



# CANADIAN MENNONITE

December 17, 2018

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## EDITORIAL

## 'Fear not'

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

In the past few weeks, a theme has emerged in my Advent singing and Scripture reading: fear.

Fear is all around us. A recent book about a fearmongering president is on the bestseller list. Politicians and pundits stoke a public paranoia, using it to boost their own power. Credible scientific reports alert us to the troubling facts surrounding present and future climate change.

As the church faces new realities, we wonder how we will live as faithful disciples in a scary and uncertain future. And in our private lives, there is the threat of broken relationships, illness, death, financial uncertainty, and sometimes the debilitating anxiety caused by mental illness.

It's in the Bible, too. Already in Chapter 3 of Genesis, fear rears its head. "I heard the sound of you in the garden," Adam tells God. "And I was afraid. . . ."

While the "fear of the Lord" is praised in the Bible's wisdom literature, in the biblical narratives fear of other people and of future events plays a significant role. Sarah is anxious over Hagar's and Ishmael's influence, Moses and Gideon face the uncertainties of stepping into leadership, in the exile the people of Israel live out the realities of displacement, prophets fear speaking on the Lord's behalf. In the New Testament, Jesus acknowledges his disciples' fears, as they attempt to walk on water or face an empty tomb.

What bad things will happen next? The



gift of an active imagination can create beautiful works of art, music and literature. But our imagination can also fuel deep fears that stoke conflict and paralyze individuals and groups.

In the Advent and Christmas stories,

fear is a prelude to God's bringing new and wonderful things into the human story.

"Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son," an angel tells Zechariah, the father-to-be of John the Baptist (Luke 1:13). The angel Gabriel surprises a peasant girl: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son" (Luke 1:30). Her fiancé hears an angel say, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). The astonished shepherds hear an angel announce, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10).

These individuals stepped beyond their fear and invited the surprising action of God into their lives. Unlike King Herod, who unleashed violence because he feared losing earthly power, they consented to take part in God's peaceful dream for the world.

The challenge, in our age of anxiety, is to acknowledge the fears but not to let them keep us from participating in the new things the Spirit has in store. What a shame if fear stifles our ability to offer hospitality and prevents us from using our imagination for good deeds rather than for despair!

In the Scriptures, God repeatedly reassures those who fear: I am with you; I have great plans for you; I will give your strength; I will deliver you; I love you. In the words of Jesus: "Peace I leave with you;

*As the church faces new realities, we wonder how we will live as faithful disciples in a scary and uncertain future.*

*my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid* (John 14:27).

So, with songwriter Charles Wesley, we pray: "Come, thou long-expected Jesus! / Born to set thy people free, / from our fears and sins release us / let us find our rest in thee. / Israel's strength and consolation, / hope of all the earth thou art, / dear desire of every nation, / joy of every longing heart. (Hymnal: A Worship Book, No. 178).

As we welcome the Christ Child, may this be a season free from fear and anxiety. May the assurance of Emmanuel calm our hearts and give us bold courage for the coming year.

### Holiday schedule

*Canadian Mennonite* is entering into another three-week cycle of publication. Our next issue will be mailed on Jan. 7, 2019. After that, we will return to our regular two-week publishing schedule.

### ABOUT THE COVER:

In his oil painting simply entitled 'Nativity,' artist Brian Kershnik speaks of the angels as a 'cloud of witnesses' or a 'river of angels,' which crowd closely around the holy family, and then turn their faces heavenward to praise God for what they have seen. Susanne Guenther Loewen's Christmas feature begins on page 4.

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# CANADIAN MENNONITE

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

## Guiding values:

Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom • Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will • Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability

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'As we welcome the Christ Child today, let's remember that we are . . . called to form a river of angels that shelters the homeless, the displaced, the refugees, the strangers, all of whom are the face of Christ,' urges Susanne Guenther Loewen in our Christmas feature.

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Award-winning member of the Canadian Church Press



## CHRISTMAS FEATURE

# Welcoming the stranger at Christmas

*Based on a sermon preached at Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, on Christmas Day 2016. Scripture references: Deuteronomy 24:17-21, Luke 2:1-7, Matthew 2:13-18.*

BY SUSANNE GUENTHER LOEWEN



'NATIVITY' (DETAIL), © BY BRIAN T. KERSHISNIK, 2006.  
USED WITH PERMISSION.

*'The chance of a young woman having her first child away from her usual residence, and not being attended by women [even strangers], seems to me very unlikely. Women would come. They would help. I feel sure of it.'*  
(Brian Kershishnik)

**T**he Christ Child has arrived. We've waited through four weeks of Advent to light that fifth candle, the Christ candle, symbolizing the presence of Christ in our midst. And we feel ready to welcome this baby with open arms. Don't we?

It's easy to forget, I think, that the Christ Child received rather contradictory messages at his birth. Some, including his parents, the shepherds and wise men, the angels, even the friendly beasts—perhaps representing creation—offered him clear welcome. But others, like the innkeeper, turned his family and him away, or, like King Herod and Emperor Augustus, acted with overt hostility toward them. And this pronounced lack of welcome is not to be taken lightly in that cultural context, with its emphasis on hospitality, on welcoming not only the friend but also the stranger.

Mary of Nazareth is the first to provide this kind of welcome, with her "yes" to the angel Gabriel. In a way, hers was the ultimate instance of welcoming the stranger, since she was welcoming and making space for the very otherness of God. So what fostered in Mary this kind of radical openness? Her revolutionary hymn, the Magnificat, attests that Mary was steeped in her own Jewish tradition and Scriptures, and she most certainly would have been familiar with the key biblical notion of welcoming the stranger.

Appearing four times in the first five books of the Bible, from Genesis to Deuteronomy, the command to love or welcome the stranger—also termed "resident alien" or "foreigner"—was central in Israelite understanding, and was linked with the care for widows and orphans, or "the least" of that society and context. In Deuteronomy 24, the Israelites are commanded "*not [to] deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave*





'NATIVITY,' © BY BRIAN T. KERSHISNIK, 2006. USED BY PERMISSION.

*For me, it's striking to notice that there is actually no stable depicted in Kershnik's art. Instead, it is the angels who shelter and surround the newborn baby and his perplexed parents.*

*in Egypt. . .*" They are also to leave food—grain and olives and grapes—for "aliens," orphans and widows to glean, a system of sharing at work in the Book of Ruth.

In these passages, God calls on Israel to extend a particular welcome to the outsider, the one not at home, the one who is vulnerable and thus in need of hospitality. Isn't it likely that Mary drew on this tradition when faced with the ultimate stranger, the one who was radically other and yet became completely vulnerable, the God Child, Jesus? In God's act of becoming a human child within her, Mary read God's love for the most vulnerable: for herself as a young peasant woman, pregnant and unmarried; for her nation, straining under Roman occupation; for all the humble, meek and hungry over the proud and the rich. And she responded with reciprocal love and welcome and hope. Without any guarantees, she agreed to make God's plan possible by mothering Jesus.

And from the start, it wasn't easy. This makes Mary's profound hospitality all the more remarkable, as she offered what she herself, and her son after her, were

continually denied. Think of her story in Luke 2 and Matthew 2. Near the end of her pregnancy, she was forced to travel to Bethlehem to be taxed, an excruciatingly uncomfortable journey that may have caused her to go into early labour. And there, in Bethlehem, there was no room for her and Joseph, and she had to labour and give birth in a stable.

In *Rediscovering Mary: Insights from the Gospels*, theologian Tina Beattie speaks of Jesus' birth as Mary's "own physical passion," stating, "Rejected by society and lying in a barn among animals, she suffered for the salvation of the world." Afterwards, Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt as refugees, unable to find any safety or home in their own land.

And, of course, in the ultimate rejection of Jesus—his death on the cross, when evil and sin tried to render Christ utterly unwelcome—Mary was subjected to one of the worst forms of grief: the violent death of her son. Despite, and in the face of, all of this rejection and unwelcome that was to come, the Incarnation began with Mary saying "yes" to God's request for hospitality.

Of course, there were others who welcomed the Christ Child as well. In his oil painting simply entitled "Nativity," pictured above, artist Brian Kershnik speaks of the angels as a "cloud of witnesses" or a "river of angels," which crowd closely around the holy family, and then turn their faces heavenward to praise God for what they have seen. Notice the tired-looking Mary, the agony—or is it relief—of Joseph, the two midwives looking on, even a dog and her puppies in the corner, perhaps representing the "friendly beasts."

In "Nativity: An essay," Kershnik speaks about the scene:

"Jesus came very much like you and I came. His birth was like your birth and mine. He came into our dirt and sweat and blood and milk. . . . His birth was, in that sense, unremarkable. It hurt his mother and him.

"It was very likely troubling to Joseph as well (his vexation probably complicated by their displacement from home) and likely not so troubling to the midwives, smiling through the bloody ordeal, as midwives do.

I know that no midwives are mentioned in the Scriptures, but bear in mind that almost none of the details of his birth are mentioned in these holy texts. Even the stable is inferred by the brief mention of an improvised cradle—his being ‘laid in a manger.’ The chance of a young woman having her first child away from her usual residence, and not being attended to by women [even strangers], seems to me very unlikely. Women would come. They would hear; they would help. I feel sure of it.

“Perhaps the sheer number of them is a clear indication that I became engaged with the angels [who almost fill the five-metre-long painting]. The births of my own children felt so very ‘attended to’ by other-worldly beings. . . . The number of angels in my work kept multiplying. I have counted them several times, but I come up with different numbers. I rather like not knowing exactly. . . . [And that] only the dog can see the glorious river of angels.”

For me, it’s striking to notice that there is actually no stable depicted in Kershishnik’s art. Instead, it is the angels who shelter and surround the newborn baby and his perplexed parents. And the angels’ curiosity and wonder are almost child-like, kind of like our restless little angels and wise men who crowded in close to baby Dominic at the nativity play last Sunday evening!

What, then, is our calling, as followers of Mary’s son? Perhaps drawing on something his mother taught him, Jesus reaffirms and reinterprets the idea of welcoming the stranger in Matthew 25, in the parable of the sheep and the goats. Among other acts of mercy, he lists, “*I was a stranger and you welcomed me.*” And when they wonder when it was that they offered him hospitality, he says, “*Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.*” In Jesus’ interpretation, the “least” are to be viewed as the face of Christ himself, as God-with-us.

These days, it can sometimes seem that there is increasing fear around welcoming strangers or refugees, which speaks of a broader distrust of diversity and difference. In times like these, this idea of making space for a stranger seems vastly removed from our reality, a naïve hope. Yet there are instances of this kind of

welcome all around us, from Nutana Park’s own decades-long involvement in literally welcoming the stranger by sponsoring refugees or newcomers to Canada, to other forms of intentional welcome for other people who have been made “strangers” or vulnerable, people who are presumed not to belong or not to matter.

