

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

June 22, 2020 Volume 24 Number 13



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## EDITORIAL

# Life together online

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
Executive Editor



Since the middle of March, when church buildings closed due to the novel coronavirus outbreak, I've been

visiting many churches. Not in person, of course, but on the internet. Each week I click on the link to a worship service that a Mennonite congregation, or group of congregations, has prepared to share with members of our denomination.

It's been fascinating to see how churches are learning to live in this unusual time, and how they are harnessing the creative and technical gifts of members to congregate in new ways for worship, faith formation, pastoral care, outreach, social times and more.

However it is expressed, there is a clear desire to stay connected in a time of physical separation. Among the 200-some churches that make up Mennonite Church Canada, there's quite a variety in how they are present online.

Many, but not all, churches have a website. Some of the sites have basic information about church: history and beliefs, address, contact information for staff, and a schedule. Other websites have embedded content, both audio and video, sermons in PDF format, and links to outside resources. Some have blog posts, written by the pastor or other church leaders. Some of them have announcement sheets or the order of service that can be downloaded. Some of them have a private area for members, to be accessed through a password.

Some congregations use Facebook, either with a public page or as a closed

group for congregants. A church's Facebook page might have photos, prayer requests, announcements and inspirational sayings. Some congregations stream their worship services through Facebook Live. Some share links there to other resources (thank you to the ones who point to content on *Canadian Mennonite's* website!)

An informal search yielded at least 30 YouTube channels connected with MC Canada congregations, where churches share video sermons, personal reflections, music and children's activities.

Worship planners and leaders are learning new skills for virtual worship: how to sing while located far from each other, and how to capture quality video and audio. Speakers and worship leaders are learning how to speak to a camera. Congregations are getting creative in how they involve children and youth in virtual ways.

Some churches have preferred more interactive activities and have incorporated the videoconferencing platform Zoom into their weekly routines, for worship or for times of sharing and prayer. (Important skills for all participants: knowing how to turn on your camera and how to mute your mic.)

In this time of physical distancing, we're realizing how important it is to see the faces of others in the congregation. Through Zoom, congregants are inviting each other, virtually, into our homes and yards, where some of us have changed from Sunday clothes into T-shirts, shorts and pyjamas, and where pets linger nearby.

We are asking ourselves questions about how to live as congregations in this

unusual time. What are the limits of online life, both for individuals and groups? Who is being left out of this virtual church? What are the vital aspects of worshipping together that we want to maintain? How do we carry out faith formation activities for people of all ages? What methods do we have for the pastoral care that is so vital to the flourishing of all? How do congregations stay fit financially when there isn't the weekly reminder of the offering plate?

As I write, some congregations have begun opening up their spaces for meeting in person, while others are hunkering down for a longer time of being apart.

For now, if you're comfortable online, you too can "visit" many churches! There are links to the weekly services coordinated by MC Canada at [mennonitechurch.ca/worshipservices](http://mennonitechurch.ca/worshipservices). Or go to the website of your regional church for resources and links to more congregations offering online activities.

In the coming months, there will be new questions and adjustments for our congregational life. How will our church have changed when we emerge out of the COVID-19 crisis? How will God call us to respond to the new challenges ahead—both online and in person?

## Upcoming digital issues

Speaking of life online, *Canadian Mennonite* will begin our summer practice of offering three online-only issues, starting with the next edition. The July 6, Aug. 3 and Aug. 31 issues will not appear in print but will be available through email to digital subscribers. If you're interested in receiving digital issues, through the summer and beyond, you can subscribe online at [canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital](http://canadianmennonite.org/subscribe/digital) or email [office@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:office@canadianmennonite.org). There is no extra cost to current subscribers. ☸



Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada

Canada

ISSN 1480-042X

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PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO /  
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General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO: Canadian Mennonite,  
490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5, Waterloo, ON, N2L 6H7

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

Published by Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service. Regional churches and MC Canada appoint directors to the board and support 38 percent of Canadian Mennonite's budget.

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### One-Year Subscription Rates

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

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

### Subscriptions/address changes

(e-mail) office@canadianmennonite.org

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## FEATURE

# The twilight of Mennonite radio

Will new audio formats rise to the task?

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Manitoba Correspondent



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO / THE CANADIAN MENNONITE

*Southern Manitoba Broadcasting Company opened the CFAM radio station in Altona, Man., in 1957.*

**M**anitoba's airwaves are full of Mennonite radio. I began to notice this last year when I started hosting a radio program for Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), where I also work.

Except for Manitoba, none of the regional churches within Mennonite Church Canada currently produce radio programming, according to their executive ministers. In fact, as best they could remember, none of them ever have.

Yet MC Manitoba produces not one, but two radio programs. CMU, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba and the Mennonite Heritage Archives also make radio broadcasts in Manitoba.

Why is this prairie province different from the rest?

Shortly after I began investigating, MC Manitoba decided to terminate *Frohe Botschaft*, its German-language broadcast. I quickly learned that Mennonite radio in Manitoba is now only a shadow of what it used to be. So, instead, I began to ask: Is the long legacy of Menno-

nite radio in Manitoba dying?

Mennonites in Manitoba first dove into radio in 1956. It should be noted that the Mennonite Brethren church entered radio broadcasting 10 years prior and made significant contributions to the field, but this article will focus on the endeavours of MC Manitoba, then known as the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba.

In 1955, the Conference formed the Mennonite Radio Mission committee—later renamed Faith and Life Communications—with the desire to evangelize and connect with the community. It began airing two Sunday programs from Winnipeg and Fargo, N.D., in 1956. The shows quickly transferred to the CFAM radio station in Altona, when the Southern Manitoba Broadcasting Company, founded in 1957 with board representatives from 28 separate Mennonite groups, opened the next year.

Frank H. Epp was made radio director for the Conference in 1957, and within the first year he developed three radio programs: *Frohe Botschaft* (Good News),



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO / THE CANADIAN MENNONITE

**Frank H. Epp was the first radio director for the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba and hosted the Abundant Life radio program.**

*Abundant Life*, and *Wort des Lebens* (Word of Life). By 1961, *Abundant Life* was airing from Manitoba to British Columbia, and three years later *Frohe Botschaft* began broadcasting to Europe and the Americas through a station in Quito, Ecuador.

This radio ministry was so successful because of a few key figures who opened the doors for it.

"I think we had some really wonderful visionary leaders in the past, who helped develop this instrument and this voice, this method of communication," says Ken Warkentin, MC Manitoba's executive minister. "They have had tremendous impact on our ministry and in the life of our congregations."

One of these people is Elmer Hildebrand. The CEO of Golden West Broadcasting (formerly Southern Mennonite Broadcasting) started with the company as an ad writer the year it opened and he became its president in the 1980s. Golden West quickly



PHOTO COURTESY OF  
GOLDEN WEST BROADCASTING

**Elmer Hildebrand, CEO of Golden West Broadcasting, was influential in Mennonite involvement in Manitoba radio.**

expanded from its one CFAM station to more than 40 stations across Canada. His push to combine radio and faith is a big reason why Mennonite radio continued to boom in Manitoba throughout the years.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars were invested in a recording studio at 600 Shaftesbury Boulevard in Winnipeg, where the radio operations moved in 1990 and are still located today. In 1994, *Abundant Life* was estimated to have between 30,000 and 50,000 listeners.

But airtime for these Mennonite programs was not free, like some might think. By the time Darryl Neustaedter Barg became director of Faith and Life Communications in 2003, a \$250,000 fund had dried up. He says the Conference also lacked any communication methods other than radio, and it needed to put energy into keeping up with the changing world, which included developing a website. Two programs ran for more than 40 years, but MC Manitoba had to end *Wort des Lebens* in 2003 and *Abundant Life* in 2004.

Now, the only remaining original program, *Frohe Botschaft*, signs off the air this month.

Warkentin says that, while MC Manitoba values the dedicated listeners who continue to love the program, the reality is that listenership and funding for radio ministry have been steadily declining. "If you read the obituaries, you can actually see the people who

have traditionally supported *Frohe Botschaft*," he says. "We're now at a place where the donations simply aren't enough to carry the program anymore."

Hildebrand says the decades-long passion for radio is waning. "As the only Mennonite radio organization in Canada, it's ironic that the Mennonite programs are being replaced by others, be they Lutheran, Baptist or other independents," he says. "We continue to make time available for Mennonite organizations to broadcast, but there seem to be fewer and fewer that want to do that. You ask why, and I don't know."

Dorothea Kampen, who has produced *Frohe Botschaft* since 2001, says she thought a lack of speakers would bring about its end. She has been surprised, and thankful, by the continued willingness of both old and young pastors to prepare German sermons for the program.



**Dorothea  
Kampen**

But to produce a radio broadcast still takes money, and churches are emptier, with younger generations often choosing to support different causes than their parents or grandparents, Hildebrand says. As the media landscape has changed, and information is instantly available at the click of a button, people have also come to rely less on radio.

Moses Falco, pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg, says the decrease in Mennonite radio mirrors the way the church as an institution is changing. "Things aren't happening from the top down anymore," he says. "It's on the local congregations now to connect us across this denomination. . . . Once we are passionate from the local level and we start to build from the bottom up, that's where we see things emerge. . . . We have to find new ways to do these kinds of things, to be a witness and use technology to further the mission of the church."

But many will lament this shift and the loss of long-standing projects that



PHOTO COURTESY OF MOSES FALCO

**Moses Falco, pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg, is starting a new podcast with two pastors from across Canada.**

come with it.

“Listeners have told me or written to me about how important this broadcast is to them,” Kampen says of *Frohe Botschaft*. “For many listeners, German was their ‘religious language,’ the language in which they first read the Bible and participated in worship services. . . . Since most Mennonite congregations have discontinued their German worship services, *Frohe Botschaft* has provided an opportunity for listeners to worship God in the language they were first introduced to church.”

Falco recognizes the sadness, but also celebrates the past and gets excited about the new possibilities that can emerge when something ends. He is starting a podcast with two pastors from across Canada, which is currently moving from the dreaming phase into the first stages of production.

Podcasts are popular right now, and Falco says they are proof that audio is still very much alive. In many ways, podcasts are similar to radio, but he says they provide something new to the world. They allow for different types of conversations, ranging widely on topics and quality of production, and are accessible at any time, making them more convenient.

He says the podcasting world is relatively untapped in Anabaptist circles, and the medium will “provide a different space for the Mennonite voice. . . . I want to explore it, see where it might go. How can this medium benefit the future of the church?”

Falco’s emerging podcast will not be

associated with any institution but is rather taking a grassroots approach. “We want to create a place where we can have honest, constructive, sometimes critical conversations within our own church,” he says. “This could be a way for us to enrich the church as well, by providing a space for voices that otherwise wouldn’t be heard.” He hopes it can connect the Mennonite church across Canada, but also open the conversation more broadly to anyone who is interested in the Anabaptist faith.

Although the original traditional radio programming by Manitoba’s Mennonites may be taking its last breaths, the desire to keep creating meaningful audio content and have collective experiences is by no means dead.

In addition to Falco’s podcast, *Sunday@CMU* (CMU), *Still Speaking* (Mennonite Heritage Archives), *Threads* (MCC Manitoba), and *Circle of God’s People* (MC Manitoba’s English-language broadcast) all continue to air on Golden West stations.

