

Walking a different path

Tourism, not terrorism,
rules in the West Bank

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EDITORIAL

Shaped by our essential book

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER



The name Arab Christians use for the Bible translates literally as “The Holy Book,” and they often

shorten it to “The Book.” Article 4 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* states: “The Bible is the essential book of the church.” What does it mean if we see the Bible as the book above other books, the essential book of our faith?

In this issue, we feature our semi-annual Focus on Books and Resources section, with a collection of titles for you to explore and read. On page 23, Nancy Frey, a teacher and pastor formerly serving in Africa, recalls how her Bible students there wanted to understand the Bible so badly that they would study for 10 hours! In the feature on page 4, author Meghan Larissa Good considers how the Bible helps shape our biblical imagination. She posits, “Through Scripture we are shaped, page by page, into the imagination of Christ.”

Here are a few thoughts on being “shaped” by the Bible.

How often do we touch an actual Bible or read its words? Not often, according to a 2013 study commissioned by the Canadian Bible Forum and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. The statistics show that only 14 percent of Canadian Christians read the Bible at least once a week. That’s one in seven of us. If you look at the total population, a majority of Canadians—including those who call themselves Christian—seldom or never read the Bible.

The Confession of Faith in a

Mennonite Perspective states: “We commit ourselves to persist and delight in reading, studying and meditating on the Scriptures.” A lofty and desirable goal.

Maybe it starts with handling the actual book. When I lived in the Middle East, I witnessed a new kind of respect for the Bible. Middle Eastern Christians take great care with the actual book: They don’t place a Bible on the floor or on any other dirty surface, and they never take a Bible into the bathroom. In western societies, some worship services include a procession in which a highly decorated copy of the gospels is held up for all to see. The whole congregation stands when the gospels are read, as a witness to the centrality of Christ.

Closer to home, we can make at least one Bible visible and available in the spaces where we live our daily lives. We can carry an actual Bible to church, or our congregation can provide pew Bibles within easy reach. When Scripture is read in a worship service, we can open “The Book” and follow along.

As Anabaptists, we want to engage with all parts of the Bible—through worship, individual and group studies, and spiritual formation. We should be conscious of how various church activities provide opportunities for the Bible’s contents to be seen, heard, read, discussed, taken to heart and lived out.

Another way we allow the Bible to shape us is to hear its stories. The good narratives contained in the Bible continually surprise me. In this holy book, we see one grand story of how God and humans built—and re-built—their relationship. It portrays believable

characters, with dreams, temptations and challenges. Challenging plots and surprise endings. Emotions ranging from reverence and awe, to anger and shame. This story invites us to walk alongside our spiritual ancestors as we, too, grow in our relationship with the story’s author.

For me, this has meant engaging in biblical storytelling, learning the ancient narratives by heart and telling those stories orally. An international movement within the broader Christian church helps storytellers tell those ancient stories with understanding and passion.

To see how to get involved, check out the Network of Biblical Storytellers International (nbsint.org/). A Canadian chapter meets annually each fall (facebook.com/biblicalstorytellingca).

You may have testimonies to share about how the Bible has shaped you as a follower of Christ. We’d love to hear them. In the meantime, consider this your invitation to “persist and delight” in the church’s essential book.

New columnist

The column “The Church Here and There” debuts on page 11. Columnist Arli Klassen comes with experience in several Mennonite settings, and she brings a vision for connecting Anabaptist siblings in many places around the world. Arli writes, “I would like to both educate and reflect on the connections and relationships among churches at all levels.” We look forward to hearing her perspective.



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CANADIAN MENNONITE

490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5,
Waterloo, ON, N2L 6H7

Phone: 519-884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 Fax: 519-884-3331

Website: canadianmennonite.org

Facebook.com/Canadian.Mennonite @CanMenno

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Board Chair, Henry Krause, hakrause@telus.net, 604-888-3192

Canadian Mennonite Staff:

Publisher, Tobi Thiessen, publisher@canadianmennonite.org

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

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

Online Media Manager, Aaron Epp, onlinemgr@canadianmennonite.org

Editorial Assistant, Barb Draper, edassist@canadianmennonite.org

Graphic Designer, Betty Avery, designer@canadianmennonite.org

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

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

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

Senior Writer, Will Braun, seniorwriter@canadianmennonite.org

B.C. Correspondent, Amy Rinner Waddell, bc@canadianmennonite.org

Alberta Correspondent, Joanne De Jong, ab@canadianmennonite.org

Saskatchewan Correspondent, Donna Schulz, sk@canadianmennonite.org

Manitoba Correspondent, Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe, mb@canadianmennonite.org

Eastern Canada Correspondent, Janet Bauman, ec@canadianmennonite.org

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BOOKS & RESOURCES FEATURE

The world in colour

Shaping biblical imagination

By Meghan Larissa Good

If the Bible is a story, it is also something more: It's a book that dares to make an authoritative claim on life. Between the poems and proverbs and parables, a portrait is taking shape of who God is and what exactly God desires. The Bible suggests that to learn to walk with God and love the things that God loves is to begin to live in sync with the world's true design.

This description of the Bible—an introduction to God and to the shape of the “with-God” life—is something rather different from “basic instructions.” From time to time, I fantasize about possessing a handbook that would answer every problem with a clear, three-step process. Secure a great husband, according to the Book of Ruth:

1. **Don your best dress.**
2. **Sneak up to his bed** after he's spent a long evening partying with friends.
3. **Uncover his feet** and lie down and then wait to see what he says.

Check out Ruth 3 to catch that story.

even send you skidding into wreckage. The goal, the ultimate destination, remains exactly the same. But the ability to get there safely requires a certain ingenuity, the ability to navigate previously unknown obstacles and adapt to new terrain.

The Bible's opening sequence in Genesis 1, which describes God's creation of the world, could leave some readers with the impression that everything is finished, tied off, completed—like a highway laid down once never to be altered again: *“God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And so light appeared.”*

If this is the case, turn-by-turn directions would seem the perfect communication tool. But Genesis 2 immediately complicates this picture of creation by depicting God playing in the mud of the newly minted Earth. Humans are on the scene now, but God remains in the world as well, and the creative work is still unfolding.

The scene in Genesis 2 always reminds me a bit of kids tinkering in a sandbox. God forms a creature and hands it to Adam and asks, “What do you think we should call it?” Adam replies, “It's a spiny lumpsucker!” And that becomes its name. Presumably this is about the moment God decides it might be time to bring Eve around, if only

The Bible's opening sequence in Genesis 1, which describes God's creation of the world, could leave some readers with the impression that everything is finished, tied off, completed—like a highway laid down once never to be altered again

Of course, the trouble with instruction manuals is how quickly they go out of date. A 2018 atlas could offer you a detailed guide for driving from New York to Los Angeles. The instructions might be absolutely perfect on the day they were laid out. But what happens when traffic patterns change? Or a tree falls in the way? Or when cars are replaced by hovercrafts? The precise sequence of turns that once would have carried you safely to your destination could now lead you far astray,

for a second opinion.

In Genesis 2, human beings are not merely passive observers of God's work in the world; they are active participants in the creative vocation of God. They—and we—are assigned the task of cultivating soil that is pregnant with divine possibilities. (*“The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden; to farm it and take care of it.”*)

This vocation, given humanity in Genesis 2:15, is not



'FACE PAINTING PHANTASM' (MENNOPIX DIGITAL ART BY ROSS W. MUIR)

We were made for so much more than paint-by-number religion. We were made to cast the dreams of God on many different canvases, in all the diverse shapes and vibrant, Spirit-saturated colours of true life.

mechanical, assembly-line working—that of stamping identical cogs pumping out of a machine. It's creative, nurturing work. It's the vocation of a gardener who tends living, growing things—a vocation not just of preservation but of emergence.

The number and complexity of tasks and the variability of conditions demand that a gardener have a far more intimate knowledge of her soil than a finite list of instructions would ever contain. The gardener must understand her soil's potential and vulnerabilities enough to recognize potential new threats, adapt to changing conditions and cultivate flourishing in all seasons. What she needs is a mind that is attuned to the

nature of the earth itself.

This is why, I believe, the Bible takes a much more ambitious approach to human formation than a simple rule-book could provide. God is not shaping automated drones but artists in the image of a Master. Now, an artist must begin by learning the essential rules of her craft. A sculptor won't get far if she denies the nature of clay, refusing to keep it moist, firing it in ways that crack it. Similarly, there are basic rules to how God's world operates—principles of moral gravity, if you will—whose defiance is quite costly. Infidelity, to word or relationship, breaks things. Webs of deception trap the weaver. The Bible points out some of these essential

principles so we can work with the nature of our clay rather than against it.

But rules alone are not enough! An artist needs imagination, a vision of what can be. The Bible is more than a story only—it's a story moving us and the world somewhere. It's a revelation of who God is, of what God loves, of how the world is shaped. It's an invitation to a relationship, an apprenticeship in God's creative, nurturing vocation.

The Bible provides the essential information we need to creatively lean in. We were made for so much more than paint-by-number religion. We were made to cast the dreams of God on many different canvases, in all the diverse shapes and vibrant,

Spirit-saturated colours of true life. The Bible trains our eye for the divine aesthetic and then sends us out with a brush in hand to paint with the help of the Master.

Between the lines of its obscure laws and strange and unexpected stories, the Bible forms inspired imagination for the God-shaped possibilities of the world. In it, we learn what God's activity has looked like in the past so that we will recognize it when it is unfolding right in front of us. We discover what God sounds like so that we can hear when God continues to speak. We learn what God loves so we can be alert for opportunities to stir that delight. We learn what God dreams of so we can begin to live that dream. The Bible shapes imagination for how God can be encountered in ordinary life and for how we can cooperate with God in encouraging the flourishing of all creation.

It turns out that the strange particularity of the Bible's address—God's word to this person, in this place, at this time, in this specific situation—is powerful precisely because it is the particular that shapes imagination for the universal. The same God who talked to ancient farmers about paying their day labourers before sunset so their families would have dinner that night (Deuteronomy 24:14-15) has something to say as well to modern office managers about how they care for the needs of the temp.

God is at work not just everywhere but somewhere in particular. God tends not just every bloom but this one, in its unique soil and shape and condition. We are being formed by the Bible to join God not just in general but in the specificity of genuine care, in all the "hereness" and "newness" of the particular bit of creation with which we have been uniquely entrusted.

In Romans 12:2, an early Christian leader named Paul writes: *"Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature."* The patterns of the world run across our news feed

Through Scripture, we are shaped, page by page, into the imagination of Christ.

every minute of the day—cycles of fear, greed, isolation and violence that all the intellect of all the nations can't seem to find a way beyond. But those who are shaped by the Bible are formed for a more beautiful imagination.

We imagine a community where there are no poor because what belongs to one is a gift for all. We imagine conflict where enemies defend each other's interests. We imagine marriage—and sex—characterized by mutual submission, where each partner guards the other's joy as if it were their own. We imagine a justice defined not by matching wounds but by the healing of what's broken. We dare to imagine a genuine friendship, true companionship with God.

Through Scripture, we are shaped, page by page, into the imagination of Christ. We learn to see past the surface of the broken soil around us to the small but potent seeds of divine possibility,

which have been planted within and are waiting to be cultivated.

This vision of faithful living is so much bigger than a rote performance of a finite set of religious rules. The Bible's invitation is to a life of creative, risk-taking engagement. Its movement drives us toward a relationship still unfolding and a story still being written—in us, in our children's children and in generations yet to come. ❧



Meghan Larissa Good is teaching pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz. This appears as Chapter 4 in

her book The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today, © 2018 by Herald Press. Used with permission. The Bible Unwrapped is this fall's CommonRead selection. For more information or to purchase, visit commonword.ca/go/1807.

❧ For discussion

1. Where and when do you read the Bible or hear it read? What parts do you find easier to read and which are more challenging? Why do you think biblical literacy is declining?
2. Meghan Good says the Bible should not be viewed as a handbook of basic instructions. What does she say are the limitations of a rulebook? Do you agree? What are the implications of viewing the Bible as stories about God rather than as a rulebook?
3. The Bible gives us a portrait of "who God is and what exactly God desires," so that we can live faithfully in our ordinary lives, says Good. How do you respond to the idea that Christians are creative "artists," responsible to determine a Christ-like response to the modern world?

4. Good says that "there are basic rules to how God's world operates—principles of moral gravity," that we need to know so we can "work with the nature of our clay." What are some of these essential principles? Are they timeless or do they change? Can you think of denominations that have essential principles different from yours?
- By Barb Draper

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/// Readers write

✉ **Point:Counterpoint—Differing views on AMBS hiring**

Re: “Boshart next AMBS president despite expressed concerns,” Sept. 30, page 27.

Thanks to *Canadian Mennonite* for covering the opposition to the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) announcement about its new president. As the only news source which mentioned this, you showed yourself to be interested in more than just corporate communications.

The one piece that could be more accurate is that significant concerns about Boshart’s candidacy were raised by the four women you mention here, and many others, since long before the announcement. As a man, I’ll repeat my criticism of the announcement here, in the interest of furthering the news of this announcement.

In 2017, I edited a special issue of the *Conrad Grebel Review*. In the afterword to that work, I wrote about the need for institutional transparency and used the example of Sara Wenger Shenk’s leadership as a potentially good way forward for AMBS and Mennonite education. As Stephanie Krehbiel documents in the piece linked at Into Account, AMBS seems to be sacrificing significant pieces of its recent progress.

What is particularly frustrating to me about AMBS’s opaque announcement, beyond the narrative erasure Krehbiel discusses, is the lack of any positive reason for why David Boshart will be a good president—other than that he has held leadership in a denomination that has halved in size over the last 10 years and that he loves the seminary.

Because of some conversations that I’ve had with people at the seminary, I know that people there believe he brings potential to address other issues the seminary is now facing. But failing an articulation of those, we are left with simple institutional secrecy, the kind of speech that destroys lives and poisons culture.
TREVOR BECHTEL (ONLINE COMMENT)

This commentary on David Boshart’s appointment is disappointing.

Leadership in the Mennonite church is daunting in these days. It takes selfless courage to subject self and family to this kind of armchair scrutiny.

Boshart has been vetted by an elected board. After consideration, they have asked him to step forward. He has yet to take his seat at the table, but he is being plagued with microaggressions and an attempt at de-platforming. What folly.

Can we allow Boshart to assume his duties and make his own decisions before we pile on with terms

like “heteropatriarchal”? (This term appears in Stephanie Krehbiel’s online Into Account piece.)
What does that mean anyway?

Is there no grace extended anymore when people begin their challenging duties?

WALTER BERGEN (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ **Thanks for starting a discussion about money and giving**

Re: “The zucchini principle” and “Why your church needs to talk about money,” Sept. 16, pages 4 and 36, respectively.

