How, in the midst of such dizzying discord, do I find serenity? First, I need to mention that I have done lots of counselling in stages over the years; it is invaluable work. Second, I am blessed with both a supportive, encouraging birth family and church family.

Peace looks like meals cooked, dishes done, cards mailed, emails sent, hugs, and phone calls; also, patience and grace extended when I had to cancel plans . . . *yet again*, presence within silence, non-judgmental attitudes, permission to speak in church about mental illness, listening and more listening, and then

FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

PHOTO BY JENNIE WIEBE PHOTOGRAPHY,
COURTESY OF SARA FRETZ

Healing for soul and spirit

Sara Fretz practices music therapy

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Singing has always been a passion for Sara Fretz. Long before she took up the profession of music therapy she found music “very therapeutic” for herself through her years of growing up. But music is also prayerful, and draws her close to God—faith and singing go together for her. She “comes to herself as a person” when she sings. Her voice teacher connected spirituality and music for her, “they are one and the same,” she says, “my voice a doorway to my faith.” In later years the indigenous drum has also become important to her with both the beat echoing her heart beat, and drumming with others a “synchronicity with people.”

Doing work in the Philippines and an orphanage in Thailand called her to work with vulnerable people. Since music felt personal, she went into psychology, but a course with David Huron at Conrad Grebel University College opened a way to combine her two passions. In 1998 she began a degree in music therapy from Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo. Both during her education and after, she worked at Lutherwood, which ran programs for 12-18 year olds, including those in custody. She was amazed to see how music freed the expression of emotions and helped troubled youth to find better ways to express them. Reworking violent and profane lyrics in a rap song helped one young man to find other words for his feelings.

“Music is in the body, it is experiential, it slows down the mind, it changes patterns of belief,” both about the self and about the divine, she says. Fretz is excited that her work now allows her the room to not only work at mental/emotional and social health but also spiritual. Having completed a Masters in Psychotherapy in 2016, she now works both at a Women’s Centre in Kitchener and at the Brantford General Hospital. The latter, near the Six Nations

community, gives her opportunities to work with indigenous Canadians to bring healing after centuries of trauma. Here techniques like ‘toning’—the sounding of inarticulate sounds—help patients be better able to articulate what they are feeling afterward, especially if the traumas were pre-verbal in children.

In her work with women, sometimes coming out of decades of abuse, music frees space to emote, something that was often shut down in fear of reprisals and further abuse. Fretz admits that sometimes it is a “Pandora’s box” of emotions as the women become very vulnerable in their sharing. But music can also give them strength, help heal their feelings of vulnerability and suicidal ideation.

In all these things actual musical skill is not required. Sometimes untrained people actually find it easier to allow music to help in their healing journey. “Come as you are,” she says, “be in this space” without need to perform or perfect. Music “deals with the whole person, including the spiritual.” In her work “people are always talking about the spiritual,” though not necessarily Christianity or religion.

Fretz, who attends Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, sings



The indigenous drum has become important to Sara Fretz.

with both Leonard Enns’ DaCapo Singers and the Mino Ode Kwewak N’Gamowak (Good-hearted Women Singers), an indigenous and non-indigenous women’s drumming circle. Both groups are spiritually oriented and provide outlets for her spirituality. ✎

Mental Health and “Having Faith”:

Volunteer counsellors at CMU work with students at a religious institution

BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY

Manitoba Correspondent

After retiring from professional service almost two years ago, Valentine (Val) Warkentin found she missed her work as a counsellor and accepted an invitation

to volunteer at Canadian Mennonite University. Many kinds of mental illness only develop, or present for the first time, during a person’s teen years and

early-twenties, which makes academic institutions dynamic and challenging contexts for her work. “The stresses and expectations in schools result in students being particularly vulnerable. The most common problems I run into are anxiety and depression, sometimes including thoughts of suicide.”

John Weier, also a counsellor at CMU, elaborates: “Most of the students who come to me begin by talking about anxiety, sometimes about panic attacks. They may not mention the word ‘depression,’ but it does seem to lurk there at the back of their throats. Well, there are lots of great reasons for us all to be anxious. The world seems often to be teetering on the edge of disaster. The state of the environment, the political climate, the violence that exists in our world, all are causes for concern.

“And for students, they’re embarking on their adult lives. They’re choosing partners, choosing careers, writing exams, passing and failing. Yikes! Lots of great reasons to feel panic. Still, it does seem with most visitors that there is something hidden in the backdrop. Something deeper, behind the anxiety, that’s causing trouble. *Am I okay? Am I normal? Am I loveable? If I fail this exam will my family still love me? Will I still be able to have a good life?*

“Let me ask you: What is that ache deep inside you? In your darkest nights, sitting alone in the living room, what’s the question that brings tears to your eyes? I think we all have this deep ache and I think we all have these questions. Sometimes, for some of us, this ache becomes almost unbearable and we decide to pay attention. That brings us to the counselling room.”

In her office, Warkentin finds students often sit at a crossroads of fragility and resilience: they are students, battling all the dragons Weier describes, but they are also people of faith who have chosen to study and often live in a religious context. She says “students talk about prayer as having a calming effect, as a way to find relief from their pain for a time.” It begs the question—what role does faith play in the lives of students battling to maintain good mental health?

Weier suggests it comes down to whether a student’s religion offers a practical inventory of beneficial resources:

“As counsellors, most of us are trying to help students gather their resources. What is it that makes you feel strong? What is it that gives you a sense of relief from these

*What is that ache deep inside you? In your darkest nights, sitting alone in the living room, what’s the question that brings tears to your eyes?
—John Weier*

disturbing feelings? Most of us have a complement of activities, friends, beliefs that help make our lives rich and meaningful. But in times of distress it’s often easy to forget what these resources are. One of the counsellor’s jobs is to help the visitor find these resources again. So faith? Sure, I think faith can be a really strong resource for health and well-being. When I think of the atmosphere that institutions like CMU strive to provide—accepting to all, readily offering forgiveness, mercy, grace—it seems to me that’s the kind of atmosphere

that offers resources and resilience for students,” Weier says.

“But what if faith becomes narrow and inflexible? What if in faith we find guilt in-

stead of forgiveness?” he asks. “Maybe faith can also be a detriment.”

Warkentin, too, has seen religion become problematic: “Institutional religion—which is not to say any particular institution, or even faith itself—sometimes tends to be judgmental, to the point of being spiritually abusive. Those who think prayer or religious faith are the only answers to a mental health problem often fail to understand the complexity and reality of mental health issues.”

Nevertheless, she concedes that Christian values are important in informing her practice: “The call from Jesus to love and not judge is a significant mantra in my life and work.”

The good news, she says, is the situation for young people struggling with mental illness in this country—inside and outside the church—is improving markedly.

“I love working with students. I am honoured when they trust me with the difficulties they are experiencing and I have been encouraged by their openness to share their struggles. This indicates to me that the stigma is decreasing. When I was growing up, mental health concerns were a family secret and considered shameful. After 29 years working in a college, I have seen a significant increase in students, especially men, seeking counselling.”

Weier agrees, it is in the moments of real connection that the true worth and importance of his vocation comes to light, and even the word “faith” takes on new meaning.

“I think probably I don’t see faith so much as a fixed entity but rather as a process of life and growth. And that’s exactly what happens in counselling. Here are two people trying to learn and grow together, learning to have faith in each other.”

PHOTO BY DAVID WITYK



John Weier, a volunteer counsellor at CMU, makes and restores violins.

FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Being the church in an age of anxiety

21st century represents a great missional opportunity

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

High anxiety is a characteristic of this age. Political and economic uncertainties abound, and electronic media, purported to help people connect with one another, actually seem to make them feel increasingly isolated.

These realities were the starting point for discussion as Mennonite Church Saskatchewan pastors explored what “Being the church in the 21st century” means. They met at Mount Royal Mennonite Church on April 28 for a one-day workshop with Betty Pries of the L3 consulting group.

“We are living in a time of significant social upheaval, the magnitude of which has not been seen for 500 years, some say thousands of years,” Pries told participants. It is a time characterized by secularism and by multi-faith communities. It is also a time of changing social norms, consumerism and increasing disparity between those who have and those who have not.

Social media has created unprecedented challenges. The seduction of being perpetually connected has left many people ill-equipped for solitude. “Young adults are most likely to commit suicide right before bed, after they turn off their devices, because they fear being alone,” said Pries. Applications like Facebook provide endless opportunities for social comparison and meaningless distraction. The immediacy of news stories also elevates anxiety as people worry about what’s happening right now.

While churches may lament the changes technology has wrought, there is also reason to be hopeful. “We, as congregations, have a huge missional opportunity,” said Pries. High school students, because they are digital natives, recognize that technology isn’t meeting all of their needs. “They



Presenter Betty Pries of the L3 Group leads a workshop for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan pastors on ‘Being the church in the 21st century’. She illustrates how individuals and congregations are wounded, yet those wounds can be places where God is allowed to enter.

are wanting to return to faith,” she said. “They are saying, ‘We need something bigger.’”

Another characteristic of this time is the polarity between modern and postmodern viewpoints. Modernism values solid truth and social agreement. The self is centred and has a sense that there is “something bigger than me” out there, said Pries. By contrast, in postmodernist thinking, truth is subjective and individual experience matters. The self is not centred, but rather keeps moving depending on context.