Warkentin says that MC Manitoba wants to maintain a presence in this new era of broadcasting and has considered whether it should move forward as a podcast, but the regional church hasn’t been able to explore the idea yet due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Whatever the future will look like, Warkentin knows how important the regional church’s radio history is. “We have an archive full of sermons representing Anabaptist Mennonite theology that comes from our midst that goes back decades now,” he says, which staff will preserve and hope to make more accessible. “They do represent a tremendous voice of theology in our midst. This is the story that shapes us. It’s had a significant impact, and we don’t want to see that story lost.” ❧

*Much of the research for this article draws on Anna Ens’ book In Search of Unity and David Balzer’s essay “Exploring the timbre of Mennonite radio in Manitoba: A case study of the Gospel Light Hour and the Abundant Life.”*

### ❧ For discussion

1. Where and when do you listen to the radio? Do you have favourite programs? Do you have memories of your family using the radio for worship or for faith guidance? Do you think radio is sustainable in the long term or will it eventually be replaced by other technologies?
2. Why did Manitoba have a more vibrant Mennonite radio ministry than other provinces? Do you have memories of other Mennonite radio programming? What are some contributing factors leading to the decline of radio ministries?
3. Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe quotes Moses Falco, who says that we need to find new ways to further the mission of the church but he is confident that audio is still viable. Do you agree? Are podcasts a good way for the church to spread its message or should it concentrate on other methods? How might today’s podcasts be different from yesterday’s radio programs?
4. Where and when do you listen to podcasts? What type of podcast do you find appealing? What are some of the strengths of audio broadcasting? If you were producing a podcast, what topics and themes would you include?

—By Barb Draper

See related Congregational Communication resources at [www.commonword.ca/go/1617](http://www.commonword.ca/go/1617)

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## /// Readers write

### ✉ 'A wise investment' in the future of church camps

Re: "Testing the ties that bind," April 27, page 2.

It hit me when I read in the editorial that the financial fallout from COVID-19 may well mean the possible closure of some of our church camps, since they rely on revenues generated from programs that they run.

I have fond memories of our time volunteering at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp in Sauble Beach, Ont., and listening to our grandchildren's enthusiastic recounting of their camp experience as we ferried them home from camp. But more than that, I firmly believe our church camps are vital in faith formation for our children and youth. We must think creatively of ways to sustain our camps through this financial crisis, so that they can survive to serve us in the future.

I just called Camp Valaqua in Water Valley, Alta., to pay for my granddaughter's camping fee (in the form of a donation for this year), just as I have for the past few years. I have budgeted for it, so why not pay that fee to the camp regardless of whether it will be running this summer or not. Perhaps if we all do that, our camps can be sustained. I consider it a wise investment for the future.

BARBARA MARTENS, LEAMINGTON, ONT.

### ✉ Point: From the indulgence of hubris

Re: "Open to us a door," May 25, page 4.

Doug Klassen, executive minister of Mennonite Church Canada, comments on the effect of COVID-19 on MC Canada churches, revealing and lamenting how "worship-focused" western churches are at the expense of being missional communities."

He has come to see our pandemic experience as an opportunity to open our doors to our neighbours, to be a part of a community in ways we had not anticipated before, to function much like a parish might function, as opposed to continuing the current model of parachute churches whereby congregants drop in from far and wide.

He sees COVID-19 as a missional opportunity, identifying the euphoria of being "overwhelmed by God's presence, mystery and goodness," and wanting that same thing for the "neighbours and strangers who live around me as well."

But he neglects to speculate on what these neighbours and strangers might have to offer him.

The goodness is strictly a one-way street. Perhaps his neighbour is of Muslim belief, or Hindu, or Buddhist, or American Indian. Then what? Perhaps all would choose to coexist without the blatant proselytizing evident in Klassen's discourse. That would be refreshing indeed.

Seems to me that Jesus was "fully human," and that he set an example of what that might entail at its best. I think it would be better placed if MC Canada would focus on what it might mean to be better human beings (in the Jesus "life well lived" sense), and less focused on conversion therapies and opportunities for an afterlife with the gods.

We are not gods, we are gifted with humanity. The time we have now, COVID-19 or not, is a marvellous opportunity to become as fully human as possible. Seems probable that this is what Jesus might do.

PETER REIMER (ONLINE COMMENT)

### ✉ Counterpoint: 'I have received as much as I have given'

**In reading your response, I feel as though my words have been amplified to mean something that I did not intend.**

As one who has spoken at two Muslim/Christian dialogues, and was the organizer of an ongoing Indigenous/Settler book-study group, I assure you that I have received as much as I have given. I have engaged in these activities with precisely the understanding of human flourishing that you suggest.

Conversion therapies or escape-to-the-afterlife offers are not part of who I am, nor the gospel that I embrace.

DOUG KLASSEN (ONLINE COMMENT)

### ✉ What's going on with climate change?

**This pandemic isolation has encouraged most of us to become somewhat creative in how we entertain ourselves. I've been reading more about what's going on with climate change.**

My opinion is that cyclical changes in the tilt of the Earth's axis to the sun is the main force affecting climate change. The sun is the main driver of climate, and the angle that those rays hit the Earth strongly affects climate on Earth. These regular changes, called Milankovitch cycles, cannot be affected by humankind.

Other secondary forces, like large volcanic eruptions, can affect climate globally for several years. It is thought that's what wiped out the dinosaurs.

There are some climate-change factors that can be

affected by human activity. Increased CO2 levels that cause the greenhouse effect (global warming) are partially caused by industrialization, and further exasperated by eliminating a large number of CO2-breathing trees.

Climate has always changed, is changing now and will change in the future. Our job (to borrow a new popular phrase) is to “flatten the curve.” Here are some suggestions of what we can do:

- Stop arguing about climate change and start talking about the prudent use of the Earth’s resources.
- Implement strong family-planning programs, especially in the developing countries, to slow down the ever-increasing conveyor belt of new humanity.
- Through technology, encourage the use of non-fossil means to generate energy.
- Slow down our deforestation activities and ensure there is a strongly enforced reforestation program carried out by those who cut down the trees.
- Encourage diet changes that include non-meat as a protein source. Meat is the least efficient way of producing protein.
- Adjust the curriculum in our schools to include subjects on ethics and behaviour. This will create and encourage an electorate who can be counted on to make rational choices at the voting booth; that will

eventually enhance the common good for all of us, thus preserving our democratic way of life.

RICHARD PENNER, SASKATOON

### ✉ ‘Be well and be blessed’

**Re: “To death’s door and back,” May 25, page 29.**

Thank you to Vic Winter so much for sharing this. It is important for people to hear your story, both of your deeply personal experience and of your recovery. And to know that you felt held and supported. We need to remember that it can happen to any one of us. Be well and be blessed, for you are that.

BARBARA ANDREW, GUELPH, ONT.

(ONLINE COMMENT)

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

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Friesen**—Maverick James (b. March 15, 2020), to Michael and Nicole Friesen, Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

### Marriages

**Brethower/Janzen**—Stephanie Brethower (Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man), and Joshua David Janzen, at Henderson, Neb., March 28, 2020.

### Deaths

**Buhr**—Caroline (nee Derksen), 82 (b. May 16, 1937; d. April 5, 2020), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Chemerika**—Betty (Lavis), 83 (b. Oct. 4, 1936; d. May 26, 2020), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Epp**—Jacob William, 86 (b. Jan. 21, 1934; d. May 31, 2020), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Erb**—Vernon David, 84 (b. Oct. 24, 1935; d. May 20, 2020), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Funk**—Menno, 95 (b. Jan. 5, 1925; d. April 21, 2020), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Gerber**—Robena Catherine, 92 (b. Jan. 18, 1929; d. May 26,

2020), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Gimbel**—Howard, 98 (b. Nov. 10, 1921; d. May 25, 2020), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Kuehne**—Reinhold, 88 (b. July 27, 1931; d. May 11, 2020), First Mennonite, Edmonton.

**Penner**—Christina (nee Voth), 81 (b. Jan. 27, 1939; d. May 15, 2020), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Riediger**—Dorothy (Block), 93 (b. Nov. 17, 1926; d. June 2, 2020), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Schellenberg**—Edgar, 82 (b. July 15, 1937; d. Feb. 3, 2020), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Wiebe**—David P., 93 (b. May 13, 1927; d. May 13, 2020), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

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



## FROM OUR LEADERS

# New CommonWord website launched

Arlyn Friesen Epp

On June 1, CommonWord launched a new website at [commonword.ca](http://commonword.ca) that is mobile-friendly, easily searchable and beautifully designed. Our goal is to make Anabaptist and related resources easily found for the pastor and the parishioner, the student and the casual reader, and have them available in multiple forms to buy, borrow or access online.

Start with a keyword search. A scripture text. A name. A theme. Like Google, our enhanced indexing system will suggest subjects, titles and spelling corrections to prompt you further into the collection.

Our materials are classified with multiple tags so you can quickly filter your results. Focus on a topic, like racism, COVID-19 or climate change. Browse by genre, like curricula or parts of worship. Limit your findings by expressions of music or drama. Sift by video, audio or print. Narrow your search by event, like communion or anointing. Or restrict your findings by language (e.g. French).

Mix and match your search results, and quickly find that online Advent

“Call to Worship” based on Isaiah 9. Or a children’s picture book about death and dying. Or Mennonite Church Canada’s Joint Council minutes.

There is a breadth of curated material at your fingertips.

Herald Press publishes books on reconciliation, community, discipleship, mission, spirituality and theology. We have them all available to buy or borrow.

Mennonite Heritage Archives collects, preserves and interprets the history of the Mennonite people. We list all their retail titles online.

We value the educational and advocacy resources that Mennonite Central Committee produces for North American congregations and offer these materials to borrow or access digitally.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) represents most of the global Anabaptist family. Its work, in part, is the resourcing of the global church. We are pleased to offer MWC’s worship and education resources online.

Canadian Mennonite University and MC Canada are our founding and governing partners, and their resources—from university public forums to

International Witness and Indigenous-Settler Relations materials—are easily accessible.

Additionally, when we launched our website, we celebrated our new partnership with Together in Worship, a bi-national Mennonite curation team committed to providing Anabaptist worship materials for free online. On June 1, more than 1,100 such items became available through CommonWord. Many more, including video, audio and visual resources, are forthcoming. Together in Worship will launch its parallel site later this fall.

And, as always, we are here personally to help link you to materials. If you’re not finding what you’re after online, or may not be certain what you’re looking for, please contact us at [info@commonword.ca](mailto:info@commonword.ca).



*Arlyn Friesen Epp is the director of CommonWord, a national bookstore and resource centre of Mennonite Church Canada and Canadian Mennonite University.*

## A moment from yesterday



Len Bechtel, front, is pictured with a portable saw he and other conscientious objectors (COs) designed near Vancouver during the Second World War. As oil supplies dwindled due to the war, this group of workers with mechanical aptitude in the Alternative Service program were pulled aside from forestry work to help supply Vancouverites with wood for the winter. Fellow worker Ray Good described this effort as one of the most rewarding aspects of his service as a CO.

Text: Lauren Harder-Gissing

Photo: Len Bechtel / Mennonite Archives of Ontario



## THIRD WAY FAMILY

## Learn, love, advocate

Christina Bartel Barkman

I was in Whistler, B.C., last week with my husband and kids, and we joined a Black Lives Matter protest in the village. My eight-year-old reminded us that we used to do this often when we lived in Manila in the Philippines. He recalled a story of how his brother had held a sign up as a toddler (“Resume formal peace talks!”), and how we later learned that we could get deported for rallying (as had a 71-year-old Australian nun), so we started just standing beside our Filipino friends who held the signs!

But this got me thinking. We partnered with the oppressed and vulnerable in the Philippines for seven years, learning their culture, their conflicts and the impact of white colonialism on them. And we became their allies. We listened to them, loved them and advocated for their rights with them. And it is now time we do that again, but this time at home.

