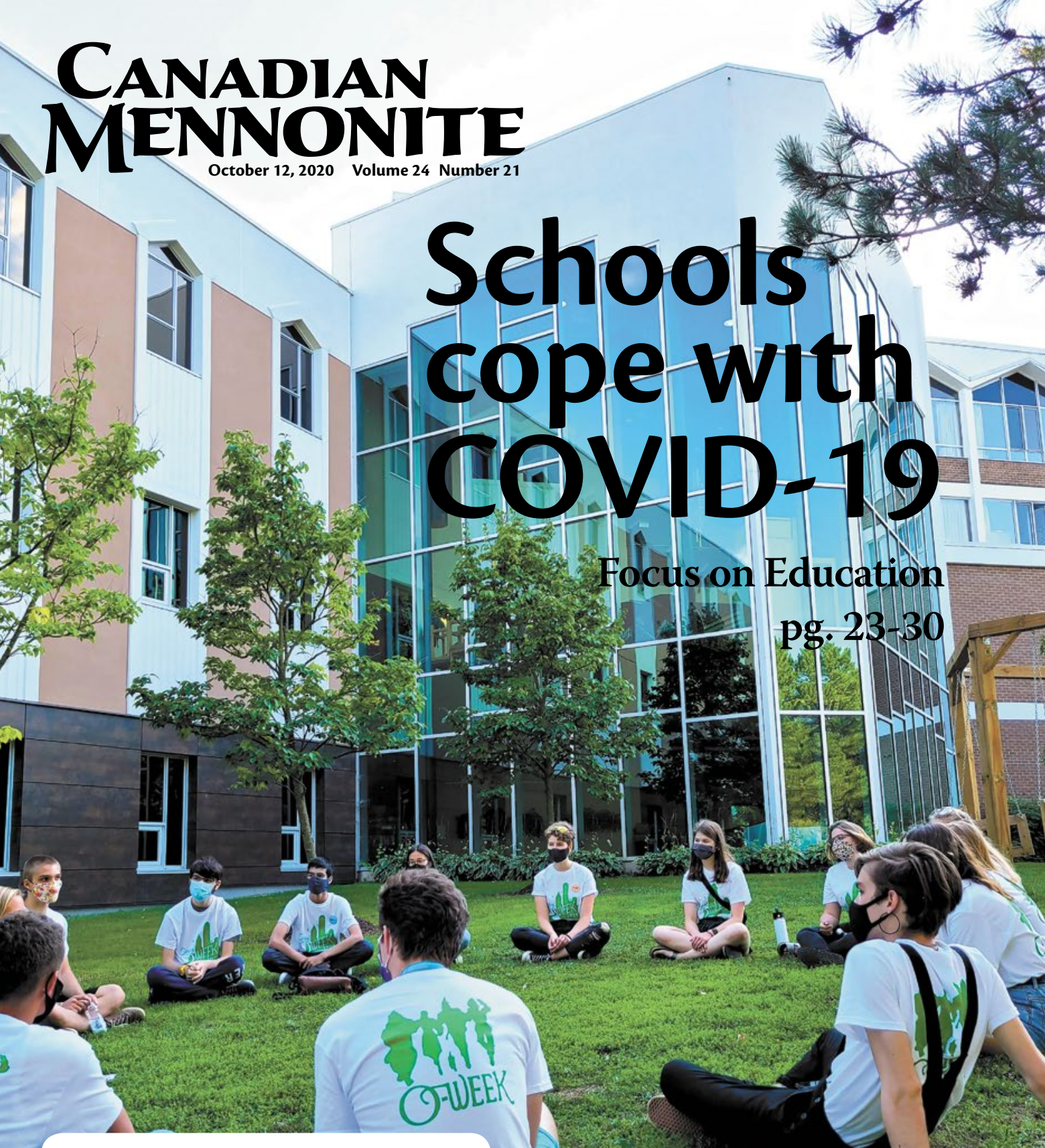


# Schools cope with COVID-19

Focus on Education  
pg. 23-30



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## EDITORIAL

# Take care

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER  
Executive Editor



**R**ecently the world-wide number of souls lost to the COVID-19 virus surpassed 1 million.

Visualizing that large number of lives cut short touches one's own soul. We, the living, mourn and seek to understand.

As members of the world community and participants in our own neighbourhoods and congregations, you and I are witnessing the many losses this pandemic has brought. Some of us have in fact lost loved ones and friends, or our own health. Others have lost a job or a place to live. We find it harder to connect with family and others in our support circles. There is a new kind of instability, with struggles in interpersonal relationships and sometimes even violence in our homes. We see an increased sense of polarization in our conversations. Some of us are experiencing an upsurge in discriminatory and hateful behaviours.

So much is uncertain. We are exhausted by this new reality of warnings, precautions, social bubbles, distancing, sanitizers and masks.

Promotion for a recent event at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) observed, "At times, COVID-19 leaves us feeling anxious and forces us to confront life's fragility. COVID-19 also invites us to think about what we notice and how we see."

Called "Seeing through the Pandemic: The Art of Noticing," part of CMU's Face2Face series, the panel presentation included contributions by a music therapist, a sociologist, a biologist and a

philosopher-theologian. (You can watch it here: [bit.ly/3jCjOht](https://bit.ly/3jCjOht))

I was struck by the insights of music therapist Lee-Anne Dowsett, who sees the COVID-19 pandemic as a traumatic experience for everyone. She offers insights into the psychological realities all of us are facing.

"[Trauma] happens when our brain and body systems become overwhelmed in the face of a life-threatening event," she says. "When this happens, we're not able to maintain a sense of control over our experiences; we're not able to stay connected with the people we care about, with the people around us. We have trouble making meaning out of what's happening because we're so flooded. Experiencing a trauma, you feel a sense of helplessness and being out of control."

With these feelings, we find it hard to make good decisions. We may feel exhausted and unable to concentrate. There is emotional distress, including depression and anxiety, which she says has increased 56 percent in recent times. These stresses are leading to increased substance abuse and domestic violence.

Dowsett reminds us that these are natural responses in the face of great challenges. And she offers hope. We can and should seek self-care in these uncertain times.

The church is engaging in courageous efforts to help us still be there for each other. Congregations are finding new ways to worship together and to offer social connections and caring. There are new opportunities for ministry outside

church walls. Over the past six months, this magazine has told some of those stories of challenges and creativity. Thank you for sharing your experiences.

It is becoming clear that our Christian community must offer opportunities for us to name and mourn our losses. As individuals, we are invited to seek wellness for ourselves—practicing physical, mental and spiritual self-care. As communities, we keep seizing opportunities to offer caring to others, both within our immediate circles and in our larger neighbourhoods.

How might we as Mennonite Christians continue living in the midst of this pandemic time with courage and caring for all? Let's keep finding ways. And let's keep telling those stories.

As a popular email sign-off goes, "Take care." ✎

## A call to young artists

In 2018, *Canadian Mennonite* started a Christmas tradition we're hoping to continue again this year. Here is an invitation to submit art to accompany the Christmas feature, which will be published in the Dec. 7 issue. This contest is open to elementary and high school students from Mennonite schools and congregations. All art pieces should address the theme of hope. Submissions can be done digitally or on paper. For more details, see the ad on page 39 of this magazine.

## Correction

The Sept. 28, 2020, feature "Copyright matters" gave information on page 6 about permission for using original songs by Bryan Moyer Suderman. In the editing process, a line was unintentionally omitted. It reads, "This permission is primarily meant for one-time usage, and more details are available at [smalltallministries.com/music/church-music-licenses](http://smalltallministries.com/music/church-music-licenses)." We regret the error.



Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada

Canada

ISSN 1480-042X

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PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEJONG

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General submission address: [submit@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:submit@canadianmennonite.org)

Readers Write: [letters@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org)

Milestones announcements: [milestones@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:milestones@canadianmennonite.org)

Calendar announcements: [calendar@canadianmennonite.org](mailto: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.

Board Chair, Henry Krause, [hakrause@telus.net](mailto:hakrause@telus.net), 604-888-3192

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### One-Year Subscription Rates

Canada: \$44 + applicable sales tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)

U.S.: \$66 / International (outside U.S.): \$91.10

### Subscriptions/address changes

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## FEATURE

# Expanding the reconciliation tent

Tommy Prince initiative a chance for collaboration of the imperfect

By Will Braun

Senior Writer

**A**lthough I'm a pacifist who has never voted Conservative, I support the Conservative-led campaign to put a war hero's face on the \$5 bill.

All the more so after speaking about it with Don Plett, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, who upset many in our denomination last year by blocking Bill C-262: An Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

My reason for aligning with Conservatives on this is not just that I believe irony is good for the soul. It's because the face they want on the bill is one familiar to me, in a way.

In 1968, my aunt and uncle adopted a six-year-old Anishinaabe girl named Karen, who had been in foster care for some years. Karen was born to Verna Sinclair and Tommy Prince of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation in Manitoba. Tommy Prince, who served in the Second World War and the Korean War, is one of the most decorated Indigenous veterans in Canadian history with a total of 11 medals. A school in Manitoba and a street in Winnipeg are named for him.

It is Sergeant Tommy Prince, my cousin's dad, that the group of Conservative MPs and senators, including Plett, want featured on a new \$5 note.

## Anti-racist money

The Conservative campaign includes a website ([honourtommyprince.ca](http://honourtommyprince.ca)) with a video and petition. About 31,000 people have emailed the finance minister in support of Prince via the website.

The Conservatives acknowledge the racism Prince faced upon his return from war, when he and other Indigenous veterans were denied benefits received by other veterans. Prince eventually died homeless in 1977.

Prince is one of more than 600 people nominated to appear on the new bill. An advisory council will narrow



LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA PHOTO (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

**Tommy Prince, right, is pictured with a brother at Buckingham Palace, London, England, where he was awarded two gallantry medals.**

down a short-list, based in part on public input, and the finance minister will make the final decision. The new bill will land in wallets in "a few years."

Other notable nominees include Terry Fox, Nellie McClung, Tommy Douglas, Tim Horton and Lord Stanley.

## Why Tommy Prince?

I favour Prince for three reasons.

First, for the sake of my cousin. I have not seen Karen in years, but family is family. If it is important to her, I'm



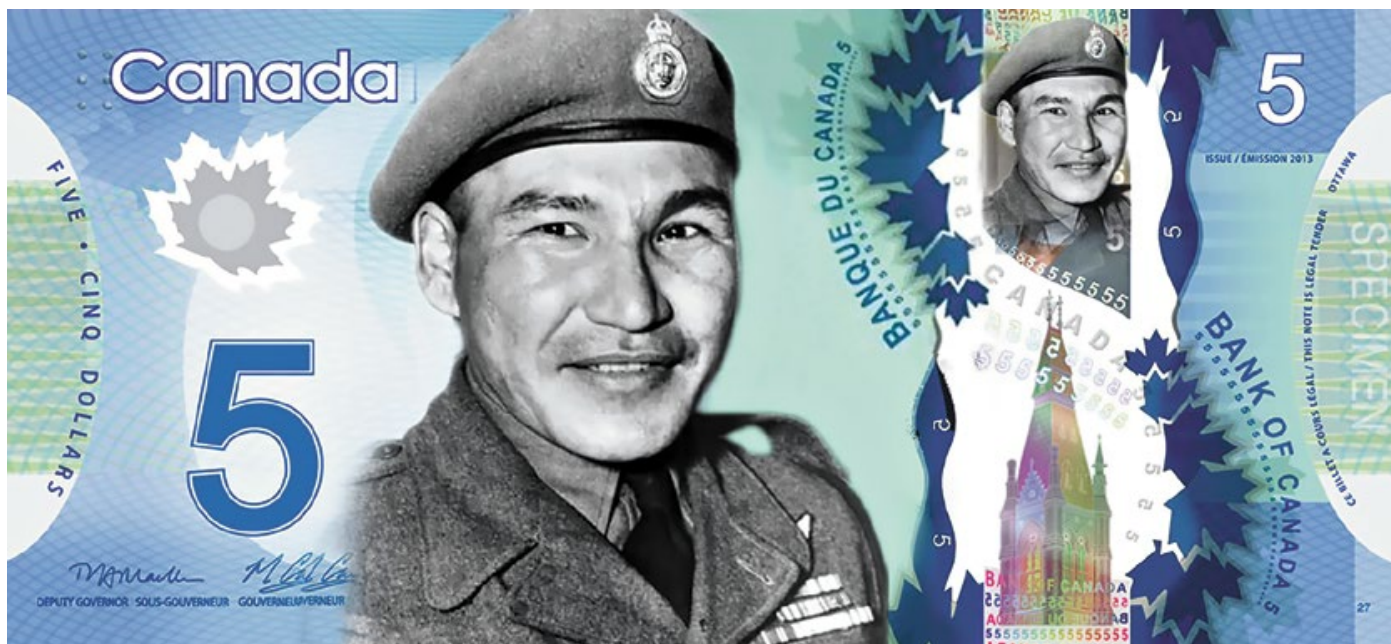


IMAGE COURTESY OF TOM KMIEC

*A 'specimen' of the \$5 bill to honour decorated Indigenous Canadian war veteran Tommy Prince.*

in. "I feel very proud," she tells me by phone from Calgary. "It's such an honour," she says of the nomination, which she learned about only after the campaign had launched.

How does she feel about the party behind the nomination? "I'm just glad that somebody has taken notice," she says.

She acknowledges the stature of other nominees, saying, "I think they should put Terry Fox on the 10 or 20."

My second reason for backing Prince is that, while symbols don't replace tangible change, they do matter. I support prominent recognition of Indigenous people.

### **Broadening the tent**

Thirdly, if the current period of heightened concern for racial reconciliation is to yield deep transformation and healing—not just victories over certain bad guys—liberals and conservatives need opportunities to work together.

That did not happen on Bill C-262. The private member's bill—put forward by then-NDP MP Romeo Saganash—sought to bind government to the UNDRIP. Plett, who has been a Conservative senator for 11 years, led the effort to run out the clock on the bill

before the last election.

Plett spent most of his life in Landmark, Man., and in the Evangelical Mennonite Church, although he now lives in Winnipeg and attends Calvary Temple. I spoke with him by phone for almost an hour.

Mennonite Church Canada had put much effort into pushing for Bill C-262, and encouraged Canadians to send emails to Senator Plett, urging him to back off. Plett was the bad guy. Many people did send emails, it turns out, not all of them overly gracious.

Given this history, and my intrigue with people who blur categories, my

**The Conservatives acknowledge the racism Prince faced upon his return from war, when he and other Indigenous veterans were denied benefits received by other veterans. Prince eventually died homeless in 1977.**

interest was piqued by Plett's support for Prince. Then I found out, that on June 25, in the wake of the George Floyd murder, Plett rose in the Red Chamber to launch "an inquiry into racism and discrimination in Canadian institutions."

### **Heartless Conservative?**

I'm not naive about gross injustices perpetrated by Conservative governments federally and provincially. Nor those perpetrated by Liberal or NDP governments, past and present. No one is anywhere near perfect.

That said, I was very interested to read Plett's speech on racism. Would it be political posturing?

At points he sounded quite unlike the supporters of Bill C-262. At other times, the opposite. He quoted comments on systemic racism by Liberal-appointed Senator Murray Sinclair, expressing gratitude to the same senator he clashed with over Bill C-262.

Plett said there is "much work to be done" because there are still people who are not treated as "equal members of this society simply because of the colour of their skin." To conclude, Plett quoted Psalm 34, and said the obligation of senators is to "stand up for the broken-

hearted and the crushed in spirit.”

I could critique Plett’s comments—he does not go as far as I would—but I am inclined to welcome them and learn from them. Not all paths to change will follow the same course, and no path is perfect. He can reach an audience that Saganash and Sinclair cannot, including many good people in our pews.

### Lives matter

As for Prince on Canadian money, Plett told me: “It would signify the respect we have for our military men and women . . . and certainly right now, because of the big Black Lives Matter, Indigenous Lives Matter movement, I think it would be a great thing for the Indigenous community. I am proud to be part of that.”

