



Choir perseveres through pandemic

Pg. 22

INSIDE

- On babies and politics 4
- Waging peace on ministerial misconduct and abuse 14
- 'We are going to need more of each other' 24

EDITORIAL

One hundred years

VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



Throughout this year, readers may have noticed a regular item appearing in the print version of this magazine: historical photos and vignettes highlighting aspects of 100 years of ministry by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). If you are a saver of old magazines, you might want to pull them out and glance through the Et Cetera section of each issue. There you will see some of the ways MCC has sought to make a difference in the world.

Born in the 1920s as a response to wartime disaster, MCC has rallied many in the wider North American community to serve “in the name of Christ.”

Recently I dipped into the book *Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History*, by Esther Epp-Tiessen. There are stories of food kitchens, refugee resettlement, and work in agriculture and water management. Volunteers at home sewed clothing, canned meat, packed Christmas bundles and relief kits; longer-term volunteers served in mental-health facilities and worked as school teachers and health educators. Committees lobbied the Canadian government for alternative-service options for conscientious objectors.

One of MCC’s strengths has been the ability to inspire different branches of the Anabaptist world to work together on a common cause. In Canada, these various groups functioned alongside each other for many years, with some amount of cooperation among themselves, and with the MCC office based

in Akron, Pa.

Then came a crucial meeting in December 1963 that brought the disparate efforts together and officially created Mennonite Central Committee (Canada). The headline in Dec. 17, 1963, issue of *The Canadian Mennonite* reads, “Christian Brotherhood Gives Birth To A National Inter-Mennonite Committee.” (Yes, the photo shows six men sitting at a table.)

The article indicates that a number of attendees saw the three days of meetings as a “high-water mark in Canadian inter-Mennonite relations.”

Epp-Tiessen’s book tells stories from the years since then, as the new Canadian organization forged its identity and adapted to change. The book describes visions for ministry and some of the challenges MCC leaders faced over the years. (You can borrow or buy the book from Commonword.ca.)

The year 2020 saw new challenges for MCC, with the limitations brought on by the novel coronavirus pandemic. Public meetings and fundraising had to move online, and thrift stores faced new regulations. Calls for assistance came from areas hit hard by the pandemic. Even the centennial celebrations themselves played out online.

At this celebration time, it is good to ponder how MCC has influenced the Anabaptist community and how we have helped to shape it. In the past 100 years, what have we learned about relief and development work? About making and building peace? How does the MCC “brand” express itself today? What are the visions for the future? What are the

new calls to justice to which MCC must respond? Where and how might the Anabaptist community serve, “in the name of Christ,” in the next 100 years?

Goodbye

In this issue, you will read the final entry in the Third Way Family column. Christina Bartel Barkman is stepping away from regular writing because of new time commitments. She says, “I recently started working three days a week at a program for high-risk single moms, facilitating group support for women who have experienced intimate partner abuse and meeting with women one-on-one. I’ve been volunteering at this program for a couple years and it is a great fit for me.” Christina began writing her column in January 2019. Since then she has shared stories about her relationships with family, church and neighbours, writing with both insight and honesty. We thank her and wish her well in this new ministry.

Advent approaching

This issue’s feature, “On babies and politics,” leads into the season of Advent, which begins on Nov. 29. In the coming weeks, Christians prepare to welcome the Christ Child, who is also the Lord of history, of the present and of the future. Traditionally, this has been a busy time for congregational life. Here is a shout-out to pastors, congregational leaders and other volunteers as you head into this season, especially this year, with the challenges of COVID-19. As you lead worship, prepare music, offer pastoral care and administer the details of a scattered congregation, may you also be gifted with time to rest, to connect with your loved ones, and to experience the Divine Presence.



Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Canada

ISSN 1480-042X

CONTENTS

NOVEMBER 23, 2020 / VOL. 24, NO. 24

ABOUT THE COVER:

Choristers Eleanor Reimer and Ingrid Moehlmann figure out the technology needed to record Winnipeg First Mennonite Church's Coronoa Choir during the novel coronavirus pandemic. "Choir perseveres through pandemic" starts on page 22.

PHOTO: BY KARIS WIEBE

Covenants signed linking congregations to overseas workers 16

International Witness Sunday strengthens relationships across the worldwide community of faith.

MC Eastern Canada changes pastoral misconduct procedures 18

Regional church apologizes for misinterpretation and misapplication in recent ministerial misconduct case.

Searching for home 20

MCC Saskatchewan peace conference challenges participants to care for those who are displaced.

'Do you know any Mennonites?' 26

Congolese Mennonite couple search for Mennonite family in Canada.

On babies and politics 4

"When we cradle babies in our arms, they often jolt us out of our preoccupation with current needs, to a concern with what we will leave behind for the next generation," writes Pastor Judith Friesen Epp in our Advent feature.



Regular features:

For discussion 6 Readers write 7 Milestones 9
A moment from yesterday 10 Calendar 29
Classifieds 29 Schools Directory 30-31

Insiders versus outsiders Ken Dueck 10

Marriage and conflict Christina Bartel Barkman 11

Going to church Arli Klassen 12

Judgment versus discernment Troy Watson 13

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Please send all material to be considered for publication to

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613

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

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

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

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One-Year Subscription Rates

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

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

Subscriptions/address changes

(e-mail) office@canadianmennonite.org

(phone) 1-800-378-2524 ext. 221

On babies and politics

By Judith Friesen Epp

Adapted from a sermon she preached at Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, on Nov. 19, 2017.

It used to be that the tinsel and lights of Christmas didn't dare emerge until the black cats and orange pumpkins of Halloween were stripped from the shelves. But this year I saw Christmas trees in early October! We had not even given proper thanksgiving for the harvest before boughs of holly decked the halls, enticing us into a winter wonderland.

I resent this headlong rush into the Christmas season. It frenzies my spirit when I long to linger in the dying days of autumn. So I was resentful when I found Isaiah 9, traditionally a Christmas Eve text, listed as the scripture reading for today: *"For a child has been born for us. A son given to us."* Good heavens, even the narrative lectionary has succumbed to "the Christmas creep."

Yet as I pondered this text, I was reminded that the prophet Isaiah did not write with the nativity scene in mind. Nor did New Testament writers refer to Isaiah 9 as a prophecy of the Messiah. In fact, our automatic association of this text with Jesus' birth probably comes from Handel's Messiah: "For unto us a child is born."

Isaiah, however, was speaking very particularly to his own people almost 800 years before the birth of Christ. It was a time of great fear. In Isaiah 7:2, we read: *"[T]he heart of Ahaz, king of Judah, and the hearts of his people, shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind."* Assyria was a rapidly growing empire, and Judah was clearly within the thirsty sites of this colonial power. Aram and the northern kingdom of Israel were also under grave threat, and their kings first asked, then demanded, that Judah join their coalition to fight Assyria. When King Ahaz refused, Aram and Israel declared war on Judah.

Judah was now threatened on two fronts, and into this complex interplay of imperial power, God sent Isaiah to tell King Ahaz to stand firm; Judah should join neither the Assyrians nor the Aram/Israel coalition. "Standing firm" was rather risky advice for a little nation in the face of a two-pronged military threat, so God gave King Ahaz

a sign—a baby. Pointing out a pregnant woman, Isaiah said, "Look! Before this woman's baby can tell right from wrong, the threat of the coalition will have passed."

Just in case people missed it, God gave the same sign again in Isaiah 8. This time, Isaiah and his wife were going to have a baby, and before that baby grew old enough to speak, the coalition would lose its power.

Then in chapter 9, another child was promised, one who would usher in endless peace, justice and righteousness.

If I had been King Ahaz at the time, I'm not sure that babies would have been much comfort. I can just imagine how Isaiah's words must have sounded to Ahaz: "Are you and your people absolutely terrified, King Ahaz? Look—a baby! Does it look like your nation is about to be squashed and your people taken into slavery? No worries—check out that baby! Your military strategists can't figure out how to stave off two different attacks at the same time? No problem—I'm sending you a newborn!"

God has got this thing for babies. In the midst of all the immense, complex political troubles of Judah, God kept offering babies as signs, inviting King Ahaz to what Alastair Roberts calls "the politics of the child": politics centred on trust, vulnerability and long-range vision.

God was telling the people of Judah to embrace a political stance that was not rooted in imperial power. While many nations were amassing weaponry and troops, with the assumption that the most powerful would take all, Isaiah puts before Ahaz the wildly impractical suggestion that Judah should rather trust in God. Like infants, the people are utterly dependent on God's provision and care.

I believe that most of the things to which God calls us are both deeply personal and profoundly political. On a personal level, this text calls us, like King Ahaz, to a deep acknowledgment of our powerlessness. Realizing our infant-like reliance on God is both entirely terrifying and



PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM / HUSAM CAKALOGLU

God has got this thing for babies. In the midst of all the immense, complex political troubles of Judah, God kept offering babies as signs, inviting King Ahaz to what Alastair Roberts calls ‘the politics of the child’: politics centred on trust, vulnerability and long-range vision.

fully freeing. As Richard Rohr says, “We are being utterly and warmly held and falling helplessly into this scary mystery at the very same time.” We are each personally called into this deep spiritual journey of dependence upon God.

And what does it mean politically? It

means we make the radical claim that God is already at work in the world, moving with power and purpose. Mark Douglas puts it this way: “For the first political act of Isaiah’s theology is to see the world and its politics differently: not first of all as a field of heroic struggle

against an overwhelming force . . . or a prison in which humans are stoically trapped . . . but as a site of divine activity. There is hope because God is already working here.”

Nothing begins or ends with us. This is profoundly humbling, and profoundly

hopeful.

Now, if that is the first personal and political premise—that God is already at work with great power—then it is possible to believe new things and work toward seemingly impossible goals. That is precisely what Isaiah called King Ahaz to do. While nations around Judah operated in the politics of imperial control, Isaiah called the nation of Judah to centre its politics on the care of the most vulnerable. It was to bring justice and peace, remove yokes and burdens, and break the rods of oppression. In offering Ahaz the sign of the baby, God told him that the priority of his government must be caring for the most vulnerable people among them. This was a radical departure from the politics of dominance.

Personally, we are called to a change of heart, to careful listening and compassionate tending to the vulnerabilities of others. We are invited out of our self-absorbed lives into the care for, and empowerment of, others.

Politically, this priority of the vulnerable certainly has idealistic appeal. But is it a practical political approach? Is Isaiah's demand of King Ahaz grounded in reality? Can we really ask our politicians today to play by radically different rules?

Well, in Alberta, the City of Medicine Hat decided to give this a try. In 2009, it pledged to eliminate homelessness in its city. In the face of much scepticism and some active opposition, new housing was built that gave permanent shelter to more than a thousand people. Now, whenever people find themselves without a home, the goal is to give them a permanent roof over their heads within 10 days. The mayor, who was initially an active opponent of this plan, reports that the city has had more success than it ever imagined, with unforeseen benefits for the entire city.

What might Isaiah's politics of the child and prioritizing the care of the vulnerable mean in our own neighbourhoods, towns and cities? What if we directed our imagination and creativity to this task?

Finally, the politics of the child

broadens our perspective; it is politics with a long-term view. When we cradle babies in our arms, they often jolt us out of our preoccupation with current needs, to a concern with what we will leave behind for the next generation.