During our first year in the Philippines, armed conflict broke out in the south between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the armed forces of the Philippines. While delivering relief goods, going through military checkpoints and hearing the bombing not very far away, we were learning from them about the heavy cost of

colonialism. Spain, not having conquered the southern island of Mindanao, sold all of the Philippines to the United States in 1898, and the mostly Muslim Mindanao people are still fighting for control of their ancestral territory today.

Working for a peacebuilding organization, we nonviolently advocated for the rights of this oppressed people group and participated in interfaith dialogues, peace education initiatives and community development projects. We were their allies.

We were living in Manila in 2016, when President Rodrigo Duterte came to power. His campaign speeches promised that he would rid the country of drug users and peddlers, saying, “My order is to shoot and kill you.” More than 12,000 people were killed in this horrific war on drugs. Not needing warrants to search or to arrest, the police shot and killed, and over and over again claimed the suspects resisted arrest.

When the brother of a young man in our church was killed, we read the police report, and saw that it had nothing to do with the actual events our friend witnessed: different place, different story altogether. In the urban-poor setting,

this was happening all the time, and our friends—our Filipino family—were scared for their lives.

As a church, we held events to honour the dignity of all life. Whether an addict, dealer or bystander, each life is infinitely valuable. We released statements for the national church body, condemning the unjust killings and police impunity; we attended funerals of those killed; we participated in peaceful protests, organized and spoke at theological forums at universities; and we had many uncomfortable conversations with Duterte supporters. Our church services turned largely to lament as we grieved the atrocities. As white foreigners, we learned from Filipinos, loved them and advocated with them. We became their allies.

I don’t know yet what the journey will look like for our family as we do the work of becoming allies with Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) here in Canada. I know we need to listen and learn, and I first commit to that. God is stirring up in me that same anger, lament, passion for justice, cry for peace that was all too familiar while living in the Philippines. It’s time to, once again, learn, love and advocate. ✚



*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

## A prayer of thanksgiving for those who keep us connected

**“Pray for those who keep us connected during this time of distancing—the videographers, sound technicians, and those who share our services online and connect us via platforms such as Zoom. We are thankful that they share their gifts so that we can stay connected and ‘do church’ in a new way.”**

Source: MC Saskatchewan e-newsletter



PIXABAY PHOTO BY DARKSIDE-550

## THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

# Disillusionment and hope

Arli Klassen

**W**hen I preach I often reference verses in the Bible that talk about God's intention that all nations, languages and tribes are called to worship God through Jesus. The Book of Acts is the story of the Jewish disciples relying on the power of the Holy Spirit and learning that the new church is relevant to a world much bigger than they ever imagined.

It seems to me that we need to continue to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to learn and act on what this means, that God's intentions are for all nations, languages and tribes. We are still learning, and we have much to learn.

Most of what I've learned about racism and anti-racism I learned as an adult, although my parents' work in northern Manitoba when I was a preschooler helped to set the stage.

I remember doing a social studies project on South Africa when I was in middle school. Recently I came across that project again, and I saw it said not a single thing about apartheid. How was that possible? As adults, we lived in southern Africa during the final four years of official apartheid. I learned much about the impact of systemic racism, and how much intentionality

and struggle it took as a white person to not fit into the system.

I remember taking our kids and my parents to visit Gettysburg, Va., and having one of our kids read aloud Abraham Lincoln's words that "all men are created equal." Powerful ideas. I also remember my disillusioned tears watching the movie *Lincoln*, and realizing that Lincoln brought about emancipation for some, not because it was morally right, but more because it was politically expedient. And many people voted for it—or not—because of politics.

I work for Mennonite World Conference, our global Anabaptist church. We strive to have strong representation from every continent on every committee, task force, commission and council. We believe that God's intention is that the church is made up of every nation, language and tribe, and that we need each other to see the breadth of God's love in the world. And yet our staff members are predominantly from the Global North, including me as the leader of a very diverse group of 12 regional representatives. There might be equal representation from around the world, but I lament our lack of diverse voices and leadership.

I belong to a local congregation that sees our mission as intercultural community, one of a small number of multiracial congregations amidst a plethora of monocultural congregations. It's not easy! At potlucks and picnics (a distant memory now) we have to be intentional about relationship-building across these walls that so easily divide us. But every Sunday at worship, including Zoom worship, we have leaders and readers who speak with a multitude of accents. We have elders from each of the major ethnic groups in our congregation. It takes intentionality.

I am heartbroken and disillusioned once again, watching the news in Canada and the United States these past weeks with the many first-person accounts of the impact of systemic racism. I know a little bit about how this impacts the people in my own small group, our congregation, our community, our country and our world. Being heartbroken is good, because it forces me to turn back to the Holy Spirit. The church is relevant to the whole world, but in the context of systemic inequity, it is through the gift of the Holy Spirit that we can believe in powerful ideas and act with intentionality to overcome systemic racism. ☸



*Arli Klassen is a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., and a staff member of Mennonite World Conference.*

## Et cetera



### MCC helps with water reservoirs in Somalia

**Somali agriculturalist Mohamed Aden Jama, front, helps construct a water reservoir for a farm nursery at a refugee camp in Somalia in 1981. MCC provided technical support for the farm project and motivated refugees by dividing the land into family plots, which ensured the fruits of their labour.**

Source: MCC / Photo by Gerald Heistand



## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

## Rushi's radiant smile

Troy Watson

I was 7 when Rushi (a pseudonym) and his family moved into our neighbourhood. They were the first people of colour to move into the community, and nobody rolled out the welcome mat for them.

As children, we picked up on the air of suspicion and hostility towards these “foreigners” and we acted accordingly. One day, a group of us kids found a large tree branch and used it as a battering ram on their front door. A few weeks later, we plastered the front of their home with a few dozen mudballs. Those were the only two attacks I participated in, but there were plenty more.

Most of the other kids' parents seemed amused or turned a blind eye. Not mine.

“That's not how Christians treat other people,” my mom said. “You need to go and apologize. And help them clean up that mud. Those poor souls.”

Rushi's parents were cleaning the mud off their front window when my dad and I arrived. Dad made me walk up to them by myself and apologize. I was terrified.

“Excuse me,” I said.

The man stopped what he was doing and looked at me with a mixture of

surprise and confusion in his eyes. He looked over at my dad, then back at me.

“I'm sorry for throwing mud,” I said.

“I'd like to help you clean up.”

I'll never forget the radiant smile that spread across his face. He wasn't angry. He seemed relieved. Happy even.

“That's okay. You don't need to clean,” he said. “Would you like to meet my son

Rushi? He is your age. Rushi! Rushi, come here. There is someone to see you.”

My heart sank. Rushi had already met me. The neighbourhood boys had picked on him every day since he moved in and I had joined in on a number of occasions. The last thing I wanted was to look Rushi in the eyes right now. But my guilt wasn't the only reason I didn't want to talk to him. I was afraid. If the other boys saw me hanging out with Rushi, I knew I'd become a target as well.

Rushi opened the door. His face lit up when he saw me. His smile exuded the same warmth and graciousness of his father. He introduced himself and asked me if I wanted to play. I looked back at my father, who silently confirmed that I did.

I spent the afternoon with Rushi and, much to my surprise, we really connected. He was musical, spiritual, philosophical; he liked to read and had interesting stories. I had far more in common with Rushi than the other boys in town. We quickly became best friends.

Rushi and his family expanded my little world with their fascinating culture and exotic cuisine. Who knew chocolate covered ants were so delicious?

About a year-and-a-half later, my family moved. Rushi and I stayed in touch as pen pals for a few years, but we eventually drifted apart. I can't remember a single name of the other kids I met in Tiverton, Ont., but I will remember Rushi for the rest of my life.

I've reflected a lot on why I was so mean to Rushi and his family when they

**Rushi opened the door. His face lit up when he saw me. His smile exuded the same warmth and graciousness of his father.**

first arrived. I knew it was wrong while I was doing it. So why did I behave that way?

I think the primary reason was fear. I was a sensitive kid and I already felt out of place with the other boys. I was afraid of being rejected or made fun of for being different. I think on some level I was actually glad they had Rushi to pick on. Better him than me. I was just trying to survive. Thankfully, Rushi helped me aim higher.

After meeting Rushi, I realized I didn't want to fit in with those other boys. Rushi helped me re-establish a connection with my own heart and soul. He saved me from continuing down a path of pretending to be someone I wasn't in order to fit in and stay “safe.” He helped me understand that staying true to God and myself was more important and more rewarding than security, comfort and belonging. Rushi made me want to thrive—not just survive.

Thank you, Rushi, wherever you are. ✎



*Troy Watson is still trying to listen, learn and grow.*

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## VIEWPOINT

# A Black/Menno inventory

Timothy D. Epp  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

*"To be brothers and sisters in the Lord we must understand the dynamics of black/white relations. . . . An examination of the historical nature and development of black/white relations is necessary for understanding the status and reality of their status today"* (Hubert Brown, *Black and Mennonite*, 1976).

The death of George Floyd has been a flashpoint for protest around the world. The act of President Donald Trump holding a Bible in front of a church in Washington, D.C., has revealed deep rifts between Christians, with many denouncing the act as blasphemous. This is a time when Mennonites, too, must re-examine our past and present thoughts, assumptions and actions regarding racial difference.

Other than banning slaveholders from church membership, American Mennonite congregations do not appear to have had much interaction with African Americans until the establishment of Mennonite missions at Welsh Mountain, Pa., and Elk Park, N.C., during the late 19th century.

The bravery of these missionaries is demonstrated in a letter published in the *Gospel Witness* (Aug. 1, 1906), in which the "white setzans" of the Elk Park area wrote to the workers at the Salem Mission and Orphanage of their work with African Americans: "Now you can give up your ockpashun or take what will follow . . . your last warning." The mission workers eventually "won the confidence of the white population."

In contrast, during the same year two letters by Mennonites appeared in *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, which were very critical of Black workers in Georgia. The first letter, on June 13, warns of underestimating "the Negro problem," and identifies Black workers as lazy and prone to disease. The second letter, on Dec. 19, addresses "the race issue" and warns that "the northern citizens in general are much too positive in their assessment of the Negroes."



PHOTO COURTESY OF  
GLADYS DIRKS AND MARLYS JANTZ.

## *Vacation Bible School at Shiloh, Man.*

The history of Mennonites and Blacks in Canada also demonstrates some ambivalence. In 1806, Abraham Erb arrived in Canada with Isaac Jones, a Black youth who tended Erb's cattle. However, in his history of *Mennonites in Canada*, Frank Epp questions their relationship. Had Erb rescued Isaac Jones from slavery? Was Jones "cheap labour"?

In general, positive and supportive relations existed between Mennonite and Black populations in the present-day Kitchener-Waterloo, Niagara and Stayner areas of Ontario during the 19th century.

In Saskatchewan, the 20th century saw strong friendships between Mennonites and the Lafayette family of the Fiske-Herschel area. However, this was also the community from which came Bernhardt Klassen, who founded the white suprem-

acist Church of the Creator in 1973.

Canadians were among the recipients of Anabaptist mission work at Sunnidale, Ont., and Winnipeg, but apparently had no leadership roles in these efforts.

In the 1930s, the Western Children's Mission (WCM), out of the Bethany Bible Institute in Hepburn, Sask., extended its Vacation Bible School program to the Shiloh community north of Maidstone, in its efforts to reach those who were "spiritually destitute." This was in spite of the fact that the community had built its own church at least 20 years prior, and held its own services.