When I asked how he would respond if he walked into a rural coffee shop and people critiqued the notion of Prince on the \$5 bill, he questioned my implied assumption that such opposition would be common. Worth considering.

Perhaps I would encounter more opposition than he on such a matter, because I expect it and my perceived association to progressive attitudes might itself occasion resistance.

In terms of people who do express more critical views of Indigenous people, he says they see expenditures of money on reserves and “some of the negative results.” Plett values the opportunity he has had to see this from both sides. For many years, he operated a plumbing and heating company that did a lot of work on First Nations. “If you don’t see both sides,” he says, “you make a judgment on one side.”

Plett does not “adhere” to the notion of white privilege as a “fair” lens through which to view society or our forebears. But he does say, “We have not all been created with the same advantages.” Referring to realities he saw on First Nations, he says, “I have a better opportunity than someone born in a broken home or broken family.”

### Plett versus MC Canada

If Plett wants fairness for Indigenous people, why didn’t he support Bill



DON PLETT FACEBOOK PAGE PHOTO

*Don Plett, a Conservative senator, is working to help get decorated Indigenous Canadian war veteran Tommy Prince onto a new \$5 bill.*

C-262? The bill would have benefitted Indigenous peoples by providing access to lands they traditionally occupied, or restitution where land cannot be returned. It would have required the “free, prior and informed consent” of Indigenous peoples before implementing laws affecting them and before approving projects affecting their lands.

Plett says the bill should have been costed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, a step that is required of government bills but not private member’s bills. He said the bill would have cost trillions and there would not have been a project built in Canada without requiring Indigenous sign-off. He does not support that.

Some legal experts and Indigenous leaders have a more nuanced interpretation of free, prior and informed consent. Plett, and others, say the legislation should have defined it.

Senator Sinclair, who sits as an Independent, told CTV News at the time that the Conservatives knew free, prior and informed consent is “not a veto” and they were just saying that to

create fear. “They know that the UN declaration does not create substantive rights in Canada,” he said.

Sinclair declined my request for a 15-minute interview about Prince and Bill C-262.

Plett suggests that Liberal support for Bill C-262 was not genuine. He asks why they did not push it harder in the Senate, and speculates they were not unhappy to see it die, especially with him taking the blame rather than them.

Liberals have promised to introduce their own 262-like bill.

### Mennos in the trenches

I asked Plett how the pushback he received on Bill C-262 compared to other battles he has fought. He paused. Then he said it was “probably the toughest.” Part of the difference was the tone of some of the “attacks.” Other issues “never got that personal,” he said, singling out MC Canada members as the source of the bulk of the antagonism.

“People were preaching from the pulpit about what a bad person I was,” he told me, a mix of anger and sadness in his voice.

In public, Plett can come across as a hardened partisan scrapper, but none of us are one-dimensional. Amid that complexity, I was glad for the common ground created between us by Tommy Prince.

### Diverse paths to change

MC Canada, and other church bodies, have focused much of their Indigenous-relations work on UNDRIP. That is important work supported by many prominent Indigenous people.

It feels almost sacrilegious to suggest we should collaborate with opponents of that approach or diversify the church approach.

Roger Epp, a professor of political science at the University of Alberta, sees great value in UNDRIP as something “really sensible” that can “help us think about a different way of living together.” He expresses concern, however, about the potential for it to be reduced to a litmus test or a matter of “a kind of admission into a certain sort of camp.”



## Mennonite Church Canada had put much effort into pushing for Bill C-262, and encouraged Canadians to send emails to Senator Plett, urging him to back off. Plett was the bad guy. Many people did send emails, it turns out, not all of them overly gracious.

I presume such a camp would exclude the Conservatives behind the Tommy Prince initiative.

Epp, who studies Indigenous relations in rural areas, draws at times on *The Ordinary Virtues*, a book by Michael Ignatieff, former leader of the Liberal Party. After ground-level research in eight countries over three years, Ignatieff concluded that the language of human rights, which was supposed to unite humanity under a common moral ethic, “remains an ‘elite discourse,’ the lingua franca of an influential but thinly spread stratum . . . [of] people paid to think abstractly or campaign for a living.”

He does not say at all that the human rights movement—in which UNDRIP is rooted—is without merit. But I see in his findings an encouragement to engage people on a practical, everyday level, and to acknowledge the need for multiple entry points into discussions of injustice. Doing otherwise may shrink the audience, increase resistance and reduce common ground.

### Who is my neighbour?

Epp builds on Ignatieff’s conclusion to ask whether the concept of neighbourliness can help us work toward better ways of living together. Neighbourliness is practical, localized and immediate.

The caution Epp offers is that neighbourliness cannot gloss over the sort of power and land dynamics addressed by UNDRIP and it cannot erase the fact that, for non-Indigenous people, “all of our ancestors have been beneficiaries of arrangements around land and political power.”

With respect to the Prince initiative, Epp says that honouring past heroes must not be a matter of closing a chapter of history and thus presuming to “achieve our innocence again.” Injustices experi-

enced by Prince, persist.

Those caveats stated, though, Epp says, “Yeah, I’d carry that bill in my wallet.”

I presume Senator Sinclair would too, and Justin Trudeau. Common ground. A potential entry point for collaboration.

“I see using my dad’s legacy as an opportunity for education,” Karen tells me. I would like to think that education could span a truly broad spectrum of society.

### Grace

I expect many of the 31,000 people who emailed the government in support of Prince—perhaps including the

organizers—would not attend a workshop on UNDRIP. Both approaches, I would argue, can be steps in the right direction. And perhaps the most fruitful change happens when those two paths find common ground.

In his speech on racism, Plett asked, in relation to “cancel culture”: “How can we expect to educate one another and learn from each other when we pre-emptively remove individuals from the conversation? . . . As we take part in this important discussion, let’s give each other the benefit of the doubt. Let’s be gracious.”

I am happy to give the benefit of any doubt to Don Plett and the Conservatives behind the Tommy Prince initiative. It’s a perfect opportunity for collaboration of the imperfect.

And I hope someday to buy a cup of coffee for both Plett and my cousin Karen with a crisp new \$5 bill that has a familiar face on it.☞

### ☞ For discussion

1. Can you name the faces on Canadian money? How often do they change? What criteria would you use to determine who should be honoured in this way? Has a decrease in the use of cash made this honour less significant?
2. Will Braun writes, “I support prominent recognition of Indigenous people.” Why does Braun think it is important? Do you agree?
3. Has anyone you know been involved in encouraging the government to pass Bill C-262, an act that would ensure Canadian laws are in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? What reasons does Senator Don Plett give for not supporting it? Are these valid reasons? What are some counter-arguments to this position?
4. According to Plett, he received personal pushback and antagonism from members of Mennonite Church Canada regarding the Bill C-262 debate. Are there issues that are so important that it is worth disrespecting an individual? What kinds of issues can lead us to lose our cool?
5. How has our society been harmed by acrimonious debate? What are some ways to be gracious in the midst of intense disagreements?

—By Barb Draper

## OPINION

### /// Readers write

#### ✉ Reactions to recent 'A moment from yesterday' photographs

**Re: A photograph of a volleyball game beside a row of tall poplar trees with a lake in the background, Aug. 17, page. 4.**

The site is Camp Elim on the north end of Lac Pelletier, 50 kilometres southwest of Swift Current, Sask. The poplars were replaced in 1991 and the main tabernacle building in 1997. Mennonite Disaster Service helped build or replace two cabins and the boathouse in 2015. This summer was Camp Elim's 75th anniversary. Due to COVID-19, there were no physical celebration, no summer camps or rentals. Summer students—a director and two counselling staff were hired to help the local board with maintenance refurbishment and program refreshment. Check the Camp Elim Facebook page ([facebook.com/MCSask.CampElim](https://facebook.com/MCSask.CampElim)) for pictures from past years as well as camp updates.

GRACE FUNK, WALDECK, SASK.

*The writer is a former camper, staffer and board member, and a current volunteer.*

**Re: A photograph of three Canadian Mennonite Bible College students and professor Waldemar Janzen, Sept. 14, page 11.**

The two other people in the photograph, pictured second from left and right, are Jake Froese and Gary Bueckert, both originally from Saskatchewan. Jake was a minister in churches in the Conference of Mennonites in Canada for years and Gary was a teacher for many years in Winkler, Man.

EDGAR SCHMIDT (ONLINE COMMENT)

*The writer is pictured at left in the photograph.*

#### ✉ Study of the Psalms leads to thoughts of summer camps past

**This summer at Jubilee Mennonite Church in Winnipeg we have engaged in a study of the Psalms. My favourite text was from Psalm 55, a lament by King David about being betrayed by a lifelong friend, and his steadfast belief that God would redeem him: "Oh that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Behold, I would wander far away. I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten to my place of refuge."**

The text conjured up many images and memories of working at a summer camp in the mid 1980s. I

asked myself, if I was in King David's shoes, where would I find my place of refuge? The answer is Camp Squeah in Hope, B.C., where I worked as a counselor and lifeguard from 1983 to '86. The name, in fact, means "place of refuge."

For me, my place of refuge was all about the joy of living within nature for two full months: canoeing down the Fraser River, cliff diving at Fifth Falls, repelling down sheer cliffs, taking a group hike to the Pride of Emory, fireside at chapel in the sky, a snack at the canteen, vacuuming the pool in the morning under the hot sun, and sitting on the trampoline at the end of the day under a blanket of stars.

*"Oh that I had wings like a dove,"* I would fly up there every summer.

RYAN ADRIAN, WINNIPEG

*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

**Miller**—Colson Jonathan (b. Sept. 16, 2020), to Jon and Courtney Miller, Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

#### Deaths

**Barkman**—Cameron, 51 (b. March 23, 1969; d. Aug. 20, 2020), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

**Bartel**—Jack, 77 (b. Feb. 27, 1943; d. Sept. 8, 2020), Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Burkhardt**—Esther (nee Knechtel), 92 (b. Feb. 9, 1928; d. Aug. 29, 2020), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Froese**—Ella Erna (Wende), 92 (b. Oct. 12, 1927; d. Sept. 8, 2020), Springridge Mennonite, Pincher Creek, Alta.

**Paetkau**—Anna (nee Martens), 92 (b. April 21, 1928; d. Sept. 11, 2020), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

**Reimer**—Peter, 97 (b. Sept. 10, 1922; d. Aug. 15, 2020), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Steinman**—Leona Rachel (Gingerich), 98 (b. Dec. 7, 1921; d. Aug. 11, 2020), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Troester**—Hans, 88 (b. July 8, 1932; d. Aug. 8, 2020), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

**Wiebe**—Karen, (nee Wiebe), 46 (b. April 4, 1974; d. Aug. 17, 2020), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Wiens**—Louise Adelheid, 91 (b. June 25, 1929; d. Aug. 15, 2020), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.



## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Faith is so much more

By Kathy Giesbrecht

**T**he youth of the Mennonite church are often on my mind, and over the years, they have secured a place in my heart. It has been total joy and privilege to share time and space with them at national gatherings, regularly in my ministry within Mennonite Church Manitoba, and through the sharing of stories in *Canadian Mennonite*.

Youth were again in the forefront of my thoughts as I read Andrew Root's book: *Faith Formation in a Secular Age: Responding to the Church's Obsession with Youthfulness*. I'm a fan of Andrew Root, but this time around I found his writing agitating. Before me was the nature of the cultural waters we are in and how, in an attempt to navigate those waters, we (the church) have focused our faith formation efforts on how to get youth to affiliate with the church.

"Faith need not be defined any further than this willingness to affiliate through participation and claimed belief . . . faith has been stripped of transcendence and has little to nothing to do with mystery, transformation, and ontological encounter," Root writes.

What was agitating me was the truth I was seeing in this analysis, and how it was shedding light upon some of my own best efforts. I put the book down, processed my restless heart with some highly skilled mental Ping-Pong. Then with courage only the Spirit can provide, I picked the book up again.

By the time I arrived at the index, Root had convinced me to reclaim an understanding of faith formation that, at its core, holds that "to have faith is to have an experience of the person of Jesus Christ coming to your own person."

It's not as if I didn't know this—my own faith journey serves to remind me—but I had lost focus. Amid all my work on the evolving forms of youth ministry, the heart of the matter got buried. Root's words went from agitating to resonating.

So much more than me assimilating as a member of the church, or even participating in congregational life, faith is trusting that Jesus is near me, moving in me and through me. This is the lively faith life I long for our youth to experi-

ence: intimate, interactive and infusing.

Youth will need this kind of Jesus-right-here-right-now faith as they give themselves to the holy movements of reconciliation, climate action and compassion. I feel my responsibility to show the way, to tell our community's stories of being engaged by the Holy Spirit and of how we have wrestled with Jesus's words, ways and will.

Our kids are dealing with ancient questions and incredible challenges. They are showing up with their gifts of energy and idealism. It is my deepest hope that they know and feel that Jesus is right there with them, in their frustration, in their longing, in their despair and in their hope. I want to say to them, "Faith in Jesus is so much more than we may have told you."



*Kathy Giesbrecht serves with Mennonite Church Manitoba as associate director of leadership ministries.*

## A moment from yesterday



Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Lawrence Klippenstein / Mennonite Heritage Archives

LaVerna Klippenstein (1934-2014) fulfilled many roles, including mother, wife, teacher and author. After her marriage to Lawrence Klippenstein in 1956, the pair began working in the Métis community of Matheson Island, Man., for two years with Mennonite Pioneer Mission. She is pictured hanging laundry on Matheson Island. She completed a bachelor's degree from Goshen (Ind.) College, took classes in special education, and worked with disabled children in Minneapolis, Minn. In 1971, the family returned to Manitoba, where LaVerna continued researching and writing, actively collecting material about the Christian life and, for three decades, writing about it in magazines such as *Mennonite Reporter*, *Rejoice* and *Christian Living*. We celebrate many Mennonite authors but sometimes forget those who wrote for our community publications. Her materials are now in the Mennonite Heritage Archives.



## IN THE IMAGE

## Two stories clamour to be shared

Ed Olfert

The first story is as recent as a week ago last Sunday. As I stood to sing a somewhat familiar hymn in the morning worship service, the words came off the page to grasp my attention with unusual urgency. The song was “There’s A Wideness In God’s Mercy,” and the verse that snared me was the third. “But we make God’s love too narrow / by false limits of our own / and we magnify its strictness / with a zeal God will not own.”

As the song ended, my friend “Jim,” an incarcerated “lifer” out on a pass, leaned over and spoke quite audibly, “Next time somebody gives me a dirty look when I’m outside having a smoke, I’ll point them to this song!”

It was the highlight of my morning worship. I giggled for quite some time, while also being reminded that the words we sing shape us and sometimes convict us.

The second story has its roots in my childhood years. From grade two to seven, I attended school in the tiny village of Superb, in west central Saskatchewan. There was a smattering of German Mennonite families farming in the area, though we were a minority in school. Another family I remember well were the Zimmers, who, like us,

had a large family. The ages of the Zimmer children roughly matched our own. Zimmers were also of German descent. We built tree forts together, played soccer, tried out cusswords, smoked rolled up newsprint and indulged in general low-key mayhem in those formative years.

One thing we didn’t do was socialize outside of school. The Zimmers were Roman Catholic. Thinking of the day demanded that this be viewed with some suspicion. On Sunday, as I stood with siblings and cousins in the dusty yard of Superb Mennonite Church, waiting to enter the sanctuary, I would often see the crowded Zimmer station wagon rumble by, hissing out stones on the gravel road. They also were on their way to church, the Catholic church at the town down the road. And while we might give them a careful wave, somewhere in our thoughts lay the thought, “Why don’t they go to a real church?”

As the years went by, the oldest Zimmer boy, Glenn, disappeared into the Catholic education system. When he emerged, years later, we learned that he had become a priest. For some reason, it was important to me to maintain a relationship with Glenn. He was, after all, a fine fellow. Somehow, spiritual

differences grew small as friendship developed. The time came when Glenn was invited to share a sermon at Superb Mennonite. I clearly recall his first comment, delivered with some urgency. Glenn took us back to those years of the crowded Zimmer car motoring past the yard full of Mennonites and the thought he used to have, “Why don’t they go to a real church?” And then Glenn offered a heartfelt apology.

