

Fair trade under the mask

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EDITORIAL

Hellos and goodbyes

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive Editor



At the end of a video conferencing call, have you found yourself waving energetically at the screen? It might seem strange to make a goodbye gesture toward a computer, but something tells us that it's not right to simply make those faces disappear by clicking a button labeled "Leave meeting."

According to some body language experts, this wave is a common practice and a good thing. An NBC article notes, "The Zoom wave provides social connections when many of us are missing them." Erica Dhawan, author of the book, *Digital Body Language*, says "It creates not only a sense of closure and alignment but is also, for some, a signal of respect and acknowledgment: valuing others for their time, their engagement with us."

As we navigate this digital culture that COVID-19 has created, I am considering other "real-life" cultures I have encountered, in particular their customs around saying hello and goodbye.

In Nazareth, where my family lived for nine years, a business meeting often began by everyone taking time to sip small cups of strong Arabic coffee together. If you met an acquaintance on the street, you would inquire about that person's family. Today, even in texting interchanges with non-North American friends, I find myself sending greetings to be shared with my conversation partner's loved ones.

In Brazil, where I grew up, leave-taking from a home visit often involved several rounds of "I should go now," and the

host's response, "But it's still early." When visitors did prepare to leave, the host would walk them to the door and would remain there, without shutting the door, until the guests were out of sight.

This issue's feature, "Toward Antioch" (p. 4), explores the vision of an "inter-cultural church," a Christian community that values the richness its diverse members bring to their life together. Maybe a place to start is to expand our rituals of greeting and departing, both onscreen and in person.

How might gestures and words help connect us with each other across distances and cultures? Is it possible to make our hellos and goodbyes more intentional and respectful? Are we ready to experience some awkwardness as we try out new ways of acknowledging each other?

In the pre-pandemic days, a custom at my church involved greeters at the two main entrances saying hello and shaking the hands of young and old. This practice was part of our church family's culture of hospitality. I wonder whether we will continue to offer handshakes when the church gathers post-pandemic. Might we hesitate to get close to each other? Or maybe, on that first Sunday back together, we'll be tempted to hug everyone in sight—not advisable! Going forward, maybe church practices will require dispensing with the traditional handshake altogether.

In any case, let's figure out how our greetings and departures can grow as practices of welcome and inclusion. Whether in front of a screen, on a

neighbourhood sidewalk, or in a church foyer, it matters how we begin and end our encounters. Learning how to do this well can be a first step toward becoming an intercultural church.

Thank you for reading and goodbye for now.

Hellos

A recent addition to the *CM* team is Charleen Jongejan Harder, who will be reporting on news from the Leamington-Windsor area. She and her husband Kendall currently serve on the pastoral team at North Leamington United Mennonite Church. They previously were co-pastors of Valleyview Mennonite Church in London, so her connections there might bring stories from the London area as well.

At the beginning of May, we welcomed Grace Bruinooge as a social media intern with *Canadian Mennonite*. Grace is a student at Canadian Mennonite University, studying in the area of communications. For the next couple months, she'll be helping *CM* communicate in the online world. We look forward to the learning and sharing all of us will experience.

Welcome, Charleen and Grace!

Corrections

- **Elaine Farner** was misidentified as Elaine Hovey in "The Gourmet Girls," April 26, page 23. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.
- **It was a 1967** baptismal group from Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., that was pictured on page 9 of the April 26 issue under the heading, "A moment from yesterday," and not from Clearbrook Mennonite Church in the 1970s, as the caption incorrectly indicated. *CM* and the Mennonite Heritage Archives regret the errors. For more information about this photo, visit bit.ly/3gIMMqw. ❧



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Jane Nigh, manager of Villages Port Colborne, Ont., wears a jacket and scarf from Ark Imports and earrings from Ten Thousand Villages. Read "Fair trade under the mask" on page 16.

PHOTO BY TRAVIS-JAMES HAYCOCK / SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

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FEATURE

Toward Antioch

By Doug Klassen and Joon Park



CM FILE PHOTO BY ROSS W. MUIR

The five 'amigos'—members of the Global Community of Young Anabaptists—joined hands at St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church in early 2005. The hands belong to Sarah Thompson (North America), Amandus Reimer (South America), Elina Ciptadi (Asia), Khohlwani Moyo (Africa), and Barbara Kärcher (Europe).

By Doug Klassen

During times of crisis or struggle, I study Scripture, praying that the Holy Spirit nudges me with a word, a phrase . . . anything. A few months ago, I came upon Acts 11:19-26 and I knew that I had received an answer to a question I had wrestling with:

Where is God leading us as a nationwide community of faith, as regional churches and as local congregations?

After the stoning of Stephen in Jerusalem, the followers of Jesus scattered. Some went as far as Antioch, in Syria. While some spoke the message of Jesus only with other Jews, others began to proclaim him to the Hellenists (Greeks). God blessed this effort and

their numbers grew rapidly.

News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch to inspect. He rejoiced and then went to Tarsus to look for Saul to help. When Barnabas found him, he brought Saul to Antioch. They stayed together for a year, teaching and preaching to a great number of people. It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

In my ongoing task of reviewing church policies and structures, sometimes it feels like I am in Jerusalem: guarding cultural ways of being church and straining out the gnats (Matthew 23:24). Meanwhile, Barnabas is taking Saul to Antioch (Acts 11:25). For me, it's clear the church is heading to an expression similar to Antioch of old. It was in Antioch that the church underwent a fundamental transformation and erupted with new opportunities inspired by the Holy Spirit. Antioch is intercultural, multilingual, and multiracial; it is cosmopolitan.

In the 20th century, as the Mennonite church formalized relationships with governments, churches and conference bodies were incorporated under Canadian societies act legislation. To comply, we adopted governance practices like forming boards, and hosting annual general meetings where financial statements were passed using Robert's Rules of Order. We wrote bylaws, constitutions and policies, and made our confessions of faith our identifier.

I am very thankful for the careful thought that went into the ways that we have historically organized. Those actions gave us the ability to control, clarify and systematize how we lived as church in that time. But in Antioch, all of that is secondary to meaning, purpose and belonging. Relationship replaces structure, and encounter replaces apologetics.

Today, Mennonite Church Canada is exploring what it means to become an intercultural church. Guiding us in this is the multiethnic Intercultural Church Steering Committee, made up of members from across our nationwide

church community. (See pg. 24).

At our first meeting this past February, I proudly shared my Antioch analogy, and then we began sharing our hopes, dreams and questions.

Joon Park, a member from Mennonite Church British Columbia, responded first by asking me, "Why now?" Excitedly, I said that diversity was written into the church's 2017 structure documents. Also, I added, my own experiences with intercultural church had changed me. I was shocked when he replied, "I wrote about the church in Antioch 10 years ago and no one showed any interest."

After the meeting, Joon circulated a paper he had written while in seminary. In it, he quoted as his inspiration Mark Deymaz in his seminal book, *Building a Healthy Multiethnic Church*: "[In Acts 13:1] Luke has listed the five leaders of the church at Antioch not only by gifting and role, but, [significantly] by ethnicity as well. Surely, it is more than coincidental that two of these men were from Africa, one was from the Mediterranean, one was from the Middle East, and one was from Asia Minor! . . . Such indirect prescription is informative for the church today and, certainly, for the multiethnic [intercultural] church. . . ."

I was humbled and realized that, in the months ahead, I needed to listen. The Holy Spirit has been lifting these Antioch truths out of Scripture for new Canadian Mennonites for years, and I—we—did not notice.

By Joon Park

Yes, the story of Antioch is not only descriptive of how the early church was multiethnic, but is also prescriptive for modern churches, including the Mennonite church, churches which have become comfortable with homogeneity. Unfortunately, even though the Antioch church was built in AD 42, and almost two millennia have passed, Luke's dream for the multiethnic church is still largely unfulfilled.

It is true that churches that were once composed of people of only one ethnicity are now, intentionally or unintentionally, becoming

heterogeneous, multiethnic and multicultural. Canadian Mennonite churches are not an exception. German-speaking congregations have dwindled, and new immigrants and refugees have been welcomed into the family: Hmong, Karen, Afghan, Indian, Korean, Congolese, Syrian, Ethiopian, Kenyan, Colombian, Brazilian. Whew!

However, even though the Mennonite church appears multicultural, the majority of Mennonites still fall behind in embracing the true meaning of multiculturalism and applying it practically to their congregations. It is one thing to agree cognitively that the 21st century is an era of accommodation and adaptation, but it is another to embrace and embody a new multicultural reality.

It is my experience that there are still unexpressed or undefined sentiments felt by white Mennonites about losing their original Anabaptist identity when they are challenged by intercultural encounters. This often reinforces a stereotype that "the best person for the job" is like us (by colour or last name). This attitude hampers our journey to become a more inclusive, intercultural church.

Flashback

As a Korean Christian, I knocked on the door of a Mennonite church in Vancouver in 2004. With the belief that I would be well cared for and treated as I was in the Korean church, I started attending regularly. As weeks went by, I discovered that no one would initiate conversation with me.

Crestfallen by this German restraint and reservation, I hid away as soon as the Sunday service was adjourned, not attempting to say hello to modern-day Anabaptist descendants. My mind clouded with the questions:

- **How can I** break through this cultural or ethnic barrier with the Mennonites?
- **How can I** help the Mennonites cope with this kind of accidental encounter with a stranger?
- **How can God** intervene and, if so, what can God say in a situation where

nobody dares reach beyond cultural barriers?

Seventeen years have passed since I officially became a member of a Mennonite church. I studied Anabaptist theology at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., and finally came to preach at a pulpit in a traditional Mennonite sanctuary. Yet I still have no clear answers to my questions, no clear answer to my identity as a “validated” Mennonite.

Back to Antioch

Why was the leadership of the Antioch church composed of people of multiple ethnicities? What was Luke’s intention in mentioning those believers’ names along with their country of origin?

I believe Luke meant to reflect the demographics of Antioch, the cradle of cultures and peoples, and its multiculturalism, the place where the Christian church was born and breathed the air of multicultural, multiethnic passion and potential. Luke believed the church community inside the walls should represent the community outside the walls. People from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds made up the leadership of the church, started a new church plant and, finally, sent the first Christian missionaries into the world. This happened not from Jerusalem, the centre of Jesus’ original disciples.

