

CANADIAN MENNONITE

June 24, 2019 Volume 23 Number 13



Confronting the fear of our history

It's time to recognize the colonial swords that we all carry, pg. 14

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INSIDE

- Four decades of welcome 4
- Walking and talking along the trail 18
- 'My place is right here' 20

EDITORIAL

Learning as we go

By Virginia A. Hostetler
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



When you read this, Gathering 2019 will be in progress or will already have happened. From June 28 to July 1, several hundred attendees from across Canada will meet in Abbotsford, B.C., for the first major event since the re-structuring of the Mennonite Church Canada. Thank you, MC British Columbia, for hosting this gang!

While getting together to worship and be inspired, to enjoy mealtime conversations and to do the business of the larger church is not new, this gathering has some new elements. A smaller staff for the nationwide church means that responsibilities for the gathering have been distributed in new ways. There will be some new faces, and some familiar faces may not be there. Congregations are no longer sending delegates for the decision-making of MC Canada; the delegates are now representing their respective regional churches (formerly called area churches or conferences).

Earlier this year, delegates from individual congregations did meet for inspiration and business in their own geographical areas. In February, MC B.C. held its annual meeting; we reported on it in “B.C. delegates engage together in ‘God’s mission’” (March 18, 2019 issue). MC Manitoba met at the beginning of March. You will find the report also in the March 18 issue, entitled, “New structure brings challenges and opportunities.” Following that came MC Saskatchewan’s annual meeting, covered in “Considering bylaws and budgets,” in the April 1 issue. MC Alberta delegates

gathered in mid-March; you can read about the event in “MC Alberta embraces new life, hope and possibilities,” in the April 1 issue. At the end of April, MC Eastern Canada gathered; that report is entitled “It’s all worship” and appears in the May 13 issue.

New things are happening at many levels of the church. This reality presents opportunities for courage and creativity, as well as an invitation to let go of some old patterns. We’re all learning as we go.

Watch for reports on Gathering 2019 in the July 22 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*.

Hello and goodbye

A new name appears in the masthead on page 3. We welcome Joanne De Jong, the new Alberta correspondent, who began on June 1. Joanne lives in Edmonton, where she attends Holyrood Mennonite Church with her husband Werner, who serves as pastor there. In the fall and winter of 2018, they volunteered at the Meserete Kristos College in Debrezeit, Ethiopia, mentoring and tutoring students, visiting, counselling and speaking. Joanne attends many events within MC Alberta and likes connecting with people there and in her own community.

Joanne joins *CM*’s team of correspondents who, along with Ontario writers Joelle Kidd (Greater Toronto area), Zach Charbonneau (Leamington area) and Maria H. Klassen (Niagara



area), are always on the lookout for news and “people stories” in their areas. Feel free to be in touch with the writer near you if you have suggestions for content that would interest *CM*’s readers.

And a time for goodbye. On page 12, columnist Melissa Miller says farewell after an almost-17-year stint with her *Family Ties* column. Through the years, she explored relationships—in our immediate families and within our communities and congregations. With a spirit of gentleness, she wrote about her own life in a way that was relevant to readers’ own experiences, both affirming and pushing them in how they live out their faith.

In Melissa’s first column, published in the Sept. 9, 2002, issue, she put forth a challenge that remains relevant: “As people of faith, can we draw on the resources of God’s love and the Spirit’s wisdom to strengthen our relationships?” As we say goodbye and thank you, that invitation inspires us toward ongoing faithfulness. Thank you, Melissa.

Digital

The next issue of *CM* will be digital-only, sent out on July 3. If you are a digital subscriber, it will appear in your email inbox, not with the usual PDF but with links to online stories. It’s not too late to sign up to receive that issue and the other digital issues that will go out during the summer and at the end of the year. See details on page 28 or at canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital.



This is a new direction for the magazine, so we welcome your feedback. While the commitment remains strong to the readers who prefer print, this new direction explores another way of communicating with readers, cuts down on the use of paper, and it saves on the costs of printing and mailing. The next print issue will be mailed on July 22. ☞



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CONTENTS

JUNE 24, 2019 / VOL. 23, NO. 13

ABOUT THE COVER:

'The church played an instrumental role in colonization and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples—no matter what the intentions were—so we all must work to decolonize,' writes Charity Nonkes, a peace and conflict studies major at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., in 'Confronting the fear of our history' on page 14.

PHOTO: LEONA LORTIE, MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

From rebellion to reconciliation 16

Senior writer **Will Braun** explores the attraction of Bridgefolk for 'sacramentally minded Mennonites and peace-minded Roman Catholics who come together to celebrate each other's traditions.'

The women of Alberta rediscover Mary 19

'It was like the Catholics got Mary in the divorce settlement and Mennonites got a 30-minute sermon,' **Irma Fast Dueck** told participants at this year's MC Alberta women's retreat.

Offering the gift of non-judgmental listening 25

Saskatchewan funeral officiant **Elaine Presnell** is pastor to those without a faith community.

Making art 'like breathing' for B.C. illustrator 26

For **Dona Park**, a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, making art is the equivalent of eating, sleeping and breathing. She does it every day because she needs to.

Four decades of welcome 4

A glimpse into Toronto United Mennonite Church's part in the early days of Canada's private-sponsorship program that is now celebrating its 40th anniversary.



Regular features:

For discussion 7 Readers write 8 Milestones 9
A moment from yesterday 10 Online NOW! 28
Schools Directory 28-29 Calendar 39 Classifieds 39

Building resource connections 10

Arlyn Friesen Epp

Passionate about front-yard living 11

Christina Bartel Barkman

202 columns later 12

Melissa Miller

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FEATURE

Four decades of welcome

A glimpse into one congregation's part in the early days of Canada's private-refugee-sponsorship program that is now celebrating its 40th anniversary

By Anne Konrad Dyck
Toronto United Mennonite Church



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HARRIET DICK

Harriet Dick, back right, and son Alan, back left, host a refugee family in the Dicks' backyard in Toronto.

Toronto United Mennonite Church was the first church in Canada to receive privately sponsored “boat people” who were fleeing Vietnam and Laos during the chaos of the Vietnam War.

Early in March 1979, an adult social-issues group meeting during the Sunday school period took the first step. The story of Southeast Asian refugees fleeing by boat had hit the headlines. Soon, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) stepped in to propose and secure a sponsorship agreement with the Canadian government that would allow private individuals and groups to sponsor refugees. MCC and the Government of Canada signed the agreement on March 5 of that year.

As church members watched TV reports of harrowing rescues of boatloads of Vietnamese people, or others waiting behind fences in refugee camps, we remembered the flight from oppression many of our own parents and grandparents had experienced in the past. We wanted to save the lives of as many people as possible.

Our church was ripe for a new project. With a copy of the agreement, a group began to organize. Harvey Dyck became the chair of the Southeast Asian Refugee Committee, and soon an overall philosophy and approach to a refugee-aid program was worked out.

Next thing we knew, a CBC-TV news crew was filming a refugee-aid committee meeting in the church’s “upper room,” as we discussed ways and means to sponsor these refugees.

Our first refugee family arrived in April 1979. Over the next two years, almost everyone in our hundred-member congregation was involved in the program. By the end of that period, our church had accepted and settled 49 Southeast Asian refugees in 13 groups ranging in size from one person to families of seven members.

Church members also stimulated interest in sponsorship through the media, speaking to other churches and lay groups in the city, and inviting neighbours and friends to get involved.



A Vietnamese couple's wedding in 1983, to which Nicholas and Harriet Dick were invited, a signal of their ongoing friendship. The Dicks played a big role in further refugee efforts, including helping to settle a very large extended family of Kosovars.

In this way, our church became the formal sponsor for a further 22 refugees undertaken by other Toronto groups: a student and staff group at Wycliffe College, a Mississauga family, a University of Toronto group and a group of schoolteachers. Three other Ontario Mennonite churches—Berea Mennonite Church near Drayton, Dunnville Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Fellowship that existed at that time in Brampton—became our partners.

MCC provided our church with advice on access to government-assistance programs and resources, in part by employing the invaluable Tinh Huynh, a Vietnamese man fluent in English who acted as interpreter and consultant. Along with our church volunteers, he went to Toronto Pearson International Airport to meet refugees and take them to local hotels. Later, he helped them find apartments. He assisted in orientation, visited them, and explained how to navigate the city to find donated clothes and furniture, or the city’s Chinatown. As interpreter, he and our volunteers accompanied refugees to Canada Manpower (as it was known at the time) to help them find jobs, to doctors’ offices, and to schools to help them register their children.

At the outset, the aim of church

sponsorship was not to overwhelm one family with loving care and encourage dependency, but to help as many desperate people as possible.

This policy was clearly explained to the refugees: that the house shelter was temporary and that our church group would assist them to adapt to Canadian life and to become self-sufficient as soon as possible. As a chair of the refugee-aid committee wrote, “The approach is based on Anabaptist-Mennonite principles of Christian love, corporate responsibility, mutual aid and decentralization directed to settling as many refugees as limited funds allow. ‘More with less’ is our watchword.”

Our settlement program excited nearly everyone in the church. It bloomed into committees and sub-committees. An early task was fundraising, and a big-budget item was housing. Because hotels were costly and the first family of seven was large, the congregation and refugee-aid committee decided to buy a seven-room house to be used for temporary housing. The price is hard to believe today, but in May 1979 the congregation approved the purchase of a house at 424 Jones Ave. for \$35,000. The money came from interest-free loans given by members and friends. When all our refugees

had secured their own permanent housing, this house was to be sold and the loans repaid to donors. By the end of 1980, two years later, the families had permanent housing.

The support policy is illustrated by the example of the Luong family. The seven-member family settled into the house at 424 Jones Ave. Another family, the Huang family, consisting of mother, father and three children, shared the house. The Luongs, two parents with five children, were given a base support of \$600 a month. Of this, \$270 was considered rent, and a first payment of \$330 was given to the family. As Family Allowance and earnings came in, and family members started getting jobs and earning money, these sums were deducted according to a set rate. In a short time, the support money was freed to assist another family.

The Luongs were eager to earn their own money and to make their own choices of food, clothing and shelter. One month after their arrival, both parents had been initiated, with language school for the mother and a factory job for the father, who spoke some English already. One son found a job, and within six months the family income was sufficient for them to move



Group photo from a picnic held at Willowgrove Camp in August 1979. Harriet Dick is pictured front left.

into an apartment of their choice. Congregants helped to find their new place, provided furniture and household equipment for their chosen apartment, and helped with the move. A new refugee family moved into 424 Jones.

Because our refugees came largely from urban backgrounds, we were confident they would soon succeed in making their way in Toronto, a city offering varied educational and job opportunities and quickly a growing Southeast Asian communities. With our relatively modest funds and many volunteers, we provided emotional support; housing; winter clothing; orientation to access

health, school, government assistance; and initial individual financial services. Once education and jobs got one group of refugees on its feet, it made room for another group.

Our congregants were active in many other practical ways, such as doing repairs and improvements to the settlement house. We helped with orientation, airport pickups, taking refugees to school, language classes or doctors, and training them in how to use public transportation. Congregants also spent informal time with our guests: on wagon rides and at potlucks and wiener roasts. For the first 23 refugees, we organized a welcome picnic along with members from the Dunnville, Berea and Brampton Mennonite congregations, as well as Toronto Evangelical Vietnamese Church.

At that time, the refugee-aid committee also reported “with gratitude” that \$30,000 had been committed to refugee work. This, along with the self-sufficiency policy, allowed the church to sponsor so many refugees.

Any family member able to work was encouraged to take a job and help the entire family to become self-sufficient. Our refugees agreed readily to the emphasis on self-sufficiency and

Beyond the ‘boat people’

WITH FILES BY EVAN HEISE

Toronto United Mennonite Church

The first concerted refugee-settlement initiative by Toronto United Mennonite Church was the welcoming of refugees fleeing Southeast Asia in the late '70s and early '80s. Soon, Mennonites in Canada began responding to refugees from Latin America. In Toronto, this resulted in the establishment of the Mennonite New Life Centre and Mennonite New Life Church, with whom Toronto United Mennonite still shares its building.

By the late '80s and '90s, our con-

gregation, in collaboration with the Mennonite New Life Centre, helped settle families from Latin America, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Liberia, Iraq and others.

In 2009-10, along with Mennonite Central Committee, our congregation responded to an appeal from the Canadian government to assist with the sponsorship of Palestinian refugees from a camp in eastern Syria. Along with three other congregations in the Greater Toronto Area, we welcomed two families and fully paid for their first year of life in Canada, walking with them through their adjustment.

Through the government-sponsorship option, called Blended Visa Office-Referred, especially vulnerable refugees are identified. Our church participated in

two such sponsorships, the first in 2013, with two, young, single Eritrean men who had grown up in a refugee camp in Sudan. The second was in 2017, with an Iranian family that had been hosted by Turkey for eight years as part of the Syrian crisis.

In 2018, we undertook a full sponsorship of a young man from Eritrea via Israel. He is now working full-time for a heavy-equipment manufacturer in Guelph, Ont., and looks forward to sponsoring his wife on his own next year.

This year, we responded to a financial appeal by a church member to assist with a Syrian refugee family that is being sponsored by another group he is a part of. Our church expects to welcome six Eritreans—young women and children—sometime this summer.

independence. The bare-bones approach allowed the committee to settle a total of 70 refugees!

Darrell Fast, our pastor at the time, along with the church board, worked with the refugee-aid committee to make the refugees feel welcome. Winfred and Jean Soong, then pastor of Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church and his wife, also helped with interpretation and welcomed refugees into their church, which some attended and later joined. Toronto Vietnamese Evangelical Church became a church home for some others.

As our church gained experience and saw that the refugee program was going well, we broadened our scope. In addition to the families we had committed to sponsor, we helped rural churches in their sponsorships, with those churches providing the funds. We also helped a local Vietnamese family to foster a set of four brothers.

Summarizing the benefits of the refugee project, in his 1979 annual report Harvey Dyck noted that the church budget had not suffered in the least. According to him, the settlement outreach had strengthened the spirit of cooperation among church members, attracted new friends, gave children and youth a lesson in practical Christianity, and helped broaden church members' perspectives beyond a "me first" ethic.

As a church-partner family wrote in December 1980: "Our refugee family are now living full, busy lives in Canada, taking English classes at night, the children enjoying our customs. They are no longer refugees, but immigrants, and we have been privileged to have this opportunity of sharing their resettlement here." ❧



Anne Konrad Dyck was an original member of the Toronto United Mennonite Church Southeast Asian Refugee Committee.



A horse-and-wagon ride at Willowgrove Camp in August 1979.