After the service, I couldn’t make my way to Glenn fast enough to return the apology. In the years that followed, Glenn became a significant mentor and encourager, someone who impacted my vocational choices. If God was really as compassionate as Glenn described at my cousin’s funeral, I needed to go there.

We often miss glimpses of God because of our narrow assumptions. We hold desperately to theologies that put limits on where and how those glimpses might be experienced. We picture heaven as a predictable enclave that reflects God to be exactly as we imagine. We sweep the richness of mystery and surprise and inclusion under the rug.

“But we make God’s love too narrow by false limits of our own, and we magnify its strictness with a zeal God will not own.”

Guiltily as charged. ❧



Ed Olfert (p2ptheo@sasktel.net) believes the words we sing shape us.

## Et cetera

## Kairos digital hub to empower land defenders in Canada

Kairos launched the Canadian phase of its digital platform, Mother Earth and Resource Extraction: Women Defending Land and Water (MERE Hub), on June 21, National Indigenous Peoples Day. MERE Hub ([bit.ly/-kairos-mere-hub](https://bit.ly/-kairos-mere-hub)) houses content and material to support research, advocacy, information sharing, and movement building regarding resource extraction and its gendered implications. The Canadian phase will highlight the current and historical role of women land defenders in protecting Mother Earth and provides links to maps, campaigns, guides, toolkits, and other published documents for and on land and water protection.





## MIND AND SOUL

# Living well together

Randolph Haluza-DeLay

Whether you know the word or not, shalom is central to the way most Mennonites think of what it means to be disciples faithful to Jesus. “Peace” is how the Hebrew word *shalom* is often translated.

Eminent theologian Walter Brueggemann says that shalom is the foundational message of the Bible, and the intended purpose of Jesus’ vision of the kingdom of God. He explains that shalom captures the “persistent vision of joy, well-being, harmony, and prosperity” and all the complexity and nuances that involve “love, loyalty, truth, grace, salvation, justice, blessings, righteousness.”

Wow—that is a lot of work for one word! Translating shalom simply as peace misses some of the word’s richness. Most importantly, shalom is applied; it means living well together in the land.

I recently had the opportunity to compare two books on shalom. Mennonite theologian Perry Yoder and American Indigenous biblical scholar Randy Woodley have much in common. But Woodley’s Indigenous perspective will particularly help non-Indigenous Mennonites develop broader notions of discipleship, faith, and peacemaking. It is

an example of the richness of diversity that God has allowed to develop within the world’s many cultures.

Usually, when we think about peace, we imagine peace among the humans in the world. Woodley extends shalom beyond the human community, to the entirety of the “community of creation.” He also addresses colonization and colonialism as ongoing barriers to shalom.

Yoder does not mention them, although his book also includes a strong call to change socioeconomic structures that short-circuit shalom. Shalom is the common good. It connects climate change, racial justice, COVID-19 health care and masks, caring families, mental health, and Indigenous-settler reconciliation. We are all better when all of us are well and healthy, and society is just, and when human usage does not overwhelm the world’s resources.

Both Woodley and Yoder emphasize that shalom includes all of material and spiritual needs, social relations, and moral character. Shalom is never individual—it is living well together. Woodley includes human beings, animals, and plants in these relations.

Shalom is liberation of all who are caught in oppression, whether that is

bondage to sin or to injustice—anything that reduces joy, well-being, harmony and prosperity.

The reason I use the phrase “living well together in the land” is that it requires us to ask questions of what is included in each of the words. What does living well mean? Who is included in the *we* living together? Being *in* the land puts these actual lived relations into concrete places. It shows that ecological sustainability and social justice are intrinsically and inextricably linked, which is God’s desire for shalom.

As a Christian, I am hopeful in Jesus and aware of the resources of our religious tradition. As a social scientist, I am keenly aware of the loads of research showing ways toward shalom. For example, social equality has benefits for the poor and the rich, according to solid research. Nonviolent strategies for building peaceful societies or preventing coups have been widely examined, tested, and implemented.

In the midst of these challenges, we would do well to remember that the goal is the process of living well together in the land. If the community of all creation is the “we” and shalom is equivalent to “living well,” then the land is the site of our mission, and we do it together. ❧



*Randolph Haluza-DeLay attends First Mennonite Church in Edmonton. A longer version of this article will appear in the*

*fall issue of Anabaptist Witness (anabaptistwitness.org).*

## Et cetera



### MCC worker delivers triplets

In January 1995, MCC service worker Margaret De Jong, left, stands with the family of triplets she delivered along the road outside Bwadlorens, Haiti. Mother Madame Apolon, her daughter Adlin, 9, and grandfather hold triplets Wilmer, Wilson and Eksen. De Jong served with MCC as a health educator in Haiti from 1991 to 1997, and as a representative for a medical assistance program in Haiti from 1999 to 2004.



Source: MCC / Photo by Linda Shelly

## TALES FROM THE UNENDING STORY

# Praying for the prophets

Joshua Penfold

I was sitting at the kitchen table, trying to read amidst my children having breakfast and building with Lego, and I read this verse: “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people, *Your sons and daughters will prophesy.* . .” (Joel 2:28).

I had been trying to find something from the text for my mind to mull over and ponder but instead, this verse tugged at my heart. I closed my eyes and pictured my daughters being filled with the Spirit and prophesying before me.

Now, remember that prophecy doesn't necessarily mean telling the future, for prophets are often not speaking of the future but of the present. More often than not prophets speak into the present with divine influence or focus. Prophets are God's mouth to God's people.

I sat and imagined my daughters speaking God's words, prophesying a word of truth to me, and it made me both hopeful and anxious. I wondered: are they experiencing God in our home in a way that will help them develop their own relationship with God? Will my attempt at a life of faith and the upbringing I've bestowed upon them give them the foundation to make what I hold dear in my life hold equal or

greater value in their own lives? Am I successfully educating them in the way of Jesus so that they will know what it means to follow him? Will the day come when, as the scriptures say, my daughters will prophesy? Lord, may it be so.

## I sat and imagined my daughters speaking God's words, prophesying a word of truth to me

In ways it already is. I get glimmers of it when their compassion is unprompted, when they can articulate something that reveals they've been absorbing things about my faith. They certainly speak truths to me in ways that I interpret as divine, but I wonder about their future. I worry that they don't see my spiritual practices because I usually do them alone. I wonder if my life is bearing visible fruit. I worry that I'm not teaching them well and passing on the faith.

God, I pray that my daughters will continue to blossom in their faith, that I will continue to grow in mine. Equip and empower me to pass on my faith to my girls in ways that they can see its

beauty and depth and struggle and wisdom and complexity and simplicity and value. I pray that they don't just see my faith as something to take or leave, but something to learn from, so that they can develop their own relationship with you. May my love for them and for you create a desire in them to pursue you. I long for the days when their passion and fervour and devotion and compassion and wisdom surpass mine, and I can learn from them and grow with them. I pray that my faith might strengthen them, and that their faith might soon encourage and challenge me. I pray you take my meagre offerings and multiply them into their lives that they might grow despite my faith failings and flaws. I offer my children to you that you might take them where I cannot. Bless them, teach them, carry them, love them, pour out your Spirit on them, I pray. ☩



Joshua Penfold ([penfoldjoshua@gmail.com](mailto:penfoldjoshua@gmail.com)) has two daughters that he hopes will one day prophesy with the same

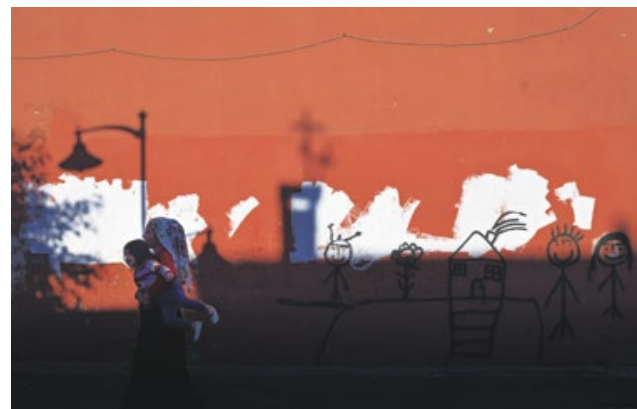
fervor they currently use when complaining and squabbling.

## Et cetera

### Agreement violates the Canadian Charter of Rights

The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) is pleased that the July 22, 2020, Federal Court of Canada ruling that sending refugee claimants back to the United States under the Safe Third Country Agreement violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Principles of Justice. At its May 2017 meeting, the Council's governing board decided to support the effort to challenge the Safe Third Country Agreement under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The CCC has been working closely with the Canadian Council for Refugees and Amnesty International to bring about this outcome.

Source: The Canadian Council of Churches



# Communion and community during COVID-19

By: Donita Wiebe-Neufeld  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

For many congregants, the invitation to receive communion at Edmonton's First Mennonite Church on Sunday Sept. 27 would mark the first time they had physically set foot in the building for six months. For Maggie Martens it was "an invitation I wasn't going to pass up." Martens lives alone and finds that Zoom communion via computer is missing something important—the community that is such a vital part of being the church together.

Upon entering the sanctuary, Martens spent time sitting in her usual spot. Being in the familiar pew, she says, "it just felt like I had arms around me. My friends, God, and our church community." Martens greatly appreciated the opportunity to be physically present with a few others during communion while still feeling safe. "Everything was being done so responsibly," she said.

The procedure for communion was anything but familiar. Those wishing to participate called ahead to schedule a time so that physical distance could be easily observed. Face masks, hand sanitizing, a brief health questionnaire, and sign-in preceded entry into the sanctuary. The pastor or deacon serving communion wore gloves and used tongs to handle the elements. The comments read to welcome participants to the table affirmed, "Communion is an act of the community. . . we recognize that in these special circumstances, we are surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses and are connected spiritually to these larger communities."

Mildred and Ernie Wiens also came to receive communion. "It was kind of nice to walk into the building, so nice and peaceful," Ernie said. Entering the sanctuary, they went to look at the memorial board where names of members who have passed away are mounted on small plaques. Ernie works with this memorial, ensuring that

it is kept up to date. He said he looked "to remind myself of the names on the board and the names that have been placed on there in the last while."

First Mennonite, like many other

Embracing, and Embodying Christ (E3), they were inspired to invite congregants to physically re-enter the church, even though in-person services are still not happening. The E3 worship materials



PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

**Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, executive minister of Mennonite Church Alberta, receives communion from deacon Debbie Baergen at Edmonton First Mennonite.**

churches, has had to find creative ways to celebrate lives and conduct funerals while restrictions prevent the normal rituals and gatherings that allow families and congregations to mourn and find comfort together. "We can't forget them," Wiens said.

First Mennonite's worship service has been exclusively online since the end of March and, until September, the communion services were all virtual as well. When Pastor Craig Neufeld and the worship team saw the Sept. 27 materials suggested by Mennonite Church Alberta for its three-year plan for Encountering,

suggested that each of the 12 churches of MCA set up a tree visual in their buildings and invite people to make a commitment (small or large) to grow spiritually, to write this on a paper leaf, and to go to their church to put their leaf on the visual.

The E3 planning group realized that this could be the first time in months that many people would set foot in their buildings. Pastor Neufeld said that adding communion to this invitation to First Mennonite was a way of "making the return that much more meaningful." ❧



# MCC Ontario AGM goes virtual

*Bylaw changes and impact of COVID-19 discussed*

By Janet Bauman  
Eastern Canada correspondent

**M**ennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO) held its annual general meeting (AGM) online on Sept. 21, 2020. John Head, executive director, reported that most targets in the organization's five-year strategic plan were met. He said the organization made "strides in effective communication" especially on digital platforms, it increased its capacity in refugee resettlement since 2015, and it expanded the reach of its restorative justice programming, which is now used in all the prisons in Zambia.

Head recognized that COVID-19 meant budget revisions across the organization but expressed gratitude that donors continued to respond generously. He acknowledged that Thrift Shop staff and volunteers faced increased stress due to the closing and then careful re-opening of their stores according to pandemic protocols.

Delegates to the AGM passed a motion to edit the membership bylaws. Congregations are no longer members. Instead members are now defined in two "classes:" Anabaptist conferences; and directors and officers. Fifty percent support from both classes is required to pass regular motions. In the past, the AGM did not have strong representation from congregations, which meant the board and employees could control voting. It is hoped the change will bring wider engagement from the constituency as each conference will appoint two delegates to the AGM. By comparison, MCCO's fall peace conference draws strong support from constituent congregations.

Kim Lester, associate executive director, acknowledged that MCC's centennial celebrations were overshadowed by the pandemic, but she reminded delegates that MCC had "humble beginnings" in difficult times. She highlighted several centennial initiatives like Share the Table



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MCC

*In 1945, Alice Snyder (pictured here) took over from her mother as the manager of MCC's cutting room, which had been moved to Kitchener, not far from where the MCC Ontario offices stand today. She is part of the 100-year legacy of serving in the name of Christ.*

(a food sharing program) and Roots (an opportunity to plant a commemorative tree), and she expressed gratitude for generous support and legacy gifts.

As MCCO looks ahead to its next five-year strategic plan, it will adapt these broader goals to its Ontario context:

1. **Increase the** capacity of its partners to help uprooted and vulnerable people
2. **Improve communication** with churches and constituents
3. **Increase peacebuilding** and justice work
4. **Care for** God's creation and support communities harmed by climate change

One ongoing issue to address going forward is the difficulty in recruiting international service workers. ❧



PHOTO: KEN OGASAWARA

*MCC has thousands of volunteers creating kits and comforters to be shipped around the world. Here Kristen Berg from Breslau (Ont.) Mennonite Church works on one of the 9,504 comforters created as part of an international effort called the Great Winter Warm-up to mark MCC's centennial.*

# COVID-19 global response fund helps more Global South churches

Mennonite World Conference

“I have seen entire families in the garbage dumps looking to quench their hunger. I have also watched with sadness as they return the elderly from the hospitals because there are no possibilities to attend them, nor medicines to supply them,” said Erwin Francisco Mirabal González, a Mennonite pastor in Venezuela. “We pray to the Lord for strength to endure and not to resign ourselves, confidence to keep our work in the midst of adversity, willingness to continue proclaiming the gospel...and to experience his shalom.”

He coordinated COVID-19 relief for his church in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network and the Colombian Mennonite Church until he became infected and died.

The Mennonite World Conference (MWC) COVID-19 Inter-agency Task Force has approved 35 relief proposals so far, with more approvals in process, including assistance for Mennonites in Venezuela. With the assistance of MWC’s Global Church Sharing Fund, local congregations will bring relief to thousands of families, sharing the love of Christ in a tangible way with church members and their neighbours suffering hunger and lost income. Some efforts:

- **Food and** hygiene kits for 500 households in five regions in Brazil.
- **Food aid** and emotional and spiritual support for 300 men and women in Honduras.
- **Dry rations**, seed grants for small business and an awareness campaign for 700 villagers in four areas of Bihar, India.
- **Short- and long-term** labour opportunities for 250 men and women through agricultural farm development in Parapat, India.
- **Food and** hygiene kits for 3,000 families in six regions of Bihar, India, and 300 landless agricultural labourers in Tamil Nadu, India.
- **Equipping** 20 farming families in three regions of Uganda.

- **Community-based nutritional**, educational and health-care support for commercial sex workers in Ethiopia.
- **Installing 104** handwashing stations in public spaces outside church buildings and distributing food to 90 families in Indonesia.
- **Community-health education** and food relief for thousands of men and women, and purchasing thermometers for community health survey in Nigeria.
- **Equipping 250** households with skills and tools for fruit and vegetable production in Sierra Leone.
- **School support** for children, a lunch program for the elderly, sanitation material distribution and economic activities in Venezuela.
- **Public awareness** campaign and hygiene materials to prevent infection and to mitigate gender-based violence in households in Zimbabwe.