Luke was wise enough to predict that this experimenting, multicultural and multiethnic church would experience bumps and bruises on the way—the relationship between Paul and Peter became damaged, the tensions between Jews and Gentiles escalated, Paul and Barnabas separated, and the church itself did not last. But Luke’s evangelical zeal was unshaken; he knew that, through it all, the Lord would be faithful. People of all colours would be blessed to be part of the plan for the flourishing of the church.

Antioch now

Luke’s unfulfilled Antioch mission of the multicultural, multiethnic church is now assigned to us. It is not a matter of choice. It is a holy mandate from God

People from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds made up the leadership of the church, started a new church plant and, finally, sent the first Christian missionaries into the world. This happened not from Jerusalem, the centre of Jesus’ original disciples.

for us to embrace here and now.

We know from the Antioch example that it will not be easy and there may be no certainty or security ahead of us.

This is a road less travelled, yet worth exploring because we are guided by the Holy Spirit, who was there in Antioch. We are equipped by our collective, unswerving intentionality, not through random prayer or wishful thinking.

What are we afraid of? Let us now, instead, dream a big dream that people from all walks of life, regardless of ethnic differences, will gather as one body, singing praise to the Lord, “*Salvation comes from our God who sits*

on the throne and from the Lamb!” (Revelation 7:10). O holy and heavenly multicultural, multiethnic humanity! ✎



Joon Park is an intercultural educator and author. He attends Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C.



Doug Klassen is the executive minister of Mennonite Church Canada. He attends Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg.

✎ For discussion

1. Have you ever paused to wonder where God is leading us as congregations of Mennonite Church Canada? What future do you see for the Mennonite church? What things make you anxious about the future and what things give you hope?
2. In the days of the early church (Acts 11: 19-26), how was the church at Antioch different from the church at Jerusalem? What persuaded Barnabas to welcome Greeks into the church? What questions do you think the people of Jerusalem had for Barnabas? Who is acting as a Barnabas in today’s church?
3. Doug Klassen, the executive director of MC Canada, writes that he believes God is leading us to become an intercultural, multiracial and multilingual church. Do you agree? What is exciting about the church becoming intercultural and what is intimidating?
4. Joon Park writes that, in his experience, white Mennonites tend to fear losing their Anabaptist identity when they are challenged by intercultural encounters. Do you agree? What needs to happen for a church to become truly intercultural?
5. Park says that being a multicultural and multiethnic church is “a holy mandate from God.” What are the signs that show this is true? What might MC Canada look like in 20 years?

—By Barb Draper

See related Intercultural Church resources at www.commonword.ca/go/22144

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/// Readers write

✉ Doctors, prof and more weigh in on controversial vaccine letter

Re: “Reader calls on Mennonites to reject COVID-19 vaccines,” April 12, page 7.

I am disturbed by the publication of the letter calling on Mennonites to reject the vaccine offered to help people avoid the COVID-19 infection. It contains a lot of misinformation and, as such, is an embarrassment.

It is one thing to accept this false belief, but it is a completely different matter to endorse the avoidance of this life-saving therapy. Vaccinations have protected millions of people over the past hundred years from diseases such as polio, measles and whooping cough.

The writer says he has a fundamental right to avoid this vaccine, and indeed he does. However, to advise people to avoid this life-saving treatment is not only wrong, but it crosses a line. I assume that the writer is not scientifically knowledgeable. He has the right to his opinions. He does not have the right to stop other people from getting vaccinations.

I am surprised that the editor would publish such nonsense without fact-checking. This reduces the value of this publication. The program of vaccinations is not only necessary, it is crucial in halting the spread of this pandemic.

ARTHUR FRIESEN, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

The writer is a medical doctor.

As a pediatrician with more than four decades of experience practising in Canada—plus volunteer stints overseas in Honduras, Ecuador, Ukraine, India and Uganda—I can state unequivocally that vaccines are the single most significant advance in medical care in my career and probably the last 100 years.

The reason that you and I are unlikely to ever have known someone paralyzed by polio, scarred by smallpox or rendered deaf from meningitis is—take a guess. It is an irresponsible ignoring of history to advocate against vaccines because they work amazingly!

PAUL THIESSEN, VANCOUVER

I was deeply disappointed to read this letter to the editor.

There are far too many incorrect assertions about the science around vaccines and COVID-19 transmission to address here, but most distressing of all was the writer’s mistaken conflation of anti-vaccine sentiments with being a faithful Christian.

Over the past year, at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), where I teach, students, faculty and staff were able to continue working and learning in person for the vast majority of the last academic year precisely because all community members took seriously recommendations from public-health officials to mask and social distance, as acts of care for community and Christian witness to one another.

In recent months, young adults have, at times, been maligned as “super spreaders,” called out by political leaders and public-health officials as “ruining things” for others who have been working hard to limit their contacts. This has not been my experience; the hundreds of young adults I have witnessed on our university campus have carefully worn their masks and stayed apart, to the extent that our dormitories and cafeteria could remain open, and classes could continue to meet in person.

The letter writer, and any reader tempted to equate faithfulness to Jesus with defying public-health measures, including vaccination when available to them, would do well to follow the example of the younger members of our churches, people like our students at CMU, who have committed to following Jesus’ example of loving one another by masking, distancing and joyfully accepting vaccination.

RACHEL KRAUSE, WINNIPEG

While I have no doubt that there are readers who hold these views, *Canadian Mennonite* has a responsibility to not allow their own platform to spread dangerous misinformation.

Make no mistake, anti-vax propaganda is misinformation and, by allowing the spread of misinformation, *CM* has abdicated its responsibility to help keep our communities healthy and safe.

Virginia A. Hostetler and whoever else had a hand in allowing this to be published should resign if they are not willing to keep *CM* free of dangerously misleading information.

GRAHAM MACDONALD, SASKATOON

The writer attends Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon.

I do appreciate the dilemma of editors as they try to accommodate freedom of expression at a time when some people are embracing anti-truth-seeking voices and “alternative facts.”

At the same time, I was surprised to read this anti-vaccine polemic in *CM*.

Christians of most denominations have been leaders in alleviating human suffering and preventing death since the time of Jesus and the Good Samaritan. Many of our health-related institutions of today had their origins in compassionate Christian

leadership (Salvation Army, Grey Nuns, Youville Centre in Ottawa, Hotel Dieu in Quebec, Concordia in Winnipeg.)

The evidence is clear that once COVID-19 vaccines were introduced in long-term-care homes, the rate of infections and subsequent deaths fell dramatically.

Consider also the burden and risk being placed on health-care workers and first responders by folks who are against vaccines and masks. These health-care heroes then return home at the end of their shift, not sure if they are doing enough to protect their loved ones. Let's think, too, of those non-COVID-19 patients who are seeing critical surgeries postponed because the medical community is consumed with treating COVID-19 patients.

We are our sister's and brothers' keepers. Getting the jab is as much about others as about ourselves. Imagine the burden of causing a health-care worker, neighbour or fellow parishioner to die of COVID-19 by a sin of omission (not taking all precautions).

Discipleship requires that we love our neighbours as ourselves and that includes doing what we can to prevent suffering and death from COVID-19.

I commend our church leaders for endorsing vaccines and encourage them to do even more!

J. MARTENS, VICTORIA, B.C.

The writer is a member of Ottawa Mennonite Church.

We know a number of people who were ill with COVID-19 and survived. One of us has a colleague who had it and died a painful death. The writer says that our bodies can provide us with better protection than a vaccine. If so, why have millions of people died of COVID-19 in the past 16 months?

The best medical advice that we have, including the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control in the United States, and the Public Health Agency of Canada, tell us that the vaccines have been created to provide us with vastly better protection than doing nothing.

We applaud religious leaders who support vaccinations, but apparently some non-experts claim to know better. It's one thing when willful ignorance endangers only the individual. It is quite another when that ignorance threatens the lives of family, friends, neighbours and the community.

DENNIS GRUENDING AND MARTHA WIEBE,
OTTAWA

When people say they are not getting "the vaccine," I have started asking "So, if you were bitten by a rabid animal, would you refuse to take the rabies vaccine?"

I am old enough to have had children in my class at school who had polio—not pleasant!

And I worked with a man a few years ago whose father did not believe in the polio vaccine. He and his brother both got polio; the brother died and this man recovered. But in his 50s, he began to again experience symptoms of polio. I don't think he ever forgave his father.

LINDA GARLAND, BLUEVALE, ONT.

The writer attends Brussels Mennonite Fellowship, Ont.

There are a range of approaches to deal with a situation like COVID-19. On one end of the spectrum, an absolute societal lockdown could be implemented. On the other end of the spectrum, a let-nature-take-its-course approach could be taken, in which, based on the evidence from the early part of the pandemic, we would be accepting a reality where hospital-based care for those most affected by the adverse reactions to the disease is not available.

But we live in an infinite game, according to Simon Sinek (bit.ly/2SSMsb2). There is no dress rehearsal for something like COVID-19. We can look at the flu pandemic of 1918, and the SARS incident of 2003 for guidance. We also need to understand the present, where there are segments of society that are skewed towards a finite-game mentality that prioritizes the short-term needs of the individual over the needs of the whole, and where opinion and observation are misconstrued as fact.

To maintain the desired balance of individual versus group rights, we need to routinely evaluate the consequences of our actions and contemplate the short-term, as well as long-term, implications of those actions. We should be open to, and accepting of, short-term actions that benefit the whole. As a consequence of following the short-term precautions to the benefit of the whole, individual situations will eventually improve.

I am trustful that leaders within and without government are doing their best to play the long game when making decisions with regards to this situation. I am grateful for the work done by others that prepared for this situation, like chief medical officers who offer their expertise, and the researchers who did the foundational work prior to the existence of COVID-19, to enable new vaccines to be created in such a timely manner.

I will continue to evaluate and assess my actions, and the actions of others, to ensure that we are all working together, advancing the infinite game in a positive direction.

DAVID WEILER-THIESSEN, SASKATOON

I rarely write letters to editors, but when I was questioned about this letter refuting the value of COVID-19 vaccines, by some medically trained professionals, I could remain silent no longer.

I genuinely appreciate *Canadian Mennonite*, and read it regularly and enjoy the good editorials and thoughtful articles printed. I have been impressed at how open, intelligent and non-judgmental most of the writers have been.

Then, like a lightning strike, a letter to the editor appears that is so shameful and ignorant in content that it should never have seen the light of day. Its author laments that “many leaders of the Mennonite church are endorsing vaccinations for COVID-19.” In doing so, he literally insults and demeans thousands of professionally trained and dedicated health-services workers who daily and desperately seek to save the lives and give comfort to those afflicted with COVID-19.