As someone who has talked a lot about money, it is encouraging to see that money/economics is not only of interest to the secular world, but deserves attention from the Christian community as well.

I found this editorial a completely new economic theory and worthy of our collective consideration. The tangible, personal, benevolent aspects of money and vocation are often overlooked, partly because we Mennonites have left the farm. In my view, our traditional tie to the land that has characterized us for a long time has been a beneficial and sacred aspect of our history and helped forge our attitude about community and money. Gifting or selling surplus zucchini is huge, but helping our neighbours to grow their own vegetables is also a part of God’s plan (Mennonite Economic Development Associates).

Lori Guenther Reesor talks about giving and that it is an increasing challenge in some churches, but here, too, a big-picture view is also important. We need to be thankful that giving is not as necessary domestically as it once was, or as it is in other countries, because we are wealthy, but more importantly because we have a relatively progressive tax system creating a large middle class. We have allowed—or forced—governments to assume most of our former community responsibilities that were handled largely by the church.

And finally, digital giving is like digital banking, a non-issue compared to the big economic/moral/social/political issues like global warming, building pipelines, Indigenous reconciliation, big business morality and equitable trade.

PETER A. DUECK, VANCOUVER

✉ **A strike against climate change must include a strike against cars**

The climate change strike in Uptown Waterloo on Oct. 4 raised awareness and got people talking about climate change, which I definitely think is a good

thing. To me, though, what's a lot more important—but a lot more difficult to organize and be a part of—is the action that is taken after a strike like this. How can we build off this energy, this unity?

I believe the one thing individuals who have access to public transit can do to have the greatest impact in the fight against climate change, is to give up your cars. Sell all your personal vehicles, or, even better, get them demolished and use the parts to build a bicycle or two.

"Incentify" people to rent vehicles, rather than own them, by providing a low-cost rental service/car-share program. Ban all parking lots/long-term parking spaces in the cities except for one communal lot at every on/off ramp to the highways, which would include a car rental place for those who want to use the highways and which would connect to numerous bus routes.

What it's going to take, in the short term at least, is for some of us to simply suck it up and live a lifestyle that is more inconvenient than what we're used to.

It's going to require us to take longer to get to

work or school, and even be late sometimes. It may also require us to get off our butts, to walk or bike in the heat, cold, rain or snow, to get to work covered in sweat. It will require us to compromise, to sacrifice some of our own comfort and freedom of mobility for the greater good.

JONATHAN KLASSEN, WATERLOO, ONT.

The writer is a member of Breslau (Ont.) Mennonite Church. A longer version of this letter appeared as an op-ed piece in the Oct. 5 Waterloo Region Record.

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.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Klassen—Mikenna Daisy Harlos (b. Aug. 21, 2019), to Gillian and Brock Klassen, Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Lehr—Taylor Emma (b. Oct. 3, 2019), to Steven and Tami-Lynn Lehr, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Baptisms

Karl McNeil—Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C., June 23, 2019.

Deaths

Andres—Anna (nee Pauls), 97 (b. Nov. 8, 1921; d. Sept. 14, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Braun—William, 94 (b. Aug. 12, 1925; d. Sept. 22, 2019), Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Dick—Cornelius, 92 (b. May 8, 1927; d. Sept. 14, 2019), Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Epp—Elizabeth (nee Loewen), 99 (b. Jan. 22, 1920; d. June 16, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Friesen—Orly, 78 (b. Aug. 20, 1941; d. Sept. 25, 2019), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Friesen—Willy, 92 (b. May 10, 1927; d. Aug. 29, 2019), Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Groening—Ed H., 106 (b. Feb. 5, 1913; d. Aug. 24, 2019), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Isaak—Siegfried (Butch), 75 (b. Nov. 1, 1943; d. June 6, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Janzen—Jakob, 83 (b. Aug. 19, 1936; d. Sept. 27, 2019), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Kliever—Edith, 68 (b. June 19, 1950; d. April 7, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Kroeger—Helga, 64 (b. Oct. 26, 1954; d. July 30, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Kunkel—Henry, 69 (b. Jan. 19, 1950; d. Sept. 10, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Loewen—Henry, 88 (b. March 12, 1931; d. Sept. 20, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

McGill—Kenneth, 71 (b. Sept. 4, 1947; d. Feb. 18, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Unger—Elfriede (nee Unger), 84 (b. Dec. 21, 1934; d. May 21, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Unrau—Harry, 94 (b. Sept. 7, 1924; d. Aug. 9, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Voth—Peter, 77 (b. Feb. 1, 1942; d. March 7, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Wiebe—Hilda (nee Kastenschmidt), 90 (b. Nov. 20, 1928; d. Jan. 1, 2019) First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Willms—Victor, 80 (b. Aug. 3, 1925; d. Jan. 10, 2019), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

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

Speak Jesus

Ken Warkentin

In the mid-1960s, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman coined the phrase “the social construction of reality.” The phrase emphasizes that the world of power and meaning is created through the careful management and manipulation of social symbols. This is done intentionally in a community in order to arrange power and value in certain ways, aimed at creating a viable social sphere in which to live.

Every community—from families, to congregations, to nation-states—are engaged in creating your world. We do that through emphasizing some things over others. We do that through activities that range from family activities, such as table prayers and birthday celebrations, to national events, such as participation in the Olympics and political conventions, and nationalized health care.

Currently our world is often portrayed as deeply divided. Whether we talk about politics, economy or religion, we are subtly and not so subtly cast into “us” and “them.” I personally find it disheartening to hear people in my

country discuss immigration—and more particularly refugees—in terms of “us Canadians” and “those foreigners.” “Foreigners” are frequently associated with terrorists, criminals or revolutionaries.

It is equally disheartening to hear people discuss politics in very black and white terms, in which the party I support is “right” and the other party is “wrong.” People who disagree with me are “stupid,” “lazy,” “right wing” or left wing.” This language creeps into our church and our religious life when I hear people discussing other Christians in very unchristian terms. Frequently, when we disagree with other Christians, we use the opportunity to judge their faithfulness or, worse yet, their salvation.

This is a world of fear and insecurity that breeds anxiety, defensiveness and despair, which is often acted out as brutality and inhumaneness. You might say that the world has always been thus, and I would not argue, but I think that it is also fairly evident that the divisions that we feel in our context have not

always been this pronounced.

The world as we know it has not always been as it is now. In the beginning, the world was a formless void, and Jesus was there. The transformations that took place did so in the light of Christ.

When we appreciate that statement, we begin to alleviate some of the fear and anxiety that our society produces around change. When we appreciate that statement, we can fully engage in life in the kingdom because we acknowledge that God is in charge. God has been in charge; God will continue to be in charge. There is nothing outside of the realm of God’s control, and God, who began this creation so many years ago, continues to shape it in love.

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

Jesus is the living Word of God . . . not a belief about Jesus . . . not a set of doctrines that define our belief systems . . . not a code of ethics that can define how we live together in community. No. Jesus is the Word of God. That Word is with God, and that Word is with you. Speak the living Word. Speak Jesus. ✎



Ken Warkentin is executive director of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

A moment from yesterday



Can you help identify these three men at Bethel Bible Institute? Is John Poettcker in the centre? The formation of Bethel in Abbotsford, B.C., was proposed in 1937 at the ministers conference of the Conference of United Mennonite Churches of B.C. with the hope it would be “the guardian of traditional Mennonite faith.” Its first year had 22 students taking classes in Bible, church and Mennonite history. In 1943, the United Mennonite Conference assumed full responsibility for the school, and plans were underway for new classroom and dormitory buildings. By 1953, every congregation in the conference had at least one student at Bethel. Concerns over some faculty’s positive views of fundamentalism and dispensationalism in the 1950s eroded support for the school. In 1970, Bethel Bible Institute merged with Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute to become Columbia Bible College.

Text: Conrad Stoesz
Photo: By Rudy Regehr / Mennonite Heritage Archives



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THIRD WAY FAMILY

Rhythms of reconciliation

Christina Bartel Barkman

My two-year-old has developed a habit of throwing his bowl across the kitchen when he's finished his food. Sometimes it clears the dining area and we find it in the playroom with a messy trail of porridge!

Every time I tell him not to do it, he says, "I sorry, Mommy. I won't."

Despite the sweetness of his apology and even his willingness to collect his bowl, he keeps doing it. The message hasn't exactly sunk in.

The other day, after he drew with markers all over his bare chubby tummy, I told him he should only colour on the paper, and he said so sweetly, "Okay, Mommy. I won't."

It made me chuckle to myself, as his seemingly sincere apologies are muddled up in a language of forgiveness that he has clearly not mastered.

My toddler may not understand what saying sorry means, nor does he even know what "I won't" actually entails, but the sweetness of his apology, which always comes with a kiss and hug, is a beautiful practice of reconciliation.

Having three older siblings, who have had lots of practice with apologies, has surely helped our youngest go through the motions of forgiveness as expected. Despite my little guy not fully grasping

the meaning of his apologies, the practice of saying sorry and the forgiveness that he experiences are teaching him one of life's most important habits.

Such great pain and division is caused when we are not able to say sorry or when we don't feel like we can forgive. But when we practise it daily, and forgiveness becomes a habit, perhaps this will prepare us to forgive when it might have otherwise seemed impossible.

Much has been written about the forgiveness extended by the Amish in Nickel Mines, Pa., after a shooting in 2006 left five young girls dead and five others injured. The family of the victims reached out to the wife and parents of the shooter, who killed himself, and offered them forgiveness even on the day of the shooting. This immediate act of forgiveness comes not from a place of complete healing nor following the remorse of the shooter's family, but as a life practice and commitment to give up one's right to revenge.

With Jesus as our ultimate teacher and example of this type of radical forgiveness, we can trust that when we practise forgiveness daily with small conflicts, and choose not to hold grudges, we are prepared for the

toughest acts of forgiveness one might face.

This doesn't mean it is thoughtless or easy, and there are likely many emotions and hurts to sort through later. But regardless of how we feel, we can choose to forgive and trust God's healing power to transform our own broken hearts.

Jesus entrusted to his followers the message of reconciliation, and called for repentance and forgiveness everywhere he went, right up to the cross. Reconciling our broken relationships, our family feuds, our grudges against friends who have let us down, is at the heart of Jesus' teaching. We need to practise actions that bring us together, not those that tear us apart.

And when we choose to apologize, forgive and be reconciled, even when we find it difficult or nearly impossible, God's Spirit will carry us through the tough emotions surrounding it, bringing us nearer to wholeness as we continue to choose reconciliation daily, over and over again.

And just like my toddler, as we practise it, we will begin to know it better, experience the fruit of forgiveness and grow as God's ambassadors of reconciliation. ✎



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

Greatest hymn ever?

In July, 800 members of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada voted for the "greatest hymn of all time." The winner was, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" The tune was composed by English clergyman John B. Dykes, pictured, and the words were written by Anglican bishop Reginald Heber, both in the 1800s. The song is No. 120 in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (aka the Blue Hymnal).

Source: Religion News Service



wikimedia.org photo
(in the public domain)

THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

Walking in the church

Arli Klassen

Who is a Canadian Mennonite? I stood in line for supper at the start of a church convention this summer, and looked at my turquoise toenails, a splurge in the airport during a two-hour delay, and wondered if that had been a big mistake. I was at the Evangelical Mennonite Church (EMC) convention taking place this year in Picture Butte, Alta. All the women near me were wearing closed-toe shoes with skirts and dresses, many of them pushing strollers—more strollers than I have ever seen at a church convention.

I was reminded that we have significant cultural and theological diversity right here in Canada. Because I am on staff at Mennonite World Conference (MWC), I have access to statistics, even though they are not always as accurate as we would like. Based on 2018 MWC stats, there were 149,367 adult-baptized Anabaptists in Canada, of which just five of the 22 different groups are members of MWC. I am aware that the people who visit across these different Anabaptist groups are very few and also very privileged.

Can you guess which are the biggest Anabaptist groups in Canada? The top five groups, (75 percent of total adult members), in order of reported size: Canadian Conference of Mennonite

Brethren Churches, Mennonite Church Canada, Be in Christ Church of Canada, Hutterian Brethren Church and Old Colony Mennonite Church. The remaining 17 groups (25 percent of total baptized adults) can be classified as either Russian heritage traditionalist groups or as German/Swiss heritage traditionalist groups.

Some of the 22 groups worship in more than 20 different languages every Sunday, of which Mennonite Church Canada seems to have the most linguistic diversity. And yet more than half of adult Anabaptists in Canada belong to groups that remain ethnically monocultural, albeit not the same as each other.

All 22 of these groups agree to the same seven Shared Convictions from MWC. But we differ dramatically on many theological issues beyond these Shared Convictions. Sometimes those differences manage to co-exist within one of these groups, and sometimes those differences mean more divisions and separations. Are all those differences purely theological, or are some derived from our respective cultures? I am often sceptical about whether theology drives our cultural traditions, or our cultural traditions shape our theology.

And so I stood in line, in a dress with my flashing turquoise toenails, and I felt very self-conscious. But then the

line moved. We were each given a plate of chicken and rice with very spicy hot sauce, cooked by the Hispanic EMC congregations. As we gathered at round tables, I saw that there were many women who dressed like me, and there were many who were more conservatively dressed. But everyone belonged.

During the services, simultaneous translation was provided into Low German and Spanish. We sang about, and listened to, sermons on unity in the church. And in the end it did not matter that my toenails had become turquoise earlier that same day. We worshipped together and welcomed each other.

When your neighbour wants to know “who is a Mennonite?” how do you respond? Do we each talk only about our own group, or do we acknowledge the existence of the others in this larger Anabaptist body, even in our own country?

I pray that our diverse cultural and theological heritages will strengthen us as sisters and brothers, in following Jesus and in growing in the depth and breadth of our experience of the love of God. ☸



Arli Klassen is a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.; the moderator of Mennonite Church Eastern

Canada; a member of the MC Canada Joint Council; and on staff at Mennonite World Conference. In this column, Arli speaks for none but herself, and even that perspective might shift depending on the day and context.

Et cetera

The future looks bright

Did you know that in the last three years, 4,278 out of 12,355 Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers were 25 or younger. That's 34.6 percent!

Source: *Behind the Hammer*, Summer 2019
Photo: flickr.com/Marco Verch



COVER STORY

Walking a different path

Tourism, not terrorism, rules in the West Bank

Marlene Friesen

When we first started telling people we were going to hike the Masar Ibrahim Trail in the West Bank, Palestine, they were incredulous.

“You’re going where? You’re doing what?”

Over a three-week period, starting in Rummana at the northern Israeli/Palestine border and ending in Beit Mirsim southwest of Hebron, the 330-kilometre trail would take us over rocky hills and mountains, through green and fertile canyons, along olive groves and flowering pastures, across vast and dry deserts, each of these landscapes stunning and unique.