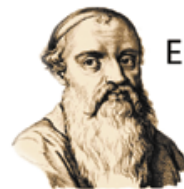
“In most cases, church members have established relationships with their most vulnerable neighbours,” says Henk Stenvers, the secretary of MWC’s Deacons Commission. “Giving out food and supplies builds on those connections and underscores the message of the love of Jesus through help in time of need and scarcity.”

Job losses and food scarcity affect church members as well.

“Assistance from the Global Church Sharing Fund empowers church leaders and their congregations to serve their members and neighbours in a time of multiple crises: pandemic, economic downturn, environmental disaster,” says Joji Pantoja, a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker who chairs the task force and MWC’s Peace Commission.

Mennonite World Conference formed the COVID-19 task force with the support of more than 10 global Anabaptist agencies to respond to the needs arising from the pandemic in the global south. Under the leadership of the Deacons

(Continued on page 16)



$E^3 = MC^A$

Encountering, Embracing, Embodying Christ  
In life, in community, in the world



## Encountering Christ in Life

LaVerna Elliot  
Foothills Mennonite Church

When the E3 focus for the year was on deepening our faith through prayer, my interest was piqued. I took the personal practices and highlighted a few of them -- committing to 5-20 minutes prayer daily, reading a book on prayer, practising Sabbath. Over previous years I had taken up the challenge of beginning a gratitude journal.

I found that these new practices were just that. By practicing it daily I was making a new habit that would affect me in more profound ways than I could have imagined.

The E3 Action Plan:  
Living into God’s Call



Mennonite Church  
Alberta



*(Continued from page 15)*

Commission and delegates from around the world, the team determines the criteria of accountability and coordinates responses to project proposals. This inter-agency response maximizes the strength of diverse organizations, builds on existing networks of primary relationships and mitigates competition for scarce funds. ❧

To learn more, visit [canadianmennonite.org/globalsharing](http://canadianmennonite.org/globalsharing).

### ❧ Briefly noted

#### Camps with Meaning lays off staff due to COVID-19

MANITOBA—As of Sept. 1, seven Camps with Meaning (CwM) staff members have been temporarily laid off: Dorothy Fontaine, Janet Peters, Elisabeth Franz-Warkentin, Paul Dueck, Linda Dueck, Jake Fehr and Alfridie Braun. Mennonite Church Manitoba's camping ministry has experienced a significant financial deficit caused by COVID-19. Camp Assiniboia, one of the CwM locations, has had a dramatic decrease in rental bookings, which make up a large portion of the camp's income. Rick Neufeld, director of leadership ministry and interim executive minister, said it's been difficult to see the beautiful camp facilities empty and that he misses colleagues in the office. "The impact is large and very close to us." Some staff members will work on an as-needed basis in order to host groups at the camp, which is still available to rent. Layoffs are effective until the end of 2020 and will be reassessed when it is clearer what pandemic-related restrictions will look like in the new year. "It is our intention to return everyone back to their position if and when it is feasible to do so," said MC Manitoba in a news release. Increasing rentals at Camp Assiniboia will be crucial to returning staff to work. Information about facilities and rates is available at [www.campswithmeaning.org](http://www.campswithmeaning.org).

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

### ❧ Briefly noted

#### Release dates for *Voices Together* announced

MennoMedia will begin shipping *Voices Together* print products in November but most digital products will be available in mid-October 2020. On Oct. 19, the app versions of the pew edition, the accompaniment edition, and the worship leader edition will be available as in-app purchases. This app is available in the Hymnals app for both iOS phones and iPads. MennoMedia previously advertised that the app was also available for Android tablets. Because the developer is phasing out the Android version of the Hymnals app and the longevity of the Android app cannot be guaranteed, MennoMedia recommends purchasing the app versions for iOS devices only. The ebook version of the worship leader edition can be purchased from the MennoMedia webstore. "Shipping print products in November means we are in the peak shipping season," says Amy Gingerich, MennoMedia publisher. Shipping could take up to 25 days because of issues related to COVID-19 combined with the high shipping volume expected during the holiday season. The delayed arrival of print products means the *Voices Together* launch event will be also be delayed. The virtual celebration is now scheduled for 5–7:00 p.m. ET on Sun., Dec. 13. Taking place via Zoom, it will be a time to worship with new songs and resources, hear stories, and offer blessings for *Voices Together* and all who receive it. There will also be a brief overview of the process and a time for questions with committee members.

—MENNOMEDIA



PHOTO BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

**The parking lot of the MCC Centre in Abbotsford, B.C., turned into a temporary outdoor kitchen and drive-through food service Sept. 20, with 285 cars coming to pick up pre-ordered food. Mennonite Central Committee B.C. had to cancel its annual Festival for World Relief due to COVID-19, but organizers adapted by preparing some favourite foods for pick up: watermelon and roll kuchen, portzelky, or vareniki with farmers' sausage. A series of events over the weekend, including three cyclathons, a plant sale and quilting sales, as well as the Festival-to-Go food sale brought in over \$550,000. This year's funds were designated for the Democratic Republic of Congo.**



# MWC postpones Assembly 17

Mennonite World Conference

“Like the Israelites in the desert, as recorded in the Book of Numbers, we’re on a journey together, trusting in God’s daily provision and presence,” said J. Nelson Kraybill, president of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), to open the second set of online meetings of the Executive Committee.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused unexpected turns in the journey of MWC. Considering the recommendation of the National Advisory Committee of the host country, the Executive Committee agreed to postpone the global assembly planned for Indonesia until 2022. Timing and venue will remain the same.

The Executive Committee agreed by consensus on a proposal to extend the terms for members of the General Council, Executive Committee and MWC officers by one year, until the new assembly date. The matter proceeds to General Council



members via email for final approval.

Financially, giving is in line with previous years at this point, Len Rempel, MWC’s chief operations officer, reported. Expenses are below budget due to reduced travel; however, Fair Share contributions from national churches have been coming in slower than anticipated.

“Some parts of the world have entered into recession due to the pandemic. This may impact giving from individuals, as well as member churches’ ability to meet their commitments later in the year,” Rempel said.

The Executive Committee also approved changes to the Global Church Sharing

Fund accounts: the newly formed Creation Care Task Force will be entrusted with use of the carbon offset fund originally collected under auspices of the Global Church Sharing Fund. The usual management fee will not apply to the COVID-19 response fund, so all donations can go directly to grants to meet needs for food, hygiene items and health education in countries of the Global South.

A proposal to change the name of Mennonite World Conference, to be more inclusive of all its Anabaptist members and its function as a global communion (not merely a periodic event), remains under discussion.

“We have a goal and that is the Kingdom of God,” said Wieteke vanderMolen, Executive Committee representative for Europe. “Sometimes it is easy going, along with good friends. Sometimes one gets lost and lonely. But we keep on going.”

**MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA STUDY CONFERENCE 2020**  
**Saturday Oct 24**

## Table Talk:

*Does the church still have legs?*

*Join our nationwide community of faith as we discern what it means to be the church together. Faculty from our four affiliated schools share from across their tables...*

**Register:**  
[mennonitechurch.ca/tabletalk2020](http://mennonitechurch.ca/tabletalk2020)  
CONFERENCE HOSTED ON ZOOM

<p><b>PLENARY SPEAKER:</b></p> <p><b>Sara Wenger Shenk</b> <i>President Emerita, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary</i></p>	<p><b>HOST:</b></p> <p><b>Kim Penner</b> <i>Christian Ethics, Conrad Grebel University College</i></p>	<p><b>GUEST SPEAKERS:</b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p><b>Jeremy Bergen</b> <i>Religious and Theological Studies</i></p> <p><b>Bryan Born</b> <i>Missiology</i></p> <p><b>Irma Fast Dueck</b> <i>Practical Theology</i></p> </div> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p><b>Gerald Gerbrandt</b> <i>Biblical and Theological Studies</i></p> <p><b>Sheila Klassen-Wiebe</b> <i>New Testament</i></p> <p><b>Jesse Nickel</b> <i>Biblical Studies</i></p> </div> </div>
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# Niagara churches reopening

By Maria H. Klassen  
St. Catharines, Ont.

**V**ineland (Ont.) United Mennonite Church plans to continue meeting virtually for worship through September, using YouTube video. According to pastor Louise Wideman, the church is planning a cautious tiered approach to reopening. The first step will be to install equipment for livestreaming the service. The next stage will include inviting small groups to join for in-person worship. Eventually, the church hopes to meet corporately, but this will not happen until after the new year. Of course, all of these plans depend on

Niagara (Ont.) United Mennonite Church held a first soft-launch in-sanctuary service on Sept. 13, reports Daniel Janzen, pastor. Congregants are asked to pre-register so numbers can be estimated and to contact trace if needed. With differing advice regarding singing, the congregation has chosen a cautious approach and is not singing at this time.

Fellowship is another joyful activity but also carries greater risk indoors, so people are asked to safely gather for conversation outside. Youth programs are kicking off

Services have been held in the sanctuary since the end of July, every other Sunday. The Good Shepherd Anglican church shares the sanctuary with Grace, and they meet on alternate Sundays. Currently there is no coffee time after the service, but people mingle in the parking lot, wearing masks and keeping a safe distance.

According to Ron Funk of The First Mennonite Church in Vineland, they reopened the church building for worship services beginning Aug. 15, however they also continue to offer a video conferencing option. The sanctuary chairs are set into small clusters to accommodate families, couples and singles, with two-metre spacing. Hand sanitizer is offered to everyone arriving and leaving and extra masks are available. Besides having the church completely cleaned on Saturdays, the ushers also sanitize surfaces such as handrails and door handles on Sunday morning.

As health guidelines permit, they plan to continue meeting in person on Sundays, while offering the services via Zoom for at least the near future.

Pastor Herb Sawatzky at Bethany Mennonite Church in Virgil is planning to restart in-person worship services on Oct. 4. Livestreaming will continue for those wishing to participate but are not comfortable attending in person. As well as registering ahead of time, those attending in person will be screened by a volunteer before entering. To avoid congestion, they are asked to show up alphabetically, at a scheduled time. There will be no congregational singing, but the service will include solos and duets—with singers masked, behind screens, and 20 feet from the nearest seated pews. They are planning for communion on Thanksgiving with individualized, pre-sealed communion sets that worshippers will pick up as they enter the sanctuary. Those worshipping from home are encouraged to create their own worship space and communion so that they can all worship together. ☸



PHOTO CREDIT: RACHAEL PETERS

*Niagara (Ont.) United Mennonite Church began in-person worship on Sept. 13, 2020.*

public health regulations.

Nick Schuurman, pastor of St. Catharines (Ont.) United Mennonite Church, says they have been holding in-person services since Sept. 6. To limit risk and accommodate participation, services for seniors and younger generations are scheduled for alternating Sundays. Recordings of services and mail-outs of sermons continue to be appreciated by those unable to attend. A small number of weekday programs are set to begin, either online or with precautions in place, but many activities will continue to remain on hold for the time being.

again in September and will be a mixture of socially distanced outdoor events and interactive online activities. Plans call for Sunday school to launch virtually in October, with hopes of adding in-person gatherings in the future.

Doug Schulz, co-pastor at Grace Mennonite Church in St. Catharines, listed the core practices of spacing, sanitizing and wearing masks as the congregation meets in the church building. Other details include taking attendance, shorter services, humming or quiet singing, an offering box at the door, and foyer off-limits (except ramp and washroom access).



# Songs of hope 'under God's wing'

By Angelika Dawson  
Communitas Supportive Care Society  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

There's a festive atmosphere at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Centre every Thursday evening. The barbecues are going and long tables are set up to serve a full meal, complete with pie for dessert. As they wait for the meal to begin with a prayer of grace, people who are lined up (socially distanced) are having conversations, sharing a laugh or two. Over all of this is the sound of music played by two men, John and Daniel.

The two have known one another for several years. Last year, John came to live with Daniel's family through a home-share arrangement with the Communitas Supportive Care Society. They have been making music together for years, first at Circle of Friends, and now, at MCC's weekly barbecue. This event has grown since it began in 2014 to include a meal, hot showers, gently used clothing and other services to people who are street entrenched. For Daniel and John, it's an opportunity to use their musical gifts for encouragement. "Our goal is to bring hope through our music," Daniel says.



COMMUNITAS PHOTO BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

**John and Daniel bring their music to the cause at the weekly MCC B.C. barbecue for people in Abbotsford who are street entrenched.**

John agrees. "It's very meaningful to be able to play for people and share our music. It's also a lot of fun!"

Those who attend the barbecue appreciate the variety of services available to them. Larry, who also receives services through Communitas's Brain Injury

Drop-In, comes to the barbecue regularly. Volunteers know him by name and are aware of his dietary challenges, bringing him a customized plate of food. He also enjoys the music Daniel and John provide.

"It's really great what they do here," Larry says.

Daniel and John purposefully choose gospel songs that reflect the joy, peace and comfort of their Christian faith. Daniel has sensed that during this pandemic there is an added layer of fear to lives that are already vulnerable. It is what inspires them to share their songs.

"I know that, for me, no one can bring comfort like Jesus can. There is no other place to be than under God's wing," Daniel says.

For Daniel and John, making music together brings them closer together as friends. The opportunity to use their gifts to bring some joy and comfort to others is what inspires them to continue. They invite others to participate with them.

"If we can bring a sense of hope by what we do, then that makes all the difference," Daniel says. ☿



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# Friends celebrate Leonard Doell's long service with MCC

Story and photos by Donna Schulz  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATOON, SASK.

**W**hen Leonard Doell was hired as Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan's Native Concerns program coordinator in 1996, he was told his job was "to drink tea with elders." It was a job description he took to heart.

After 24 years, Doell retired in June. On Aug. 21, colleagues and friends gathered on the lawn outside Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon to honour him and celebrate his contributions to the work of reconciliation.

"Leonard invested in genuine relationships with all kinds of people," says MCC Saskatchewan executive director Eileen Klassen Hamm. "We learned a lot from him about what it means to be in relationships with people."

Former executive director Bruno Baerg also sees Doell's work as that of building relationships. "He wanted to walk in solidarity with people," says Baerg. "He always

had a long-term understanding."

This long-term understanding is best seen in Doell's walk with the Young Chippewyan people. In 1977, long before his employment with MCC, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada hired Doell to undertake a three-month research project into the Young Chippewyan Band and their claim to land west of Laird, Sask., land that was owned by Mennonite farmers. Doell says this project became "a lifetime story" that he was able to continue working on in his role with MCC.

"Leonard walked with the Young Chippewyan band, trying to understand what they were looking for," says Baerg. "When people started saying things that got [other] people a little bit hot, he talked to both sides to find out what they wanted." Doell's journey with the Young Chippewyan lasted more than 30 years, says Baerg, and was "a key demonstration of

how he worked."

"It would have been enough to deter others," says Baerg, "but he just kept working. He stayed the course."

In the early days of his work with MCC, Doell assigned volunteers to a number of gardening projects in northern communities. He also worked with a nurse in Sandy Bay, Sask., to try to build a bridge between modern medicine and traditional healers. Later, Doell worked with Parliament Mennonite Brethren Church in Regina to support the Healing Hearts Ministry for men trying to exit gang life.

Doell recalls how the Truth and Reconciliation Commission national event, held in Saskatoon in 2012, helped change Mennonite perceptions of Indigenous people.

"Our people began to learn about residential schools and about their impact on First Nations," he says. "That really changed our understandings."

Conversations about land claims and residential schools were challenging, but, says Klassen Hamm, Doell never shied away from them. "He just waded into those things," she says. "He took another step and then that step would illuminate the next step. He wasn't afraid of complexity."

Persistence and perseverance also characterized Doell's work, says Klassen Hamm.

"He cajoled us all—his colleagues, the churches—to take risks for justice," she says. "He had a long vision."

Doell is the first to admit that things didn't always go well. "Efforts toward reconciliation can be very messy and complex," he says. "Many times we didn't get things right." Some of the mistakes had to do with failure to follow protocol and ceremony.