He implores that God has created humans so wonderfully that they can well develop their own superior immunity to any and all viruses. Historical experiences with polio and many other communicable diseases completely invalidates his claim. Fortunately, our great Creator also created the human being with intelligent reasoning capacity and the responsibility to use it.

I believe *CM* made a dreadful error in printing this letter, for it most surely violates a basic premise of “doing no harm.”

I truly hope the author of this letter doesn’t contract this dangerous disease and that he doesn’t cause the infections and death of others because of his limited acceptance of the medical truths surrounding COVID-19. He seriously needs our prayers.

ERNEST EPP, SASKATOON

✉ **Tone and spirit are more important than words**

Re: “Words and community” editorial, April 26, page 2.

Thank you for the kind invitation for respectful and thoughtful dialogue. As editor Virginia A. Hostetler indicates, such dialogue is important for healthy community.

She points to primary ingredients of dialogue, such as perspectives, views, opinions, words, and so on. These are, indeed, important.

I would like to add just a few more ingredients that, from my experience, often trump the words and perspectives expressed.

I am referring to the tone and the spirit exuded by

the communication. Too often, good and wise words are delivered with a tone of impatience, a spirit of sarcasm, or a sense of harshness that discredit the wisdom of the words themselves.

Most folks have the capacity to receive critique and to be challenged by other perspectives, and are open to further information. Much depends, however, on the tone of the critique and the spirit in which difference is expressed and new information is shared.

Is our communication with each other characterized by a gracious spirit, a humble heart, patient forbearance and loving concern? Is there a sense of gentleness, of personal vulnerability? Is there a tone of respect and genuine interest in another’s view that may be different?

It seems that the genre of a “letter to the editor” itself already mitigates against careful attention to tone and spirit. The genre dictates precision, brevity and the need to clarify. It seems that the genre of online communication further exacerbates our lack of attention to tone: We press “send” too quickly, without the benefit of sober-second thinking. Spur-of-the-moment emotions and opinions upstage careful, humble and respectful reflection.

My plea would be for folks to consider the tone and spirit of communication to be as important—or more so—than the precision of words and the clarity of argument. This would facilitate difficult dialogue immeasurably.

ROBERT J. SUDERMAN, NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

✉ **Laws are not the final answer to ‘moral issues’**

Re: “Churches weigh in on bill to ban conversion therapy,” April 26, page 16.

Any number of what might be called “moral issues” remain on the table in North America, and the temptation to urge legislation that will swing the arguments one way or another is always present.

Abortion and same-sex marriage come to mind, but one can easily add anti-racism, or truth and reconciliation, and a host of others, to this docket.

No law will ever prevent gender fundamentalists from using coercive measures behind closed doors to “correct”—or at least hide—an LGBTQ+ orientation. No law will prevent racist cops from finding ways to intimidate and harass people they consider legitimate targets. Some unwanted pregnancies have always been terminated, often by unsafe procedures by money-grubbing charlatans, even when stringent laws existed.

The law will never replace conscientious, wise and

informed child-rearing practices and quality civic education.

GEORGE EPP (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ **Solar panels do good even after they are paid off**

Re: Herman Ens and Tim Wiebe-Neufeld's "The value of solar power" conversation, April 26, page 7, in response to Wiebe-Neufeld's "Avoiding an environmental shipwreck" feature, March 29, page 4.

I appreciate the helpful conversation on this theme between Ens and feature writer Wiebe-Neufeld, and agree that there are ways to offset greenhouse gases created in the manufacture of solar panels.

For example, at Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont., after paying for our solar panels through revenues already generated, our congregation will use solar-panel income to fund "green"

initiatives that congregants put forward.

To date, grants from our solar panels support a tree-planting and land-reclamation project nearby, a bio-diverse garden, and reforestation in Haiti.

In short, we are coming closer to constructing a perpetual-motion machine that cares for creation through our solar panels. To be sure, we are not alone; other congregations and businesses are doing the same through their solar-panel projects.

RICHARD MACBRIDE, WATERLOO, ONT.

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

Bergen—Theodore Bernhardt (b. April 5, 2021), to Rick and Tessa Bergen, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Driedger—Ava Alexandria (b. March 22, 2021), to Jesse and Lena Driedger, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Klassen—Thomas Henry (b. April 11, 2021), to Alex and Caitlin Klassen, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Marquardt—Thea Jean (b. April 24, 2021), to Andrea and Matt Marquardt, Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Pizzano—Dominic John (b. April 23, 2021), to Amanda Friesen and Anthony Pizzano, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Robertson—Ezra Peter (b. April 12, 2021), to Emma Horvatis and Eric Robertson, Hamilton, Mennonite, Ont.

Deaths

Archer—Jim, 95 (b. July 25, 1925; d. April 17, 2021), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Cornies—Agnes (Neufeld), 94 (b. April 18, 1926; d. March 30, 2021), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Driedger—Alfred, 96 (b. July 19, 1923; d. Jan. 30, 2020), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Epp—Al, 89 (b. Sept. 7, 1930; March 2, 2020), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Fisher—Ruth, 86 (b. Sept. 27, 1934; d. April 20, 2021),

Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Gerber—John, 80 (b. July 5, 1940; d. April 6, 2021), Poole Mennonite, Ont.

Gerber—Laura (nee Schwartzentruber), 97 (b. April 14, 1924; d. April 25, 2021), Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.

Heinrichs—Ron, 85 (b. June 12, 1935; d. April 7, 2021), Grace Mennonite, Regina, formerly of Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Janzen—George, 91 (b. Aug. 13, 1929; d. April 23, 2021), Grace Mennonite, St. Catharines, Ont.

Janzen—Peter, 76 (b. June 15, 1944; d. April 17, 2021), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Klassen—Allan, 81 (b. Nov. 20, 1939; d. Feb. 17, 2021), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Mansaray—Kumba, 41 (b. Dec. 20, 1979; d. March 30, 2021), Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.

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

‘Follow that wild turkey!’

Arlyn Friesen Epp

I have grown accustomed to our regular Sunday morning live-streamed worship services and the Zoom call that follows. Oh, I might try to change it up occasionally and take the computer to the kitchen, but I am somehow predestined to end up on the couch like it was my regular pew. I am a creature of habit, known to eat the same lunch at work every day, only changing the bread for a bun on the weekend, so that I know it’s Saturday. I will also wear the same shirt on Fridays because, goodness knows, there are enough other decisions to be made. Familiar routines, I love them, even if it makes the first three days of a vacation difficult.

Am I alone in this?

I guess I might be considered dull or unimaginative. But I like my peanut butter and banana sandwiches. It somehow grounds me in my day. And, against a familiar backdrop, the moments of creativity and surprise really spark! Like the time a pair of wild turkeys strutted across our front lawn during the pastoral prayer, and I briskly ran from the couch to show the congregation. Or the awe found in blueberries occasionally mixed in one’s daily

breakfast cereal. And, truth be told, I like nothing more than a provocative sermon that is not really a sermon at all, but a theatrical explosion of creativity, quite possibly because I’ve experienced many sermons before.

When I walk to work each morning, I know whether I am two minutes early or three minutes late depending on who I meet along the way. I know the licence plate of the car that parks beside the bridge. But it is the man on the bicycle who strangely greets me with “Praise God!” that breaks my routine, and I am found blessed by the unusual encounter, precisely for its unusualness and truthfulness.

It is like the sighting of a rare bird after seeing thousands of feathered friends.

Is there a gospel story of Jesus that does not carry this poignancy? Jesus encounters were quite outside the norm—creative, challenging, engaging, provocative—something to take us off the couch and exclaim, “Follow that wild turkey!” Jesus has no routine; he heals when he must. There’s not always logic or reason: “Blessed are the poor.” His sharpness is razor-like compared to

the commonness of his day—and our day.

Jesus is that rare bird.

We are entering Ordinary Time in the church calendar. Seems common, familiar, perhaps even dull. Certainly ordinary. And it occupies half of the year! It serves as the mundane backdrop to the occasional Jesus encounters or Spirit experiences that knock us off our feet or out of our ordinary routine. Would we be so prepared for God’s jolting mystery if all of life was a mountaintop experience?

May we appreciate the ordinary for what it is—daily living. May we be startled into new revelation, fresh experience and transformation, so that our ordinary might never be quite the same. ❧



Arlyn Friesen Epp is the director of the Common Word Bookstore and Resource Centre located at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg.

A moment from yesterday



Helene (Heese) Toews, seated, is honoured by Katie Dyck with a fruit basket, circa 1972. At a Conference of Mennonites in Canada meeting in 1945, Toews read a paper to a gathering of women on “the true role of women” in which she argued that women could work for God’s kingdom outside the realm of the family. Inspired by Mennonite women in other provinces, she resolved to help organize the women of the United Mennonite Churches of Ontario. In May 1947, the United Mennonite Women’s Mission Society of Ontario (later Ontario Women in Mission) was founded; Toews served as president until 1961.

Text: Laureen Harder-Gissing
Photo: Ontario Women in Mission / Mennonite Archives of Ontario



archives.mhsc.ca

THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

A communion in communion

Arli Klassen

Where or when is the next Mennonite World Conference? This was the question posed to all of us as Mennonite World Conference (MWC) staff and volunteers at a recent Zoom gathering. Some people quickly figured out it was a trick question. The next MWC assembly will be in Indonesia in July 2022. But MWC is right now, everywhere, all the time!

There will be news articles over the next few years about the proposals for a name change for MWC. The main concern is the confusion that exists between MWC as our global Anabaptist faith community, and the conference—or assembly—that takes place about every six years. MWC is not only a conference.

So, what is MWC if it is not just a conference/assembly? “MWC is called to be a communion of Anabaptist-related churches.”

To be a communion? This is more than celebrating communion together, but a faith community in which there is interdependence and mutual accountability across its member churches. All of the 107 national member churches that are members of MWC are in communion with each other. That is a strong way of describing these

relationships, much stronger than we often think about them.

“Communion” is the churchly word used to describe the type of relationship among members of a congregation, members of a regional church, members of a nationwide church and members of our global church. We are “in communion” with each other. Not just talking together over coffee during the fellowship hour after a pre-pandemic worship service. We are a communion in communion with each other.

As a teenager, I remember taking very seriously the instructions about preparing for celebrating communion in my Baptist congregation. One Sunday morning, I got up from my chair during worship to make things right with a person important to me before I could settle back down and participate in the communion service.