Pries argued that each viewpoint has something to offer, and that both are

needed. “The only way we can honour my experience is by thinking that there’s something bigger than myself,” she said. “We can’t solve the polarities with either/or thinking; we can only solve [them] with both/and thinking.”

She added, “People are searching for meaning, purpose and belonging. This is what the church has to offer.” Her question for participants was, “How does the church speak into the world’s profound spiritual, emotional and mental health needs?”

Ric Driediger, interim pastor of Zoar Mennonite in Langham, noted that the church values being with people. Terry Stefaniuk of Osler Mennonite suggested that the church reduces isolation and offers grounding.

Garth Ewert Fisher of Mount Royal Mennonite said that the church offers one of many competing narratives. “We can claim we have the centre, but others claim they have the centre, too,” he said.

“What do we mean by centre?” asked Pries. Some suggest orthodoxy is the answer, but, she said, “right beliefs always come last. Jesus didn’t push right beliefs; he challenged the people who used right beliefs as a weapon. Jesus loved people and taught the love of God. The centre is that God loves us, not what we believe.”

Thriving churches in an age of anxiety, said Pries, offer people “a safe ‘container’ or a place of rest.” They have leaders people want to follow, and they engage in deeply meaningful worship. Authentic relationships give members a sense of belonging, but thriving churches also provide members with meaningful avenues for participation and are highly missional. Their policies and procedures are nimble and effective, and they possess a healthy self-awareness. In addition, such churches practise self-compassion, giving themselves permission to be human.

In small group discussions, participants sought to answer the question, “How do you become the people you need to be in order to answer the call of being the church in the 21st century?” Their answers included practising devotion to Jesus, loving God and others, never forgetting that God loves his people, putting Anabaptist belief into practice, and walking together in difference and love. ❧

When mental illness drops in at church

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent

Asked how many “walk-ins” looking for help at a church are likely to have a mental illness, pastors like Werner De Jong say “the majority, for sure.”

De Jong, pastor at Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton, is often alone in the building when people wander in to ask for help. In fact, he leaves the door unlocked so they can find him. “The first thing I do is invite them into my office to talk with them,” he says. Invariably they ask for money, but money rarely helps [with their issues].”

The Canadian Mental Health Association’s website (cmha.ca) corroborates De Jong’s observation, stating, “People with serious mental illness are disproportionately affected by homelessness. The consequences of homelessness tend to be more severe when coupled with mental

illness. People with mental illnesses remain homeless for longer periods of time and have less contact with family and friends. They encounter more barriers to employment and tend to be in poorer health than other homeless people.”

A few dollars or a food voucher given by a pastor may serve as a temporary help, or as a way to placate an individual and send them away, but it does nothing to address the larger issues mental illness often brings with it.

People dropping in at a church to ask for help often have a complicated story. Homelessness, addictions, disabilities and a lack of social support often result from mental illness. Many of these people fall through the cracks of the social system and are left with few options for help. Some,

because it is how they have learned to cope, become adept manipulators of systems and people, and are difficult to work with. Pastors and church office staff who respond to walk-ins are rarely trained or prepared to deal with the situations, understand the role mental illness plays or support the people who need help.

De Jong tells of a mentally ill man who regularly stops by to see him at church. “It is overwhelming to try to help this man by myself or even as a congregation,” he says. “He almost needs 24-hour care when he is not in jail. And the jail system is where they end up.” De Jong takes the man out for lunch once a month, commenting that what

the man needs most is a listening ear and a friend.

Ed Kauffman, pastor of Calgary First Mennonite Church, says that “only experience” has prepared him to deal with the issues of mental illness and people asking for help from the church. Some of the same people come back time after time. One of these, Kauffman says, “clearly has real mental issues. It’s really hard to get rid of him. What do you do with these guys?”

De Jong has had similar experiences. “I’ve discovered that as soon as you help someone once, it’s hard to deal with the expectation again,” he says. “Once I had a guy screaming at me when I said no. Eventually he just left. Months later he came back and apologized.”

The stories and struggles of dealing with walk-ins and mental illness are common to every urban church, and so is the lack of training for church staff. The issue of safety is a concern when pastors or office staff are alone at church, regardless of whether or not strangers asking for help appear to have a mental illness. In an article in *Psychology Today* (bit.ly/2pUt3b), Dr. Carrie Barron writes, “Most mentally ill people are not dangerous. And yet public perception lags miles behind this reality.”

While DeJong and Kauffman are comfortable leaving doors unlocked, they have both experienced uneasy situations.

“One situation, I picked up a woman who was being abused,” Kauffman recalls. “I took her to my office and he [the abuser] showed up.” Kauffman recalled.

While the situation resolved without violence, the potential for it was real. Such situations highlight the need for congregations to develop a procedure for walk-in situations that will keep everyone safe.

The language used to describe a church’s response to the issue of walk-ins can be revealing. Phrases such as “dealt-with,” “handled” or “gotten rid of” convey different goals than do phrases like “connecting with” or “ministering to.” Unfortunately, the response is often left in the hands of pastors and office staff who often lack both time and capacity to respond with anything more than crisis management. ❧

Besides her duties at Canadian Mennonite, Donita Wiebe-Neufeld is also a pastor of Edmonton First Mennonite Church.

Suggestions for churches

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD
ALBERTA CORRESPONDENT

- Have a discussion about your congregation’s vision. How, and to what extent, do you want to/are able to minister to those who walk in asking for help?
- Formulate a policy to guide your pastor and office staff so they are prepared to respond safely and consistently to walk-ins, minimizing the potential for unsafe situations.
- Consider hosting educational events to equip staff and lay leaders regarding issues of mental illness, both inside and outside of the congregation.
- Develop a list of organizations and programs in your neighbourhood that offer help for people coping with mental illness.
- Encourage pastors and churches to network with each other to share resources and information.
- Get involved with organizations that provide housing for vulnerable people.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Donations sought to send youth to special delegate assembly

STORY AND PHOTO BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

Youth are in demand. When the Emerging Voices Initiative (EVI) held a cross-Canada tour in 2016-17, the importance of encouraging youth involvement in area and national church initiatives rose to the surface again and again. Their presence is now wanted at the special delegate assembly in Winnipeg on Oct. 13 to 15.

Since financial assistance can sometimes be an issue for youth, EVI is inviting donations that make it easier for high-school students to attend. That will give them the opportunity to help imagine the church of the future in a multi-faith world challenged by bullying, racism and inequality—issues of special importance to youth. To support their initiative, EVI is inviting financial

support from donors. Their objective is to raise \$20,000. Thanks to two generous supporters, \$5,000 in seed funding is already in place.

“[Through EVI] we’ve been empowered and encouraged to share,” says Anneli Loepp Thiessen, an EVI member and one of the lead planners of the initiative. “Now we have the opportunity to pass that on to others.”

Unlike many wider church activities, financial assistance for youth attending this event won’t hinge on them attending with youth groups.

“This isn’t intended to be a youth assembly, and that gives us more flexibility,” says Loepp Thiessen. “We can have two, or 50 or 60 youth, depending upon fundraising and interest.”

Reflecting on the 2016 assembly in Saskatoon, which was attended by 30 to 40 youth, Loepp Thiessen notes the unique challenge faced by this age group. Only baptized church members who attend assemblies as official delegates are allowed to vote. That eliminates many youth who aren’t typically baptized until they are older. With that challenge, she asks, “How can we make them feel more involved?”

Addressing that question is key, says Katrina Woelk, another lead planner. “If youth feel empowered and involved, they might be more invested [in the future of the church]. That was my experience with EVI.”

Woelk, Loepp Thiessen and a few other EVI members met with Mennonite Church Canada’s Future Directions transition coordinator, Keith Regehr, to brainstorm ideas that would help empower and

ARTWORK BY RYAN ROTH BARTEL

Mennonite Church Canada
2017 Special Delegate Assembly

Future Directions: **Covenant New**

2999 Near earth, heavens come

**YOUTH DELEGATES
WANTED**
@ Assembly 2017

details at www.mennonitechurch.ca

Mennonite Church Canada
EVI Emerging Voices Initiative

encourage youth at the special delegate assembly.

Youth will meet with EVI at the Radisson Hotel in Winnipeg, the venue for the October assembly, and engage with the Future Directions Task Force proposal on the evening of Oct. 13 to prepare for discussions the next day. They will stay together on the same floor of the hotel, with lots of fun and food to enhance their experience. On Oct. 14, youth will integrate with adult delegates at table discussions, with EVI members circulating to answer any questions they might have and empowering them to speak. Following the closing session, there will be time for debriefing.

“We’ll encourage live tweeting, open mike sharing and reporting back to their churches after the assembly ends—things that are energizing for them,” says Woelk, noting that the objective is to ensure they are as much a part of the discussion as adult delegates.

“They aren’t there because they can vote, but because they have an important voice,” says Loepp Thiessen. “We want no youth to feel they can’t come because of money, and the seed money we have received shows that others are interested in them being there, too.”



Emerging Voices Initiative members Anneli Loepp Thiessen, left, and Katrina Woelk are the lead planners and hosts for an initiative raising funds to sponsor youth participation at the special delegate assembly in Winnipeg, Oct. 13-15.



To donate, visit bit.ly/youth-delegate-fundraiser.