"Gently people reminded me that, when you're coming seeking guidance, it's important to bring tobacco," says



*Leonard Doell (far left) stands with Ray Funk, Jason Johnson, George Kingfisher and Marshall Williams at the Spruce River Folk Festival near Spruce Home, Sask. in 2019. The five men were all part of the film, Reserve 107, which depicts the coming together of Mennonite, Lutheran and Young Chippewyan people in 2006.*



Leonard Doell speaks with Young Chippewyan Chief Sylvia Weenie during the Treaty Six 140th anniversary celebration at Stoney Knoll in 2016.

Doell. “That was a life-changer in terms of opening doors.” Doell’s experiences with Indigenous people taught him that the process is as important as the end result. “Nothing went fast,” he says. “You had to be prepared for the pipe. But when we took the time—even when the whole thing took longer—it was a richer experience.

Everybody had been heard and validated.” Today the program, known as Indigenous Neighbours, works with partner organizations, including Mennonite Church Saskatchewan’s Walking the Path Committee, Mennonite Church Canada’s Indigenous-Settler Relations program and various reconciliation groups in the

province.

Another facet of Doell’s work with MCC was helping Low German-speaking Mennonites who were returning to Saskatchewan from Mexico. He found these Mexican Mennonites had much in common with his Indigenous friends. Both groups, he says, “have an appreciation for their own history, culture and language” and both emphasize community, kinship and family. Through broken treaties and broken promises, both groups have experienced disappointment with governments.

Klassen Hamm says that Doell “always put himself in a learning stance.” She adds, “He learned from many different people. He knew that that was his task.”

Baerg notes that Doell never sought attention for himself but rather tried to make sure others were heard. “He wanted people to articulate their own concerns, and he would just work with them quietly and consistently,” says Baerg.

Doell’s own response bears witness to his deep faith in God. “I often felt in over my head,” he says, “but I trusted that God had brought me there for a purpose.”

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## News brief

### Local effort benefits others



PHOTO BY INGRID KRAHN

**Mary Krahn crochets a milk-bag mat.**

ST. CATHARINES, ONT.—After many years of making comforters, Mary Krahn, a senior member of St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, turned her time and talents to crocheting mats from milk bags. Children from a local school collect thousands of milk bags for her—400 are needed to make one mat—and her son-in-law helps her cut the bags into strips. She has crocheted more than 600 mats. The last batch of approximately 15 mats were given to Start Me Up Niagara. Others have been delivered to Christian Gleaners and milkbagsunlimited.ca in Toronto, which shipped them to Third World countries, including Haiti. The New Apostolic Church in St. Catharines has distributed some of her mats to homeless people in Hamilton and Toronto. “By helping others, it helps me,” says Krahn. “It gives me a purpose, and satisfaction, helping others less fortunate than me.” The mats keep the milk bags out of landfill sites, they don’t break down in the sun, they don’t hold odour or moisture, they can easily be hosed down for cleaning, and they have a life span of 25 years.

—BY MARIA H. KLASSEN



PHOTO COURTESY OF MC MANITOBA / TEXT BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

**On Aug. 30, Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Winnipeg installed its pastor, Hoa Van Chau (center front). Standing with him is wife, Lan. Around 40 people of all ages—approximately the size of the congregation—celebrated together. Rick Neufeld, Mennonite Church Manitoba’s director of leadership ministry and interim executive minister, represented the regional church at the service. Chau was pastor of the church from 2010 to 2018 and retired afterwards. However, when the congregation struggled to find another pastor, it called Chau back to ministry and are thankful for his willingness to serve another term. The church has been gathering for almost 40 years, and moved into its current building in downtown Winnipeg in 1997.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF PEACE CHURCH ON 52ND

**Adam Back, co-pastor at Peace Church on 52nd in Vancouver, was ordained during a Sunday morning worship service on Sept. 20 held outside the church’s Community Hub building. Here fellow co-pastor Lydia Cruttwell, left, offers a blessing to Back along with his wife Charlene and infant daughter Madeleine. Back wears a stole from Guatemala given to Cruttwell by the congregation’s previous pastor, Ingrid Schultz. Garry Janzen, Mennonite Church B.C. executive minister, officiated at the ordination, along with Cruttwell, Ross Hastings (Regent College professor and Adam Back’s mentor) with a handful of Peace Church on 52nd’s congregation attending in person. Using Zoom, the greater church community also played a role in reading scripture and “virtually” laying hands over Back in prayer. Holding the service outdoors made it easier to**

**follow COVID-19 protocols, and the location represented Back’s vision that the church not be defined by four walls but to be an open welcoming table in the community.**



## FOCUS ON

## Education

# Sarah Johnson honoured as distinguished alumna

Conrad Grebel University College  
Waterloo, Ont.

Theology scholar Sarah Kathleen Johnson has always been interested in religion and Christian worship. In her pursuit of education, her many different involvements at Conrad Grebel University College deepened, clarified and expanded those interests through courses, innovative chapel experiences and late-night conversations.

Because of her inspiring creativity, thoughtful dedication and unique contributions to the Mennonite church, Grebel's alumni committee has selected Sarah Kathleen Johnson (BA 2007, MTS 2008) as the recipient of its 2020 Distinguished Alumni Service Award.

Johnson is currently completing a doctorate in liturgical studies at University of Notre Dame, Ind. She is a visiting fellow at the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre and her dissertation title is "The roles of Christian ritual in increasingly nonreligious and religiously diverse social contexts."

"Sarah's work bridges the academy and the church, as is evidenced not only in her leadership of the *Voices Together* hymnal project," says Kyle Gingerich Hiebert, the theological centre's director, "but also in her doctoral dissertation, which is an ethnographic study at the intersection of liturgical studies and sociology of religion."

Johnson's research and expertise has been employed by MennoMedia in the development of *Voices Together*, the new Mennonite hymnal from MennoMedia. In a nomination letter to Grebel's alumni committee, Amy Gingrich, executive director of MennoMedia, commented on Johnson's diligence. "In addition to curating an expansive set of written worship resources, Sarah crafted a vision for worship resources that included the introduction of visual art in the hymnal as a way to broaden the experience of



**Sarah Kathleen Johnson**

worship resources in our collection."

Jeremy Bergen, director of theological studies at Grebel, adds: "In her leadership role for *Voices Together*, Johnson has been at the centre of a very careful process of listening to the diversity of expressions across our churches, examining a dizzying array of potential hymns and worship resources for inclusion, and charting a way forward that is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition and sensitive to present context."

"It has been profoundly rewarding," says Johnson, "to facilitate a collaborative process that brings people together from across the church for important

conversations about who we are, where we come from and who we are called to be in the years ahead, and especially to consider how these questions about identity and purpose intersect in concrete and embodied ways with what we sing and pray and do when we gather for worship."

Johnson has also worked with a binational team of volunteers to develop *Together in Worship*, a website designed to support Anabaptist leaders with free online resources such as lyrics, prayers and visuals.

"It is hard to imagine what it would be like to work on *Voices Together* and *Together in Worship* without the formation I received at Grebel," Johnson says.

After graduating from Grebel, she has been a guest lecturer in classes, a teacher of several Anabaptist Learning Workshops and a workshop leader at the Ontario Mennonite Music Camp, and has been published in *The Conrad Grebel Review*.

The 2020 Distinguished Alumni Award will be presented in the 2020-21 academic year. ❧

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## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

# Bursary connects students to their faith

By Joanne De Jong  
Alberta correspondent

“Ever since I was a little girl, I knew I wanted to attend a Mennonite post-secondary institution,” says Danika Warkentin, one of seven recipients of this year’s Mennonite Church Alberta student bursary.



**Danika Warkentin**

In order to receive the bursary, applicants must belong to an MC Alberta congregation and have successfully enrolled in a Mennonite or Anabaptist post-secondary institution.

Warkentin has just begun her first year at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), following in the footsteps of her parents, who both attended the school over 20 years ago. She shares how her spiritual development has been shaped by living in Burkina Faso as a child, being one of the few young people at Springridge Mennonite Church in Pincher Creek, Alta., and most of all, by the faithful witness of her mom.

Warkentin loves her church. “Everyone is there voluntarily, not because they have to be, like in school, so community is different—people want to know you.” She appreciates that “there is a specific time to worship God, that we can put things aside and work on deepening our relationships with God together.”

Her advice to churches who want to keep young people in the community is to “make youth feel from a really young age that they’re part of the church—don’t be afraid to give youth responsibilities.” Warkentin has been playing piano at Springridge since she was 12 years old and later took on the role of Sunday school teacher for the younger children.

Now she is part of a new community at CMU. “Now that I’m here it’s easy to make connections—like with Cassidy [Brown] whom I already knew from Camp Valaqua.”

Brown is from Bergthal Mennonite Church in Didsbury, Alta., and also received a MC Alberta bursary this year. She says, “My decision to attend an Anabaptist post-secondary school began as a curiosity about my faith and a yearning for intentional community and has blossomed into a yearning to integrate my faith with my education.” She especially enjoys learning about the integration of Anabaptism and science.

Anne Retzlaff, from Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary, Alta., is entering her second year at Columbia Bible College (CBC). Another bursary recipient, she talks about how she was impacted by a course last year entitled Introduction to Christian Theology. “It generated more questions than I had before and instilled in me a yearning to learn more about the doctrine and practices of Mennonite faith.”

She also says, “I look upon a second year at this school to help cultivate those views further and become more fully aware of the different ways in which I can lead a Christian life outside the walls and boundaries of CBC or the walls and community of a church.”

Interestingly, the bursary Retzlaff and others received came after the sale of the Swift Current Bible Institute (SCBI), which had the goal of encouraging young people to explore mission and Mennonite theology. The institute was begun in 1936, and youth were encouraged to attend classes there for five-and-a-half months as a way of being rooted and disciplined in their faith.

SCBI closed its doors in 1996 and the property was sold in 1997. At its meeting in 1998, the Conference of Mennonites of Alberta decided to use a portion of the proceeds to pay off part of the land purchase of Camp Valaqua and to set up a tuition assistance program for young people wishing to study at Mennonite institutions.

Since then at least 150 young people have benefited from the MC Alberta student bursary.

After completing a year at CMU, Bryant Neufeldt from Foothills Mennonite Church says the main reason he chose to go back to CMU is the people. “The students that are now my friends have made CMU feel like home, and they have challenged and uplifted my faith in God.”



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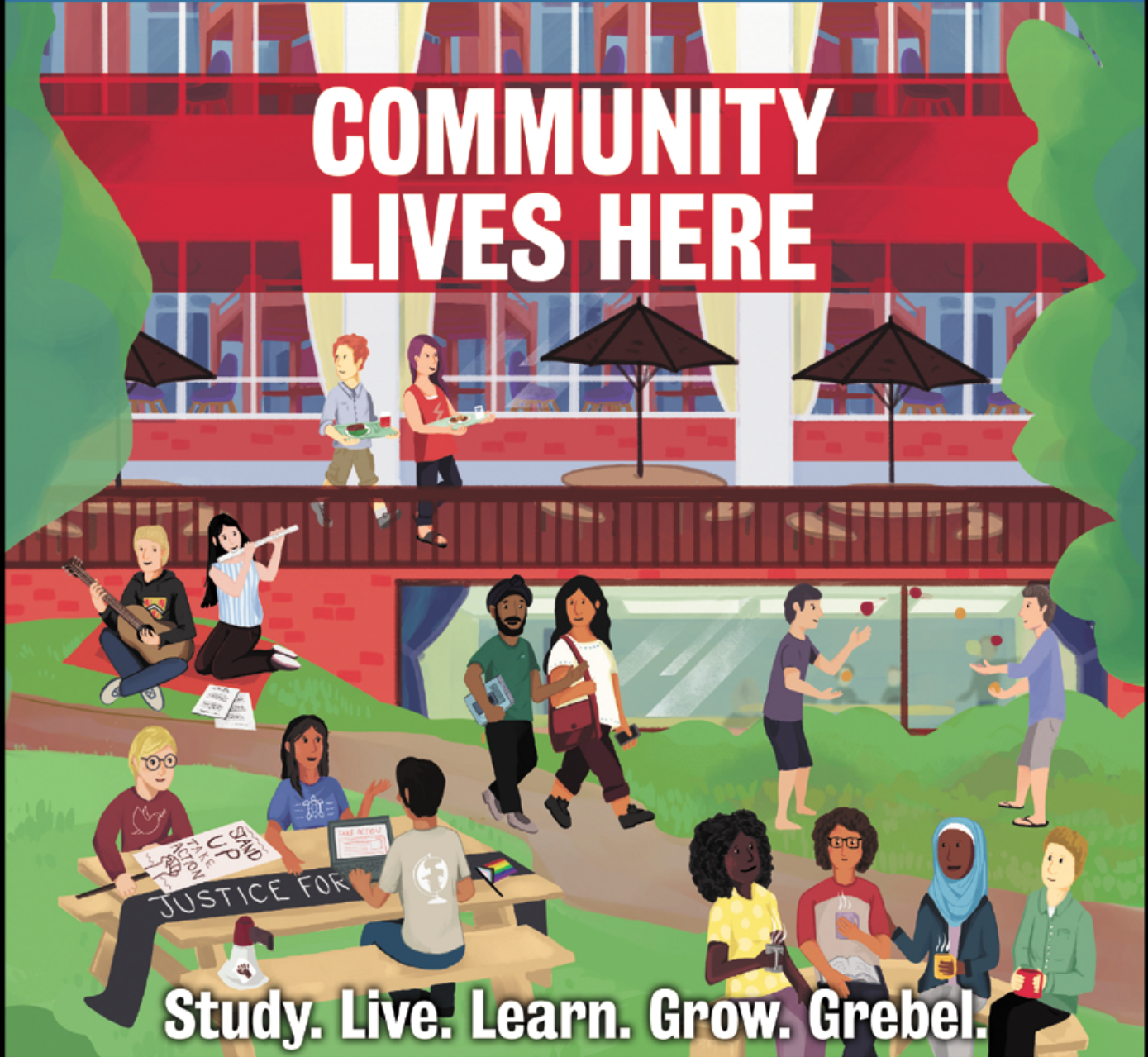
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## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

# CBC navigates fall class restart

Story and photo by Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Life at Columbia Bible College (CBC) looks quite different than it did back in mid-March, when classes suddenly ended and students were sent home due to COVID-19. After six months of inactivity, CBC has reopened for in-person classes. Staff were busy over the summer preparing the campus for a safe return, balancing residence life, instructional space, and general community living.

“We want to be in the same space and do it safely,” says Academic Dean Gil Dueck. He notes that while some schools have resorted to remote instruction, CBC has a “very strong value of being in person as opposed to online.” This resulted in a

flurry of modifications on campus during the summer.

One change involves increased technology. Each classroom now has the capacity to livestream so that those who cannot attend physically can still participate. Classrooms have been fitted with plexiglass for instructors to stand behind, desks are two metres apart, and classroom space is at 46 percent capacity. Students must also sanitize their hands and desks upon entry to class.

Classes begin and end at different times to reduce crowded hallways, and one-way arrows into and out of buildings help keep traffic flow smooth and keep close contact

seating to four people per table.

“So far student response has been very good,” reports Dueck. “Everybody is getting what they need. We are facing something unprecedented [but] so far it’s working.”

Another change affects campus life with large gatherings, as the whole college community cannot be together as a group. Instead of weekly chapel services for everyone, now chapel services take place in smaller groups five days a week. Student extracurricular activities are still taking place with precautions. Many are wondering about the upcoming athletic season and Dueck says the school plans to “revisit the question in mid-October. Right now the teams are here, practicing and training.”

Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen, dean of students, told *Canadian Mennonite*, “I have been so impressed by the student leaders, who have owned the COVID adaptations that are required for us to function this year and [I] admire the way they have intentionally helped create



Staff member Tina Richardson, left, checks in with CBC President Bryan Born prior to attending chapel service.

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to a minimum.