The next comment we often heard was one of fear: “Aren’t you afraid?”

William Ury, who developed the vision for the Abraham Path, similar to the Masar Ibrahim, talks about these walks as helping to change the perception of this region from a place of hostility to a place of hospitality, and a place of terrorism to a place of tourism:



PHOTOS BY ALBERT FRIESEN

Many of the valleys we walked through were carpeted with wild flowers.

“The opposite of terrorism is to take in innocent strangers and treat them as friends, to welcome them into your

home, and to show and create an understanding of respect and love.”

That is exactly what we experienced. We were welcomed like royalty in places that rarely see tourists. “Welcome to Palestine! Please enjoy our country!” “Can you come and sit and have coffee?” “If you wait a few minutes, we will bring you tea.” These were comments we heard continually, and we were perfect strangers.

The trails—the Masar Ibrahim (masaribrahim.ps) that runs through Palestine, and the Abraham Path (abrahampath.org) that runs through other parts of the Middle East—are part of a vision to eventually traverse the entire path Abraham would have walked through these countries as well as Turkey, Syria and Iraq.

The story of Abraham is a common identity that is shared by Christians,



One of our fellow hikers speaks with a local shepherd comparing walking sticks and hiking poles!



Out for a late afternoon hike in the desert with a Bedouin host from our camp, we happened upon their camel herd.

Muslims and Jews. Its history dates back four thousand years to a man and his family who walked across the Middle East with a message of unity and connectedness, and whose values were kindness and respect for all people, and showing hospitality to strangers.

As hikers walk side by side and shoulder to shoulder with others (the goal of the trail), the founders' dream to

bring people of all nations and backgrounds together is being realized.

The Masar Ibrahim that we experienced in Palestine did not fail to make this dream a reality. At every organized homestay and guesthouse, or in rustic Bedouin camps, we were welcomed as family.

We laughed, we talked, we played games, we heard stories about

occupation and injustice, and we heard the pleas and prayers for peace.

Over tea and coffee and fabulous food, we were asked to go back to our homes and share their stories. By offering their delicious food, heaps of it, they showed how much they appreciated our company, our presence and our willingness to engage.

Even under many restrictions and the pressure of the occupation, the Palestinian people are resilient, pursuing higher education and trying to find ways of nonviolent resistance. They will not give up hope for change. It may not happen in this generation, but, hopefully, in the next one. They will continue to plan and work; to love and marry and have children; to build homes and friendships. And they will continue to dream of peace and equality.

Having never travelled on a tour before, we had some reservations, but our fears were unfounded. The group was small, only seven of us doing the complete hike, and others jumping on and off at different places for varying amounts of time. The guides were accepting of everyone, eager to show us the beauty of a forgotten country and its people. Not only did they have an exceptional understanding of the history of the land, they coloured it brightly with amazing and wonderful stories and insight into the traditions and culture handed down through the generations.

Palestine is a country that needs to be seen not only as a place of conflict, but as a land of great beauty, with a deep richness to its people and culture, a country that is resilient and hopeful, even in the midst of great oppression.

It is a country that must be experienced on the ground, among its families and its traditions. Go and see and hear and experience.

You will never regret it. ☺

Marlene Friesen and her husband Albert, members of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., travelled the Masar Ibrahim last spring. Originally published in the Vancouver Sun on Aug. 10. Reprinted with permission of the author and photographer.



Hikers pass Mar Saba, a Greek Orthodox monastery founded in AD 483 and now considered one of the oldest inhabited monasteries in the world that still maintains many of its ancient traditions.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Credible Christians

Troy Watson

“People are no longer interested in religion or church, but they are still interested in Jesus.” This is a statement many Christians, including myself on occasion, proclaim confidently.

However, blanket statements like these are misleading. The assumption that everyone is interested in Jesus is obviously false. Think about it. Some people who regularly attend church aren't even interested in Jesus.

A more accurate statement is that a growing number of North Americans are no longer interested in religion or church, but some of them are still interested in Jesus. Even then, I would qualify this statement as conditionally true. By that I mean their interest in Jesus depends on certain conditions, most notably, who is speaking.

People who are sceptical of church and organized religion aren't interested in hearing about Jesus from the very institutions they are wary of. However, many of them are actively seeking out books, podcasts, lectures and insights on Jesus and spirituality from people who aren't overtly affiliated with the church. People like Brené Brown, Deepak Chopra, Oprah Winfrey, Adyashanti, the late Rachel Held Evans, Russel Brand . . . to name a few.

So, yes, many are still interested in Jesus, but it seems they're not that interested in the “Jesus of the church.” Why?

We've lost our credibility. That's why. We're no longer trustworthy.

Too often our “Jesus” comes packaged with a moral, social, economic or political agenda that is problematic at best. The truth is, the name “Jesus” coming from the mouth of someone who identifies as a church-going Christian is more likely to trigger, offend or repulse these spiritual seekers than intrigue them. Someone recently told

me that one of the biggest pet peeves of many Nones (have no religion), Dones (done with religion), and spiritual-but-not-religious people is when Christians try to tell them who Jesus is.

Does this mean we Christians should never talk about Jesus or share our faith with others?

Of course not. But we should probably take some time to prayerfully and objectively reflect on the situation we find ourselves in. Why don't people want to hear about Jesus from us? Why have we lost our credibility as a positive and trustworthy spiritual voice in North America?

I obviously don't have the answers. But I have a few thoughts.

- **First, I think** our credibility will increase as we become known for what Jesus intended us to be known for: our love.

Our love for God, one another and our neighbours, which includes strangers, foreigners and enemies. This means spending time as church communities discerning what it means to truly love people and creation in these confusing times. But it also means not allowing the complexity of our 21st century to become an excuse for making love more complicated than it is.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus clarified what it meant to love our neighbour. To love others is to treat them the way you would want to be treated—if you were in their situation.

That last part is important. You can't understand how to love someone until you put yourself in their shoes. Telling people to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps,” for example, may be received as “tough love” by those who are as mentally, physically, emotionally and socio-economically “fit” as you are, but it may be harmful—or even abusive—to someone who doesn't

possess the power and privilege you (often unknowingly) enjoy.

- **Second, I believe** our credibility will increase as we sensitively but courageously speak up and confront that which is done in the name of Jesus yet contradicts the love of Christ.

However, it is imperative that our challenges, protests, activism and prophetic messages flow from a place of Spirit connection and not from ego. If we're not speaking and acting in harmony with God's love and grace, we are part of the disease, not the cure. Every morning it's a good idea to remember to tend to the log in our own eye before pointing out the speck in everyone else's.

Someone recently told me that the problem with my “politically correct, progressive Christian, social-justice movement” is that we have too many prophets and not enough priests. We have lots of prophets pointing out what everyone is doing wrong, but we lack priests who extend forgiveness and absolution for our transgressions. I think he has a point. The call of Christ is to integrate grace and truth, justice and mercy. This isn't easy, but it is essential.

- **Third, we need** to honestly examine our desire to regain credibility to speak about Jesus, and in Jesus' name, in the public domain.

Are we motivated by a sincere desire to bear witness to the liberating and transformative presence and message of Christ, or is it power and control we're really after? ☞



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

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Poppies for Dad

Diane Sims
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Painted poppies, embroidered poppies, art glass poppies, metal poppies and photographed poppies all pepper my office.



No trendy poppies these.

Mine are four decades of gifts from friends remembering the terrible physical and emotional pain Dad, Mom and our family suffered after the Second World War, through the 1950s '60s, and past Dad's death in 1978 at age 66.

Each November I pin poppies and, if I can't attend a Remembrance Day service, my TV is tuned to the national service from Ottawa.

However, four years ago, I felt an utter fake at Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont. I felt my spirit at stake because I kept butting into Article 22 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

Specifically, Point 3 of the accompanying commentary: "We affirm that non-participation in warfare involves conscientious objection to military service and a non-resistant response to violence."

I called my pastor, Troy Watson, asking him over, because I thought I should leave Avon.

Sipping coffee, he softly asked me to tell him Dad's story. And he listened.

Dad was on the frontline fighting Hitler's soldiers. He was a Baptist who believed evil must be battled. "*The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is his name,*" Exodus 15:3 records.

Juxtapose that with "*Do not repay anyone evil with evil,*" Paul wrote in Romans 12:17.

I was 19 when Dad died. By my 30s, as a journalist I'd interviewed a plethora

of soldiers from Gallipoli, the two World Wars, the Spanish civil war, the Korean war, Vietnam, Bosnia and Somalia.

I obtained Dad's medical records from the war. Gar Sims was a lieutenant with the Lincoln Welland Regiment. He volunteered in September 1942, mere months after marrying his blonde, blue-eyed Swedish bride.

He set ashore in France in September 1944 and soldiered through the blood, bodies and that bitter winter to Belgium and Holland, then into Germany.

On April 21, 1945, at 10 p.m.—two weeks shy of the German surrender—he was hit with shrapnel at the Küsten Canal in northwestern Germany. He had tried to shepherd his troops behind the limited shelter of accompanying tanks when he was hit. Shrapnel tore through his forehead, blowing out a 13-centimetre piece of his skull.

Immediately transported to a field ambulance two kilometres behind the front lines, he was evacuated to the Canadian army's neurological hospital in Basingstoke, England. Doctors waited for the inflamed skin to heal.

Weeks later, he was allowed a short telegraph to say he was homeward bound. He sent the reference "3rd John:13." Mum underscored this in her Bible: "*I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.*"

Toronto surgeons inserted a titanium metal piece to replace the missing bone. Titanium won't rust but it couldn't erode the pain. Doctors prescribed "222s" for many horrific injuries, then turned a blind eye to their patients'

heavy consumption of alcohol.

We were a wounded family. Mom and my eldest brother bore the worst of Dad's explosive anger. I'm the youngest, but I couldn't have friends visit or participate in after-school activities. I had to monitor the rye bottle until Mom got home from teaching. And I was angry at him.

Supper was rushed, but then Dad slept. Mom would knit and I escaped with homework to my bedroom.

What loneliness Mom suffered.

Forgiveness came, but like the old adage of peeling an onion, many tears were shed. O, dear Lord, the pain both Mom and Dad fought.

Troy heard my story with coffee long cold. He had no easy answers because it's a struggle for many. He took my hands, reassured me of my love and respect for Dad within the Lord, and then prayed for peace for my chipped heart. As the psalmist wrote in Psalm 34: "*Seek peace and pursue it.*"

Memories linger, but now I believe the Divine wants us moment by moment.

Over my left shoulder as I write this is a rich oak and red velvet shadow box that my aunt made with Dad's gold and silver regimental pin, his officer's pin and five medals. Beneath it I've framed his officer's card with his photo, thumb print and a line for an identifying mark. Those notes helped identify bodies.

It still chills to read, "Scar along outside left wrist."

I'll wear poppies this November, weep when veterans "March Past," and remember why Dad served.

But I pray fervently for people fleeing warfare where Jesus, Peter, Paul and Luke walked.

I'll also wear the Mennonite Central Committee pin, "To remember is to work for peace," for peace in my soul.

Finally, I have a red poppy tattooed on my outside left forearm respecting and loving Dad. ☸

Diane Sims is the author of three books: Garden of Our Souls: A Correspondence of Friendship and Healing, An Ovarian Cancer Companion and Solace.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Let's talk about talking: Radical dialogue at CMU

By Chloe Friesen
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Welcome to Canadian Mennonite University (CMU): The land of Blundstones, using the word “community” as many times as possible, and endless conversation.

Let's talk about that: talking. The art of conversation here at CMU, radical dialogue, how important it is, and how much we value learning from each other, no matter our differences. The people who sit beside you in class, pass in the hallways and sit in the cafeteria all help shape education at CMU and other universities. They're like your professors, just without the PhDs.

Like I said before, CMU is a place of endless conversation. And it's the conversations that I've had in the past two years that filled in the gaps and rounded out the edges of my degree. Talking is important.

Your professors are a good place to start. They ignite little fires of curiosity within you. You're going to have questions, ideas, worries, inspirations, and your professors want to hear about them all. I have walked into countless professors' offices, seeing their faces light up when I come to sit and chat, and a lot of times it's not related to a paper I'm writing or an upcoming test I have. It's what's going on inside my head, it's about that little flame. And your profs want to help stoke that fire.

Your classmates are another great place to start up conversations. These will happen before class, during class, in the dining hall, at the bus stop, in the gym. I've even had some good bathroom chats about biblical literature! Sometimes these classmates won't even be in the same class as you. I've had great conversations with friends who are taking philosophy classes, when I've

never taken one in my life, and we're talking about a communications topic from one of my classes, and we're both enriching each other's understanding of classes we don't own the textbook for.

These conversations aren't always going to be sunshine and rainbows. Sometimes you're going to like pineapple on your pizza and the person you're talking to won't. This doesn't mean they are wrong. Sometimes your prof will introduce you to an entirely new pizza that you're not sure you're comfortable with, or maybe even a calzone. This doesn't mean they're wrong. Sometimes, you'll meet someone who's never even had pizza. This doesn't mean they're wrong. And this is the part where the “radical” in “radical dialogue” comes in. And this is also where listening comes in.

If there's one lesson that's hit me the hardest while studying and living here at CMU, it's this: The words I will learn the most from will not be my own. The opinions and knowledge and experiences that I have are going to be wonderfully different than everyone else's. And this is good.

If you really want to write and think and learn, you're going to need so many more opinions and angles and push-backs. So, in the midst of these conversations you'll be having, remember to listen. To really listen. Not just hear and wait for your turn to speak again. Listen and learn respectfully.

I'm not saying that you should only listen and not speak. You also need to speak and share your unique perspectives so that others can learn from you.

After we're done talking, and we're done listening, it's time to engage.

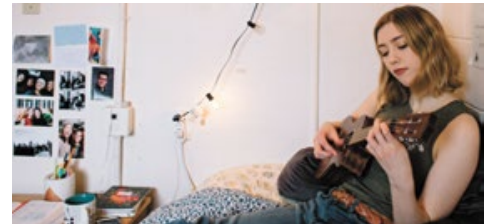


PHOTO COURTESY OF CMU

Chloe Friesen is a third-year communications and media student at CMU.

When I think about really engaging in radical dialogue, I think about my first year. I took an international development course called Voluntary Simplicity. A classmate and good friend of mine and I got to talking one evening about what we had learned in class, which led to us watching a documentary about fast fashion and the clothing industry, which led us to making a pact that we would both refuse to buy any new clothes for an entire year. We did it! We talked about it with each other, with our professor, with our friends and family. It was like stepping into our textbook and frolicking amongst the words and ideas we'd been learning.