/// For discussion

1. Do you know people who fled Southeast Asia and came to Canada in the late 1970s and early '80s? Where are these people now? What services were important to integrate them into Canadian society? Through what process did some of them become part of the Mennonite church?
2. Information about Mennonite Central Committee Canada's agreement with the government regarding refugee resettlement appeared in the April 1, 2019, issue of *Canadian Mennonite*. It was signed on March 5, 1979, and Toronto United Mennonite Church welcomed its first refugees in April of that year. What does this timeline show about this congregation? Did other congregations respond in a similar way?
3. Toronto United Mennonite helped as many people as possible, encouraging newcomers to quickly become self-sufficient. What are the advantages or challenges of this approach? In what situations might this strategy be particularly difficult?
4. What part of Toronto United Mennonite's refugee sponsorship story do you find most inspiring? Where are the refugee crises today? Who is stepping up to help? What are some ways that congregations can work collaboratively to be more effective?

—By Barb Draper

See related resources at
www.commonword.ca/go/1762

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Bookstore and Resource Centre

OPINION

/// Readers write

✉ Where is the 'just and redemptive path forward' for Dalton Jantzi?

Re: "MC Eastern Canada apologizes for causing pain to abuse survivors," May 13, page 16.

It appears to me that this article is all about Mennonite Church Eastern Canada protecting itself due to its publication errors and not about the victim or Dalton Jantzi's efforts to follow what was required of him.

Most publications and organizations would have apologized to the individuals concerned and their families, and put a small retraction notice in the magazine. I noted that both the victim and Jantzi refused to comment, so why sensationalize something "that dates back more than 30 years"?

I question the integrity of the Mennonite Abuse Prevention (MAP) List. There were no apologies to Jantzi when incorrect information was posted on this site. I also noted that the efforts on Jantzi's part over the past 30 years have not been acknowledged anywhere on the MAP List. Why would *Canadian Mennonite* give MAP List a platform to publish unfounded claims?

It appears that MAP List is taking credit for Jantzi stepping away from his volunteer position. I know that the two organizations he volunteered at did not want him to leave, but he didn't want to bring any negative attention to the organizations. As the previous chair of one of those organizations, I know that his committed time and effort will be the organization's loss.

Where is MC Eastern Canada's articulated "just and redemptive path forward" in dealing with this situation? What more does Jantzi have to do to receive forgiveness?

BONNIE WRIGHT, TORONTO

✉ What will be next?

Re: "Queer and quirky and profoundly worthy of wonder," and "Creating space to work towards inclusion," April 29, pages 14 and 15, respectively.

Waterloo North Mennonite Church hosted a worship/workshop event to address barriers in the treatment of those who identify as LGBTQ+. But if the words "quirky, queer and wonderful" were interchanged for a phrase in a hymn in a worship service, I would leave running. As minds get more confused about sexual identity and queer theology, what will be next?

LEETTA ERB, STE. AGATHE, MAN.

✉ Pitfalls to making religious practices more meaningful

Periodically, *Canadian Mennonite* documents efforts to make religious practices more meaningful ("Ramping up the rituals," March 4, page 20; "Bringing diverse voices together," April 1, page 26; and "Come to the table," April 15, page 16). For me, that is both commendable and raises red flags.

I am increasingly aware that Jesus came to restore relationships between us and God, and us and all humanity. To that end, Jesus was obliged to "end" religion in his day and in ours. The Apostle Paul was equally adamant about this in Colossians 2.

Despite our Anabaptist spiritual heritage, I have observed that we allow buildings, rituals, rules, ordinances, worship styles, music, cultural differences and many other religious practices—all originating with noble intent—to become divisive, ends in themselves or idolized.

We barely follow the example of Jesus in baptism, and Christians have ritualized the memory of Jesus. Jesus and Paul did not intend that a symbolic remembrance of God's reconciling act in Jesus' life and death were to become liturgies or sacraments. John's gospel and Paul remind us that remembering the life and death of Jesus points to loving relationships. In the early church, communion meals were actual meals together. Never were they to be occasions for division (I Corinthians 11:17).

The Lord's Supper, on one hand, is for Jesus' disciples to proclaim and remember the divine mystery of God-in-Jesus offering us a reconciled relationship with God. Koinonia (Greek) and "communion" (English) point to Jesus' invitation for loving relationships among all people. Can we combine these emphases into one practice or ritual? New Testament writings suggest that both can happen during a communal "love feast."

Let's focus on the practical implications of our practices rather than be distracted by fine-tuning the ritual. It is important for ourselves, our children and for those still unsure about Jesus and the Way.

IVAN UNGER, CAMBRIDGE, ONT.

✉ Test the spirits: highly principled or holier than thou?

Re: "Murky lessons from a political firestorm," May 27, page 17.

Congratulations to Will Braun on his deft handling of a controversial subject.

It would appear that the emphasis on the SNC Lavalin file was a mere sidebar to the real core of the

issue: How does a body deal with internal conflicting views and forces without destroying itself?

What troubled me most was the emergence of an almost exclusive emphasis on the moral courage and highly principled positions and actions of Jodi Wilson-Raybould and Jane Philpott. One might therefore be tempted to view their fellow caucus members as spineless, cowardly and unprincipled.

Really?

The very public posture the former ministers project suggests to me a whiff of “holier than thou.” For us, it would seem that the scriptural injunction to believers to “test the spirits” requires more than a superficial judgment call.

The cautious and measured comments of former Mennonite politicians Berny Wiens and Ray Funk were appreciated.

FREDERIC WIELER, OAKVILLE, ONT.

✉ **Voices Together should restore the words of revered hymn**

While singing from the new *Voices Together* hymnal sampler, I came across the new, much-altered version of “This is My Father’s World.”

I grew up with this hymn, and the images of Maltbie Babcock’s poem are dear to me, especially the image of a benevolent God walking in nature and his “wind” moving the “rustling grass” in verse two. That whole line is now replaced.

And the removal of the very natural phrase “lily white,” to be replaced by “the dark of night” in the same verse, just ruins the hymn. It is an example of political correctness narrowly applied to an historical, classic hymn. Instead of making the poem more inclusive, the changes just make it exclusive in a different way, and the sampler’s editors just assume that the author had some bias, which he most surely didn’t have. It also is a mark of disrespect to the author, who is long dead and who has left us one of the great hymns.

The changes in verse 2 of the hymn also alter the whole viewpoint of the poem. In the original, the human is only watching and listening, not

“roaming”—not affecting creation, but just learning.

The first line—the title line—also made me realize that we humans don’t own nature, Mother Earth. We only live out our short lives here. But that has been changed to “This is God’s Wondrous World.” I agree that “God” should not have a pronoun, but in 1901 the term “Father” was pretty common.

Babcock’s poem is deeper than it seems, and the original version needs to be restored. Or, if the hymn editors want a different hymn, they should write their own and not ruin someone else’s.

PETER VOTH, AJAX, ONT.

/// **Milestones**

Births/Adoptions

Cressman—Maeve Kay (b. April 11, 2019), to Matthew and Faith Cressman, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Kowalko—Nova Aramburu (b. May 10, 2019), to Caleb and Triana Kowalko, First Mennonite, Calgary.

Kuepfer—Meredith Brooke (b. April 14, 2019), to Greg and Shelley Kuepfer, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Muns—Annette Lila (b. May 2, 2019), to Hannah and Paul Muns, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Tissen—Lincoln Daniel (b. May 21, 2019), to Daniel and Nicole Tissen, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Baptisms

Kyra Brown, Jacob Derksen, Zoe Driedger, Adrian Gualtieri, Cameron Koop, Megan Neufeld, Erik Pearson—North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., May 5, 2019.

Deaths

Elias—Justina (Jessie), 96 (b. Oct. 24, 1922; d. May 26, 2019), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Hiebert—Verna (Schellenberg), 84 (b. Oct. 11, 1934; d. April 18, 2019), Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Konrad—Anna (nee Flaming), 99 (b. Aug. 30, 1919; d. May 22, 2019), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Reimer—Helen (nee Bartsch), 93 (b. June 20, 1925; d. May 27, 2019), Cornerstone Church, (formerly Mayfair Mennonite), Saskatoon.

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 and include the author’s contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

Building resource connections

Arlyn Friesen Epp

CommonWord is just over four years old. In that short time we have doubled our sales (reaching more than 10,000 retail customers last year), more than doubled the number of website users, and have continued to circulate half of our loan materials outside Manitoba—and increasingly to people outside our immediate Mennonite Church Canada and Canadian Mennonite University communities. We are grateful for the many connections we have with you, and the wealth of resources and the Anabaptist Christian tradition we help to inspire.

What's on your summer reading list?

We have again compiled a short list of biography, poetry, spirituality and other inspirational titles to take with you to the beach, hammock or front porch.

Here are several written by friends of CommonWord:

- *Light and Shadow* by Tamara Franz. A poetic celebration of beauty found in all of life's experiences.
- *Four Gifts* by April Yamasaki. Self-care for the heart, soul, mind and body.
- *The Pastor-Congregation Duet* by Gary Harder. The music—and

dance—of the pastor-congregation relationship.

- *Living Our Prayer* by Betty Enns. A Mennonite Central Committee adventure in Lesotho.
- *Re-Encounters* by Judith Rempel Smucker. The exploration of a word.
- *Rise and Shine* by Mary Derksen. Forty-five years of church mission in Japan.
- *A Nourished Spirit* by Sue Clemmer Steiner. Reflections of thanksgiving.
- *Jump into the Story* by Ray Friesen. The art of creative preaching.
- *Enduring Art, Active Faith* by Robert Proudfoot. An anthology from three familial generations.
- *Peaceful at Heart* edited by Don Neufeld and Steve Thomas. Reflections on healthy masculinity.

These and others on our 11th annual summer reading list, to buy, borrow or access online, can be found at commonword.ca/go/1802.

#CommonRead

Let's read a common title together! Imagine a "book club" across all of MC Canada (and MC U.S.A.). We are partnering with Herald Press to make Meghan Good's new book, *The Bible Unwrapped*, available for small-group study at a

discounted price. We are also posting a free download guide, book reviews and additional resources at commonword.ca/go/1726. And we'll welcome receiving your group's feedback!

We think this is a wonderful title with which to begin this initiative. Drawing from the best of contemporary biblical scholarship and the ancient well of Christian tradition, Good demonstrates why the Bible matters and how it can be understood by people today. Please join us in a #CommonRead!

MennoMedia-CommonWord partnership

All Herald Press titles are available for sale at CommonWord (often below Amazon's price) and are also available to borrow. We encourage pastors, librarians, small group leaders and all interested readers to shop for Herald Press books at commonword.ca/go/1420. Recent titles reflect current social themes from an Anabaptist faith perspective: the opioid crisis, immigration, artificial intelligence. Other titles speak of the end times, or how we find God in the Old Testament. As part of our partnership, MennoMedia has established a new Canadian website—mennomedia.ca—for congregations to order their Sunday school curriculum and periodicals in Canadian dollars. ☞



Arlyn Friesen Epp is the director of CommonWord.

A moment from yesterday



From halfway across the world, a loyal MAID watcher noticed an error. This was not the Rainham church in 1965, as originally labelled by the photographer, but South Cayuga Mennonite Church, Dunnville, Ont. Comparing it to another photo of South Cayuga, he urged us to "look at the west end of this meetinghouse. Exact same porch, exact proportions, exact same pitch on the roof, and finally, the clincher is that there are 18 boards alongside the door. This . . . has to be . . . South Cayuga." We agree, and made the change in the description. Mennonite archivists are always grateful for the strong dedication to place and story found in our Mennonite communities.

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing
Photo: James Reusser / Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca

THIRD WAY FAMILY

Passionate about front-yard living

Christina Bartel Barkman

My pastor husband co-preached about living a front-yard life at a large joint worship service at the park last weekend. With three churches gathered together and probably half of our town at the park, the message of interacting with our neighbours in the front yard, instead of keeping isolated in a fenced-off backyard, rippled through our town this week.

A few days later, I got an invite for a local barbecue from a friend who said she was inspired by the sermon. And a few ladies told my husband that they were sitting in the front yard this week, as per their pastor's suggestion!

My own front-yard life involves playing outside with my kids. With my year-and-a-half-old son ripping around on his Strider bike all morning, I follow him around the neighbourhood and enjoy conversations with our neighbours. After school, I'm outside playing hockey or baseball with my bigger kids, and I usually end up in another yard chatting with a friend while my kids run around with neighbour friends.

One of our neighbours recently gave us a picnic table. It got carried over to our yard and placed in the driveway, and although we had intended to put it in the backyard, we quickly realized how nice it was to have a table in the front yard too.

I was chatting the other day with some ladies walking their horses by—we live in the country so this is a common occurrence—and one of them said she needed to find a stool to get back on to her horse, as she has a bad hip. I quickly offered our picnic table and the lady was very thankful to have a perfect spot to climb back onto her horse. And my four-year-old daughter was incredibly excited to see this beautiful horse right in front of our house. I did hope that our picnic table would encourage neighbourhood friends to come visit, but certainly didn't expect it to attract horses.

To me, though, living a front-yard life is more than choosing to have my morning coffee in the front yard, it's about being open and vulnerable with the people around me. It's about sharing my life with people, building community and welcoming people into our home, our yard and our family. It benefits our own family when we feel safe, watched over and comfortable in a neighbourhood that knows us, but we also seek to offer that security to others.

I volunteer at a program for single, low-income moms and have talked to several women who say they have no support network outside of the volunteers at the program. Several of them, after splitting up with a partner, have no one they can ask for help,

no one to help them move, no one to babysit their kids. It saddens me to see how isolated so many people are; I feel passionate about helping create caring, supportive communities.

In a society where people are busy, independent and task-oriented, I want to ensure that there's always space for long impromptu sidewalk chats, time to bake an extra batch of cookies to share with the neighbours, and weekend hours to spend working on the yard and watching the kids scooter on everyone's driveway.

I enjoy living in the front yard, but I also want that in all areas of my life; I want to have a posture of front-yard living when I visit with friends at church, when I volunteer with single moms and when I pick up my kids from school. I don't want to go about my day living in my backyard, keeping to myself and not allowing others into my space. The front-yard life of loving our neighbours, sharing with those in need and being open and vulnerable in our friendships will create the caring communities we all need. ❧



Christina Bartel Barkman, with her four little ones and her pastor husband, seeks to live out Jesus' creative and loving "third way" options.

Et cetera

The evolution of belief

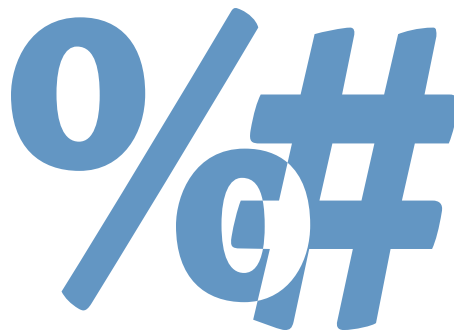
48 percent of Americans believe humans evolved, guided by a higher power.

33 percent believe in purely natural evolution (no God).

18 percent believe humans have always existed in their present form.

38 percent of white evangelicals believe humans have always existed in their present form; in Nicaragua, 48 percent of the population hold this belief.