The college has instituted a mask requirement for all spaces except dormitory pods, the library and the cafeteria. The cafeteria has extended hours for meal-times and limits

a positive student culture within these parameters. When I commiserate with them about the challenges of masking and distancing, rather than lamenting about the inherent limits that are part of operating during a pandemic, they typically respond by expressing gratitude that Columbia is actually functioning in person this year. Their resilience and creativity is inspiring.”



## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

## /// News brief

**CMU Outtatown Discipleship School discontinued indefinitely**

WINNIPEG—Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) is discontinuing the operations of the Outtatown Discipleship School indefinitely due to the uncertainties perpetuated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The university cannot anticipate how the ground will settle within church and society, or what kind of program may be feasible and desirable to students in the aftermath of the pandemic. CMU acknowledges the impact of this decision for the university, the church, the many students whose lives have been profoundly shaped by Outtatown, and the partners in Canada and Guatemala. However, CMU continues to steward the Outtatown mission “to inspire and nurture students in their life of discipleship with Jesus Christ in a journey towards knowing God, knowing yourself, knowing the world.” To that end, CMU will engage in deep listening with the church over the coming year. CMU calls the broader Outtatown community—former students, staff, and church and community partners—to celebrate Outtatown’s two extraordinary decades of transformative discipleship education. Over the course of 22 years, Outtatown formed communities with 1,500-plus students, travelled in six countries, and created countless local and international collaborative partnerships.

—CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

2011 CMU PHOTO

*Outtatown student Alison Goertzen appreciated the opportunity to serve in a pre-school in Soweto, South Africa.*



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## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

# MWC and AMBS partnership opens access to Anabaptist education

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary / Mennonite World Conference

**M**ennonites around the globe yearn for Anabaptist theological education, identity formation and leadership development, but attending an Anabaptist-related college, university or seminary has not been possible for Mennonites in many countries. A new partnership has been designed to respond to this need.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., have forged a new agreement to provide Anabaptist-based theological and church leadership education to Anabaptists around the globe in both for-credit and non-credit formats. Pastors and church leaders will be able to take courses in biblical and theological studies and church history and ministry, in their home countries.



**César  
García**

A memorandum of understanding between MWC and AMBS lays out the details of what César García, MWC's general secretary describes as a response to a 2003 call for "sharing of gifts" among MWC member churches.

AMBS is owned by Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A., which are two of 107 member churches of MWC.

"We perceive this relationship with the seminary as a gift that we are receiving from [MC Canada and MC U.S.A.] in order to support global Anabaptist churches," says García.

## Rapid growth creates need to equip leaders

While, on the whole, membership is declining among Mennonite churches in the United States and Canada, many Anabaptist-Mennonite churches in the Global South are growing rapidly. Along with this growth comes a need for leaders grounded in Anabaptist faith and theology.

This need has become more

urgent as the Anabaptist family has expanded around the world, says García, adding, "Now that most of our Anabaptist member churches are in the Global South, we have a huge need to do theology from an Anabaptist perspective in each context."

He says that popular evangelical, fundamentalist and charismatic preachers influence theological development in MWC congregations around the world through their online platforms.

"When we lack Anabaptist identity, it is so easy to absorb the influence of these theologies without entering into a real conversation with them," he says. "We want to help our churches enter into a discerning dialogue instead of blindly receiving from other traditions."

## Joining gifts to build up the church

AMBS leaders have been working to make Anabaptist educational offerings available to church leaders around the world—in their own contexts. Beginning in 2017-18, Sara Wenger Shenk, the former AMBS president, led an initiative to recruit participants for seminary courses and certificate programs that students could engage in from a distance.

Conversations between García and Wenger Shenk—and subsequently with AMBS's incoming president, David Boshart—about working together to strengthen Anabaptist identity in the global communion led to a meeting in January of this year to formalize the new



partnership. The shared memorandum of understanding was affirmed in March and April by Mennonite Education Agency and MC Canada executive leaders, MWC Faith and Life Commission leaders and executive committee members, and the AMBS board of directors.

According to the partnership document, both MWC and AMBS are dedicated to strengthening the life and ministry of the churches they serve and to cultivating their rich heritage as Anabaptist organizations. They see their new partnership as a way to join their gifts in building up the church and its ministries together.

Among the gifts that MWC brings to the partnership are an extensive network of international relationships and connections, communication channels and an accountability structure. MWC leaders will help identify professors from around the globe who can offer global perspectives as sessional faculty members at AMBS. They will also promote program and course offerings to member churches.

AMBS brings more than 70 years of experience in educating church leaders from an Anabaptist perspective, including many international students. In 2019-20, international students represented 25 percent of the graduate student body and 29 percent of participants in the seminary's nondegree Journey Missional Leadership Development Program. Since the launch of AMBS's distance-friendly Master of Divinity Connect Program in 2013, faculty members have gained experience in online instruction. The seminary's teaching and administrative faculty are creating curricula and curating library resources that are increasingly attuned to global contexts.

## Gifts for mutual growth

Both García and Boshart have high hopes for this sharing of gifts for mutual growth.

"These educational opportunities will



**David  
Boshart**



## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

equip new leaders in the global church with more awareness of the tradition to which they belong—and with the capacity to enrich other traditions with our distinctives while also receiving from others,”

says García.

Boshart agrees, saying, “I think this can only be good for a more unified and clarified sense of Anabaptist identity for the global communion, as AMBS meets

educational institutions around the world to think together about what it means to be Anabaptist in the world today.”

### News brief

#### CMU announces 2020 fall enrolment numbers

WINNIPEG—CMU starts the 2020-21 academic year as the only fully accredited Manitoba university to provide on-campus living and in-person. As of Sept. 8, undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at CMU’s main campus sits at 617 students. Preliminary reporting indicates an overall 1.9 percent decline in students enrolled in the CMU Shaftesbury campus’s undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Returning undergraduate student full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolment has increased by 6 percent, while first-year undergraduate enrolment

is down overall by 20 percent, driven significantly by a decline in incoming international students because of COVID-19. One-hundred-and-fifty-two students are living in on-campus apartments and dormitories, in single-occupant rooms only. While all classes are being offered in-person, including outdoor-learning settings, approximately 8 percent of students have elected to attend classes online. Provincial physical distancing protocols have been instituted throughout the campus, as well as a mandatory mask usage policy for all students, faculty and staff. Cheryl Pauls,



CMU’s president, is heartened by the way the students have embraced the challenges of the new school year. “I’m encouraged to see how students have come together to share responsibility for the health, safety and well-being of all—both on campus and as part of the larger community.” Final enrolment figures will be confirmed in the upcoming weeks, as registrations continue to be processed.

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Abigail Unrau Woelk – Class of 2020  
Honours Arts at University of Waterloo (September 2021)



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## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

# Keeping community at the centre

By Abby Rudy-Froese  
Conrad Grebel University College

The 2020 school year has sparked academic innovation. With the new challenges posed by COVID-19, students, professors and staff at Conrad Grebel University College have found new ways to learn, connect, and grow. Grebel faculty and staff spent the spring term ensuring the safety of students and staff in the building, providing students with the best virtual courses possible, and making sure everyone has the resources they need for a successful term.

Course enrolment has increased from last year and graduate course enrolment is up 25 percent. The Master of Theological Studies program is welcoming 19 new students. Emmanuel Israel, in his last year of his MTS degree, mentioned that his professors adjusted classes by shortening lectures and focusing class time on discussions, a core element in the program, to “help avoid Zoom and screen burn-out.”

The music department in particular is pushing traditional boundaries, as they offer seven online ensembles, emphasizing collaboration, teamwork and instrumental and vocal technique. Sarah Lauren Brown, a music student in her last year, is taking this

even further. With the help of two friends, she created an online server for the music society so “we still have the same sort of access with peers as we typically would at Grebel.”

Although on-campus presence is smaller because of the pandemic, community remains a large part of the Grebel experience. With only single rooms available this term, there is a combined total of 102 students in the residence and apartments. “From making tables with dividers so we can eat together, to making unused classrooms into games rooms, study rooms, and a place to watch movies all at a physical distance,” explained second-year student Nathan Toews, “Grebel has done a fantastic job keeping community at the centre.”

Many non-residents are connecting with Grebelites for online games, virtual talent shows, and more. First-year virtual resident Selah Woelk said, “I have really enjoyed making online connections in the past couple of months. Sometimes it can feel like I am missing out, but people are coming up with inventive ways to keep us all connected.” Throughout the term, Grebel will host a multitude of virtual and in-person events



PHOTO BY REBEKAH DEJONG

**Students line up in the new Grebel kitchen. The tables have dividers so students can sit at the same table.**

like door decorating, virtual chapel, volleyball, and the Friday Wave, a temporary replacement for the weekly community supper. There are 112 non-residents who can come to campus to join the socially distanced fun or log on virtually.

“Students have been very responsive to the health and safety protocols,” added Mary Brubaker-Zehr, director of student services. “We want students to continue to build relationships and be accountable to one another. These responsible actions, along with our COVID-19 testing pilot project, allows us to continue to co-create community—COVID style.”

Life at Grebel and the University of Waterloo looks a little different than in previous years, but with some of the creativity and innovation that the University of Waterloo is known for, students and professors will continue to find ways to stay healthy, stay connected, and have a fun-filled term. ☘

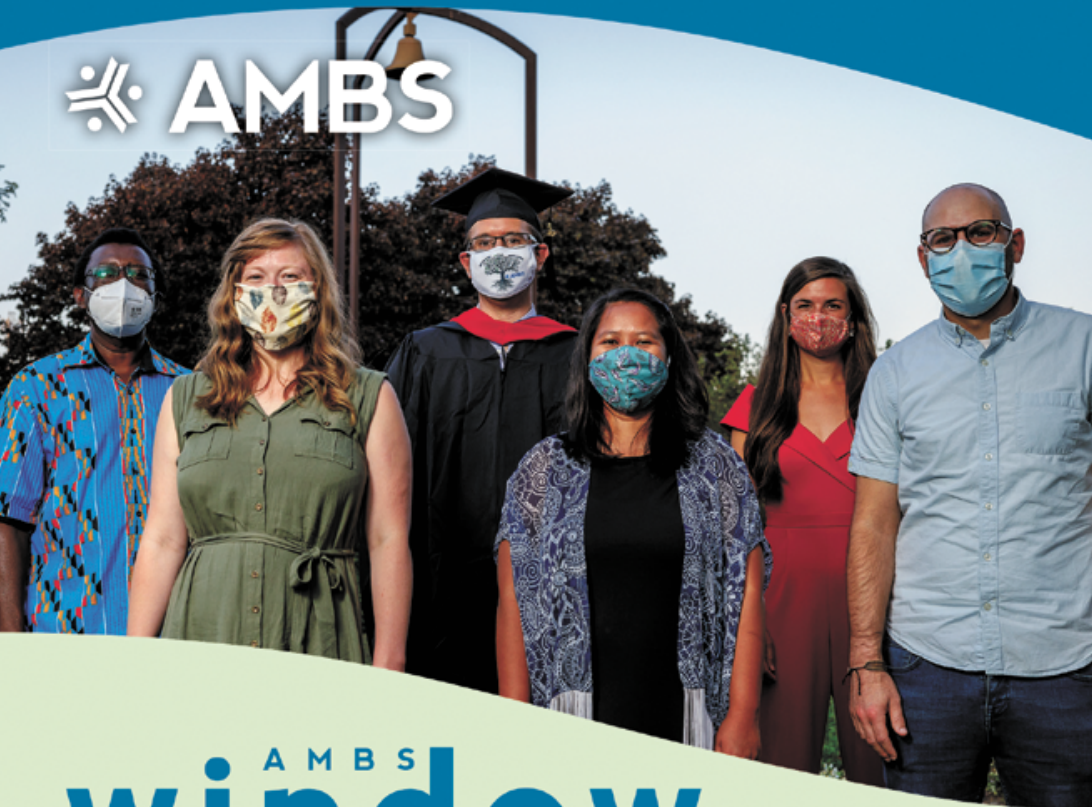
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Fall 2020

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# AMBS window

## Livestreamed commencement honors 15 graduates

In this time of pandemic and social upheaval, **Ben C. Ollenburger**, PhD, encouraged candidates for graduation at AMBS to focus on one thing: love.

In a livestreamed address during the seminary's Aug. 22 commencement and commissioning service — delayed from early May and held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic — Ollenburger explored concepts of God's love, drawing on 1 John 4:12-16.

"In this time of isolation, we have learned that our very human love of one another is as vital as our very breath," said Ollenburger, Retired Professor of Biblical Theology at AMBS and an author and storyteller. "We are not created to be alone."

He observed that the first mention of love in the Bible appears in Genesis 22, when God instructs Abraham to prepare to sacrifice his son, Isaac, and refers to Abraham's love for Isaac — the love of a parent. This sacrificial moment would not be the last time love and loss would be joined, Ollenburger said, pointing to the New Testament and the

passion of Jesus: "God's love for the world displayed in the supreme gift, and Jesus's love for us displayed in the supreme self-giving."



Followers of Jesus make God's love known through their willingness to lay down their lives for their brothers and sisters as Jesus did, Ollenburger noted. In these months that "have reminded us that fear-fueled hate is love's persistent, murderous rival," he encouraged the graduating class to love God and to love one another "as Christ has loved us ... as God so loved the world."

Most of the 15 graduates participated in the online service from their homes,

dressed in their commencement regalia, which they had received by mail along with their diplomas and a small brass replica of the bell that rings on the seminary campus. Several campus residents watched together from the seminary lounge while the commencement speakers were being filmed nearby in the chapel.

The service, which was viewed by more than 180 people, also featured customized blessings for each graduate given by members of the AMBS community as well as composite recordings of hymns sung by ensembles of students and seminary employees. Following *(continued on p. 2)*

**Top (l. to. r.):** Graduates Patrick Obonde, Sophia Austin, Jacob Curtis, Febri Kristiani, Mara Weaver Boshart and Eric Frey Martin at the on-campus reception following the commencement and commissioning service. **Left:** Vice President and Academic Dean Beverly Lapp, EdD, presents the 2020 candidates for graduation during the livestreamed service. **Credit:** Peter Ringenberg



(continued from page 1)

the conferral of degrees by President **David Boshart**, PhD, the graduates — visible onscreen — celebrated with joyful bell ringing, a commencement tradition.

**Malinda Elizabeth Berry**, PhD, Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics, gave a theopoetic charge to the graduates, urging them to cultivate connections by loving God, themselves and their neighbors; immersing themselves in the “joy of ecological intimacy”; being curious about the feelings and needs of others; and understanding their everyday life as being “dependent on Sonlight/sunlight.”

**Safwat Marzouk**, PhD, Associate Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, offered the prayer of blessing, asking God to give the graduates compassion, courage, resilience and creativity as they lead the church in these times of disorientation, isolation, anxiety and loss; confront forces of racism and xenophobia; and “envision a beloved and a loving community that welcomes all.”

A socially distanced in-person reception was held outdoors on campus that evening for the seminary community, the graduates and their guests. • — *Annette Brill Bergstresser*



(l. to. r.): Master of Divinity candidates Febri Kristiani, Sophia Austin and Mara Weaver Boshart participate in the livestreamed commencement and commissioning service from the seminary lounge. Credit: Peter Ringenberg

## Profile of the graduates

Of the 15 graduates, six completed part or all of their seminary studies from a distance; three of them began with the second **Master of Divinity Connect** cohort in 2014. Seven completed most or all of their studies while living on campus (a higher proportion than usual), and two while commuting locally or regionally.

As undergraduates, four of this year’s graduates studied theology, religion, philosophy, or international studies ministry; three studied science, chemistry or engineering; two studied forestry or horticulture; and one each studied education, English, history, law, peace and conflict transformation, sociology and telecommunications. Seven graduates earned their undergraduate degrees from Mennonite or Missionary Church colleges/universities, including Bethel College, Bethel University, Bluffton University, Canadian Mennonite University and Goshen College.