One of the best parts of CMU is the ability to have these conversations. The small class sizes, yet beautifully diverse student body, enriched, filled and blessed each and every class I've taken. At the beginning, it took work to let go of my biases and step out of my comfort zone. Believe me, this radical dialogue you will engage in at university is what will shape you for the better and help you to see the world with more compassion and empathy than ever before. ❧

Chloe Friesen is a third-year communications and media student at CMU.

Helping families rebuild their lives

Foodgrains Bank executive director visits communities devastated by cyclone in Malawi

Canadian Foodgrains Bank
SOUTHERN MALAWI

As Jim Cornelius drove through southern Malawi, weaving down sandy roads and looking out at fields covered in dried-up soil, it was hard to believe that just six months ago the same land was completely flooded.

“We were told that in some areas the water was knee-high,” says the executive director of Canadian Foodgrains Bank. “In others, it was well over an adult’s head.”

When Cyclone Idai made landfall in mid-March, heavy rains and flooding destroyed homes and crops across Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, affecting three million people.

“Farmers in southern Malawi were just a few weeks away from harvesting when the cyclone hit,” says Cornelius. “Many lost all their crops. And for the crops that weren’t washed away, the yields were quite low because of waterlogging.”

A time of year that is typically focused

on producing food to last during the dry season became a time of worry and uncertainty. Cornelius heard story after story of how farm families didn’t harvest any food.

“One particular story of a farmer named Kalisto Rular sticks with me,” says Cornelius. When the heavy rains and flooding reached Malawi, Rular, his wife and their three children watched as their house collapsed. They lost all their crops in the flooding and most of their household items were washed away.

“It was sobering to sit there, look Kalisto in the eye and hear how he struggled to provide for his family,” says Cornelius. “But I’m thankful our members and their partners were there to help.”

Through a Foodgrains Bank member agency, Rular and his family received monthly rations of maize flour, beans and cooking oil. They also received maize and vegetable seeds to help grow food for their

family in the longer-term.

“I am grateful for the help I’ve received,” Rular told Cornelius. “Thank you for your support. It’s something we don’t take for granted.”

Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Manitoba



• **Valerie Alipova** began as interim associate pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg on Sept. 1. Her focus in this part-time, one-year position is working with children, youth, young adults and young families.

She is entering her fourth and final year of studies at Canadian Mennonite University, completing a four-year BA majoring in psychology, and a three-year BA majoring in peace and conflict transformation studies, with minors in biblical and theological studies. She spent this past summer working as a pastoral intern at Bethel through Mennonite Central Committee’s Summerbridge program.



• **John Braun** retired from pastoral ministry on Aug. 31 after 42 years of service in the Mennonite church.

Most recently he was pastor of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg for 25 years, from 1994 to 2019. Before that, he worked in many congregations, including Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach, Man., for 15 years. He graduated from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., in 1982 with a master of divinity degree. On Oct. 1, he will begin the role of interim associate pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church; the half-time position will focus on pastoral care for seniors and will conclude next summer.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK PHOTO BY SHAYLYN MCMAHON

Foodgrains Bank executive director Jim Cornelius with Malawian farmer Kalisto Rular.

Faithfulness and perseverance

Chinese Mennonites persist in Edmonton for 30 years

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
EDMONTON

Each week, a little band of disciples known as Edmonton Christian Life Community Church meets at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in downtown Edmonton, where many homeless people congregate. The congregation of about 20 is made up of Chinese boat people who came to Canada in the 1980s, many of whom got jobs as cleaners upon their arrival.

Originally named Edmonton Chinese Mennonite Church, it had its first service in September 1989 as a joint effort of three Mennonite denominations: Mennonite Church Alberta (formerly known as the Conference of Mennonites of Alberta), the Northwest Mennonite Conference and the Mennonite Brethren. The original vision was to "help meet the spiritual needs of the new immigrants at the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers," which opened in 1980.

Because language continues to be a barrier, church services have remained in Cantonese, with Pastor Ken Tse translating into English so younger congregants, including some university students, can understand the teaching. He also takes many seniors to appointments, as the children cannot translate the terms that come up when speaking to specialists at the hospital or when filling in complicated forms.

Now 30 years later, Tse, who has been pastoring the church for the past 21 years, talks about his passion for his congregation despite low numbers. Motivation comes from two sources. "It is my calling," he says, adding that "the people may not be growing in number but they are growing spiritually. As long as they keep growing, I am encouraged."

At the beginning of every year, Tse gives congregants a booklet in which they are encouraged to write down something they learned or experienced with God each

week. Then, at the end of the year, they are invited to summarize what they have learned and it is included in the annual report.

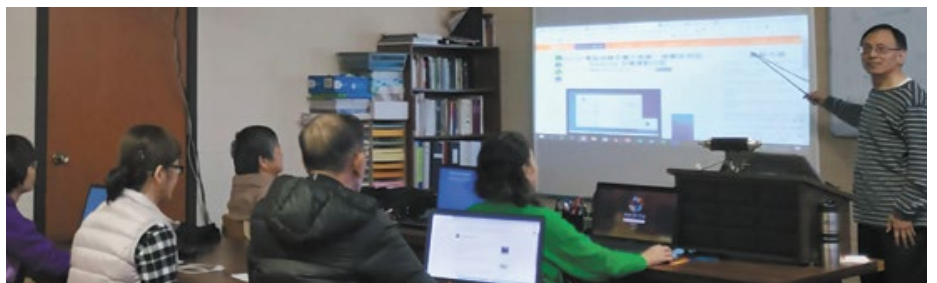
For more than 10 years, the church has hosted two free computer classes. One is an outreach, to which the greater community is invited to learn how to use

programs like Word and PowerPoint. The other is for its own community, to which Chinese Christians are invited to learn the same skills, as well as how to use Bible tools and apps online; this class is followed by prayer and Bible study. Participants pray weekly for each other and the church, and for the needs of Mennonite Central



PHOTOS BY KEN TSE

Edmonton Christian Life Community Church, which has membership in three Mennonite denominations, rents space from St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in downtown Edmonton.



Edmonton Christian Life Community Church has been hosting two computer literacy classes every Wednesday for more than 10 years. Pastor Ken Tse, right, is seen teaching the class.

Committee. Classes consistently have 12 people.

Although the congregation changed its name to be more welcoming, it still very much sees itself as a Mennonite church. Belonging to three Mennonite denominations means it needs to be intentional to stay connected in relationship. It tries to do this by attending each denomination's annual meeting, and worshipping together in joint services with other Mennonite congregations as often as possible. Edmonton First Mennonite Church, until recently, oversaw the church's expenses and helped with taxes.

Tse says he appreciates how "Mennonites live their faith. They do not just say it. I always ask people, 'Do people see Christ in you?' The way you live your life is your testimony."

While admiring the integrity of the Mennonite witness, he wonders if Mennonites know what motivates it. "When people see you, who do they see?" he asks. "When people see your work and concern for social justice, do they know you do it as a follower of Jesus?" The challenge, he says, is to be fully authentic, to combine work for peace and justice with a verbal

Although the congregation changed its name to be more welcoming, it still very much sees itself as a Mennonite church.

witness to Jesus.

The pastor says that, even in his own church, members often struggle to put words to their witness. During the share-and-prayer time in the worship service, he tells congregants that they are welcome to share an answered prayer, not only as a testimony, but as a way of practising telling their faith stories.

Every week the congregation reads its vision statement out loud in unity, to remind each other of their call not to give up and to focus on being faithful disciples of Jesus: "Our vision is to become a community of Jesus followers, passionate for God and for all people." ❧



YOUTH FARM BIBLE CAMP PHOTO / TEXT BY DONNA SCHULZ

The Youth Farm Bible Camp's corn maze season in rural Saskatchewan that ran until Oct. 27 provided fun and challenges for young and old alike. But ground-based participants didn't see the message cut into the maze. This year's maze featured a Christ-figure and the words, 'I am the way.'



PHOTO BY RYAN ANDRES / TEXT BY JOANNE DE JONG

Edmonton First Mennonite Church's riders for Team Poovong—Jeremy Wiens, left, Karl Blank, Craig Neufeld and Barry Andres (and photographer Ryan Andres)—stop for a break at a mid-ride rest area during this year's Ride for Refuge on Oct. 5. Their goal to raise \$2,000 for Witness workers Tom and Christine Poovong, currently serving in Thailand, was exceeded by \$740. This year, Mennonite Church Canada had 45 participants on eight teams riding in four locations across Canada to raise money for International Witness workers. The national goal of \$15,000 was exceeded by \$1,652.

A farewell to the 'blue hymnal'

Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church hosts hymn sing-a-thon

Story and Photos by Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Over the span of a single weekend, Sean Goerzen sang or played every single hymn in the blue-backed *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. All 658 of them. "I feel like I know the hymnal in a very intimate way now," he says with a laugh.

Goerzen organized Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church's hymnal sing-a-thon, a two-day event to raise funds so the church can purchase copies of the new Mennonite worship and song resource, *Voices Together*, forthcoming in 2020.

Around 80 different people came and went over the 13-and-a-half hours of singing, split into four sessions on Sept. 27 and 28. About six people managed to sing every tune.

Church members cooked and served lunch and supper on Sept. 28 and set out donation baskets at the meals, raising about \$800. Goerzen says this is an awesome start, although the new hymnals will probably cost more than \$5,000.

Everyone from seven-month-old babies to people over 90 gathered at the church to participate. There were congregants from other Mennonite churches in Winnipeg and from Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican denominations, says Marla Langelotz, Sargent Avenue's pastor. Even residents of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Prince Edward Island joined in while



Singers sang all 658 hymns from *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and raised \$800 to help Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church purchase copies of the new *Voices Together* hymnal.

visiting family and friends in the area.

"It's cool. I didn't expect that many people to know about it," says Goerzen, who was surprised how far the word spread. An article in the *Winnipeg Free*

Press, shares on Facebook and word of mouth helped draw attention to it.

Katie Neufeld, a long-time member of Sargent Avenue, was one of the dedicated singers who participated. She attended every session on Sept. 28 and returned the next morning to sing with the choir for worship. She wanted to be part of it because she has always liked singing and has sung in the choir for years. "And it's sort of a celebration that we as a church are doing," she says. "Music has been a very important part of our church always."

Five song leaders and five accompanists, including Goerzen, took turns leading the diverse choir over the weekend. In order to get through the thick book, they sang only two verses of each hymn.

Goerzen, 26, grew up attending an Anglican church in Vernon, British Columbia. So when he moved to Winnipeg and started attending a Mennonite church, he didn't know most of the hymns. Other than some Christmas and Easter songs, "the hymnody was very, very new to me," he says.

His father did own a copy of the brown *Mennonite Hymnal*, which Goerzen paged through when he was a kid. But his love of hymns really flourished on his trips to southern Manitoba. "Whenever I came out to Altona to visit my grandparents,



Eighty people from different Mennonite churches, denominations and even provinces participated in Sargent Avenue Mennonite's hymnal sing-a-thon weekend at the end of September.

going to the Bergthaler Mennonite Church . . . , that's actually where my interest really started," he says. "I would've heard four-part singing there and I liked it a lot. I always did like going to that church."

Goerzen, who graduated from Canadian Mennonite University with a bachelor of music degree in 2016, and from the University of Manitoba with a bachelor of education degree in 2018, now teaches junior-high band in Winnipeg and plays piano, French horn and organ. He's also the chair of the music committee at Sargent Avenue.

Singing every song in numerical order gave him new insight into the "blue book." "You realize that there's a whole arc," he says. "I think we kind of just pick apart the hymnal, but to see it as one large thing was interesting . . . and it was just neat from a theological perspective."

After several hours of singing, Neufeld's voice started to give out, so sometimes she had to just sit back and listen. But she found that as she read the verses, the familiar hymns took on new meaning. "You read the words, and that sort of means more, because I don't struggle with the notes and I can take in the meaning of the words," she says. "There were a few songs as we sang that . . . grabbed me again, what the meaning of the song was."

Darryl Neustaedter Barg, a member of the committee that curated the new song collection, did a short presentation during the last session of the weekend. About half of the songs in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, which was published in 1992, and the two supplements, *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story*, that were published later, will be included in the new resource, he says.

Goerzen is excited for the new hymnal because it is going to leave behind unused hymns and bring back many of the German texts that were left out last time. He is also looking forward to new compositions by Mennonite composers.

"I think our singing of hymns is such a collective way to praise God," he says. "Especially with hymn singing, you're using your voices, there aren't all sorts of instruments in the background. It's very simple and I think it's a very humble way to praise." ❧

Praying without words

Saskatchewan group seeks God's presence through contemplative prayer

Story and Photo by Donna Schulz

Saskatchewan Correspondent

OSLER, SASK.

A solitary candle flickers on a low table in the middle of a darkened room. Participants chat quietly with one another as they wait for the session to begin, having come to partake in an hour of centring prayer and sharing.

Melody Neufeld and John Gascho launched the centring prayer group in late August. Both are members of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's Spiritual Resource Committee, which, throughout the past year, introduced congregations to various forms of prayer. Centring prayer was one of those forms.

Both Neufeld and Gascho were familiar with, and had practised, centring prayer as individuals. But Neufeld says that when she travelled to the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, N.M., she learned how powerful the experience could be when done in a group.

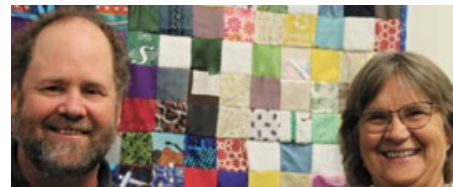
Gascho, likewise, felt that since they had introduced centring prayer to the regional church, it was now time to put it into practice.

And so the two invited individuals they knew had interest in contemplative prayer to be part of a group that would meet regularly for prayer and sharing.

A centring prayer session begins as participants choose a sacred word that will remind them of God's presence. During the silent prayer time, as they find their minds wandering, they repeat the sacred word as a way of returning to centre.

Citing founder and practitioner Thomas Keating, Neufeld likens centring prayer to standing on the shore of a river and watching one's thoughts float by as if they were boats on the river. "The trick," she says, "is not getting into a boat."

Centring prayer, she says, is about sitting in silence and being open to what God has to say. "You might be bringing yourself back a billion times in a 20-minute sit," she



John Gascho and Melody Neufeld have launched a centring prayer group that meets bi-weekly at Osler (Sask.) Mennonite Church.

says, "but that's a billion opportunities to recall your intention."

Gascho suggests that it is a matter of practice. "The thoughts will subside the more you practise," he says assuredly. "The ego will soften and will give way to the present moment."

"I like the word 'practice,'" says Neufeld. "None of us has arrived. It's not about the goal, it's just about the doing."

Praying in darkness is significant for Gascho. "Darkness is a medium that provides a place for new beginnings," he says. "When you plant a seed in soil [it] becomes accustomed to its surroundings. As rain and nutrients come, the seed swells and grows." In the same way, he says, "we grow in darkness as God provides what we need for the journey. . . . Prayer is very simple, and yet very basic truths are often the most profound."