Source: Pew Research Center



FAMILY TIES

202 columns later

Melissa Miller

Some years ago, I screwed up my courage and sent off an email to the editor of *Canadian Mennonite*. I offered to write a column on family relationships.

Proposing the column was one of the hardest things I ever did. I mulled over the idea for months, and when I actually sat down to contact the editor, I was so fidgety I could barely sit. Fear of rejection was probably the strongest obstacle, a familiar hindrance to many writers and artists. That fear, though, was held in tension with my abiding “passion for helping people develop healthy, vibrant relationships with God, self and others,” as my previous author bios indicated.

The passion won out. One thing led to another, and now 202 columns and four editors later, here we are.

The dream I had to be a columnist was ignited by another writer. When I first became a Mennonite, I enjoyed reading a magazine called *Christian Living*. Readers of a certain age and stripe of Mennonite will remember this publication. I especially enjoyed the punchy, pointed writing of Robert Baker in his “County Road 13” columns, and I hoped someday for a similar venue.

In the delightful way in which the Spirit works, I actually met and interviewed Robert for a writing project.

Subsequently, I served as his pastor during a brief interim; an experience I had with him there made its way into a column. Finally this week, while sorting through files, I happened upon his final column, written as *Christian Living* came to an end. I imagine the Spirit likes to play among us and in our dreams.

The focus of the column I proposed to *CM* was to be on family relationships, defining family in its broadest sense: biological, faith-based, communal. It was relatively easy to find material, given these different families and my keen engagement in the lives of those around me.

From the outset, I tried to write without causing harm or embarrassment. I was aware of the power of voice and print and wanted to be sensitive and careful of the stories I told. For the most part, I was able to hold true to that goal. I imagined my training as a counsellor would be put to use, and the column itself might actually help people to live well in their relationships.

I wasn't prepared for the warm, affectionate response that has come from you, Gentle Readers. I have been delighted and overwhelmed by the number of you who have let me know that you enjoy the column and find it offers meaningful guidance. The

obstacle I climbed over to make that first overture to *CM* is diminished in light of the affirmations the columns received. I have been guided by Paul's exhortation to Timothy that “*God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline*” (II Timothy 1:7). In short, don't let our fears prevent us from offering our gifts!

I also benefitted from challenging feedback, from readers who think I'm off-track. As noted in the recent series on difficult conversations, we need to talk with each other, especially about our differences, to hear how God is speaking through many voices. We need to exercise and strengthen our capacity to listen and speak respectfully, openly, and with curiosity and humility.

Gentle Reader, the time has come to bring this column to a close. I write with sadness, for I have been grateful for the opportunity to place my heartfelt reflections before you, and will miss the monthly commitment. Yet I am winding down a number of activities in preparation for a new season of life, and I have a strong urge to clear space for whatever will emerge. From the bottom of my heart, I say thank you. ☺



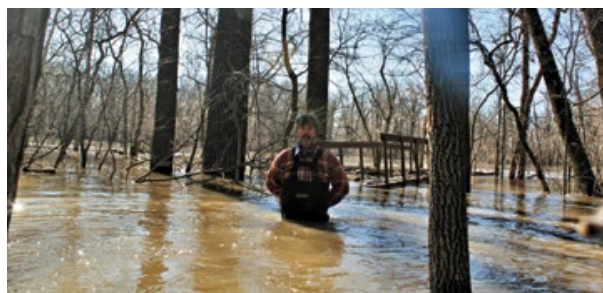
Melissa Miller is a pastor and writer soon to be moving from Manitoba to Ontario. She has written Family Ties monthly since 2002 and retains her keen passion for helping others to enjoy healthy relationships.

Et cetera

Flooding the major cause for disaster assistance in Canada

According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, damage from flooding accounted for 80 percent of federal assistance for disasters over the past 20 years. In 2016, the insured damage was more than \$4.9 billion, passing the previous record of \$3.2 billion set in 2013. Around the world, the cost of disasters has increased five-fold since the 1980s.

Source: The Government of Canada website
Photo: Kathryn Hogue / Camp Assiniboia



David Hogue is pictured waist-deep in water during the 2011 flood at Camp Assiniboia in Manitoba.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Reaching out requires letting in

Troy Watson

A recent CBC news article projected that 9,000 Canadian churches will close over the next 10 years.

That's approximately one-third of Canadian churches gone in a decade. It's not news that the church in Canada is dying, but it is shocking how fast it's happening.

Many denominations are responding to this current crisis by adopting a missional approach to church ministry. Most missional conversations seem to be fixated on reaching the millennials, the Nones, the Dones and the spiritual-but-not-religious people. Here is a concise summary of these four groups that are distinct but have many overlaps:

- **Millennials** are a diverse group of people born in the 1980s and 1990s (this is the general categorization). Millennials are the largest generation in Canada—currently tied with the boomers—making up more than 27 percent of the Canadian population.
- **Nones** are a diverse group of people who don't identify with any religion. Some are atheist or agnostic, while others believe in God or a higher power; 24 percent of Canadians are Nones, but this percentage is higher with younger Canadians (34 percent of millennials, for instance). Nones are the fastest growing “religious” group in Canada.
- **Dones** are people who used to be active in church but have stopped participating. Many Dones grew up in the church and left in early adulthood. The Canadian church loses between 60 percent and 90 percent of its young people by early adulthood (stats vary depending on what research you look at). Dones are not just young people, though. Many in their 40s, 50s and 60s are leaving the church as well.
- **Spiritual-but-not-religious** people are a diverse group who value spirituality and spiritual growth

but mistrust, or are opposed to, organized institutional religion.

The question most churches and denominations are seeking to answer is: “How do we reach these people?” I don't have answers to this question but I have some observations.

First, this question is part of the problem. When we talk about reaching people—or worse, when we talk about evangelizing, winning or saving their souls—we are creating

When we talk about reaching people—or worse, when we talk about evangelizing, winning or saving their souls—we are creating a relational barrier. This barrier is our . . . sense of superiority.

a relational barrier. This barrier is our subtle—and too often not-so-subtle—sense of superiority.

Most Christians don't think of it this way, but our outreach attitude typically communicates that we have what everyone else needs. What we have is better than what they have. Even with approaches like “relationship evangelism,” we fail to develop authentic spiritual connections with people because they sense this attitude of superiority.

The only way to build authentic spiritual connections with people is to develop relationships of mutual trust and respect, with mutual transformation as the goal. This takes time, humility and openness. It also requires a theological and spiritual shift in us.

To make mutual transformation the goal in any relationship means recognizing God is present and active in the other person, whether Christian or not. It means acknowledging God's intention for bringing us together is, in part, so I can be healed, renewed

and transformed. It means expecting the Spirit to teach and “disciple” me through this person or, at the very least, to be open to this possibility.

In Acts 10, we see God is active in the lives of both Cornelius and Peter. God brings them together so they can both grow and be transformed. Peter is an apostle and leader in the early church, whereas Cornelius is an unclean Gentile and centurion in the Roman army. Yet notice in the story that Peter's beliefs and theology are changed as much as, if not more than, Cornelius's beliefs and theology. This is a story of mutual transformation. This is authentic spiritual connection.

In my experience, when Jesus calls us to “reach out” to people, he calls us to let them in. Into our homes,

social circles, friendship networks and church communities. He calls us to invite them to our kitchen tables and communion tables. He calls us to open our hearts and minds to their stories, experiences and wisdom, so we can be transformed by the Spirit through our mutually transforming relationships.

I'm learning that when I let others in, I let Christ in. As I actively listen to others, I increase my capacity to hear the still small voice of God. As I love others, I understand and experience God's love for me more clearly.

Our “success” in faithful outreach is not measured by how many souls we save. It is evidenced by the ongoing transformation in our own lives as we genuinely connect with others and let them in. ☿



Troy Watson (*troyw@gmail.com*) is slowly learning how to genuinely connect and let others in.

VIEWPOINT

Confronting the fear of our history

Charity Nonkes

“Yet we Christians have also been called to take a good hard look at ourselves. To reflect on our Christian beliefs, to scrutinize our missional practices. And to decolonize. It’s not that Christianity is inherently colonial, but for generations the church and its faith have been used—wittingly, unwittingly, and far too often—as instruments of dispossession in the settler colonial arsenal. Indigenous peoples are asking the church to own our work, to beat our colonial swords into peaceable ploughshares.”

Steve Heinrichs, the director of Mennonite Church Canada’s Indigenous-Settler Relations Program, wrote this in *Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization*, a collection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors re-examining biblical stories in order to reclaim the Bible as a tool for peacemaking from an instrument of dispossession.

In the process of truth and reconciliation there is a great need for us all to critically analyze the forces that favoured Christian Europeans and their descendants over others. This work brings up hard questions concerning our identity and our justification for being on the land. When I look to my upbringing, Christianity was not perceived as an instrument of dispossession. Christianity brought community and belonging, but I was coming from a place of privilege and European ancestry.

In the early settlement of Canada, the government claimed it had the authority over the land to sell or grant it to settlers. The Doctrine of Discovery and *Terra Nullius* are concepts that the European powers used to justify the claim that land was theirs. These concepts provided a framework that said North America was open to be

“discovered” because the Indigenous population wasn’t Christian and therefore did not rightly own the land. Theology was used to create a narrative that the land was empty and therefore open for foreign powers to come and claim possession, leading to genocide and exploitation.

For the healing of others and ourselves, it is absolutely paramount for us all to understand the entire story of how Canada was established and the role of Christianity in it. In my experience, destruction caused by Christianity is often ignored or hidden because of fear. This fear may be rooted in what these truths mean for our identity. This becomes especially difficult when our own histories are mingled with stories of fleeing persecution, hunger and violence, to find freedom in Canada. How do we reconcile it within ourselves that we have freedom in Canada but at the expense of Indigenous peoples? How can we do reconciliation work if we don’t address the truth of our history?

A part of this journey is to thoroughly examine the residential school system and the role of Mennonites. Mennonite residential schools in Northwestern Ontario were part of the larger residential school system that sought to eliminate Indigenous ways of life and ensure assimilation to Christian European practices. I have often heard the point that the Mennonites running these schools had good intentions but were misguided.

Good intentions are often clouded by privilege and ignorance of how oppression is ingrained into society for the benefit of some over others. Anthony Siegrist, pastor of Ottawa Mennonite Church, has researched and written about Mennonite involvement in the residential school system.

He writes: “[Mennonites] seemed

sincere in their attempts to ‘improve’ the lives of their Indigenous students. Many staff sacrificed comfort and pay to serve as they did. And yet they were complicit. Probably naïve, but still complicit. If you know anything about Mennonite Christians, you may know that historically ours is a minority tradition, a tradition rooted in martyrdom. We do not always realize the power of our own cultural connections or the power of skin colour.”

The call for decolonization and a critical analysis of the role of Christianity in colonial history is a door that is often bolted shut because we fear what it will reveal about ourselves. However, this self-reflection is a healing process for us and everyone living on this land. Christianity has been used for destruction. But faith can also invite us towards reconciliation, as we learn new ways of reading the Bible.

The church played an instrumental role in colonization and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples—no matter what the intentions were—so we all must work to decolonize. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action challenge us to do this.

Action 49 states: “We call upon all religious denominations and faith groups who have not already done so to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *Terra Nullius*.”

It is time for us to recognize the colonial swords that we all carry and to beat them into peaceable ploughshares to till fields of truth and reconciliation. ✎

Charity Nonkes wrote a longer version of this op-ed piece for the Mennonite Central Committee Ottawa Office’s blog while serving as an intern there earlier this year.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Justice on the journey: Migration

Rebeca González Torres
Mennonite World Conference

There is a lot of information out there about the varied issues that lead to human mobility. Among them we find climate change that modifies the environment; empires and world powers that produce more wealth while causing poverty in other countries; and the means of communication that provide access to information, routes and transport, that give us knowledge of better living conditions in other places.

The 16th century Anabaptists experienced and lived through migration motivated by the persecution that they suffered. In large part, their faith in the teachings of Jesus moved them to put up with this. Their furtive and renegade escapes from persecution enabled them to organize and live in intentional communities, where they learned to live together in fellowship, dialogue, come to agreements and cooperate.

I have watched people arrive in the United States having travelled long distances across the American continents, while ignoring the suffering endured, just to be able to achieve the so-called 'American dream.'

These values were very necessary for daily life, in order to achieve a community in spite of being uprooted from their place of origin, where they supported one another in difficult times and could feel mutually supported and accompanied in their journey. Throughout the time of martyrdom and persecution, their faith grew, and community life and mutual support were reinforced. These character traits have continued to distinguish them over time.

During our own times, human mobility is occurring everywhere and in all directions: north to south and south

to north, east to west and west to east.

I have watched people arrive in the United States having travelled long distances across the American continents, while ignoring the suffering endured, just to be able to achieve the so-called "American dream."

Compassion

We find many human migrations documented in the Bible, some voluntary and others involuntary. They are always toward abundance, where there is an empire and the possibility of life.

What threads through all these experiences is the presence of God manifested through compassion for the poorest and the least of the Earth. Among them we find women, children, the ill, the elderly and foreigners.

Particularly in the New Testament, we find the presence of God through Jesus, who incarnates God's compassion

(John 14: 9-10; Philippians 2:5-11).

In Romans, the Apostle Paul urges us to always show hospitality (12:13). And the author of Hebrews even suggests that welcoming strangers could be an act of hosting divine beings (13:2).

My own story

We thought long and hard before deciding to accept an invitation that required us to abandon comfort and move towards an uncertain future without knowing what it would hold for us. It was only in 2016 that that my husband Fernando and I decided to pack our bags and

volunteer at the "Casa de Paz" (House of Peace) located a block from the GEO Detention Center in Aurora, Colo. This is a welcoming place for migrants seeking political asylum.

We have learned first-hand how to intervene in crisis situations that go far beyond the ideas learned in academia and the numerous arenas of dialogue about migration. We learned to be compassionate with foreigners, and their stories moved us to respond to migrants' urgent needs, respect their habits and customs that are always different from our own, and to serve unconditionally because each and every human is made in the image of God.

Conclusion

Now we hear about mass exodus: human caravans that have left their countries with the intention of arriving in the United States. The border has become a battleground. The travellers bring only themselves, vulnerable and dependent on the goodwill of others. The horizon is their imaginary guide, the famous "American dream." The farther they walk, the farther they see, and they urge one another on, daring themselves to keep going. Nobody is from here, but, in the end, nothing belongs to any of us anyway because we are all transitory in this life.

Now, at the height of globalization, human mobility demands that communities be moved to compassion and to see the multitudes of powerless people as sheep without a shepherd. ❧



Rebeca González Torres is a member of Mennonite World Conference's Faith and Life Commission. She is currently serving with the Mountain States

NEWS

From rebellion to reconciliation

Catholic-Mennonite gathering planned for Winnipeg

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

One could say Anabaptism began as a rebellion against Catholicism. Our forebears bled and died so we could be not-Catholic.