While a photo album suggests that relations between missionaries and the Shiloh people were generally positive (see photo at left), the reactions of some missionaries reflected discomfort with the boisterous singing of the Black congregants:

"Rhythmic utterance, loud and strong but unintelligible, came from the audience. Oh, oh! Someone was affected. Adversely? Looking back through the corner of my eye, I saw that Grandma Maze, a dear old saint of one hundred years of age, was the producer of this unintelligible utterance. . . . The blacks seemed undisturbed by it. Obviously, this was not a first-time experience for them."

The WCM missionaries also had to rethink their curriculum when the "Black heart, white heart" lesson, in which the missionary filled the white paper heart with cotton and feathers, and the black heart with rusty nails and garbage, backfired when a few Black children at Blaine Lake relayed the lesson to their parents.

As global protests continue, as we continue to understand the roots of violence against Black people in the U.S. and Canada, we are called to re-examine our own assumptions, beliefs and actions that have divided us along lines of race. Failure to do so will only deepen the chasm that so desperately needs to be bridged. ❧

*Timothy Epp is currently working on The Social History of Anabaptist-Black Interaction in Canada.*

## VIEWPOINT

# The 'next-normal' church

Madalyn Metzger

**W**hen stay-at-home guidelines are eased and church doors and sanctuaries reopen, worship and church ministries will undoubtedly look different than before the COVID-19 outbreak.

But that means pastors and church leaders should prepare for what the “next normal” will be for the congregation and its ministry. The following are some things to consider before inviting congregants back into the physical pews:

**1. Even if** stay-at-home mandates are eased, should you immediately go back to in-person worship and activities?

While novel coronavirus cases might level off or fall in some places, it has not completely disappeared. Will it be safe to invite older individuals or those with increased risk to be in an enclosed space with others who might be asymptomatic? Perhaps delaying your first in-person worship service or doing a slow rollout of activities and programs would be best.

**2. What if** church gatherings are initially limited to no more than 50 people?

If physical gatherings are limited in size, you might consider offering more—or shorter—services, or continuing supplemental online services.

**3. How will** you handle kids' activities?

It's hard for most kids to understand why they need to keep a certain amount of distance between them and their friends. Should you delay or cancel children's activities, like Vacation Bible School, children's church or children's time? Or are there alternatives you could implement to reduce the spread of viruses and germs but still engage your church's children and youth?

**4. How will** you “pass the plate”?

Collecting tithes and offerings in a



physical plate might no longer be feasible. Consider collecting the offering via hands-free receptacles, or offer an online giving option.

**5. What modifications** should you make to religious rites and ceremonies?

Might your congregation adjust how it handles baptisms, anointing, foot washing and communion, both for the short and long terms?

**6. How will** you ask church members to think differently about their Sunday morning norms?

With the risk of additional COVID-19 surges, what used to be common practices may no longer be appropriate. Perhaps your church members should greet each other verbally rather than by shaking hands.

**7. What will** you do about fellowship time and potlucks?

Many churches offer a brief time for people to gather, have refreshments and talk between worship and Sunday school. But, given COVID-19, it may be in everyone's best interest to shorten, or even eliminate, this fellowship time to reduce the risk of spreading the virus to one another. Likewise, how might your church find safe alternatives for breaking bread together?

**8. Should church** business meetings be handled differently?

Whether it's out of precaution, or because of busy schedules, maybe church business meetings and committee meetings should continue by phone or video. Perhaps others might want to volunteer for leadership roles if changes are made to make meetings more flexible!

**9. How will** you manage non-Sunday activities and programs?

From Bible study gatherings and mid-week activities, to inviting external groups to use your church space, how will you manage everything that happens in your church building during the rest of the week?

**10. What extra** steps can you take to care for your church family?

Now is the time to sanitize and sterilize the entire church building, and keep doing it until—and after—you physically reopen the church. And, if you haven't already, think about placing hand sanitizer in common areas, spreading out worship and Christian education seating, or offering non-medical face masks to attendees.

**11. Should** you invest in or upgrade your digital equipment?

If your church plans to continue some form of online worship or programs, and your church budget allows for it, it might make sense to invest in equipment to help the church be more efficient and proficient in this area.

**12. Do you** need to adjust your church policies or structure?

The “next normal” for our faith communities should include updated congregational plans related to church finances, crisis communication, and maybe also health and hygiene policies. And, if you plan to continue offering online programs, you might think about whether or not you need volunteer or staff leadership positions focused on your church's digital ministries.

By intentionally considering, praying and planning for your congregation's “next normal,” your faith community will be better prepared when the stay-at-home guidelines are eased. And your church members will appreciate your care of their physical, financial and spiritual health and well-being. ✎

*A Mennonite World Conference release by Madalyn Metzger, vice president of marketing for Everence. This article first appeared on the Everence blog in a longer format.*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Walking together at a distance

Marlene Friesen

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Following current physical-distance guidelines, the fifth annual Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation was held in various parts of British Columbia over the final weekend of May.

Although we walked apart, we did so in solidarity with our First Nations brothers and sisters whose families have been affected by the residential school system for many generations.

In previous years, we were honored to spend time and share meals with our

Indigenous brothers and sisters.

As we walked, we were reminded of the abuse and loss of identity that occurred at residential schools, this being especially sobering when we recall that this happened in the name of the church. As we passed by local First Nation communities, we recognized again how much work we still need to do to create levels of trust, develop honest relationships, and maybe one day find a way to true reconciliation.

ourselves and work towards reconciliation.

The Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation is held in partnership with the Christian Reformed Church, Diocese of New Westminster; Langley Mennonite Fellowship Church; Mennonite Church British Columbia; Mennonite Central Committee B.C.; the United churches of Langley; and Willoughby Christian Reformed Church. ❧



PHOTO BY AL FRIESEN

*Al Friesen, left, Marlene Friesen, Charlotte Siemens and Jon Nofziger, who all attend Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., take part in the 2020 Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation.*

First Nations neighbours, and we really missed that connection this year. Hopefully, that will happen again as we move forward in the coming years.

Walking on a more individual basis this year gave us more time to think and really focus on why we were walking, although we missed the camaraderie of others. It is always painful to reflect on the cultural genocide that has taken place over generations against our

Even though there has been more of an openness to truth telling, we now need to act on what we have heard to show that we are actually listening.

By participating in the walk, we hope to raise awareness to the gross injustices that continue to be inflicted on our Indigenous neighbours. It allows us to show our respect, and reminds us, and others, of the journey we should all be on to listen, hear the truth, educate

*Marlene Friesen is a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C. This was the third year she participated in the Walk in the Spirit of Reconciliation.*

## NEWS

# 'Forced to re-imagine'

*Elementary and secondary schools adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic*

**M**ennonite schools are facing the challenge of operating during a pandemic, both now and into the fall, while staying true to their mission to deliver a faith-based, holistic program.

## Ontario

- **At UMEI Christian High School** in Leamington, principal Sonya Bedal praises her “great staff” and their dedication for the way they have “stepped up” to bring programming to students online, saying they have delivered academically “meaningful work” and offered virtual daily chapels as a way to continue faith formation. In planning for September, Bedal anticipates enrolment will decline somewhat from the current 52 students. She is waiting for direction from the provincial ministry of education, expected at the end of June. In the meantime, while prioritizing the safety of staff and students, Bedal is preparing UMEI for several scenarios. These include: returning to school with necessary health and safety protocols in place; a hybrid model where some students return to school while classes are made accessible for others to learn from home; or continuing with online learning for everyone. Students and staff alike miss the sports, music, arts, school trips and other community events that are part of a regular school year. Bedal says it makes them appreciate how much they value “in-person learning,” participation and engagement.

- **At Rockway Mennonite Collegiate** in Kitchener, principal Ann Schultz also feels good about the way staff and students have adapted to online learning. They were “up and running quickly” and able to make “significant refinements” based on feedback from families and teachers. But the school community is feeling the loss of regular events and extra-curricular activities. Looking ahead to September, Rockway has 269 students enrolled, down

slightly from the current year. Schultz says that teams are in place to address three areas: how to plan for a safe, healthy facility; maintain academic excellence; and provide care and support for students and staff. She too looks to the education ministry and health professionals to guide decisions, but meanwhile Rockway is investing in technology so that classes can run in the building or at home in a way that is accessible and secure. Schultz says that in the midst of this crisis Rockway is being “forced to re-imagine” many things, which requires agility, but can also be an opportunity. Even as the school staff “adapt and pivot” everything from timetabling to fiscal plans, she says, “we keep the mission in the forefront of all we do,” grateful for the “patience and grace extended to us.”

—BY JANET BAUMAN

## Manitoba

- **Both locations** of Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary and Middle Schools—the Bedson campus and Katherine Friesen campus—are busy planning for a full return to in-person classes when the new school year begins, says Lawrence Hamm, the superintendent and chief executive officer. They anticipate being in their regular class sizes, which they cap at slightly smaller numbers than most schools. The campuses, which teach Kindergarten to Grade 8, are expecting 200 students at Bedson and 180 students at Katherine Friesen. The latter will be welcoming its first group of eighth graders this fall. The schools have updated rules on cleaning and have developed new procedures for students when they are in the buildings. They have begun practising them as students have been reintroduced into school this June after a few months of remote learning. “I think that the biggest challenge is to ensure that our children learn from this entire experience and are assured that, regardless of what is happening in the world, they’re going to be okay,”

Hamm says. “God is here with us through thick and thin, and if we rely on him and each other through times like this, we’re going to be okay.”

- **Although projecting** a few weeks ahead, never mind a few months, is difficult during the novel coronavirus pandemic, Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI), Gretna, intends to return to in-class instruction and reopen its dorms this fall, says Harold Schlegel, the school’s executive director and donor development officer. The school is also planning to welcome back international students, who will have isolated for a period of time upon returning to Canada. MCI is well set up to



deal with any physical distancing requirements, with 71 students in grades 9 to 12 enrolled this past year, almost 40 of who lived in dorms. “It actually is a time where our current small size is to our advantage,” Schlegel says. Quick adjustment to distanced online learning this spring by both teachers and students mean they will be prepared should the need for virtual learning arise once again. “We recognize that all of this can change very quickly and that we will need to be adaptable in how we deliver our services,” he says. Determining whether MCI’s choral program, a central pillar of the school, can continue in the fall is the challenge currently weighing



heaviest on the school.

• “We are ready to go for school in September,” says Bob Hummelt, principal of Westgate Mennonite Collegiate in Winnipeg. The school is preparing for in-person education for all of its students, although, should the conditions require, it is equipped for online instruction after a successful spring of teaching that way. Westgate is waiting for guidelines from the Province of Manitoba that will dictate class sizes and how the athletic and music programs will be able to run. How to operate the cafeteria, and whether the school’s music tour and study tours abroad will be able to run, are also under discus-



PHOTO COURTESY OF RJC HIGH SCHOOL

*RJC High School students in Rosthern, Sask., walk together in front of the school building.*

sion. With a student body of 325 students in grades 6 to 12 this year, appropriate distancing measures will be established with creativity and much timetabling. Hummelt has hired a half-time staffer, Gabrielle Bishop Wiebe, to work with the music program. The additional support will enable bands and choirs to be split into smaller groups, in the hope that the programs will then be able to continue. In the meantime, Hummelt will be

monitoring the phones throughout the summer, to give families interested in Westgate more information and possibly even tours of the campus.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

### Saskatchewan

• **Ryan Wood**, principal of RJC High School (Rosthern Junior College), says the school is planning to fully re-open with regular classes and full kitchen and dorm service in the fall. However, he adds that the school is working on contingency plans. A hybrid model might include staggered classes and rotating lunch times. In addition, RJC’s dorm rooms are being renovated to allow for single occupancy. “Our plan is to follow all the directives of the Ministry [of Education],” he says, but “we’re still awaiting clear directives.” Saskatchewan is the only province that chose to end the school year in mid-March when the pandemic was declared. Students were encouraged—but not required—to participate in remote learning. Wood says that most RJC students engaged in online classes, although some opted not to participate. If a predicted second wave of COVID-19 forces the school to close again, remote learning may not be optional, as it is now. Wood believes that remote learning will continue on some level even after the pandemic is over. He thinks it could be especially useful in terms of student sick days or if a student’s family goes on vacation. “Teachers’ workloads might [have to] be redefined to include both face-to-face and remote teaching,” says Wood. However,

he also feels that there will be “a stronger appetite for face-to-face learning”

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

### Alberta

• **Menno Simons Christian School** in Calgary has 200 students from Kindergarten to Grade 9 and is planning to fully re-open on Sept. 2. The Alberta government will not be mandating school openings until sometime in August, at which time the opening date can be officially confirmed. Currently, the school is operating under a hybrid system, with some teachers working from home and other teachers working from the school. Teachers continue to provide classes and connect through Google Classroom, Google Meets and Google Hangouts. If the government decides not to allow schools to physically reopen, classes will continue to occur online. Although students can’t wait to be together and the teachers can’t wait to be with the students, some families are enjoying being more involved in their children’s lives, according to a school official. Online classes will end as scheduled on June 26, and the school is currently taking applications for the new 2020-21 school year. Applications can be found online at [mennosimonschristianschool.ca/](http://mennosimonschristianschool.ca/) and virtual school tours are available.