"My hope is that a space is created for people to come and practise centring prayer together," says Neufeld, adding, "We also spend part of the evening sharing about what is going on in our lives. I hope we can provide space for those things to happen."

The centring prayer group is open to anyone who wishes to participate. The group meets on alternate Tuesday evenings at Osler Mennonite Church. ❧

Good news

A short history of Lao Christian Fellowship

Story and Photo by Maria H. Klassen
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

After many years of war in and around Laos, the Laos PDR party took over in 1975, and hundreds of thousands of Laotians escaped to Thailand. Under Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, and with the help of individuals and groups under the leadership of Mennonite Central Committee, many families settled in Canada.

The family of Southin and Khamphone Luangrath were the first refugees sponsored by St. Catharines United Mennonite Church in 1979; Thongviene Khounborinh and his family were sponsored by Vineland United Mennonite Church; and Sene Vetsavong first went to Quebec City before coming to St. Catharines.

More families were sponsored by other Mennonite churches in the area. Many eventually settled in the Niagara Region of Ontario because of the availability of jobs on farms and in greenhouses, or as machinists and carpenters.

Most of these families were Buddhists,

but in St. Catharines some attended a Bible study at the Mennonite church. When a Laotian Christian couple came to the area, they started a small group that met for Bible study. The good news was that four families became Christians through one family's influence.

As a group, the Laotians began meeting in Grantham Mennonite Brethren Church in St. Catharines in 1980. A few months later, they moved to the basement gym of St. Catharines United Mennonite. The group was officially recognized as a congregation by the Conference of United Mennonite Churches in Ontario in 1983.

For 16 years, Laos Christian Fellowship worshipped in the basement of St. Catharines United Mennonite on Saturday evenings and, when more people came, they met on Sunday mornings in the church's gym. In 1996, the Laotians held a dedication service in their newly purchased and renovated building on Page Street in St. Catharines.

In March 2010, many people gathered to mark the 30th anniversary of the Lao community in Niagara Region. The church continues to worship in that building today, holding services on Sunday mornings, with other activities during the week.

Southin Luangrath is the church's board chair, Khounborinh is an elder, and Vetsavong leads the elders group. For years, the average attendance was around 60, but it is less now, as children have grown up and moved away.

Outreach has been a big part of the Lao church's mission. Former ministers of the congregation have been very active. Tong Chitchalemthem has been planting churches in the United States. In 1994, Boris and Bonnie Sithideth were commissioned to start a church plant in the Greater Toronto Area. There are now five Lao Mennonite churches in Ontario: St. Catharines, Hamilton, Toronto, Kitchener and Leamington. An Ontario Laos Christian Conference meets several times a year.

Another former minister, Kuaying Teng, went to Laos in 2014 to build a primary school in the village of Sawmill under Mennonite Mission Network. This project was financed through a fundraising concert at the church, through private donations and donations from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

Khamphong Phommaseng obtained a certificate of theology and was installed as pastor in the Lao Christian Fellowship in St. Catharines in 1995, at the same time as Kuaying Teng. In 2014, Phommaseng returned to Thailand to work as a missionary at the Gennesaret Church; he is presently serving a Mennonite church in Saskatchewan.

Lao Christian Fellowship is very active in fundraising for various projects, making and selling spring rolls and noodle soup. Money raised has supported the rebuilding of flooded areas in Laos, and the next project is donating money to the local hospital to buy an MRI machine.

Southin Luangrath says of the Lao experience in Canada: "The Mennonites have brought good news to our people." ❧



Laos Christian Fellowship in St. Catharines officially became a Mennonite congregation in 1983.

PEOPLE

Like a bird who flew away ... and came home

Ministry in West Africa inspires Nancy Frey's passion for the Bible and her deep trust in God

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent

Nancy Frey remembers as a young child seeing a bird flying by and telling her mother, “Someday I am going to be like that bird and fly away.”

She did just that, spending a year in France after graduating from high school. That was only the beginning of a ministry career that has spanned two decades, most of it spent in West Africa.

After graduating from university, Frey taught high school French in Palmerston, Ont., but she still had a desire to travel and live overseas.

An opportunity arose in 1994, with the Mennonite Board of Missions, later the Mennonite Mission Network. For 15 months, she worked in Cotonou, Benin, as an intern in a systematic Bible training program that later became the Benin Bible Institute. It was her job to take class notes in French, documenting the curriculum so students could teach it back in their home communities.

Sensing a call to pastoral ministry, Frey enrolled at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), graduating in 1998. She met Bruce Yoder at seminary and discovered that they shared an interest in overseas work. They married in July 1998.

In 1999, Yoder graduated from AMBS, their first child, Jeremiah, was born, and they responded to an invitation from the mission board to return to Benin. After six months of language training for Yoder in France, they began their work in Benin in February 2000.

Frey worked with administrators and taught at the Bible Institute. Yoder did some teaching and also travelled a great deal, serving as a resource to other partners in West Africa.

They were moved by the desire and commitment of their students to learn

the Bible. In a room with poor lighting and only one fan, students would sit for up to 10 hours because, Frey says, “They wanted to study the Bible so badly . . . they were so hungry for Bible teaching.”

The church in West Africa is “filled with young people,” says Frey. Because it is relatively new, it attracts many young people who seek something different than the traditions of previous generations.

Frey and Yoder’s second child, Deborah, was born in 2001. They continued their work with the Bible Institute until 2009, when they felt there was enough local support and leadership for the school.

It was time for Frey to respond to the lingering call to pastoral ministry. Their family moved back to North America, where Frey was ordained and pastored the Mennonite Congregation of Boston, Yoder began doctoral studies, and their children became acquainted with life in North America.

But their passion for the church in West Africa persisted. In 2012, they responded to an invitation from the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Ouagadougou, in Burkina Faso. Frey worked in the church’s Christian university residence, helping students adjust to life in a big city and develop their Christian faith and leadership potential. She also taught for several years at the International School of Ouagadougou, where their children attended. Yoder completed his PhD thesis, stayed involved with the Bible Institute, and continued to teach and help the church in West Africa. Both of them served on the leadership team at the Ouagadougou church.

In August of this year, two decades after they began their ministry in West Africa, they returned to North America, where



PHOTO COURTESY OF

NANCY FREY AND BRUCE YODER

Nancy Frey, left, is pictured teaching at the Benin Bible Institute in Cotonou, Benin.

their children were enrolled in post-secondary studies.

Reflecting on the gifts of their time in West Africa, Frey says, “I know my Bible really well after living in West Africa.” She names it as the primary, foundational document for life in the global church. Various issues can be divisive, but studying the Bible unites Christians, teaching them about the historical church, inspiring the current church and will guide the future church. Without it, churches are “anchorless and rootless,” she says.

She also gained a profound sense of gratitude and trust in God. She says she learned “the secret to a joy-filled life . . . from people that don’t have the opportunities and privileges we have.” Reflecting on her life experiences, she says, “I trust God with my life and the lives of my family. Nothing can shake my trust in God.” If something bad happens, “God will hold and carry me through.”

She has learned to let go of the need to control. Last year, when she and Yoder had no idea what the next step in their lives would be, she drew on an image of God as a bouncy castle. “Whatever happened, we would land on our feet,” she says. “I didn’t know, but God knew.”

Frey again responded to a call to pastoral ministry, this time at Listowel (Ont.) Mennonite Church, not far from where she grew up and began her teaching career.

Reflecting on how she has made her home in so many different places over the years, she says, “My parents gave me roots. That allowed me to have wings.” ❧

Exploding with creativity

Artist finds connection with God and people through her painting

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
LANGHAM, SASK.

Her parents called her Dynamite. Although she didn't care for the nickname when she was a child, Valerie Wiebe has come to appreciate its layers of meaning.

The Langham, Sask., artist says that when she looked up the etymology of "dynamite," she learned that the prefix "dyna" describes "something with the potential for an explosion of energy," while the word "mite" describes something very small.

has added life experience as a schoolteacher, a volunteer with Mennonite Central Committee in Bangladesh, a mother of two sons, and a farm wife.

In spite of all that, Wiebe wasn't always sure what she wanted to do. "I was muckin' around," she says, "with not really a clear sense of what I was supposed to be doing." She admits to feeling frustrated.

Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2016, held in Saskatoon, changed all that. At assembly, Winnipeg artist Ray Dirks

building in the corner of a vast landscape. "I felt like God's hand was on my hand," she says. The very last thing she added were tiny marks representing people, and she painted them leaving the church building and walking toward the setting sun.

"When I added those little tiny marks, it felt like this," she says, striking her chest with her fist. "It was visceral."

The name of the painting—"Called Out"—became the name of the series of five. "All five paintings were purchased before I even got to the [assembly]," she says, "and I sold a whole whack of prints during [assembly] as well." The sales affirmed for Wiebe that she was on the right path. "This is what started the journey I'm on," she says.

Some time later, Wiebe discovered Christian artist Matt Tommey online. His website offered a 30-day art challenge. "Every day you would get a prompt and



'A Coat of Many Colours' by Valerie Wiebe.



'Created in His Image' by Valerie Wiebe.



'Down in the Valley' by Valerie Wiebe.

In a way, this is how Wiebe sees herself, as a small individual with the potential for a big explosion of energy.

Wiebe spent most of her growing-up years in Regina, where her family attended Grace Mennonite Church. She recalls singing four-part harmony with her three older sisters in church.

She says her parents neither encouraged—nor discouraged—her artistic endeavours, but she remembers, "I was always doing something creative."

Wiebe's post-secondary education includes degrees in music, arts education, painting and interior design. To that she

curated a show on the theme: "God-Faith-People." She recalls thinking, "What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus, or to be the body of Christ?" She remembers learning that the Greek word *ecclesia*, translated into English as "church," doesn't refer to a building, but to "people who have one mind, and have worked together."

Wiebe created a painting for that art show but was also asked if she would design visuals for the whole assembly. In response, she did five paintings, which were projected as backdrops during worship times.

The first painting featured a church

create a piece of art," she remembers. "Things just started to happen. I created a ton of work."

Wiebe's self-described obsession with landscape grows from her context of life on a farm in rural Saskatchewan. Each landscape she paints includes at least one little person. "Every time I make that mark, it goes like this," Wiebe admits, again striking her chest with her fist. "It's a grounding. In the big scheme of things we're like this," she says, holding forefinger and thumb close together to indicate smallness, "and our problems are like this."

To Wiebe, the human connections she



Painted for MC Canada's Assembly 2016, 'Called Out' by Valerie Wiebe depicts the church (the tiny black marks representing the people of God) leaving the church building and walking toward the setting sun.

makes through showing or selling her paintings are very important. At a show in Airdrie, Alta., she struck up a conversation with a young woman. "I could see she really liked my stuff. She [told] me how she'd lost her job and was looking after her mother, and she started to cry," Wiebe says. "I listened and encouraged her." Looking back, Wiebe thinks, "Maybe that's why I needed to go there."

Wiebe will soon have plenty of opportunity to encourage others, as she has begun teaching classes. An upcoming class will see mothers and tots creating art together.

One morning in church, Wiebe says she found herself praying, "God, thank you for bringing me back to myself." Little by little, she feels God has been "taking back [my] misconceptions about who I am," and saying to her, "No, Val, it's not like this, it's like this!"

Wiebe is happy with where her life as an artist is going, but, more importantly, she says, "I'm excited about my faith! ☺"



PHOTO COURTESY OF VALERIE WIEBE

Valerie Wiebe is an artist, a singer/ songwriter and a decorator, but it is her art and her faith that has her excited these days.



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In defence of funerals



Why are funeral services important? A former pastor reflects on the CM blog.

canadianmennonite.org/blog/fr-funerals

The purpose and joy of congregational singing



During a recent sermon at Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship in Vancouver, former music professor Curtis Funk spoke about the value of music in worship.

canadianmennonite.org/congising

U.S. groups send letter opposing military service



Anabaptist church groups in the U.S. have sent a joint letter to a federal agency making a strong statement of conscientious objection to war and military service.

canadianmennonite.org/jointletter

'Coming out' as a church



Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg recently held a worship service celebrating its newly-created affirmation statement, which welcomes people of every gender and sexual orientation into its community.

canadianmennonite.org/comingout

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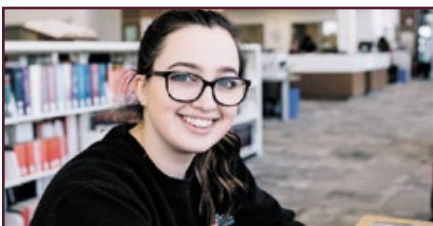
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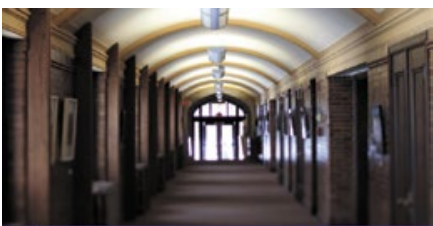


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Writing for the ‘W’

Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) has always been a writing-intensive school, but it started to shift a couple of years ago towards a new model of “W” courses, in line with what’s being done at a number of high-profile schools in the United States, including Duke University, George Washington University, Harvard and Princeton.

“Writing for us is real. It’s not an exercise. We learn best when doing something real. [Our students] are writing for a real audience. When you write for different audiences, you write in different ways,” according to Jonathan Dueck, CMU’s academic dean.

“In biology, you don’t write the same way as you do in English [class]. The students are improving in their thinking and argument, and in clarity, correctness and citations,” he says.

“What we’ve done is design courses to

engage students in the way professors really write, and give them a chance to interact with as close to a real audience as they can, and revise their work for that audience so they have practice. Feedback is really helpful in writing when it’s provided, and you have to use it.”

After running 14 “W” courses during the 2018-19 academic year, CMU offered a dozen classes this past September across a wide variety of disciplines, including business, biology, music, English, philosophy, theology and psychology.

“We found students really understood these courses as improving their academic writing. They felt they were engaging deeply with the course content and valued most feedback on their writing. When we looked at their work, we saw their writing improving at all levels,” Dueck says.



CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY PHOTO

CMU students have affirmed the university’s increased focus on writing across all of its academic programming, recognizing improvements in their communication skills.



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!Explore: A cog in the wheel of faith formation

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

As a child, Lynea Brubacher Kaethler thought the only leaders in church were the pastors. This perception changed when she began leading worship as a teenager with the support of mentors at her home church, Belmont Mennonite, in Elkhart, Ind.

"I loved being involved at my church, and planned to stay connected with the Mennonite church, so I signed up for !Explore, intent on figuring out what exactly my role as a church leader could be, besides a pastor," she says.

Through !Explore, a summer program of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, students in grades 10 to 12 can explore ministry and theology, grow in spiritual practices, and listen for God's call through a congregational internship and a group experience.