Time does not erase the past, but intervening centuries have led some to a sort of Reformation reconciliation. Differences remain, but a good number of people now travel bridges between Mennonite and Catholic worlds. The upcoming Bridgefolk conference in Winnipeg will celebrate such cross-denominational connections and grapple with lingering divergences, just as Bridgefolk conferences have for 20 years.

Bridgefolk is a movement of Catholics and Mennonites who have connected profoundly with the other tradition. Officially, it is a “movement of sacramentally minded Mennonites and peace-minded Roman Catholics who come together to celebrate each other’s traditions, explore each other’s practices, and honour each other’s contribution to the mission of Christ’s church.”

Bridgefolk started when about 25 people met at a Mennonite retreat centre in Pennsylvania in 1999. Two years later, Abbot John Klassen of St. John’s Abbey in Minnesota—one of the largest monasteries in the world—offered to host annual gatherings. Although the abbot did not grow up Mennonite, as his surname might suggest, his endorsement lent credibility to the movement.

Conferences have happened at the Abbey and elsewhere. The July 25 to 28 event at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg will be the second Bridgefolk conference in Canada. The theme is “Indigenous-settler reconciliation.”

Biff Wideman plans to attend, as he did the original gathering in 1999 and every conference since.

He “wandered” into the Mennonite church in Indianapolis in his mid-20s. He has held to that Mennonite identity—and later served as a Mennonite pastor—but he also had yearnings that led him down Catholic paths. Early in his journey, he came upon a book called *Ordinary People as Monks and Mystics* that awakened an awareness of something he had felt drawn



PHOTO BY KEITH EWING / FLICKR.COM, CREATIVE COMMONS
St. John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minn., has hosted numerous Mennonite-Catholic gatherings.

to but could not name.

He visited a monastery in Wisconsin and another in Michigan, recognizing some of the same things that attracted him to Anabaptism: “non-conformity, humility, hospitality, simplicity of life.” During that period he was invited to the first Bridgefolk gathering.

For Wideman, Mennonite-Catholic connection is more than an annual conference; it is daily life. In 2011, he married Margie Pfeil, a theology professor at a Catholic university (Notre Dame) and co-founder of the Catholic Worker House in South Bend, Ind., where they remain involved. Fittingly, they met at Bridgefolk.

In a phone interview, they spoke about their weekly “liturgical double-header”—Catholic mass followed by a service at Kern

Road Mennonite.

Pfeil’s path to Bridgefolk involved Gerald Schlabach—a co-founder of Bridgefolk—who was at Notre Dame and knew she was a peace-minded Catholic who, as such, sometimes felt like she was in the minority in her own tradition. Schlabach invited her to Bridgefolk.

While Bridgefolk has involved scholarly endeavours, at the core it is very simple: people on the bridge between Catholic and Mennonite worlds “proceeding in friendship,” to use a common Bridgefolk phrase. Wideman compares the conferences to family gatherings. He talks about friendship, sharing personal stories, validation and a basic unity.

Each conference has a theme, as well as a hymn sing followed by an ice cream social. Foot washing is also part of the tradition, as is communion. That is where things get tricky. Catholic Canon Law is breathtakingly complex but, in simplest terms, non-Catholics are not permitted to receive communion in a Catholic service. During a talk at Goshen College in 2015, Pfeil said of that rule, “It feels very exclusive because it is.”

But amidst the intricacies and Canon Law, and particular local practices, lies some grey area. Pfeil says many Mennonites go forward for communion when Bridgefolk meets at St. John’s. She said in the 2015 talk: “It’s up to each person, in conscience, to discern in their hearts whether they are prepared to receive eucharist and, if the answer is yes, no one can say no.”

That is how the monks at St. John’s explain it, she says.

Still, she tells me, “it is delicate.” The Bridgefolk community has “grappled with being separated at the table” as long as she has been involved. She speaks of the value

of people getting to know one another well enough to talk about the tensions, as well as the need to accept where the institutional churches are at, while celebrating the many points of connection and holding to the “eschatological hope of being united in Christ.” Pfeil then returns to the Bridgefolk

mantra of proceeding through friendship. For Pfeil and Wideman, ecumenism is a way of life. He speaks about being “fairly regularly surprised” by the “unexpected blessings” when people discover places of common ground across denominational lines.

As they look forward to the Winnipeg conference, they “invite people who find themselves interested or curious to come and participate.” For conference details, visit bridgefolk.net/conferences/bridgefolk-2019. ❧



Building unity in the body of Christ

Mennonite-Anglican dialogue works towards unity and justice

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

There are hundreds of denominations within Christianity, and it can be easy to focus on the differences between them all. But a group of Mennonites and Anglicans is breaking through those walls.

A group of 12 people from both denominations gathered from May 24 to 26 at the University of Manitoba’s St. John’s College in Winnipeg. They spent the weekend sharing the struggles each church experiences and the resources they offer, a practice they have labelled the “exchanging of gifts.”

“It seems that denominational affiliation is becoming less important, and Christianity is shrinking in many sectors in Canada,” says Melissa Miller, interim pastor at Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. “So it seems more important that Christians from different denominations engage with each other and learn from each other and lay down some of those divisions.”

Miller is the Mennonite co-chair of the dialogue, and Christopher Trott, ward-en of St. John’s College, is the Anglican co-chair.

The Anglican Church of Canada-Mennonite Church Canada dialogue began in 2016, when both conferences approved a resolution. It had its first face-to-face meeting in 2018. The group is now in its third year of a three- to five-year mandate, and meets annually in person with additional virtual meetings in between.

When the group started out, members

deliberately entered into an open-ended conversation, establishing no specific goals beyond the mandate of a reciprocal exchange of gifts. Miller says the traditional idea of quantifiable “progress” that people expect from meetings is thus hard to grasp in this situation.

Miller says Anglicans want to learn from Mennonites about life on the margins, as their position in Canadian society becomes less prominent, and Mennonites want to learn why so many from their denomination are continually drawn toward Anglican worship services. But rather than making assumptions and limiting themselves, the group is keeping an openness to the question: “What are the gifts our denominations can share with each other?”

This year, members engaged in “gospel-based discipleship,” an Anglican practice similar to *lectio divina*, in which they read Scripture repeatedly and shared reflections on the passage and where they felt the Spirit leading.

Their second order of business was engaging in learning and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Local Indigenous elders Velma Orvis and Vince Solomon shared about their experiences as Indigenous Christians. Their faith is shaped by both traditional Indigenous spirituality and Christianity.

Miller appreciated their teachings. “The Anglican-Mennonite dialogue is enriched by hearing from Indigenous peoples who have extensive ‘interfaith’ experience,” she

says. “In the same way that I am open to understanding the gifts of the Anglican tradition, I see much to learn from the gifts of Indigenous peoples and their understanding of the Creator.”

Both denominations are responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s recommendations to churches. Kerry Saner-Harvey, Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba’s Indigenous Neighbours Program coordinator, offered a reflection on Canadian Mennonites’ past and present engagement with Indigenous peoples. Trott gave a similar report on behalf of the Anglican denomination. The group also engaged in lament, noting the harms done to Indigenous peoples by settlers.

The weekend of meetings concluded with worship at Home Street Mennonite Church. Group members led the adult Sunday school class before the service, introducing congregants to what the Anglican-Mennonite dialogue has been doing and why it exists. A process that has so far been contained to a small group is now beginning to spread to the wider church community.

Miller calls it “a kind of curiosity and hunger” to engage with each other. “As we continue the dialogue, we deepen our understandings of each other’s histories, structures, passions, practices, fears and hopes,” she says. “As the dialogue evolves, we hope to build more unity in the body of Christ.” ❧

Walking and talking along the trail

Faith community supports walk for reconciliation

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

In solidarity with their First Nations neighbours, Mennonites in the Fraser Valley joined others in a Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation from May 31 to June 2.

The event was a partnership between Mennonite Central Committee B.C., Mennonite Church Canada, and several other denominations, including Anglican, the United Church and Christian Reformed Church.

While some chose to walk on all three days, others did shorter portions of the journey.

Around a hundred participants began their walk early in the evening of May 31 at the various churches in Fort Langley, proceeding to the Kwantlen First Nation, where they were welcomed with drumming and singing by the Kwantlen elders, including Marilyn Gabriel, Kwantlen's hereditary chief, and her family. Those in attendance enjoyed a salmon meal together and heard stories from Joseph A. Dandurand, director of the Kwantlen Cultural Centre.

The June 1 walk was along the Trans Canada Trail from Marina Park in Fort Langley to Mt. Lehman United Church.

According to Henry Krause of Langley, who walked the trail, this was a "symbolic walk of solidarity with residential school survivors, many of whom experienced abuse and tremendous loss when they were taken from their families and lands to go to school."

Some found the 19-kilometre journey challenging but they acknowledged that their Indigenous brothers and sisters had also experienced a hard journey.

The event concluded on June 2 in Mission, a walk starting from the bridge to Pekw'xe: Yles, site of the former St. Mary's Residential School. As

the walkers approached the school, they were greeted with music by an Indigenous dancer and drummer. Inside, they toured the buildings with Naxaxalhts'I (Sonny McHalse), took part in a Kairos blanket exercise, and heard stories from several generations who had attended there. It was noted that June 2 was the fourth anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report.

Al Friesen of Abbotsford, who, with his wife Marlene, walked the entire weekend, said the symbolism of walking was appropriate because "we're on a journey and we want to learn from others in the faith community." He added that one act of support for Indigenous people is simply listening. "As Mennonites, we get so focused on doing," he said. "We're very task oriented, [but] the Indigenous say, 'We'll get on to the task of reconciliation but let's sit down and share and tell stories first.'"

This was the fourth annual Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation, and organizers are hoping that next spring's



PHOTO BY IAN FUNK

Drummers welcome walkers at the Kwantlen Nation Longhouse, Fort Langley, B.C., to begin the Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation on May 31.



PHOTO BY IAN FUNK

A group walks from the Fort Langley United Church to the Kwantlen Nation Longhouse to begin B.C.'s fourth annual Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation.

event will bring out even more walkers from the Mennonite community. ☘



PHOTO BY DEBORAH DEJONG

Walkers approach the former St. Mary's Residential School in Mission, B.C., on the final day of the Walk for Reconciliation on June 2.

The women of Alberta rediscover Mary

Story and Photo by Joanne De Jong

Alberta Correspondent

SYLVAN LAKE, ALTA.

“We grew up never talking about Mary. It was like the Catholics got Mary in the divorce settlement and Mennonites got a 30-minute sermon,” said Irma Fast Dueck in her opening talk at the annual Mennonite Church Alberta women’s retreat held from June 7 to 9 at the Sunnyside Retreat Centre in Sylvan Lake.

“It would be an understatement to say that Mennonites have not been particularly interested in Mary, the Mother of Jesus,” said the professor of biblical and theological studies at Canadian Mennonite University. “Mary was, in many ways, lost in the Protestant Reformation, left to the Catholics, while Mennonites moved forward in history without her.”

Although not all women could relate to this history, Amie Bumbeh of Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton shared how even her Pentecostal denomination in Sierra Leone did not pay attention to Mary. “That was a Catholic thing,” she said, “and we weren’t Catholic.”

Fast Dueck reminded the women that, “for centuries Mary has shaped spirituality around the world.” She gave the invitation to “gaze on Mary” and see what she reveals to us.

The theme of the retreat was “The faces of Mary: Companion on the journey.” Fast Dueck explored three faces of Mary:

- **Mary, the face of tenderness and loving kindness.** In artwork, Mary is often depicted looking affectionately upon Jesus, who rests intimately upon her breast.
- **Mary, mother of sorrows.** This Mary is easily relatable to all who suffer loss.
- **Mary, the one who points the way.** By magnifying the Lord, she shows people



Valerie Proudfoot of Edmonton First Mennonite Church, left, presents Irma Fast Dueck with a picture of a Mennonite Mary for speaking at the MC Alberta women’s retreat. Entitled ‘Mennonitische Madonna,’ the artwork by Helena Dueck of Pennsylvania was originally given to Proudfoot in 1986 as a gift of encouragement.

how to create space for a relationship with the Living God.

Every woman at the retreat received “Prayer beads: Yes, it’s okay for Protestants,” an instruction sheet on how to make prayer beads. The sheet asked questions like, “Why are beads even necessary in prayer? After all, we Protestants have been praying just fine without them all these years,” and, “How can they help?” Prayer beads were created in many colours: some with a cross, a heart or a peace dove.

This year, the women’s retreat hosted more than 50 women from 10 of 12 MC Alberta churches. A 15-seat bus was rented

for the Edmonton contingent, which included women from Sierra Leone, Sudan, Ethiopia, Liberia, Canada and two Mennonite Voluntary Service young women from Germany. There was raucous singing all the way to the camp accompanied by the Liberian *sa-sa*, a large gourd covered in beads.

Many participants expressed their excitement to reconnect with women across the province. Valerie Proudfoot from Edmonton First Mennonite Church put it well: “The women from [MC Alberta] don’t see each other on a regular basis, so it’s like a reunion whenever we get together. There’s so much richness that comes from all the cross-cultural experiences we share.”

Lindo Manana, a volunteer from Eswatini (Swaziland) with MCC’s International Volunteer Exchange Program, led the morning worship on June 8 and taught everyone to dance that evening. She had everyone form a circle and, while she danced, she shouted, “Choose! Choose! Who will dance with me?” Woman after woman danced, young and old, white and black.

This was the first year that the women’s retreat was an official program of MC Alberta, and the women appreciated the message that this conveyed—that women’s ministry is important to the regional church.

Kate Janzen, a retreat organizer, held a silent auction that raised \$600 for scholarships for women going to post-secondary Anabaptist institutions.

The retreat ended with communion and warm cinnamon buns, and reminders from Fast Dueck that “Mary could have been any one of us,” and, “What happened in Mary needs to happen in us.” ❧

'My place is right here'

Play tells story of justice and inclusion while raising support for local food bank

Story and Photo by Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent
CAMBRIDGE, ONT.

It was all about working together for the good of the local Cambridge community when Preston and Wanner Mennonite churches partnered with a local theatre group to support the work of the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank.

The two churches hosted a performance of *My Place is Right Here: Hugh Burnett and the Fight for a Better Canada* on June 8 at Preston Mennonite Church, inviting the audience to donate to the local food bank.

The play tells the story of Hugh Burnett, an African-Canadian who fought for Ontario's anti-discrimination legislation in the 1950s. Living in Dresden, Ont., at the time, Burnett and his allies challenged discriminatory customs and laws that denied service to African-Canadians in restaurants, hair salons and recreational facilities. With courage and determination he persisted in demanding equal rights, even when it was dangerous.

The local Flex We Talent theatre group is made up of members with Caribbean and Canadian heritage. Aaron Haddad, who wrote, produced and directed the play, was inspired by the research of Jim Walker, professor of history at the University of Waterloo, who knew Burnett and believed his story was "a part of our history that needs to be told." Walker noted that there is still "a prevailing attitude that racism was an American disease and not really a problem in Canada."