Both personally and politically, this requires the transformation of our desires and calls us to a holistic, long-range vision. Perhaps we see this most clearly when we look at climate change, and the cost that future generations will bear for the choices we make today.

I will not forget the day when one of my children pondered the polluted world, looked me in the face, and said, "You made this mess. You clean it up." Our children ask us to make intentional choices: To personally develop more sustainable practices, to call our political leaders to green policies, to make the grinding long-term commitments toward a healthy world for generations to come.

When Isaiah held babies before King Ahaz, when we hold our babies in our

arms, we are called to remember and live out these politics of the child; to acknowledge our powerlessness and trust in God; to care for the vulnerable; to commit to a long-range vision. This Isaiah 9 scripture is a radical personal call and a profound political vision.

And you know, while Isaiah was speaking to his people 800 years before the birth of Christ, it turns out that he caught God's drift pretty well. Centuries later, when Jesus was born, the politics of the child were still exactly what God meant. Jesus was thick into both the personal and the political; and trust, vulnerability and long-range vision were central to his message and life.

"For a child has been born for us, a son given to us." May this challenge and change us. ☿



Judith Friesen Epp is a member of the pastoral team of Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

☿ For discussion

1. What do you think is the appropriate time for Christmas decorations and Christmas music to appear? Why do some people welcome signs of the Christmas season while others say "not yet"? Do you look forward to Christmas celebrations with joy, or is your anticipation mixed with anxiety? How is this year different from other years?
2. Judith Friesen Epp writes that, when Judah was under threat, God sent Isaiah with the sign of a baby. What do babies symbolize that makes the sign of a newborn seem like an inappropriate sign and yet also suitable for this situation?
3. Friesen Epp says, "This text calls us, like King Ahaz, to deep acknowledgment of our powerlessness." What are some of the things that we wish we had power over? Have you had an experience where you had to recognize your powerlessness and depend on God? Do you agree that this is "both entirely terrifying and fully freeing"?
4. How are we doing as a nation in caring for the vulnerable among us? As we enter the 2020 Advent season, what is God's message of the child for us today? Where do we need to have "trust, vulnerability and long-range vision"?

—By Barb Draper

See related Politics resources at www.commonword.ca/go/2200

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/// Readers write

✉ Responses to termination of John D. Rempel's ministerial credential

Re: "Credentials terminated for theologian-academic-pastor," Nov. 9, page 18.

✉ Point: Compassion needed for both victims and perpetrator

I share deep sadness and grief over John D. Rempel's sexual misconduct and the withdrawal of his ministerial credentials. It is a devastatingly costly and painful moment for those who came forward, for John, his family and friends, and the church he has served faithfully for decades. For church leaders and institutions to take a clear stand with those who have been harmed is entirely in keeping with Jesus, who identifies himself with the most vulnerable and who expresses unmitigated outrage at their being abused (Matthew 18:1-9). Following Jesus as disciples demands it.

I am just as convinced, however, that the church and its leaders need to stand with those who have done the harm, who have sinned—not to defend or diminish their behaviours, but to stand with them in patient, loving hope for full acknowledgment and true repentance, for the experience of forgiveness, and for restoration to full fellowship/koinonia.

It means not only pledging to offer every assistance to those who have been harmed, but also to do everything possible to recover the offender from the wreckage of sin, shame and brokenness. In the body of Christ, we do not cancel each other.

On standing with the victims/survivors, the church and school statements on John's discipline are strong and clear. On standing with the one who has offended, they are largely silent. If this concern is there in the hearts of those who have carried the awfully heavy burden of dealing with this tragic case, then I am deeply disheartened that we cannot find words or means to express such yearning for "healing and hope" for the one who has brought harm on others, and to offer the church's resources and creative imagination to that end. That must be part of our repertoire if we truly wish to be a peace church. Following Jesus as disciples demands it.

TOM YODER NEUFELD (ONLINE COMMENT)

I am disappointed that this *Canadian Mennonite* report includes an extensive quote from John D. Rempel, in which he emphasizes his own need for restorative justice rather than the harm he has caused. It is disheartening to then see this emphasis on grace for the offender echoed by some in their

(Continued on page 8)

✉ Counterpoint: No quick forgiveness for perpetrator

It will not be my practice to respond to every published comment that is made about the findings of misconduct against John D. Rempel. Given that Tom Yoder Neufeld is an emeritus faculty member at Conrad Grebel University College, I am obliged to publicly respond to his letter.

First, I have personally received responses to Yoder Neufeld's comments from some of the survivors in this case. They unfortunately experienced the letter as shaming them for coming forward, and pressuring them to quickly forgive. I have communicated directly with Yoder Neufeld about his letter. I believe that he regrets how his words were received, and that he did not intend to communicate these things.

Second, Yoder Neufeld's letter states that the church and the college have been "largely silent" in expressing concern for the offender in our public statements, and suggests that we have neglected values of mercy and forgiveness. This is untrue. The suggestion that we wish to "cancel" the offender is mere rhetoric that ignores what we actually said.

My official statement calls on John's community to continue supporting him, not to abandon or to shun him. I also invite prayers for "everyone involved."

As our community begins the long process of coming to grips with this trauma, I recommend reading Ecclesiastes: "*To everything there is a season.*" There is a time and a place for everything. The day may come when we can talk of forgiveness, but now is not that time. Now is the time to confront painful truths. And while I respect everyone's right to speak out, this might also be a time to more carefully consider the impact of our words, and to listen well.

MARCUS SHANTZ (ONLINE COMMENT)

The writer is president of Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.

The original longer versions of these two Point-Counterpoint letters can be read online at bit.ly/3eKKAMe.



(Continued from page 7)

online comments.

In the triage of this moment the most important concern must be for the individuals harmed by the actions of a trusted church leader. While our faith calling to “healing and hope” includes those who have caused harm, that should not be the focus for today.

Too often the rush to forgiveness has been used to diminish the weight of wrongdoing, ignore the pain caused or even enable continued abuses of power.

There is grace offered in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s statement that “we, as a faith community, must support paths that lead to healing and wholeness for all.”

This journey towards healing begins with a focus on the harm caused to victim-survivors and the grappling of a faith community with the realization of a trust that has been betrayed.

TIM WIEBE-NEUFELD (ONLINE COMMENT)

The writer is Mennonite Church Alberta’s executive minister.

John D. Rempel is a dear friend to me and countless others. He has mentored and inspired many.

Now is a time for all of us to take stock of the culture we have created—one in which victims of his sexual misconduct have not felt safe to speak out for fear they would not be heard or believed. The pain of holding these experiences within, for all these 30 to 40 years, must have been almost unbearable.

These are the people who need our empathy now, so that justice and mercy may continue to be brought forth. None of us are pure enough to throw the first stone, but all of us can help build a stronger community, which can find better ways for accountability to take place and for healing to occur.

CAROL ANN WEAVER (ONLINE COMMENT)

The writer is professor emerita, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.

I am a survivor of ministerial sexual misconduct referenced in *Canadian Mennonite’s* recent online article, “Credentials terminated for theologian-academic-pastor” and have followed the subsequent online dialogue at bit.ly/3eKKAMe.

I am grateful for the support of others, encouraging my own healing. The online dialogue included expert voices, publicly naming truth and peeling back the legacy of silence. Their energy, conviction and courage bring a much-needed perspective to this discourse.

This disclosure is difficult for those who must reconcile the behaviour of the perpetrator with the

person they know, love and respect. That doesn’t lessen the harm done by someone who violated accepted professional boundaries with individuals, breaching the policies and professional standards expected of him by the institutions he served. The passage of time and his noted contribution to the church do not alter the impact of what happened for me.

Individuals in positions of leadership and influence, by their online comments, undermine the process carried out by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, which followed publicly posted procedures, including an appeal process, which no party chose to access. The regional church used the services of skilled, impartial, third-party resources for its fact-finding investigation. The commitment of MC Eastern Canada and Conrad Grebel University College to following their procedures, supporting those harmed, showing compassion for the perpetrator, and considering what, in their own culture, may have allowed such things to happen, all serve as protective factors going forward.

The inference in one online letter of “false memory syndrome” on the part of victims felt particularly silencing to me when I know well what happened.

A temptation to categorize sexual abuse into degrees of seriousness ignores the dynamics in this circumstance—breach of trust and abuse of power, sexual or otherwise, and associated trauma. That violation, and its lasting impact, have harmed me more than the actual sexual acts themselves.

Suggestions that I, or the institutions John D. Rempel served, need to forgive and be reconciled with the perpetrator with alacrity, are misplaced. This is his work. I pray that he will have supports to help him do that.

NAME WITHHELD AT AUTHOR’S REQUEST

✉ **Reader complains about ‘Leaf advertorial’**

Re: “Cheering for the Leafs!” Sept. 28, page 24.

It is interesting to note that your magazine has stooped to doing advertorials. Your “Leaf” article should have been labelled as such.

Are electric cars more carbon and socially responsible than internal-combustion engine (ICE) cars? The electric cars’ production carbon footprint is considered double that of the typical ICE car. It takes eight years to even out this carbon discrepancy.

We are not even thinking about the mining methods and desecration of the Chilean uplands and Tibetan highlands, or the children digging with their hands and dying while mining for cobalt in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I have witnessed children digging for precious minerals in the Congo

while working there as a Mennonite Central Committee volunteer for three years. Not a pretty sight.

Also, I saw no mention that 91 percent of Alberta's electricity is derived from fossil fuels, from which over half is derived from coal-burning plants.

Do these "righteous" Leaf owners have no pride? Can there not be any objectivity in your articles?

Also, why would anyone buy a Nissan Leaf? It is boring to drive, slow to charge, uses old technology, is limited in range and is as stylish as a Lada. These Leaf owners could at least drive a Tesla, which is stylish, extremely well built, technologically more advanced and constantly upgraded, and is fast and fun to drive.

I drive a Tesla and I am a hypocrite! But nothing is more fun to drive than a Tesla.

DAVID WALL, FORT LANGLEY, B.C.

✉ Reader thankful for story about 'courage and persistence'

Re: "Defeating Goliath," Sept. 14, page 26.

Thank you for carrying this story about how, 40 years ago, a modest group of people from the Warman, Sask., area, organized resistance to a planned uranium refinery. I was no longer living in that area when this took place, but I will always be grateful for their courage and persistence.

BILL JANZEN, OTTAWA

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

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Epp—Katie Sara Marie (b. Oct. 6, 2020), to Erik and Cara Epp, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

McGill—Isla Roes (b. Oct. 15, 2020), to Matthew and Maria McGill, Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Marriages

Dirks/Palmer-Almond—Kate-Lynn Dirks (Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.) and Cody Palmer-Almond, in Port Colborne, Ont., Oct. 24, 2020.

Dobbie/Martin—Rosemary Dobbie and Ernie Martin, at

Bethel Mennonite, Elora, Ont., Oct. 24, 2020.

Ehgoetz/McGrath—Sarah Ehgoetz (Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.) and Joshua McGrath, in Leamington, Ont., Sept. 19, 2020.

Enzie/Thiessen—Jennifer Enzie and Andrew Thiessen, First Mennonite, Calgary, on a farm near Cochrane, Alta, Oct. 10, 2020.