—BY JOANNE DE JONG

### British Columbia

• **Mennonite Educational Institute** in Abbotsford could not be reached in time to get a response into this issue. ❧

## Fall plans for Mennonite post-secondary schools

### Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many changes and challenges for Grebel. While construction on the kitchen and dining room expansion continues, many other activities have been curtailed or adjusted.

The spring term that runs from May to August at the University of Waterloo is being taught entirely online in light of the pandemic. This term, the College is offering 10 courses online, ranging from Roots of Conflict to Popular Music, and enrolments are strong for these courses.

Grebel’s residence is entirely empty,

resulting in significant staff layoffs. However, there are 23 students living in six units in the College's on-campus apartment building.

Plans for the fall term are evolving, but at this point the direction is similar to the spring term, where undergraduate and graduate courses will be delivered remotely. The main difference between spring and fall is that Grebel professors might have more freedom to include synchronous elements.

Grebel has planned for only single-room occupancy in the fall term to allow for more physical distancing. "We are also upgrading our washrooms and plan to have robust sanitization protocols in place to ensure that we comply with public health best practices," says Mary Brubaker-Zehr, director of student services.

### Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg

At this time, Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) is actively planning a "mixed model" for the 2020-21 fall and winter terms. Many classes will mix online and in-person elements, with some classes being offered primarily in-person and others via e-platforms. Every class will engage professors and students with one another in a real learning community. In all its planning, CMU is attentive to appropriate physical distancing for all on-campus activities, and to accommodating students who are unable to come to campus, or elect not to.

CMU has a spacious campus relative to the size of its small learning community, giving it ample space within which to spread out and accommodate physical-distancing requirements.

Attention to appropriate physical distancing is possible in virtually all circumstances and locations on campus. CMU is working to enact clear protocols consistent with directives provided by Manitoba health officials to ensure the health and safety of all on-campus students, staff, faculty and guests.

Given its size, as well as preparatory work by faculty planning teams through

the spring, CMU can move quickly from in-person and hybrid classes to quality online education formats, should conditions or health directives warrant.

CMU will provide further details of fall education by July 15, recognizing that conditions or health directives may change the course of that decision.

### Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, B.C.

Columbia Bible College's plan is to have face-to-face classes in the fall with built-in flexibility for different access points and delivery models. The reasons are as follows:

- **"We will maintain a clear focus on ensuring high-quality in-person instruction.** We believe that, based on the current instruction and advice of health leaders, face-to-face classes are possible when combined with rigorous efforts to minimize health risks.
- **"Columbia's class sizes are small when compared to larger institutions.** Because of this, we can maintain physical-distance requirements and stay under the group size limits established by the Provincial Health Officer.
- **"Larger spaces on campus have been repurposed for classroom instruction,** allowing reconfigured classroom spaces to accommodate appropriate levels of physical distance.
- **"All faculty and instructors will be**

resourced and enabled to provide remote delivery of class content in the event of their own absence from class."

Columbia has launched a new learning management system that will enable access to all course content across multiple devices. Students will have online access to any classes that they miss. Instructors are equipped to deliver their courses remotely if they are restricted from campus.

The plan is for residences to operate in a manner similar to previous years, with added modifications, including enhanced cleaning in all common areas and high-touch surfaces.

### Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

"As we continue to manage the impact of COVID-19, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) is developing a plan for some Semester 1 courses (August/September-December) to meet in person while remaining safely distanced," says Beverly Lapp, the school's vice-president and academic dean. "We will also build on significant AMBS faculty experience with online formats and the unique pedagogical benefits of these, offering fully online classes, full videoconfer-

ence classes, and blended classes (some students in the classroom with others attending via videoconference).

"Students or faculty with health or exposure risks will attend classes via videoconference. To minimize travel to campus from outside of the Elkhart region, hybrid courses that meet for an intensive week in mid-August will be available to attend remotely.

"Our accreditor, the Association of Theological Schools, has waived residency requirements through December 2020, enabling students in our Master of Divinity Connect program to count any Semester 1 course towards their residency hours.

"Our residential apartments remain operational and the AMBS library will be open to students and faculty," she says. ▮

—COMPILED BY ROSS W. MUIR



# There will be fruit

*Pandemic slowed down the arrival of Jamaican seasonal workers*

By Maria H. Klassen  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

**W**hen international travel was banned in March of this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many Niagara fruit farmers were in shock.

John and Jocelyn Thwaites and their sons, who attend Niagara United Mennonite Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., were among those farmers. Much of the work on their fruit farm is done by off-shore workers from Jamaica. They were supposed to arrive in late March to start the first of the orchard work and also work with the asparagus crop. The orchard work includes pruning the peach, pear and nectarine trees, suckering the grape plants, budding trees, and later thinning the ripening fruit and harvesting.

This work is time sensitive; there is not a long window for the work to be done, says John, adding, “These workers are skilled labourers with years of experience. They can’t be replaced.”

“Trees and vines need to be pruned every year or they will quickly deteriorate,” he says. “One year of neglect will affect the crop potential for a number of years.”

Unlike vegetables grown in greenhouses or fields, if there are no workers, the seeds don’t get planted and there is no harvest.

Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services, a non-profit, federally incorporated organization that facilitates and coordinates the processing of foreign seasonal agricultural workers, discussed the situation with the Ministry of Labour and negotiated an exemption for foreign agricultural workers on the international travel ban.

When the 52 workers arrived at the Thwaites’ farm, they were quarantined for two weeks. The houses where the workers live were stocked with all necessary provisions before their arrival. The men were not allowed to work or leave the property, or to have any contact with other people except those living in the same house, but

they were paid for these two weeks.

The fruit harvested at the Thwaites farm—and there will be fruit this year—is sold by Vineland Growers to large national chains like Loblaws, Metro, Costco, Sobeys and Walmart.

With the wages they earn in the Niagara Region, they are able to supply their families with much more money than they would earn in Jamaica. As well, they

Jane Andres of Southridge Community Church, a Mennonite Brethren-affiliated congregation, owns a local bed and breakfast. She has been instrumental in facilitating an annual Niagara Workers Welcome concert and the peach pickers’ picnic with the help of many local volunteers and church groups.

Other social activities include regular Sunday evening church services, table games such as dominoes, and field games such as cricket and soccer.

The Niagara Workers Welcome group also distributes welcome kits that include heavy-duty work gloves and thermal socks to close to 600 workers.

Because the workers’ mode of transportation is using bicycles, bike repairs and sales are organized by Bikes for Farm-



PHOTO BY JANE ANDRES

*Migrant workers in quarantine on the Thwaites’ farm.*

are also able to ship home food supplies, clothes, computers, and bigger items such as welders and water pumps.

Most of the same off-shore workers return every year and are well-known in the community. A 50th-anniversary celebration was held for the farm work program in Niagara Region in 2016.

In 1966, 273 migrant workers came to Canada. Today, there are 17,000 men and women, with 7,000 of them living and working in Niagara.

workers. Health clinics are set up for their use by Quest Community Health, and they have Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) coverage.

Andres has made eight trips to Jamaica, visiting with individual migrant workers and their families. “I stay in their homes, visit their churches and schools, and learn about their culture first-hand,” she says, adding that she finds it a most rewarding cross-cultural experience. ❧

# 'Superb helped me continue to have faith'

*Saskatchewan church building closes its doors after more than 75 years*

By Donna Schulz  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
KERROBERT, SASK.

"I think they're going to grieve for a while," says Lois Siemens of Superb Mennonite Church, which held its final worship service on May 31.

The church building, located 212 kilometres west of Saskatoon near Kerrobert, was home to a small but thriving congregation for more than 75 years. It took its name from the hamlet of Superb, where 10 Mennonite families settled in 1927.

"These families had little else but the clothes on their backs and a strong Christian faith," write Elsbeth Bergen and Helen Olfert in their history of the congregation.

Soon after arriving, the families began meeting for Sunday worship in each other's homes. They were fortunate to have a leader in Peter J. Klassen, an ordained minister and published writer who preached, taught Sunday school and catechism classes, and started a church choir.

"In those years, only a bishop could perform baptism and serve communion," write Bergen and Olfert. The congregation had a minister but no bishop, so it joined with Mennonites from Herschel, Fiske and Glidden to form a cluster of congregations known as the *Ebenfeld Gemeinde*. Bishop Jacob Wiens served these four congregations.

In addition to sharing the services of a bishop, the *Ebenfeld Gemeinde* held a joint annual meeting, an annual picnic and, eventually, joint youth activities.

When the *Ebenfeld Gemeinde* dissolved in 1972, Superb Mennonite became an independent congregation.

By 1944, the church had 50 members. Meeting in homes was no longer possible, so they purchased a former printing office in nearby Luseland. They dismantled the building, moved it to their chosen site and

reassembled it.

They dedicated it in 1945. They also dedicated an adjacent cemetery plot, but no burials ever took place there.

Superb Mennonite moved away from the German language in the 1960s. English was first used in Sunday school classes, then during membership meetings, and



PHOTO BY MARG OLFERT

**Regular attenders celebrate Superb Mennonite's 70th anniversary in 2015.**

finally during worship.

Dave Feick became the congregation's first salaried minister in 1986. Eileen Wiebe (now Klassen), a congregation member, became pastor when Feick resigned in 1994. But when Klassen resigned in 1999, the church didn't immediately look for her replacement. Instead, congregants took turns presenting worship services.

In 2001, the church hired Grant Martens. Under his leadership, Superb

Mennonite gained visibility in the broader church when their choir, Simply Superb, performed several full-length musicals.

"Grant recognized they needed something to give them a purpose," says Lois. Between 2001 and 2006 the choir performed *The Wheatbelt Gospel* (written by Martens), *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *The Wheatbelt Parables* (also written by Martens and performed at the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly in Saskatoon), and *Godspell*.

The musicals were a big deal, as Lois found out when the congregation hired her to replace Martens in 2006. "When I came [to Superb] that's what people kept talking to me about," she says.

After Lois resigned, the congregation carried on with members taking turns planning and leading worship as they felt

able. But as their numbers continued to dwindle, the inevitable decision to close the doors was made.

"It wasn't sustainable," Siemens says. "Too many people leave and nobody comes to replace them." She says the church was already talking of closing when she arrived, and adds that, during her time there, six families left.