Leading the leaderless

A Mennonite dilemma

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

We do not expect our denominational leaders to write encyclicals, assume pompous titles or drop pastors into congregations, but what exactly do we expect of them within our proudly pope-less priesthood of all believers?

Should they enforce adherence with the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*? Should they just run area or national church ministries? Should they state their views on contentious

Agony and deliberation

“We tend to agonize and agonize and agonize,” says Dan Graber after nearly 40 years in ministry, including five years as Mennonite Church Alberta’s area church minister. “Too often Mennonites think their work has to do with talk, not doing things,” he says, stating his belief that this



Dan Graber

Formal authority lies with the voting members. The whole system is bottom-up. That means a group process, which is more cumbersome than hierarchy.

questions or simply facilitate communal discernment?

The divvying up of roles within our denomination is laid out in *A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership*. The principle underlying the little 1996 manual is that it is good for congregations to belong to a larger body. This requires organization, decisions and money.

Indeed, many leadership questions boil down to how decisions are made and how money is spent. One could call it “power,” although the word beckons a 500-year-old uneasiness.

In our system, national and area churches in Canada issue ministerial credentials, pass resolutions and decide how to spend their money. Ultimate authority lies with the delegate body. For their part, congregations hire and fire pastors, and decide how to spend their money, including how much goes to the area church. Formal authority lies with the voting members. The whole system is bottom-up. That means a group process, which is more cumbersome than hierarchy.

does not help morale or boost confidence in leadership. Graber also feels the church too often equates leadership with keeping everyone happy.

Fresh out of the lengthy and contentious Future Directions Task Force and Becoming a Faithful Church (BFC) process, Hilda Hildebrand has more patience for deliberation. Hildebrand, who served as MC Canada moderator until Assembly 2016 in Saskatoon, speaks with warmth and gratitude about the processes leading up to and including the assembly. A great many voices were heard and many people struggled through discernment in a deep and prayerful way, she says. From her perspective, the time spent was worthwhile and spirit-filled.

In terms of her role as moderator, she says the MC Canada bylaws are clear about the functional role of moderator, including setting agendas and chairing meetings. Parallel to that is the task of setting the tone of deliberations, with emphasis

on listening, respect, forbearance, compassion and prayerfulness. Hildebrand says she took this task seriously, emphasizing that it was not about being a “strong personality,” nor about what she personally preferred. Rather, she drew on existing board documents that set out these principles, as well as the example of her predecessor.

To state—or not to state—their views

In terms of whether leaders should state their views on contentious matters, Hildebrand was comfortable with the decision of BFC Task Force members not to publicly state their own views.

Graber took a different approach, sharing his traditional beliefs on same-sex matters, while working hard to maintain relationships with all congregations and affirming conversations that were taking place with LGBTQ people.

Bernie Wiebe also believes in taking a stand. He served three terms as MC Manitoba’s moderator and one as national vice-moderator, in addition to heading the Conflict Resolution Studies program at Menno Simons College in Winnipeg for a decade. Now 82, and preaching weekly, Wiebe says, “People have a right to know what I believe, not just what I think.” His belief is that if we do not say what we believe, we risk becoming “harmless” or even “useless.”

Bill Block, another elder statesman, having spent 12 years as national denominational minister, says it takes a lot of courage for leaders to state their views. He recalls a leader from yesteryear who responded to tough questions by saying the matter was being studied. “He got away with it,” Block says.

As area church minister for MC Saskatchewan, Ryan Siemens has not stated his view on LGBTQ matters. “If I pick a side, how does that help the whole?” he asks. Siemens,



Bernie Wiebe



Hilda Hildebrand



Bill Block



Ryan Siemens

38, feels that would alienate part of the flock. Instead, he sees his role as creating space for “people to hear each other,” worship together and grow to love one another.

He says people have not pushed him to declare his position. In terms of what people expect, his sense is that people want him to remind them they are part of the larger church. He visits congregations, getting a sense of where people are at, affirming them, updating them on area church activities, and supporting pastors. The bottom line for him is relationships of trust.

Living with people's anger and frustration

Both Wiebe and Block cite Martin Buber's book *I and Thou*, which speaks of the primacy of relationship and how they bring us into relationship with the “Eternal Thou.” Wiebe speaks about God opening himself up to us with great vulnerability and inviting us to do likewise with one another. Using Buber's contrast of “I-Thou” versus “I-it,” Wiebe's counsel is to focus less on the “it's” of rules, statements and resolutions, and instead turn with vulnerability to the “Thou,” sitting in circles to find out why people believe what they believe.

While Mennonites do not want leaders to rain decisions down on us, perhaps when we feel threatened, most of us want someone more powerful to state and defend the positions we hold dear. But we cannot have it both ways. Wanting a leader to side with us on one issue is different than wanting to submit to directives from above.

Although our bottom-up ethos limits the power of leaders, they still take heat, even from journalists. Hildebrand says that sometimes leaders “just have to live with people's anger and frustration.”

Block says leadership requires “checks and balances” that can be provided by church councils and “free thinkers,” and in congregational settings. Recalling friends who would occasionally question him, Block quotes E. Stanley Jones, who said, “My critics are the unpaid guardians of my soul.”

It must also be stated that informal power, sometimes linked to wealth, plays into church decisions. Most of our

/// Staff change

Pastoral transition in Saskatchewan

• Krista Loewen has resigned from her position as associate pastor of Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, effective March 1. She is currently working as a workshop leader with L'Arche Saskatoon's day program. Although she has no plans to return to pastoral ministry, she says she has not closed the door to it.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ



institutions would be in big trouble without contributions from wealthy donors. Some of those donors—astute people with access to leaders—believe their influence should be somewhat proportionate to their generosity.

Such things are not covered in the Mennonite polity manual. What is covered, and tellingly so, is how the book came to be. Over eight years and six drafts, the book was massaged by a committee, conference ministers, 70 “readers,” and conference boards, then back to the committee, and finally the general boards of the day.

Less than 20 years later, a two-year revision process produced a new “Working

Document.” Indeed, that is how we do things: slowly, with lots of people and lots of discussion, often making up the process on the fly. We revise and adapt, ever-hesitant to be definitive, conclusive, or, heaven forbid, authoritative. Our approach is participatory but slow. At best, it allows for many voices to join in collective spirit-led discernment; at worst, it keeps the “peace” by dodging the conflict, tying up a lot of church energy in protracted internal deliberations.

Leaders, it seems, are left to manage the tension between these poles—masters of process and models of vulnerability in relationship. ❧

ReCommission, ReLearn, ReUnion

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada annual church gathering

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
OAKVILLE, ONT.

When delegates from the churches of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC) met in Oakville, Ont., on April 28 and 29, the focus was on re-commissioning, based on Matthew 28:19-20, where Jesus speaks to the disciples before his ascension. Read frequently in many languages, the words spoke to the many nations already present in the area church.

The Greater Toronto Area churches, who sponsored the event, made it clear that Oakville is not in Toronto, but the

home campus of The Meeting House, a Brethren in Christ church which has 23 locations and over 10,000 attenders. The facility provided all that was needed for the gathering and did not require folk to drive right into Toronto's frequent traffic problems.

Friday night provided congregations with an intimate look at ReLearning Community, a congregational resourcing initiative of MCEC together with Three Dimensional Ministry (3DM) from



Rescue Junction, a blue grass gospel group from the hamlet of Millbank, north of Stratford Ont., performed at the MCEC gathering on Friday evening. Members are (from left): Nick Huber, Joe Clark (standing in for Dallas Roth) Kyle Gerber and his sister Kaitlyn Gerber, and Roger Martin.

Europe. Kevin Peters Unrau, one of the pastors at Hillcrest Mennonite Church in New Hamburg, described the three dimensions: Up is one's relationship with God; In means self-care and relationships; and Out is one's relationships in the wider community. Of particular importance among the Out relationships is that with "a person of peace" connecting with Jesus' advice to the seventy sent out in Luke 10 to find someone who returns their peace in a town and to stay with that person.

Testimonies from Andrea Warkentin from Leamington United Mennonite Church, Norm Dyck, the pastor at Listowel Mennonite Church, and Noramy Gonzalia Diaz, youth worker from First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, fleshed out how this

is being done in many different ways in different communities. A further testimony from Jennifer Wickham, an Anglican priest, showed that intentionality is needed for Jesus' church to spread the good news of God's love.

Henry Paetkau, Area Church Minister for MCEC, spoke of this effort creating "a culture of disciple-making where disciples who can make more disciples are being made—disciples who live and love as Jesus did, living in the likeness of Jesus, sharing their faith" with others. Fifteen congregations are currently involved in this program, begun in 2014. One of the ten workshops invited new congregations to join ReLearning Community.

Bruxy Cavey, pastor of The Meeting

House, and author of the recently released book, *(Re)union*, spoke on Saturday morning. In telling the story of "the eleven" who gathered to meet Jesus, Cavey noted that "God relates to our pain." This story always remembers Judas who betrayed Jesus. The incarnate God knows our pain intimately. Cavey noted that while the group who heard the great commission worshipped Jesus, "some doubted." The church is not a place where everything is summed up and answered—there will always be questions. We "follow while we have questions." And in the ascension God remains human. With a transformed body God takes humanity to Godself through Jesus."