Hamm/Samson—Matthias Hamm (Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.) and Avigael Samson, at St. Agatha, Ont., June 28, 2020.

Kornelsen/Plumtree—Nicole Kornelsen (Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.) and Jeremy Plumtree (Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.), at the groom's home, July 10, 2020.

Deaths

Bergen—Annita, 86 (b. March 12, 1934; d. March 31, 2020), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Braun—Lora, 49 (b. May 11, 1971; d. Oct. 22, 2020), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Clemmer—Jane Josephine, 70 (b. Jan. 22, 1950; d. Sept. 23, 2020), Floradale Mennonite, Ont.

Driediger—Isaac, 94 (b. Jan. 14, 1926; d. Nov. 1, 2020), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Eitzen—George, 92 (b. Jan. 4, 1928; d. Oct. 2, 2020), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Enns—Egon, 87 (b. March 31, 1933; d. Oct. 28, 2020), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Fast—Jacob, 91 (b. Feb. 27, 1929; d. Oct. 5, 2020), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Friesen—Peter I, 94 (b. Oct. 30, 1925; d. Oct. 13, 2020), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Hamm—Jacob, 88 (b. Oct. 28, 1931; d. Oct. 2, 2020), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Hildebrandt—Anne (nee Driedger), 98 (b. Nov. 20, 1921; d. Oct. 27, 2020), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Klassen—Paul, 90 (b. Aug. 12, 1930; d. Sept. 27, 2020), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Kornelsen—Herbert Henry, 85 (b. Sept. 14, 1935; d. Oct. 22, 2020), Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont.

Krause—David, 51 (b. Aug. 13, 1969; d. Oct. 15, 2020), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Loewen-Rudgers—Erna, 74 (b. June 8, 1946; d. Oct. 30, 2020), Charleswood Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Marr—Sarah Elizabeth, 44 (b. Nov. 26, 1975; d. Oct. 17, 2020), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Nafziger—Miriam, 99 (b. Oct. 16, 1921; d. Oct. 31, 2020), Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.

Nelson—Susan Gail, 59 (b. Dec. 4, 1961; d. Oct. 11, 2020), Hanover Mennonite, Ont.

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

FROM OUR LEADERS

Insiders versus outsiders

Ken Dueck

“Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us” (Mark 9:38, NIV). John’s exclusionary attitude remains a prevalent attitude in our churches: “You are not one of us!”

Sometimes churches boldly outline the boundaries of membership in their policy documents. So the Baptist church where I pastored required my wife to be baptized by immersion to become a member because her earlier faith-based baptism had been by pouring. Sometimes individuals judge others by their assumed beliefs, ethics or practices. So a man left the Mennonite church I pastored when he heard, via gossip, that I did not hold to a literal seven-day creation.

We become exclusionary when we create or adopt boundaries that allow us to determine who is one of us and who is not. Always we assume we are part of the “in” group, which means those different from us—as determined by us—are “out.” We are comforted by being an insider and rarely challenge our assumptions that judge others as outsiders.

John and the disciples believed they were “in” because they remained physically with Jesus. The healer casting out demons in the name of Jesus was, therefore, “out.” Ironically, the insider disciples had earlier been unable to do in Jesus’ authority what this outsider healer was doing. So who truly was “out”? So where should we set the boundaries when it comes to the Kingdom of God?

The more conservative within our Mennonite church family tend to set the boundaries tighter and clearer. The more liberal are comfortable with broad and often indistinct boundaries. What we hold in common is that we all have boundaries separating insiders from outsiders, and we all think we are part of the insider group. The problem, of course, is that we too quickly move from drawing boundary lines to condemning those who fall outside our lines.

Jesus tried to turn the disciples’ thinking inside out and outside in. Jesus replied to John and the other disciples: “Do not stop him. . . . For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about

me, for whoever is not against us is for us” (Mark 9:39-40, NIV). The disciples considered all who were not with them as outsiders, while Jesus considered all who were not against him as insiders.

According to Jesus, insiders in God’s kingdom are not determined by whether or not they align with our beliefs or thinking or practices, but whether or not they align themselves with Jesus. The most faithful church-goer may be more concerned with his/her agenda instead of following the ways of God. On the other hand, someone far from the church may be turning continually to God in the hope of redemption.

To the former, Jesus says, “Away from me. I never knew you.” To the latter, he says, “Welcome to the kingdom. Blessed are you.” ❧



Ken Dueck is an “oldie” to Mennonite faith and pastoring but a “newbie” to MC Canada. He is currently MC British Columbia’s interim communications coordinator.

A moment from yesterday



Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) began work in Thailand in 1960, but from 1963 to 1975 it had no programs there. In 1979, MCC started working with Indochinese refugees coming into Thailand with job creation, social services, agriculture and education programs. This is a photo of MCCer Victor Neumann of Abbotsford, B.C., with refugee workers processing mail at Songkhla camp, Thailand. Letters from relatives already settled abroad tell of televisions and other luxuries but also of problems adjusting to a new and complex society.

Text: Conrad Stoesz and MCC

Photo: Annie Krasker/ MCC collection



THIRD WAY FAMILY

Marriage and conflict

Christina Bartel Barkman

My husband and I have been married for 13 years; long enough to have weathered some difficult seasons. We've walked alongside other couples in turmoil lately, causing us to reflect together on what makes our marriage work and how we will continue to grow stronger and closer. My grandparents were married nearly 70 years so, in light of that, we anticipate years ahead of us growing closer!

In our first year of marriage, with a lot of conflict and struggles at hand, a counsellor recommended *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, a book by Dr. John M. Gottman. This is one of those tried-tested-and-true books when it comes to marriage advice. The Gottman Institute has observed thousands of couples in the "Love Lab" since 1986, and its researchers can reliably predict the future of a relationship because of the conclusions of this intense observation. More importantly, though, the research has also led to data-driven suggestions for how to positively adjust the course of a relationship. The Gottman Institute's clinical director is also a seminary graduate who has written about how these principles reflect biblical foundations for healthy relationships.

Conflict in marriage is not something that can be eliminated; 69 percent of marriage conflicts can't even be resolved, Gottman's research claims.

How we manage conflict, however, is crucial. The Gottman Institute identifies the "Four Horsemen" that are destructive ways of managing conflict. They include criticism (attack on your partner at the core of their character), contempt (treating the other with total disrespect), defensiveness (fishing for excuses or playing an innocent victim), and stonewalling (withdrawing physically or emotionally from interaction).

Thankfully, we have four antidotes to these unhealthy habits. Let me share an example of how my husband and I have learned to avoid stumbling into criticism, contempt, defensiveness or stonewalling during a recent conflict.

I had a really rotten week earlier this month. My car was rear-ended; thankfully I'm fine. Then I got a fever the next day and felt sicker than I've been in a very long time. (Of course, I was also pretty worried it was COVID-19, but thankfully my test came back negative.) One morning that week, after having slept poorly and still feeling sick, I noticed the container of ice cream my husband had bought me the week be-

fore in the recycling. I was so upset that he had eaten the rest of a special treat meant for me! Later that day, I told him how disappointed I felt. Here I was sick and miserable, and so looking forward to finishing this gift, and he ate it all up! I didn't criticize his character or show contempt by being disrespectful or degrading him, but I did share how it made me feel.

The next week, when we were having ice cream with our kids at the dinner table, we joked about how Daddy had eaten all of Mom's special ice cream. I told my kids, though, that when I told Dad how it made me feel, he didn't get defensive, or give reasons or arguments for what he did. Nor did he stonewall and just not respond. He said he was sorry. He offered comfort and recognized that it wasn't the nicest thing to do. This is a key thing: he turned towards me.

Of course, not all our conflicts are so simple and silly, but how we deal with the little everyday things is extremely important. And I think it's good to let our kids see how we navigate some of these lighter conflicts. We work hard to stay away from destructive conflict patterns and we both desire to have healthy, positive interactions every day. ☺



Christina Bartel Barkman, with her four little ones and her pastor husband, seeks to live out Jesus' creative and loving "third way" options. This is her final column for Canadian Mennonite.

Et cetera

Deepening the conversation on militarism

A new group seeks to revive the peace witness in the United States. Mennonites Against Militarism is organized by the Peace and Justice Support Network in collaboration with Mennonite Church U.S.A. and Mennonite Central Committee. "We hope that this campaign will help to deepen our conversation as a church on the damaging impacts of militarism that intersect with our theology, economy and the environment—locally and around the world," says member Sue Park-Hur.

Source: Mennonite Mission Network

MENNONITES
A G A I N S T
MILITARISM

 THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

Going to church

Arli Klassen

I've been a "church-goer" my whole life. I remember my dad polishing our shoes on Saturday evening so we would all look bright and shiny for church on Sunday morning. I remember Sunday evenings watching Walt Disney on TV, getting changed for church during the last commercial, and leaving for church just before the show ended. Going to church is what we did on Sundays. My church met in a school gymnasium, so it wasn't about the building, but something about what we did, that made it church. Yet going to Bible study on Wednesday nights, or youth group on Friday nights, was not considered going to church.

The first Mennonite church I joined as a member was in my mid-30s in Lancaster, Pa. The sign out front said it was the Meeting House of the East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church. I still walked "to church" on Sunday mornings, but that sign began to shift my understanding of church.

A few Saturdays ago, I sat in front of my puzzle board, finding the right places for a lot of pieces in the current puzzle, while listening to the MC Canada "Table talk" conference on what is compelling about church these days?

I heard many good analogies and

images about church—with an emphasis that church is not the building, and church is not limited to gathered worship on Sunday mornings. I heard someone in my breakout room describe the yearning in her congregation during COVID-19 to gather together, a powerful yearning to "go to church."

That yearning to gather as Christians for shared worship is admirable. Church is a communal space where we are inspired to follow Jesus and where we might have an encounter with God. We get to sing together—maybe the only place where we sing. The weekly check-in with each other for worship keeps us grounded, preventing us from drifting away from our faith commitments.

But as Carey Nieuwhof reports, based on Barna's current research in the United States, the pandemic is making it easier for adults to not participate in Sunday morning church, and research projects that many will not return when pandemic restrictions end: "Seventy-one percent of Boomers say they want primarily in-person church attendance after COVID is over. For Gen Z, only 41 percent prefer primarily physical gatherings in the future. . . . The changes happening right now in church attendance preferences are not just cultural,

they're generational!"

I read these stats and I wonder what proportion of adults under 50 will participate in any form of Sunday morning church in the future. Regular church participation has been dropping for decades. The pandemic is making obvious the disruptions that already exist in our church communities and is increasing the speed at which change is happening.

I have been intrigued for many years how the Be in Christ Church of Canada organizes itself around three "expressions" of church: Community churches (what we normally think of as a church); The Meeting House (for people who aren't into church); and Reunion (creative church plant communities).

As Mennonite churches, we also put resources into creative church-plant communities in Canada, and we invest heavily in newer Canadian church communities. Our goal is not to turn all these investments into traditional Sunday-morning-worshipping communities. Our goal is to invest in creative explorations of what it means to be church together for different generations and cultures; and I think we need to do more investing and exploring. Let's redefine together what "going to church" means. ✎



Arli Klassen serves as Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's moderator and is a member of the MC Canada Joint Council.