The play, which featured the main role of Burnett and a supporting cast of other characters from his life, used minimal

props, and actors used their voices and movements to portray the fire of Burnett's passion for equality, as well as the frustrations, obstacles and dangers he and his family faced. The performance earned a standing ovation from the appreciative audience.

Organizers hope that the benefits of staging the play ripple out beyond the

and the food bank that offers food and other support services to people in need within Cambridge and North Dumfries Township. The two churches, which have been in the community for two centuries, wanted to open up conversation and action about peace and justice issues in their lives and in their larger community.

Dennis Flaming, a key organizer of the event from the Wanner congregation, was inspired by a performance of the play that he saw last winter. As someone who grew up just outside of Leamington, he was moved by the story of an ordinary man's fight against racism in rural southwestern Ontario. He saw staging the play as a way for the churches "to reach out to the broader community" with an important message of justice, equality and respect, values "that we, as Christians, try to promote and reflect in our day-to-day life and in our communities," Flaming said.

Muriel Bechtel, a partner in the event from the Preston church, saw the play's message as relevant in a Canadian context in which people "are sometimes oblivious to [their]

own racist thoughts and actions." We can become "rather smug and self-congratulatory that this kind of racism is an American problem. It is not," she said.

Hosting the event together was a good opportunity for Preston and Wanner to continue exploring ways to collaborate and connect with each other and the broader community of Cambridge. On Sept. 7, they will partner again to host the annual Wanner Community Cornfest as another fundraiser for the local food bank. ❧



Muriel Bechtel, right, and Dennis Flaming, organizers of the My Place is Right Here play and joint fundraising event, are pictured with Alië Teetzel-Edmondstone and Yasmine Mohamed, representatives of the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank, who accepted the food donations.

donations to the food bank.

Glyn Jones, pastor of Wanner Mennonite, reflected that a play about inclusion and diversity was as relevant today in Cambridge, with its diverse population, as it was in Burnett's time. "It is important that we remind ourselves of how hurtful acts of racial discrimination" can be for individuals and communities, he said.

Being part of an event to promote understanding and inclusion in Cambridge felt like a good fit for the Mennonite churches,

The almost-forgotten hero

New book chronicles the exploits of Herbert Bergen in post-war Germany

By Maria H. Klassen
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Mennonites fleeing Ukraine for refugee camps in Germany after the Second World War encountered Mennonite Central Committee workers Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, who organized the camps and trans-Atlantic trips that took the refugees to their new homes in Canada or South America.

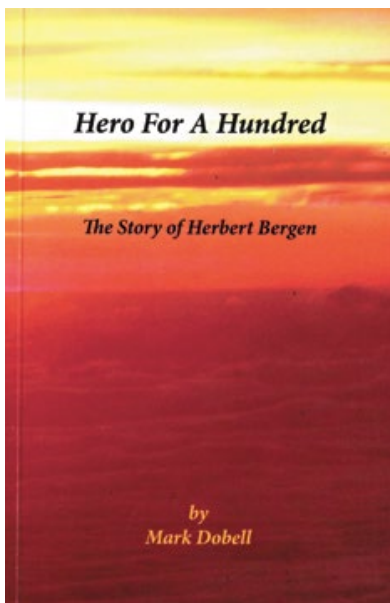
Mentioned briefly in *Up From the Rubble*, a book of the Dycks' efforts published in 1991, was Herbert Bergen, who helped rescue a hundred people from the Russian zone in Berlin in 1947 from being repatriated back to Russia. In post-war Germany, Berlin was divided into four sections, each controlled by one of the Allies. At great personal risk, Bergen went into the Russian zone to help Mennonite refugees escape to the American section of Berlin.

Very few people knew of this story, not even most of Bergen's family, until he agreed to be interviewed by Mark Dobell in 2013. Dobell's book *Hero For A Hundred* is the end result.

When Bergen's father was taken in 1937 by the Russians and sent to a labour camp, Bergen was 13 years old and had to go to work. The harrowing experiences in the next decade prepared him for the risks he would take to rescue others.

In the winter of 1947, when he was in the Munich refugee camp telling stories of his many exploits, someone asked him if he would go into the Russian zone to help people they knew escape to the camp. After some convincing, he reluctantly took up the mission, with the promise of money, food and clothes for the undertaking.

His rescue attempts included crossing borders that were heavily patrolled, blending in with the people around him—which was difficult to do as he had lost an eye and was wearing a black eye-patch—and talking to girls, hoping they would be a



diversion for the Russian soldiers watching him. He could never drop his guard, had to always be alert, was adept at reading people's facial expressions and scanning his surroundings. He used gasoline and American cigarettes as currency to help his cause. He himself used four different names and four different birthdates.

He often carried pictures of the people he was trying to help. But never was there a name or address written on the picture. These he had memorized. Pictures were more useful than names, as names were often changed. He also found speaking Low German helped open doors for him.

What he thought would be his only mission turned out to be many. One rescue saved 16 people. It was after rescuing his aunt, bringing her to the refugee camp in Berlin, that he met Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, and he began to work from the Berlin camp.

After his last mission in February 1947, he even needed to make his own

arrangements to get from Berlin to the ship waiting in the harbour of Bremerhaven, to leave with the other refugees for South America.

Bergen came to the Niagara Region from Paraguay in 1955, where he was a member of Niagara United Mennonite Church until his death on June 10, 2015. ✎

Hero for a Hundred is available from People's History Publications (phpnotl.com).



✎ Staff change

Interim International Witness director to begin on Aug. 1

• **Jeanette Hanson**, associate director of Mennonite Partners in China, will begin as interim director of Mennonite Church



Canada's International Witness program on Aug. 1, in order to ensure ongoing support for Witness workers and to give appropriate attention to new and emerging initiatives. She will replace Jason Martin, who will conclude his service as director on July 31. He has been in the role since October 2017. Prior to that, he was on the Witness Engagement staff team for two-and-a-half years, serving Eastern Canada. "It has been a privilege working for [MC] Canada and with its great staff team, as well as being able to serve in a role deeply connected to international mission," Martin says. "We are grateful for Jason's dedication to the ongoing work of International Witness, and in particular for the care and support he has provided our Witness workers during this time of restructuring and transition," says Henry Paetkau, interim executive minister. "Jason has been instrumental in developing the Witness Support Team model of funding and support for our workers, ensuring the sustainability of our international partnerships and programs."

—MC CANADA

Breathing new life into a centuries-old folk art tradition

'New Fraktur' exhibit exposes colonial realities in Southern Ontario

By Rachel Bergen
Contributing Editor

An Ontario artist is enlivening a Mennonite folk-art tradition that hasn't been widely practised for more than 150 years.

Meg Harder's six-piece exhibit, "New Fraktur," draws on the detailed, illuminated calligraphy that was historically produced by early Mennonites and Hutterites, including those who settled in Ontario. She uses fraktur art to bring together her ancestral traditions with contemporary thoughts and concerns.

Historically, fraktur was made to show reverence to important religious and cultural texts, but the art appeared everywhere, from people's walls to the covers of Bibles and hymnals.

The 29-year-old says she was captivated by the aesthetic of the art, in particular the balancing of the colour and beauty with the darkness of the themes.

"There's something a bit menacing about it," she says. "I was interested to take on that style and see how I could work with it in a contemporary context."

Harder's ink and gouache drawings draw on the esthetic of fraktur art by mimicking the calligraphy, colour and some of the imagery, but they reframe the images through decolonial and feminist theories, as well as gender and sexuality lenses.

One piece called "The House" pictures a home typical to the Kitchener, Ont., area. It is surrounded by plants that are invasive to the area, including buckthorn and phragmites, which point to the ecological disruption associated with a post-colonial landscape.

"The plants are meant to situate the art in a bioregional context," she says. "The invasive species are connected to a history of environmental degradation and disturbance in the region. They signal a colonial legacy."



Meg Harder's 'The House' is part of her exhibit, 'New Fraktur,' which is on display at Conrad Grebel University College Centre for Peace Advancement Gallery until Oct. 25.

The house is shown to be degraded, and Harder includes an inverted proverb from the Bible: "The foolish woman builds her house but wisdom with her own hands tears it down."

"I was thinking of domesticity and breaking down what that's meant for women historically," she says, referring to the degenerating house. "The proverb suggests it might sometimes be wise to tear open and make space for new things."

Harder says this exhibit is also an attempt to address the colonial reality of the region. She grew up in Southern Ontario in a Mennonite family who thrived after settling in the province. That's due, in part, she says, to the Haldimand Treaty, which was signed with the Haudenosaunee, also known as Six Nations, in 1784, but is still disputed today.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CENTRE FOR PEACE ADVANCEMENT

Meg Harder stands in front of her artwork, 'The House,' at her 'New Fraktur' exhibit that runs until Oct. 25 at Conrad Grebel University College Centre for Peace Advancement Gallery.

Most of the Haldimand Tract was sold or leased to settlers in blocks that were later developed into farms and then towns and cities.

By 1847, the Six Nations occupied only 4.8 percent of the original Haldimand Tract.

“The land was purchased through somewhat nefarious means, and Mennonite settlements in the region led to the displacement of Indigenous people locally,” Harder says. “Mennonites have done well here. We’ve really prospered, and I’m the beneficiary of that prosperous culture. I feel some responsibility to look at that

more closely. It’s important for me not to walk away from that [but] to grapple with the complexity of that reality.”

Amy Zavitz, the coordinator of the Centre for Peace Advancement at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, where the exhibit is on display until Oct. 25, says Harder’s work fits well within the gallery’s mandate to be a place to craft, record, map and perform the stories of peacemaking and to hear the voice of others.

“‘New Fraktur’ advances peace by challenging visitors to think critically about the land we reside on and problematic

narratives that exist within larger systems of injustice,” she says.

Harder says she hopes that her art will prompt others to look deeply and honestly into their family’s history and what life can look like moving forward. “I feel like I’m part of a larger movement of people who are looking at the narrative we carry with us as Mennonites and re-examining their truth,” she says, adding, “Thinking about how we can work together as a community to build peace in the places we live, I hope my art continues that conversation of perpetual re-examination of who we are and who we want to be in the future.” ❧

‘It takes raindrops to fill a lake’

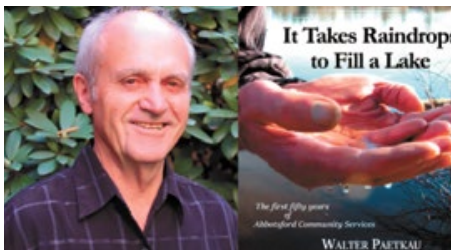
Mennonite writes history of Abbotsford Community Services

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

More than 50 years ago, Walter Paetkau founded Abbotsford Community Services (ACS), an umbrella organization bringing various local service organizations under one roof.

From humble beginnings in a two-room office, today ACS is now the largest community services organization in the province, with 90 programs fostering community well-being and social justice that encompass employment services, legal advocacy, drug and addiction counselling, youth and seniors programs, a food bank and much more.



ABBOTSFORD COMMUNITY SERVICE PHOTO

Walter Paetkau, left, with his book *It Takes Raindrops to Fill a Lake*.

Paetkau, who served as executive director of the organization from its founding in 1969 until 2000, has just written *It Takes Raindrops to Fill a Lake*, a book on the history of ACS.

Social justice issues were always important to him. In the 1960s, he became involved in the U.S. civil rights movement. He attended Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., and was an exchange student at an African-American seminary in Atlanta, the only white student there. He worked for the then General Conference Mennonite Board of Christian Service in Newton, Kan., for two years in the mid-1960s, and then continued working in service development for the conference in Abbotsford.

Paetkau says the book came about through talking with colleagues and reminiscing four or five years ago. He met with the current ACS executive director, Rod Santiago, to discuss the project, and then the board approved it. Paetkau then combed through stacks of scrapbooks and other archival items as he researched the



THE ABBOTSFORD NEWS PHOTO BY DALE KLIPPENSTEIN

Walter Paetkau cuts the cake celebrating the release of his book *It Takes Raindrops to Fill a Lake* at the Reach Gallery Museum in Abbotsford.

book.

“I did a lot of interviewing, talked to a lot of people, and read through a lot of minutes kept over the years,” he says.

After his retirement from ACS, Paetkau volunteered with the Circle F Horse Rescue Society, but now he is concentrating on promoting the book and continuing to garden at the home he and his wife Mabel have shared for 50 years.

In 2017, he received an award from the British Columbia Achievement Foundation for his role in founding ACS.

He has been active in several Mennonite congregations in B.C. A long-time member of Olivet Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, he later helped co-found the Abbotsford Mennonite Fellowship house church in 1996. He currently attends Langley Mennonite Fellowship, where he chairs its peace and social concerns committee. ❧



HOPE MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO / TEXT BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Hope Mennonite Church congregants waved rainbow flags and carried their signs proudly as they took part in Winnipeg's 32nd annual Pride parade on June 2. Members of Bethel Mennonite Church and River East Church also joined Hope congregants, totalling more than 50 people at the height of the march, to show their love and support for the LGBTQ+ community.



MCC ALBERTA PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

The Alberta Relief Sale, held May 31 to June 1 in Coaldale, raised \$193,500 as of June 10 for local and international Mennonite Central Committee projects. As well, \$170,000 was raised for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, which held a separate auction of 53 hectares of barley and straw. Pictured, Irene Penner holds a loaf of bread, a cutting board and knife that 'sold' at auction for a donation of \$1,000 to the Foodgrains Bank.

Offering the gift of non-judgmental listening

Funeral officiant is pastor to those without a faith community

Story and Photo by Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Elaine Presnell has presided at around 600 funerals. That's a number most pastors won't achieve in a lifetime. But Presnell isn't an ordinary pastor. For more than 10 years, she has worked for Mourning Glory Funeral Services in Saskatoon as a funeral officiant.

Previously, she spent 16 years as a psychiatric nurse at Saskatoon's Regional Psychiatric Centre.

When her husband Ron became ill, the couple searched for a new church home. They found one in Pleasant Point Mennonite Church, about 35 kilometres southeast of Saskatoon. Presnell had already helped out with the church's Vacation Bible School program for some years, and when they began attending regularly, they found a ready welcome.

Eventually, Ron's illness advanced to the point where he needed care. "He asked me to take early retirement to stay home with him," says Presnell. "I didn't want to retire but felt he needed me." Sadly, Ron died four days after she left her job.

"That was really difficult for me," she says. "My job meant a great deal to me. I had lot of support and friends there."

At a grief support group, she met a funeral director who was establishing a new business. "He was looking for someone who [had] lost a spouse and thought I would be a good fit," she says. "My only qualification was that I was a widow."

So she went to work for Mourning Glory as a funeral attendant. After about four years, she began officiating at funerals.

Presnell believes her psychiatric nursing experience prepared her for this work. "You learn in that kind of environment to read people pretty quickly," she says. Although she was devastated when she lost her husband and her job at same time,

she now sees those events as God's leading in her life.