Brubacher Kaethler, a 2013 participant, says the program was "not like a career quiz that tells you what role you're best suited for."

"It cracked open my understanding of Mennonites and the Mennonite church," she explains. "I met youth with different experiences, and people who devoted their careers to understanding and teaching others about the meanings of the Bible. I practised, along with my peers and mentors, ways to be leaders in the church."

Brubacher Kaethler went on to study kinesiology at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo, Ont., and connected with Rockway Mennonite in Kitchener, where she taught Sunday school and led the youth program. She was encouraged by the involvement of many church members there. She is currently

living in Ottawa, where she serves at Ottawa Mennonite as a youth sponsor and Sunday school teacher, and joins other young adults for weekly potlucks.

For details about the 2020 program, visit ambss.edu/explore.



PHOTO BY SAEJIN LEE

Lynea Brubacher Kaethler prepares for a 'trust fall' during leadership training and team-building exercises with her fellow 2013 !Explore peers at Amigo Centre in Sturgis, Mich.

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/// Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Ontario



• **Nancy Frey** joined the pastoral team of Listowel Mennonite Church in September. She earned her master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in 1998 and previously pastored from 2009 to 2012 at the Mennonite Congregation of Boston, where she was ordained by the Atlantic Coast Conference. Between 1999 and 2019, she and her husband Bruce Yoder served with Mennonite Mission Network (formerly Mennonite Board of Missions) in Benin and Burkina Faso, West Africa, in various teaching, resourcing and administrative roles, including nine years at the Benin Bible Institute.



• **Daniel Janzen** began as lead pastor of Niagara United Mennonite Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake in

September. He graduated from Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto with a master of theological studies degree, and then served for two years with Mennonite Central Committee in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He previously pastored at Carrot River (Sask.) Mennonite Church for six years.



• **Ken Driedger** began a year-long interim pastorate at North Leamington United Mennonite Church, Leamington, in September.

He earned a bachelor of religious education degree from Ontario Bible College, attended Ontario Theological Seminary and Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, and graduated from Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., with a master of theological studies degree. He previously served as pastor at two Methodist churches in Pennsylvania and co-pastored with his wife Dawne at Zion Mennonite Fellowship in Elmira and at Wideman Mennonite Church in Markham, both in Ontario.



• **Lloyd Oakey** began a supply pastorate at Zion Mennonite Fellowship, Elmira, in September. In the past, he has planted a church, and helped churches build, renovate and work through issues and changes, all the while pointing people to focus on Christ. He has pastored in various Ontario locations, including Niagara Falls, New Hamburg, Mount Brydges and Ayr. He has also served as an "on-call" chaplain at Cambridge (Ont.) Memorial Hospital.



• **Marvin Friesen** began as pastor of Valleyview Mennonite Church in London in October. He is a graduate of Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. He has served as a pastor in Vineland, Ont.; Carman, Man.; Chicago, Ill.; Hamilton, Ont.; and State College, Pa.; and has served in two interim roles in Petittcodiac, N.B., and most recently a two-point charge at Community Mennonite in Stouffville and Rouge Valley Mennonite in Markham, both in Ontario.

—BY JANET BAUMAN

Pastoral transition in Saskatchewan



• **Rachel Wallace** has been called by Eigenheim Mennonite Church, near Rosthern, Sask., to be its pastor. Wallace, who is from Hamilton, Ont., graduated earlier this year from Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo with a master of theological studies degree. Prior to entering pastoral ministry, Wallace worked in retail, taught piano and was a full-time mother to two young sons.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

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FOCUS ON

Books & Resources

Journal connects Korean Anabaptists across the globe

By Katie Doke Sawatzky
Mennonite Church Canada

Eight years ago this fall, a group of 10 Korean Mennonites met at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church in Vancouver and decided to start a magazine. The publication would be a resource for Korean Anabaptists around the world and connect them to one another.

Nov. 17, 2019, marks the seventh anniversary of the first issue of the *Korean Anabaptist Journal*, a semi-annual magazine published by a volunteer editorial team primarily made up of leaders from Mennonite churches in South Korea.



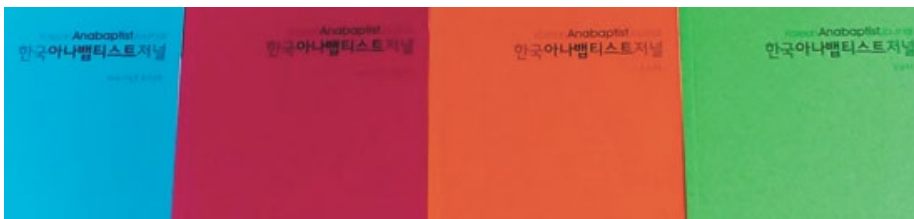
Bock Ki Kim

In 2010, Mennonite Church Canada International Witness worker Bock Ki Kim noticed a desire from Korean Anabaptist groups in South Korea, Los Angeles, Calif., and Canada, to share

resources and network with each other. While the Korea Anabaptist Center in Chuncheon offered resources, Kim saw the need to have a tool to share news and resources on a regular basis.

"I wanted to create a communication tool for scattered Korean Anabaptists here and there," says Kim, who was editor of the journal from 2013 to 2016. "Korean church leaders and staff don't have the time or resources to develop this, and yet leaders are regularly asked by newcomers . . . for a way to connect with others. We needed a way to share information."

Kim has translated 35 Anabaptist works into Korean in response to a burgeoning interest in Anabaptism by Christians and non-Christians in South Korea. According to him, narrow perspectives of God, corrupt leadership in hierarchical structures and a younger generation disinterested in maintaining physical church buildings, are motivating people to seek fresh perspectives of God and what it



Issues of the Korean Anabaptist Journal are available through CommonWord.ca. Readership is estimated at 1,500, split fairly evenly between digital and print readers.

means to be the church.

"Peace theology, church as a faith community, restorative justice, conflict transformation, [and] new ways of biblical interpretation, like hermeneutical community," are some Anabaptist principles that are appealing, he says.

The journal is published by the Korean Anabaptist Fellowship, both in hardcopy and in a PDF format that is shared through social media. An editorial team decides the content for each issue and contacts contributors.



Hyejung Jessie Yum

Hyejung Jessie Yum has been an editor of the journal for the past three years. She is a doctoral student at the Toronto School of Theology and attends Danforth Mennonite Church in Toronto. She is a Korean migrant living in Canada, so regular participation as an editor has allowed her to connect Mennonite faith to her Korean identity and context.

"The journal gives me an opportunity to think about what Korean Mennonites' unique voices in our contexts are, and what Mennonite peace theology from Korean perspectives looks like," says Yum. "These questions relate to my current research focus on postcolonial peace theology in a multicultural context, from a Korean migrant woman's perspective."

Inter-Korean relations, refugees on Jeju Island, restorative justice for school bullying and eco-friendly farming are some of the topics the journal has covered recently, all from an Anabaptist perspective, says Yum.

Jongyoon Moon, pastor of Jeongin Presbyterian Church in Bucheon, in the Gyeonggi Province of South Korea, learned very little about the Anabaptists in his theological training both in Korea and in Texas at the Baptist Theological Seminary.

"I only knew about them as radical religious reformers," Moon writes in an e-mail.

He was searching for a model of church that was true to the New Testament when he learned about the Amish, but he found the lifestyle hard to emulate in urban Korean society. When he learned about the Mennonite church, he wanted to know more. He connected with the Korean Anabaptist Fellowship and met Kim.

"What I learned through the Anabaptist-Mennonite church was the spirit of mutual aid and mutual accountability in the church," Moon writes. "Today, modern city churches, especially Korean churches, are sadly losing the spirit of mutual aid and mutual accountability the New Testament stresses."



Jongyoon Moon

FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

He credits the *Korean Anabaptist Journal* with pointing him towards New Testament models of the early church. His own congregation is now putting aside a portion of its offerings each month to help members who experience economic hardship, a practice inspired by his Anabaptist readings.

Along with benefitting pastors and seminary students, Kim hopes the journal will be helpful for newcomers to Anabaptism.

That's why the editors also introduce readers to organizations like Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Disaster Service, and partner organizations like Christian Peacemaker Teams.

Kim says the most challenging thing with running the journal is finding the time and resources to publish it. While it started out as a quarterly, the journal is now published twice a year. The current

editorial team includes a pastor, the director of the Korea Anabaptist Center, an editor and a seminary student, all of whom devote extra time to make the journal a success. They hold their meetings twice a year, using Google Hangout.

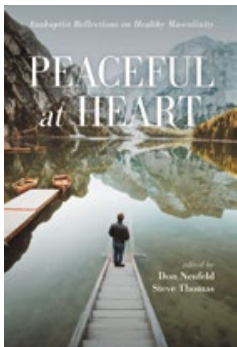
"The bond is quite strong and supportive," says Kim. "Sometimes we meet at 10 p.m. or even 11 p.m. But the passion never fades." ❧

BOOK REVIEW

Mennonite men explore healthy masculinity

Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity.
Don Neufeld and Steve Thomas, eds. Wipf and Stock, 2019, 250 pages.

Reviewed by Doug Amstutz



Once upon a time, living in splendid isolation, Mennonite men were moulded differently from the rest of society. Worshipping in a traditional peace

church with a different set of values, they didn't fit the western stereotype of a male. But today, Mennonite men are diverse; as much urban as rural, as much men of colour as white, and they have diverse views on politics, religion and lifestyle. Who are Mennonite men today?

Peaceful at Heart offers a glimpse into this world. Edited by Don Neufeld and Steve Thomas, Canadian and U.S. coordinators of the Mennonite Men organization, the book offers chapter after chapter of men exploring the question of what it means to seek healthy masculinity. The editors cast their net wide to include a cross section of Mennonite leaders in Canada and the United States.

It was with special interest that I read the "Perspectives" section, which includes stories about masculinity in a Mennonite context written by an African-American, a Canadian-Korean, a Latino, a gay man and an Indigenous man. The stories shared were honest, powerful and compelling.

Probably the most readable story for me was Leonard Dow's sharing about his father, Lawrence "Deacon" Dow. The story follows a working man and a church leader, who displays integrity in the face of prejudice and an ability to walk straight and tall in the face of racism. Dow names three points of his father's character that were examples of how to be a man: his dad was consistent; he sought to be compassionate; and he was courageous. Like most sons, he didn't recognize these qualities in his father until much later in life.

The "Context" section explores masculinity from psychological, academic and traditional points of view.

The "Theology" section brings biblical and Anabaptist interpretations to the fore.

Marty Troyer's chapter highlights that "Jesus models the kind of healthy lives

men are to live. He embodies being peaceful at heart," and, "As Anabaptist Christians, Mennonites are at our best when inner and outer peace are embodied as two parts of the same whole."

But we are up against a world in which men are "peaceless at heart," and they often choose denial when seeing or experiencing trauma. Our inner peace will drive our lifestyle of peace, but Troyer warns that the opposite is also true.

I was drawn in the "Practices" section to Scott Brubaker-Zehr's chapter describing his research interviewing men for his doctor of ministry degree. He prescribes the following for healthy masculinity: create spaces to listen and reflect with other men; work towards integration of spirituality, theology, science and culture; explore the use of biblical and theological language with each other; and move toward disclosure of vulnerability and failure.

The "Afterwords" were responses written by three women—a nice touch by Neufeld and Thomas. As much as men need to talk with each other, we need to hear from our sisters. Cyneatha Millsaps highlights the stories that

FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

touched her. Carol Penner shares a part of her own childhood story to ask why abuse in families, especially Mennonite ones, was not covered in the book. Sara Wenger Shenk comments on the urgency “that we learn to talk with each other about what it means to be healthy humans as men and women.”

I agree. Can the church be a meeting place to talk honestly with one another, men to men, men to women, about

what it means to be healthy? What steps can we take to become peaceful at heart, so that we can live in peace among ourselves? My hope is that the Mennonite Men organization will help men in our churches do just that.

If there is such a thing as a trickle-down effect, my hope is that the work of this book will trickle down into the churches, camps and groups like Mennonite Men.

But the book seems to miss the demographic of men in rural settings. Brubaker-Zehr’s study used urban, theologically progressive men of European ancestry. Some of the chapters feel like an academic read, as though the book wasn’t set up to be read by the average working man. ❧

Doug Amstutz is a pastor, most recently of Poole (Ont.) Mennonite Church.

BOOK REVIEW

Overcoming the siren diversions of our digital age

The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction.

By Justin Whitmel Earley, InterVarsity Press, 2019, 198 pages.

Reviewed by Melodie M. Davis

What was your response the last time a good friend asked you how you were doing? If you said with a laugh or a moan, “Too busy,” or just offered an eye roll, this book might be for you.

In *The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction*, author Justin Whitmel Earley uses a memoir style of writing as he sets out to tame the beast of overwork and overdoing anything. He is a mergers and acquisitions lawyer in Richmond, Va., and earlier was a missionary in China. He and his wife have four sons, all of which means that he has learned the hard way about anxiety and overdoing.

The book is directed to Christians who feel addicted to work or who find themselves putting job before family, God or self. It can help all who desire to nudge work and responsibilities into their proper place: handling them as both necessity and joy.

Earley created a program he calls The Common Rule, which helps individuals not to succumb to time sucks, such as scrolling the smart phone, burrowing in a newspaper, glazing before the TV or

teeing off too many rounds of golf. His step-by-step instructions help us bask both in God’s love, and work at sharing God’s bounty and mercy with friends, family and neighbours. He covers a lot.

The Common Rule includes a total of eight habits—divided into daily and weekly habits. Daily habits include: kneel for prayer several times a day (wow!); have at least one meal with others; turn off the phone for an hour; and read Scripture in the morning before you turn on your phone. The weekly habits include: one hour of conversation with a friend; no more than four hours of leisure media use; fasting from something for 24 hours; and observing sabbath rest. The material on managing the distractions of modern media—smart phones, computers, email—is worth the price of the book, with practical suggestions to try, and leeway to come up with guidelines that work for you.

I love that Earley started his exploration of realigning one’s life and priorities by reminding us that God, as creator and sustainer, worked hard and long! “Go back to the opening act of the Bible.

The spotlight has just come on, and we find the Trinity on the stage working together to create this beautiful and bizarre material world. God is different parts blue-collar worker, artist, inventor, tinkerer, gardener and entrepreneur,” he writes, reminding us that God did manual labour.

As the wife of a retired blue-collar worker, I appreciated this shout-out. I also resonated deeply with his chapter on how to keep family mealtimes.

But kneeling down in your work day? I was fortunate for most of my employed life to enjoy a private office with a door. I could easily do what Earley recommends—stop mid-morning or afternoon and kneel down, or stretch out to pray or get in touch with the Holy. If your work setting doesn’t allow that, or you are constantly in the



FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

public eye, Earley suggests that just a few moments of holding out your hands on your lap, in a holy gesture of receiving a gift, can also be a way to slow down and refocus.