 Et cetera



Iraqi IDPs receive food aid through MCC

Fourteen-year-old Yusuf (last name withheld for security reasons) carries a food package distributed in July 2014 by MCC partner Zakho Small Villages Project at an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in northern Iraq; most of the IDPs fled the city of Mosul after its takeover by the Islamic State group ISIS. More than 230 heads of household received the packages that contained basic cooking staples, such as rice, lentils, oil and other ingredients, as well as some basic hygiene items.

Source: MCC / Photo by Ryan Rodrick Beiler



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Judgment versus discernment

Troy Watson

What does Jesus mean when he says “*Do not judge*”? How do we respond to injustice, oppression, racism, sexism and prejudice without judgment? I’ve contemplated this for years, and here is where I’ve landed, for now at least.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “*Do not judge*,” but a few verses later he says we can tell what kind of character someone has based on the kind of fruit they produce. That sounds like judgment. So, for simplicity’s sake, let’s call what Jesus says not to do, “judgment,” and what he encourages us to do, “discernment.”

Judgment, as I see it, defines things, situations and people. It declares, “This situation is bad. That person is wicked. Those people are evil.”

There are a number of reasons Jesus tells us not to do this. First, we aren’t in a place to define situations, people or things, because we rarely have all the facts. For example, a situation that seems awful at first may end up being one of the best things to happen to us. Similarly, people are complex and multi-layered. We don’t fully understand ourselves, let alone others. Only God knows the truth and depth of each situation, person or thing. To put ourselves in the position of judge is to make ourselves God.

Another reason we shouldn’t judge is because it only produces more judgment. Imagine two fires burning on earth. One is God’s great bonfire that provides light, warmth and comfort. It brings people together like a good bonfire does. The other fire is a raging wildfire of destruction. It burns, consumes, destroys and devours.

Jesus says that whenever you judge, you are adding fuel to this destructive wildfire. You are feeding that which destroys trust, community, unity, peace, love and connection in the world. In-

stead, Jesus encourages us to fuel God’s bonfire of love and light by practising things like non-judgment and discernment.

Discernment doesn’t focus on the other. It focuses on my character and my responsibility, insofar as I have the ability to respond. Discernment means to separate or sift. It sifts the wheat from the chaff, first and foremost in myself. It helps me determine if this

Discernment says, ‘Based on what I’ve experienced, observed and learned, this is who I need to be in relation with this person right now, until I learn more.’

thought, feeling or attitude arising within me is wisdom or reactivity, profitable or unhelpful, honest or biased, Spirit-aligned or ego-induced. This awareness helps me assess and choose the best response.

For example, if someone steals from me, judgment declares that person a thief. Judgment says, “Based on what I’ve experienced, observed and learned here, this is who that person is.” Discernment says, “Based on what I’ve experienced, observed and learned, this is who I need to be in relation with this person right now, until I learn more.”

Discernment focuses on how to see clearly and respond appropriately.

Should I call the police? Get a lawyer? Ask the person to give back what they stole? Humbly inquire with an honest intention to understand why they felt they needed to steal? Forgive them and let it go? Get a home security system to prevent future thefts? All of the above?

Back to the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is referring to preachers with ulterior motives when he says we need to “discern” other people’s character based on their fruit. Jesus isn’t encouraging

us to label someone a false teacher. His point is that we need discernment to know who we can trust, especially when it comes to our spiritual growth and well-being. The focus is on discerning how I need to respond to this person. Do I need to be on guard? Do I need to establish stricter boundaries with them? Do I need to separate and distance myself from them? Do I need to confront them to protect vulnerable people I see

suffering because of them?

Discernment is never focused on shaming, blaming or scapegoating others. It is focused on my character and responsibility. This means my work for peace and justice and my “prophetic” confrontations must flow from discernment, not judgment. To be discerning means committing myself to an ongoing assessment of the need for change within myself, first and foremost.

There is far more to discernment than this, but healthy discernment always begins within oneself, as we learn to constantly separate the wheat from the chaff in our own hearts and minds, and align our responses to divine Spirit, because the truth is, we are all full of chaff. ☘



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

VIEWPOINT

Waging peace on ministerial misconduct and abuse

Leah Ressor-Keller
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

This is a difficult season for our Mennonite Church Eastern Canada community of faith, as incidents of harm caused by faith leaders are coming to light. Learning that faith leaders we respect and value have violated the sacred covenant of their ministry and harmed others, whether physically, emotionally or spiritually, is earthshaking.

Our Anabaptist tradition calls us to seek peace and transformative healing for all. The first step of this journey is to find out what happened and understand the harm that it caused. As a faith community, we need to open up the windows of our past and let the fresh air in. We are waging peace on the harm that has happened, and creating space for new movement and growth to spring up. This is holy and sacred work, and work that we need to undertake as a faith community.

For you who have experienced harm or are experiencing it now, know that you are a beloved child of God, and your story matters. We can only imagine how devastating it is when you have experienced harm from a pastor personally, and yet see the one who harmed you held up publicly as a loved and respected faith leader. We know that survivors of pastoral misconduct suffer the consequences for years and sometimes decades.

For you who have caused harm, whether intentionally or unintentionally, know that you are also a beloved child of God. We believe in a God of repentance and redemption. The road of repentance leads through justice and accountability for harm done. This is not the end of your journey of faith or

your membership in the community. What happens next is up to you and the actions you choose to take going forward.

The decision to remove a pastor's credential and revoke ordination is never made lightly. The MC Eastern Canada Church leadership minister and the Leadership Council carry a heavy burden on behalf of our community as they hear misconduct investigation findings and weigh the evidence. In the most serious cases, the Leadership Council may decide to terminate an ordination credential. This work can take a personal toll on regional church staff and Leadership Council members, as they prayerfully make difficult decisions that impact many lives.

We place our trust and our spiritual well-being in the hands of pastors whom we have called and ordained to provide leadership and spiritual care for us in our walk with God. Ordination is a covenant relationship in which we, as a faith community, affirm an individual's calling to ministry. Pastors promise to hold the needs of the faith community they serve above their own personal needs and desires.

When this covenant is broken, it leads to deep emotional reactions as we seek to understand what has happened. As individuals, we will respond to the misconduct findings in different ways, and this can lead to conflict. We, as a faith community, will not all agree on the way forward. These ripple effects of pastoral misconduct create trauma for congregations and the broader faith community as we struggle to come to terms with what has happened.

Finally, thank you to all the pastors,

chaplains and volunteers who develop and follow Safe Church policies. Thank you for the work you are doing every day to make MC Eastern Canada congregations and related organizations a welcoming and safe space for all of us; your work matters.

My prayer for us as a community of faith is that we will feel God's presence with us on this journey. I pray that we can root ourselves in God's love and grace, building up our courage and resolve to move forward and seek the well-being of all. This is a hard road for us to walk as a church body. It is one that challenges our core sense of identity as we grapple with harm done while publicly proclaiming our witness as an historic peace church.

I believe that in this season God is calling us to extend the peace of Jesus Christ inward, to bring healing to harm experienced in the midst of our community. Seeking to be peacemakers is leading us to look in the mirror and own the brokenness and pain we find there. We may not like what we see in our reflection right now, but we must keep to our path and show the world what it looks like to put our faith into action.

This is our work; this is our witness. ✎



Leah Ressor-Keller is MC Eastern Canada's executive minister. She lives with her family in Kitchener, Ont. Connect with her by email at lreesorkeller@mcec.ca or on Instagram at [@leahreesorkeller](https://www.instagram.com/leahreesorkeller).

VIEWPOINT

Renewal through dialogue

J. Nelson Kraybill
Mennonite World Conference

Pandemic and racism loom large in the Americas and in many parts of the world today.

These scourges also were rampant 500 years ago, when Anabaptism emerged. Racism fuelled European conquests in North and South America, and settlers brought diseases that killed millions of Indigenous people. Many settlers carried the cross and the sword, reflecting an alliance between church and militarized state.

One generation after this colonial expansion into the Americas began, Anabaptist renewal emerged in Europe. Most Anabaptists did not accept the marriage of church and state, and did not participate directly in military conquest.

Failures

Nevertheless, Anabaptists who settled in the Americas sometimes benefitted from imperial conquest. The United States army expelled the last Indigenous peoples from Indiana, my home state, in 1838. My Anabaptist forebears soon arrived to possess land where the Potawatomi people long had lived.

It is important to acknowledge such moral failures of the past. Nevertheless, we also can celebrate that God has raised up a global Anabaptist people whose highest loyalty is to Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and Anabaptists around the world are commemorating 500 years since this renewal movement began in 1525. Early Anabaptists were energetic missionaries, reaching across national and cultural boundaries to call for repentance and teach the peacemaking way of Jesus.

Better ways

Anabaptist theologian R. Bruce Yoder recently studied how one North Amer-



PHOTO BY J. NELSON KRAYBILL

Mennonite pastors at Bobo-Dioulasso tell of the struggle of their congregations.

ican mission agency (Mennonite Board of Missions) reached out in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America, by seeking dialogue with churches and cultures in the host countries. This approach emphasized “indigenization” and “decolonization.”

Instead of simply trying to transfer what they considered correct theology, these mission workers wanted new congregations to be self-theologizing, self-financing, self-administering and self-propagating.

The global character of Anabaptism today is, at least in part, the result of such dialogical mission.

Yoder suggests that MWC must oper-

ate in a similar way, as diverse cultures from 86 countries relate to each other.

Global Anabaptism needs guidance from the Holy Spirit, affirmation of the lordship of Jesus Christ, commitment to Scripture, deep listening and clear articulation of theological understandings.

Those qualities are essential for the future of MWC and are consistent with our Shared Convictions statement. With the Spirit to unite and inspire us, diverse cultural expressions can flourish, to the glory of God.✠

J. Nelson Kraybill is president of Mennonite World Conference. He lives in Indiana.

Early Anabaptists were energetic missionaries, reaching across national and cultural boundaries to call for repentance and teach the peacemaking way of Jesus.

NEWS

Covenants signed linking congregations to overseas workers

International Witness Sunday strengthens relationships across worldwide community of faith

Mennonite Church Canada

Congregations across Mennonite Church Canada celebrated International Witness Sunday in October. The nationwide church declared Oct. 18 to be the official day, but welcomed congregations to celebrate on whatever Sunday worked for them. The theme of the day was “Sharing gifts. Building relationships.”

Kirsten Hamm-Epp, regional church minister of MC Saskatchewan and a member of Eigenheim Mennonite Church, appreciated the outward focus the day brought to her congregation. “It’s been easy to hunker down and focus inwards [due to COVID-19], but we felt International Witness Sunday calling us to look beyond ourselves and realize God is still very much active in the world. There are still meaningful ways we can be part of building the kingdom,” she said.

Members of Erie View United Mennonite Church in Port Rowan, Ont., celebrated their connection to the ministry of Witness workers Tom and Christine Poovong in Thailand. Erie View used online resources provided by MC Canada, which included videos about the ministry of the Witness workers, prayers and other worship resources.