"It was really hard for me when my husband passed away. I was surprised how hard I grieved," she says. But grief taught her what's helpful and what isn't. "People sometimes try to fix you," she says. "[Grief] can't be fixed."

Rather, the best gift one can offer a grieving family is non-judgmental listening. "Just being there for people—living out Jesus' commandment to love your neighbour as yourself," is critical, she says.

Presnell plans each funeral around the deceased person. "I don't do a sermon," she says. "If they [were] people of faith, I try to work that into the service, [but] it's

'It's their life and their journey people want to hear about.'
(Elaine Presnell)

their life and their journey people want to hear about."

Because the work is emotionally demanding, she says, "I depend on God a lot more." She prays as she drives to work. "I'll get a call about some family . . . and I'll just say to God, 'I don't know what this family needs, but you do.' I totally rely on God's guidance," she says.

In addition to conducting funerals, Presnell follows up with "aftercare."

Marlene Froese, who attends Nutana Park Mennonite in Saskatoon, is Presnell's partner in this work. They contact each family a month after the funeral to offer support.

"It's getting heavier all the time because a lot of people don't have a church they go



According to Elaine Presnell, a funeral officiant and a commissioned lay pastor at Pleasant Point Mennonite Church, the best gift one can offer a grieving family is non-judgmental listening.

to," she says. "Most have some sort of faith but they don't have a faith community."

Aftercare involves "letting people know they don't have to walk the journey alone," she says, adding, "They're often looking for assurance that what they're feeling is normal and that healing will come."

"Few people aren't willing to talk about faith," says Presnell. "It's a vulnerable time and people are often looking for God." But occasionally families don't want God mentioned in their loved one's funeral service. "I have to give people what they want," she says. "I can still honour the person's life, but it's kind of a hollow service."

If people are receptive, she shares with them what she believes. Sometimes she has seen people move toward God because of what she has shared with them.

"Trying to stay balanced" can be challenging. She admits she tends to put her job first. She relies on the support of her spiritual director and several close friends. Her church, too, has played a significant role in helping her maintain balance.

Presnell has been a lay preacher at Pleasant Point for some years. In addition to funerals, she also occasionally performs weddings. On June 2, Ryan Siemens, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's executive minister, commissioned Presnell as a lay pastor at Pleasant Point. "You are doing pastoral work every day," he had reminded her.

For Presnell, the commissioning was an "overwhelming" affirmation of the work she does. "I was amazed at the amount of support [I received]," she says. ❧

Making art 'like breathing' for B.C. illustrator

By Rachel Bergen
Contributing Editor

For Dona Park, making art is the equivalent of eating, sleeping and breathing. She does it every day because she needs to.

The 24-year-old attended Goshen (Ind.) College, from which she graduated with a double major in fine arts and history in 2017. She is now a freelance artist based in Abbotsford, British Columbia, where she attends Emmanuel Mennonite Church.

Over the years, Park worked in numerous media, including acrylic paint and ink, but she primarily does digital illustration.

If she would describe her art, it would be “nature incorporated with womanhood, coming of age experiences, and pops of colour,” but she draws inspiration from a number of places.

Park’s art is partly inspired by her Korean heritage and culture.

“I’m finding a lot of inspiration in my own identity as a Korean immigrant woman,” she says. “You’ll see in some of my pieces there’s a red sun and blue background, with waves in the front. If you see traditional Korean paintings, you’ll see curly clouds and waves twirling through mountains. The colours, too, are really particular. Many of my pieces draw themes from Korean folklore.”

She is also inspired by past experiences. From 2017 to 2018, she took part in Mennonite Central Committee’s Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program. She served with an organization called Women Peacemakers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Taking part in SALT was an exercise in living out her faith, she says, by experiencing the reality of advocacy outside of an ideal college environment.

“As an undergrad, I was actively involved working as a leader of international students, an intern and participant for anti-racism workshops and organizations, attending protests, et cetera,” she says. “While I wanted to learn about a different culture and build friendships

internationally, I also wanted to see if I would still be the human-rights advocate out of my comfort zone.”

Although she she learned a great deal from the experience, she says that parts were challenging: “In Cambodia, I had such low self-esteem because of my body. I had some mild depression and I felt so dissatisfied with myself.”

That’s why she was inspired to draw women, especially nude women. She says it was an exercise in body positivity: “For most women, when we look in the mirror, we pick at our flaws. That’s what keeps inspiring me to draw nude bodies. They’re naked, they’re beautiful, and it is what it is.”

Advocating for women is one way that Park expresses her faith. “I hope people who see my work see me advocating for women in the way Christ has,” she says. “I think that’s the best way to explain it.”

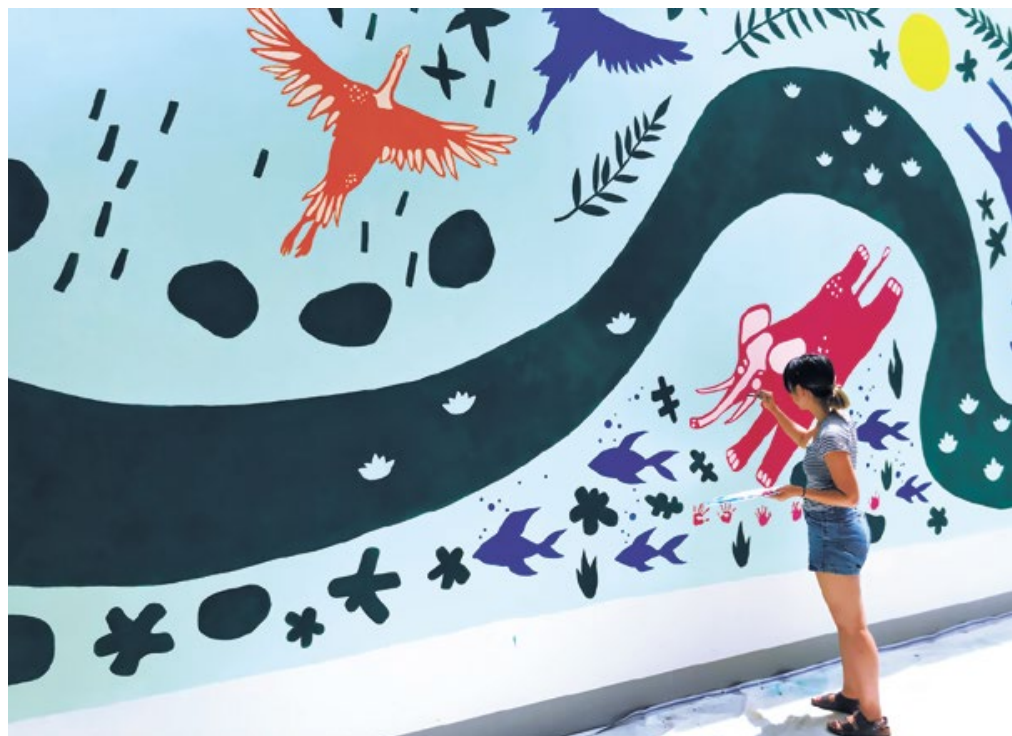


PHOTOS COURTESY OF DONA PARK

Dona Park is an illustrator who lives in Abbotsford, B.C.

In addition to inspiring some of her work, Park’s experience in Cambodia contributed to her desire to create so voraciously now. While she was at work or at home with her host family, she didn’t have any of her usual art supplies.

“That’s when I started doodling on my



Dona Park painted a mural at a school in Cambodia during her Serving and Learning Together term with Mennonite Central Committee



ARTWORK BY DONA PARK

A piece from Dona Park's 'Summer Series,' which celebrates warmth, women's bodies and nature.

I put all my stresses into a creative energy”

For her, making art wasn't like self-care, it was just something that needed to happen. “It's more like breathing,” she says. “It's not a grandiose act of art, it's just breathing. You just do it, like drinking water or eating. It's something I have to keep on doing,”

Park will spend part of the summer bringing together her love for art

and experiencing new things in a familiar place. She's returning to Cambodia to work with Women Peacemakers, teaching photography classes to help Vietnamese people living in Cambodia to document their community. She will also be painting murals and gathering more fodder for her imagination. ❧

To see more of Park's art, follow her on Instagram at @itsadona or visit her website at donapark.com.



computer in Photoshop,” she says. “I didn't even have a mouse, I just used my track pad. I think there are always opportunities to create, but I didn't have the same environment that I was used to. When I was working in my office, I thought, ‘What can I do in my spare time to make something for myself?’ And that's when I started drawing.”

From there, Park had the opportunity to paint a mural at a school inspired by the Mekong River that flows through the Southeast Asian country, along with the animals that are common in the region, including elephants, water buffalo, cranes and monkeys.

Even that was different from what she was used to, since she didn't have the supplies she normally used and she was always too warm and slightly uncomfortable.

“It taught me how to be flexible, how to weave myself into spaces that need creativity, and how to be creative when given different resources,” she says.

But when she returned home to Abbotsford after her SALT term was over, those challenges needed to come out of her in some way.

“I think all the frustrations exploded when I came back home, and that's when I started to create,” she says. “That's when

/// Obituary

Founding member of Foodgrains Bank passes



• **Len Siemens**, one of the founding members of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, passed away on April 25, 2019. He was 93.

Siemens, a retired agronomy professor and former associate dean in the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the University of Manitoba, played an important role in the establishment of the Foodgrains Bank. In the mid-1970s, he was part of a small group that envisioned the creation of a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Food Bank into which farmers could donate grain for shipment overseas. At the time, there was pressure on MCC to respond to the hunger crisis around the world. The MCC Food Bank was enlarged to include other churches in 1983 and became Canadian Foodgrains Bank. In these developmental years, Siemens was on the board of directors of MCC and served as its secretary. “[Len's] mission was to feed the world,” says John Wieler, who directed the MCC Food Bank at the time. “His various contributions were proved by the fact that Canadian Foodgrains Bank worked, it was accepted, and, 40 years later, both MCC and Foodgrains Bank are vibrant agencies.”

—CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK

/// Staff change


New coordinator for Mennonite Men in Canada



• **Don Neufeld** is the new coordinator of Mennonite Men in Canada, having served on the organization's board since 2013. As coordinator, his role is to promote the work of Mennonite Men, a binational organization of Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. with a mission of “engaging men to grow, give and serve as followers of Jesus.” Its JoinHands program raises funds to provide grants to new congregations that are seeking to purchase or renovate their first meeting space; as coordinator, Neufeld's role is to communicate with the donor base in Canada to encourage gifting to this fund. Neufeld replaces Hans Peters, who had been the coordinator since November 2014.

—BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

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Responding to the stranger at our gate

On the CM blog, Brian Dyck from MCC Canada explores the question, "What is a Christian response to migration?"

canadianmennonite.org/blog/bd-stranger



Another successful relief sale

"It is an important fundraising event, but it's an even more important community event." Read about MCC Saskatchewan's 49th annual relief sale and auction.

canadianmennonite.org/saskrelief2019



Watch: 'Gettin' it done' with MDS

Last year, more than 5,400 volunteers from churches across Canada and the U.S. gave their time and skills to MDS. Watch a short video highlighting their work.

canadianmennonite.org/video/mdsvid



NEW FROM
Canadian Mennonite
digital issues for the summer slowdown

The magazine will print one issue in July and one in August during our annual summer slowdown, but subscribers are eligible to receive a digital issue by email in two-week intervals.

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**CANADIAN
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Schools Directory featuring Canadian Mennonite University

Neighbours and borders

Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg

Carol McNaughton spent a semester with Outtatown, the discipleship program of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), and has dedicated herself to peacebuilding ever since.

It was with Outtatown that she first heard about the Canadian School of Peacebuilding (CSOP) at CMU. She took a course shortly afterwards and enjoyed it so much that she returned for more.

Most recently, she took the "Who is my neighbour? Ethics in a bordered world" CSOP class with Roger Epp, a political science professor at the University of Alberta. McNaughton is excited to dig further into what was discussed, like the question of who your neighbour is and how to approach ethics if everyone is your neighbour, not just the person who lives next door.

"I chose this course because it felt like it was out of my comfort zone," says McNaughton, who has a degree from the University of Calgary in social work with a minor in dance. It was also the themes of neighbours and borders that drew her to the course, after a trip to Israel/Palestine two weeks earlier as part of a Mennonite Central Committee learning tour.

A lot of things from CSOP will stay with McNaughton, but one sticks out in particular. "People at CSOP come from all over the

world. That is really the amazing thing: You meet up in a classroom with those different perspectives," she says. "The inspiration of having a community of peacebuilders that, even when it doesn't seem practical in some ways, are still committed to keep caring and to keep working to best love our neighbours."



'People at the Canadian School of Peacebuilding come from all over the world,' says Carol McNaughton. 'That is really the amazing thing: You meet up in a classroom with those different perspectives.'

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ARTWORK BY SELENA DYCK / TEXT BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Selena Dyck, who attends Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, graduated with a bachelor of fine arts degree from the University of Manitoba this spring. For her graduating art show, she created 'Soft Cage,' left, in which she deconstructed a quilt and sewed the pieces back together using clear thread, leaving gaps between each square, and then strung it onto a wooden frame she built herself. 'Glitch Pillow,' right, another piece in Dyck's graduating art show, is one of a series of pillows she made using a combination of quilting and sewing techniques on material printed with images using a flatbed scanner.

A NATIONWIDE YOUTH GATHERING Shekinah Summer Camp, SK July 28- August 1, 2019

Youth in grades 6-12 from Mennonite Church Canada congregations across the prairies and beyond are invited to come and join us at Shake at Shekinah Summer Camp, SK.

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Summer 2019
VOLUME 29 ISSUE 3

- 2 2019 Commencement
- 4 Meet our graduates!
- 6 Faculty and staff transitions
- 8 AMBS Snapshots

AMBS window

Transitions: Leaving well

Sara Wenger Shenk, EdD, AMBS
President, retired June 30, 2019, after having served since the fall of 2010.

A friend commented to me recently that an acquaintance “did not leave well” from her previous job. It felt like an observation loaded with import. What does it mean to leave well? Doing transitions well is hard work. Some transitions, like graduation, have established ways to celebrate endings and new beginnings. That doesn’t make it easy. Leaving dearly loved friends and professors is painful, and finding fulfilling work is uncertain. But with commencement rituals and blessings, persons can leave well.

For years, I’ve been asking myself: how will I know when it is time to leave? When is it right for AMBS and for me personally? There were times, when the work was so intense, that I longed for an excuse to make a quick exit, and then was glad I didn’t. I have mostly loved this work and wondered how I could bear to leave. Yet I have felt a growing sense that I have given what I can and it is time

for someone with new vision to lead this beautiful learning community into the future.