The book includes a 30-page resource section. ☘

Melodie Davis of Linville, Va., recently retired from MennoMedia/Herald Press, where she worked as an editor and writer. She is the author of nine books, most recently Whatever Happened to Dinner? Recipes and Reflections for

Family Mealtime. You can read her blog at findingharmonyblog.com. This review was originally published in the September issue of The Marketplace magazine (bit.ly/2IuNMff).



☘ Briefly noted

Resource helps families nurture faith in their young students



In full colour, with photos and illustrations throughout, *Let the Children Come to Me* is a resource for families nurturing faith

development in their elementary school-aged children. It is structured around 12 Anabaptist faith practices: Scripture reading, prayer, community, bearing witness, service to one another, worship, nonviolence, steadfast faith, the centrality of Christ, communion, believer's baptism and stewardship. Each faith practice is developed as a short unit—the equivalent of two page-spreads—and explored through stories from Anabaptist/Mennonite history, one from the 16th century and one from contemporary global life. These stories are accompanied by Bible passages, conversation-starters, prayers and multiple options for family activities. The book is supported by the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism of Goshen (Ind.) College through the Bearing Witness Stories Project. Author Lisa Weaver has more than 25 years of teaching experience in public elementary schools, adult English-as-a-Second-Language classes, and Christian education settings, while Elizabeth Miller is co-director of Mennonite Central Committee Colombia-Ecuador. Designer Judith Rempel Smucker brings each unit to life with engaging full-colour images, photos and designs that invite participation.

—CASCADIA PUBLISHING HOUSE

'I realized I had been duped!'

United Church minister dedicates memoir to Mennonite archivist

By Dan Dyck
Mennonite Heritage Archives
WINNIPEG

Gordon Toombs was deceived by the Canadian military when he tried to register as a conscientious objector (CO) during the Second World War. His recent book, *L74298: Recollections of a Conscientious Objector in World War II*, is dedicated to Conrad Stoesz, archivist at Winnipeg's Mennonite Heritage Archives, in gratitude for revealing the deception.

The 98-year-old United Church minister reveals what he calls an embarrassing, almost 80-year-old secret, in a self-published book with his enlistment registration number as the title. Arvel Gray, a former CBC news anchor, edited the book.

Toombs grew up in Saskatchewan during the Dirty Thirties, a time of extreme drought and economic depression across Canada. A theology student preparing for ministry in the United Church of Canada, Toombs and seven fellow students came to a pacifist position, believing that they should reject combat service in the military because Jesus calls his followers to love their neighbours and enemies, even if that requires self-sacrifice.

When called to military service in 1941, Toombs made clear to the enrolment officer that he was applying for CO status and wished to serve in the medical corps—a non-combatant duty for which he was willing to sacrifice his life. The officer indicated this was fine, but he would still need to engage in the same

registration process as regular soldiers. Young and perhaps naïve, he followed these instructions, only to find himself in boot camp and training for combat service. Feeling betrayed, he decided to make life difficult for his commanding officers, something that frequently resulted in disciplinary action and the assignment of menial tasks.

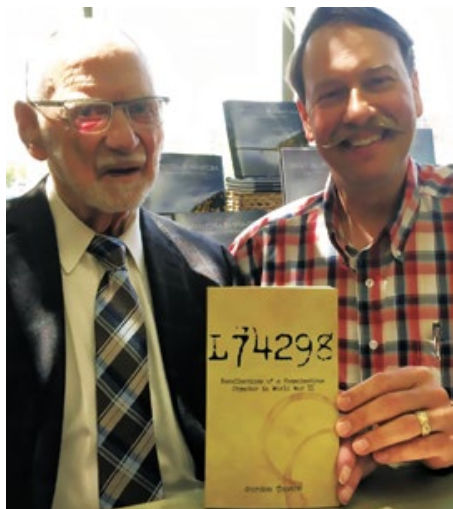
Toombs protested throughout his entire four years of enlisted service, an art he said was learned from Saskatchewan farmers of the day. His tale is filled with many challenges to military authorities, including a somewhat humorous twist revealing how he came to be enrolled in both the army and the air force at the same time. Some of his friends faced persecution, and even jail.

Fervour for the war was so strong at the time, says Toombs, that the United Church supported the Second World War despite a statement at a 1938 General Council meeting that called war “a resort to hatred and violence/barbarism.”

Toombs found he was shunned by his own church. Even his pastor failed to contact him during his military service. The United Church archive does not name the group's members nor their objections.

The young activist later went on to earn a doctor of philosophy degree in Christian ethics, eventually specializing in marriage and family counselling. But a full and fruitful life after the war never completely lifted the weight he felt for not

FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES



Gordon Toombs, left, was deceived by the Canadian military when he tried to register as a conscientious objector during the Second World War. His recent book, L74298: Recollections of a Conscientious Objector in World War II, is dedicated to Conrad Stoesz, right, archivist at Winnipeg's Mennonite Heritage Archives, in gratitude for revealing the deception.

following his convictions. He thought it was his own fault that he never made it into the medical corps.

In 2004, Toombs learned about the research of Stoesz, a specialist in the history of conscientious objection to war in Canada. The pair met at the Archives, where Stoesz explained that Toombs had been deliberately misled, and, under his circumstances, CO status only became a legal option in 1943.

Toombs exclaimed, "I realized I had been duped!" As the decades-old weight lifted, he became inspired to write about his experience and that of his friends, relying on his own correspondence and memories, as well as letters collected from his seven friends, all of whom are now deceased. The book is dedicated to Stoesz for his role in exposing the reason behind Toombs's perceived failure to follow his convictions. ❧

L74298 is available from McNally Robinson Booksellers online at bit.ly/orderL74298. You can also hear a 2009 interview with Toombs at bit.ly/toombs-interview.

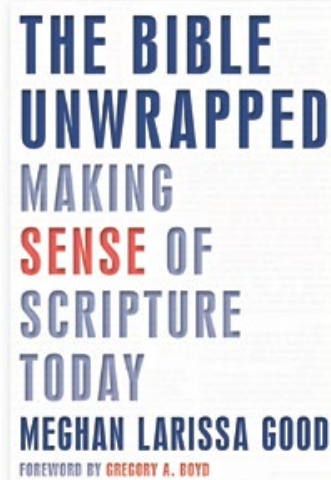


News brief

CommonRead connecting churches from coast to coast

The number of people who read the Bible is steadily declining, studies have found. Whether they can't reconcile problematic texts with their lives, or feel like they just aren't getting anything out of it anymore, people are leaving the Bible on the bookshelf. Meghan Larissa Good is trying to change those attitudes with her book *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today*. It explores questions about Scripture that many people are too afraid to voice, and it explains where the Bible comes from, how it was written and, above all, it shows people why the Bible matters. CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Centre is partnering with MennoMedia and Mennonite Church U.S.A. to encourage all Mennonites to read this book through their initiative CommonRead. This is the program's first year and it is running in Mennonite churches from July 2019 to May 2020. "CommonRead is an opportunity to read one title together as a nationwide church family," says Arlyn Friesen Epp, director of CommonWord. "One of CommonWord's mandates is to help strengthen the collective Anabaptist identity of our community of faith, and reading a singular title together, with online study guide and other conversation pieces provided, is a creative way to do that." Book discounts for *The Bible Unwrapped* and resources like study guides, reviews by pastors and comments from the author can be found at CommonWord.ca.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



News brief

Resource teaches about Indigenous cultures

Canoe Kids/4Canoes is a series of colourful books designed to showcase Indigenous cultures, using large photos and stories from Indigenous perspectives. They are intended for all ages, including children, and can be used as a resource for schools or churches. The first volume has 160 large pages and features the Ojibwe of Manitoulin Island, Ont. Subsequent volumes feature the Haida of Haida Gwaii, British Columbia, and the Mi'kmaq of Newfoundland and the North Atlantic. The canoe, or transportation, of each Indigenous culture is always a theme. More recently, the *Canoe Kids* name was changed to *4Canoes*, representing the four directions. Vol. 4, currently only available in digital form, features the Yavapai of Arizona. Vol. 5 will feature the Carrier or Dakelh of Northern B.C. These books are published by Reality Media with editorial leadership from Glen Woolner of Kitchener, Ont. The project began in 2016 as a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and hopes to grow to 24 volumes. Reality Media has also published *The Drum Story* and a DVD documentary, *The Art of Being Métis*, about the teachings of the canoe. More information is available online at canoekids.com.

—REALITY MEDIA



FOCUS ON BOOKS & RESOURCES

BOOK REVIEW

Part memoir, part devotional reading

Signs of Life: Resurrecting Hope out of Ordinary Losses.
Stephanie Lobdell. Herald Press, 2019, 200 pages.

Reviewed by Barb Draper
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

Stephanie Lobdell grew up in the church as a pastor's kid. She was a high achiever with dreams of becoming a missionary, but things didn't work out as she had hoped and she struggled to accept the losses that life threw her way. In *Signs of Life*, she reflects on her growing realization that



being Christ's disciple is not about being successful but about finding hope in an ordinary, messy life.

In each of the nine chapters, Lobdell describes an ordinary loss she has experienced, using an anecdote from her life as an illustration. As she explores her

emotions around this loss, she also identifies a biblical character who had a similar experience, and she comments on that character's possible personal reactions. In each case, she finds that there is hope in looking at life from God's perspective.

One of the strengths of this book is the direct honesty that she uses in describing her feelings. In the second chapter she discusses her reaction when her long-held plans for becoming an international missionary end suddenly. She writes, "When my plans fail, my insides boil with rage at what feels like such an injustice. But anger is merely

the easier-to-manage emotion—easier than loss, easier than grief, easier than humiliation at what might feel like a personal failing." In each case, she examines her emotions and then looks to see what she has learned in the process of letting go and seeing what God offers instead.

The most poignant story of the book is her sense of betrayal when she is called before the church board of a congregation where she and her husband are pastors. She writes, "I felt betrayed, not only by the congregation to whom I had given my life, but also by all the nationally known speakers and leaders and teachers and authors who had touted their wares, those surefire plans to revive churches like mine." None of the strategies for church growth had revived the congregation adequately, and Lobdell was chastised for not being more effective. It was only when she allowed her idea of revival to die that she was able to pursue faithfulness.

She suggests that, just as Jesus' resurrection comes only after his death, so we must let go of the struggle for success, letting some of these hopes and dreams die. It is only when we acknowledge our inability to save ourselves that we can experience salvation from God.

This book is part memoir and part devotional reading. Lobdell's writing is easy to read, and she explores the questions and struggles of ordinary people. She presents the biblical reflections very imaginatively. Her honesty should appeal to readers who also struggle with life's losses. ❧



Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth allows young people (grades 10 to 12) to engage their faith questions, develop their passion for ministry and test their leadership gifts.

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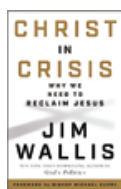
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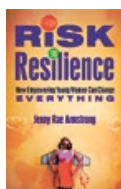
2019 Fall list of
Books & Resources

Theology, Spirituality



Christ in Crisis: Why We Need to Reclaim Jesus. Jim Wallis. HarperCollins, 2019.

Wallis argues that many Christians have become disconnected from Jesus' primary message. He identifies eight questions that Jesus asked, or were asked of him, as a way to measure our spiritual foundations. He is critical of American religion that is tied to politics.



From Risk to Resilience: How Empowering Young Women Can Change Everything. Jenny Rae Armstrong. Herald Press, 2019, 208 pages.

Armstrong writes about the many risks for girls around the world, especially during their teen years, and describes how the church can help them be more resilient. She argues that an end to gender discrimination, especially when it comes to education, is a good first step.



Intercultural Church: A Biblical Vision for an Age of Migration. Safwat Marzouk. Fortress Press, 2019, 212 pages.

Worship in the church is enriched by an intercultural identity, so we should welcome and celebrate differences of culture. By showing hospitality to migrants, the church can rediscover the biblical vision of the church

as a diverse community, says Marzouk, who is an associate professor of Old Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.



Invited: The Power of Hospitality in an Age of Loneliness. Leslie Verner. Herald Press, 2019, 220 pages.

Using her experiences as the mother of young children and having lived in China for five years, Verner reflects on the importance of hospitality and community in our churches and in our day-to-day lives. Her comments are rooted in the stories of Jesus. The book includes discussion questions for each of the 10 chapters.

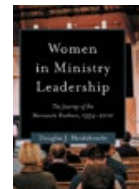


Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity. Don Neufeld and Steve Thomas, eds. Wipf and Stock, 2019, 250 pages.

Edited by the coordinators of Mennonite Men in Canada and the United States, this book includes 15 essays exploring what it means to have a healthy masculinity. The chapters are written by Mennonite men, many who have served as leaders in the church in Canada and the U.S. In the first chapter, Don Neufeld, the Canadian coordinator of Mennonite Men, reflects on masculinity and how his faith community has nurtured his own sense of self.

Women in Ministry Leadership: The Journey of the Mennonite Brethren 1954-2010.

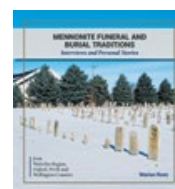
Douglas J. Heidebrecht. Kindred Productions and the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission, 2019, 326 pages.



For many decades, the Mennonite Brethren in Canada and the United States have been discussing whether or not it is appropriate for women to hold positions of ministry leadership in the church. This book follows that complex and ongoing conversation.

History

Mennonite Funeral and Burial Traditions: Interviews and Personal Stories from Waterloo Region, Oxford, Perth and Wellington Counties. Marion Roes. Privately published, 2019, 102 pages.



Roes describes the funeral and burial practices of a variety of Mennonite and Amish groups, both past and present, primarily using the words of her interviewees. She includes many colour photos. The book is available at local bookstores or by email to mlroes@sympatico.ca.

Minority Report: Mennonite Identities in Imperial Russia and Soviet Ukraine Reconsidered, 1789-1945. Leonard G. Friesen, ed. U. of Toronto Press, 2018, 352 pages.



This is an academic book that explores new interpretations of the Mennonite experience in Russia.

My Sojourn in Mexico from 1955 to 1995. Helen Ens. Privately published, 2019, 122 pages.



Helen Ens tells the story of her 40 years of working in Cuauhtémoc, Mexico, the business centre for many Old Colony Mennonite villages. She worked as an educator and community developer, helping to establish a school and a Mennonite church. Ens now lives in Winnipeg. Available from CommonWord.ca.

FOCUS ON EDUCATION



On My Own: A Journey from a Mennonite Childhood. Hildegard Margo Martens. Anderson Publishing, 2018, 324 pages.