As we welcome the Christ Child today, let’s remember that we are called to be those witnesses, called to form a river of angels that shelters the homeless, the displaced, the refugees, the strangers, all of whom are the face of Christ. So in a world that so often turns vulnerable people away, let’s continue to be people of welcome, knowing that through our hospitality, God is able to make strangers into kin. ❧



*Susanne Guenther Loewen is co-pastor of Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.*



‘NATIVITY’ (DETAIL), © BY BRIAN T. KERSHISHNIK, 2006. USED BY PERMISSION.

*‘[O]nly the dog can see the glorious river of angels.’  
(Brian T. Kershishnik)*

### ❧ For discussion

1. Who are the vulnerable strangers who need hospitality in our world today? Has anyone in your family ever been in need of refuge? What is Jesus’ message in the parable about the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25?
2. The artwork accompanying this feature article is a reproduction of a painting about the birth of Christ by Brian Kershishnik. What does this painting say to you? How is it different from a traditional nativity scene?
3. Susanne Guenther Loewen writes that welcoming strangers and caring for widows and orphans were central to Israelite culture. How does our society view vulnerable people? Has our attitude toward refugees changed since 1979-80, when Canada welcomed 60,000 southeast Asians? What responsibility does the church have in providing refuge for those in need?
4. Loewen writes that we are called to “form a river of angels that shelters the homeless, the displaced, the refugees . . . .” What are some ways that this is happening? What prevents us from doing more? What are some organizations that we could support in welcoming strangers? Do we see strangers as having the “face of Christ”?

—BY BARB DRAPER

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## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

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

## ✉ Kudos for 'apologetic' column

RE: "I'M SORRY': Apologies and abuse" column by Carol Penner, Nov. 5, page 11.

Thanks for some very good thoughts about how apologies can make things worse for victims of abuse.

I especially like Penner's fourth point: "We like things clean and tidy." Perhaps this is because abuse in a church setting isn't just about the perpetrator and the victim. It often involves an unhealthy, enmeshed and closed system. An abuse disclosure disrupts this disordered system, and people want to return to "normal" as quickly as possible. That's why it is so important for victims to get competent, outside, professional help. Equally important is outside professional

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## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Everyone is on a journey

JANETTE THIESSEN

We are uniquely created in God's image. The key phrase for me is that we are unique, and with the uniqueness comes a journey that is all our own. Our journey may look vaguely similar to that of those around us but could also look vastly different to the journey of others. No one knows what our journey looks like, except perhaps those very close to us, if we've allowed them into our inner struggles and thoughts.

Our journey may involve issues from our childhood that still need to be dealt with, or current issues with family, friends and churches that are ongoing. Some have suffered abuse and are still struggling with the aftermath, which can take decades to work through. Some have suffered silently with infertility, which can be a lifelong challenge to overcome. Some are the sandwich generation helping children and perhaps raising grandchildren as well as assisting aging parents.

Some of these issues or things are unseen to our friends and family. Just



living life consumes our time. Being involved in our church congregation or our denomination also consumes our time. Everyone's threshold of the load they can bear is different, and that load changes as we experience the different phases of life.

Recently, I was at a discussion on a certain social cause. I was surprised to overhear the words "they're ignorant"

*We need to show grace if someone's level of involvement is less than ours.*

in relation to others not embracing this specific cause. I was saddened by these words. It's a big world, with lots of charity and social justice causes in which to become involved. All of us should realize individuals who are not involved in our specific social justice issue or missional cause may just not have room to add to their personal journey at this time. I admit I had ungracious thoughts when others weren't as involved as I was in a certain cause a few years back.

Romans 12: 4-6 says: "For just as each

*of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us."*

Let's keep in mind that not everyone will become involved in the same cause that we've embraced, and that's okay. We need to be gracious and hospitable to others whether they are involved in our social justice cause, or have chosen another charity or issue in which to become involved.

We need to show grace if someone's

level of involvement is less than ours. It might be that they are not involved in anything at the moment, and we also have to allow for that because we just don't know where they are in their personal journey. So let's encourage each other to find where God wants to use us, and then let's be gracious as others live out their journey, which will be different than our journey.

*Janette Thiessen is Mennonite Church British Columbia's office administrator.*

(Continued from page 7)

intervention with abusers, which sometimes means involving the criminal justice system.

Penner is right that healing for victims can take years, and part of the difficulty is the long and arduous task of rebuilding the shattered self, rebuilding violated boundaries and re-establishing confident agency. This is often impossible to do in the context of a church

setting, especially a Mennonite one in which people have multitudinous dual relationships and where the families of abusers are often power brokers or power holders at the congregational, denominational or other institutional levels.

Add to this a culture of valuing community over individualism, and reconciliation over individual autonomy, and you get a system that continues to see

## IN THE IMAGE

# A washroom smelling of stale beer

ED OLFERT

At 9:30 a.m., the church door opens. A young woman, a girl really, slips in quietly. She asks quickly, “Can I use the washroom?” My reply is to the already closed bathroom door.

Two hours later, I decide to investigate. The visitor has not reappeared. I knock, asking if she is okay. A mumbled voice replies. I ask her to open the door. I hear her gathering herself up from the floor, then the door is opened.

A young woman, dressed in tight jeans and a short jacket, dark circles under her eyes, is shaking. A wave of alcohol fumes roll out of the washroom.

It feels uncomfortable. I am a large man. “Are you hungry?” She is. “Do you want to go with me to Tim Hortons for a sandwich and coffee?” With her agreement to step outside, my confidence in managing the situation grows a little.



The young woman, “Jill,” tells her story of leaving an abusive partner, of needing alcohol to find the resolve to escape after a particularly violent episode the night before. She wants to be taken out of town and dropped off where she might hitch a ride to Saskatoon. Family and support lie there. I suggest that we buy some lunch and head

back to the church to call Mobile Crisis. She’s a little unsure but she agrees.

Mobile Crisis talks to Jill over the phone. They will send a counsellor when they can. I sense a bit of trust growing between us.

As Jill eats, some vitality appears. She tells me about her long-term violent relationship, berating herself for staying so long. She tells stories about herself, her youth, her parents. A sense of humour appears. The questions tumble out. “What kind of a church is this? What’s a Mennonite? Are you a priest? Are you married?” And then, more guarded, body tensing, “Do you ever hit your wife?”

We agree that I will put her on the bus for Saskatoon. At the depot, she is fun,

*I encourage her that this day can be a turning point. She has worth and today she can make decisions that might begin to uncover that worth.*

engaging, remarkably articulate. Her eyes never stop roaming, looking at faces, her body is coiled tightly. But I am offered remarkable trust. Spiritual questions keep coming, and sometimes Jill catches her breath, and then mutters, “Yeah, that makes sense.”

I encourage her that this day can be a

turning point. She has worth and today she can make decisions that might begin to uncover that worth. It seems like a new concept to her, but I see a hint of hope in her eyes.

Jill offers her hand. Her eyes meet mine. Yes, there is a spark of connection.

I return to the church and open my Advent resource. The first words I see—the only words—are “God’s unstoppable purpose surprises.”

I am surprised. I read the suggested Isaiah passage. One verse comes alive: “For you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down and the mountains trembled before you.”

I think of the Christmas carol, “Away in a Manger.” I think of the bizarre image of God becoming human in the form of an infant, born in a barn. Although we try to romanticize that scene with images of sweet-smelling hay and gentling lowing livestock, barns really aren’t that charming. I’ve forked enough manure to get me past the need for that birth scene to be nice and

inoffensive.

A barn is a shocking and a stinking place to discover the Christ. Kind of like . . . a washroom smelling of stale beer.

*Ed Olfert (p2ptheo@sasktel.net) is a pastor and a lot of other things, searching for awe.*



victims and offenders as a circle of healing rather than two individuals who need to follow very different and unrelated paths: accountability for perpetrators and recovery for victims, a recovery that often involves exiting churches in order to build healthy relationships in other settings.

**KATHY SHANTZ (ONLINE COMMENT)**

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Friesen**—Atlas Jacob (b. Oct. 14, 2018), to Michael and Nicole Friesen, Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Reesor-Keller**—Ava Hope (b. Oct. 30, 2018), to Leah and Luke Reesor-Keller, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Van Den Tempel**—Brock David (b. Aug. 20, 2018), to Dave and Lauren Van Den Tempel, Poole Mennonite, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Emilee Hamm**—Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man., Oct. 28, 2018.

**Janelle Ropp, Tonia Steckly**—Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont., Sept. 30, 2018.

### Marriages

**Gross/Ropp**—Callie Gross and Scott Ropp, Poole Mennonite, Ont., at Maple Lake, Ont., Sept. 8, 2018.

**Hildebrandt/Raisbeck**—Matthew Hildebrandt (Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.) and Celine Raisbeck, at Rosthern Mennonite, Oct. 27, 2018.

**MacDougall/Sefic**—Emily MacDougall (Wellesley

Mennonite, Ont.) and Junior Sefic, at the Art Gallery of Burlington, Ont., Oct. 20, 2018.

### Deaths

**Andres**—Walter, 80 (b. Sept. 27, 1938; d. Oct. 13, 2018), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Boschman**—MaryAnne (nee Janzen), 84 (b. Nov. 10, 1933; d. Nov. 3, 2018), Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

**Dyck**—Jacob, 94 (b. Jan. 10, 1924; d. Oct. 19, 2018), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Fitzgerald**—John, 67 (b. April 28, 1951; d. Oct. 26, 2018), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

**Janzen**—Elisabeth, 91 (b. Feb. 14, 1927; d. Nov. 6, 2018), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Klassen**—Bernie, 72 (b. Jan. 25, 1946; d. Oct. 27, 2018), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Kuepfer**—Ruth Elizabeth, 82 (b. June 15, 1936; d. Aug. 25, 2018), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

**Shantz**—Helen (nee Lichty), 99 (May 25, 1919; d. Oct. 9, 2018), Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Schroeder**—Katherine, 89 (b. Feb. 24, 1929; d. Nov. 13, 2018), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Wagler**—Margaret (nee Gerber), 71 (b. Aug. 9, 1947; d. Nov. 8, 2018), Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

**Wiens**—Eleanor (Rempel), 86 (b. Sept. 28, 1932; d. Oct. 24, 2018), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

### Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

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

## A moment from yesterday



To encourage women to enter church-related work, the General Conference Mennonite Church began the “Women in Church Vocations” program in 1957. Pictured, Elmer Ediger discusses the new program with interested young women at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. Women recruited to the program would pursue a college education and be mentored into such positions as local congregational administrative work, Mennonite Central Committee assignments or missionary commissions. The program never really grew and was discontinued in 1963. Perhaps this generation of women was beginning to have different ideas about what it meant to serve the church.

*Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing*

*Photo: The Canadian Mennonite / Mennonite Archives of Ontario*



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

## OBITUARY

**Martin Thomas Cross Jr.**  
**May 22, 1933 - Aug. 13, 2018**

Martin Thomas Cross Jr. was born in Elbowoods, N.D., on May 22, 1933, to Dorothy Genevieve (Bartell) Cross and Martin Thomas Cross Sr. He was their second child and first son. He grew up at a time of significant social and cultural upheaval for his people on the Fort Berthold Indian Reserve. He was Hidatsa and very proud of his Indigenous culture and history.