Several congregations celebrated by signing covenants with Witness workers to honour their relationship with—and commitment to support—the workers and their ministries in countries around the globe. Morden (Man.) Mennonite Church

signed a covenant of support for ministry in South Korea with Witness workers Sook Kyoung Park and Bock Ki Kim, while nearby Carmen Mennonite Church covenanted to support ministry in Thailand through the work of the Poovongs. Ros-thern (Sask.) Mennonite Church signed a covenant for ministry in China with Witness workers Tobia and George Veith.

The leadership team of Zion Men-

month to International Witness. Pastor Lois Bukar said the invitation to celebrate International Witness came at a good time, since her church was not able to have its Thanksgiving banquet and donate to a specific project like members normally do.

Living Stones Chinese Mennonite Church in Surrey, B.C., dedicated an afternoon to learning about ministry in China. Those in attendance listened to a special

recorded message in Mandarin from a church leader in Mainland China, who has connected with Anabaptist teaching through Chinese partners of International Witness and the ministry of China Witness workers George and Tobia Veith. He shared his excitement in discovering Anabaptist teaching as the roots he had been looking for in his faith journey. Members of Living Stones, along with Pastor Audrey Sheu, are now helping to edit some of the Anabaptist resources their speaker shared and plan to use them in their own congregation.

“It was wonderful to see relationships between our Canadian congregations and our Witness workers and international partners strengthened on International Witness Sunday,” said Jeanette Hanson, director of International Witness. “Our hope is that this celebration becomes an annual event that

reminds us that we walk together as followers of Jesus.” ❧

International Witness Workers

- China
George and Tobia Veith
- Thailand
Tom and Christine Poovong
- Philippines
Dann and Joji Pantoja
- South Korea
Bock Ki Kim and Sook Kyoung Park

International Witness Sunday was held on Oct. 18, 2020. Congregations were invited to celebrate their relationships with Witness workers and their ministries by making donations, by learning about ministries through online resources provided by Mennonite Church Canada and by strengthening their relationships through the signing of covenants.

nonite Church in Swift Current, Sask., declared the month of October International Witness Support Month and invited people to designate gifts throughout the

Building on 40 years of connection

MC Canada International Witness supports new Anabaptist resource network through Mennonite Partners in China

Mennonite Church Canada

Mennonite Partners in China (MPC), a joint program of Mennonite Church Canada International Witness and MC U.S.A.'s Mennonite Mission Network (MMN), is creating an Anabaptist resource network to assist Chinese church leaders who want to know more about Anabaptism.

For the past 40 years, MPC has been the main pathway for Mennonites to engage with Chinese church and education communities. It has facilitated educational exchanges for more than 300 North American teachers and 400 Chinese university professors since 1981.

In a time of growing tension between Chinese and Canadian and U.S. governments, MPC has provided valuable opportunities for learning and for building peace between different cultures and viewpoints. Now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, MPC is adapting to focus on providing resources to Chinese faith communities.

Together with MMN, International Witness consulted with Chinese church leaders who have partnered with MPC in the past. These leaders have asked for help establishing a resource network to assist with the translation of Anabaptist

materials and the development of new teaching materials for the Chinese context. A proposal to meet this need was approved by MC Canada's Joint Council earlier this fall.

Several Asian partners of International Witness and MMN are also asking for Anabaptist resources. One Chinese lay church leader said, "Learning about Anabaptist teaching was like learning about my faith roots when I didn't even know they existed."

To meet these requests, International Witness and MMN have expanded the mandate of Myrrl Byler, MPC's director, who will now also serve as Anabaptist education coordinator, connecting church leaders in various parts of Asia, including China, and providing them with needed resources.

Myrrl and Ruthie Byler will relocate to Asia in 2021, to begin learning from, and walking with, Asian church leaders who seek Anabaptist training. They will also continue to strengthen ties and promote exchange opportunities between Chinese and North American educators when these can happen safely again. ❧



Myrrl Byler



FILE PHOTO BY TODD HANSON

Mennonite Partners in China has been connecting Mennonites and Chinese church leaders for 40 years.

News brief

Camps with Meaning hosts successful fundraiser



The annual banquet of Camps with Meaning, Mennonite Church Manitoba's camping ministry, took on a new form this year due to COVID-19. The fundraiser transformed into a "Break the Bank-uet" online celebration. The live-stream event aired on Oct. 25 and has gained hundreds of views so far. Hosted by Sandy Plett and Blue Puppet, pictured above, the evening featured performances by well-known musical guests like Fred Penner and Steve Bell. Camp staff gave updates on the 2020 summer camping ministry and the effects of the pandemic on the camps. These were interspersed with more musical contributions by Mike Wiebe, Kim Thiessen and Darryl Neustaedter Barg. Dorothy Fontaine, the regional church's director of missions, is grateful to report that donations were significantly higher this year and by far exceeded what she anticipated for a year with COVID-19. While MC Manitoba typically raises somewhere between \$15,000 and \$20,000 from a banquet, this year roughly \$50,000 was raised. "It is way beyond what we were expecting, given how difficult the year is. It is much appreciated," she says. Most of the camp staff continue to be laid off. The fundraiser will remain online at campswithmeaning.org/banquet.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



MC Eastern Canada changes pastoral misconduct procedures

Regional church apologizes for misinterpretation and misapplication in recent misconduct case

Canadian Mennonite

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada staff “will now consider any ministerial sexual misconduct complaints, including anonymous and second-hand concerns, to be sufficient to open an investigation.”

The decision was made after the regional church announced in June the termination of Wilmer Martin’s ministerial credential on the grounds of ministerial misconduct and ministerial sexual misconduct during his tenure as pastor of Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., between 1978 and 1991.

Following the announcement, regional church leadership “received multiple letters expressing concern about the process and the delay involved, particularly since complaints about the offender resurfaced and came to [MC Eastern Canada] staff’s attention in late 2017 and the investigation did not start until January 2020,” a press release issued by the regional church on Oct. 23 said.

“The regional church’s Executive Council asked three external reviewers to independently review the process that led to the commencement of the misconduct investigation,” the release went on to say. “This review was undertaken by two people with responsibility for the binational Mennonite Church Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure [manual] and one person with expertise in dealing with historical sexual misconduct.”

The Executive Council received the findings of these reviewers in September. The

review “independently and unanimously concluded that [MC Eastern Canada] staff unnecessarily delayed the commencement of the investigation by requiring a signed first-hand complaint to initiate the process,” according to the release.

The Policy and Procedure manual definition of a “complaint” does not include the term “first-hand.” It is defined as: “A written allegation of misconduct, signed by a complainant, including the name of the accused and, as much as possible, the date, time, location, circumstances, names of any witnesses and other relevant information.” Nor is the term “first-hand” found elsewhere in the manual.

The MC Eastern Canada release explained the reason for requiring a first-hand signed complaint in order to begin an investigation: “The staff’s intent was to protect the confidentiality and wishes of victim-survivors; and to follow the [Policy and Procedure manual] as closely as they could in accordance with their understanding of it.”

MC Eastern Canada leadership “sincerely regrets and apologizes for this misinterpretation and misapplication of the [Policy and Procedure manual] and the consequent delay,” the release continued. “We sincerely wish we had acted sooner. We deeply regret the harm the significant delay caused to victim-survivors and their families, as well as the faith community at Erb Street Mennonite Church, especially those who advocated for and supported victim-survivors. We recognize that our response to ministerial sexual misconduct must be significantly better.”

The review noted that, according to the Policy and Procedure manual, “once a complaint is made to [MC Eastern Canada] staff, it is the role of an independent investigation team to determine the credibility of the concerns.” It determined

that neither regional church staff nor congregational councils, boards, committees or ministers “should be involved in building a case with or for the complainant or the respondent.”

“This delay has no impact on the findings of ministerial misconduct in this case,” the release stated.

Dealing with victims who are afraid of the church

Besides making “improvements to its processes regarding allegations of ministerial sexual misconduct,” the press release stated that “church leadership has also heard from some victims of sexual misconduct that they do not feel able to voice their concerns directly to [MC Eastern Canada]. They fear the possible loss of confidentiality and are afraid of dealing with the investigation process without support.”

While the Policy and Procedure manual provides for a contact person to support the complainant where there is a concern about ministerial sexual misconduct, going forward the contact list will also include Christian counsellors who are not members of the Mennonite church to choose from. “This ensures that the complainant can receive support throughout the process,” the press release stated.

“We are committed to ensuring that victim-survivors are heard and more easily protected through these revised procedures,” the MC Eastern Canada release concluded. ❧

To read the whole Policy and Procedure manual, visit bit.ly/312nBG1.

For background, read “Pastoral misconduct investigation mishandled, says complainant” online at bit.ly/3lKc9ry, or in print in CM (Aug. 17 issue, page 16).



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/// **News brief**

Special delivery for Trinity Mennonite students



PHOTO BY VERNA FROESE

Pastor Will Loewen of Trinity Mennonite Church in DeWinton, Alta., left, and Marguerite Jack, right, a church leader and a Mennonite Mutual Insurance constituency relations representative, hand out care packages to Rachel Hunsberger, a 'virtual' education student at the University of Alberta, and Ryan Engbrecht, an autobody student at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.

DEWINTON, ALTA.—Post-secondary students from Trinity Mennonite Church received a surprise earlier this month when the members joined together to assemble care packages that included hand-written notes, a large chocolate bar and treats, a \$10 Tim Horton's gift card donated by Mennonite Mutual Insurance, gloves, socks, a booklet telling the story of Eugene Janzen, and a book by church member Hugo Neufeld, among other items. A letter was included from the church leadership to communicate their blessing, support and commitment to pray for each student as they seek to share their gifts in the church, the larger community and the world.

—BY JOANNE DE JONG

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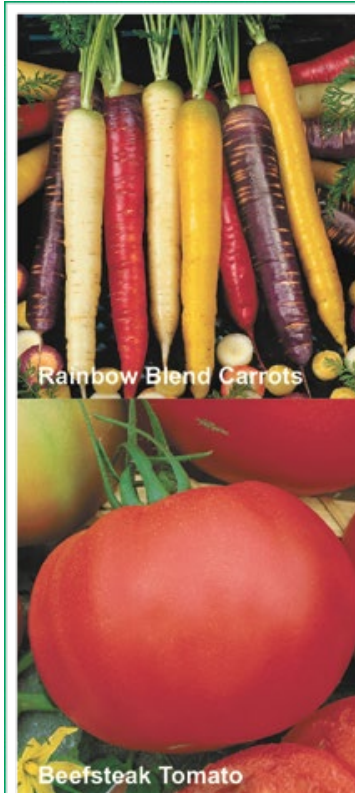
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Searching for home

Peace conference challenges participants to care for those who are displaced

Story and Screenshots by Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Home is where one is from, where one lives, where one belongs. But for those displaced from their homes, the concept of home may be more of an illusive dream than reality.



Vurayayi Pugini, MCC's area director for Southern, Central Africa and Nigeria, speaks at MCC Saskatchewan's virtual peace conference.

"Displaced: Upheaval, hospitality and justice in the search for home" was the theme of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan's second annual peace conference, held online on Nov. 7.

Amanda Dodge, who is MCC Saskatchewan's program director, noted in her opening remarks that Mennonites founded MCC a hundred years ago as a response to the displacement of their Mennonite brothers and sisters.