Plans for the closing service were complicated by COVID-19. Saskatchewan law



PHOTO BY LOIS SIEMENS

### *The meeting place of Superb Mennonite Church.*

under the state of emergency prohibited gatherings of more than 10 people. So only 10 people were physically present, but Leighton Krahn, who planned the service, says, “No one was excluded [who] would have been a regular attendee.” Former attenders and former pastors participated via Zoom.

“We’re 20 miles from nowhere,” says Krahn. “The church building has no internet access, so we ran the meeting using my phone as a hotspot.” Both Lois and Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s executive minister, Ryan Siemens, had pre-recorded their sermons at the church the previous Friday.

Wiebe led the service remotely. Feick read Scripture and offered a pastoral prayer. Martens led communion, and Lois led the congregation through a closing ritual in which they stacked hymnbooks, pulled window blinds and readied the building for closure.

“Superb is unique church,” says Lois. “It has a different vibe to it than I’ve ever experienced.” She recalls how another pastor, whom she’d invited as a guest speaker, had walked into the foyer and exclaimed, “I feel at home now.”

Krahn, who came to the community with his wife Tammy 15 years ago, agrees. “It’s the most inclusive, inviting and accepting church,” he says. “People are really willing to express alternative points of view.” He adds, “Superb helped me continue to have faith.”

The congregation hopes to sell the building and have it moved off-site. It also hopes to designate the remaining funds toward a legacy project of some kind. ❧

### News brief

#### Fully online master of arts degree program takes off internationally



PHOTO BY PETER RINGENBERG

#### *Ethiopian Henok Mekonin, left, a MATGA Ethiopia assistant, talks with MDiv Connect student Josh Landis of Souderton, Pa.*

ELKHART, IND.—A year ago, in response to a growing demand for online master’s degrees, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) launched a new fully online Master of Arts in Theology and Global Anabaptism (MATGA) program, effectively making Anabaptist theological education accessible to people anywhere in the world with a high-speed internet connection. Four graduates of Meserete Kristos College in Bishoftu, Ethiopia, began AMBS’s Leadership Education in Anabaptist Perspective (LEAP) orientation course in Semester 1; five additional MK College graduates joined the cohort in Semester 2. Together, they’ll complete the degree program entirely from Ethiopia. The students will fulfil the requirements for a customized version of the 46-credit-hour MATGA that AMBS is providing for MK College graduates who are recommended by college administrators. The college’s leaders invited AMBS to help them develop a graduate-level program to educate leaders for the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia, expressing a need “for trained leaders and other professionals capable of defending the faith and promoting peace by interfaith dialogue, human rights and interethnic peacebuilding.”

—AMBS

### News brief

#### AMBS doubles church matching grants



PHOTO BY PETER RINGENBERG

#### *Participants in AMBS’s August 2019 orientation course tour Island Park in downtown Elkhart, Ind., as they consider how theology relates to one’s setting and context.*

ELKHART, IND.—Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) is doubling its dollar-for-dollar church matching grant from \$1,000 per academic year to \$2,000, beginning in the 2020-21 school year. The grant matches contributions that congregations, conferences and regional churches make toward a student’s tuition costs for graduate-level study at AMBS. Through the church matching grant, full-time admitted students will be able to receive up to \$2,000 per academic year, depending on the amount of need-based financial aid they are awarded. Part-time admitted students will be eligible to receive a 25-percent matching grant of up to \$500 per academic year. “We’re making this change at a time when some participating congregations have called for an increase in the match amount,” says Daniel Grimes, vice-president of advancement and enrolment. “We see this added financial assistance paired with church participation as being especially timely, given the current pandemic and the financial uncertainty some current and prospective students are facing.” To apply, visit [bit.ly/ambs-church-partnership](http://bit.ly/ambs-church-partnership).

—AMBS

# Meeting of francophone Anabaptists like a dose of vitamins

*Worship gathering offers encouragement in a time of isolation*

By Janet Bauman

Eastern Canada Correspondent

**S**erge Gravel describes meeting with other francophone Anabaptists online like getting a dose of Vitamin C fortified with Vitamin D and zinc, in order to gain spiritual victory and encouragement, enthusing about how good it was to see the radiant faces and shining eyes of everyone.

Gravel was one of more than 50 participants in the “first inter-church celebration of French Anabaptists” in Ontario and Quebec. Michel Monette, mission catalyzer for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, who works with new leaders and congregations in Ottawa and Quebec, organized the May 16 online event.

Participants joined the worship gathering from Toronto, Ottawa and Kitchener, Ont.; and Montreal, Quebec City, Joliette and Sherbrooke, Que.

“People told me that it was a great encouragement for them, and they felt supported,” says Monette. “This group is just starting to build, and we are very excited to see how it grows.”

Monette is excited about the growth he sees in the Anabaptist presence in Quebec and Ottawa, and he says he wants to “bring more people to the table.”

When he started as mission catalyzer, there was only one church, Hochma, in Montreal, which has stayed open during the COVID-19 pandemic because it runs a 24/7 shelter for homeless people.

Now there are four congregations, three of them in the province of Quebec, that are provisional members of MC Eastern Canada; four more church plants of French speakers in Quebec; and, according to Monette, “we are walking with some others.” Almost all of these churches are immigrant-based from Haiti and Africa.

Monette, who meets twice a month

with the pastors and church leaders, proposed this gathering to them as a way to get to know each other and their churches.

For the first event, Monette extended invitations to French-speaking Mennonite Brethren and Alliance friends. “That’s why we call it French Anabaptists,” he says.

Pastor Charles Tebena of Centre Bethésda Mennonite de Quebec, a new church plant, brought a message of encouragement to the group, reminding them that God is in control, and to look for all the ways God provides during the pandemic lockdown, like God did for the Israelites when they were in the desert.

For Norm Dyck, MC Eastern Canada’s mission minister, it was “a Holy Spirit-inspired time of worship together.”

Several participants shared their appreciation for the meeting with Monette, who translated their comments:

- **Pasteur Demms** “appreciated the idea of organizing such assemblies to get to know each other as a group of leaders in different regions . . . to strengthen ourselves spiritually.”

- **Charles Tebena**, citing Psalm 133:1, called the meeting a “very nice blessing” and a “unifying initiative . . . that brings us closer as Francophone Mennonite churches in Eastern Canada.”

- **Rachelle Demosterne** said, “It was a very nice experience for me. I was blessed to see that we were able to share the same spirit of worship even from a distance.”

Another gathering of French-speaking Anabaptists was planned for June 20, and future gatherings are planned for every third Saturday of the month “for as long as people will want it,” says Monette.✂



Charles Tebena



PHOTO BY CHARLES TEBENA

*Michel Monette, mission catalyzer for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, back row centre, is pictured with the Centre Bethésda Mennonite de Quebec, a French-speaking church plant.*

# Manitoba's Winter Hour releases debut album

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

Manitoba musician Mike Wiebe released his debut album, *You Made a Shadow*, on May 31 under the name Winter Hour. He wrote the album's 10 songs over a period of five years, starting in 2015.

"Those songs all included my experiences in getting to know Winnipeg as a city, getting to know new people in Winnipeg, relationships, friendships, and also coming to terms with my own views and relationship with faith and with God," Wiebe says. "The reason why it's called [*You Made a Shadow*] is because it encompasses all of the friendships and relationships and spiritual experiences that . . . have made an imprint, and that shadow is the imprint on my life."



PHOTOS FROM WINTER HOUR'S FACEBOOK PAGE

**Mike Wiebe, left photo, is the musical mastermind behind Winter Hour. *You Made a Shadow* is about the people and experiences that have made an imprint on his life.**

He wrote the first song while making the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage through Spain. He then composed the rest of the material while working at Canadian Mennonite University and then studying education at the University of Winnipeg.

Wiebe, 26, grew up in Gretna, Man., and now lives in Winnipeg. He is a member of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church,

where he filmed a music video for one of the album's songs, "Letters."

While he was a member of former local band Pocket Change, Wiebe loved collaboratively making music, but he always had more personal lines of poetry and musical ideas in his mind waiting to become songs. He thought he owed it to himself to put them together and create something that comes from a deeper part of himself.

The name "Winter Hour" is a combination of some of Wiebe's favourite lyrics on the album. "I think Winter Hour is also representative of the way that Manitobans generally produce creative content often," he says. When being outside in the freezing, dark, Manitoba winters becomes unbearable, people end up hanging out and

writing music or working on other creative ventures.

Despite this being a solo project, a lot of collaboration helped *You Made a Shadow* come alive. While Wiebe is featured on vocals, guitar and keys, several other musicians contribute bass,

drums, strings and backup vocals. The record was produced by Daniel Friesen and Nathaniel De Avila of Point Row Records.

The album's release show had to be cancelled due to COVID-19, along with any other opportunities for Wiebe to play his new songs. Depending on gathering restrictions, he is hoping to play some of

## Staff change

Desjardins named new MHF executive director



**Cate Michelle Desjardins** was named the new executive director of the Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF), starting in May 2020.

She is pending board certification as a professional chaplain and has five years of experience serving highly medically complex children and their families at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in Ohio. She is also passionate about the intersection of faith and science, earning a master of public health degree in epidemiology focused on the impact of religion on health care locally and globally. Since earning her degree, she has been a leader in promoting research in spiritual care and chaplaincy, serving on the board of the international Joint Council for Spiritual Care Research and convening the Pediatric Spiritual Care Research Network. She came to the Mennonite church just after college and earned her master of divinity degree in 2014 from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. The MHF was formed in June 2011 when the Mennonite Medical Association and Mennonite Nurses Association joined to form a new organization open to all Anabaptist health-care professionals anywhere in the world. In 2017, the Mennonite Chaplains Association folded as an organization and its members are now encouraged to participate in the MHF.

—MENNONITE HEALTHCARE FELLOWSHIP

his songs at a backyard house concert or two until he's able to perform a full show with a band at a concert venue. Ultimately, he's excited to share this music and he hopes people will enjoy giving it a listen. ❧

# The ‘poet of ironwork’

*A perk of donating his ironwork pieces to MCC is that he can raise more than he can give, says John Wiebe*

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta Correspondent



**John Wiebe, a ‘poet of ironwork’**

If you are Mennonite and live in Alberta, you may not know John Wiebe, but you’ll recognize his work. Kate Janzen calls him the “poet of ironwork.”

Every year since 1973, Wiebe has been creating artworks made from scraps of steel and

donating them to the annual Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta Relief Sale. With this being the first year the sale is cancelled, it is also the first year in more than four decades that he will be unable to donate his pieces.

A number of years ago, Wiebe was inspired to make a dove candleholder from ardox (twisted) nails. His friend Menno Epp was at a board meeting in Guatemala City when he saw a dove candleholder and sent a sketch to Wiebe. “He had to give me a little bit of a push,” says Wiebe, “but I’ve enjoyed making them.”

According to Janzen, a long-time

member of Foothills Mennonite Church along with Wiebe, “A professor from California, a Mr. Byler, was attending an Alberta sale and was very interested in the dove candleholder. Kurt Janz kept bidding until \$700. Kurt gave the piece to Mr. Byler, who took it to the MCC sale in California. John found out later that the ‘dove’ went for \$3,000.”

Now multiple churches in Alberta use the peace dove candleholders as part of their worship services, and some are still on the waiting list to pick up at a future relief sale.

A pressure welder by trade, Wiebe began creating artworks when he couldn’t find bookends heavy enough at the local Woolco store to hold an encyclopedia set. He figured he could make his own, and that began his lifetime hobby of creating pieces in his little winterized shed in the backyard, where he often tinkers until midnight.