Several graduates have family members who are also AMBS graduates: **Sophia Austin’s** husband, **Andrew Austin** (MDiv 2017); **Jacob Curtis’s** wife, **Michelle Curtis** (MDiv 2018); **Rianna Isaak-Krauß’s** husband, **Benjamin Isaak-Krauß** (MDiv 2019); **Eric Frey Martin’s** brother, **Peter Martin** (MDiv 2017); **Dianne Schmidt’s** husband, **Dennis Schmidt** (MDiv 1994), and daughter, **Julia Schmidt** (MDiv 2018); and **Mara Weaver Boshart’s** husband, **Corben Weaver Boshart** (MATS 2017), and mother-in-law, **Shana Peachey Boshart** (Certificate 2017).

The graduating class’s gift to AMBS is a portrait of the Christ of Revelation 1:12-18 created by 2020 graduate **Jacob Curtis**. •

— *Janeen Bertsche Johnson*

### AMBS Window Fall 2020

Volume 30 Issue 2

Distributed two times a year as a supplement to *Anabaptist World and Canadian Mennonite*. Editors: *Annette Brill Bergstresser*, *Melissa Troyer*. Designer: *Nekeisha Alayna Alexis*.

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A seminary of  
Mennonite Church USA and  
Mennonite Church Canada

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Graduates by degree

- 10 Master of Divinity
- 2 MA: Theology and Peace Studies
- 1 MA in Christian Formation
- 2 Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies

### Graduates by ministry

- 6 serving in ministry roles or seeking a pastoral or chaplaincy assignment
- 3 discerning future options for ministry, mission or service work
- 4 pursuing further graduate studies
- 2 serving with nonprofit or mission organizations

### Graduates by demographic

- 9 women
- 6 men
- 27–65 age range in years
- 5 countries represented — Canada, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, U.S. — on three continents
- 13 members of Mennonite or Mennonite Brethren congregations
- 8 members of Mennonite Church USA
- 1 member of a Reformed church
- 1 member of a nondenominational church



## Meet our new graduates!

The 2020 AMBS commencement and commissioning service — originally scheduled for early May but postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic — took place online on Aug. 22. Each graduate received one of the following degrees and certificates:

<i>MDiv</i>	<i>Master of Divinity</i>
<i>MACF</i>	<i>Master of Arts in Christian Formation</i>
<i>MATPS</i>	<i>Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies</i>
<i>Certificate</i>	<i>Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies</i>

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

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



► **Melissa Ruth Atchison** (Manhattan, Kansas). *MDiv: Christian Faith Formation*. Melissa served as Sabbatical Coverage Pastor with Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kansas, for the month of May. She is continuing to work as a spiritual director and exploring other pastoral ministry possibilities. Melissa's home congregation is Manhattan Mennonite Church. She and her spouse, Bob Atchison, have four children.



**Sophia Louise Austin** (Missouri). *MDiv: Theological Studies: Biblical Studies*. Sophia and Andrew Austin (MDiv 2017), her spouse, plan

to move back to Missouri to be near their families and to explore ministry opportunities after they are settled. While living in Elkhart, they have been part of Olive Mennonite Church in Elkhart.



► **J. Joel Beachy** (Kalona, Iowa). *MDiv: Pastoral Ministry*. Joel will continue to serve full time as Pastor of East Union Mennonite Church

in Kalona. He and his spouse, Christine Maust Beachy, have two sons.



► **Kevin Chupp** (Osceola, Indiana; Aberdeen, Idaho). *MDiv: Theological Studies: History, Theology and Ethics*. Kevin will continue as Pastor of First

Mennonite Church of Aberdeen, where he has served since 2016. He is married to Jessica Chupp.



**Kami Coffin** (Wakarusa, Indiana). *MDiv: Chaplaincy*. Kami is serving as a hospital chaplain at Goshen (Indiana) Health and as Pastor at

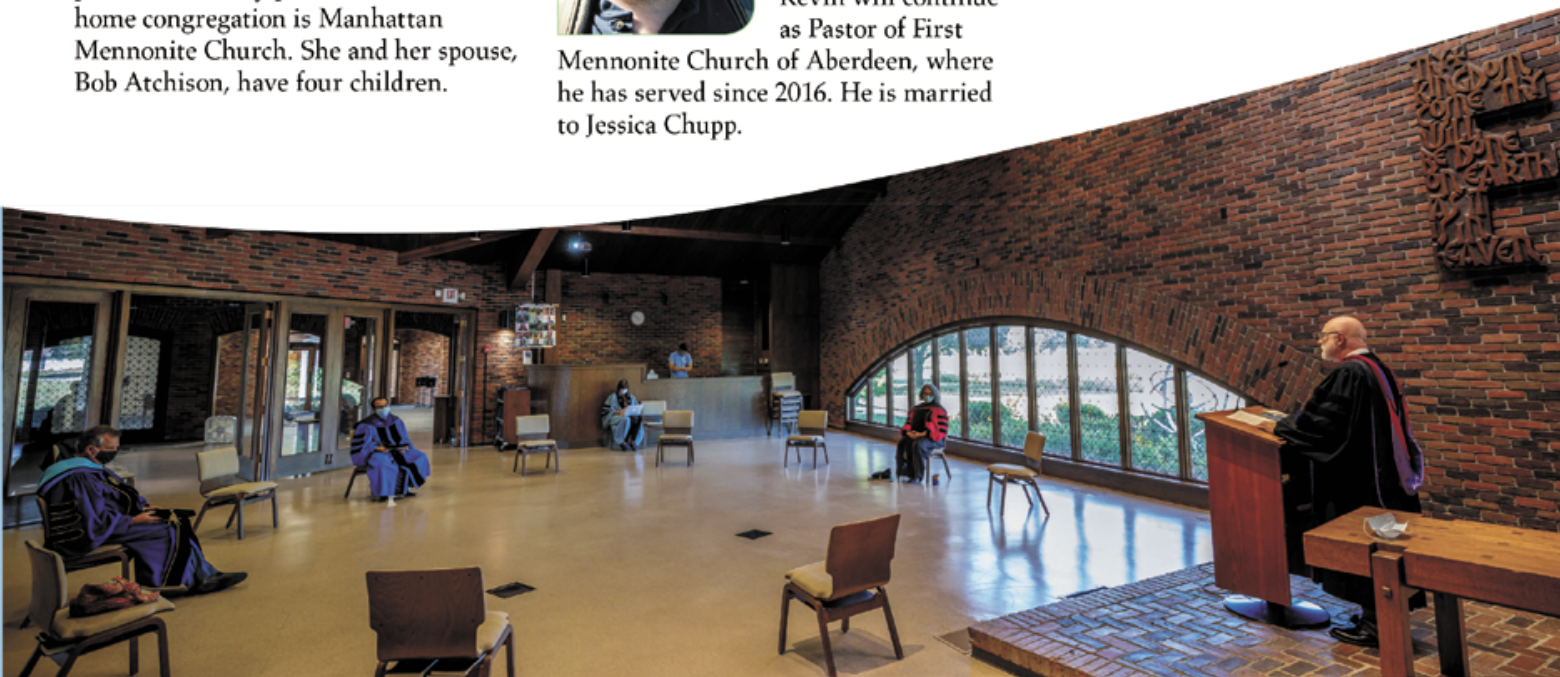
First Mennonite Church in Nappanee, Indiana. She and her husband, Todd Coffin, have two children.



**Jacob Elias Curtis** (Dublin, Ireland; Denver, Colorado; Goshen/Elkhart, Indiana). *MDiv: Pastoral Ministry*. In May, Jacob and his wife, Michelle

Curtis (MDiv 2018), became Co-pastors of Ambler (Pennsylvania) Mennonite Church. Jacob's home congregation is Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen.

**Below:** Retired Professor of Biblical Theology Ben C. Ollenburger, PhD (at right), gives the address during AMBS's livestreamed commencement and commissioning service as other faculty speakers listen. **Credit:** Peter Ringenberg







► **Jill Hofer** (Freeman, South Dakota). *Certificate*. Jill is currently pursuing a Certificate of Spiritual Direction from Sioux Falls

(South Dakota) Seminary. She participates in a small rural house church in Freeman. She is married to Stan Hofer, and they have two adult sons.



**Rianna Elizabeth Isaak-Krauβ** (Fresno, California; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Regensburg, Germany). *MACF*. Rianna is working on strengthening

her German language skills before exploring pastoral or missional ministry opportunities in Germany. She is a member of Willow Avenue Mennonite Church in Clovis, California. While at AMBS, she attended Fellowship of Hope in Elkhart. She has close ties to River East Church in Winnipeg and currently attends the Mennonite Church of Regensburg. She is married to Benjamin Isaak-Krauβ (MDiv 2019).

\* **Febri Cahya Kristiani** (Klaten, Central Java, Indonesia). *MDiv: Chaplaincy*. This fall, Febri will complete her degree by



doing a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) internship at Elkhart General Hospital while taking a CPE class at Bronson Methodist Hospital

in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She and Nicholas Gehman, her spouse, are exploring opportunities for mission/service assignments abroad following her graduation. While at AMBS, Febri has attended Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart.



► **Eric Frey Martin** (Goshen, Indiana). *MDiv: Theological Studies: Peace Studies*. Eric plans to continue to serve as a Recruiter and Church Relations

Representative for Mennonite Mission Network. He attends Silverwood Mennonite Church in Goshen and is married to Kelly Frey Martin.

**Patrick James Obonde** (Siaya and Nairobi counties of Kenya). *MATPS*. Patrick is enrolled in a PhD program at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, to facilitate further research and publishing work in his African mission field context. He wishes to



transition into full-time missional leadership training and global peace missions work. Patrick is a member of Family Fellowship and Peace Missions

Church of Kenya Mennonite Church. While studying at AMBS, he has been part of Pleasant View Church in Goshen, Indiana, and Faith Mennonite Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He and his wife, Pamela Obonde, have two children.



**Mariah Omer** (Addis Ababa, Kolfe Keranio, Ethiopia). *Certificate*. Mariah plans to continue studying theology and peace studies. She is a member of

Madan Gospel and Song Ministry in Addis Ababa, Bole Bulubula, Ethiopia. While at AMBS, she has been part of Pleasant View Church in Goshen, Indiana.



► **Dianne Schmidt** (North Newton, Kansas). *MDiv: Christian Faith Formation*. Dianne will continue to serve full time as Associate Pastor of Eden Mennonite



## Graduate awards and gifts

Teaching and Administrative Faculty members presented awards to selected candidates for graduation at a livestreamed Awards and Sharing Service on Aug. 22. This year's recipients are:

- **Melissa Ruth Atchison**: Award for Excellence in Christian Formation
- **Sophia Louise Austin**: Award for Excellence in Old Testament Exegesis



Church in Moundridge, Kansas. She is married to Dennis Schmidt (MDiv 1994), and they have three children and two grandchildren.



**Perdian  
Koeswanto  
Magelhaens  
Tumanan**

(Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia). *MATPS*. Perdian is now pursuing PhD studies

in Systematic Theology and Ethics at Villanova University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is a member of Indonesian Christian Church (GKI) in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia. While at AMBS, he attended Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart. Perdian is married to Hilda Melani, and they have two children.



**Mara Weaver  
Boshart** (Archbold, Ohio). *MDiv: Theological Studies: History, Theology and Ethics*. In September, Mara began working with

Project Hope, a nonprofit immigration legal services provider in Archbold. She is a member of Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold. She is married to Corben Weaver Boshart (MATS 2017).

## Graduates' reflections



### ON RELATIONSHIPS

"Even though I completed my degree through the MDiv Connect Program, which was largely online, I have developed relationships with the faculty, staff and students. I attribute that to the fact that everyone from the AMBS community is wholly invested in the mission and ethos of the institution." — **J. Joel Beachy (MDiv)**

### ON LEADERSHIP

"AMBS offers a unique environment for critical thinking and faithful discernment of missional Christian leadership. I am glad that my professional missional work experience in East and Central Africa is now uniquely rooted in biblical foundations for God's reconciling mission work of shalom." — **Patrick James Obonde (MATPS)**

### ON SCRIPTURE

"Over the past four years I have received the tools and wisdom that will help anchor me as I study Scripture, cultivate further my relationship with Jesus Christ, and strive to faithfully serve God and neighbor in all I do." — **Kami Coffin (MDiv)**

### ON DIVERSITY

"Learning at AMBS provided me opportunities to develop my academic skills as well as grow in my spiritual life. I really enjoyed taking courses with diverse students who came from different regions of the world." — **Mariah Omer (Certificate)**

### ON KNOWING, BEING AND DOING

"Among many other things, my time at AMBS grounded me in a conviction that my head and my hands belong together. I am deeply grateful to have been formed by such a place." — **Kevin Chupp (MDiv)**

- **Kami Coffin:** Award for Excellence in Pastoral Care
- **Jacob Elias Curtis:** Award for Excellence in New Testament Exegesis; Heart of the Community Award
- **Febri Cahya Kristiani:** Award for Excellence in Preaching
- **Eric Frey Martin:** Award for Excellence in Missional Leadership
- **Patrick James Obonde:** Commendation in Peace Studies

- **Perdian Koeswanto Magelhaens Tumanan:** Commendation in Peace Studies
- **Mara Weaver Boshart:** Cornelius J. Dyck Award for Excellence in Church History

Graduates also received a one-year print subscription to *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* from the Institute of Mennonite Studies; access to the Atlas for Alum database from the

AMBS Library; and a complimentary registration to a Leadership Clinic in 2021 from the Church Leadership Center. The Admissions Team presented each graduate with a "golden ticket" — good for one waived \$50 admissions application fee — to share with a prospective student.

**At left:** Rachel Miller Jacobs, DMin, Associate Professor of Congregational Formation, presents a preaching award to Febri Kristiani on behalf of the Church and Ministry Department. **Credit:** Peter Ringenberg



## New partnership enables global access to Anabaptist theological education

Mennonites around the globe yearn for Anabaptist theological education, identity formation and leadership development, but attending an Anabaptist-related college, university or seminary has not been possible for Mennonites in many countries. A new partnership has been designed to respond to this need.



### Mennonite World Conference

(MWC) and AMBS have forged a new agreement to provide Anabaptist-based theological and church leadership education to Anabaptists around the globe in both for-credit and noncredit formats. Pastors and church leaders will be able to take courses in biblical and theological studies, church history and ministry in their home countries.

A memo of understanding (MOU) between MWC and AMBS lays out the details of what **César García**, PhD student, MWC General Secretary

from Bogotá, Colombia, describes as a response to a 2003 call for “sharing of gifts” among MWC member churches: “We perceive this relationship with the seminary as a gift that we are receiving from Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA in order to support global Anabaptist churches.”

While on the whole, membership is declining among Mennonite churches in the U.S. and Canada, many Anabaptist-Mennonite churches in the Global South are growing rapidly. Along with this growth comes a need for leaders grounded in Anabaptist faith and theology.

“After more than a half century, several churches born of Mennonite work do not know who the Mennonites are or what their particularity is within the larger Christian family,” wrote Burkina Faso Mennonite church leader **Siaka Traoré** in *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*, MWC’s Global Mennonite History volume (Good Books, 2006).

García said that through their online platforms, the most popular evangelical, fundamentalist and charismatic preachers influence theological development in MWC congregations around the world.

“When we lack Anabaptist identity, it is so easy to absorb the influence of these theologies without entering into a real conversation with them,” he said.

“We want to help our churches enter into a discerning dialogue instead of blindly receiving from other traditions.”

Conversations between García and former AMBS President **Sara Wenger Shenk**, EdD — and subsequently with incoming President **David Boshart**, PhD — about collaborating to strengthen Anabaptist identity in the global communion led to a meeting in January 2020 to formalize a new partnership. The shared MOU was affirmed in March and April by the leadership groups of both entities.

MWC and AMBS see their new partnership as a way to join their gifts in building up the church and its ministries and have high hopes for mutual growth. Among the gifts that MWC brings are an extensive network of international relationships and connections, communication channels and an accountability structure. MWC leaders will help identify professors who can offer global perspectives as sessional faculty members. AMBS brings more than 70 years of experience in educating church leaders from an Anabaptist perspective, including many international students. Its faculty are creating curricula and curating library resources that are increasingly attuned to global contexts.