Saturday's business included a long-awaited end to the Warden Woods Community Centre (WWCC) building saga. Originally it was a combination church and community centre, and the ownership of the building has been in contention since the congregation closed in 2009. Through mediation the WWCC agreed that MCEC owns the building and dropped their litigation. MCEC will lease the building to WWCC for seven years (with up to six renewals) for \$1 per year, retains an office in the building, and can use space up to 25 hours per week.

The Rehoboth Evangelical Church, an emerging Ethiopian congregation in Toronto, withdrew from MCEC citing a difference of theological orientation and has joined a Baptist group.

The Lao Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church in Toronto moved to full membership in MCEC, and Hochma



Bruxy Cavey, pastor of the Meeting House, a Brethren in Christ Church with over 10,000 attenders, addresses the MCEC annual church gathering held in Oakville on April 29

(formerly Roi des Rois) in Montreal, Meheret Evangelical Church in Kitchener, Oromo Evangelical Church of Ottawa (both Ethiopian congregations), and Westview Christian Fellowship in St. Catharines were accepted as emerging congregations.

Financial manager Sean East presented the financial statements showing a balanced budget through the use of the Faithful Steward Fund. This fund contains large bequests and MCEC can draw up to 15 percent of the capital in any year. In 2016-17, MCEC drew only 7.5 percent. The budget for 2017-2018 was again balanced through a 15 percent draw on the fund. The work of the Congregational Ministries Council has been shifted into Congregational Resourcing with no one



Keith Regehr (left), Future Directions Interim Council Transitions Coordinator, discusses with Paul Wideman, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada Moderator, and Willard Metzger, Mennonite Church Canada Executive Director, at the MCEC annual church gathering.

staff person responsible.

Keith Regehr, Future Directions Interim Council Transitions Coordinator, made a presentation followed by discussion about the proposed structure for Mennonite Church Canada. He spoke to the five emphases: 1) Use of “Vision: Healing and Hope” as a vision statement for MC Canada; 2) Focus on the vitality of congregations; 3) Focus on the vitality of regional churches; 4) Focus on the viability of the national church; and 5) International

Witness, working with the international church. But he admitted that “what witness will look like is not yet known.”

The gathering ended with Pieter Niemeyer of the Rouge Valley Mennonite Church and part of the hosting group, challenging the gathered delegates that “the status quo won’t do. We need to come to terms with our legacy of harm and exploitation. The Spirit calls us forward in humility with new ways to talk about faith, rooted in transformation.” ❧

/// Staff change

Dori Zerbe Cornelsen new CMU director of development

Dori Zerbe Cornelsen comes to Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg following nine years of experience in donor relations as a gift planning consultant with Abundance Canada, the organization formerly known as Mennonite Foundation of Canada. Prior to her work with Abundance Canada, Zerbe Cornelsen served as a pastor. Before that, she was the coordinator of Open Circle, a program that provides relationships of integrity and faith for prisoners and people who have committed offenses. She holds a master of divinity degree from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.; a bachelor of arts degree majoring in cultural anthropology from the University of Winnipeg; and a diploma in biblical studies from Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C. Zerbe Cornelsen began at CMU on April 3.



Dori Zerbe Cornelsen

—Canadian Mennonite University

/// Briefly noted

CPT awarded the 2017 CMU Pax Award

WINNIPEG—Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) and Executive Director Sarah Thompson were awarded the 2017 Pax Award from Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) on April 5 in honour of their service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society. “CPT works daily in Palestine, Iraqi Kurdistan, Colombia and North America to build partnerships that will transform the violence and oppression of such a time as this,” said Thompson. “It’s an honour to be recognized by CMU, a committed educator for peace and justice, moved by the transformative life and teachings of Jesus Christ.” CPT uses small teams of four to six people trained in documentation, observation, nonviolent intervention and various ministries of presence to make a difference in violent conflicts. With the CMU Pax Award, CMU aims to recognize people whose unique practice, imagination, commitment, presence and naming of the world is important to restoring and renewing the world in some way. CMU also seeks to honour the movements and organizations to which individuals receiving the award contribute and carry forward.

—Christian Peacemaker Teams



OTTAWA MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO / TEXT BY JOAN BUECKERT



April Yamasaki speaks at the Ottawa Mennonite Church Women's retreat held at Saint Paul University on April 1. In addition to being lead pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., she is the author of several books, including Spark! Reigniting your God-given Creativity, a Bible study guide she wrote in 2015. The three sessions she led focussed on abundance, trust and the Spirit. Despite flight delays and lost baggage, she provided inspiration and focus for the retreat, and the church's Christian formation and worship service on April 2.

God at work in the Church Snapshots

PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN



'Trusting God in life's transitions' was the theme for the annual Mennonite Church B.C. Women's Inspirational Day, held on May 6 at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford. Speaker Marlene Kropf, a former faculty member at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., spoke about how, no matter what stage of life, or whether the transition is planned and joyful or unexpected and unhappy, people must say goodbye to something old and transition to something new. Handling things in the 'messy middle' is difficult, but she reminded listeners to remember that God is actively at work within the context of their lives: 'God is at home in chaos, and God's trademark is doing new things.' At Kropf's left are representations of different stages of life: wedding veil, baby cradle and walker/afghan.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

PHOTO BY ARLENE HOKE



Family fun on the swing. Pictured: Pheh Meh with Htaw Meh, left, and Lee Reh with Mi Meh.

From Myanmar to Canada with dreams, gratitude and hope

BY FERNE BURKHARDT

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Settled in their new home in New Hamburg, Ont., Lee Reh and Pheh Meh constantly think of family members still in Ban Mai Nai Soi Refugee Camp in Thailand that the couple and their five children left behind when they came to Canada in April 2016. They wish their relatives could join them here and enjoy the safety and good life they have found in Canada.

In the 1990s, the young couple lived among the 70 households in the rural village of Dawkaloekhu in southwest Myanmar. A rice plantation provided work. Vegetable gardens gave them food in addition to rice. But life was primitive. There were no schools or medical services. They suffered the loss of four of five children at birth or early in their lives. Without means of communication, the villagers had

little awareness of the conflict raging in their homeland, or the government's efforts to suppress or destroy the numerous, minority ethnic groups like theirs.

In October 1996, soldiers suddenly arrived and began to burn their village. Villagers fled into the jungle with only what they could quickly grab and carry. Where they roamed or for how long they do not know, since they constantly moved from one hiding place to another. They could only dream of returning to their village and their gardens.

Eventually, some refugee camp residents, who risked leaving the camp, secretly found the wanderers and brought them to the camp just inside the Thai border. Refugees, most of them Christian, could gather for worship services led by missionaries from outside the camp. But

there were no jobs.

Reh and Meh lived in the camp for 20 years, with little hope for the future, although two sons and three daughters who were born to them in the camp survived, giving them great joy.

Nearly two years ago, two of the couple's camp friends—Tu Reh, his wife Nae Meh and their young son—came to New Hamburg, Ont., sponsored by Trinity Lutheran Church. When Trinity learned that four Wilmot Mennonite churches were considering sponsoring a refugee family, they encouraged them to apply to sponsor the Reh/Mehs despite the hype in Canada to sponsor Syrian refugees.

All four churches—Mannheim, Nith Valley, St. Agatha and Wilmot—agreed and made an application through Mennonite Central Committee Ontario's Blended Sponsorship Program. The churches raised the necessary funds, volunteers came forward, and a suitable house in New Hamburg was rented and furnished. News arrived in late December 2015 that the family was travel-ready. But they didn't come. The sponsors waited, paid the rent, shovelled the snow and checked emails. And waited some more.

Finally, the family boarded a plane from Bangkok, Thailand, to Pearson International Airport in Toronto, arriving on April 21 of last year. Several sponsors and an interpreter met them at the airport and brought them to their new home, where they immediately explored every nook and cranny while the children began playing with toys they found. Soon, all enjoyed a meal of familiar foods.

The Reh/Meh family has found a warm welcome in New Hamburg. The children are doing well in school, the parents have attended some English-as-a-second-language classes. The family has been busy with various short-term jobs, soccer, shopping, visiting local attractions, birthday parties, attending worship services and other community events. And they planted a vegetable garden in the backyard.

They have made great strides in many ways, such as paying off their \$10,000 travel expenses. With formal sponsorship ending in April, they face new challenges as they strive to become more independent, something new for them after two decades

in the refugee camp.

The family's smiles express gratitude for the support they have received and the relationships that have developed. They love Canada—except the cold weather—and their new friends. But they still wish that much-loved family members still in the

Thai camp can come to share this good life in New Hamburg. Then their gratitude will know no bounds. ❧

Ferne Burkhardt is a member of Mannheim Mennonite Church and the Wilmot Planning Team.

'One night changed everything'

Floradale Mennonite assists Turkish refugees

STORY AND PHOTO BY BARB DRAPER

Editorial Assistant
FLORADALE, ONT.

Last November, two Turkish men arrived in the small village of Floradale, in the heart of Ontario's Mennonite country, seeking refuge. Leon Kehl, a local resident, had developed a relationship with Turkish Muslims in the past, so it was natural that they turned to him for help. He arranged to have the men, who are not named because their families remain in peril in Turkey, live with his parents next door while they applied for refugee status.

Last July, Turkey experienced an attempted coup. The government blamed the Hizmet organization, and thousands of innocent people were arrested and thrown into prison. Others lost their passports and had their bank accounts seized. Those who managed to flee believe about 20,000 people are presently in hiding in Turkey, fearing arrest and torture.