As a middle-aged adult in senior leadership roles in Mennonite organizations, I often wonder what my responsibility is while preparing for a communion service. How do I make things right with people who disagree with decisions I have made in my work roles? Or, how might I make things right with people whom I know well, who disagree with me on how to live our

deeply held values? It is not as easy as when I was a teenager and could go ask forgiveness on the spot, and we could move on.

Communion is how we describe the relationships within our various levels of church, from locally to globally. We celebrate the act of communion together as a public witness to the kind of relationship we have with each other, as members with one another. Does it change your understanding of your congregation to call it a communion? Or any part of Mennonite Church Canada? Or MWC?

Communion does not mean we all agree with each other. I sure hope not! God created our diversity so that we could be rich and strong because of our differences, not to make us all the same. Communion means we understand each other as sisters and brothers in the family of God, and we are prepared to engage deeply with each other because of this relationship. Communion is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

So let’s not talk about “going to the next Mennonite World Conference.” Let us celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, who brings us into communion, here in Canada and around the world. Maybe MWC will change its name to become the Anabaptist World Communion. ☿



Arli Klassen is an MWC staff member, based in Kitchener, Ont.

Et cetera

Media awards for Goshen College students

The Indiana Collegiate Press Association (ICPA) named Goshen College’s student newspaper, *The Record*, “Newspaper of the Year” for the fourth consecutive time in the college division. More than 20 students collected 42 awards in design, photography and graphics at the ICPA annual awards ceremony, which extended across several days in April. Also, the Indiana Association of School Broadcasters (IASB) named 91.1 FM *The Globe* (WGCS) “Radio School of the Year” for the third consecutive time in the college division. Students received 24 awards at the IASB’s annual event, which honors college broadcasting and multimedia programs. Both awards ceremonies were held virtually for the second year in a row.

Source: Goshen College



*Greta Klassen, left, and Priscilla Tanujaya work on an issue of *The Record* in Fall 2020.*

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

'Truth balm'

Troy Watson

You are at the centre of every experience you've ever had. You're hard wired to be self-centred. It's your default setting because, from your relative position, you are the centre of the universe.

Most of us eventually come to understand that our perspective is limited to our own experience of reality, which only accounts for a microscopic fraction of the collective experiences of humanity and history. However, there are two extremes humans seem to struggle with in light of this greater reality:

- **The first** is a natural gravitation towards our default. We acknowledge our perspective is only one of billions, but we continue to operate as if our perspective is more valid than others.
- **The second** extreme is epistemological relativism. This is basically the assumption that there are no absolute or universal truths, just different ways of interpreting things. You have "your truth" and I have "my truth," but none of us can know "the" truth.

Both extremes hinder meaningful discourse in society and church.

The first core practice of meaningful dialogue is genuine listening, with a sincere desire to understand what others are communicating, and why they think and believe that.

Another complication to healthy dialogue is the dynamic of power. Whoever has power tends to dominate or disproportionately influence the conversation, whether they speak or not. Power can be based on personality, position, education, gender, wealth or many other things. It can also be based on worldview. If an individual holds the dominant metanarrative, or worldview, in

their group, subculture or society, they hold power. This means that questions, ideas and people can be shut down if they contradict or offend the prevailing metanarrative or worldview of that group or society.

Meaningful discourse is complicated and always has been.

The first core practice of meaningful dialogue is genuine listening, with a sincere desire to understand what others are communicating, and why they think and believe that. Ideal church practice would be for people to articulate what they hear the other person saying, and wait for them to confirm that they have been understood before others offer their perspectives or rebuttals. This is no easy task.

For example, when others share extreme views I don't agree with, my default is to drop "truth bombs" to blow up their ideas and opinions. However, this is rarely helpful. I'm slowly learning to apply "truth balm" instead.

Instead of throwing "truth" at others like explosives, I can allow the Spirit of Truth to gently nurture relationships with people I disagree with and with my own inner growth. For example,

authentic openness to truth makes one genuinely curious. I'm learning to listen and ask honest questions to understand what and why others think and believe. I also invite Spirit to help me see the truth about why I'm internally reacting to what they are saying. Why am I upset, angry or offended?

This practice is really about attuning my heart and mind to the Spirit of

Truth. Here is an example of what I'm talking about.

One evening, I was reflecting on how I was doing. On that particular day it wasn't great. I was languishing. I had this thought, "Well, I'm doing my best."

Then I sensed my inner light ask, "Is that true?"

It was not a judgmental or shaming question. It was an invitation to seek truth. Upon further reflection, I had to admit, "No, I'm not doing my best. I'm capable of doing more and doing better. The truth is, I'm struggling to do my best."

My inner light immediately affirmed this: "Yes, that is truth."

I remained open to Divine Presence and eventually thought: "Spirit, I want to do my best. I want to be my best self. I just don't always seem to have the energy and sometimes I don't know how."

Again my inner light affirmed this: "That is truth."

I'm learning the importance of intentionally checking in with the Spirit of Truth with my thoughts. When I think "untruths" and start believing them, that is when I start feeling caged or stuck. Only the truth will set us free.

I'm learning not to accept statements like, "I'm doing my best," when the truth is, I'm not. This isn't about judgment, shame or comparing ourselves to others. This is about a commitment to seek and abide in the Spirit of Truth.

As a result, I've discovered Spirit rarely drops "truth bombs" when I remain open to Divine Presence. Spirit typically applies "truth balm" that heals and nurtures. I'm trying to do the same with others, and I'm finding it's more effective. ☸



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

VIEWPOINT

Safe space in the light of COVID-19

Carol Penner

On a cold wintry night in the middle of February around a decade ago, I arranged five chairs at the table for our committee meeting. One person came in looking wretched; she blew her nose and sneezed through the whole meeting. I felt like moving my chair away, as I was sitting next to her, but I didn't want to be rude. At the end of the meeting, she said, "I thought about not coming because I've got this terrible cold, but it was difficult to schedule this meeting."

I got very sick two days later and so did someone else who was there. We both had to take time off work.

At the time, I wished that the sick woman had phoned or emailed, saying, "I have a bad cold. Do you still want me to come?" We could have made the decision together. We weren't given an option; we didn't consent to taking that health risk.

How do we create safe and healthy spaces together? Many churches think about safety in relation to sexual abuse and have worked on safe-space policies in that context. But what does safe space mean in the light of COVID-19?

When government-mandated, physical-distancing sanctions ease, and churches start meeting in person again, our communities will need to negotiate boundaries about health. We won't know who has had a vaccine, and who has not, or what people's underlying health conditions might be. We won't know who wants to maintain physical distancing.

With their existing safe-space policies, some churches have cultivated a "consent culture" about physical contact. Instead of assuming everyone wants a hug, you are encouraged to ask before you touch people. Being asked and giving permission means that everyone feels respected and safe.

How we frame things matters. If I say, "Can I hug you?" it can be socially awkward to answer negatively, "No, I don't want a hug." That's why, in consent culture, framing a question where all options are fine is a best practice: "Is shaking hands good, or would you prefer a hug?" The other person can respond by saying, "Shaking hands is

good."

How can a consent culture of respect and careful communication help us negotiate each other's boundaries around health? In large group settings the church may very well mandate rules, "Everyone must wear a mask when we worship together." But we will need to navigate small group meetings and social gatherings. This can be awkward if we make assumptions. I have already had uncomfortable social dances as people have tried to move close and I've tried to move away.

Asking questions is going to be important. "Are you physical distancing, or is a handshake good?" "Can we have this council meeting virtually, or would you prefer an in-person meeting?" We can create a habit of checking-in before we meet, to gauge how we interact.

How we frame things matters. I have heard people ask, "Is it okay for me not to wear a mask?" This is a socially awkward question because it means someone might have to reply with a negative answer, "It's not okay. I need you to wear a mask." It's much better to ask, "Is wearing a mask good, or would you prefer no masks?" You are signalling

that both options are fine, and the person can respond, "Masks are good."

Consent culture is not about explaining why; it's about respecting decisions. If someone doesn't want a hug, we don't ask, "Why don't you want a hug from me? Why are you uncomfortable with hugs?" That would be intrusive. Similarly, we should not expect people

Instead of assuming everyone wants a hug, you are encouraged to ask before you touch people. Being asked and giving permission means that everyone feels respected and safe.

to divulge their health situation and choices; it's a violation of privacy to even ask. It's intrusive to ask whether someone is vaccinated, or why they can't or won't. If people want social distancing or masks, we should offer that with no judgment. We do not know why; we just comply out of respect.

Many people are tired and frustrated because of the pandemic and want life to go back to normal. Others are living with ongoing health risks. What does it mean to be the church in this pandemic reality? Unwillingly exposing others to our viruses will be a stumbling block; which not only endangers their health, it also means that the community doesn't feel safe for them.

Creating safe spaces is part of being the church, and that includes cultivating a consent culture in which we ask good questions and go the extra mile to accommodate everyone. ❧



Carol Penner teaches practical theology at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., and has a blog of worship

resources at [leadinginworship](#).



'I am not being persecuted'

Michael Pahl calls on Manitoba churches to follow masking and gathering regulations

By John Longhurst
WINNIPEG

A former church minister in Morden is pushing back on churches arguing for freedom from COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

In a series of tweets sent out May 3, Michael Pahl, executive minister of Mennonite Church Manitoba, called on Christians in his southern Manitoba community to continue to follow public-health orders as a way to show love for their neighbours.

Unlike what some churches were claiming in a Winnipeg courtroom, about how their freedoms are being restricted through limits on in-person gatherings, "I can freely proclaim and live out the good news of Jesus, of God's reign of love and justice and peace come near," Pahl posted on Twitter.

"I can freely love God and love my neighbours in the way of Jesus, and I can freely gather with like-minded Jesus followers for worship and building up in love, which also means not gathering together in person when love of neighbour demands it."

As for those churches that are part of the court challenge, including the Christian Church of Morden, "No, I am not being persecuted," Pahl said. "And, my Christian siblings in Manitoba, neither are you."

Pahl, who was lead pastor of Morden Mennonite Church until January, issued the messages out of a sense of personal frustration at seeing some Christians flouting mask mandates and churches defying gathering restrictions.

"This is not the way of Jesus," he said in an interview. "Our highest act of worship, greater even than gathering together in worship, is to love God by loving our neighbours. Following mask mandates,

adhering to gathering restrictions, and getting vaccinated are all part of our Christian call to love our neighbours, especially those who are most vulnerable among us and around us."

Far from being persecuted, he added, "This is the moment when we are most clearly able to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ through our very actions."