To date, he has created hundreds of bookend sets, with no two sets being identical. He does not sell the sets—but only donates them to the MCC sale or makes them for family and friends as gifts. All 11 grandchildren have received horseshoe bookends, and with a great-grandchild on the way, he will soon have to start on another set.

Other sets have included Ford trucks, pig pots with meat grinders, and his wife’s favourite: a bull dog sitting on a Mack truck. Wiebe was able to buy the bulldog using the “Ralph bucks” every Albertan received in 2006 from Ralph Klein’s government.

A perk of donating his pieces to MCC is that he can raise more than he can give. Last year, he donated seven items and raised almost \$2,400—much more than he could afford to donate. Wiebe talks about how “the satisfaction is not from the money raised, but from sharing with



PHOTO BY TIM WIEBE-NEUFELD

*The Wiebe-Neufeld family displays one of the iron doves made by John Wiebe while watching this year’s Inter-Mennonite Good Friday service and preparing for communion in Edmonton.*

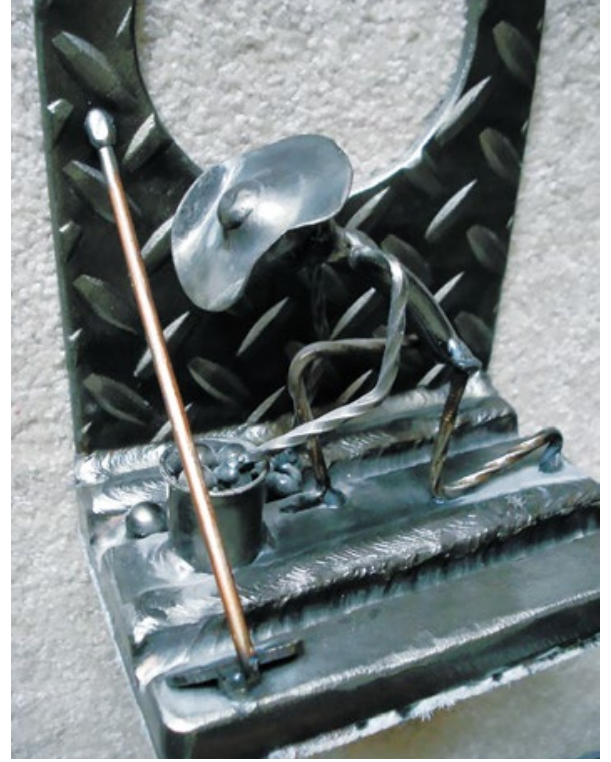




PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY LAURA WIEBE

*Horseback bookend by John Wiebe.*

a part of my life for as long as I can remember. As a kid, part of the reason for going was seeing how much my dad's metal bookends and candleholders would raise for MCC each year. As an adult, I started wondering what I could make for the relief sales. I don't know if I would be baking bread for each Coaldale MCC Sale if my dad hadn't made an annual contribution of his metal art. Life lesson learned: Healthy long-term relationships are better sustained when we ask the question, "What will I give?" more often than "What will I get?" ❧



*Curling bookend by John Wiebe.*

the people you care about."

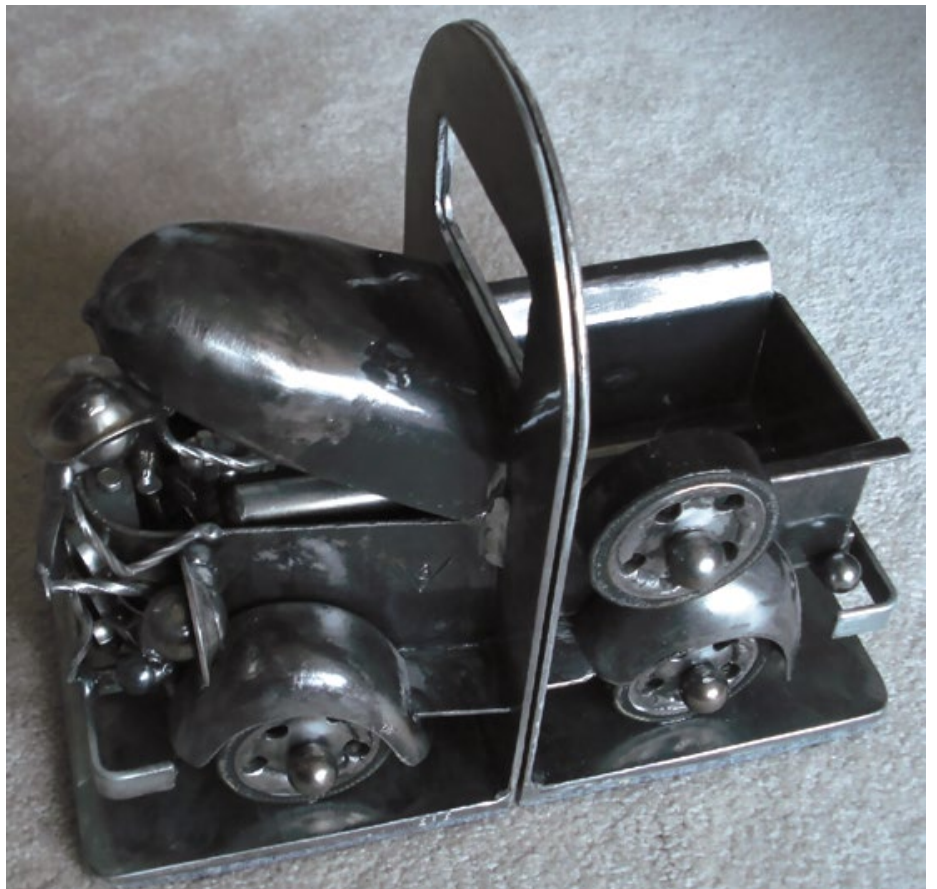
One year, there was a low turnout at the sale on the Friday night. His friend Herta Janzen bid on one of Wiebe's items and got it for \$25. She felt guilty and told him she was sorry. He replied, "Don't worry about it. I bought your afghan for \$25, and you took a lot longer to make that!"

Wiebe has also volunteered at the MCC thrift shop over the years and once picked up a bunch of golf clubs—some for free and some for \$3 apiece. He turns them upside down and makes them into coat hangers.

A couple of times he made rifle lamps, which easily sold. Even though the .22s were only used for shooting gophers and butchering, he figured he had better check first with MCC to make sure it was okay. He called Abe Janzen, then director of MCC Alberta, to find out what he thought, and he said to go for it.

Growing up in McMahan, Sask., in a Sommerfelder community, he eventually moved with his parents to Taber, Alta., where the family farmed sugar beets. Wiebe grew up with 11 siblings. Later, he apprenticed as a welder in Coaldale, Alta. Today, he is 84 and still going strong.

His son Doug Wiebe, a member of Lethbridge Mennonite Church, appreciates his father's example: "Going to the annual MCC Alberta Relief Sale has been



*Pickup truck bookends by John Wiebe.*

# Legacy of the last great epidemic

*The drama and trauma of polio lingers*

By Will Braun  
Senior Writer

**D**ave Penner recalls playing in the ditch with his brother in the summer of 1952. He was 5, his brother Henry was three years older. The freshly dug ditch on the expanded Highway 3 next to their yard near Morden, Man., had filled after a rain storm and Dave remembers having a grand time in the water with his brother.

The boys went in for a nap, and when Dave woke up from his nap he jumped out of bed and fell on his face. His muscles didn't work. He clearly recalls trying again. Same result.

He and Henry were taken to hospital with polio.

Polio, which paralyzes muscles, sometimes permanently, was arguably the most significant epidemic in Canada between the Spanish Flu of 1918 and COVID-19 today. It came in sporadic waves, with a peak in 1952 and 1953. In Canada, 9,000 cases and 500 deaths occurred in 1953. Winnipeg had more reported cases that year than any other major North American city. In 1955, a long-awaited vaccine was introduced.

Polio attacked Henry's muscles required to breathe. He died not long after being admitted to hospital.

Dave's right side was paralyzed. He regained use of his leg, but not his arm, although he continues to lead an active life.

Dave suspects that waste from the highway construction crews was washed into the ditch by the rain storm, resulting in transmission of the virus to him and his brother. Although scientists did not know it at the time, polio was spread via feces, often in the form of contaminated water.

Carl Braun recalls Henry's funeral. He had been Henry's teacher the year before at the one-room Zion School, and had the grim task of preparing the school kids to sing at the funeral. For Carl (my uncle), the day was doubly tragic.

On the way to the funeral, the young



PHOTO COURTESY OF HENRY JOHN EPP

***A Mennonite quartet sings for polio patient Ted Braun, in an iron lung at the King George Hospital in Winnipeg in the mid-1950s. Ted watches the singers in the mirror positioned above his head.***

teacher had taken his older brother, Ted, 24, to the clinic. Ted had not been feeling well for some time, although doctors had not given a diagnosis. After the funeral, Carl went back to the clinic, where Ted lay in pain on a bench in the waiting room. They went home to the farm, 10 kilometres away.

But Ted was still in distress. Two days later, he was in hospital, with no question about his diagnosis now. After he struggled to breathe all night, the family procured an electrician's van that was quickly emptied to make room for a cot for the hour-and-a-half ride to Winnipeg.

My dad, the youngest brother of Carl and Ted, recalls his dad saying that the truck would drive down Highway 3 near the farm and the kids could go to the highway to see their brother on the way to the hospital. My dad, 11 at the time,

understood that might be the last time he would see his much-admired brother.

My Aunt Adeline recalls peeking into the truck, then going back home and crying on the couch, then realizing life needed to go on. It was summer on the farm. Their mother had died 11 years prior, one brother was out of commission, and their dad and older siblings would be spending time visiting Ted. Sadness and worry would mix with work.

As my late Uncle Ed recalled, the initial trip to Winnipeg was agonizing, as Ted was gasping for air. When Ted said he couldn't take it anymore, they stopped at a farm yard to call an ambulance, which took Ted the rest of the way. As Ed recalled in a family book about Ted, the trip was for Ted, "a struggle to survive," and for Ed, "a nightmare never forgotten."

By the end of the day, Ted was in an iron

lung at the King George Hospital in Winnipeg. Iron lungs were metal tubes with a mechanical bellows at the foot end that alternately pressurized and depressurized the chamber which essentially inflated and deflated the patient's lungs. Only the patient's head stuck out of the tube, which sealed around their neck.

Ted spent several years in an iron lung, before a tracheotomy, respirator and rocking bed replaced it. He remained at the King George Hospital until his death in 1988. He could speak, eat, and wiggle his toes and fingers slightly. He read extensively, using a wand with a grippy end to turn pages of books or magazines positioned in a special rack.

Of the 12 Braun siblings, three ended up contracting polio, as well as one niece, although Ted was the only one with permanent damage.

But for all, the disease left a practical and emotional legacy. For those uncles and aunts I interviewed, the agonizing events of 1952 are still somewhat raw, mixed with the sadness of seeing their

brother spend most of his life on his back. Practically, for the 36 years of Ted's hospitalization, family members, along with Katie Dyck, the woman Ted would have married, visited him faithfully. They speak about how he never complained, or almost never, depending on whose version of the story I hear.

For much of my childhood and youth, our family drove to Winnipeg one Sunday a month to visit Uncle Ted. I saw iron lungs in the hall, although I did not see him in one. My sister and I would exchange greetings with our gentle, pleasant uncle, perhaps get a "ride" on the bed that rocked back and forth to aid his breathing, then listen to our dad and uncle discuss politics or farming.