Hizmet began as a reform movement within Islam in the 1960s, following the teachings of Fethulah Gülen. Beginning in Turkey, it became an international movement emphasizing voluntary service and peace, with an emphasis on education. By last summer it had established more than 2,300 educational institutions in Turkey and around the world.

Government pressure, which had been mounting since a December 2013 corruption scandal involving senior government ministers, intensified after the coup. Overnight, the Turkish government



Alina Kehl, left, and Taylor Clemmer fill their plates at a refugee fundraiser lunch at Floradale (Ont.) Mennonite Church on March 26. The food was prepared by a Turkish refugee who is being hosted in the village.

declared that Hizmet was a terrorist organization and all its schools were closed. Three hundred people were killed during the coup attempt, and teachers and professors were forced to flee. Over 134,000 people lost their jobs.

At a breakfast held at Floradale Mennonite Church on March 18, some of the Turkish newcomers shared parts of their stories. A professor of foreign languages described how he and his wife were on campus the night of

the coup. They said they saw and heard the mob trying to get into their building while shouting, "Kill them!"

"They were like hungry wolves, wanting to kill someone with knives and sticks," said the professor. Slipping out the back door, he joined the crowd for a while, shouting and pretending to be one of them. He was able to get into his car and go back for his wife. They hid in the park for a while but then fled again when they were seen. They found safety for a time at the house of a friend and managed to leave the country.

His wife, who had waited for more than an hour for him to return with the car said quietly, "I was sure he was dead." She still has nightmares about that night.

"We lost everything," the professor said simply. Although he believes that God has a plan, and believers need to accept what comes, he admitted this wasn't the plan his family was envisioning. "One night changed everything," he said sadly. "Suddenly they call you a terrorist."

Another woman, who had arrived in Canada only three weeks previously, talked about her experience. She had grown up in Europe, and after her marriage she and her husband worked in Azerbaijan and Sudan for many years before going to Pakistan. After the Turkish president visited Pakistan, suddenly the 28 Hizmet schools there were closed. More than a hundred Turkish families were told they no longer had visas to work in Pakistan and needed to leave in three days.

She and her family were lucky to be able to travel to Canada and apply for refugee status, but she expressed the agony she feels for members of her family who are in prison, and for her son who remains a student in Turkey. "Anything could happen to him," she said. "It hurts a lot."

Floradale Mennonite also had a fundraiser lunch on March 26, with the proceeds divided between Mennonite Central Committee Ontario for its work with refugees and the Intercultural Dialogue Institute at the Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo. The Waterloo branch of the Institute has been supporting and re-settling about 40 Turkish families who have recently sought refuge in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. ❧

Lifesaving latrines and the importance of local partners

By Rebecca Shetler Fast and Ted Oswald

Mennonite Central Committee
PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI

Hurricane Matthew hit the rural community of Wopisa-Gabriyèl, Haiti, hard last October, leading Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to respond to sanitation needs identified by community leaders.

“There was a lot of damage to this community in the storm,” says Previl Pierre, a local leader and community monitor in MCC’s environmental education program in the Artibonite region in central Haiti. “Many goats and cows died, and whole gardens were lost.”

But beyond the damage to animals and crops was the increased risk of cholera

caused by the intense rains washing cholera-infected human waste into the streams and rivers that are used for bathing and drinking.

Cholera, a bacterial disease that causes severe vomiting and diarrhea, was introduced to Haiti in 2010, when the contaminated waste of UN peacekeepers was discharged from improperly built latrines into Haiti’s main waterway, the Artibonite River. Cholera spread like wildfire through the country, killing more than 10,000 people. People in the Artibonite were especially affected.

In Wopisa-Gabriyèl, a community wedged among several mountains in the

Artibonite region, a small creek feeds into a larger river. The absence of latrines means the 1,500 residents practise open defecation, dramatically increasing the risk of cholera exposure.

“When it rains, everything runs down into the water and contaminates the springs. It infects our drinking water, our gardens and our food,” says Roseline Pierre-Louis, a community health worker.

Once contracted, cholera can kill quickly if treatment isn’t received, but reaching medical care is very difficult from this remote community. The quickest route requires descending a waterfall on foot. To reach the nearest medical facility takes three hours on foot and up to six hours if one is sick. Sometimes people have to be carried by others on makeshift stretchers or mattresses.

The community has long known of a relatively low-cost solution to protect its water source and its health: the installation of latrines. For subsistence farmers, though, the materials to build latrines are

MCC PHOTOS BY TED OSWALD



This is the frame of the first latrine to be built as part of MCC’s project in the rural community of Wopisa-Gabriyèl in Haiti.



The shortest route to get medical assistance for people from Wopisa-Gabriyèl requires descending this waterfall. By building latrines, community leaders and MCC expect the number of cholera cases to be reduced.

too expensive.

After the hurricane, MCC met with people in Wopisa-Gabryèl to discuss how they might work together to address the community's needs. The community identified latrine construction as its most pressing need.

"We can't drink our water safely. We can't care for our children. We can't protect our families," says Pierre, noting that the community saw better sanitation as a necessary building block for both short- and long-term recovery and for improving their community.

Even though community leaders rank latrines as a high priority, the government of Haiti has withheld approval of almost all new latrine projects by non-governmental organizations because too many were poorly designed and did not have community input. Because MCC planned, designed and implemented this project in partnership with local people,

the government officials approved it.

MCC provides the supplies for the simple, solid latrines, and a local expert builder to direct the construction. Then community members transport the materials and form neighbourhood work groups to complete the labour and construction. In total, 450 latrines will be built for 90 percent of the residents who can't afford to build their own.

Desinord Petide says that seven people in his house will benefit from the latrine he helped build. "I am proud to build this toilet," he adds. "The first in the community!"

The benefits of this project extends beyond Wopisa-Gabryèl. Because the community rests at the source of a spring, downstream communities will be protected as well.

The first phase of building 250 latrines is nearing completion. As part of its ongoing hurricane response, MCC will be working with other remote communities at high risk of cholera by building a total of 630 latrines serving more than 5,000 people. ☘

☘ Briefly noted

Osler couple receives recognition for volunteer work

Harry and Eva Martens are among the latest recipients of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal. The retired dairy farmers, who are members of Osler Mennonite Church, received the medal for their work in restorative justice. Twice monthly, they travel to Prince Albert to visit inmates at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary through Parkland Restorative Justice's Person to Person program. As well, three times a month they volunteer with Micah, visiting inmates in the Regional Psychiatric Centre (RPC) in Saskatoon. For five years, Eva also visited in the women's unit at RPC. In addition to prison visitation, they serve on the Citizens Advisory Committee at the Willow Cree Healing Centre in Duck Lake. When conflicts arise, committee members are called on to listen impartially to inmates, guards and government officials, and to offer an objective point of view. Some years ago, they visited an inmate who repeatedly told them, "I wish I could kill you." They thought he was beyond help. Then, at the Person to Person Christmas banquet, the man sang "Amazing Grace." When he sang "that saved a wretch like me," the man broke down and wept. After that, each time they visited, he greeted them warmly. The experience made a strong impression on the couple. Harry says, "We'll never write anyone off again."

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

PHOTO BY ANNA MARTENS BEVERIDGE



Harry and Evan Martens, retired dairy farmers and members of Osler Mennonite Church, received the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal for their work in the area of prison visitation and restorative justice.

☘ Briefly noted

West Broadway's House Blend Ministries celebrates 10th anniversary

WINNIPEG—House Blend Ministries has been working for a full decade to alleviate material, spiritual and relational poverty in Winnipeg's West Broadway neighbourhood. Board Chair Dan Nighswander announced this landmark at the non-profit's annual general meeting on April 24, although executive director Rachel Twigg Boyce noted that staff have been organizing and hosting celebrations with the community since the organization's actual anniversary back in February. The festivities come at a poignant time for the ministry, which recently announced it will soon sell the house around which its operations have revolved for the last several years, in order to relieve staff of duties proper to landlords, so they can more effectively minister to community members' deeper needs. Despite some initial trepidation about how the public would react, Twigg Boyce said that, since the announcement of the sale, support for the ministry's new direction has been pouring in. Of the decision, Kathy McCamis, House Blend's pastor, said, "Safe housing is important, but it's harder to find a sense of love and belonging. . . . Knowing that you matter, that people will ask about and pray for you, that's as much a concrete need as housing, and it takes a lot more investment."

—BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY

PHOTO BY ANTHONY SCHELLENBERG



Pastor Kathy McCamis leads the House Blend community its weekly liturgy of prayer.

GOD AT WORK IN US

STAFF CHANGE

Martens Zimmerly returning to congregational ministry

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada

Karen Martens Zimmerly, Mennonite Church Canada's executive minister of formation and pastoral leadership, is returning to congregational ministry. She and her husband Terry Zimmerly will share a one-and-a-half time pastoral role at First Mennonite Church in Iowa City, Iowa, beginning this fall. She leaves MC Canada on June 30.



**Karen
Martens
Zimmerly**

congregational settings, most recently at Grace Mennonite in Regina. That was prior to Martens Zimmerly's role with MC Canada. "Since then, we have done different things," she says. And that's been beneficial. "We have both grown and developed

in areas we wouldn't have otherwise."