Conference of Mennonites in Canada between 1988 and his retirement. His presence left a lasting impression on his colleagues:

Martin attended school in Elbowoods during the Great Depression and the Second World War. He and his family worked hard to make a living and their experiences fostered a strong sense of unity among his siblings and their descendants that continues to this day.

Martin lettered in football at Elbowoods high school. Less than a month after his graduation and 18th birthday, Martin enlisted in the United States Air Force. He trained as a mechanic at Parks Air College, specializing in the repair and maintenance of B-29 bombers. He was stationed at airbases throughout the U.S. during the Korean conflict.

Martin returned to North Dakota after his discharge in 1955. At the time, Elbowoods was flooded with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers working on the Garrison Dam. Martin settled in the nearby town of Parshall. For several years, he worked for local farmers and made friends with their families.

Martin moved to the Bay Area in California in the 1960s, where he met Mary Jean Geiser, a Swiss Mennonite woman from Ohio in the fall of 1969. They were married in 1971. Jonathan David was born to them in 1972. Martin continued his education, first at San Jose City College, then Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kan., and finally at Barry College in Miami, Fla., where he earned a master of social work degree in 1977.

In 1978, the family moved to Saskatoon, Sask., where Martin worked with several social service agencies and taught courses at Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. During this time, he was a member of Wildwood Mennonite Church.

Martin and Mary separated and divorced in 1990. Martin maintained a strong connection to the Mennonite church, joining the staff of the Native Ministries program of the

• “Martin worked as a chaplain at the Correctional Centre, working closely with elders and social agencies and the church. He loved people and worked hard at building bridges of understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. I met with him often when he lived in Saskatoon and learned a great deal from him. A good storyteller, that always had a moral or lesson attached to it. Martin also served on an advisory committee here at MCC, that connected him to our work here. I will miss him. May he rest in peace.”

*(Leonard Doell)*

• “Martin was a gentle soul and had much to share, including humour! . . . One trip (bi-annual Native Assemblies in the U.S.) was especially memorable for all of us because Martin was able to introduce us to some of his relatives and to his Fort Berthold reservation in Parshall, N.D. . . . He was very proud of his cultural heritage and we were honoured to spend time there with him.”

*(Neill and Edith Von Gunten)*

• “Martin was affectionately nicknamed “Bear” because of his engaging personality. His humour helped us not to take ourselves too seriously. His love of life was infectious. His thoughtfulness and encouragement inspired us all. His insights challenged our assumptions. His presence enriched our lives. We are honoured to call him our friend.”

*(Vera and Johann Funk)*

Martin enjoyed his retirement years immensely and took every opportunity to travel back to Fort Berthold over the next 20 years to visit family. He was particularly devoted to his sister, Phyllis Old Dog Cross. He spent many hours by her side during her final illness and was with her when she died.

Martin suffered from congestive heart failure for the last 10 years of his life. He faced his declining health with admiral equanimity. In 2013, he moved to Vancouver, B.C., to be close to his son and daughter-in-law Sarah Sutherland. He lived at Tapestry at the Arbutus Walk seniors home until his death on Aug. 13, 2018. There he is remembered, as in all the places he lived, for his smile, his positive attitude, his warmth, his laugh, his sense of humour, his love of children, his respect for others and his kind heart.

**Paid obituary submitted by Jonathan Cross and Sarah Sutherland.**

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PHOTO BY HENK STENVERS

*The Mennonite World Conference delegation in Peru presented workshops with practical skills, biblical reflection and time for prayer, which caught the interest of one little boy, at left.*

## VIEWPOINT

# Hope in suffering

ELISABETH KUNJAM

Suffering is a worldwide reality. It affects all people sooner or later. Yet, from the very beginning of time, people have tried to find credible answers to this suffering.

It is consoling to find that the Bible is not distanced from human suffering but confronts it head-on in the books of Job, Lamentations and in Romans 8:18-28.

In the Romans passage, we see a fellowship of groaning and hope emerge from the futility and suffering experienced by all people in futility and in suffering.

### **Fellowship in futility and suffering**

All human beings share the common fate of fallenness, as mentioned in Genesis 3. The Apostle Paul says that the whole creation is subjected to “futility” (8:20). This futility is experienced by living beings and non-living things alike.

Ultimately, all living beings, including humans, perish. Paul compares the corruption and destruction of this futility in the creation with “birth pangs” (8:22). And, like birth pangs, this corruption and destruction keep increasing in frequency and intensity.

We see this happening in nature—earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, floods and droughts—and also in human intolerant behaviour and erosion of

civility, human dignity and biblical ethics.

But believers can take comfort that God takes responsibility for this futility and reveals his resolve to do away with the fate of the Fall.

### **Fellowship in groaning**

The creation (v. 22), the believers (v. 23), and the Holy Spirit (v. 26) are all groaning because of creation’s subjection to futility.

The personification of creation as groaning reveals the fact that the Creator God is concerned about what he has made. And as part of that concern, the Creator God makes his children see the sufferings and the futilities in the world, especially in the lives of fellow believers, as their own suffering.

Believers not only feel sorry for the ones suffering but they share the afflictions of their fellow believers. That is how we enter into the fellowship of groaning together with our fellow human beings. But, more than us, it is God who suffers in the suffering of his people. The Holy Spirit groans on behalf of God’s people.

It is comforting for believers to know that when they suffer, they’re not alone. Brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are with them, experiencing their suffering and feeling concern for their wellbeing.

### **Fellowship in hope**

In Romans 8, Paul mentions four facts that are comforting and hope-filled amid suffering:

- **THE FUTILITY** of creation has a purpose: the realization of the glorious liberty of the children of God. When this purpose is realized, God will deliver creation itself from its bondage (v. 21).
- **WE FELLOWSHIP** in the sufferings and pains of creation. But God has a plan for believers to fully experience godly adoption as sons and daughters of God in Jesus Christ. This is our glorious hope (v. 23).
- **WE ARE** not alone. Even if we are physically alone, the Holy Spirit is with us. Jesus, “Emmanuel,” is God with us. The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us, praying according to the will of God (v. 26).
- **THE CORRUPTION**, futility, suffering and pain in this world are for the benefit of the believers. “*Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (v. 39). That is, nothing can damage our status as the children of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

These comforting facts strengthen our hope in our God. This hope is common to us and hence we fellowship in hope also (v. 28).

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) is a part of this fellowship in futility of pain and suffering, in groaning and in hope. Therefore, the members of its Deacons Commission especially visit those churches that experience suffering. If God is for us, present in the form of fellow believers and of the Holy Spirit, who can be against us (v. 31)? Therefore, we can shout, “*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us*” (v. 37).

*Elisabeth Kunjam is a member of the Mennonite Brethren church in India. She served on the MWC Deacons Commission (2015–2018). This article is inspired by her participation in the Deacons visit to flood-affected Mennonite Brethren churches in Peru in 2017.*

## WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

# Christmas rush

*Finding a time and a place for both Mary and Martha*

BY MEL HARMS

Christmas is one of my favourite times of the year. Everyone is so joyful! We get excited for tree decorating, Christmas shopping, starting our Christmas baking while playing Christmas carols in the background, and preparing for the many gatherings that are soon to follow. And, whether you're a last-minute shopper like I am, or one who starts baking in November, we all have our special traditions and ways of doing things.

The family gatherings are my favourite part. I love getting ready and preparing for company. My mother-in-law usually hosts the Harms's get-together and it's always a busy day. We arrive mid-afternoon to help prepare the meal, set up tables and all that goes along with hosting. After supper, we have our gift opening with the kids opening their presents first.

For the last few years, the little cousins have drawn names and buy gifts for each other. (I find that they get more from the giving end when they are able to participate in this way.) When they leave to play with their new treasures, the adults have their turn to play. After years of drawing names, we've recently, switched things up a bit. We now do a "Grinch Gift Exchange," during which we watch carefully as people choose wrapped gifts to open and, depending on what's inside, others plan their "steal" when their turn comes around. The laughter always outweighs the steals.

After the gifts and laughter have wound down, you see some people heading back to the kitchen for dishes and clean up, while others settle back down into conversation.



Mennonite  
Women  
Canada

Soon the night creeps up and we're saying our goodbyes until next year.

Nights like these seem to fly by so fast that you're scared to blink.

This fall, when I was attending a youth retreat, my outlook on all this began

to change. We were discussing the scripture passage involving Mary and Martha, who responded

so differently to their friend Jesus' visit in Luke 10:38-42.

And I couldn't help but think about how much this applies to my actions at Christmas gatherings. Like Martha, I'm the one who's busy in the kitchen, helping to make sure everything is ready and perfect for our guests. I make sure we have enough gravy and potatoes. Then there's the inevitable "Is the dessert ready?" "Oh wait, did we put out napkins?" "Do you think this gravy tastes all right?" That's followed by cleaning up afterwards so people have room to move, play games and visit.

As I reflected on that, I wondered if all this rushing about is the reason why these times together feel so short. I honestly struggle to let my Mary out at such events. And if I do sit down and talk, I often feel guilty about it afterwards.

But I shouldn't. Because even Jesus says that it's okay for us to be Mary, even if it's just for part of the night. Women like me need to be able to embrace a little of both Mary and Martha in our lives. It's not like Jesus is telling us to be Mary all of the time, or Martha for that matter. But that there's a time and place for both.

My goal this year is to let my Mary side out more. My Martha side can go crazy at the beginning of the evening, but afterwards she needs to step aside so my Mary can have a chance to visit, relax and just enjoy the more peaceful moments.

After all, our family isn't always around when we decide we have time to relax. We need to take the time while we have it. ☸

*Mel Harms is the Mennonite Church Saskatchewan representative on the Mennonite Women Canada board.*



*Mel's 'Mary' pays close attention to the words of Jesus.*



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MEL HARMS

*Mel's 'Martha,' left, enjoys Christmas cookies with her daughter Madison and her mother, Wendy Desmarais.*



## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# Identity, boundaries and new ways of thinking

*History conference explores Mennonite diversity over the years*

BY BARB DRAPER

Editorial Assistant

Mennonites in Canada today are a diverse group, and the old stereotype of Mennonites as German-speaking agrarian people fits only a small part of the picture.

The history conference, “A people of diversity: Mennonites in Canada since 1970,” held at the University of Winnipeg from Nov. 15 to 17, provided an opportunity to explore this wide variety in today’s Mennonite experience. Organized by Royden Loewen, the Chair of Mennonite Studies, the conference, with 33 presentations from across Canada, also recognized the 50th anniversary of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

Several presenters pointed out that, as Mennonites were moving from farms to cities and losing the German language, their identity was a rising concern. As small Mennonite Bible schools were disappearing or changing into liberal arts colleges, there was a feeling of loss. Cooperation among different kinds of Mennonites brought new organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee Canada in 1963, but

cooperation also raised concerns about who Mennonites are.

In her keynote address, Marlene Epp, Grebel’s dean and history professor, raised the question of Mennonite identity, wondering about its importance, because it leads to an “us versus them” attitude. She suggested that cookbooks can be a metaphor for the diversity of Mennonites in Canada. Since the 1960s, there have been a multitude of different kinds of cookbooks that tell stories from all corners of the Mennonite world. To work together better, she suggested, “Perhaps we need fewer Mennonite theologians and more Mennonite cookbooks!”