Last fall, I went on retreat to discern whether I felt released from the call that brought me here. I had only come in the first place because, in the midst of my trepidation, I sensed an unexpected joy and rightness about yielding to the adventure. As long as I felt fortified by the Spirit’s courage, I could keep putting one foot in front of the other despite the daily challenges. On retreat, as I walked the prairie trails, listened and prayed, I wrote in my journal: “Dear Maker, Sustainer, Lover, Redeemer, I feel that it is time. And from all that I can tell, you are releasing me from this work. What are the signs? Not loud, certain, obvious, but creeping in little by little. It is time to lay this down”

In 2010 I had walked the retreat labyrinth as I began to serve as President — inviting the AMBS mission statement to open itself to me. Last fall, I walked it again, weeping with gratitude for the goodness I’ve been blessed to be a part of these nine years.

On leaving the labyrinth’s center, this song welled up: “Go my children, with my blessing, never alone. Waking, sleeping, I am with you, you are my own. In my love’s baptismal river, I have made you mine forever.”

I began, step by step, to leave. I was met by a community that does leavings exceptionally well.

Truly God is in this place! The place of transition. Whether we stay or leave, we are never alone. We are washed in “love’s baptismal river” and belong to God. Forever. •

Above: Sungbin Kim (MDiv) of Seoul, Gyeonggi, South Korea, receives his diploma and bell from President Sara Wenger Shenk at AMBS’s 2019 commencement. Credit: Jason Bryant

STAY IN TOUCH

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Graduates urged to pursue “ministry of celebration”

Meghan Larissa Good, DMin, encouraged the 20 graduates at the 73rd AMBS commencement to embrace a ministry of celebration.

“Our primary work,” Good said, “is to do two things: to proclaim to the world its glorious destiny and to rejoice ahead of time in the victory that is overcoming everything.”

Good, of Phoenix, Arizona, is Teaching Pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Arizona; a member of the AMBS Board of Directors; and author of *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today* (Herald, 2018). During the commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 4, at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, she reflected on one of her favorite passages, 2 Corinthians 2:14-17, where Paul envisions Christians as the captives of Christ’s victory parade.

Captives in Roman military parades were walking to their deaths, but Paul’s metaphor suggests that the captives are celebrating, which means they “must know something that no one else does,” Good said.

“We are commissioning you for a ministry of celebration. We are sending you out as the world’s most joy-filled captives,” Good declared. “Wherever you go from here — wherever God’s



AMBS’s 2019 graduates after the commencement service. **Credit:** Jason Bryant

call takes you — what you are going to do is you are going to wear your weakness openly and declare at the top of your lungs, ‘Look what the power of God has done! The God of the universe is toppling tyrants, beginning here with me. Praise God that I’ve been taken captive by the mercy of the Lamb.’”

She explained that practicing ministry as a captive means remembering that God will heal the world, whether we wake up early and engage in that work or spend a day eating Cheetos under the covers. It is about “getting over ourselves” and letting go of the idea of one’s indispensability, instead focusing on “the incredible joy of getting to participate in this story,” Good told the graduates.

“Most of us come into these kinds of ministry with a burden to save the world and keep it on track and help things come together, and everything in the world seems to resist that effort,” Good said.

“This will cause you to feel overwhelmed and exhausted and to question your qualifications for this work,” she continued. “Hear me, future leaders, the broken world is not out there waiting for you to go and save it. It has been saved and it will be saved by Jesus Christ.”



Meghan Larissa Good, DMin, delivers the commencement address. **Credit:** Jason Bryant


Along with honoring the accomplishments of the 20 graduates, the commencement service also recognized three

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Graduate awards and gifts

Each year, AMBS faculty members present awards to selected graduates at the Dean’s Luncheon, which is held the day before commencement. This year’s recipients are:

- **Pratik Bagh:** Student Ambassador Recognition Award*
- **Margaret De Jong:** Willard M. Swartley Award for Excellence in Biblical Interpretation
- **Dustin Finch:** Gertrude Roten Award for Excellence in Greek Exegesis
- **Benjamin Isaak-Krauss:** Award for Excellence in Peace Studies
- **Scott Micheal Litwiller:** Heart of the Community Award
- **Grant S. Miller:** Cornelius J. Dyck Award for Excellence in Church History
- **Brian Miller O’Leary:** Perry B. Yoder Award for Excellence in Hebrew Exegesis
- **Renee Epp Reimer:** Award for Excellence in Preaching
- **Nel Warkentin:** Award for Excellence in Missional Leadership

*This new award recognizes an international student for representing AMBS in constituent churches.



Graduates ring their bells after receiving their diplomas. **Credit:** Jason Bryant

administrative and teaching faculty members who are retiring from AMBS this academic year. AMBS Vice President and Academic Dean **Beverly Lapp**, EdD, commended **Loren L. Johns**, PhD, Professor of New Testament; **Ben C. Ollenburger**, PhD, Retired Professor of Biblical Theology; and **Sara Wenger Shenk**, EdD, President. (See pp. 6–7.)

After Wenger Shenk conferred the graduates' degrees and the graduates received their diplomas and certificates, Ollenburger presented them with a charge. He echoed Good's call to celebrate amidst the struggle for God's kingdom and charged the graduates to continue in their ministry wearing the armor mentioned in Isaiah 59 and Ephesians 6, including "shoes suited to proclaiming the gospel of peace."

Not only are those shoes fit for proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, he said, but "those same new shoes are good for dancing, and the gospel is the greatest music ever composed, so even while you are wearing armor and wielding weapons, yield to the Spirit's song, and dance to the music." •

— *Marlys Weaver-Stoesz for AMBS*

Profile of the 2019 graduates

This year's graduates range in age from 25 to 62 and come from nine countries — Australia, Canada, Germany, Ethiopia, Honduras, India, Japan, South Korea and the United States — on five continents.

Ten of the graduates are affiliated with Mennonite Church USA; one with Mennonite Church Canada; and five with Mennonite Churches in other countries. One identifies as Baptist; one as Anglican; one as Church of Christ; and one as nondenominational.

One of the graduates, **Scott Litwiller** (MDiv) was a former participant in AMBS's !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth, and both Scott and **Naún Lucoer Cerrato** (MAPS) served as event pastors for the 2018 !Explore cohort as part of their studies. Another graduate, **Anne Perkins Munley** (MDiv) completed AMBS's nondegree Journey Missional Leadership Program before beginning seminary. **Benjamin Isaak-Krauss** (MDiv) is the first AMBS graduate to complete the Sustainability Leadership Semester at Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen (Indiana) College as part of his seminary studies.

Several graduates have family members who are AMBS graduates: **Pratik Bagh's** uncles, **Anil Bagh** (MATS 1998) and **Prem Bagh** (Certificate 1996); **Barbara Krehbiel Gehring's** husband, **Richard Gehring** (MDiv 1991); **Scott Litwiller's** uncle, **Jerry Holsopple** (MDiv 1987); **Grant Miller's** siblings, **Elizabeth Miller** (MATS 2013)

GRADUATES BY DEGREE

- 12 Master of Divinity
- 2 Master of Arts: Peace Studies
- 1 Master of Arts: Theological Studies
- 1 Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies
- 4 Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies

GRADUATES BY THE NUMBERS

- 13 men
- 7 women
- 13 serving in ministry roles or seeking a pastoral or chaplaincy assignment
- 4 pursuing mission, service, church planting or peacebuilding work
- 10 served in pastoral ministry, conference ministry or mission work (not including internships) while earning their degrees

and **Lane Miller** (MDiv 2013); **Renee Reimer's** mother, **Rosie Epp** (MAPS 1977, MDiv 1983), father, **Ray Reimer** (MDiv 1983), and uncle, **Delvyn Epp** (MDiv 1973); and **Joel Schroeder's** wife, **Kay Schroeder** (MACF 2018).

As a gift to the seminary — an annual tradition — this year's class will build a wood-fired pizza oven on campus near the pergola given by the Class of 2017. •

Graduates also received a one-year print subscription to *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* from the Institute of Mennonite Studies; access to the Atlas for Alum database from the AMBS Library; and a complimentary registration to a Leadership Clinic in 2020 from the Church Leadership Center. The Admissions Team presented each graduate with a "golden ticket" — good for one waived \$50 admissions application fee — to share with a prospective student.

At right: **Pratik Bagh** of Kutela-Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India, receives the Student Ambassador Recognition Award from **Daniel Grimes**, Director of Enrollment and Financial Aid, at the 2019 Dean's Luncheon. **Credit:** Jason Bryant



Twenty graduates honored

The 2019 AMBS commencement service took place on May 4 at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana. Each graduate received one of the following degrees and certificates.

<i>MDiv</i>	<i>Master of Divinity</i>
<i>MAPS</i>	<i>Master of Arts: Peace Studies</i>
<i>MATS</i>	<i>Master of Arts: Theological Studies</i>
<i>MATPS</i>	<i>Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies</i>
<i>Certificate</i>	<i>Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies</i>

* Candidates who have six or fewer credits left to complete toward their degree

† Candidates who completed a portion of their degree or certificate at a distance

***Peter Digitale Anderson** (Bremen, Indiana; currently in transition). *MATPS: Conflict Transformation*. Peter is exploring locations for multifaith urban peacebuilding. He attends the South Bend Friends Meeting – Elkhart worship group. He and his wife, Elizabeth, have two daughters.

Pratik Bagh (Kutela-Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India). *MATS*. Pratik anticipates working as lead pastor of an Indian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as part of a yearlong government-approved professional training program. He also will continue as an AMBS MDiv student. Pratik is a member of Jhilmila Mennonite Church in Jhilmila-Saraipali, Chhattisgarh. He attends Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart. He and his wife, Shabnam Pratik Bagh, have one daughter.

†**Jeremiah Buhler** (Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada). *Certificate*. He plans to continue in his role as minister at First Mennonite Church in Kelowna. Jerry is married to Kara Siemens; they have five children and four grandchildren.

Naún Lucoer Cerrato (Goshen, Indiana). *MAPS: International Development Administration*. Naún is working in church planting, helping form Piedra Viva Mennonite Church in Goshen.

* †**Margaret De Jong** (Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada). *MDiv: Christian Faith Formation*. Margaret plans to pursue opportunities where her faith and health interests intersect. Her home congregation is Skyline Acres Baptist Church in Fredericton, and she attends First Assembly of God in Fort Kent, Maine. She is married to Jeff Morgenthaler and has one stepson, eight godchildren in Haiti and one namesake in Senegal.

†**Dustin Finch** (Jonesboro, Arkansas). *MDiv: Theological Studies: Biblical Studies*. Dustin plans to continue as Discipleship Minister at Southwest Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas. He and his wife, Angela, have two children.

†**Suzanne Engle Ford** (Fort Collins, Colorado). *MDiv: Pastoral Ministry*. Suzanne is serving as Pastor at Zion Mennonite Church in Donnellson, Iowa. Her home congregation has been Fort Collins Mennonite Fellowship. She and her husband, Paul, have three children.

†**Barbara Krehbiel Gehring** (Manhattan, Kansas). *Certificate*. Barbara and her husband, Richard Gehring (MDiv 1991), are ending their



From left: Peter Digitale Anderson, Pratik Bagh, Naún Lucoer Cerrato, Margaret De Jong, Dustin Finch and Suzanne Engle Ford. Not pictured: Jeremiah Buhler.

pastoral positions at Manhattan Mennonite Church and beginning a co-pastorate at Lombard (Illinois) Mennonite Church. They have two children.

Benjamin Isaak-Krauss (Bammental, Germany). *MDiv: Theological Studies: Peace Studies*. Benjamin will serve as the host of Jubilee House in Elkhart for the next half year, providing hospitality to men released from incarceration, while his wife, Rianna Isaak-Krauss, finishes her Master of Arts in Christian Formation at AMBS. He also is looking for a pastoral position in Germany. His home congregation is the Mennonite congregation of Heidelberg-Bammental, and he attends Fellowship of Hope Mennonite Church in Elkhart.

Sungbin Kim (Seoul, Gyeonggi, South Korea). *MDiv: Theological Studies: Biblical Studies*. Sungbin has been accepted as the first chaplain for work release in Goshen, Indiana, by the Elkhart County Jail Ministry Board as part of a yearlong government-approved professional training program; he is waiting for visa approval. His home congregation is Jesus Heart Church in Chuncheon, Kangwon, South Korea, and he attends Yellow Creek Mennonite Church in Goshen. Kim is married to Shinae Park; they have one son.

* **Scott Micheal Litwiller** (Delavan, Illinois). *MDiv: Christian Faith Formation*. After completing his last internship this summer, Scott plans to pursue a pastoral ministry assignment. His home congregation is Hopedale (Illinois) Mennonite Church, and he attends Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart.

* † **James Longley** (Sydney, Australia). *MDiv: Theological Studies: History, Theology and Ethics*. Jim will fulfill his Supervised Ministry Experience degree requirement via a temporary placement with the United Kingdom Anabaptist Network. While in Elkhart, he attended Prairie Street Mennonite Church. He is married to Sally Longley, and they have two children.

Grant S. Miller (Danvers, Illinois). *MDiv: Theological Studies: History, Theology and Ethics*. Grant is exploring pastoral ministry and service assignment possibilities. He is a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Indiana.

† **Anne Perkins Munley** (Mundelein, Illinois). *MDiv: Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Anne plans to continue to serve in her congregation, North

Suburban Mennonite Church in Libertyville, Illinois, and as a chaplain and spiritual director. She and her husband, Gerry Munley, have five children.

Yukino Ohyama (Sapporo, Hokkaido, and Tokyo, Japan). *Certificate*. Yukino is exploring a Bible translation mission assignment. Her home congregation is Japan Mennonite Shiroishi Christian Church in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan. Locally, she has been a member of Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart.

Brian Miller O'Leary (Goshen, Indiana). *MDiv: Theological Studies: Biblical Studies*. Brian plans to teach high school English. His home congregation is Seattle (Washington) Mennonite Church, and he attends Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen. He is married to Katie Miller O'Leary.

† **Renee Epp Reimer** (Sioux Falls, South Dakota). *MDiv: Christian Faith Formation*. In August, Renee will begin as Associate Pastor of Faith Formation at Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, Kansas. Her home congregations are Sermon on the Mount Mennonite Church in Sioux Falls and Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas



From left: Benjamin Isaak-Krauss, Scott Micheal Litwiller, James Longley, Grant S. Miller and Brian Miller O'Leary.
Not pictured: Barbara Krehbiel Gehring, Sungbin Kim, Anne Perkins Munley.

Faculty and staff transitions

City, Kansas. Locally she has attended Silverwood Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana.

Tesfaye D. Robelle (Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia). *MAPS: International Development Administration*. Tesfaye plans to work with linking theology and business via a holistic service; and with evangelism via missional business, church planting, organizing and networking. He is part of the Meserete Kristos/Mennonite Mission Church of Ethiopia.

† **Joel Ray Schroeder** (Newton, Kansas). *Certificate*. Joel plans to continue in pastoral ministry and church leadership at First Mennonite Church in Newton. He and his wife, Kay (MA in Christian Formation 2018), have two children.