"Karen represented the Mennonite Church Canada family with great integrity and sensitivity," says Willard Metzger, the national church's executive director. "Her gentle spirit yet firm convictions have been greatly appreciated. Her caring and pastoral presence will be greatly missed."

What is Martens Zimmerly taking with her? "All sorts of relationships and networks," she responds. "I've had an incredible opportunity through those relationships to get a more intimate and bigger picture of the wider church."

"It's a big move," says Martens Zimmerly of their move, "but we're looking forward to it." ❧

BC Achievement award for Walter Paetkau

Recognition for Abbotsford Community Services founder

BY AMY DUECKMAN
B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

The man who founded Abbotsford Community Services more than 48 years ago has been honoured with an award from the British Columbia Achievement Foundation.

Walter Paetkau of Abbotsford, a member of Langley Mennonite Fellowship, was one of 21 recipients of the 2017 B.C. Community Achievement Awards at the ceremony held at Government House in Victoria on April 26. The award recognizes the spirit, imagination, dedication and contribution of British Columbians in their communities.

Paetkau had been nominated for the award by Abbotsford Mayor Henry Braun and the city council. At the formal presentation ceremony, joined by members of his family and close friends, he received a certificate and a medallion designed by B.C. artist Robert Davidson.

Abbotsford Community Services (ACS), today the largest organization of its kind in

PHOTO COURTESY OF WALTER PAETKAU



Walter Paetkau, left, receives his 2017 B.C. Community Achievement Award from Judith Guichon, the province's lieutenant governor, at a ceremony at Government House in Victoria on April 26.

Throughout her service, Martens Zimmerly has been deeply involved with pastors and the nuts and bolts of Christian Formation, connecting with leadership across Canada and the U.S.

As Martens Zimmerly leaves her role, her husband leaves his position as lead pastor at Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. Terry Zimmerly, an American, signalled his resignation from Home Street last fall and began searching the MC U.S.A. website for pastoral openings. The couple had previously envisioned serving in the U.S., where his family still lives. With the proposed restructuring of MC Canada national and area church entities, it seemed like a good time to make the move.

For Martens Zimmerly, the move to Iowa City seems pragmatic and opportune. "There aren't many pastoral openings in Canada, not like there were when I started with MC Canada in 2008," she says. "We've had several conversations with the congregation and leadership of First Mennonite Church in Iowa City, and found that our perspectives on faith and life generally align. We're looking forward to joining them."

For most of their working life, the couple have shared pastoral roles in

the province, was registered in 1969. From 1966 to '68, Paetkau was employed by the then-General Conference Mennonite

/// Briefly noted

Wallace ordained at Warman Mennonite

WARMAN, SASK.—“God uses our community, family and friends to speak to us,” Ryan Siemens told the children gathered at the front of the sanctuary at Warman Mennonite Church on April 9. Siemens, who is Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s area minister of congregational and pastoral relations, was speaking at the ordination of Josh Wallace. Affirming Siemens’ words, Wallace’s colleagues offered their support and blessing to him and his congregation. “Each one of us is called to be part of a priesthood of believers,” Siemens later told the congregation. “Ordination is not elevating an individual, but [rather it is the] church calling an individual to serve on behalf of the congregation and the area church.” Garth Ewert Fisher, pastor of Mount Royal Mennonite in Saskatoon, spoke of the costly nature of Christ’s grace, reminding Wallace that the message he preaches may not always be well-received, but encouraging his congregation to support him nonetheless. In response to his ordination, Wallace said, “I feel this is what God has made and remade me for. But I know I’m going to get tired. Pray for me, please. Pray for my humility, gentleness, patience, and joy.”

—STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ



Ryan Siemens anoints Josh Wallace with oil as the Warman Mennonite Church pastor is ordained.

Church to do service development on the West Coast of Canada and the United States. During 1969 and 1970, he was employed by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada for service development in B.C. During that time he was instrumental in forming and organizing the community services agency. MCC Canada allowed him to work half-time to help establish the emerging community service organization. At the end of that period, ACS received funding from Ottawa, and Paetkau then became the full-time executive director, a position he held to 2000, when he retired.

The organizers had no model at the time for launching such an organization but pulled together support from a wide variety of local groups.

“We started as a steering committee of public, church and agency folk,” says

Paetkau. “One thing led to another. We started with the Christmas bureau, and then we organized an information bureau, a volunteer bureau, and youth and family programs.

Today, ACS has 380 staff and 2,000 volunteers, and is in 23 locations with 70 programs, including a food bank, community recycling operation, and a host of services for children, youth, families and seniors, as well as multicultural programs. Two years ago, an orientation program was set up in India for individuals and families hoping to come to Canada.

Paetkau still has fond memories of his time at ACS. “It’s well established and well respected,” he says. “Its culture and values have been maintained, and the agency has grown considerably and is still growing.”

He is currently working on a book about

/// Staff change

New TMTC director brings enthusiasm and vision

TORONTO—Kyle Gingerich Hiebert has been appointed director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, beginning July 4.

He brings enthusiasm for the conversation between Anabaptist-Mennonite theology and the wider Christian tradition, and has a vision to deepen and extend the work of the Centre. Gingerich Hiebert holds a PhD in theology from the University of Manchester, England, and degrees from the University of Nottingham, England, the University of Toronto and Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg. During his studies in the U.K., he was active in the Anabaptist Network there and has authored several articles and books on political theology, peace theology and Anabaptism. As director, Gingerich Hiebert will work to advance Mennonite theological discourses in academic, church and public settings; will support a student-centred academic community, especially among Mennonite students; and will network among Mennonite scholars and institutions. Teaching and advising at the doctoral level will continue to be a priority for the Centre but will be the primary responsibility of the theological studies faculty at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.

—Conrad Grebel University College



**Kyle
Gingerich
Hiebert**




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ACS in preparation for its 50th-anniversary celebration in 2019. //

ARTBEAT

Singing by the numbers

Ziffernsystem is a unique way of making music

BY RUTH MARLENE FRIESEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
SASKATOON, SASK.

“Singing by the numbers: Mennonites and the Ziffernsystem,” Wesley Berg’s presentation to the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan in early March, proved his extensive grasp of “the number system.”

Some have said that the singing in local Old Colony churches evolved from the Gregorian chants of old Catholic orders, a choral music that has soft, gentle notes floating on the air. Berg disagrees, however. He played samples as he told of the history of the Ziffernsystem that grew over hundreds of years, being passed on from generation to generation as an oral tradition with no written notes.

Naturally then, they lost the variety they may have had at the beginning and are reduced to six or so melodies, which the Old Colony Mennonites now apply to all the hymns in their *Gesangbuch*. He sought out *vorsänger* (cantors) who would be willing



Wesley Berg

to sing for him, allowing him the opportunity to transcribe their singing to a written form.

There are other ethnic and closed religious groups that use Ziffern as well. The Amish have an oral tradition of more than 450 years, dating back to the *Ausbund* of the middle

16th century.

The Hutterites, like the Amish, have their oral traditional singing going back to the 16th century. So does a Pennsylvania German Mennonite group.

There is a primitive Baptist congregation in the southern U.S. that keeps to itself, and sings by numbers. Dolly Parton comes from this background, and listeners may detect some influences of that style in her singing, he said.

Other German non-Mennonite groups in Russia have been found to have 434 melodies collected from prisoners of war. A Swedish colony found in a Russian village

was from a Swedish religious group that disappeared in Sweden but whose singing style had survived in these isolated colonies abroad. Berg heard this Ziffernsystem singing in the Scottish Hebrides, where he recorded two brothers singing psalms in this manner.

In a Copenhagen archive, Berg found recordings of a congregation singing by the numbers. His conclusion: the Ziffernsystem is not to be scoffed at. It is a unique way of making music coming from isolation and reflects a desire for isolation in these religious groups. Yet, it is valid and worth learning to sing, he said. ❧

To learn more about Wesley Berg online, visit bit.ly/wesley-berg-bio.



❧ Briefly noted

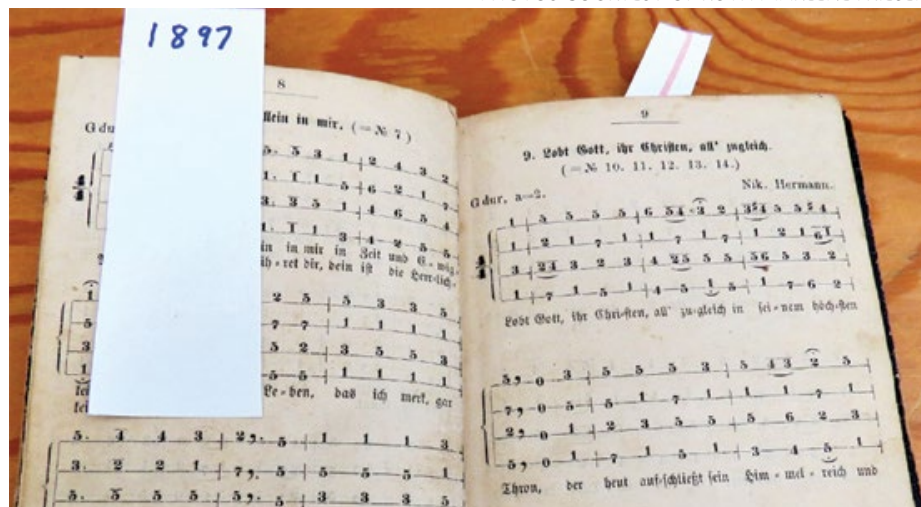
Series explores countercultural faith

It is easy for Christians to lose touch with God in the routine of everyday life, so Herald Press has created *Upside-Down Living*, a six-part Bible study series that engages participants with questions about how to live out their Christian faith in ways that seem upside down in today’s culture. All are to be released in the first half of 2017. In six sessions, “Sabbath,” by Anita Amstutz, discusses different perspectives on Sabbath and the benefits of practising it in today’s fast-paced world. “Technology,” by Becca J. R. Lachman, explores how to use technology responsibly in today’s changing world. Intended for small-group Bible studies or adult Sunday school classes—and especially for busy Christians who may not feel they have time to study for a lesson—the series strives to explore modern, relevant themes with whomever shows up on a given Sunday. The chapters are short and include visuals. Scripture references address a specific theme within the topic of the study and discusses its connection to current life using anecdotes, analogies, and discussion of today’s culture.