Among the responses to this concern for identity 50 years ago were Mennonite historical societies and a series of history books about Mennonites in Canada. A rising interest in multiculturalism across the country in the 1960s caught the interest of Mennonites who were getting more involved in the broader society, and they began applying for government grants to support their projects, including

Mennonite archives, museums, memorial plaques, monuments and centennial celebrations.

Other presentations reflected the wide cultural diversity of Mennonites in Canada. While traditionalist Mennonites, such as the Old Order and Old Colony, have maintained their distrust of contemporary attitudes and modern education, Mennonite churches today worship in a wide variety of languages. Attendees at the conference learned about Mennonites in Quebec, Chinese Mennonites in Vancouver, and a first-hand description of how a refugee from Laos became involved in the Mennonite church. Stephanie Phetsamay Stobbe, who was born in Laos, now works at Menno Simons College in Winnipeg. Zacharie LeClair told the story of how the conversion of some young hippies led to phenomenal growth in the French-speaking Mennonite Brethren Church in Quebec.

The 1970s and ’80s were years of social activism, most often organized by the grassroots. While the farmers of Warman, Sask., prevented the building of a nuclear refinery in their community, there were a variety of other peace movements. Lauren Harder-Gissing, the Mennonite Archives of Ontario archivist, described how someone used his credit card to buy out the local department store of G.I. Joe figures before Christmas, and then returned them all in January, as a protest against war toys.

Other presenters described changes in Indigenous and LGBTQ relations and the role of women in the church.

Carol Penner, a theological studies professor at Conrad Grebel University College, compared what the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* and the *Mennonite Reporter* had to say about women in ministry. She found that the *Reporter* had more articles about and profiles of women in ministry, especially in the 1970s and ’80s. She also commented on the importance of church-sponsored journalism. While the church press controls how issues get discussed, she said, “journalists provide the first draft of history.”

Selected, peer-reviewed papers from this conference will be published in the 2019 *Journal of Mennonite Studies*. ❧



PHOTO BY CONRAD STOESZ

*In her presentation, Carol Penner, at the microphone, compared the coverage of women in ministry in two church periodicals between 1970 and 2009. ‘Periodicals reflect church bodies, but they also influence them,’ she said.*

# Christmas: Let it be, let it go

BY AMY DUECKMAN  
B.C. Correspondent

When Jill (a pseudonym) turns her calendar to December, she'll read a message she wrote to herself a year ago: "Be intentional all through the month to not put pressure on myself and to avoid the stress of the holidays."

She says she dreads the Christmas season every year. Between gift shopping; sending out a Christmas letter to more than 60 people; decorating the tree; trying to find room to set out her Santa, nutcracker, angel and Christmas village collections; and cleaning the house to prepare for company, she is ready to collapse before Dec. 25.

On Christmas Day she feels she must make a full turkey dinner, topped off with a dozen different kinds of homemade cookies—and a Christmas pudding that nobody eats, but that she feels she must make because it is a family tradition.

"If I continue to do this, I will go insane," she says. "A couple of years ago I thought I was going to, as I was not getting any pleasure from the holidays and couldn't wait until they were over."

As we celebrate Christmas, it may be helpful to sort out what's worth releasing for the enjoyment of the season and what's worth keeping, or even adding.

On my own "Let it be" list of absolute necessities are putting up a Christmas tree and manger scene, baking my mother's peppernuts and listening to my collection of Christmas music of old favourites like Nat King Cole, the Canadian Brass and the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square (formerly the Mormon Tabernacle Choir). Along with buying gifts for my family, I also like to remember the less fortunate, either by donating to a local charity that supports indigent families or making up a care package of necessities for the homeless people.

On the "Let it go" list is the idea that I need to put up all the special Christmas



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMY DUECKMAN

*Amy Dueckman is pictured with her Christmas tree and musical decorations.*

ornaments in my collection every year; there are simply too many. Instead, I now pick a theme and use only those ornaments, such as musical instruments, travel, toys or angels. Ornaments left in the box this year will come out another year!

Other members of the *Canadian Mennonite* staff share what's on their list to keep or let go:

• **WILL BRAUN**, senior writer: "I celebrate family, food and gifts. And I ponder the mystery of Emmanuel. During Advent, I listen to Handel's *Messiah*, full version, numerous times."

• **DONNA SCHULZ**, Saskatchewan correspondent: "For me, Christmas would not be Christmas without music. Also, while I don't think it's essential, I'm not sure it would feel quite like Christmas without a tree. And, though I don't do much Christmas baking, it wouldn't be Christmas without peppernuts. These things have nothing to do with the birth of

Christ but they have become part of our celebrations, and we enjoy them in their familiarity and their beauty.

"Christmas shopping is one thing I am letting go of. Being a quilter, I stitched a Christmas stocking for each member of the family, along with an additional stocking for the Christ child. We will give one another gifts, but they must be small enough to fit in a stocking and valued at under \$10. Gifts for the Christ child's stocking can be of any value, large or small, and will be designated toward a giving project of our family's choosing."

• **GINNY HOSTETLER**, executive editor: "I like the Advent practice of setting up the creche. Over the years, I have collected manger scenes from places where I have lived, and from other countries around the world. They are a reminder of other homes and people whom we love. More importantly, they point to the coming of Christ and the universality of Christ's message."

"What to let go? As much as I enjoy eating Christmas cookies, I don't really enjoy making them! I'm content to make only a recipe or two, and to enjoy the variety of treats that often come to our house as gifts."

• **BARB DRAPER**, editorial assistant: "For me, connecting with family is probably most important. I'm not good at staying in touch with people throughout the year, and I don't use social media, so I consider it important to send out Christmas cards with a duplicated letter."

"I find gift-giving probably the most stressful. I'd like to drop it altogether, but that's a tradition that is so ingrained it can be hard to break. I work at small, practical gifts that express thoughtfulness but also allow most of my end-of-year budget to go to charities."

What about you? What can you release to cut down on holiday stress? What practices or traditions mean the most to you that you want to keep? ☞



# 'Opening to God's leading'

*Phase 2 of MC Alberta's Vision 2020 looks at what it means to be a community of faith, practically*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent  
CALGARY

In opening comments at Mennonite Church Alberta's first of three Vision 2020 gatherings, Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, the regional church's executive minister, asked people in the crowd to stand if they had left their place of birth in search of new life and opportunities. A few stood, and the crowd was aware that this is the situation for many in MC Alberta's newer churches, including the Sudanese, Oromo and Chin congregations.

When those whose parents or grandparents had come to Canada for the same reasons were asked to stand, almost no one was left sitting in the pews. It was a striking visual example of turbulence, discovery and renewal in the recent history of the people of the regional church.

As society experiences rapid change and the need to adapt and respond to it, so does the church. On Nov. 16-17, delegates from the 13 MC Alberta congregations gathered at Calgary's Foothills Mennonite Church to reflect on what is changing and how MC Alberta is being called into a process of renewal.

Vision 2020 is a four-phase process designed to aid the regional church in

understanding its current context, in focussing questions and listening for God's direction, and in welcoming spiritual renewal and practical changes in the life of the church.

Betty Pries, co-founder of Credence & Co., led the gathering through Phase 2 of the process; Phase 1 involved a survey of the regional church's perceived strengths, realities and values. The gathering was a time to reflect on the current social context and the situation of congregations, and, in a context of worship, asking the question of how might MC Alberta be open to listening and surrendering to God's call.

In recent visits to the newest churches, Wiebe-Neufeld and Brenda Tiessen-Wiens, chair of MC Alberta, asked what challenges they face. Answers, including how to encourage regular attendance, generous giving, and sharing the Anabaptist vision of the gospel, were not unique to new congregations, but showed how different cultural groups in the regional church struggle with the same issues of being the church today. Social media, consumerism, overwhelming world issues and time pressures are endemic.

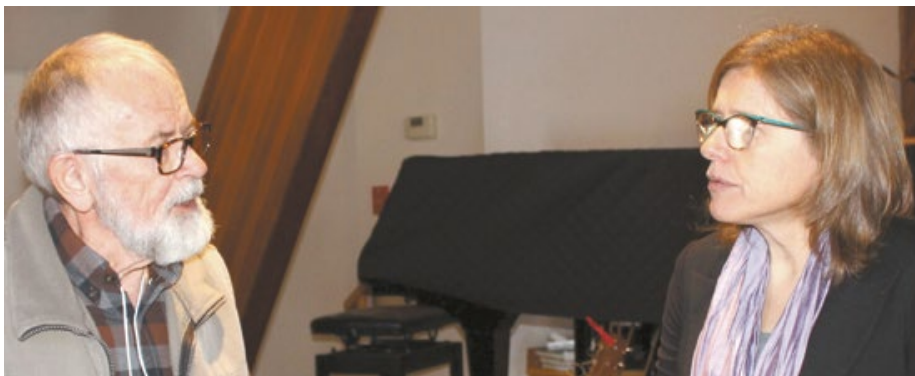
Pries reassured the gathering that the "grand narrative" cycle of awe and wonder, suffering and submission, and transformation, is a natural part of being the church, and is also the narrative of the Bible. In recognizing this cycle, Pries said: "The hardest part is where we release ourselves into a place of listening for and hearing God. . . . How are we nurturing the spiritual discipline of trust in our congregations? . . . Do we truly believe God loves us?" she asked.

After hearing survey results that indicated both hope and anxiety about the future of the regional church, delegates discussed and voiced questions about the future. These included:

- "HOW DO we practise unity in our diversity?"
- "BEING IN communion with each other, especially when we disagree, is a profound message in a divided world. Is this our witness?"
- "HOW DO we become attuned to the longing of our times?"
- "WHAT IS the gift MC Alberta brings to our congregations and the broader church?"
- "HOW DO we open ourselves to the movement of the Spirit within us?"
- "WHAT DO we need to release and what needs to be taken ahold of?"

The next step in the process is for individuals and congregations to engage in prayer. Pries cautioned the gathering several times not to expect answers to come to them during prayer, but to use prayer as a time of preparation so that God can be heard in the everyday places where life is lived. Prayer, she said, "ploughs the fields of our hearts so that we begin to see the burning bush moments and hear the whispering of how God is calling MC Alberta."

"Discerning God's call," the third phase, will be hosted at Bergthal Mennonite Church near Didsbury from March 15 to 16, 2019, in tandem with the MC Alberta annual assembly. Phase Four, called "Incarnating God's call," will take place next fall, when the participants will hear of the outcomes, key lessons, opportunities and action plans that will guide MC Alberta into 2020 and beyond. ☸



*John Neudorf speaks with Betty Pries of Credence & Co. during a break in the Nov. 16 session of Mennonite Church Alberta's first Vision 2020 gathering at Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary.*

# Emmaus Mennonite closes after 90 years

*Aging congregation and dwindling numbers cited as reasons*

By DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

“There’s not one of us that isn’t grieving,” said Lorna Wiens. “We’re all unhappy to lose our church building, our congregation, our friends.” She was reflecting on the decision to close Emmaus Mennonite Church in Wymark, Sask.