Martens grew up in southern Manitoba, the daughter of Mennonites who fled from Russia in the 1920s. She tells the story of how she chose to leave behind the cultural and religious expectations of her community to find an independent life in Toronto.

Other books



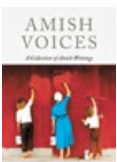
Addiction Nation: What the Opioid Crisis Reveals About Us. Timothy McMahan King. Herald Press, 2019, 272 pages.

Using his personal experience, King describes opioid addiction from the inside. He shares his extensive research about drug addiction and what is needed for recovery, declaring it is a community, not an individual, problem.



All That Belongs. Dora Dueck. Turnstone Press, 2019, 333 pages.

As Catherine prepares to retire from her job as an archivist, she finds herself examining her own family history. The fictional book explores themes of Mennonite culture, religious fanaticism, shame and inherited trauma. Previous books by Dueck include *This Hidden Thing* and *What You Get at Home*.



Amish Voices: A Collection of Amish Writings. Brad Igou, ed. Herald Press, 2019, 239 pages.

Using 25 years of *Family Life*, an Amish periodical published each month in Aylmer, Ont., the compiler has put together a wide variety of comments by Amish writers reflecting on their way of life. Among the topics are marriage and family, youth, aging, discipline, clothing and “the world.”



Don't Try This at Home: One Family's (Mis)Adventures Around the World. Daria Salamon and Rob Krause. Turnstone Press, 2019, 280 pages.

This family rented out their Winnipeg home and travelled around the world for 12 months. The Mennonite connection is somewhat tenuous.



The Farm Wife's Almanac. Shari Wagner. Cascadia Publishing House, Dreamseeker Books, 2019, 116 pages.

The poems in this collection are written from the perspective of a farm wife. This is the author's third poem collection; she was chosen Indiana Poet Laureate in 2016-17.



Glitter and Fall: Laozi's Dao De Jing: Traninhalations. Di Brandt. Turnstone Press, 2018, 85 pages.

This is a new collection of creative poems by Di Brandt.



The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible and the Journey to Belong. Karen González. Herald Press, 2019, 189 pages.

As a child, González and her family fled from Guatemala to live in the United States. She reflects on migrant stories from the Bible, her own experiences as an undocumented immigrant and the plight of people on the move today.



Isaac Janssen, MDiv. George G. Epp. Privately published, 2019, 350 pages.

Written from the perspective of a struggling prairie minister, this collection of 30 connected short stories explores the meaning of life. Epp writes with a kind of folksy wisdom that has a stream-of-consciousness element.

The Salvation of Yasch Siemens, 35th Anniversary Edition. Armin Wiebe. Turnstone

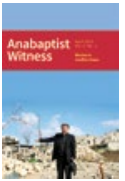
Press, 2019, 267 pages.

This humorous story, set in a fictional Mennonite village in southern Manitoba, was first published in 1984. This edition includes an essay by Nathan Dueck.



Resources

Anabaptist Witness: Mission in Conflict Zones. Jamie Pitts, ed. Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 2019 (Volume 6, No. 1), 124 pages.



Many of the articles in this issue are written by experienced missionaries, who reflect on their experiences working in places of armed conflict. Anabaptist missional theology tends to adapt when it serves societies caught in conflict zones.

By the Way: Getting Serious about Following Jesus. Derek Vreeland. Herald Press, 2019, 231 pages.



Using many anecdotes from his own life, Vreeland explores what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Each of the 10 chapters has a list of discussion questions, making this a useful resource for a small group study. Although he is not Mennonite, Vreeland's theology is quite Anabaptist.



4 Canoes: Teach Us with Culture and We Can Learn. Glen Woolner, ed.

Four magazine/volumes provide insight into Indigenous culture with the following titles: “The Ojibwe of Great Spirit Island”; “The Haida of Haida Gwaii”; “The Mi'kmaq of Newfoundland”; and “The Yavapai . . . People of the Sun.” Also available is a DVD, *The Art of Being Métis*. More information at canoekids.com.

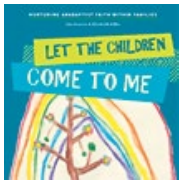
Journal of Mennonite Studies: JMS Forum: A People of Diversity. 2019 (Volume 37). Royden Loewen, ed. University of

FOCUS ON EDUCATION



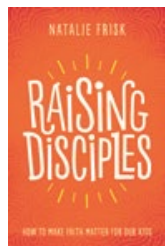
Winnipeg, 430 pages.

The papers in this volume are from the Mennonite history conference “A people of diversity: Mennonites in Canada since 1970,” held Nov. 15 to 17, 2018. They show how Mennonites in Canada have become very diversified in the last 50 years.



Let the Children Come to Me: Nurturing Anabaptist Faith Within Families. Lisa Weaver and Elizabeth Miller. Cascadia Publishing House, 2019, 62 pages.

Using colourful illustrations and photos, this book provides resources for families in nurturing the faith development of elementary-aged children. Each of the 12 faith practices comes with Scripture passages; suggestions for spiritual practices; and stories, both historical and modern.



Raising Disciples: How to Make Faith Matter for Our Kids. Natalie Frisk. Herald Press, 2019, 210 pages.

Written by the curriculum pastor for The Meeting House, a Be in Christ church in Oakville, Ont., this book provides parenting tips for raising children in the church. As well as explaining the stages of faith development, Frisk provides many practical suggestions for Christian parents.



Safezone: Promoting Healthy Boundaries in Christian Camps. Carol Penner. Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, 2019, 40 pages.

Church camps are important places of faith formation and leadership development, but it is important that relationships among the staff and children are healthy. This resource is designed to

help foster healthy boundaries for everyone. ❧

—COMPILED BY **BARB DRAPER,**
BOOKS & RESOURCES EDITOR

Many of the featured titles on the book list are available for purchase or to borrow from *CommonWord Book Store and Resource Centre* in Winnipeg. For more information, visit *CommonWord.ca*, or call 204-594-0527 or (toll-free) 1-877-846-1593.

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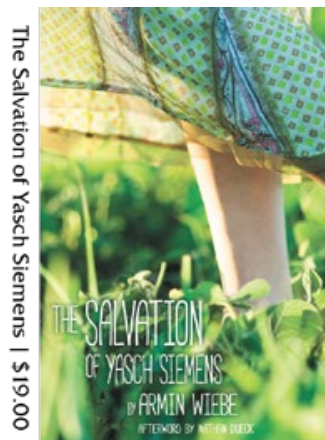
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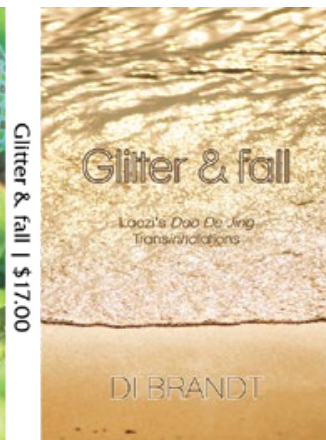
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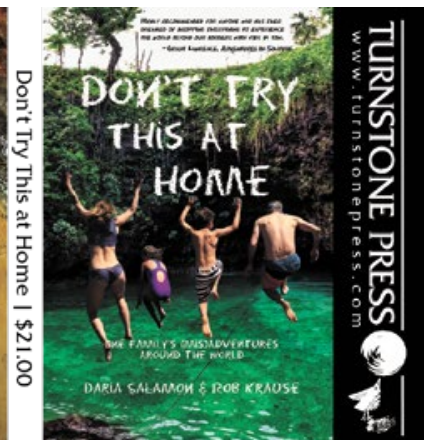
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Rooted in the Word, Growing in Christ

Photo: IMS student assistant **Sophia Austin** works with **Jamie Pitts, PhD**, IMS Director and Associate Professor of Anabaptist Studies at AMBS.



A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

Contact: ims@ambbs.edu

/// Calendar

British Columbia

Nov. 18-22: Annual Christmas market, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford.
Dec. 7,8: Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir: (7) at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (8) at St. Philip's Anglican Church, Vancouver. Both concerts at 7:30 p.m. In support of the Menno Simons Centre.

Alberta

Nov. 16: Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta fall conference, at the Gem of the West Museum, Coaldale, from 1 to 3:30 p.m., followed by faspa meal. Theme: "Alternative service in the Second World War: Crisis of community. Speaker: archivist Conrad Stoesz.

Saskatchewan

Nov. 13: RJC kielke supper fundraiser, at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon.
Dec. 19,21: RJC Christmas concerts: (19) at Knox United Church, Saskatoon; (21) at RJC at 7 p.m.

Manitoba

Nov. 13-15: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's senior-high students present "A Christmas Carol," at the Gas Station Arts Centre, Winnipeg. For more information, visit westgatemennonite.ca.
Nov. 15: "Discover Outtatown, an off-campus visit day for interested students, at the CMU campus, beginning at 8:30 a.m.
Nov. 15-Jan. 18, 2020: "Changing world: A dialogue on conservation" art exhibit, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, featuring six Manitoba artists
Nov. 19: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate hosts an "Evening of the arts," at 7 p.m. Includes music by school bands and choral groups, and a gallery of student artworks.
Nov. 21: MCC Manitoba and the Salvation Army present a pastoral care and domestic abuse workshop at CMU, from 9 a.m.

to 4 p.m. For more information or to register, call 204-925-1917.
Nov. 22: CMU campus visit day for prospective students, at 8:30 a.m.
Nov. 25: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate holds its annual general meeting, at 7 p.m.
Nov. 28: CommonWord book launch of "Peaceful at Heart: Anabaptist Reflections on Healthy Masculinity," at CMU's Marpeck Commons, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.
Nov. 29-30: Out-of-province campus preview for prospective students, at CMU, Winnipeg.
Nov. 30: "Christmas at CMU," Winnipeg, showtimes at 2 and 7 p.m.
Dec. 1: Winnipeg First Mennonite Church Choir and orchestra present Mozart's "Coronation Mass," and Magnificat settings by Stanford, Mozart and Schubert, at the church, at 7 p.m.
Dec. 7: "Choose your own adventure trip" raffle, in support of Mennonite Heritage Village. Five trip options to choose from. To purchase tickets online until Dec. 6, visit bit.ly/mhv-affle.
Dec. 7: CMU Festival Chorus and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra present Handel's "Messiah," at the Winnipeg Centennial Concert Hall, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit my.wso.ca/messiah.
Dec. 9: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate holds its Christmas concert, at Westminster United Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Ontario

Nov. 8: "One baptism? A symposium on baptism and the Christian life," an Anabaptist Learning Workshop, at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/2nPw8Ms.
Nov. 8-10: Fall youth retreat, at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, Hepworth. Theme: "Escape the ordinary: Make our mark." For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/2nOVhXE.
Nov. 9: Menno Singers perform "Mothering God: Choral works by spiritual minimalists," at Trillium Lutheran Church, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

Nov. 10: "Following Jesus together as Anglicans and Mennonites, Pt. 2," at Renison Institute of Ministry, Waterloo, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Instructor: Pablo Hyung Jin Kim Sun.
Nov. 12-13: Credence & Co. presents "Forming peaceable congregations," at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Speaker: Tom Yoder Neufeld. For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/2oKVtY0.
Nov. 15-17: "Grounding: Discovering our sacred gifts in climate emergency," a contemplative prayer retreat hosted by the Student Christian Movement and Pastors in Exile, at Loyola House, Guelph. For more information, visit pastorsinexile.org/grounding.
Nov. 16: Fairview Mennonite Home hosts its annual handicraft sale, at the home in Cambridge, beginning at 9 a.m. Includes a bake sale and tea room, and much more.
Nov. 16: Nithview Christmas bazaar, featuring a bake sale, silent auction, community vendors and a tea room, in New Hamburg, from 2 to 4 p.m.
Nov. 16: MCC peace conference, at Bethany Community Church, St. Catharines, begins at 9 a.m.
Nov. 16: "Innovate networking day," at Floradale Mennonite Church, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A ReLearning Community event. For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/2nlxOXV.

Nov. 22-23: Annual "Spirit of Christmas" event, at Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig, featuring juried craft show, Ten Thousand Villages booth and tea room: (22) from 6:30 to 9 p.m.; (23) from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Nov. 23,24: Soli Deo Gloria Singers present "Longing," a choral concert: (23) at UMEI, Leamington, at 7:30 p.m.; (24) at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For tickets, call UMEI at 519-326-7448 during school hours.
Nov. 27-29: Credence & Co. presents "The art of mindful mediation," with Betty Pries, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information or to register, visit bit.ly/2m8lbUM.
Dec. 1: Lifted Voices will sing Christmas music at the Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, at 2:30 p.m. For more information, call Laurence Martin at 519-504-4591.

To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, 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.



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Employment Opportunity



Employment opportunity

The position of **Professor of Pastoral Care and Director of Contextual Education** is open. Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, is hiring a full-time professor to start July 1, 2020.

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A ‘wonderful day on the water’

Camp Squeah paddle-a-thon fundraiser reaches million-dollar mark

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent

HOPE, B.C.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAMP SQUEAH

Participants in Camp Squeah’s 2019 paddle-a-thon enjoy pleasant weather on the water, raising funds for the camp’s summer bursary program. More than \$51,000 was raised this year, bringing the 21-year total to just over a million dollars—all of it going to support volunteer leaders with their post-secondary education costs.

Rowers and paddlers in Camp Squeah’s annual paddle-a-thon reached their goal, raising more than \$51,000 on Sept. 21 and bringing the total over the past 21 years to just more than a million dollars.

Rob Tiessen, Squeah’s executive director, reported a “wonderful day on the water,” and added that “an occasional slight headwind kept us honest in our paddling effort, requiring a bit of fortitude and perseverance.”

In a change of pace this year, instead of a two-day event, the paddle-a-thon was one day to coincide with B.C. Rivers Day, and was it was held in the fall instead of the spring. Paddlers agreed that the switch to September brought warmer water conditions, and fairer weather made the trip especially pleasant. They began at the Harrison River in Harrison Hot Springs, navigating into the Fraser River and ending at Island 22 near Chilliwack.

“As the Fraser River was flowing higher and faster than usual,

the confluence at the junction of the Harrison [and] Fraser rivers provided some extra adrenaline for the paddlers, who had to circumnavigate some turbulence and shifting current lines,” said Tiessen. “Despite the extra challenge, all boats navigated this section successfully!”

This year, 25 paddlers—from teens to seniors—took part, representing seven congregations. Nine travelled in the Squeah voyageur canoe, with 16 others in eight tandem boats.

Darwin and Sue Baerg of Fraser River Raft Adventures accompanied the group in a safety boat and helped with reading the river conditions and pointing the group toward the safest routes.

The day concluded with a barbecue and celebration service, with all giving thanks to God for the combined efforts and generosity that has now generated over a million dollars for Camp Squeah’s fund that supports volunteer leaders with their post-secondary education costs. ☺