—MennoMedia



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RUTH MARLENE FRIESEN



The Ziffernsystem is a method of singing using numbers instead of notes and has been commonly used by Old Colony Mennonites.

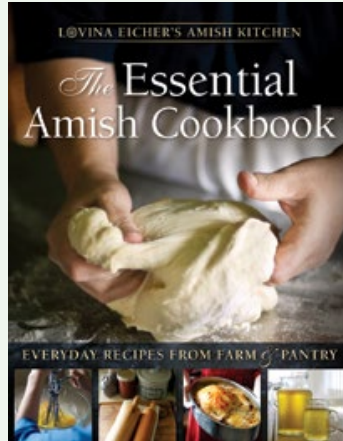
/// Briefly noted

Syndicated columnist Lovina Eicher releases first solo cookbook

Herald Press is publishing a new cookbook by prolific Amish recipe author Lovina Eicher: *The Essential Amish Cookbook: Everyday Recipes from Farm and Pantry*. The cookbook's more than one hundred recipes are accompanied by full-page colour photographs—both of recipes from the cookbook and of Amish life—as well as tips to enhance and enjoy the dishes or memories associated with them. Many recipes include smaller colour photographs illustrating the creation of the recipe step-by-step. While this is Eicher's first solo project, she is experienced at sharing recipes. She is the author of "Lovina's Amish kitchen," a syndicated column published in newspapers across the United States, as well as in a weekly blog hosted by MennoMedia.

For *The Essential Amish Cookbook*, Eicher chose recipes that are easy to follow and that use basic, everyday ingredients. "I went with recipes that I use and like," she says. "Everyone has a recipe that they like best to make bread. I've tried different kinds and I always go back to the one I started with, which was my mother's. Some recipes just stick with you for life, I guess."

—MennoMedia



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Grebel names new president

Conrad Grebel University College announces the appointment of its eighth president.

canadianmennonite.org/grebel-marcus



Eritrean church grows in spirit and godliness

The pastor of an emerging congregation in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada has a vision for his church.

canadianmennonite.org/eritrean-church



Mass starvation—does anyone give a *%^\$?

In the face of 20 million starving people—and a lot of apathy—an effort is underway calling churches to prayer and action.

canadianmennonite.org/mass-starvation



Men's choir fosters community, generosity

It's not just about singing, says the director of A Buncha Guys, an informal choir made up of young men in Saskatchewan.

canadianmennonite.org/buncha-guys



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/// Briefly noted

New book encourages 'smart compassion'

What does compassion look like when the needs seem overwhelming? How does such work relate to worship? Wesley Furlong, the founder and director of City of Refuge, a network for community transformation, and the director of church development for Evana, an evangelical Anabaptist

network of churches across North America, has written *Smart Compassion: How to Stop "Doing Outreach" and Start Making Change* (Herald Press, 2017), calling Christians to strategic, prayerful and biblically based approaches to compassion. The book journeys through inspiring places and thought-provoking



conversations on how and where good and necessary change happens. A common thread in *Smart Compassion* is the potential of healing presence, radical hospitality and collective empowerment. When these three forces come together, Furlong says, "you'll see new life."

—MennoMedia

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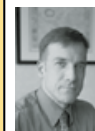


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FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Learning to let go

For Julia Klassen, recovering from anorexia nervosa is an ongoing process

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AARON EPP
Young Voices Editor

When she was admitted to hospital at the age of 14, it didn't take long for doctors to diagnose Julia Klassen with anorexia nervosa. She displayed all the classic symptoms: a fear of gaining weight and a strong desire to be thin. She was malnourished, the result of restricting her eating for three months.

Klassen's journey with anorexia began at the start of Grade 9. Something shifted in the Winnipegger's thinking and feeling, leading to low moods. She was having trouble finding where she fit in at school and she became painfully self-conscious, in part because of the effects of puberty.

As a means of coping, she began restricting her eating. When she felt powerless to change everything else around her, food was the one thing she could control. "That's one thing I could really succeed at, and no one could take away from me," the 29-year-old recalls. "It became a source of feeling good about myself."

When she felt powerless to change everything else around her, food was the one thing she could control.

The high value that the media places on being thin and looking good was a trigger for her anorexia. "You're very much given messages of how it's acceptable to look, and I really took that to heart," says Klassen, who was a healthy weight for her age before her eating disorder began. "I really started to believe that my value had to do with a thin body rather than anything else."

She was in the hospital for three months. During that time, she was diagnosed with depressive moods and anxiety and was prescribed antidepressants that she would use for the next 10 years. When she left the hospital, she was back to a healthy weight, but the stay had done little for her mental outlook. The depression and anxiety were still there, and she began restricting her food intake again almost immediately.

"Because I didn't have the skills to cope with my emotions, I went back to what I knew," she says. "Even though it cost me so much, I didn't want to let go of my eating disorder."

Within a few months, she was back in the hospital. It was a shorter stay, followed by an outpatient day program that included group counselling sessions. She left the day program with a strong desire to get back to the normal life of a teenager. But at the same time, she was having trouble letting go of her eating disorder.

Asked when it was that she finally did let go of her anorexia, Klassen doesn't pinpoint a specific time. "I came to realize that letting go isn't something that I do once and for all, it's something that has been incremental over the years," she says. "It's not one decision, but a series of choices and decisions."

"Even though the hospitalization sounds
(Continued on page 36)



Julia Klassen was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa when she was 14 years old.



Music has played an important part throughout Julia Klassen's journey with anorexia. She began writing songs around the time she was first diagnosed.



Julia Klassen with her husband Ryan, and their eight-month-old son, August.

(Continued from page 35)

like the most intense part of my eating disorder, it was actually the years that followed that were probably the hardest, even into my early 20s," she adds. "Once you get so entrenched in it, even if you want to let go of it, it doesn't want to let go of you for a long time."

Counselling has played a key role in Klassen's recovery. When she was 18, she began seeing a counsellor on and off for a decade. At first, their sessions revolved around unpacking societal standards for beauty, finding healthy ways to cope with difficult emotions, and learning to view exercise as something fun to do so that one can feel good, rather than viewing exercise as a means of punishing oneself for eating. As the years passed, the things Klassen and her counsellor talked about evolved, depending on what stage of life Klassen found herself in.

Klassen's faith has also been an important part of her recovery. "The hardest part

of having an eating disorder is feeling unacceptable—you're not accepting yourself and you don't feel accepted by others. Once I accepted that God's love for me is unconditional, that was really powerful," she says.

While she felt distant from God when her eating disorder began, Klassen can now trace God at work through her family and friends, her counsellor, and her faith community at Douglas Mennonite Church. It was these things that carried her through the most difficult times in her journey with anorexia.

Today, Klassen feels good, but her eating disorder is something she will always have to keep in check. The advantage she has now is knowing how to give voice to difficult emotions and how to manage them in healthy ways.

She has been married for four-and-a-half years. She and her husband Ryan have an eight-month-old son named August. She is a social worker and part-time fitness instructor who completed her 16th

Eating disorders: How to help

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

How do you talk to a loved one you suspect might be suffering from an eating disorder? A compassionate, nonjudgmental approach is key, says one expert.

"Share what you've noticed and show that you care," says Lori Peters, program coordinator for the Provincial Eating Disorders Prevention and Recovery Program at Women's Health Clinic in Winnipeg. "Try not to blame or judge. . . . Let the person know you're there to support them."

Women's Health Clinic has a website, EatingDisordersManitoba.ca, that is an excellent resource. The website lists facts about the different kinds of eating disorders, as well as the physical signs and symptoms, and what people suffering from an eating disorder may feel and believe.

The website also includes a "Frequently Asked Questions" section, a resource section and information on where everyone from children to adults in Manitoba can get help.

Peters encourages anyone outside Manitoba to visit the National Eating Disorder Information Centre online at nedic.ca for a resource directory that lists treatment

programs across the country.

"It's really helpful for people to understand that eating disorders develop as a coping strategy for dealing with life's difficulties and challenges," Peters says. "If we can look at eating disorders as that, we can develop more compassion for why these behaviours develop."

She adds that in a culture that praises thin bodies and weight loss, it's important to celebrate the fact that beautiful and healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes.

"All of us have a responsibility to pay attention to our own behaviour and attitudes when it comes to food and weight, so really reflecting on the judgments that we have about ourselves and others is important," Peters says. "As we work [toward] making peace with our own bodies, we can build an environment that's going to support people who are recovering from eating disorders."