Noting the vast majority of churches in southern Manitoba are following public-health orders, including in Morden itself, she said the court challenge is only making it more difficult for those where some members are chafing against the restrictions.

"It is difficult enough for churches to hold the line with following public-health orders without having the voices of anti-public-health-order churches amplified around you, especially when they use 'Christian' justifications for their actions," he said.

Pahl is hoping to encourage those "who may be on the fence about the public-health orders and their Christian freedoms, and even more so those who are carefully following restrictions but need some encouragement that what they are doing is, in fact, the right thing to do as a Christian."

So far, the responses Pahl has received have all been positive, including from ministers from other local churches and the mayor of Morden. ❧

John Longhurst is a faith reporter for the Winnipeg Free Press. Originally posted on winnipegfreepress.com on May 6. Reprinted by permission of the author.

News brief

MCC Canada's Ottawa Office has changed its name

As of May 1, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada's Ottawa Office changed its name to the Peace & Justice Office, but the 45-year legacy of the Ottawa Office and work on Parliament Hill will continue. Changes include:

- **Restructuring.** Now the work of advocacy and public engagement of the Ottawa Office is joined with MCC Canada's programs on restorative justice, Indigenous Neighbours, and migration and resettlement, along with programming in Quebec and Atlantic Canada.
- **A broader mandate** that states: "We work for policy and structural transformation towards a more peaceful and just world where all can participate in right relationships with God, one another, and creation. We centre our work on relationship building and we provide tools and resources for advocacy and social change, including direct engagement with policymakers, to support church and community flourishing." The new tag line is: "Anabaptist advocacy for peace, justice, and human dignity."
- **Diverse geography.** The new team is now made up of staff from various locations across Canada, meaning the office is not just in Ottawa anymore. Parts of the broadened work do not involve the Canadian federal government.

Part of the role of the Peace & Justice Office is to lead MCC Canada's internal Dismantling Oppression Team's work. Through a consultation process over the last two years, this area of work has emerged as a priority for MCC to analyze and strengthen, not only in its work with partners around the world but also inside MCC Canada.

—MCC CANADA'S PEACE & JUSTICE OFFICE

COVER STORY

Fair trade under the mask

Pandemic can't stop fair-trade shopping but it has slowed it down and sent it online

By Maria H. Klassen

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

ST. CATHARINES, ONT.

Although most of the Ten Thousand Villages (TTV) stores closed in Canada in the spring of 2020 when the TTV Canada entity ceased to exist, seven stores decided to stay open and continue to offer fair-trade products.

Four of these stores—in Abbotsford, B.C.; Cobourg, Ont.; and Brandon and Steinbach in Manitoba—continued to operate with the TTV brand (tenthousandvillages.ca) through a licensing agreement with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada.

The other three stores, operating independently, decided to rename their stores. They are now known as Villages Port Colborne (villagesportcolborne.ca) in Ontario; and Villages Calgary (villagescalgary.ca), and Village Goods in Edmonton (villagegoods.ca/service/about).

Most of the managers from these stores share information and ideas with each other at monthly online meetings, and their commitment to creating opportunities for artisans in developing countries to earn income, by bringing their products and stories to Canadian markets through long-term, fair-trade relationships has only grown stronger during the pandemic over the past year.

Jane Nigh, manager of Villages Port Colborne, says, “Going on our own has given me a new appreciation for the broader fair-trade movement.” As an independent business, the store joined the Fair Trade Federation this past year, in order to give the store the credibility that TTV had given it. “It is opening the world of fair trade to us in a way that we didn’t see earlier,” she says.

The transition to being totally independent has not always been an easy process.

Meeghan Gavin, manager of TTV in Brandon, says that the store is now purchasing products from more than 50 different suppliers in more than 30 countries. “We are constantly learning new skills—from social media and advertising, to volunteer recruitment and training—to share the important impact fair trade has

fair-trade wholesalers in the United States and involve shipping and duty charges. A new learning curve includes planning, implementing and promoting local campaigns.

Laura Drapeau, manager at Villages Calgary, says that overall sales dropped by 19 percent during the pandemic, while



PHOTO BY TRAVIS-JAMES HAYCOCK

Unmasked, Jane Nigh, manager of Villages Port Colborne, Ont., wears a jacket and scarf from Ark Imports and earrings from Ten Thousand Villages.

on the lives of our artisan partners.”

“The largest challenge of losing [TTV Canada] has been sourcing all the fair-trade products ourselves,” says Derrick Cunningham, manager of the Cobourg store. Many of these products come from

Brandon saw a decrease of roughly 16 percent, and Cobourg was down about 20 percent. A Canada-wide webstore was launched in early 2020, resulting in a great response from fair-trade supporters. E-commerce sales account for roughly 10

percent of total sales.

Manager Roberta Taylor says, “Village Goods’ sales were about 60 percent of the previous year.” A webstore opened two weeks after the beginning of the pandemic to support curbside pick-up sales; half of the sales are now done online and half by telephone.

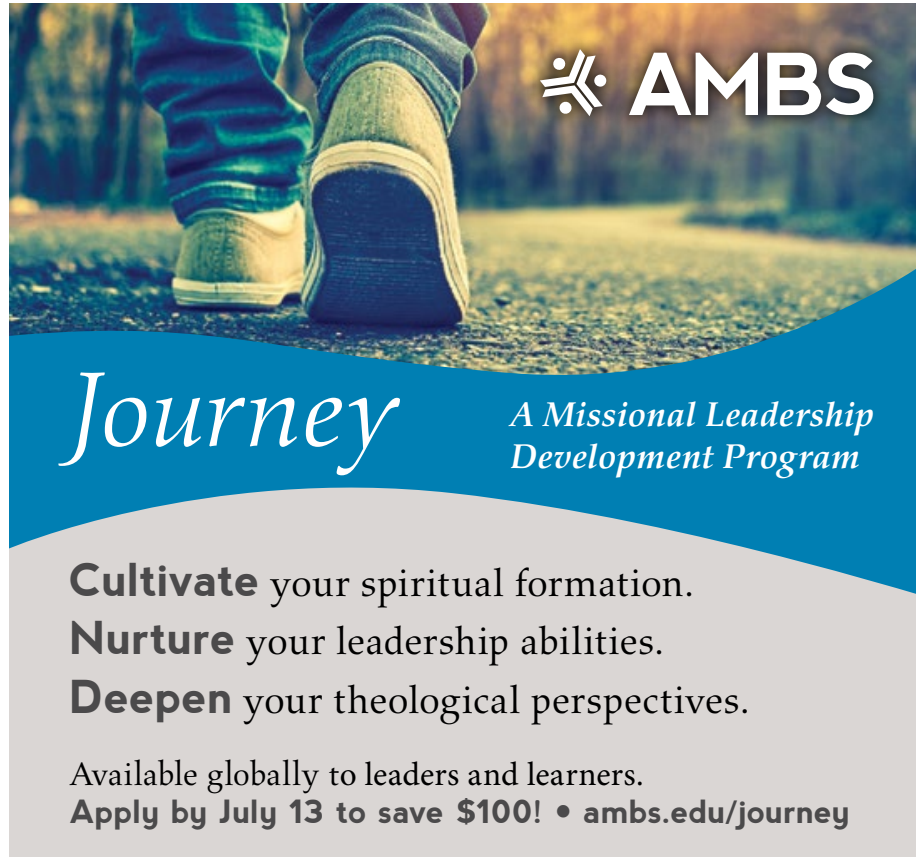
Due to the pandemic, Villages Port Colborne was closed to in-store shoppers from March till June 2020, January to March 2021, and now again in April and May for six weeks. Other stores also were in lock-down several times. Capacity restrictions and physical distancing are the norms when the stores are not in lockdown.


Another loss facing the stores last year was the cancellation of offsite sales and summer outdoor festivals. Some stores were in lockdown over the Christmas season, which also caused a major loss in revenue.

But Laurie Koop, manager of TTV outlet in Steinbach, says, “We have been consistently busy.” She cites three reasons for the steady pace: People are supporting local businesses during the pandemic; shoppers are realizing that buying fair-trade products helps sustain livelihoods in other parts of the world; and with the closing of the two TTV stores in Winnipeg, city customers don’t mind the hour’s drive to the Steinbach store.

Volunteers continue to be the backbone of these independent fair-trade stores, but it has been difficult to get or train new volunteers with physical-distancing protocols in place due to the pandemic. A few volunteers have had to step back for health reasons, while others still help behind the scenes, unpacking products and getting websites and online commerce working. The hours of operation vary from store to store across the country, as do lockdown orders in the various provinces.

However, fair-trade products continue to be available, and a difference continues to be felt, especially by the creators of the products in countries around the world, say the managers of these seven Canadian stores. ❧



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Soup, biscuits, laughter and verse

Online B.C. Women's Day features two speakers, cooking segment

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Women of Mennonite Church B.C. couldn't meet in person for the annual B.C. Women's Day on May 1, but they could still see each other's faces, enjoy fellowship and eat the same lunch.

This year's event was held on Zoom, with 67 participants from 12 cities in B.C. tuning in along with some from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New York and California.



PHOTO BY JANE GRUNAU

Many participants at the MC B.C. Women's Day on May 1 enjoyed a lunch of soup and biscuits, prepared together as guided online by Chef Dez.

Some traditions continued: Women from B.C. Mennonite congregations who had passed away since the last Women's Day—this time covering two years, since no event was held in 2020—were honoured and remembered with a photo tribute. Cheryl Heinrichs of Living Hope Christian Fellowship led singing, and an offering project was suggested for Camp Squeah.

Anne Herridge, a poet and devotional writer who attends Crossroads Community Church, read several of her original poems. Originally from England, Herridge shared

a poem she wrote following the recent death of Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh, who, she noted, was always at the side of the Queen, holding her hand. "God is holding us in his palm; we have our own royal consort in God," she said.

Christian comedian Sara Weber of Hamilton, Ont., entertained the group with her "Mothers in a dangerous time" monologue, her humorous take on life and current events. Referring to I Corinthians 1:4, a verse that encourages thankfulness, she urged her audience to remember, "This is not the end of the story."

Participants discovered that one advantage of staying in their homes and kitchens was being able to prepare the same lunch at the same time, just in time for the noon meal. Recipes were mailed to participants ahead of time for a cooking segment featuring Tuscan soup and rosemary parmesan biscuits from local Fraser Valley Chef Dez, a.k.a. Gordon Desormeaux.