“We’ve seen it coming for 20 years,” said retired pastor Fred Heese, who still resides in the community.

According to congregational chair Marvin Wiens, Emmaus had around 40 members, but only about 25 people attended regularly. In winter, with snowbirds gone to warmer climes, the number dwindled to 12.

And, like many small, rural congregations, it had an aging demographic, with most members in their 60s and 70s.

“We’ve all worked hard together to help our little world go around, but we don’t have the energy to keep it going,” said Lorna.

Reduced finances also contributed to the

decision. In the early 2000s, a significant gift from a non-resident family member enabled the congregation to hire a part-time pastor. Ray and Sylvia Friesen shared one part-time position, serving the congregation from 2004 to this year.

Sale of the church manse some years ago provided the congregation with a reserve fund. But as membership decreased, the remaining congregants found it increasingly difficult to meet budget. They began using the reserve fund to balance the budget but knew the money would soon run out.

The congregation voted to close on May 20, but the actual closing service took place on Oct. 28. Upwards of 80 people gathered for a time of worship, fellowship and reminiscing. Many former members reflected on what Emmaus Mennonite had meant to them in their formative years.

During the service, Heese shared the congregation’s history, which goes back more than 90 years. Mennonites from



Manitoba began settling the area south of Swift Current, Sask., in 1905. In 1913, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada appointed Benjamin Ewert, from Drake, Sask., to serve as an itinerant minister to these scattered communities.

But it was not until 1928 that 75 charter members founded Emmaus Mennonite. Originally, the church was a group of congregations, known as a *Gemeinde*. Congregations in Neville, Swift Current, Blumenhof, Schoenfeld, Rhineland and Wymark were collectively known as Emmaus Mennonite Church.

During the 1930s, the *Gemeinde* hosted evangelistic services in the Wymark community hall. A young couple, Valentine and Rosemary Nickel, who were teachers at the Wymark School, became Christians as a result of these services. The Nickels soon became active in Emmaus Mennonite, spearheading the search for a permanent place of worship for the Wymark group.

In 1937, they found a suitable building in a nearby village, moved it to Wymark and renovated it. That building has served the congregation ever since.

The Wymark congregation appreciated Nickel’s leadership and elected him minister. Eventually he became elder with responsibility for other congregations in the *Gemeinde*. Some of the outlying congregations closed once better roads made it easy for members to travel to Wymark. Some joined other Mennonite groups, such as the



PHOTO BY RYAN SIEMENS

*Marvin Wiens, Emmaus Mennonite’s congregational chair, leads worship during the church’s closing service. Also pictured are Lorna Wiens, Susan Peters and Gaylia Wiens.*





PHOTO BY LORNA WIENS

*This well-kept building has been home to Emmaus Mennonite Church since it was moved onto the property in 1937. Now that the congregation has closed, the building is for sale.*

Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church or the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.

In 1959, there were 270 members in the *Gemeinde*, and congregants decided to form two distinct churches. The Swift Current congregation initially became known as First Mennonite Church, but changed its name in 1961 to Zion Mennonite. The Wymark congregation kept the Emmaus name.

Emmaus Mennonite had 40 members in 1962 and peaked at 77 in 1990. By 2000, it had declined to 51 members.

For many years, Emmaus Mennonite was actively involved in mission and outreach in the local area. Through the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization, Emmaus members helped found the Herbert Nursing Home and the Mennonite Youth Farm at Rosthern. Under Nickel's leadership, property was purchased on Lac Pelletier, south of Swift Current, which became Camp Elim, one of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's three camps. Emmaus Mennonite also helped establish and support Swift Current Bible Institute.

Now that the church has closed, some

members will be attending Zion Mennonite in Swift Current, a 23-kilometre drive north of Wymark. Some may attend other churches in the community, while others will likely quit attending church.

For the time being, Emmaus still has a presence in Wymark. Members continue to be involved in a regular coffee time at the local skating rink. The group includes six to eight Emmaus people, along with others from the community.

"There's a lot of love in that group," said Marvin.

Heese agreed. The people in the coffee group "are very close with one another," he said. "They can say anything and it won't get used as gossip." He expects the coffee group will continue, in a sense, to be a ministry of Emmaus. "Emmaus is not dead," said Heese. "We will carry Emmaus wherever we go." ❧

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# 'Much is expected'

*Three ethnically diverse congregations in one church building seek to be 'a church in Markham that looks like Markham'*

By JOELLE KIDD

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

After more than three years and with a budget of \$1.4 million, Hagerman Mennonite Church in Markham, Ont., has completed a significant building renovation. But more than efficient space and a sleek exterior, the project represents the power of this church, a diverse partnership of different congregations, to work together as the body of Christ to accomplish big things as a community.

Hagerman Mennonite was started in the 1930s in what was then a small hamlet called Hagerman's Corners. In the decades since, the community around the building grew with an influx of newcomers to Canada. In 1993, Markham Chinese Mennonite Church partnered with Hagerman. Now, a third partner, Markham Christian Worship Centre, a Tamil congregation, also shares the building.

At a celebration on Oct. 14, the church unveiled its newly renovated building.

The building had been "getting a little tired," says James Barber, chair of discipleship at Hagerman Mennonite, who was also a member of the building committee. In addition to regular wear and tear, some aspects of the building didn't fit congregational needs. He notes that congregants were visiting after services in a long, narrow room that he likened to a bowling alley.

Reverend Paul Mo, Markham Chinese Mennonite's pastor, also notes the long lines that would form at the washrooms after the service.

Now a welcoming entrance opens onto a large multi-purpose room with a café, new washrooms and four rooms that can be used for meetings or Sunday school classes, says Hagerman Mennonite's lead pastor, Roberson Mbayamvula. The church's two sanctuaries have been renovated, and the whole facility, on one level, is now fully accessible. The changes have

"improved our space beyond our hopes and expectations," he says.

While the renovations themselves took only about eight months to complete, it took about three years for the project to go through the approval process for two levels of government, says Barber. By the time it was approved, building costs in the fast-growing city of Markham had shot up. "We thought we were going to have to cancel [the project]," he says. "But we said, 'Well, if God has a plan for this, if there was a path, what would it look like?'"

They began asking for help, according to Barber, and they got it. "Everyone came through, pretty much to the full extent we asked. And we made outrageous asks," he adds, noting some people who are not regular congregants came through with six-figure donations.

The two original partner congregations approached the Tamil congregation to see if it would like to be a partner as well, rather than just renting the space. The Tamils agreed, says Barber, "and surprised us with a six-figure commitment as well."

Between these and other individual donations, as well as support from Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, they "found a way to make it work."

With all this generous support, Barber says the church has almost no debt from the project. "We're a small church. Our numbers aren't that big," he says, estimating that each church would have between 30 and 40 people. "We're not huge churches, but we're active churches, we're healthy churches, and we're trying to figure out how we grow and how we be more relevant to our community."

The pastors of the congregations agree that the church's diversity is its strength.

Mbayamvula says the church feels called to be "a church in Markham that looks like



PHOTO BY GODFREY CHENG

*Roberson Mbayamvula, left, lead pastor of Hagerman Mennonite; Paul Mo, Markham Chinese Mennonite's pastor; and Joseph Savarimuthu, pastor of Markham Christian Worship Centre, a Tamil congregation, cut the ribbon on their renovated church building on Oct. 14.*

Markham," adding in an email: "Although each group has its own identity, we look forward to exploring ways that we can do ministry together in the future and to become the church that God wants us to be in our community." He noted that with three culturally diverse churches in one building, "potlucks are amazing."

Mo notes that not only does the one building hold three different languages of worship, members within the three congregations originally hail from around the world, including Africa, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, South America and Sri Lanka. "The Bible supports diversity in the body of Christ," he says, quoting Romans 12:5: "We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another." We are both individuals and at the same time members of one another."

The three congregations have formalized their partnership with a covenant agreement, Mbayamvula says, which means they will be more viable financially and have more opportunities to work together in ministry.

"I think we're feeling a certain amount of joy," says Barber, "but also a certain amount of responsibility. To whom much has been given, much is expected." ❧



## /// Staff changes

### Pastoral transitions in Manitoba



• **LISA MARTENS** began as associate pastor of Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on Sept. 1. She is in the marriage and family therapy master's program at the University of Winnipeg and also works in child care. She earned a bachelor of theology degree from Canadian Mennonite Bible College (a founding college of Canadian Mennonite University), and worked previously for Christian Peacemaker Teams and with newcomers to Canada.



• **RACHEL SIEMENS** began as lead pastor of Carman Mennonite Church on Nov. 1. Originally from Winnipeg, she has lived in the United States since 2007; most recently she pastored at Faith Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan. She earned a master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and is working on breaking 90 in golf.

—BY GLADYS TERICHOW

## /// Briefly noted

### Kindred receives platinum recognition



KITCHENER, ONT.—Kindred Credit Union has once again been included on the Aon Best Small & Medium Employers in Canada list and, for the first time, achieved Platinum Level recognition. “This recognition . . . is affirming because it indicates that we are doing right by our staff, which is very important to Kindred,” says Brent Zorgdrager, chief executive officer. The Aon program focusses on the measures that lead to sustainable business results and uses the most objective measure possible: employee opinion.

—Kindred Credit Union

## /// Briefly noted

### Bylaws committee questions generate discussion

LANGHAM, SASK.—Pastors and congregational leaders gathered at Langham Mennonite Fellowship on Nov. 24 for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's fall leadership assembly. Representatives from each of the regional church's commissions and ministries presented brief reports, which included questions for discussion.

One of the questions that generated the most discussion was the one posed by MC Saskatchewan's bylaws committee, made up of Tim Wiens and Kirsten Hamm-Epp. As it stands now, Wiens said, only baptized members may serve as delegates to the annual delegate sessions. “Given the decline in official membership,” he asked, “does this requirement still serve MC Saskatchewan well?” Responses ranged from, “Why is it so important?” to, “The issue of membership is important no matter how we define it.” No decisions or recommendations were made at the assembly. Leaders also spent time reflecting on the year of “Deepening our walk with Christ” and anticipating how congregations might apply what they've learned to next year's theme of “Deepening our walk with one another.”

—STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ



*Congregational leaders gathered for MC Saskatchewan's fall leadership assembly reflect on this year's theme of 'Deepening our walk with Christ.' Pictured from left to right, foreground: Rod Suderman, George Epp, Larry Epp and Eric Olfert.*

### Reading the Bible with Bryan Moyer Suderman



TORONTO—Songs and stories were highlights of the day at the GTA Mennonite Gathering, held on Oct. 27. Singer-songwriter Bryan Moyer Suderman (pictured) led a day-long workshop entitled “Reading the Bible with Jesus” at Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church, followed by a potluck dinner and a live concert. He asked how those gathered had experienced the Bible: as a “*light unto your path*” or as a wrestling match? “You're invited into the ring today to do some wrestling,” he said. He introduced attendees to a Christ-focused

method of reading through the gospels, led the group in an exploration of “the ways Jesus is portrayed as an interpreter of Scripture in Matthew's gospel,” and asked questions about how Christ references the Scripture and what kind of interpreter he appears to be in Matthew's telling. The workshop was interspersed with Moyer Suderman's original songs, emphatically sung with the accompaniment of an acoustic guitar. Moyer Suderman is a teaching associate at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) Church Leadership Center, and has partnered with AMBS to teach the “Reading the Bible with Jesus” workshop throughout North America. He is also an instructor in the Anabaptist Learning Workshop, a partnership between Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and Conrad Grebel University College.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY JOELLE KIDD

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# 'Living our values'

*Healthcare providers draft statement on end-of-life care*

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

When members of the Canadian Mennonite Health Assembly gathered at Menno Place in Abbotsford in early November to discuss this year's theme, "Living our values," medical assistance in dying (MAiD) was on the agenda.

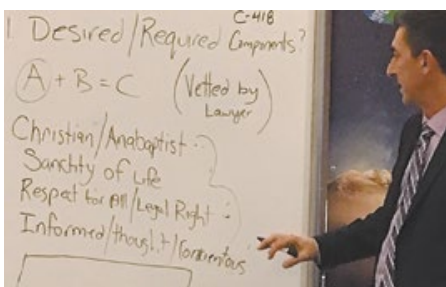
During the business session, members drafted the following statement:

"The Canadian Mennonite Health Assembly, as a faith-based organization, believes: All life originates as a creative expression of God; all human life is sacred from the moment of conception until the moment of death. Compelled by these values and the life of Jesus, we commit ourselves to provide exceptional care for our residents in body, mind and spirit."

This preliminary statement will be followed by legal consultation that will result in a final statement on the issue at a later date.

The Health Assembly is a group of 28 healthcare providers from Ontario to British Columbia that were founded through Mennonite people. Member organizations include Communitas Supportive Care Society and Menno Place in B.C., the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers in Alberta, Mennonite Homes of Saskatchewan Inc., Eden Health Care and Winnipeg Mennonite Seniors Care Inc. in Manitoba, and the St. Clair O'Connor Community and Parkwood Mennonite Home in Ontario.

The members' goal is to serve the healthcare needs of individuals, particularly the frail and vulnerable, as faith-based providers, with many retaining Mennonite leadership through their boards and executive staff. Their values include spirituality and prayer, human dignity and compassion for all people, stewardship, justice, peace and reconciliation, and ethical rigor.



*Michael Sambrook guides members of the Canadian Mennonite Health Assembly in drafting a statement on medical assistance in dying based on the group's values.*

In the assembly's opening session, lawyer Kevin Boonstra summarized the changing climate of religious freedom in Canada. Boonstra had represented Trinity Western University of Langley, B.C., in its case with the Supreme Court of Canada regarding establishment of a law school, a case that the university ultimately lost.

Keynote speaker Michael Sambrook of Brackish Consulting, an executive coaching/consulting practice, led the group in three workshops on decision-making and transformational servant leadership. He talked about the "Four Cs of Leadership":

- CLARITY OF vision;
- COMPETENCY WORTH following;
- CONFIDENCE TO be lonely; and
- COMPASSION WITH passion.

He led the group in discussing values-based decision-making, emphasizing that knowing people's values helps in understanding them. "What we value infiltrates every decision we make," he said, adding, "Check your credit card statement and your day-timer to see what you really value!"

In a session on personal values, Sambrook noted that intentional work in leadership has to do with who people are: "Values are a huge part of that. Our role is to serve as Christ served."

The weekend concluded with a communion service led by the spiritual care coordinators at Menno Place. ☘

## ☘ Briefly noted

### Eigenheim Mennonite fills MCC Buckets of Thanks

When Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan put out the call for churches and other groups to participate in its Buckets of Thanks challenge, Eigenheim Mennonite Church, near Rosthern, answered the call. Buckets of Thanks is an opportunity for young and old alike to assemble relief kits for MCC. When Eigenheim Mennonite decided to participate, it aimed to raise \$1,750 to offset the cost of 35 kits. The event was held on Oct. 14, following the church's Thanksgiving dinner. Children and adults lined up to fill buckets with bath towels, soap, toothbrushes and all the other items needed to create MCC relief kits. The congregation assembled 36 kits in about 30 minutes and raised more than \$2,100. When told that some congregations are planning to hold a Buckets of Thanks event as a Christmas project, one congregant said, "Maybe we should do this again at Christmastime."

—STORY AND PHOTO

BY DONNA SCHULZ



*Lee Warkentin, left, helps his son Ethan pack a bottle of shampoo into his relief kit bucket as others line up behind them.*



# 'Bring us beyond our own stories'

*KGB research into missing and murdered Mennonites raises broad questions*

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

Among the voluminous lists of those who disappeared during the dark times in what is now Ukraine, researchers have found roughly 400 pages of Mennonite names, with five or six names per page. That is just for Zaporizhzhia province. The lists for all Ukrainian provinces are available online (reabit.org.ua), though printed in Cyrillic script.

Each name a tragedy. Many a mystery. A husband, a father, occasionally a mother or wife, all taken, nothing more known. Families splintered. Communities shattered. Grim mysteries lingering, as mysteries do.

And, of course, the disappearances fuelled dislocation, as the violence drove Mennonites to new lands.

How did these gaping horrors shape families? How did the accumulation of thousands of such stories shape a people? How do legacies of disappearance and dislocation influence our response to the many other such stories continually unfolding in our world, including among Mennonites in the Global South?

Last February, the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg announced an initiative to dig into the now-open former-KGB records in Ukraine, uncovering trauma and mysteries of the Russian Mennonite past. Aileen Friesen, who is coordinating this effort as it takes shape, hopes this look into a specific past will generate consideration of the broader present.

Starting in 2006, Ukrainian authorities published thick books, separated by province and available online, containing lists of names of the disappeared, along with a brief summary of each case. The Centre's initiative has begun to translate these descriptions, starting with the book



*Case descriptions for thousands of Mennonites who disappeared in Ukraine are now available online. This one shows an Abram Klassen.*

for Zaporizhzhia province, picking the Mennonite names out of the lists.

Friesen, who is the Centre's co-director, says that thus far roughly 100 descriptions have been translated by two part-time translators. She expects a first batch of translated descriptions to be posted on the Centre's website in January.

The descriptions typically include a name, date of birth, place of birth, charge against the person, the sentence, indication of whether the sentence was carried out, date of execution when applicable, and location of burial site or indication that the place of burial is unknown. Some descriptions include a photo of the person.

The descriptions also include file names of the fuller files for each person. These files—held by state archives or the Security Service of Ukraine (known as the SBU, successor to the KGB in Ukraine)—contain things such as interviews with witnesses, records of interrogations and records of

how these cases were reviewed years later. Sometimes they include records of the reversals of original sentences.

While certain Mennonites will be very interested in discovering more about loved ones who went missing, and while Friesen willingly responds to such queries to the extent she can, she says the overall goal of the project "is to bring us beyond our own stories."

She says she hopes the project "initiates a broader conversation about trauma and community." She hopes that Mennonites will see our collective story in the broader context of dislocation in the world. "Our story is part of a broader story of dislocation," she says.

Friesen's personal interest in the research includes questions of how the disappearance of men influenced communities on the ground level. How did women deal with the pain of loss, the pain of not knowing what happened, and the tasks of managing a household shorthanded?

She is also interested in the effect of neighbours sometimes reporting each other to authorities, often under harsh threat. How did resulting animosity, or, conversely, guilt of informers and their families, play out and shape communities?

For Friesen, the initiative is not "about making this one specific story sacred," but rather, drawing on history to ask "bigger questions about the world."

For that to happen, the history must be known. The KGB research follows the Centre's publication of the popular book, *The Russian Mennonite Story*, in 2018, which brings that history back in a highly readable and richly illustrated coffee-table volume. The book was recently reprinted, following swift sales of the first thousand copies. Proceeds of book sales go toward the KGB work, which is linked to the establishment of the Paul Toews Professorship in Russian Mennonite History.

Friesen says that she and her colleagues are looking to building that fund to enable the translation work to progress. For her, the goal of both the book and KGB research is to re-engage with history, and to use that history to engage in our current world as our splintered stories sensitize us to the splintered stories of others. ❧



PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

*Table group sharing, a multi-cultural potluck, pictured, and a participatory concert featuring the diverse languages and foods of Edmonton's Mennonite churches rounded out a celebratory fundraiser for the North Edmonton Ministry, at Lendrum Mennonite Church on Nov. 10. The ministry, a Mennonite Church Alberta project, exists to be a witness to the life of Jesus by building bridges of understanding between differing faiths and cultures—Christians and Muslims in particular—within the city and beyond. Donna Entz, MC Alberta's outreach worker, shared stories and encouraged Mennonite churches to consider how they are a witness to who Jesus is among and beyond the Mennonite church. Although attendance was only about 50, five MC Alberta congregations in Edmonton were represented, and \$1,500 was donated toward the ministry. To view a video of members of Edmonton Christian Life Community Church offering a Cantonese song during the multicultural concert, visit [canadianmennonite.org/cantonese-song](http://canadianmennonite.org/cantonese-song).*



## God at Work in the World Snapshots



PHOTO BY DOUG AMSTUTZ

*The Mennonite Women in Mission group at Poole Mennonite Church celebrated 100 years of service on Nov. 6 at a church banquet for seniors. Stories were shared about the mission over the years, and Pastor Fred Redekop offered thanks on behalf of those who received the blankets: Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and those who were in need during the crisis in Russia a century ago, including his own family. The women continue to meet once a month to enjoy fellowship and working together. The quilts and comforters that they make are sent overseas through MCC and are shared locally in cases of need.*



## GOD AT WORK IN US

# Thankfulness in a taxicab

*One senior's surprising encounter with a taxi driver*

BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

PRINCE ALBERT, SASK.

**E**va Klaassen lives in a seniors housing complex in Prince Albert. She doesn't own a car, so every Sunday morning she takes a taxi to Grace Mennonite Church. Many of the drivers are new to Canada, she says, but all are very friendly.

Often, when they find out that she wants them to take her to church, drivers will ask her to say a prayer for them. She says she told one driver, "I can pray for you, but God is everywhere. You can pray to him, too."

One Sunday the taxi driver had a more specific request. He told her that his wife was still living in Dubai and he asked her whether she would pray that his wife could



Eva Klaassen

come to Canada. When she readily agreed to pray, he wrote his name and his wife's name on a slip of paper and gave it to Klaassen, so that she could pray for them more effectively.

The driver's name was Kijab and his wife's was Bimala. Klaassen prayed for them, as promised, but

she wondered how she would ever know if her prayers had been answered.

Then one Sunday in September, after the service was over, a man approached her. "I'm Kijab," he reminded her.

"Where's your wife?" she asked him, to which Kijab replied, "She's right here."

He then indicated his wife, standing a little ways behind him. She had arrived in

Canada the previous week.