When people with eating disorders first seek help, they sometimes wonder if they can even get better. Peters wants people to know that yes, recovery is possible. "It requires a lot of work, but it does happen," she says. "We see it all the time."

FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

half-marathon earlier this month. She is also a talented singer-songwriter who occasionally leads worship at church.

It's a life that she couldn't have imagined for herself when her anorexia began. "At 14,

I don't know that I would've believed that I would get married and have a little boy, and that eating disorder stuff would take up such a small, if even existent, part of my life," she says, concluding, "I'm doing well." ❧

Students find relaxation through 'puppy therapy'

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

Students at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C., have a unique opportunity to de-stress before exams: puppy therapy.

For the past two school years, the Student Counselling Centre has brought puppies to campus for one day at the end of each semester. Students sign up for a 15- to 20-minute slot so that they can play with the puppies.

"It is by far one of the most popular events that we put on at the counselling centre," says Claire Weiss, supervisor of counselling services. She adds that there is a branch of counselling therapy called animal-assisted therapy. Decades of research has been done on the health benefits humans can get as a result of interacting with animals.

Weiss is an animal-lover herself who has used animal-assisted therapy in her private practice. When she found out that a Columbia staff member's spouse breeds mini-Schnauzer puppies and brings them to different communities so that people can benefit from them, booking an appointment for Columbia students was a no-brainer.

For many students, college is a challenging time—particularly at the end of the semester when final papers are due and exams are about to begin.

"There's often a struggle involved in being a college student . . . and I believe it's important to balance that out with experiences that bring joy and peace and pleasure," Weiss says.

Interacting with animals can lower students' blood pressure and their heart rates, and release endorphins, helping them do better in their coursework.

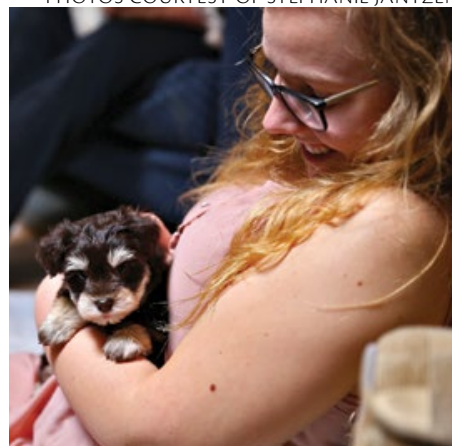
"We know performance improves when stress levels are lower," Weiss says, adding that puppy therapy is a non-threatening way for students to establish a relationship with the people at counselling services. "This event brings students into contact with us who we might not otherwise see—people who might be reluctant to come in for counselling."

Weiss is glad that she has the freedom at Columbia to try things like puppy therapy. "As a community, we're really invested in bringing a rich set of experiences to the students," she says. "We care about them and want to offer them whatever we can to give them a healthy experience." ❧



Puppy therapy offers joy, peace and pleasure to Columbia students like Aaron Braun.


PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEPHANIE JANTZEN



Columbia student Victoria Rempel gets up close and personal with a mini-Schnauzer.



Jessica Dingman is one of the many Columbia students who take advantage of puppy therapy.



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Calendar

Alberta

June 5-23: Poverty Studies Summer Institute, sponsored by the Canadian Poverty Institute, at Ambrose University. For more information, visit bit.ly/2mfW7Ya.

June 9-11: MC Alberta women's retreat at Sylvan Lake. Speaker: Sara Wenger Shenk. Theme: "Wisdom 2017: Our legacy." To register, visit mcaawomen.com.

Saskatchewan

June 9-10: MCC Saskatchewan Relief Sale, Prairieland Park, Saskatoon.

June 22-24: RJC musical, "Sister Act." Call the school at 306-232-4222 to book tickets.

Manitoba

Until June 17: Opening of "160 acres: The Geography of home," a multimedia exhibition by Darlene Derksen, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg.

June 4: Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, hosts the Heritage Classic Car Show featuring the Dave Nickel Memorial Soap Box Derby and Swap Meet, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

June 12-16 and 19-23: "School of Peacebuilding," at CMU, Winnipeg. Week-long courses available for professional and personal development. For more information, visit csop.cmu.ca.

June 20: CMU Golf Classic. For more information, visit cmu.ca/golf.

June 28: Ted & Co. performs "Discovery: A Comic Lament," about the Doctrine of Discovery, at Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call Laura Funk at 204-489-7016.

Ontario

May 28: "A community memorial service," at the Detweiler Meeting House, Roseville, at 2:30 p.m., for those with connections to the Roseville Cemetery. Service leader: Scott Brubaker-Zehr. An informal "cemetery walk" will follow the service.

May 30: MC Eastern Canada retired pastors event at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Theme: "Eldering: Our calling for the rest of our life."

June 4: Gospel bluegrass with the Tiff Family Singers, at the Detweiler Meeting House, Roseville, at 2:30 p.m.

June 13: Annual chicken barbecue at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Advance tickets required. For more information, call 519-625-8602.

June 16, 17: Theatre of the Beat and musical group No Discernable Key present "Yellow Bellies," a play about conscientious objectors during the Second World War: (16), at Steinmann Mennonite Church,

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Baden, at 7:30 p.m.; (17) at Floradale Mennonite Church, at 2 and 7 p.m.

June 17: MennoHomes' "Out-spok'n for affordable housing" bike-a-thon, at Elmira Mennonite Church. Options for cyclists, hikers and motorcyclists. Contact Dan Driedger at 226-476-2535 for more details.

June 24: The annual Nithview Community strawberry social, from 2 to 4 p.m., and 6:30 to 8 p.m., in New Hamburg,

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. For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.

Classifieds

Announcement



Jutzi Reunion

Descendants of Joseph and Marie (Bender) Jutzi, are invited to a reunion on Sunday, June 4, 2017 at the Shakespeare Community Centre, Shakespeare, Ontario. Potluck lunch at 1 p.m. Please bring your own dishes and cutlery. Contact 519-662-6798.

For Rent

Three-bedroom cottage at Red Bay on the Bruce Peninsula, nestled among maple trees. Short walk to sandy beach and small park and includes a rear deck. Available June 24 through July 22 and July 29 through Sept. 2. Call Diane at 519-746-4920.

Employment Opportunities



Employment opportunity

Graphic Designer

With *Canadian Mennonite's* head office staff, the graphic designer will ensure that copy and art are integrated into an effective and cohesive final format in the print magazine and online. This is a part-time position, to begin immediately.

Applicants should have a creative hand and eye and good skills in electronic page design, image editing, in prepress issues and working with PDF files. They should be proficient in Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator and basic HTML.

See canadianmennonite.org/positions for more information.

Good news by the numbers in Botswana

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada

For Nathan and Taryn Dirks, ministry in Gaborone, Botswana, is all about relationships. But ministry by relationship is hard to measure, so they've creatively translated some of their good news into numbers.

For almost five years, the Dirkses have served youth and young adults from local African Initiated Churches through their role as Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers, in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network and local churches. Following community needs and initiatives, they focus on development and Bible teaching.

They organize local volunteers for prison ministry and a school for special needs children, and they coordinate development projects, most notably Bontleng Park. This green, sustainable initiative supports urban agriculture and sports, and has revitalized an abandoned area in a disadvantaged area of Gaborone.

As they complete their last month of service, the Dirkses reflect on some of the successes achieved through local partnerships, by the numbers:

25,000 LITRES OF rainwater were collected by midway through the rainy season for use in Bontleng Park and the surrounding community.

\$20,000 WAS DONATED by MC Canada churches and members for community development work in Botswana over the past three years.

96 TREES AND shrubs were planted so far this year in the Bontleng Park development project.

46 PRISON INMATES at First Offenders Prison, Gaborone, completed a certificate program offered by Mennonite Ministries in Botswana.

18 STUDENTS GRADUATED from the Inter-Church Ministries Botswana's three-year Bible study program. Initiated in the 1990s by Mennonites, in partnership with local church leaders, this ministry has run without outside help for about 15 years, using materials written by Mennonite workers in both English and Setswana. Forty-two students have already signed up for the 2017 program.

7 PEOPLE RECEIVED certificates from Mennonite ministries for completion of at least three of the following modules of Bible study coursework: Christian life and discipleship, the Bible, Easter, the Church and an introduction to theology.



PHOTO BY GONNA LEWIS

Children play on a round-about in Bontleng Park, a local initiative supported by the energy and initiative of Mennonite Church Canada workers Nathan and Taryn Dirks.

7 PRISON INMATES will begin a master's-level theology program by distance this year.

2 BIO-TOILETS WERE installed in the public-access space of Bontleng Park in Gaborone, modelling water conservation and waste reduction. Bio-toilets use a litre of water daily, compared to a daily average of 71 litres of water used by each person each day to flush a regular toilet.

1 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION—Pula Sports Development Association—was founded in Botswana, run by local Batswana with the assistance of the Dirkses and Mennonite ministries, for the purpose of the social, educational, and physical development of children and youth in underdeveloped areas.

1 MENNONITE-OWNED HOUSE in Botswana is being used free of charge by local Batswana Christian leaders to run Bible study programs, start a Christian resource library, and house a local church leader and his family in order to facilitate this work. ☸

Nathan and Taryn complete their ministry term in June 2017.