Uncle Ted graciously accepted his disability. When he died of multiple medical complications at age 60, a poem found in his wallet read, in part: "One day at a time, and the day is his day. . . His grace is sufficient; we walk not alone." ❧

## Staff change

### Foodgrains Bank appoints new executive director



**Andy Harrington** has been appointed as the next executive director of Canadian Foodgrains Bank, starting in September. Harrington comes to the Foodgrains Bank with

more than 30 years of leadership experience in the non-profit sector. Most recently, he served as chief executive officer of the Wellspring Foundation, a non-profit organization based in British Columbia that works to increase access to education for communities in central and eastern Africa. "Throughout my career, I have all too often seen how hunger affects families, their sense of dignity and their ability to survive," he says. "I'm honoured to have the opportunity to work with a dedicated team of staff and Foodgrains Bank members and supporters across the country who are focused on ending global hunger." Says Foodgrains Bank board chair Ken Kim, "Andy's leadership experience and active service in Christian responses to global poverty provide a strong background and preparation for the role of executive director of the Foodgrains Bank." Harrington succeeds Jim Cornelius, who has served as executive director since 1997; Cornelius will continue as executive director until the handover, after which he will move into an advisory position to support Harrington through the transition.

—CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK



PHOTO BY WILL BRAUN

*An iron lung, the iconic image of the polio epidemic of the 1950s, at the Riverview Heritage Museum in Winnipeg.*

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**Embodying God's mission with authenticity**

Planners for the 2020 Mennonite Church Canada study conference outline their hopes for the Oct. 2 virtual event.

[canadianmennonite.org/roundtabletalk](http://canadianmennonite.org/roundtabletalk)



**'Being the church together'**

Mennonite Church Canada is donating \$50,000 to the Global Sharing Fund to help meet the basic needs of sister churches in Mennonite World Conference distressed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[canadianmennonite.org/globalsharing](http://canadianmennonite.org/globalsharing)



**Still friends after all these years**

A Manitoba-Germany exchange program that includes students from Westgate Mennonite Collegiate in Winnipeg is celebrating its 40th anniversary.

[canadianmennonite.org/germanexchange](http://canadianmennonite.org/germanexchange)



**Providing a place to call home**

A new four-storey building constructed by Markham Inter-church Committee for Affordable Housing will provide dozens of people with somewhere to live.

[canadianmennonite.org/waterstreet](http://canadianmennonite.org/waterstreet)



NEW FROM  
**Canadian Mennonite**  
digital issues for the summer slowdown

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

If you already receive digital delivery throughout the year, you **do not** need to sign up again.

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**CANADIAN  
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Schools Directory featuring Menno Simons Christian School

# The servant heart

By Ann Pan, Menno Simons Christian School, Calgary

Over the past few years, Menno Simons Christian School has taken the students on a spiritual journey to explore an Upside Down Kingdom, a world that is the complete opposite of the one that our society promotes today; PEACEKEEPING—our school's foundational acronym, with each letter describing an attribute of a peacekeeper; and now "servant hearted" for the 2019-20 school year.

What do we mean by "servant hearted"? Being the hands and feet of Christ, living with joy, showing love, being obedient to God's will, giving our time, being accountable, choosing to say yes when an opportunity arises, giving of ourselves and expecting nothing in return.

Through our Friday chapels we have challenged our individual classes to take on these definitions and create skits or presentations to help students visualize and understand what these might look like in our world today. We have further challenged them to think within their classroom about how to apply this through their studies.

The results? As a school we worked to stuff a bus, collecting more than 1,500 food items for the Calgary Food Bank.

The Grade 5 class took its math concepts of decimals and applied them to budgeting, cost comparisons, purchasing and preparing lunches for the Brown Bag for Calgary Kids program.



**Menno Simons students help pack Christmas Child shoeboxes for Samaritan's Purse.**

The Grade 4 class studied light and how it can be bent through lenses. This led to a further discussion about glasses helping to correct vision and also recognizing that some people do not have the resources or access to glasses. The challenge was then brought forth to collect glasses for the Lion's Club.

Other grades were involved with the Calgary Pregnancy Care Centre, Mennonite Central Committee and Samaritan's Purse. "True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant. It clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute and it serves those who harm it. It binds up that which is wounded. It has become all things to all people" (Menno Simons, 1539).

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**We had fried chicken and potato salad and baked beans, and oh, everybody brought something...every dish was special. —MARCELLA DILLER**

## Celebrating our grassroots

**Seventy years ago, members of a Mennonite church in Hesston, Kansas gathered for a picnic. While there, they talked about ways to help their neighbours when disaster struck.**

Ninety-four-year-old Marcella Diller was at that picnic. She still remembers that event, and the very first conversations that led to the creation of Mennonite Disaster Service.

She also remembers the food. "We had fried chicken and potato salad and baked beans, and oh, everybody brought something," she said. "Every dish was special."

For Diller, who currently lives at Schowalter Villa in Hesston, Kansas, those early conversations that formed MDS felt like a natural extension of everyday life in Hesston. "Those were the kind of people who lived around here," she said. "They helped each other."



**Today, that grassroots idea of neighbours helping neighbours still lives on with MDS, a volunteer network of Canadian and U.S. Anabaptist churches dedicated to responding to natural disasters in North America.**



Marcella Diller with her great grandsons, Kyle and Ryan.

Over the past 70 years, MDS has grown into an organization which, every year, sends between 5,000 to 6,000 volunteers to help those impacted by natural disasters. In 2019, 5,569 volunteers from churches across Canada and the U.S. gave their time, skills and compassion to build 68 new homes, complete 313 repairs, and finish 352 cleanups for households who experienced a disaster. This volunteer labour was valued at nearly \$9.8 million USD/\$13.7 million CAD.

**During the pandemic, MDS operations are suspended until it is safe to resume them again. But we want to take time when we are on pause to thank God—and all our many volunteers and supporters—for 70 years of service for those impacted by disasters such as tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires and floods.**

**[www.mds.mennonite.net](http://www.mds.mennonite.net)**

## UpComing

### Bruxy Cavey to teach Church as Mission course next spring

WATERLOO, ONT.—Bruxy Cavey will be joining the master of theological studies (MTS) program at Conrad Grebel University College and the University of Waterloo as a visiting lecturer for the spring 2021 term. Cavey is the teaching pastor at The Meeting House, a Be In Christ congregation. He is the author of the bestselling books, *The End of Religion* and *(re)union: The Good News of Jesus for Seekers, Saints and Sinners*. Cavey will teach Church as Mission. Although he has taught a version of the course in evangelical seminaries, he is excited to bring it to his own theological “hometown” of Anabaptism. “The early Anabaptists had a high evangelistic zeal that, understandably, was somewhat lost over the centuries due to continued persecution and dislocation,” he says. “I think this is a wonderful season for us as a movement as we recapture some of that initial enthusiasm for Jesus and his good news.” In his teaching, Cavey will draw on his experience leading The Meeting House, one of the largest congregations in Canada, which has described itself as “a church for people who aren’t into church.” “Viewed from the outside-in, The Meeting House looks like a contemporary, multi-site, mega-church that also has an optional small group program on the side,” Cavey says. “Viewed from the inside out, we are actually a movement of local house churches [more than 100 home churches] who also have an optional large-group program on Sunday mornings.”



—CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

**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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- 16-day group experience in Elkhart, Indiana, in July
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**FIND OUT MORE:**  
Visit [ams.ca/explore](https://ams.ca/explore)

## Calendar

### Please Take Note

**In an attempt to keep COVID-19 from spreading, some of these events may have already been postponed or cancelled. To be sure, contact the organizers in advance.**

### British Columbia

**Oct. 16-18:** MC B.C. women’s retreat. Theme: “God is bigger.” Speakers: Karina Loewen and Nichole Forbes of “We Should Record this Podcast.” More information to follow.

### Manitoba

**Nov. 6-7:** Canadian launch of new “Voices Together” hymnal, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, from mid-afternoon on Nov. 6 to the evening of Nov. 7, when a community-wide worship fest will be held. Registration will be required. More details to follow.

### Ontario

**June 27:** MennoHomes “Out-spok’n for Affordable Housing” bike-a-thon, a virtual fundraising event. Hikers, recreational bikers and avid cyclists will choose their own routes this year. For more information, call Dan Driedger at 226-476-2535 or visit [mennohomes.com](https://mennohomes.com).

**Aug. 9-21:** Ontario Mennonite Music Camp at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, for youth ages 12 to 16. To register, visit [grebel.ca/ommc](https://grebel.ca/ommc). Refunds will be provided if the camp is cancelled due to the pandemic.

**Sept. 19:** Toronto Mennonite Festival, at Black Creek Pioneer Village, opens at 10 a.m. Activities include Mennonite food booths, crafts, games, music and a quilt auction. Funds go to MCC projects worldwide.

**Oct. 17:** A one-day New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale, at the New Hamburg fairgrounds.

### International

**Oct. 10-17:** MCC Bolivia 60th anniversary learning tour in western Bolivia. For more information, visit [mcco.ca/events](https://mcco.ca/events).

**To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send**

## Classifieds

### Housing Opportunities

Fall 2020 Creative Housing for University Students in Winnipeg. Online classes? Potential isolation? Grocery shopping line-ups? Minimize the impact by living at Emmaus House Community. We have room for 2 men! Pass on this invitation and visit: [emmaushousewinnipeg.ca](https://emmaushousewinnipeg.ca)

Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by email to [calendar@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:calendar@canadianmennonite.org). For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](https://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).



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# THANK YOU for helping to be the tie that binds

Canadian Mennonite helps bridge the distances between the members of our church family. Especially at a time when even neighbours can't meet for coffee, CM shares stories that bring the church community together. This spring, you and other generous donors gave \$51,500 to help all who were separated to hear those stories and strengthen their ties to our church family.

We look forward to getting the magazine, to read not only how we are doing in Canada but how we as Anabaptists are impacting other parts of the world.  
Thank you!  
—reader from Saskatchewan

## Columbia Bible College graduates class online

'Joyful celebration' despite absence from campus due to COVID-19

By Amy Rimmer Waddell  
B.C. Correspondent  
ABOCHSFORD, B.C.

Graduation for Columbia Bible College's class of 2020 looked a little different this year. Rather than proudly walking across the stage in caps and gowns to receive their diplomas, the graduates took part in a virtual online commencement ceremony on April 16. The college had discussed classes earlier in the year due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"This graduation is like none other in the history of Columbia," said Bryan Born, the college's president, in his opening remarks. "Even though we cannot gather together in a large auditorium, we want to joyfully celebrate with our 2020 Columbia graduates."

In his address, Ken Esau, a biblical studies professor, urged the graduates to "seek first God's kingdom" in all things, including summer plans and future vocations and educational goals. Esau blew a shofar (ram's horn) three times during his speech to illustrate the three purposes the ancient Hebrews sounded it for:



SCREENSHOT BY POLINA MAUR  
Ken Esau, professor of Old Testament at Columbia Bible College, blows a ram's horn as he addresses the graduating class on what it means to seek first God's kingdom.

- To gather God's people together in community.
- To announce God's work on the

## #COVID Kindness

Calgary chef gives back to the community



PHOTO BY ASHLEY GUSZTAK

Chef Stefan Gusztaf of the NOTABLE Restaurant in Calgary, makes food for the community during the COVID-19 crisis.

## Open to us a door

"The closing of church doors across the country in mid-March due to COVID-19 restrictions has scattered this body," writes Doug Klassen, MC Canada's executive minister. While this has restricted worship together, he sees opportunities for community ministry to arise from the ashes.



## Offline life during COVID-19

How are people without internet connecting with their communities?

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe  
Manitoba Correspondent

## 'You're Not Alone'

Homebound musician offers online singalong

By Janet Bauman  
Eastern Canada Correspondent  
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