Comments afterwards expressed appreciation for Janette Thiessen for organizing an event that was creative and with a variety of segments that appealed to all ages.

"I appreciated how well the event was organized and thoughtfully planned," said Jane Grunau, who attends Langley Mennonite Fellowship. "The poetry and music combination created by Anne Herridge and Cheryl Heinrichs was meaningful, thought-provoking, and provided a spiritual emphasis to begin the morning. Sara Weber was humorous, but also reflective. Chef Dez's lighthearted but informative cooking class was a perfect [and delicious] ending. [Many] thanks to Janette for facilitating this morning of community." ❧

News brief

Saskatoon congregation finds new way to break bread together



PHOTO BY DENELDA FAST

Elisabeth Reimer, left, and Ruth Wiens ice and decorate paska buns in preparation for delivery to each home in their congregation.

Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon came up with a creative way to celebrate Easter and care for their congregation at the same time. They called the event a *paska faspa*, with *paska* being a traditional Mennonite Easter bread, and *faspa* a simple bread-based meal. The church's deacons, spearheaded by Denelda Fast, organized the event, which involved baking, icing and decorating 401 *paska* buns; nesting the buns in boxes lined with Easter grass; and delivering a box, along with an Easter card, to each household in the congregation. Marlene Froese and her sister, Hedie Harder, baked the buns ahead of time and stored them in freezers at the church. On Good Friday, volunteers prepared the boxes, and the next day more volunteers iced and decorated the buns and assembled the packages. Fourteen drivers delivered the Easter packages to homes in Saskatoon, Osler, Warman, Langham and Clavet. Fast says, "It was about making connections with people we haven't seen for a long time in church." Froese says, "I felt like I was baking holy bread. So many people were touched by it." Some recipients, especially those with small children, ate their buns immediately. Others saved theirs for *faspa* on Zoom on Easter Sunday afternoon.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ

Ecological grief

A journey from lament to hope

Story and Screenshot by Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent

A million plant and animal species are nearing extinction, the global climate is dramatically shifting and sea levels are rising—the earth is in crisis and many people are overwhelmed with ecological grief.

On April 28, A Rocha Canada hosted “Ecological grief and exploring hope,” a virtual panel discussion in partnership with Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). Speakers shared how they have experienced ecological grief, how they practise lament and where they find hope.

The evening’s panelists were Marta Bunnett Wiebe, a peace and advocacy coordinator with Mennonite Central

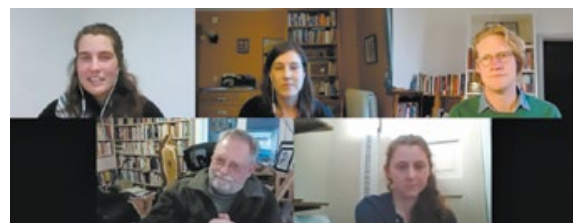
adding that an important part of this grief is mourning for the diverse life forms lost to climate change and the alarming direction the world is headed in.

So people must lament, she said, explaining that “lament is a profoundly hopeful act, one that creates space for grief to be acknowledged while seeing the potential for a better future.”

Bunnett Wiebe added, “Lament is unique from despair, in that lament is the practice of trusting God with our grief, whereas despair is a loss of trust. . . . Despair is a lack of imagination for other possibilities. Lament, on the other hand, does not give up, even in spite of it all.”

Lament moves people toward action, according to Haverluck, who recounted the story of Jesus approaching Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and weeping for the city. Jesus didn’t stop there but continued on to the Temple to confront the source of his sorrow, she said, noting, “He turns the grief into grievance.”

The panelists emphasized that the act of lament should take place in community; people need to share their grief so they feel less alone.



SCREENSHOT BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

Pictured clockwise from top left, moderator Kari Miller and panelists Zoe Matties, Josiah Neufeld, Marta Bunnett Wiebe and Bob Haverluck took part in “Ecological grief and exploring hope,” a virtual panel discussion, on April 28.

Committee Manitoba; Bob Haverluck, an artist, theologian and storyteller; Josiah Neufeld, a journalist and fiction writer; and Zoe Matties, program manager for A Rocha Manitoba.

Kari Miller, A Rocha Manitoba’s environmental education coordinator, moderated the conversation that stemmed from an independent study on ecological grief that she did for her CMU degree in thanatology, the study of death and dying.

“I have been fascinated by the question of grief and pain, and how exactly this relates to our humanity,” Miller said,

It is also communal action, with local organizations and at protests, that gives them hope. Other activities that can help bring hope included people moving their bodies, spending time outside, growing plants, making and sharing food, prayer, silent retreats and good conversations.

Miller said she hopes this forum will challenge people to find new ways of acknowledging grief and enable them to move towards hope and action. Like compost, “new life can indeed come from death,” she said. ❧

News brief

CBC graduation delayed until September



ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Due to the presence of COVID-19- positive cases among the student body and staff, Columbia Bible College has been required by the Public Health Office to postpone graduation celebrations to September, it was announced in April. In a message posted on social media April 24, Bryan Born, Columbia’s president, addressed this year’s graduates. “This was not what I wanted,” he said. “None of us are where we thought we’d be today.” Born read from the first few verses of Romans 5 on the theme of suffering, perseverance and hope in the face of challenging circumstances. Born praised Columbia’s students, faculty and staff as they have “faced the challenges presented by COVID head-on” during the past academic year. “There have been numerous challenges on account of the COVID-19 experience, and now we’re having to postpone celebrating together the learning, growth and transformation that has taken place in your lives while at Columbia,” he said. “But we want you to know that we love you and we’re proud of you. I want to commend you for the courage to come to Columbia when you could have opted for remote learning elsewhere. I am overwhelmed with God’s faithfulness in meeting us at every turn.” More information on Columbia commencement ceremonies will be announced once plans have been finalized.

—BY AMY RINNER WADDELL

'Staging change'

Theatre of the Beat invites audience to rewrite the story of gender-based violence

By Janet Bauman
Eastern Canada Correspondent

Twenty-six times since November, audiences have had the opportunity to participate in changing the story of gender-based violence. That is how many times Theatre of the Beat, a Canadian touring theatre company, has staged *Unmute: The Impact of a Pandemic on Gender Based Violence*, a forum theatre piece performed entirely through the video-conferencing platform, Zoom.

"Forum theatre" means that audience members can participate if they want to. First the cast performs the entire play. Then they perform parts of the play again and invite audience members to stop a scene and intervene where they feel a character should behave differently. They can suggest changes, or even take over a role briefly, and improvise alternative scenes alongside the company actors. A facilitator guides a follow-up discussion between audience members about the changes. No two performances are the same.

Unmute tells the story of three families, connected through work and friendship, as they come to terms with gender-based violence in one of the families, and realize that intervention is needed. In most scenes, characters are video-chatting with each other, setting the play squarely in the current reality of the pandemic.

On its website, Theatre of the Beat is described as a company that has been "staging change" by creating "original social-justice theatre and workshops for underrepresented populations" since its beginnings in 2011. It creates art that wrestles with difficult topics, always "working to catalyze conversations on social justice."

In the case of *Unmute*, the cast tackles domestic violence and some of the

common problems or mistakes that occur when people become aware of it in other families. In the play, friends miss several clues about the violence. Once they are aware of it, though, they don't know how to help or they choose to stay out of it, deciding a domestic situation is none of their business. The play also touches on the topic of secondary victims of abuse because there is a teenage daughter in the home where the abuse occurs.

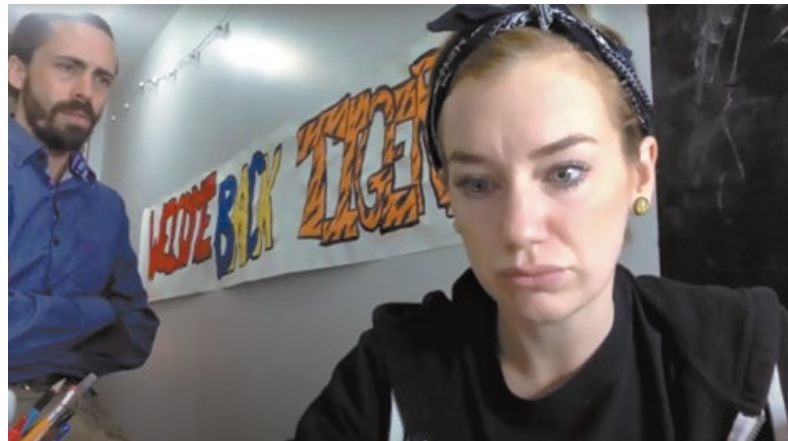
The company describes its work as art that "empowers its audience to work towards a just future." The interactive nature of this play allows audience members the chance to rehearse how to intervene in realistic scenarios they might witness, and invites them to rewrite the story. Through improvising alternative scenes, they learn skills and resources for how to move from passive to active bystanders.



The Unmute poster designed by Ali Carroll.

In quotes from audience surveys, the interactive nature of the piece is described as a rich experience that shifts an otherwise heavy subject towards something healthy and helpful.

The play was commissioned by the Domestic Assault Review Team (DART), Women's Crisis Services, the Crime Prevention Council and Keeping Families Safe, all of Waterloo Region, in order to raise awareness about the increased risk of domestic violence during the pandemic, because of stress and isolation. It premiered in November 2020 in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month.



Calvin Peterson as Jay, left, and Lindsey Middleton as Addi, perform a scene from the play Unmute.

During the run of the play, Theatre of the Beat has partnered with 12 agencies across Canada that help families experiencing violence at home. A crisis worker is present at each show to demonstrate what calling a crisis line would be like and to offer other tips for those who suspect or witness violence.



Calvin Peterson as Jay, right, and Lindsey Middleton as Addi, perform a scene from *Unmute*.

Planting a church in a pandemic

Saskatoon couple finds joy and meaning in being part of a tiny online church

By Donna Schulz
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Like so many in the performing arts community, Theatre of the Beat had to adapt quickly to pandemic restrictions. This play was co-written by Cedric Martin, Lindsey Middleton and Kimberlee Walker, so that cast members could record their parts from home and perform the show online. The cast of five also had to respond in character to the improvised scene suggestions from audience members, and had to set up and clean up the parts of the set in their own homes for each show.

It is a flexibility that seems well suited to this small company, whose people often fill multiple roles. Martin is also the production manager, Middleton acts in the play as two different characters, and Walker facilitates the audience participation part of the show. The team is rounded out by Erin Brandenburg, director; Michal Heusten, audio editor; and Sukhpreet Sangha, dramaturge. Other members of the cast are Duncan Gibson-Lockhart, Frances Loiselle, Calvin Petersen and Yusuf Zine.