"She smiled at me and we just hugged and hugged and hugged," says Klaassen. Kijab brought his wife to Klaassen's church to thank her for praying for them.

"It is wonderful how he believed in prayer," she says, "and I'm so impressed that they came to say thank you." ❧

## /// Briefly noted

### Canadian Mennonite leads to conversation on a bus

Gerald Neufeld of Surrey, B.C., takes the bus twice a week to Abbotsford, where he works part-time as music coordinator for Emmanuel Mennonite Church. Recently, a copy of *Canadian Mennonite* led to an interesting encounter. "I'm looking for opportunities to take initiative and reach out to others," Neufeld says. "I've ended up meeting a lot of new people and having some meaningful conversations. All it took was for me to keep my eyes open, looking for new opportunities, and praying that God would lead. I've met a lot of interesting people on my bus ride between Surrey and Abbotsford," he continues. "There was one time, I'm sitting at the back of the bus, reading a copy of *Canadian Mennonite* magazine. Sitting nearby is a guy who is kind of scary-looking. Eyes wide, he comes over to me and says, 'Is that a Jesus book? Is that a Jesus book?' 'Um, well it's Christian. There's stuff about Jesus in here,'" Neufeld responds. "I wasn't quite sure how to react," he admits. "He comes closer," Neufeld says of the other passenger, who makes him an offer: "I'll give you three smokes for it!" Then with a smile the man adds, "Ah, just pulling your leg!" "Some people are pretty hard to figure out," Neufeld says. "I guess you meet all kinds."

—BY AMY DUECKMAN

## /// Staff change

### Jean Lehn Epp appointed as new interim coordinator of youth ministry resources



• **JEAN LEHN EPP** began her job as Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's interim coordinator of youth ministry resources, a new position, on Dec. 1. She will connect congregations with youth ministry resources and promote annual events for the training of youth, pastors, youth workers, sponsors and parents. She will purposefully connect with youth ministry staff within MC Eastern Canada congregations and regularly share insights and lessons with the regional church community. As an ordained minister and a certified coach practitioner, she brings a passion and a depth of experience in working with youth and those who support them. "I am very excited to be laying the groundwork for networking and sharing of youth ministry resources within the [regional] church family," Lehn Epp says. An intentional consultation process begins in January 2019 to discern directions and actions to support youth ministry into the future. An outside facilitator will lead the consultation and will include equal numbers of youth and adult participants. The process will conclude by April 2019, with findings presented at the regional church's annual gathering.

—MC Eastern Canada

## ARTBEAT

## BOOK REVIEW

# Biography turns into Old Colony history

*The Ältester: Herman D. W. Friesen, A Mennonite Leader in Changing Times.*  
Bruce Guenther. University of Regina Press, 2018, 310 pages.

BY BARB DRAPER  
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

Although Bruce Guenther set out to write a biography of his grandfather, Herman D.W. Friesen, it turned out to be more of a history of the Old Colony Mennonites in the Hague-Osler area of Saskatchewan.

Guenther had no diaries or personal letters to work with, and some of the relatives were reticent to talk about their personal experiences with Friesen, so personal information was limited. However, *The Ältester* provides a valuable description of this Old Colony community and how it changed under Friesen's leadership.

In the 1890s, Mennonite families from Manitoba began moving to the Hague-Osler Reserve in what was then the Northwest Territories, including the families of Herman Friesen and his wife, Margaretha Banman. Their parents had been born in Russia, arriving in southern Manitoba in the 1870s. Twenty years later, land opportunities were taking homesteaders farther west, where they again tried to establish the traditional Mennonite village way of life.

In the early 1920s, while Herman and Margaretha were still teenagers, thousands of their people moved to Mexico rather than submit to the requirement to send their children to English-language public schools. The pressure was intense, as Manitoba and Saskatchewan wanted to make these German-speaking children of conscientious objectors into better Canadian citizens. Between 1918 and



1925, many Old Colony families were prosecuted, resulting in fines and imprisonment.

The move to Mexico was intended to include the entire Old Colony Mennonite Church, and in Manitoba most people moved. In the Hague-Osler area of Saskatchewan, where the

community was less established, only a quarter of the Old Colony people emigrated. The people of Hague-Osler had not been included in the original land deal in Chihuahua, Mexico, so some of them moved to Durango State later.

There was no official Old Colony church in Manitoba for a time, but in Hague-Osler two ministers never left. In 1930, Johann Loepky was chosen as the new *Ältester* (elder) by the Old Colony people who remained in Canada. Church leaders in Mexico did not sanction this move, and fraternal ties were broken between the churches in Mexico and Canada. Loepky helped to organize the Old Colony Mennonite Church in Manitoba in 1936.

Herman and Margaretha were married in 1928 and were blessed with 13 children. They struggled during the 1930s, but eventually their farm prospered. Herman was not hesitant to use new technology and machinery, and the family used cars, telephones, electricity and radios, as they became available. When he became a minister in 1962, he became stricter, but under his leadership the Old Colony community became less culturally isolated than it had been.

After his death, it again moved in a more traditional direction.

The 65 sermons in Herman Friesen's collection were handwritten in German Gothic script. This book includes some short descriptions of them and the complete text of several more, as well as a chart showing all the places he preached. Together with the biographical details collected by Guenther, it provides good insight into the life of Old Colony Mennonites in Saskatchewan.

It is a shame that so little personal information about Herman Friesen is available, resulting in a rather sketchy character profile, but Guenther has produced an important history of Old Colony Mennonites in Canada. ❧



PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

**Instruments and voices joined together for Mennonite Church B.C.'s third annual Symphony of Hymns, held Nov. 10 at Vancouver's Sherbrooke Mennonite Church and Nov. 11 in Abbotsford's Level Ground Mennonite Church. The combined audience was 300. Pictured, local professional violinist Calvin Dyck, foreground, leads the audience in song, along with musicians, seated from left to right: Sonja Hindmarsh on violin, Alyssa Hordyk on flute, and Christopher Lee on clarinet. The program alternated between audience hymn-singing and instrumental solos and ensemble pieces. Sponsored by the MCB.C. Finance Committee, this year's event was the first to have concerts in two locations, netting \$30,000 in offerings to support the regional church.**



# 'A relationship between colleagues'

*Father and son share concert stage as choir conductors*

BY GLADYS TERICHOW

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

WINNIPEG

Choir conductors Ben Pauls and his son Matthew share enthusiasm, talent and a passion for choral music. This fall, they had the unexpected opportunity to share the stage at a fundraising concert for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

The concert—the first they shared together as conductors—featured a joint performance of the Faith and Life Male Choir conducted by Ben and the Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) Men's Chorus conducted by Matthew. Collaborating with his father, Matthew arranged one of the songs they sang.

"I have come to realize what used to be a relationship of father as a conductor and son as a soloist has become a relationship between colleagues," says Ben. "I value Matthew's thoughts and inputs."

Ben never envisioned a musical career when he was attending a one-room country school near Morden, Man. He took piano lessons and enjoyed singing, but studying music was unplanned. After high school, he enrolled in the music program in what is now CMU. "The other programs had too much reading and too much writing, so I took music," he says.

As part of a conducting course at CMU, Ben had the opportunity to direct a 100-voice student and community oratorio choir during one of its rehearsals. "I still remember the feeling—when I lifted my arms, they all sang. They sang just because I was leading. It was hugely rewarding and satisfying. That experience was very encouraging and affirming."

His studies led to a career of teaching music, and pastoral ministry. In 1986, he earned a master's degree with a choral conducting major from the Westminster Choir College of Rider University, one of the world's leading centres for choral study

and performance, located in New Jersey.

Matthew, meanwhile, grew up in a home filled with music. His early childhood was spent in Asunción, Paraguay, where Ben taught music at the Evangelical Mennonite Theological Centre for almost 10 years.

"Music was Dad's world—music was everywhere," recalls Matthew. "Dad quizzed us on just about any classical music just about anywhere—in the car, at home, when we stopped by his office at school. He would ask us what kinds of instruments we heard and if we could guess who wrote it. Sometimes he also asked us what kind of a piece it was. For example, if it was a symphony or a piano concerto."

One of Matthew's early childhood memories is the first time he heard Franz Schubert's "Erlkönig." "I remember being mesmerized by the drama in the music," he says. "We had stopped by my dad's office for a bit, and he was listening to it. He started it from the beginning so I could experience the full effect of the song."

During his first year at CMU, Matthew took courses to prepare for church youth ministry, but by his second year he decided to pursue a career in music. "I realized that I certainly had an affinity for music," he says. "My musical ear had been developed through everyday life."

Matthew joined the CMU faculty as assistant professor of music in 2015, and recently completed his doctor of musical arts degree in vocal performance. Among his many musical accomplishments are his performances as a featured soloist with numerous symphony orchestras and chamber choirs.

The musical careers for father and son intersected at the Foodgrains Bank fall fundraising concert, which began with separate performances by the choirs they



*Choir conductors Ben Pauls and his son Matthew enjoy using their talent, energy and enthusiasm to bring people together through choral music.*

were conducting, and culminated with a joint performance of five songs. Each choir consisted of about 35 people.

As conductors, they help choir members understand, appreciate and convey the deeper meanings of the lyrics and music. The Faith and Life Male Choir sang "The Lord's Prayer." Ben says the words, "Give us this day our daily bread," serve as a reminder that food is a basic essential that cannot be taken for granted.

The joint performance included a song based on the writings of Menno Simons: "True evangelical faith cannot lie sleeping, for it clothes the naked, it comforts the sorrowful, and it gives to the hungry food, and it shelters the destitute."

"Certainly each choir fed off the energy of the other, but it was also a bringing together of older voices and younger, combining the academic university voices with the larger church community," says Ben. "Together, we focussed on one of the mandates that Jesus gives us: If someone is hungry, give him something to eat." ❧

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Mennonite women explored the theme “Talkin’ ’bout a revolution: Dialogue, practice and the work of liberation.”  
[canadianmennonite.org/women-theology-2018](http://canadianmennonite.org/women-theology-2018)

**Mennonites talking**

Will Braun collected reactions to the Miriam Toews novel and offers final thoughts of his own.  
[canadianmennonite.org/mennonites-talking](http://canadianmennonite.org/mennonites-talking)



*Stroll through the moral maze of Mennonite generosity with Will Braun. Watch it now:*  
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## Schools Directory featuring Westgate Mennonite Collegiate

# Music administrator of the year

*Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg*

Major part of life at Westgate. Our band and choir programs depend on a number of factors to thrive. Talented directors, dedicated students and lots of practice are the first things which come to mind. However, the infrastructure behind these programs and the role administrators play in helping our musicians flourish are rarely thought of.

Recently, our principal, Bob Hummelt, was recognized by the Manitoba Band Association (MBA) as the top music administrator of 2018. This organization comprises more than 400 music educators, students and community members, and every year the award is given to a current school administrator who has made an outstanding contribution to music education in Manitoba. Westgate's band director Ross Brownlee nominated Hummelt, and the selection committee was unanimous in its decision to name him as this year's outstanding administrator.