In his keynote address, Doug Heidebrecht, who is director of global training with Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, surveyed biblical texts through the lens of displacement.

"God loves the stranger just as he loves Israel," he said. "God's love overflows specifically to those who are oppressed or suffering. God's heart is for the widow, the homeless, the family-less."

Jesus, in Luke 10:25-37, redefines "neighbour," turning the perceptions of his

audience on their heads, said Heidebrecht. Jesus continually crossed boundaries to heal and show compassion toward outsiders. And in Matthew 25:35-40, Jesus teaches that love is helping those who are helpless and that serving "the least of these" is an encounter with Jesus.

Following Heidebrecht's address, three panellists offered responses.

Harry Lafond, a scholar in Indigenous education at St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon, talked about the teaching of *wahkohtowin* in Cree culture. Translated as "kinship," the word refers to the interconnectedness of all created things. "In *wahkohtowin*," said Lafond, "we are striving to find common ground rather than divisions."

Vurayayi Pugini,

who is MCC area director for Southern, Central Africa and Nigeria, stressed the importance of hospitality. "Why, when we from North America travel to other countries, are we received with respect, but when these people come to North America they are questioned and ridiculed?" he asked.

Anna Vogt, who is the MCC Ottawa Office director, shared about her two years in Colombia. "I was struck by the determination of community leaders," said Vogt. "Through telling their story to those in power, they could create change."

The conference's second keynote address, entitled "Addressing the global displacement crisis through development, advocacy and refugee sponsorship," featured a panel discussion with three MCC

personnel who work in the area of migration and resettlement.

Brian Dyck, MCC Canada's national migration and resettlement coordinator, said that more than half of the 80 million people who are displaced globally are internally displaced within their own countries. The rest are refugees or asylum seekers.

"Almost all refugees go next door to places that often cannot support them," he said, explaining that durable solutions include returning voluntarily to their home country, being assimilated into the country to which they fled or being resettled in another country.

"Almost no one gets a durable solution," he said, adding that private refugee sponsorship in relation to the global displacement problem is like "picking at a landslide with tweezers."

Vogt spoke of the advocacy work she



Anna Vogt, MCC Ottawa Office director, speaks during MCC Saskatchewan's second annual peace conference.

does with MCC in Ottawa. "Private sponsorship is a good example of why we engage in advocacy work," she said. "We're trying to use a bigger instrument than tweezers."

Vogt's office advocates in the areas of peacebuilding, climate change, accountability for Canadian companies operating



Harry Lafond, a scholar of Indigenous studies at St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon, speaks as part of MCC Saskatchewan's peace conference on displaced people.

abroad, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Pugeni talked about the development work MCC is helping to facilitate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where one in 10 people are internally displaced. The Congo is rich in resources. Eighty percent of the world's coltan, a mineral used in cell phones and computers, is found in the Congo.

“The scramble for this mineral creates a war economy,” he said. “The world is benefiting from the Congolese people. . . . What is happening in the [Congo] can be equated to a silent holocaust.”

But Pugeni sees hope in the development work MCC and its partners are doing in the Congo. One area in which they are involved is in the creation of women's situation rooms—safe spaces where women can talk about the trauma



Doug Heidebrecht, director of global training with Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, delivers a keynote address during MCC Saskatchewan's recent peace conference.

they have faced. Another cause for hope is in the way churches in the Congo are advocating to prevent election fraud and violence.

In addition to the two keynote addresses, participants chose from an array of workshops, including:

- **The causes** and complexities of Indigenous displacement in Saskatchewan.
- **The effects** of internal displacement and migration in South Africa.
- **The relationship** between Forest Grove Community Church in Saskatoon and the Indigenous Wounaan people of Panama.
- **The challenges** and rewards of private refugee sponsorship.

The conference closed with a call to engage in the work of caring for displaced people and a time of prayer, led in English and Arabic by Maysoun Darweesh, MCC Manitoba's migration and resettlement coordinator. ✎

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CANADIAN MENNONITE
Connecting communities in challenging times



Choir perseveres through pandemic

First Mennonite Church adapts to continue connecting choristers

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Hedie Epp has been singing with First Mennonite Church choirs on and off for 40 years. When COVID-19 hit and the Winnipeg church had to halt all its choral activities, it was difficult.

“For 10 months of the year, twice a week, we got together with the same people . . . and all of a sudden with COVID-19, we weren’t seeing any of these people and we weren’t singing,” says Epp, who has been attending weekly rehearsals for the last 17 years.

This absence was devastating not only for the singers, but also for listeners in the congregation. Karis Wiebe, conductor of the women’s choir, received a flood of emails from church members expressing their longing for choral music in the pre-recorded church services and their concern about the fate of the choirs.

First Mennonite is steeped in a rich musical legacy that began at its inception. It currently has a women’s choir and a mixed choir but formerly also had men’s, children’s and youth choirs. Three of four Sunday services a month feature a choir, and the choirs are well known for their First Advent and Good Friday concerts, at which they perform oratorios and other large works.

“The First Mennonite Church has an

absolutely outstanding choral tradition and it goes back in history from way before my time,” says Yuri Klaz, conductor of the mixed choir since 2003; he also directs the The Winnipeg Singers and the Winnipeg Philharmonic Choir. “I honestly didn’t even see any other option but somehow to continue.”

Klaz, Wiebe and Ingrid Moehlmann, a former worship committee chair, joined together and the church’s Corona Choir was born. Starting in early summer, the choir began meeting to make music together, but the process was far from normal.

With Manitoba restricting indoor gatherings to 50 people and outdoor events to 100, they recorded in sectionals of five singers, grouped by voice part. Masked and physically distanced, they met outside, on verandas or in large indoor venues, such as the church sanctuary.

“We had all the Canada geese in the background singing along with us,” Wiebe says with a laugh, referring to recording outside on a choir member’s ranch.

Choristers sang and Klaz conducted



PHOTO BY HOWARD REMPEL

Yuri Klaz, conductor, works with the choir while Phil Klassen records the singing.

along to a pre-recorded piano accompaniment, using headphones connected to an audio device by long extension cords and a five-way splitter. This was then mixed with the recordings of the other sectionals, to create the finished product, which was shared with the congregation online. Songs included Schubert’s “Heilig Heilig” and Oscar Peterson’s “Hymn to Freedom,” among many others.

“Not only were we able to make beautiful recordings, but the fellowship was there,” Wiebe says.

At least 40 choristers participated in dozens of recordings to make the Corona Choir a reality. “The response of the choir was absolutely amazing,” says Klaz. “This was like a glimmer of hope to many, that we were still doing something.



PHOTO BY HOWARD REMPEL

One sectional of the First Mennonite Church Corona Choir records in the sanctuary.

... I certainly have a great appreciation and admiration to people who, despite all this trouble around us, went ahead and started doing this.”

Epp says it was uplifting to be able to see her fellow choir members and sing beautiful music together again: “These people are an important part of my life and I have missed them.” Being part of the choir made it easier to deal with the pandemic, she says.

Of course, this opportunity did not come without challenges: masks that muffled, creaky voices out of practice, the absence of harmony and trying to follow a recording while simultaneously watching a conductor.

Wiebe says, “It wasn’t the same, but because we were there together in spirit, still singing, knowing that it would make a beautiful recording, it was more than worth it—it was necessary.”

But learning all the technology required for the project was perhaps the largest hurdle of all. Wiebe says it was a big learning curve for the aging population that makes up most of the choir, but they worked hard and are proud of themselves for tackling it.

Klaz, too, poured countless hours into figuring out the technology, which was completely new to him.

“As a conductor, his area of expertise is weaving together sound in real time—now he is learning to be a sound engineer,” says Lori Klassen, another chorister. Klaz worked with former and current church choir accompanists to mix the tracks and create the recordings.

At the date of publication, the Corona Choir had temporarily paused its recording due to code red restrictions across Manitoba that prevent any groups from gathering. Klaz says they are still hoping to prepare some music for the Advent season, but it’s unclear what that will look like—it all depends on safety regulations.

Wiebe said that one day, when restrictions are lifted and the pandemic is over, First Mennonite’s choirs will be back stronger than ever. ❧

For more photos and an audio link, visit canadianmennonite.org/fmc-virtual-choir.



Gendered images of God

Mennonite Worship and Song Committee releases statement on language for God in Voices Together

MennoMedia
HARRISONBURG, VA.

When worshippers flip through the pages of *Voices Together*, or swipe through songs in the app, they will discover many different images of God. Images like rock, breath and creator appear alongside father, mother, womb and king. Pronouns, including he/him and she/her, are used to refer to God. Some familiar hymn texts are revised, whereas others remain unchanged.

In “Expansive Language in *Voices Together*,” the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee outlines the theological foundations and practical approach taken to language for God in *Voices Together*. “We carefully evaluated the text of every song and worship resource,” says text editor Adam Tice. “We considered the poetry, metaphorical context, theology and history of each piece, as well as its roots and familiarity in various cultures and communities.”

The committee recognizes that the decisions made about the language used for God may be unsettling to some. “The images we have of God are deeply personal. They shape our relationships with God and our practices of prayer and worship,” says Sarah Kathleen Johnson, the new hymnal’s worship resources editor. “With this pastoral context in mind, the committee aspires to communicate clearly about the choices made in *Voices Together*.”

Mennonite Church U.S.A. and MC Canada are diverse denominations, and congregations use language for God in many different ways. Some communities routinely use she/her pronouns for God, while others have never considered this possibility. *Voices Together* aims to provide resources on a wide range of current practices.

Katie Graber, the intercultural editor and Anabaptist Worship Network co-director, encourages local communities to begin a conversation about images of

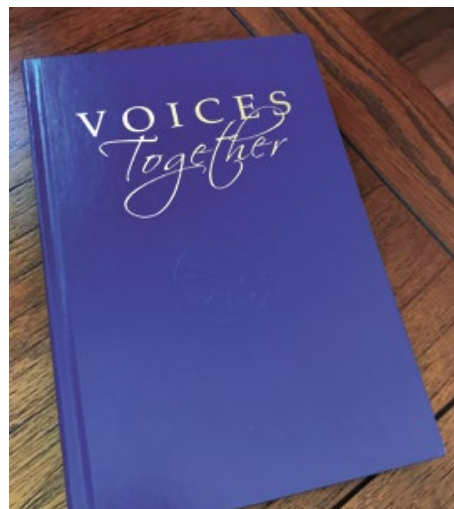


PHOTO COURTESY OF MENNOMEDIA

In ‘Expansive Language in Voices Together,’ the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee outlines the theological foundations and practical approach taken to language for God in Voices Together.

God as part of receiving *Voices Together*: “Discussing individual and corporate experiences can help communities understand the impact of language in worship. Considering this topic together can inform decisions about how to explore familiar images or introduce new images of God.” The new resource includes questions for reflection and discussion for use by individuals and groups.

“The committee has learned a lot about expansive language and gendered images of God over the past four years,” says Bradley Kauffman, the project director. “This statement names some of that learning and invites communities that will use *Voices Together* into the conversation.” ❧

To read the full statement on the language of God, visit bit.ly/3oS1Tj7.