The company is releasing a podcast version of the show in May, as well as an educational workshop to teach students about the issue of gender-based violence.

Theatre of the Beat has many connections to the Mennonite community. Martin also serves on the ministry team for youth and children at Toronto United Mennonite Church. Several founding members have roots in Community Mennonite Church in Stouffville, Ont., and Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont. Mennonite agencies have partnered with Theatre of the Beat to spark conversations about sexual misconduct in the church, conscientious objection, marriage and restorative justice. ☞

The ideal time for planting a church is likely not the middle of a pandemic, but Josh and Cindy Wallace have discovered that it can be done.

“We sort of left everything behind on the premise of a house church,” says Cindy.

In 2019, Josh resigned as pastor of Warman (Sask.) Mennonite, where he had served for seven years. The couple moved to Saskatoon, where Cindy is an English professor at St. Thomas More College.

“We were envisioning a weekly gathering for worship and another [mid-week] meal-based gathering,” she says.

But when COVID-19 arrived, they were forced to change their plans and meet online via Zoom. The Wallaces and three other households meet virtually each Sunday afternoon.

While others have expressed interest in participating, Cindy says that, for some, joining an online platform is “one step too far.”

“It’s kind of a lot to attend a tiny church gathering,” she admits.

Josh agrees, noting that, with such a small group, there is vulnerability and a feeling of exposure. “You can’t hide in the back,” he says.

Worship services follow the same format each week. The group uses a liturgy, which they share on screen and read aloud together. Instead of a sermon, they have a discussion. Members share their needs with one

another but are also encouraged to share their gifts.

“The whole format is intended to foster community,” says Cindy.

And it has done just that, in tangible ways, like delivering care packages and loaning vehicles, but also in less tangible ways, such as praying for one another.

“I had some hard health moments,” says Cindy. “These people prayed for me in ways that were genuinely life-giving. . . . Receiving that prayer has been transformative.”

Josh has appreciated fellow group members’ willingness to be vulnerable, and has valued their monthly celebration of communion—sometimes with just a juice box and crackers. “I have found that

(Continued on page 22)



PHOTO BY TAYLOR SUMMACH

Josh and Cindy Wallace’s tiny house church, normally consisting of four households, meets via Zoom each Sunday afternoon. Pictured on screen, clockwise from top left, are: Josh and Cindy Wallace, Taylor Summach and Mark Bigland-Pritchard.

(Continued from page 21)

to be really sustaining,” he says.

Early in 2021, the group developed a list of five core commitments designed to guide the community’s formation. (See sidebar on right.)

Since then, says Josh, “we’ve been thinking about what [those commitments] mean for our individual lives.”

“We’ve done really intentional work around who we are and who we want to be,” says Cindy. “We don’t know what the next months will look like in terms of re-opening, but we have hopes around more embodied hospitality.”

Although the church is tiny and doesn’t yet have a name, they are open to others joining them.

“We want to be a space for people who haven’t found comfort in the larger church,” says Cindy. “All of the people in the group are keen to make space for people who have been wounded by the church, for folks on the edges of church life.”

Josh thinks there is a certain appeal to being part of a small house church. “It doesn’t have the high bar of entering a church building,” he says. “It isn’t going somewhere to hear a sermon or to see a beautiful music performance; it’s more like having someone over for a cup of coffee.”

Yet growing their church is not the Wallaces’ ultimate goal.

“Even if we weren’t to grow beyond four households, I wouldn’t feel like we were necessarily failing as a church,” says Josh. “I don’t think you have to have ‘x’ many people to be a church.”

For people who feel God may be calling them to plant a church, the Wallaces offer words of encouragement.

“Just about anybody could do this,” Josh says. “You have to have a Zoom link, agree on a passage of the Bible to talk about, agree to share one another’s needs and gifts, and have some way to help your kids grow up to be like Jesus.”

And Cindy says, “Keep things simple and pray for people to come into your life with a shared interest,” adding, “That’s a prayer that I’ve never not had answered.”

Although the Wallaces don’t know what their church will look like in the future, they are confident of God’s guidance.

“When we let the church be what it needs to be, the Spirit is at work,” says Cindy. And they have already seen God’s Spirit at work in their small group. “The gift of God’s presence has shown up in this gathering of people,” she says. ❧

Five core commitments

Joining Jesus in God’s work of renewing all things, we are committed to the following practices:

- **Prayer**
In regular rhythms of personal and corporate prayer, we seek to meet and worship God, offering the world’s suffering, wounds, joys and praise.
- **Hospitality**
We give and receive hospitality as hosts and as guests, sharing our time, homes, food, finances, attention and various other resources with one another and our neighbours.
- **Simplicity and humility**
We give up power or prestige to seek righteousness and justice and the kin(g)-dom of God, practising humility and curiosity as we seek to remain open to learning from others, asking questions, and continually shifting and growing.
- **Justice and mercy**
As members of Jesus’ body, we take part in God’s work of bringing together and healing all who have been wounded, abused, pushed aside, or taken advantage of by personal and structural violence, prejudice and injustice. We commit to taking part in Jesus’ work for decolonial, racial, gender and ecological *shalom* and the flourishing of all creation.
- **Creativity and celebration**
By design and by surprise, we choose to celebrate every scrap and hint of what is good, beautiful, and true. Even in the midst of hurt and death, we join in diverse ways in God’s resurrection creativity, growing life, beauty, joy, and rest.



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Who needs denominations?

MC Alberta invites CMU professor to explore this question

By Joanne De Jong
Alberta Correspondent

Many churches today are distancing themselves from denominational labels like “Mennonite,” to appear more inclusive. Renaming churches “The River,” “The Mosaic,” or “Hope City” is one way of communicating this. Others embrace the name “Mennonite” because they want to celebrate their distinctiveness. Both see their decision as part of their witness.

Mennonite Church Alberta invited Gerald Gerbrandt, president emeritus and professor emeritus of Bible at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, to facilitate its annual Faith Studies event over two days in late April, by leading a presentation on why, or if, the regional church should care about denominationalism. A self-described “denominational junkie,” Gerbrandt defined, explored, and challenged about 50 online participants to look at the history of denominationalism and how it shapes the church in different ways.

Do denominations matter?

According to German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The greatest scandal of Christianity is denominationalism.” But not everyone agrees. A common perception is that denominations are based on splits but, as Gerbrandt pointed out, “Many movements did not even want to be a denomination,” and “denominations are largely rooted in reformations which hoped for a shared understanding.” This would have included Anabaptism, which he did not define as a denomination but rather as a movement.

So how is a denomination defined?

Gerbrandt defined “denomination” as “any branch or subgroup of the church with a common identity,” adding, “Two things must exist: some level of formal organization, and some agency or ability to

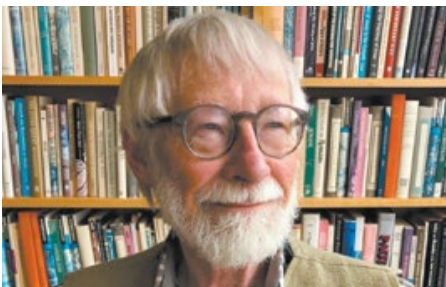


PHOTO BY ESTHER GERBRANDT

Gerald Gerbrandt, president emeritus and professor emeritus of Bible at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, was this year’s speaker at MC Alberta’s Faith studies event in April.

make decisions about theology, ethics and polity.” Most confessions of faith do not even speak about the church in terms of denominations but primarily as individual congregations or as a global body, he said.

From a biblical perspective, the church is one, he said, quoting: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

For the first thousand years there was only one church, he said, but now that multiple denominations exist, he wondered if that is such a bad thing. Some define a denomination as just a way to name a group of particular people. Mennonites are a particular people who are pacifist and believe in believer’s baptism, he said, while Pentecostals are a group whose Holy Spirit theology is distinctive. Perhaps the problem is less about being different and more about why no one is working together as one, he suggested.

Multiple comments were made around the need to foster a broader identity as Mennonites. “The very act of being a denomination implies there is more than one way to see truth,” a participant said.

But discussion around the difficulty of finding openness to new ideas led to the story of how MC Canada and the Mennonite Brethren denominations have sometimes struggled to work together, each challenged to accept different positions or ways of doing things.

How can the global church become fully visible to the world if we don’t work together? “We used to talk about being in a post-denominational world,” said Gerbrandt, “but no longer.”

He recalled when the ecumenical movement gained momentum and how significant work was getting accomplished. Now, due to internal divisions around issues such as women in leadership, sexuality and biblical interpretation, he said the focus has shifted back inwards, with denominations struggling to maintain unity even within.

But fresh ways are also arising to promote unity.

Joanne Moyer of Edmonton First Mennonite noted the potential in different denominations working together on environmental issues. Working together can be a way to celebrate diversity and bear witness to the world that we’re not always divided.

What role can denominations play?

Connecting local and larger church bodies can create context for congregational accountability, Gerbrandt said, and it can also open a door for greater theological and ethical reflection in different contexts.

“Are we able to be open to others’ ideas?” Gerbrandt suggested Mennonites ask themselves which part of the broader church they find themselves most removed from and explore that.

Other suggestions included praying for unity in the church; searching Scripture together with people from other denominations; and learning about another denomination, perhaps even adopting one as a “second” denomination.

John Woollard of Edmonton First Mennonite, who served in Botswana, shared how Mennonites intentionally chose not to plant churches in the African country, feeling that there were already enough denominations represented there.

On the other hand, Pastor Will Loewen of Trinity Mennonite Church in DeWinton, talked about an opposite experience, when he met a network of Christians in South Korea who were benefactors of Mennonite

Central Committee's work and who felt abandoned when they could not find churches that reflected their Mennonite identity.

Overall, denominationalism was seen

as something positive by the participants, celebrating diversity which occurs naturally in every culture, and is part of Christian witness as followers of Jesus who prayed his disciples would be one. ❧

Committee aims to foster diversity

Mennonite Church Canada

The East Gallatin River outside of Belgrade, Montana, a year after a head-on collision. A church in Democratic Republic of Congo. A church in Chile. A Baptist church in Korea after a three-year army term. A bathtub in Ethiopia. A Baptist church in Kitchener, Ont., after five years in a refugee camp in Thailand.