The award was presented at the MBA's annual general meeting, at which Brownlee delivered a speech highlighting Hummelt's numerous contributions to the school's musical programs. He spoke about Hummelt's approval to undergo a massive overhaul of the school's instruments, his commitment to the 12-day band and choir tour that takes place every two years across multiple cities, and his ensuring that there are minimal scheduling

conflicts for music students.

But it was a story from Hummelt's childhood that really moved the audience—an unfortunate experience in which he was the sole student not to be selected to sing in a final performance for the Winnipeg Music Festival. Despite this, he has gone on to become a champion of music education.

As Brownlee recalled at the luncheon: "There are so many ways in which Bob shows his support: from attending festival performances, making introductory remarks at each of our many concerts, shuttling kids to and from rehearsals in our bus, and being a huge professional development supporter. Bob has been nothing but a support to the music programs as a whole, and to me as a person."



WESTGATE MENNONITE COLLEGIATE PHOTO  
*Pictured from left to right: choir director Vic Pankratz, principal Bob Hummelt and band director Ross Brownlee.*

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## Young people invited to be ‘rattled by the radical’

*Nationwide youth gathering in Saskatchewan planned for next summer*

BY AARON EPP  
Young Voices Editor



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIRSTEN HAMM-EPP

*‘We want [youth who attend] to encounter the living God,’ says Kathy Giesbrecht, co-organizer of ‘Shake: Rattled by the radical.’*



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIRSTEN HAMM-EPP

*Kirsten Hamm-Epp is co-organizing ‘Shake: Rattled by the radical.’*

Leadership from two of Mennonite Church Canada’s regional churches are inviting youth from across Canada to a gathering in Saskatchewan next summer.

“Shake: Rattled by the radical” is happening from July 28 to Aug. 1, 2019, at Shekinah Retreat Centre, near Waldheim. The event will feature worship, learning and activities for young people in grades 6 to 12.

“The planning partnership is between [two] regional churches—MC Saskatchewan and MC Manitoba—but the invitation is a nationwide one,” says Kathy Giesbrecht, associate director of leadership ministries at MC Manitoba and one of the event’s organizers. “We want [youth who attend] to encounter the living God in a way that grounds and rattles them. We’d love for them to embrace the invitation to follow and be engaged in God’s mission.”

Giesbrecht is leading Shake’s organizing committee along with Kirsten Hamm-Epp, the regional church minister responsible for youth programming at MC Saskatchewan.

The committee will release more information about the event, including registration details, in January.

While deciding on a topic for the gathering, the organizing committee discussed the question, “What keeps our youth up at night?” The “Rattled by the radical” theme was chosen because it speaks to concerns youth carry about things like climate change, human rights and war, Giesbrecht says.

“We want to bring our faith to bear upon those things, and hopefully liberate us—release our [youth] from some of the anxiety that some of these concerns bring to them,” she says. “Being shaken by the radical is



PHOTO BY IRMA SULISTYORINI

*Shekinah Retreat Centre is located on 116 hectares in the North Saskatchewan River Valley.*



being shaken from some of the ways our culture can chain us—to really be freed by our faith and our belovedness.”

Organizers are being intentional about the way they use Shekinah Retreat Centre, which is located 45 minutes north of Saskatoon on 116 hectares in the North Saskatchewan River Valley.

“Being there will shape our schedule,” Giesbrecht says. “We don’t want to gather and be oblivious to the fact that we’re in this place that calls us to look and see the creation of God.”

“Certainly for the youth of Saskatchewan, Shekinah is a holy place,” she adds. “I’m sure when the rest of us gather, we will find

that to be the case as well.”

Giesbrecht and her colleagues are organizing the event because they see great value in gathering as a nationwide church.

The regional churches that make up MC Canada “share a long, wide and deep partnership and covenant, and I think when our [youth] actually can experience that and come together, it deepens their sense they belong to something that’s much larger than their week-to-week experience in their congregation or province,” she says. “It gives them an even greater sense of imagination of who we are and what we’re up to.” ❧

## Looking back and looking ahead

*Young adults share what they learned in 2018, and what they hope for in 2019*

COMPILED BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Editor

**C**anadian Mennonite asked eight young adults from across Mennonite Church Canada to look back on the year that was and to look ahead to the year that will be. These are their reflections, which have been edited for length and clarity.

### What did you learn in 2018?

“In 2018, I learned the importance of accepting support from those closest to me. Not only did it help me in times that I was stressed or down, but it also helped build relationship with those people. I also continued to learn the importance of appreciating where you are now rather than wishing away time looking forward to something in the future. I found this makes life a lot more enjoyable.”

**MICHAEL TAVES**, 23, lives in Edmonton, where he is a member of First Mennonite Church. He recently finished a bachelor of science degree at the University of Alberta.

“This year I have been invited to trust God to a new depth. I wouldn’t have been able to learn this to such an extent had I not been companioned by a deeply grounding sense of peace, a peace which has gifted me

with the willingness to consent [surrender] to the longings that Christ has for me. It might be messy, it might be hard and it will be good.”

**THOMAS FRIESEN**, 28, is a spiritual director in Saskatoon. He and his wife are the house coordinators at Vine & Table, an intentional community for Christian young adults. He worships at Osler (Sask.) Mennonite Church.

“I have learned about the pervasiveness of trauma as well as incredible resilience. Since trauma is held in the body, healing can be found in movement and breathing together, which can intentionally be brought into church through embodied worship. I have found play to be a central, life-giving spiritual practice in which we can release control, deepen relationships

*(Continued on page 30)*



PHOTO BY KRISTA LOEWEN

*Leaders from MC Saskatchewan and MC Manitoba are planning a youth gathering in Saskatchewan this summer.*



**Michael Taves**



**Thomas Friesen**



**Rianna Isaak-Krauss**



**Anna Bigland-Pritchard**



**Natasha Neustaedter Barg**



**Madeleine Neufeld**



**Heather Driedger**



**Martin Bauman**

*(Continued from page 29)*

and broaden creativity. As we face the multiple crises of climate change, oppression and war, a perspective of playfulness increases personal and community resilience and deepens relationships.”

**RIANNA ISAAK-KRAUSS, 27**, grew up in Winnipeg. She currently lives in Elkhart, Ind., where she studies Christian formation at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and worships at Fellowship of Hope.

“This year has been an incredible adventure of growth for me, but I can boil the lessons I’ve received down to this: I learned to love myself this year. On my travels to Taizé, therapy, nature, church and yoga classes, I have been shown that God embraces me from my core. God is not far away and cold, God is in everything and everyone—including me.”

**ANNA BIGLAND-PRITCHARD, 25**, lives in Winnipeg, where she is the current artist-in-residence at Bethel Mennonite Church. She is also a voice student, voice teacher, college music chaplain and a member of the children’s band Seanster and the Monsters.

### **What is your hope for 2019?**

“One of the expectations that I feel from the church, my family, friends and myself is to learn about the Vietnamese culture because I am immersed in it. However, in Winnipeg where I have been immersed in Indigenous culture for 20 years [Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada are all words that have Indigenous roots], there hasn’t been the same pressure or expectation to learn about the culture. My hope for 2019 is that more pressure will be put on people to learn about the cultures that are surrounding them every day.”

**NATASHA NEUSTAEDTER BARG, 20**, is from Winnipeg, where she attends Douglas Mennonite Church. She is currently serving in Vietnam with Mennonite Central Committee’s Serving and Learning Together program.

“I hope for deeper knowledge, wisdom and experience for myself. I hope for the congregations of the Meeting House to live in closer and intentional community

with each other. I hope that the Mennonite church finds peace in difficult conversation and becomes more and more like the eternal loving Christ. I hope that Canada learns to take climate change seriously. I hope the people of the world dedicate themselves to stewarding this Earth. I hope that 2019 sees an increase in peace and civil society, in food security and diplomacy.”

**MADELEINE NEUFELD, 20**, lives in Waterloo, Ont., where she is studying peace and conflict, and political science, at the University of Waterloo. She is president of the Conrad Grebel University College Student Council and attends church at the Meeting House.

“2018 often left me with moments of lament and doubt. As a young-ish person in the age of anxiety, I experienced many feelings of stress surrounding the future of the church, church organizations, climate change and job security. 2018 was also a year I lost two dearly-loved peers, friends who passed well before their time. In 2019, my hope for work, life and my community is to find signs of hope and be a beacon of hope to those around me. As Desmond Tutu said, ‘Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.’”

**HEATHER DRIEDGER, 32**, is the director of Parkland Restorative Justice, a Mennonite Church Saskatchewan-sponsored prison visitation and offender support organization based in Prince Albert, where she is a member of Grace Mennonite Church.

“Peace and understanding. Love instead of divisiveness. Less walls and more bridges. Mostly, I hope for the courage and strength of character to live out these ideals in my own practice—not just when it’s easy, but when it’s hard, too.”

**MARTIN BAUMAN, 26**, lives in Victoria, B.C., where he is pursuing a master’s degree in creative nonfiction at the University of Victoria. He is originally from Waterloo, Ont., and his home congregation is Hawkesville Mennonite Church. ✎

*After seven-and-a-half years—and 445 articles—Young Voices comes to an end with this issue. Thanks to all of our contributors and YV editors since 2011.*



## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Jan. 31:** "How to keep young adults engaged in the local church" event to discuss insights from the Renegotiating Faith Study, at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, from 7 to 9 p.m.

### Alberta

**Jan. 11-13:** Junior- and senior-high snow camp, at Camp Valaqua. Theme: "Don't stop believing."

**Jan. 18-20:** "The future of Anabaptism as a global movement," at Lendrum Mennonite Church, Edmonton. Speaker: John Roth of Goshen (Ind.) College. For more information, email [office@lendrumchurch.ca](mailto:office@lendrumchurch.ca).

### Saskatchewan

**Jan. 18:** RJC open house and Friday Night Live youth event.

### Manitoba

**Jan. 17:** Westgate Mennonite

Collegiate open house, at 7 p.m.

**Jan. 25:** Exhibitions by Winnipeg artists Anita Kroeger and Michael Boss open at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg. Runs until March 9.

**Jan. 25-27:** MC Manitoba senior-high youth retreat, at Camp Assiniboia.

**Jan. 31-Feb. 1:** Westgate Mennonite Collegiate presents three one-act plays by its junior-high students; at Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, Winnipeg.

**Feb. 1:** CMU campus visit day begins at 9 a.m.

### Ontario

**Jan. 19:** Anabaptist Learning Workshop for MC Eastern Canada pastors, chaplains and congregational leaders, at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, beginning at 8:15 a.m. Topic: "Caregiving in a #ChurchToo world." Keynote speaker: Marie Fortune.

**Jan. 24:** Anabaptist Learning Workshop—Bible caucus (Toronto region)—at Danforth Mennonite Church, Toronto

**Jan. 30:** MennoHomes' annual general meeting, at 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, at 2 p.m. For more information, call

226-476-2535.

**Please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by email**

**to [calendar@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:calendar@canadianmennonite.org). For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](http://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).**



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Mennonite Collegiate Institute, located in Gretna, Manitoba, is searching for a *principal* to start in August 2019.

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