Boshart noted that the educational options made possible by the new partnership could take many different forms. International mission and educational leaders have offered strong encouragement to keep the options “as open and flexible as possible,” he said. ●

— John David Thacker, Annette Brill Bergstresser, Karla Braun

## 2020 Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition Nancy Kauffmann and Anne Garber Kompaoré

**Nancy Kauffmann**, DMin, of Goshen, Indiana, and **Anne Garber Kompaoré**, PhD, of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, are the 2020 recipients of AMBS’s Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition. Kauffmann earned a Master of Divinity in Pastoral Counseling in 1982; Garber Kompaoré earned a Master of Arts: Theological Studies in 2004.

Alumni Director **Janeen Bertsche Johnson** (MDiv 1989) noted that

Kauffmann is being recognized for her outstanding service as a pastor, conference minister and denominational minister, and Garber Kompaoré for her outstanding service as a Bible translator, mission worker and teacher.

“AMBS was a place where I was able to ground my theology as an Anabaptist,” said Garber Kompaoré, adding that the knowledge she gained at AMBS has helped her “in teaching in biblical institutions and interacting with fellow

Christians, especially on the topic of what to do with enemies.”

Kauffmann reflected, “At AMBS, I developed a hunger to learn more about the Bible and about God. AMBS expanded not only my knowledge but also my experience with God. Besides the theological, AMBS promoted hands-on experience within a congregational setting that was so valuable.”

Read more at [ambbs.ca/alumni](https://ambbs.ca/alumni). ●  
— Marlys Weaver-Stoesz



Commencement  
reception in the courtyard  
Credit: Peter Ringenberg

## AMBS welcomes new Teaching Faculty

The AMBS Board of Directors appointed **Susannah M. Larry**, PhD, and **Leah R. Thomas**, PhD, to the Teaching Faculty on Jan. 30 and April 17, respectively.



**Susannah Larry**, who began as Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies on July 1, completed her PhD in May at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, with a major in Hebrew Bible and minors in New Testament and Early Christianity. Her doctoral dissertation was titled, "Lament Beyond Blame: Women's Poetry in Lamentations 1-2." She also earned a Master of Theological Studies with a focus on Biblical Studies from Vanderbilt and a Bachelor of Arts in Religion with a minor in Poverty Studies from Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina.

"We see in Susannah scholarly excellence, dynamic thinking for and with the tradition of Anabaptism, and passion for ministry preparation," said **Beverly Lapp**, EdD, Vice President and Academic Dean, and search committee chair. "We're excited about the balance of expertise and synergy she will bring."

Larry has taught courses at Vanderbilt Divinity School and Sewanee (Tennessee) School of Theology on the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Biblical Hebrew, feminist theology and biblical interpretation. Her publications include "Jeremiah as Eraser: The History of Consequences of Daughter Zion and

the Prophet" in *Jeremiah in History and Tradition* (Routledge, 2019) and "Hunger: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament" in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, Vol. 12 (de Gruyter, 2016).

Larry grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, in the Presbyterian Church (USA) tradition. While volunteering at Jubilee Partners in Comer, Georgia, she gained appreciation for Anabaptist commitments to justice and reconciliation.

"At AMBS, I believe I can live into my calling to a ministry of teaching and scholarship that uplifts marginalized voices," she said. "I'm excited to empower students with the knowledge and tools to reclaim the Bible as a life-giving Word in their diverse ministry contexts."

**Leah Thomas**, who began Aug. 1 as Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care and Contextual Education, most recently served as a Visiting Professor of Pastoral Theology at Lancaster (Pennsylvania) Theological Seminary and as Designated Associate Pastor for Congregational Care at Wisdom's Table at St. Peter's United Church of Christ in Lancaster. In her research and ministry, she has actively sought to attend to those voices excluded by the dominant culture.

Thomas earned her PhD in 2017 from the Drew University Theological School in Madison, New Jersey. Her dissertation was published as *Just Care: Ethical Anti-Racist Pastoral Care with Women with Mental Illness* (Lexington/Fortress, 2019). She also holds a Master of Divinity and a Bachelor of Arts in Theology and Political Science from the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana.

"During Leah's virtual visit, it was clear that her personal and professional commitments to Christ-centered pacifism, justice, interculturality and undoing oppression align with AMBS's," said

Lapp, search committee chair. "Her administrative gifts and ecumenical background will serve her well in overseeing students' field placements."

Thomas, who grew up in northern Virginia in the Catholic tradition, served as a chaplain at Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital in Morris Plains, New Jersey. She has taught courses on topics such as pastoral care, Christian social ethics, preaching, sociology of religion, ministry with those with mental illness, grief care, and womanist and feminist approaches to pastoral care.

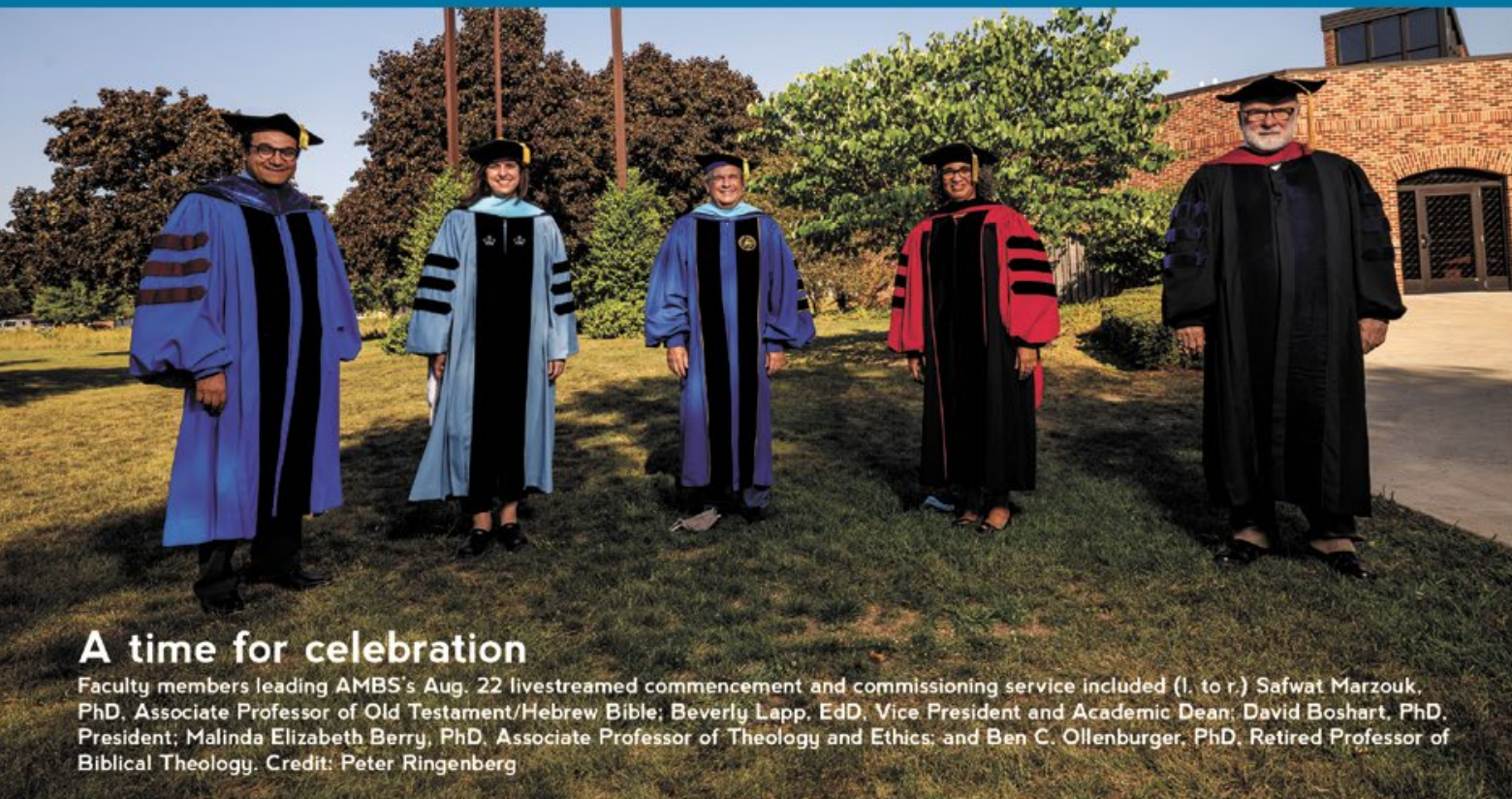


Thomas values the Mennonite theological traditions she sees AMBS as embodying: "My desire to teach at AMBS is rooted in my own commitment to peace, justice and anti-racism in a world that is reeling from disparity, injustice and divisiveness. Our world needs leaders who embody an alternative vision of peace and justice, and I'm humbled and honored to have an opportunity to contribute to that important work." •

— Annette Brill Bergstresser

**Bryan Moyer Suderman**, MTS, ended his time as Advancement Associate for Canada on Aug. 21. He continues to be available as a resource for congregations and organizations as a Teaching Associate of AMBS's Church Leadership Center, in partnership with his music and teaching ministry, SmallTall Ministries (see [ambs.ca/invite](https://ambs.ca/invite)). •





## A time for celebration

Faculty members leading AMBS's Aug. 22 livestreamed commencement and commissioning service included (l. to r.) Safwat Marzouk, PhD, Associate Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible; Beverly Lapp, EdD, Vice President and Academic Dean; David Boshart, PhD, President; Malinda Elizabeth Berry, PhD, Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics; and Ben C. Ollenburger, PhD, Retired Professor of Biblical Theology. Credit: Peter Ringenberg

## UPCOMING OFFERINGS

### Pastors and Leaders 2021 Thriving Together

March 1-4 • Meeting online!

It's been a hard year. If the current climate makes you feel more like curling up in a ball and hiding under the covers than stepping out to lead boldly, you're in good company. Sometimes it seems like all the energy you planned to use for ministry and mission is being expended just surviving week to week.

It's exhausting.

How can congregations and their leaders thrive in this time of unprecedented disruption? Who do we turn to for help? After all, who actually knows how to lead well

in a time of pandemic, racial reckoning, climate crisis and political upheaval?



For our first-ever online conference, we've invited the following creative, seasoned leaders to offer their best insights into what congregations need to thrive in today's world. They'll draw from deep wells of Christian faith and leadership practice as they share personal stories and observations.

#### Featured:

- **Cynthia L. Hale** (pictured), DMin, founder and Senior Pastor of Ray of Hope Christian Church in Decatur, Georgia

#### Also speaking:

- **James Nelson Gingerich**, MD, doctor and leader, Maple City Health Care Center in Goshen, Indiana
- **Marvin Lorenzana**, DMin, Discipleship Initiatives Director for Mennonite Mission Network, based in Harrisonburg, Virginia
- **Drew Strait**, PhD, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at AMBS

#### Learn more:

[ambs.ca/pastorsandleaders](https://ambs.ca/pastorsandleaders)

### AMBS Semester Two courses (without prerequisites)

- **Hybrid courses** (online Jan. 5 – April 30, with one-week intensive Feb. 1–6): Biblical Hermeneutics and History of Interpretation; Faith Formation and Spirituality: Adults and Seniors; Preaching
  - **Online courses** (Jan. 5 – April 30): Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture; Beginning Greek: 1 John; Christian Worship: Theory and Practice; Global Anabaptist-Mennonite History and Theology; God's Shalom and the Church's Witness; Proclaiming the Faith; Spiritual Practices: Money
  - **Campus courses available via videoconference** (Jan. 5 – April 30): Corinthian Correspondence; Human Sexuality and Christian Ethics
- Nonadmitted students get 50 percent off their first course for credit! Also, check out options for auditing courses.
- [ambs.ca/onecourse](https://ambs.ca/onecourse)



## Calendar

### Nationwide

**Nov. 2:** Mennonite Creation Care Network's cookbook club virtual meeting with Heather Wolfe, co-editor of *Sustainable Kitchen: Recipes and Inspiration for Plant-based, Plent-conscious Meals* at 7:30 EST. Join the conversation about eating for human and planetary health. Register at [mennocreationcare.org/sustainable-kitchen-cookbook-club/](http://mennocreationcare.org/sustainable-kitchen-cookbook-club/).

**Nov. 6-7:** Virtual 2020 MEDA convention, "Towards an equal world," begins at noon on Nov. 6. The two-day event includes speakers, plenary sessions and networking opportunities. To learn more, or to register, visit [medaconvention.org](http://medaconvention.org).

**Dec. 13:** Digital launch of MennoMedia's new *Voices Together* hymnal, from 5 to 7 p.m. EST. For more information, visit [VoicesTogetherHymnal.org](http://VoicesTogetherHymnal.org).

### Alberta

**Oct. 31:** A Common Word Alberta hosts its annual Christian-Muslim Dialogue on Zoom and in person at the Al Rashid Mosque's gymnasium in Edmonton, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. MST. Theme: "Boosting resilience for the digital age." Speakers: Ingrid Cramer Doerschel and Salima Versi. For more information and to register, visit [acwalberta.ca](http://acwalberta.ca).

**Every Monday to Thursday:** Congregants from across Mennonite Church Alberta are invited to join a Zoom group for morning prayer on Mondays and Wednesdays at 7:30 a.m. MDT, and evening prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9 p.m. MDT, for about 15 to 20 minutes, using *Take Our Moments and Our Days*. Register online at [mcab.ca/events](http://mcab.ca/events).

### Ontario

**Oct. 22 and 29:** Training Active Bystanders online event hosted by MCC Ontario, (22) 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. (29) 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. To register contact [restorativejustice@mcco.ca](mailto:restorativejustice@mcco.ca).

**Nov. 20-21:** Becoming Peacemakers, MCC's virtual peace conference.

To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by email to [calendar@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:calendar@canadianmennonite.org). For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](http://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).



## ONLINE NOW!

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



### 'The ghost of our history'

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada is hosting a seven-month, online storytelling series exploring Indigenous-Mennonite relations.

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



### Economic hypocrite

Gareth Brandt of Abbotsford, B.C. confesses to being an "economic hypocrite" on the CM blog.

[canadianmennonite.org/blog/gb-hypocrite](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/gb-hypocrite)



### Can preaching bring peace?

The annual Menno Simons Sermon Prize is seeking submissions from preachers from around the world.

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



### AMBS charts course for !Explore in 2021

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary is now accepting applications for !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth.

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

# CALL FOR ART

Theme: *Hope*  
Due date: *November 12, 2020*

Canadian Mennonite invites elementary and high school students from Mennonite schools and churches to submit artwork for the Christmas 2020 issue by Nov. 12, 2020.

Digital versions (*at least 300 dpi*) can be submitted to [submit@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:submit@canadianmennonite.org). Paper artwork (*minimum 4 inches by 6 inches*) can be sent to: 490 Dutton Dr., Unit C5, Waterloo, ON N2L 6H7.

Submissions should be high resolution and should include creator's full name, grade and the name of the student's school or congregation.

Selected works will appear in the Dec. 7 print issue and online.



**CANADIAN Mennonite**

# Young reader likes story about seniors

Story and photo by Jennifer Kirkaldy  
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*



**M**iles Kirkaldy, who is six years old and just started grade one, enjoys reading *Canadian Mennonite*. When a new copy comes in the mail, he reads bits and pieces and asks questions about what he reads. When the Sept. 14 issue arrived he asked, “Where does *Canadian Mennonite* magazine come from? Does our church really make the magazine?”

Miles learned to read at age three and reads well above what is expected of a child his age. When asked what he likes to read, he responded, “I really liked the story in this issue about how the seniors got to enjoy some visiting with others, even though we

still have to social distance. I also want to make sure we help other people have food to eat, so we should remember to give to the food bank.”

As his mother, I think it would be lovely if there was content in the magazine geared to fostering curiosity about our faith and our broader church for younger people.

Our family attends First Mennonite Church in Edmonton. ✎

*Canadian Mennonite wonders if Miles Kirkaldy is our youngest reader. If you know of another young reader, we would like to hear from you.*