* **Nel Warkentin** (Elkhart, Indiana). *MDiv: Pastoral Ministry*. Nel was the last student to simultaneously earn a Master of Social Work from Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, through a dual-degree program of Andrews and AMBS that has ended. She has been offered a full-time position as a spiritual care coordinator with Heart to Heart Hospice of Mishawaka, Indiana. Her home congregation is EXTEND Missional Community in Middlebury, Indiana. She has one son, Pete Wolfinger.

The AMBS learning community has been saying farewell to several of its long-time members this academic year.

Sara Wenger Shenk, EdD, retired June 30 after nine years as President. Since beginning in the fall of 2010, Wenger Shenk has provided strong direction for



Sara Wenger Shenk

the seminary's future and skillful facilitation when faced with challenging situations, including times of upheaval in higher education, in theological schools and in the church. She's overseen changes such as transitioning AMBS's name from "Associated" to "Anabaptist" in 2012, renovating the Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount in 2011–12, and degree program revisions that included the creation of a distance-friendly MDiv program in 2013. She also has led efforts to increase the seminary's global reach, including connecting with Meserete Kristos College in Ethiopia to offer

AMBS's new fully online MA: Theology and Global Anabaptism to graduate students based in Ethiopia.

As existing faculty members have retired, nine new teaching faculty members and a Vice President and Academic Dean have been hired during her tenure. She initiated strategic focus conversations among the faculty that led to further integration of environmental, immigration and peace issues into the curriculum. She notes that these projects have all been team efforts.

"Sara's ability to encourage collaboration and enable people to lead and be the best they can be — combined with her willingness to give strong direction when required — has empowered AMBS to grow and thrive," said Board Chair **Bruce Baergen** of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. "Her passion for the work and mission of the church has encouraged and strengthened those around her."

Wenger Shenk's leadership helped pave the way for enhanced faculty and student attention to theological and practical engagement with environmental sustainability, including four Rooted and Grounded Conferences on Land and Christian Discipleship. With her counsel and support, AMBS received several Lilly Endowment, Inc., grants, including



From left: Yukino Ohyama, Renee Epp Reimer, Tesfaye D. Robelle and Nel Warkentin. Not pictured: Joel Ray Schroeder. Graduate photos credit: Steve Echols

\$250,000 to reduce economic challenges for seminary graduates, a supplemental three-year grant of \$125,000, and a \$1 million grant to establish Thriving in Ministry: A Process for Pastoral Leaders. She also has worked closely with the Hearts on Fire Capital Campaign, which has raised more than \$9.6 million in gifts and commitments since 2015, as well as close to \$7 million in annual fund gifts. Her *Practicing Reconciliation* blog, launched in 2013, has consistently been one of the most visited pages on the seminary's website.

"Sara has been a beloved leader at AMBS, where her leadership is described as courageous, honest and pastoral," said Vice President and Academic Dean **Beverly Lapp**, EdD. "She's known for leading from a place of grounded personal integrity, a deep sense of service, and love for God."

Wenger Sherk also positioned AMBS to be transparent in naming and repenting for the seminary's failure to respond appropriately in the 1970s and '80s to abuse perpetrated by John Howard Yoder, a former AMBS professor and administrator — which included organizing services of lament, confession and commitment in 2015.

"Sara understood in her mind, her spirit and her gut that somehow AMBS's future as a healthy seminary and church institution required telling old and new truths about our past," said **Malinda E. Berry***, PhD, Assistant Professor of Theology and Ethics. "Her integrity has given all of us more options for what it means to be a leader."

Wenger Sherk plans to live near Waynesboro, Virginia, with her husband, **Gerald**, where they will be closer to family, including grandchildren.



Loren Johns

Loren L. Johns*, PhD, Professor of New Testament, retired June 30 after 19 years of service. He was Academic Dean (2000–07) before joining the teaching faculty, and he also was Director of the MDiv program (2009–18).

Johns has served as New Testament editor of the Believers Church Bible Commentary; as associate editor of the Princeton Dead Sea Scrolls Project; as a speaker and presenter; and as author of many books, articles and book reviews.

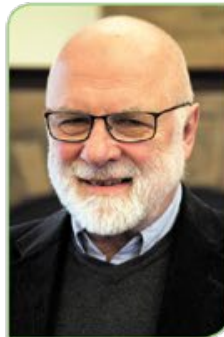
"Loren's primary research on the role of the Bible in the church, the letters of Paul, canonical formation and the Johannine literature will enrich the academy for much time to come," Lapp said.

Johns is a member of the Society of Biblical Literature and the Swiss Anabaptist Genealogical Association and has served as Vice President and President of the Mennonite Historical Society.

"Loren's love for God is evident in the ways he engages the biblical text both critically and confessionally," said **Safwat Marzouk**, PhD, Associate Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. "He loves his students not only by helping them change the ways they read, interpret, understand and preach the Bible, but also by sharing his own life stories of how he reads, interprets and preaches the good news to the world around him."

Johns and his wife, **Rachel**, will serve as hosts of the Casa Emaús guesthouse at SEMILLA, the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary in Guatemala City, Guatemala, for a year before moving to Florida. He plans to teach occasional AMBS courses.

Ben C. Ollenburger, PhD, retired Dec. 31, 2018, after teaching biblical theology and Old Testament for 31 years at AMBS, also serving as Director of MA programs since 1997. He has authored multiple books, including *Zion, the City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult* (Sheffield Academic, 1987) and *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future* (Eisenbrauns, 2004). (The latter was included in 101 Books on Biblical Theology, an annotated bibliography released by Zondervan Bibles in 2018 in



Ben Ollenburger

conjunction with their new *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*.)

Ollenburger has contributed to several academic journals and served on editorial boards and councils for the *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, *Biblical Interpretation* and *Theology Today*.

"Generations of students and colleagues have been inspired and had their faith strengthened by Ben as an accomplished scholar teacher and delightful storyteller," said Lapp.

Marzouk praised Ollenburger for consistently bringing biblical texts' "vibrant theological message to the life of the church."

In March, a book edited by two of his former students, **Ryan D. Harker** (MDiv 2015) and **Heather L. Bunce** (MATS 2012), was released by Penn State University Press. *The Earth is the Lord's: Essays on Creation and the Bible in Honor of Ben C. Ollenburger* contains essays by colleagues and former students.

Ken Hawkey*, MDiv, retired June 30. He served full time as Senior Associate Director of Development (2008–18) and quarter time as Advancement Associate for Canada (2018–19).



Ken Hawkey

Over time, his territories came to include the western half of the United States and all of Canada.

By Hawkey's estimation, over his 11 years of service, he completed approximately 3,000 donor visits and 150 Sunday morning church visits; preached 60 sermons; and traveled 300,000 miles.

"Ken has been a wise, passionate force in AMBS Advancement, beloved by his colleagues and his faithful donors," said **Paula Killough***, MDiv, Interim Director of Advancement. "He has been an innovator, bringing the team new ideas and creative concepts for sharing the powerful AMBS story." •

—*Marlys Weaver-Stoesz and Annette Brill Bergstresser*

* Denotes AMBS graduate

AMBS SNAPSHOTS

2019 graduates reflect on their seminary experiences

Peter Digitale Anderson (MATPS), Bremen, Indiana:

"Studying peace and theology at AMBS has sharpened and expanded my vision of multifaith peace-building, giving me a much deeper understanding of how communities' traditions and spiritualities aid in building bridges of trust and cooperation."



Scott Micheal Litwiller (MDiv), Delavan, Illinois:

"I will forever be grateful for the community — the students, volunteers, faculty and staff — for many reasons, but especially for the way that we engage with one another on personal, intellectual and spiritual levels. There are too few places out there like AMBS."



Anne Perkins Munley (MDiv), Mundelein, Illinois:

"I treasure this seminary experience. I've come to know the Bible better, learning to experience it and express it with mind, emotions, body and spirit. I have enjoyed learning in an environment of patient, creative, thoughtful staff and faculty who live what they believe. I am grateful."



Suzanne Engle Ford (MDiv), Fort Collins, Colorado:

"The most meaningful part of seminary for me was the combination of internships and leadership courses. Also, through the MDiv Connect program, I now have a community of colleagues throughout the U.S. and Canada and in other parts of the world."



Sungbin Kim (MDiv), Seoul, Gyeonggi, South Korea:

"At AMBS, even in my striving for *Jesus' peace* (Jn 14:27), I have deeply appreciated people's humanness, loving patience, equality, care for international students, anti-racism work, and the generous scholarship."



Nel Warkentin (MDiv/MSW), Elkhart, Indiana:

"I found the community environment at AMBS really encouraging. It provided a safe, comforting place for academic, spiritual and personal growth."

LOOKING FORWARD

Introducing our fully online MA!

In response to a growing demand for online master's degrees, AMBS has launched a fully online **Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism**. The 46-credit-hour academic degree program can be completed in four years of part-time study and offers a global approach to Anabaptist theological education.

ams.edu/matga

Semester One for-credit courses

Fully online courses (Sept. 3 – Dec. 13) include Creation Care: Theology, Ethics and Spirituality; Psalms; History of Christianity in Africa; Strange New World of the Bible 1; and more.

Our **hybrid course** (online Aug. 5 – Dec. 13 and requiring one week on campus Aug. 19–24) will be Teaching and Learning for Transformation.

We're also offering 13 **campus courses**. Nonadmitted students get 50 percent off their first course for credit!

ams.edu/onecourse

Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program

Nurture your leadership abilities. Deepen your theological perspectives. Tend to your spiritual formation. Join the Journey program! Journey offers mentor-mentee partnerships, distance-learning opportunities and community support. The nondegree program is open to all who are exploring what ministry looks like in their life. Register for fall 2019 by Aug. 6; save \$100 if you register by July 16.

ams.edu/journey

Spiritual Direction Seminars

Cultivate your ministry of spiritual direction through this supervised program. In 2019–20, **Spiritual Direction: Foundations** is a hybrid course with classwork online and on campus at AMBS. **Spiritual Direction: Mystery** will meet Oct. 7–8, Feb. 17–18 and May 4–5 on campus. Instructor: Dan Schrock, DMin.

ams.edu/seminars

Anabaptist Short Courses (online, noncredit, six weeks)

- **Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology**, with Jamie Pitts, PhD: Sept. 11 – Oct. 22
- **Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible**, with Safwat Marzouk, PhD, and Drew Strait, PhD: Oct. 23 – Dec. 10
- **Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture**, with Loren Johns, PhD: Feb. 12 – March 24
- **Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication**, with Betty Pries, PhD (ABD): April 15 – May 26

\$300/course by the early registration deadline; \$350 after. Only \$995 total for all four courses if you register by Aug. 16! ams.edu/shortcourses

Available online! Anabaptist Witness 6.1: "Mission in Conflict Zones."

anabaptistwitness.org
Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology, Spring 2019: "Be not afraid."
mennovision.org

Calendar

Manitoba

July 10: MCC Manitoba fundraising golf tournament, at Bridges Golf Course, Starbuck. For more information, or to register, visit mccmb.ca/golf.

July 25: *Discovery: A Comic Lament*, a play about Indigenous/settler issues and moving forward together," at the CMU chapel, Winnipeg, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets available at Eventbrite.com.

July 25-28: "Toward a just peace: Indigenous-settler reconciliation through friendship," the annual Bridgefolk conference for Mennonites and Roman Catholics, at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg. The focus will be on church and social relationships with First Nations peoples. Keynote speakers: Steve Heinrichs of MC Canada, and Sister Eva Solomon, and Ojibwe elder. For more information, visit Bridgefolk.net.

Ontario

June 28-30: Family camping weekend at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp,

New Hamburg. For more information, or to book a space, call 519-625-8602.

July 14: Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, hosts a gospel song fest from "Life Songs II," led by Bob Shantz, at 2:30 p.m.

July 22: "Women explore the role of Mary Magdalene: The dedicated apostle," an afternoon lecture and discussion with Amanda Witmer, at Wilmot Mennonite Church.

Please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by email to calendar@canadianmennonite.org. For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



Classifieds

Free for the Taking

1930's Windmill Rotor Free for the safe removal of the windmill steel structure from a rural property in North Dumfries. Call 519-716-7740 or email mcgarry@comap.ca.

Employment Opportunities



Employment opportunity

Toronto United Mennonite Church (TUMC) seeks a half-time (0.5 FTE) pastor, starting in fall 2019. Duties include ministry to the entire congregation with some focus on youth and seniors, dependent on strengths and experience and in negotiation with our current full-time pastor.

TUMC is a healthy, diverse congregation of 200 people from all age groups including many children. TUMC has a vibrant church life with strengths in youth engagement, refugee settlement, social justice and mutual support. We welcome people of all ethnicities, sexual orientations, physical capacities and gifts. Apply for this position by emailing: pastoraltransitions@mceec.ca.



Employment opportunity Chief Executive Officer Not-For-Profit Long-term Care New Hamburg, ON

Tri-County Mennonite Homes (TCMH) is a not-for-profit service agency dedicated to seniors and developmentally disabled individuals since 1968. TCMH has three operating divisions. Greenwood Court in Stratford and Nithview Community in New Hamburg provide residential and health care support for seniors, while Aldaview Services in New Hamburg provides support to people with developmental disabilities.

TCMH provides client-focused holistic responses to the physical, spiritual, social and emotional needs of their communities. The TCMH vision is rooted in faith and built on compassion, respect, trust, and stewardship.

Accountable to the Board of Directors, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is a dynamic, values based, visionary person who leads and directs TCMH and its divisions and provides advice and support to the Board of Directors.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Masters degree in Health Sciences, Health Administration, or Business Administration preferred
- Minimum of five (5) years' experience in a similar senior administrative position preferred, ideally within the long-term care or developmental services sectors
- Successful completion of (or willingness to complete) a program in long-term care home administration or management that is a minimum of 100 hours in duration of instruction time as per the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 (i.e., must be qualified as an Administrator as per the Long-Term Care Homes Act)

For full job description please visit: <https://bit.ly/2WgKWiu>

Please apply in confidence to:
Tobi Akintokun
Maxwell Management Group Ltd.
tobi@maxwellmanagementgroup.com
1-855-305-4078 ext. 203

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PHOTO BY JOLENE CARTER / TEXT BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

Mother Iman and daughter Doha Raad are pictured serving a sampling of Syrian food to congregants at Niagara United Mennonite Church who helped the government-sponsored refugee family, comprised of a set of parents, two sons and a daughter, when they came to Canada three years ago. Another daughter, with her husband and two sons, arrived a year ago, fully sponsored by the congregation. Iman and her daughters Doha and Shem cooked and served the Syrian dinner for 75 people at the church.

Photo finish



PHOTO AND TEXT BY MARIA H. KLASSEN

The Bob Howse Trail goes right past Niagara United Mennonite Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont. The idea that God has blessed the congregation with this space, and how the space could be used to bless others evolved into a project spearheaded by the youth group. The youth built and painted six picnic tables, with money supplied by the church for the materials. The tables have been set around the benches that had been placed there by the town. It proved a great place for the church family picnic, but the hope is that many others passing by will enjoy this space in the warm summer days ahead.