PEOPLE

'We are going to need more of each other'

New MC Eastern Canada executive minister called to navigate through uncertain times

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Leah Reesor-Keller anticipated that her work as the new executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada would involve “a lot of talking to people at potlucks.” She was especially looking forward to going to Montreal to eat Haitian food.

While the future of potlucks is unclear, Reesor-Keller is certain that “our need for a strong and supportive community as we journey together will only intensify,” as the church moves into the future. “We are going to need more of each other to walk this journey of faith together,” she says, “but that might not look like the institutional structures that were at the centre of communities . . . in the past.”

Reesor-Keller, 34, represents a younger demographic of church leaders. She feels a strong call to the executive minister position, convinced that “there is a role for my gifts at this time in service of the church.”

She says she is “comfortable navigating complexity and ambiguity.” She says her

career in leadership and management in parachurch organizations, as well as her international experiences in Haiti, Jamaica, Nepal and other parts of South Asia, have helped to prepare her for this “kairos moment,” when shifts in church and society are accelerated by the pandemic.

Being forced to detach from “our regular ways of doing things,” is painful, she says. “Yet it also frees us” to try some new things.

It calls for courageous imagination, trusting that there is a way forward even if people don't know what that will look like.

To support congregations and partner organizations that are “doing some pretty creative stuff even in the middle of a pandemic is really exciting to me,” she says.

Reesor-Keller, who speaks Haitian Creole, French and English, says that she is “energized by the way that [MC Eastern Canada] is moving to be intercultural. We have a long way to go but we're taking real steps.” The church needs to do a better job of “listening to all voices in our community, to make sure that we aren't missing where God might be saying something to us.”

She draws strength in all the change from the promise that God is present, saying, “God continues to act in the world . . . for good,” and people are called to follow God's lead “to live in shalom with each other and with creation.”

“We are not alone,” she says of the regional church, whose members are one body in the midst of a bigger movement that includes MC Canada, Mennonite World Conference and the wider Christian



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEAH REESOR-KELLER

Leah Reesor-Keller, purple shirt in centre, jumps rope with friends in 1993, in Bwadelorens, Haiti, where she lived with her family for three years between the ages of 6 and 9. She credits her international experiences with helping to prepare her to take on the role of executive minister of MC Eastern Canada.



PHOTO BY JACQUIE REIMER

Leah Reesor-Keller, recently appointed executive minister of MC Eastern Canada, says regular opportunities to develop leadership gifts when she was growing up helped to prepare her for this role in the regional church.

body of faith.

She names two strong influences that have shaped her. One is her Swiss Mennonite background experience of faith “deeply embedded” in the Markham/Stouffville area near Toronto, with its strong kinship connections. She was further shaped at Mennonite schools and organizations that gave her regular opportunities to develop her gifts.

“Part of why, at 34, I feel equipped and called to take on a leadership role like this is because, since my childhood, I have been offered leadership opportunities in church.”

Her other strong influence comes from international experiences that developed a passion in her for what it means to be part of a global church.

She spent her foundational years between 6 and 9 with her family in rural Haiti, where she saw their village church become a place where people

could express their hope in God, tie their experience to the biblical story of God's faithfulness, and encourage each other in difficult circumstances.

As executive minister, she says, "I get to actually live and further the faith values that have inspired me in my life."

She is excited that this role allows her to "be involved in so many different facets of church," such as supporting leadership development, encouraging intercultural sharing and discerning where God is calling MC Eastern Canada now. She plans to share "My View from Here," a weekly YouTube video blog (vlog) in English and French, as a way to connect across the regional church.

Reesor-Kellor is frank about ministerial sexual misconduct in the church: "This is part of a bigger piece that we are dealing with as a whole Mennonite faith. We are coming to terms with brokenness in our past." She names the church's history on racism and the discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ Mennonites as part of that brokenness. "We need to address the harm that happened," she says. "My heart breaks for the people who have carried the pain of having endured abuse, of harm, of racism, for years and even decades. I am so thankful to those who have come forward to share their stories."

She says Mennonites need to "look at ourselves, our institutions, our cultures," to see how they "have been part of causing harm, or have not stopped it." She is encouraged by the steps that have been put in place at all levels to make church a safe space for everyone.

Reesor-Keller is humbled to follow many dedicated and committed leaders. The regional church "has a long tradition of women in senior leadership positions in the church, she says. "I am grateful to those who have done very hard work before me, [who] make it possible for me to be called into this role and serve effectively."

"I can see [MC Eastern Canada] thriving in the future," she says. In her leadership role, she will keep asking, "Where is God doing new things, even as old things are passing away?" ❧

Artist 'aims to empower' with webinar logo

By Amy Rinner Waddell

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Working with the theme of "What we need is here," young Canadian artist Dona Park of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford was commissioned to illustrate the logo and banner for the #WomenDoingTheology webinar series for Mennonite Church U.S.A.

Explaining her artwork, Park says, "I always incorporate elements of flora, as I believe humans are connected and dependent to the natural environment. I chose a Black woman, a person of colour, to represent that the Mennonite entity is not limited to the white community. Many perspectives in the Mennonite church exist, and within it there are untold stories: painful ones, persevering ones and empowering ones."

Park further cites the context of social unrest today, including "countless unnecessary deaths of Black lives, and the lack of listening to the poor and oppressed."

Park interpreted the theme as identifying the existing power within the self rather than seeking it elsewhere. "I wanted to highlight the existing struggles within the Mennonite institutions—particularly racial injustices that BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, people of colour] people regularly face . . . , and that there are leaders who have worked to challenge and create change within this very community," she says. "To interpret it literally, there are political leaders who also have instigated change—but there are also people within our Mennonite churches and communities, particularly women on the margins, who have worked and continue to work to address the issues at hand."

Park believes that the art she creates is an expression of who she is, as well as



Working with the theme of 'What we need is here,' young Canadian artist Dona Park of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, British Columbia, was commissioned to illustrate the logo and banner for the Women Doing Theology webinar series for Mennonite Church U.S.A.

her experiences and relationships from people all over the world. "Most of my art focuses on the female experience and highlights the beauty of female figures," she says. "Historically, the narrative of art, particularly female portraiture, has been told under the male gaze. In the present, I aim to challenge that to do the opposite, telling the story in my own perspective; instead of objectifying, I aim to empower."

To prioritize participants' safety and well-being, MC U.S.A.'s Women in Leadership group moved to an online series of webinars this fall as an alternative to the in-person conference originally slated for November. ❧

To view the #WomenDoingTheology webinars, visit bit.ly/3kyiRQJ.



'Do you know any Mennonites?'

Congolese Mennonite couple search for Mennonite family in Canada

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent
Calgary

In 2005, a Congolese Mennonite couple with a 15-month-old baby made a desperate plan to flee through Europe and fly to Calgary to safety. Even though the second Congo war had officially ended in 2003, a thousand people were still dying daily of disease, starvation and violence. Everyone was suffering and afraid.

When Ben and Mamissa Bena and baby Sidney landed in Calgary, they had to report immediately to Immigration since they had not gone through any of the official channels. For this reason, it took 10 years for them to become permanent residents. In the meantime, the Canadian government agreed it was not safe to send them back to their home in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and released them.

The Benas had decided to go to Calgary since a friend had recommended it. But when they left the airport, they were not prepared for winter and had nowhere to live.

Right away, they asked if anyone knew "the Mennonites." The Mennonites were their family. The Mennonites had been in the Congo for more than a century, and the family was part of the Mennonite church.

Unfortunately, there was nowhere to go but the streets. They were sent to a French-speaking charity first and they eventually connected with another that offered help to homeless people who have gone through trauma. Then they connected with Inn from the Cold that bussed them each evening to a place where they could spend the night. They were the only newcomers.

Still no one knew how they could find the Mennonites.

Finally, after the Salvation Army found them a room to rent on 26 Avenue, they discovered Calgary First Mennonite

Church was only a few blocks away. Ben found the phone number and called the church. He spoke with Marv Thiessen, who was the pastor at the time. According to Ben, he tried to explain his story. With emotion, Ben says, "The pastor hung up the phone and was at our place in minutes. Literally minutes."



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BENA FAMILY

Pictured from left to right: the Bena family is composed of Sephora, Sidney, Sikila with mother Mamissa, Stony, standing, and father Ben.

This began an enduring and endearing friendship.

"Every day, Pastor Marv or Craig [Wiens], the youth pastor, would check on us, call us and bring us to the food bank," Ben says. "They came so close to us."

One day, Ben and Mamissa had no money left and they wondered how they would even buy bus tickets to get to their English classes. When they arrived home, there was a large gift basket on their doorstep full of food items. To this day, they don't know who left it there, but they will never forget it.

Although warmly welcomed, they found everything to be a form of culture shock. At church, the pastor prayed, but when he finished no one enthusiastically said "Amen!"

While the Benas believe that there are

no good or bad cultural norms, it still wasn't easy, says Mamissa. "We praise God and sing in a different way," she says. "No one moved in worship. It's like faith is between you and your God. People don't show their feelings."

There was so much to learn and they struggled to understand new ways in their new land. Christmas was one holiday that was quite different.

In the Congo, gift giving is not really part of their tradition. On one occasion they were asked, "What do you want for Christmas?" Mamissa says. "It seemed like such a weird question. In Congo, you receive with gratitude whatever you are given. I didn't know how to answer. . . . Christmas isn't about presents. It involves lots of food and drinks to share. People come with no invitation; they just come."

The Benas clearly express their gratitude to the church and to God, but they would love to see more people drop in for coffee.

One of the many strengths they see in the Mennonite church is its willingness to meet people where they are and to walk with them. "They are more open-minded here and not as judgmental," says Mamissa, who thinks this is something that could be passed on to the Mennonite churches in the Congo.

That being said, the Benas wonder if their Canadian congregation would be open to exploring the Congolese style of worship from time to time, suggesting it could be an opportunity for them to invite their friends to experience something new.

When asked why they stay in the church when it's so different than in the Congo, they replied, "Because we are Mennonites. We never thought to leave. They are our

/// Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Saskatchewan

Josh Wallace was hired by Mennonite Church Saskatchewan as its church engagement minister on a .03 FTE basis on Oct. 1. Wallace had served as interim church engagement minister since Feb. 1. He describes his role as “purposely connecting with congregations.” In 2020, this has meant speaking—both virtually and in person—and being present to congregations around the regional church’s theme, “Deepening our walk with our neighbours.” He says he expects that this missional engagement will continue as he supports congregations engaging with their communities and interfacing with MC Canada’s International Witness program and other partners. He will serve on the regional church’s Ministries Commission, and will continue his role on the Faith Leaders’ Council at the University of Saskatchewan. He will also develop a worship series around the “Deepening our walk with our neighbours” theme, and he will be working with the ecumenical New Leaf Network to develop resources for churches seeking renewal.



Claire Ewert Fisher began as co-pastor of Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, on Sept. 1. In her role, she shares a full-time position with her husband Garth. Most recently, she served as interim pastor of Rosthern (Sask.) Mennonite Church and, prior to that, of Grace Mennonite in Prince Albert, Sask.



—BY DONNA SCHULZ

/// Staff changes

Pastoral transitions in Ontario



Kyongjung Kim began in August as co-pastor of Preston Mennonite and Wanner Mennonite churches in Cambridge. He earned a bachelor of theology degree from Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now Canadian Mennonite University), Winnipeg, and a master of theological studies degree from Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont. He has worked as a camp counsellor and pastoral intern in Canada, served as Northeast Asia representative for Mennonite World Conference, worked as an office manager for the Korea Anabaptist Center, and as co-leader of the Jesus Village Church and the Jesus Heart Church in ChunCheon, South Korea. He is interested in how God’s people can live in a cross-cultural setting in a post-Christendom context.



Danielle Raimbault began in August as co-pastor of Preston Mennonite and Wanner Mennonite churches, Cambridge. She is a graduate of Providence University College, Otterburne, Man., and earned a master of theological studies degree from Conrad Grebel University College. She previously served as a pastor of Listowel (Ont.) Mennonite Church for three years. She is passionate about empowering women preachers, helping people find their place in Christ’s church and building community.

Gary Knarr began in September as supply pastor of Mannheim Mennonite Church in Baden. He recently finished two years as interim pastor of Preston Mennonite Church. Previously, he served several Mennonite Church Eastern Canada congregations as pastor, interim pastor or supply pastor, including Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo; First Mennonite, Kitchener; and congregations in Floradale, Harrow, Elmira and Hawkesville. He earned a doctorate in history from Queen’s University, Kingston, Ont., and a master of divinity degree from what is now Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.



Beth Woelk began in July as associate pastor of pastoral care and spiritual formation at Grace Mennonite Church, St. Catharines. She has a master of clinical science degree in human communication from Dalhousie University, Halifax, and practised speech language pathology for 18 years. After sensing a calling into a new vocation in “soul care,” she completed a two-year training program in spiritual direction through the Haden Institute in 2020. She has 20 years of experience in lay church leadership, and was part of the ministry and leadership team with Quest Christian Community, an MC Eastern Canada church plant (2008-18).



—BY JANET BAUMAN

family, and it is where we feel safe.”

After 15 years in Canada, the Bena family now includes four children, who are all Canadian citizens. Mamissa is working towards a degree in social work from Bow Valley College and Ben is upgrading his English. //



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The ordination service for Hyung Jin (Pablo) Kim Sun, centre, was held at Toronto United Mennonite Church/Toronto New Life Mennonite Church on Oct. 18. Maciel Hernandez, left, and Michele Rae Rizoli, right, led the bilingual service while other attendees from all over the world joined in via Zoom. Kim Sun, who is originally from Paraguay, has been serving as the pastor of the Spanish-speaking New Life congregation since November 2018.

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Mennonite
Central
Committee

/// Staff change

Eastern Mennonite Missions board appoints new president

Marvin Lorenzana is set to become the ninth president of Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) in Salunga, Pa. He brings extensive multicultural leadership, discipleship and mission experience to his new role. He will begin on Feb. 15, 2021, replacing Gerry Keener, who has been president since January 2019. Keener is retiring to focus on serving the church in Vietnam and serving in missional capacities in the United States. Lorenzana has worked with Mennonite Mission Network as minister for discipleship initiatives since 2013. In that role, he functioned as a coach for church leaders who are interested in developing a culture of intentional disciple-making within their local



congregations. In 2009, he founded the Mennonite Hispanic Initiative, a ministry of Virginia Mennonite Missions that seeks to develop Hispanic church leaders with a mindset for local missions and planting new missional communities within Virginia Mennonite Conference. Born in Tegucigalpa, the capital city of Honduras, he felt a calling from God in 1994 to become a missionary to the nation with the second-largest Hispanic population in the world—the United States. He has a bachelor's degree in management and organizational development from Eastern Mennonite University and a master of divinity degree from Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

—EASTERN MENNONITE MISSIONS

/// Calendar

Nationwide

Dec. 7: Mennonite Creation Care Network's cookbook club virtual meeting, 7:30 EST. Register at mennocreationcare.org/sustainable-kitchen-cookbook-club/.

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

Alberta

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.

Saskatchewan

Virtual Christmas holiday dinners: Friends for Dinner is a fun and unique opportunity for University of Saskatchewan students who cannot be with their families during the December holidays to connect with households from local congregations. This year the

meal will be done virtually due to COVID-19. To learn more, email churchengagement@mcsask.ca.

International

July 1-4, 2022: Mennonite World Conference's Global Youth Summit, in Salatiga, Indonesia. Theme: "Life in the Spirit: Learn. Serve. Worship." To learn more, visit mwc-cmm.org/gys.

July 5-10, 2022: Mennonite World Conference's global assembly, in Semarang, Indonesia. Features speakers chosen by the Young Anabaptist Committee and by the MWC commissions. Afternoon activities include workshops, service opportunities, local tours, a global church village and the Anabaptist World Cup. Each evening will have special music and speaker from one of the participating continents. For more information, visit mwc-cmm.org/assembly/indonesia-2022.

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.



/// Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



Employment Opportunity
0.5 FTE Pastor

St. Jacobs Mennonite Church in semi-rural St. Jacobs, Ontario, seeks a 0.5 FTE pastor to join their three-member pastoral team in the Spring of 2021.

Ministry areas in this vibrant, multigenerational congregation include preaching, worship, pastoral care and youth ministry in a collaborative team model of ministry. To learn more go to:

<https://mcec.ca/get-involved/leadership>
or email pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca



Employment Opportunity
Acquisitions Editor

Herald Press books seeks a full-time acquisitions editor to recruit authors, acquire books, develop manuscripts, and give overall shape to the book imprint of MennoMedia.

The acquisitions editor is responsible for acquiring 18-24 nonfiction book manuscripts annually. Herald Press publishes in areas including Christian living, contemporary issues, peace and justice, and more.

We seek an energetic, collaborative editor who is interested in working with authors to develop thoughtful books to enrich faith and sustain hope in a complex world. Read the full job description at <http://bit.ly/acquisitionseditor>. To apply, send a cover letter and resume to Amy Gingerich at:

AmyG@MennoMedia.org

Promotional Supplement

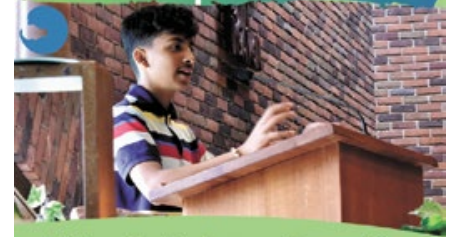
UpComing

2021 ride for sustainable climate solutions seeks cyclists

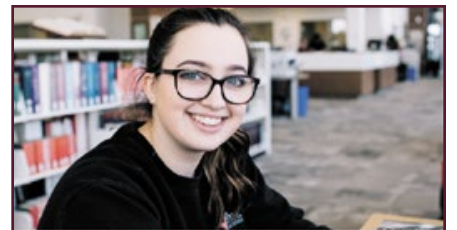
The Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions, a young Anabaptist organization, is planning a climate ride across the United States next year. It is looking for 15 core riders led by two experienced bikers in the Anabaptist community. Riders will travel nearly 6,400 kilometers across the U.S. from mid-May through mid-July, beginning in Washington State and ending in Washington, D.C. Along the route, riders will engage with Anabaptist communities and others about climate-change realities spanning from racism and renewable energy to student activism and the role faith plays in this existential struggle. The ride's overarching goal is to start conversations within the broad Anabaptist community around climate change and to deepen already existing discussions. Although the climate ride is still months away, those interested in joining should start planning now to apply before the Dec. 1 deadline. After the centre processes applications and selects core riders, riders must begin months of training in earnest. Also, the centre is looking for the support of businesses and individuals who want to make this ride viable and strong. For more information, visit sustainableclimatesolutions.org/climate-ride/. Anyone wishing to participate should email climateride@sustainableclimatesolutions.org.



—CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS



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CANADIAN MENNONITE

Schools Directory featuring Rockway Mennonite Collegiate

Berkshire sow gets new home

Story and Photos by Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont.

As part of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate's academic plan and COVID-19 health protocol, the school created student cohorts. Faculty member Don Dyck Steinmann teaches a Grade 9 Integrated Technology course that has a small cohort of seven.

Dyck Steinmann understands the practical applications of what he teaches and the importance of combining curriculum with real-world experience. Teaching at a Mennonite school, he also appreciates opportunities for faith and character development.

With extremely limited field-trip opportunities during the pandemic, Dyck Steinmann donated materials and assigned the class the challenge of designing, building and installing a small pig shed on his hobby farm.

Students used design software, considered structural components and applied a variety of building techniques to complete their task. They also learned how to work



following COVID-19 safety protocols: they wore masks, worked in designated pairs, minimized the sharing of tools and equipment, maintained physical distancing as much as possible, and followed daily cleaning protocols for equipment.

"Despite the limitations of working with these protocols, students learned a lot about teamwork, built practical work skills, and strengthened friendships," Dyck Steinmann says.

The project involved a short field trip (pun intended) to the farm for the "shed-raising" amid pigs, ducks and chickens. Students especially enjoyed meeting Rosebud, a very friendly 225-kilogram Berkshire sow, which took a mud bath while she watched the students build her home. (See photos of the students at work.)

What did students learn? One student summed it up best: "Most things in life that are good are a lot of work."

And that is true whether it is farming or shed-building.



'Renewal will come by daring'

Mennonite World Conference

There was no Anabaptist theology in the 16th century, says Astrid von Schlachta, director of the Mennonite Research Center at Weierhof, Germany, and author of several books on Anabaptist history. But there were many Anabaptist theologies.

The Mennonite historian is leading the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism in 2025. "Daring" is the name of this joint project of Mennonites and Baptists that considers what an Anabaptist movement means for the church today in light of its history.

"There were differences in theology, differences in attitudes toward use of the sword, differences in other areas," she says. "In 500 years since 1525, Anabaptists have had totally different experiences in different parts of the world. We can be proud of the diversity, but it creates challenges."

"We want to remember the past but look to the future," she says. "What are the challenges today, and how might



PHOTO BY J. NELSON KRAYBILL

Historian Astrid von Schlachta, right, speaks with Pastor Walter Jakobeit of Neuwied Mennonite Brethren Church.

history help us for going into the future? There is no renewal without daring."

Mennonites, Baptists and other ecumenically minded Anabaptist groups in Germany have planned a five-year series of events:

- **2020: Daring** to live maturely: Baptism, freedom of the will, freedom of religion.

- **2021: Daring** to live together: Equality, responsibility, autonomy.
- **2022: Daring** to live consistently: Oriented to Jesus, nonconformed, confessing faith, martyrdom.
- **2023: Daring** to live non-violently: Peace church, resistance, reconciliation.
- **2024: Daring** to live hopefully: Kingdom of God,

utopia, renewal.

Annually, the collaborating churches will publish one volume on the above themes. Events will culminate in a celebration in Zurich, Switzerland, on May 29, 2025.

The theme book overview of Mennonites from the Reformation to the 21st century, edited by von Schlachta, has been published. The 2020 event was held on Oct. 10 in Hamburg, Germany. It explored questions such as "What does unrestricted freedom of religion look like in a religiously pluralistic society?" "Which impulses from within the Anabaptist tradition open up perspectives on human interaction for a just coexistence?" and, "What does it mean to live faithfully as mature Christians today?" //

To learn more, visit taeuferbewegung2025.de.