Stories of baptism from members of Mennonite Church Canada's Intercultural Church Steering Committee (ICSC) are diverse. Several made the decision to be baptized during or after a time of crisis. Others committed themselves as teenagers, as many others who grew up in Mennonite Church Canada congregations did.

Each of these members, who actively participate in Mennonite Church congregations across Canada, have committed to providing leadership to the nationwide and regional churches as Mennonite Church Canada seeks to become an intercultural church.

The group is taking the lead from Safwat Marzouk's influential book *Becoming an Intercultural Church* (2019, 1517 Media), which describes intercultural church as one that "fosters just diversity, integrates different cultural articulations of faith and worship, and embodies an alternative to the politics of assimilation and segregation."

"The first step is to recognize that it is a long process," says Fanosie Legesse, who is a member of Zion Mennonite Church in Elmira, Ont., and intercultural mission minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. Then, he says, building awareness is key: "Our congregations . . . need to be aware of the fact that Mennonite Church Canada is becoming a home for many nations, languages and people of different

socio-economic backgrounds."

Since the group began meeting in February 2021, members have taken the time to learn about one another and share their own experiences and reasons for why an intercultural church is significant.

Joon Park, member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., hopes BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of colour) voices will be heard more in church policy and leadership decisions. This will "help us have ownership of Mennonite Church Canada," he says. He hopes the committee will be "a transforming seed that . . . is used to bring change to the current stagnant, monolithic and institutionalized church structure."

José-Luis Moraga, pastor of discipleship at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Man., says that, along with representation, creating opportunities for sharing stories of how God is at work across "the diverse Mennonite family" is important. Fanosie agrees and stresses that opportunities for one-on-one conversations between people of different cultural backgrounds are vital.

Jolie Mamissa, member of Calgary First Mennonite Church, says that one answer doesn't fit all. "A church is a body of Christ made of people with different values and cultures. So we need to consider different aspects before answering this question (of what can we do to become intercultural church). But since our Christian values are above all, God will guide us through this process so we can come up with an answer."

Committee members will serve as liaison and resources for their respective regional churches. The ICSC also has plans to gather the leadership of Mennonite Church Canada and the regional churches in 2022 to discuss policy changes and next steps.

"Becoming an intercultural church means examining the ways we function as an organization as well as how we worship and serve together," says Doug Klassen, executive minister for Mennonite Church Canada. "We must find ways to cultivate mutually transforming relationships and practices."



The committee members are:

- **Doug Klassen** (co-chair), Executive Minister, Mennonite Church Canada
- **Ly Vang** (co-chair), First Hmong Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.; MC Eastern Canada representative for Joint Council
- **Fanosie Legesse**, Intercultural Mission Minister, MC Eastern Canada
- **Jolie Mamissa**, Calgary First Mennonite Church
- **José-Luis Moraga**, Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.
- **Joon Park**, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C.
- **Josh Wallace**, Church Engagement Minister, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan ❧

Information about the committee and its work will continue to be updated at mennonitechurch.ca/intercultural-church.



That sacred space in between

Mennonite pastor doubles as a chaplain to ex-offenders

By Charleen Jongejan Harder

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

Is it news if a crime doesn't happen? What about when a guy who did break-and-enters for his whole life stops, or if a sexual offender learns how to express emotion in a healthy way and there are no more victims?

Rielly McLaren is a bivocational pastor, serving part time at Windsor Mennonite Fellowship in southwestern Ontario. In his other role, he serves as a community chaplain to ex-offenders and their families through St. Leonard's House Windsor.

"I believe, if we invest in the lives of those who have offended, they will no longer wish to harm anyone," he says, an idea connected to John Donahue's concept of *anam cara*, or soul friendship.

St. Leonard's was the first federally supported halfway house in Canada, in the 1960s. An early headline read: "Murderers move in." That common not-in-my-backyard response focuses on me/mine, rather than the good of the community, according to McLaren. He wonders if people would rather murderers to move into their neighbourhood with support, or for them to move in to a halfway house with access to therapy, medical support, identification and supportive relationships.

McLaren's chaplaincy presence is founded on three fundamental principles:

- **Listening to** experiences of harm.
- **Listening to** needs that are caused by that harm.
- **Identifying responsibilities/obligations** by those who caused the harm.

This process is made more complex by the reality that most offenders are themselves also victims. As a chaplain, he serves all the stakeholders: offenders, victims and the wider community.

McLaren never knows what his day will hold. He recently officiated at the wedding of a man who grew up in prison since he was 16. He may also listen to someone who is suicidal, or accompany someone for health care. He will be counseling, offering mental-health support, or finding resources, like clean underwear.

In one instance, he helped an offender find a new home for his cat and say a tearful, prayerful goodbye to his grandmother before bravely going to the courthouse with a confession.

Perhaps a loved one died while someone was incarcerated, and he might help them visit the grave.

He creates space for listening to stories or processing emotions, even shedding tears, as he works through with those he counsels what they have lost or thrown away. These men are professionals at lockdowns. They know how to do time, he says.

Sometimes their time together can shift from clock to kairos time, an opportunity for deeper connection with self and or God. The body can be locked up, but the soul and the mind are free. He might also tend to social workers and parole officers dealing with burnout.

St. Leonard's specializes in "lifers," people who have served 20 to 50 years. These men have lived a long time in an institution. They might need support with new technology, like debit cards or smart phones, and navigating the pace of traffic.

Pre-COVID-19, McLaren liked to take big tough guys to the movies and see them deal with the extreme stimulation. For some ex-offenders, everything outside reminds them of their victims. Out in the community, they look around and feel exposed, like everyone knows what they have done.

Sometimes he says, "Listen, I've got good

news for you. No one cares about you! I mean, I care, but no one out there cares about you."

There is a provocative balance between the sacred and the profane in this ministry.

Together with his colleague Jen Graham, McLaren facilitates a support group for women and families of offenders, meaning he is generally the only male in the room. Mothers or spouses deal with the stigma and shame of the crime, facing significant isolation. This unique program has received national recognition and was the focus of a radio documentary with CBC Radio's "The Current."

McLaren also coaches ex-offenders to connect with their faith traditions, finding community and support. "Could God forgive Satan?" is a surprisingly common question, with profound personal import for those he counsels. "Could God forgive me?" "Am I a write-off?" "Am I finished?"

The journey to the answer goes straight to the heart of the gospel, the atonement and the heart of God. It is in places like this that McLaren's ministry goes both ways; through his work he has faced his own capacity for evil. "We must accept with sobriety and humility that 'I am made of the same earth as the man who killed his wife,'" he says. "We each need to reckon with our own demons."

He has learned to forgive his own father, who did time. He has learned the difference between isolation and solitude—the former being inhumane, cutting off relationships; the latter being open to the mystical presence of God. "God can impact when no human can," he says.

Thinking of churches that might have an ex-offender in their midst, McLaren's advice is to love within clear boundaries. Don't give in to either the impulse for "anything goes" or "go away and never come back," but find that sacred space in between, he advises. ❧



Rielly McLaren

/// Staff change

Shalom Counselling announces new executive director

Susan Schwartztruber

will take over as the next executive director of Shalom Counselling Services in Waterloo, Ont., effective May 31. Currently Shalom's clinical director, she brings a solid background in both clinical social work and management to the position. Schwartztruber replaces Wanda Wagler-Martin, who is stepping down from the role on June 30, 2021, a role she has so capably filled for 24 years. Shalom Counselling Services looks forward to continuing its support of area churches and faith communities, and providing counselling that is affordable and accessible to people from all walks of life.

—SHALOM COUNSELLING SERVICES



Pastoral transition in Manitoba

John Klassen

began as intentional interim pastor of Arnaud (Man.) Mennonite Church on May 1. He will serve in this position for 14 months. This transition comes after the resignation of Arnaud Mennonite's pastor, Gloria Beck, who served the congregation for the past six years. Klassen recently retired from his role as senior pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Winkler, Man., on March 31, concluding 23 years of service at the church. This was only a partial retirement, though, as he felt called to intentional interim ministry. He received training for this work from Transitional Ministry Training, a program of the Amigo Centre in Michigan, in consultation with Mennonite Church U.S.A. and MC Canada. He earned a master of divinity degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and has worked in pastoral ministry since 1983.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE



/// News brief

Former *Courier* editor dies

Milka Rindzinski was born in Uruguay in 1932 to an immigrant father and died on March 5, 2021. She served *Courier/Correo/Courier* magazine from 1992 to 2008 and attended every Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly from Curitiba, Brazil, in 1972 to Harrisburg, Pa., in 2015. Rindzinski was baptized Jan. 22, 1956. Previously christened and catechized in the Catholic Church, she was a literal *ana-baptist* (re-baptized one) as she became a member of the nascent Convención de Iglesias Menonitas en Uruguay. English lessons with Mennonite Board of Missions worker James Martin became conversations about the Bible, she wrote in her life story. Soon after, she was invited to take classes at the newly started Mennonite seminary and to serve the director as his secretary. She went on to serve as librarian, then as study coordinator at the study centre that continued after the closure of the seminary. While in the United States in 1978, studying at what is now Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, she had opportunity to prepare materials for the upcoming MWC assembly. She served *Courier/Correo/Courier* magazine as regional editor for Latin America, as a Spanish translator, and she took on the role of English editor following the Calcutta, India assembly in 1997. "I have seen the MWC body of churches grow in love, in acceptance of one another, in knowledge, in discernment, in solidarity and service, in accountability, and in efforts to put into practice the integral gospel of Jesus Christ," she wrote in her final article in *Courier*.

—MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE



/// Staff change

New PACS professor brings a restorative-justice focus



Johonna McCants-Turner has been appointed by Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., to a tenure-track faculty position as associate professor of peace and conflict studies (PACS) at Grebel, beginning July 1. She currently serves as assistant professor of restorative justice and peacebuilding at the Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. McCants-Turner has a doctorate in American studies from the University of Maryland, where she focused on an interdisciplinary approach to urban peace studies, carceral studies, women's studies and contemporary social movements. She has graduate certificates in women's studies from the University of Maryland and urban youth ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary in California. She has published essays, articles and chapters in the areas of faith-based peacebuilding, restorative justice and transformative justice, and is a sought-after speaker and presenter. "Johonna will bring a remarkable blend of excellent pedagogy, impactful research and real-world experience to our PACS program," says Marcus Shantz, Grebel's president.

—CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

'So What?'

CMU alumni host tackles big ideas on new podcast

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Jonas Cornelsen created a podcast as a fun way for his family to stay connected. Siblings, parents, and little nieces and nephews across the country sent him audio recordings, which he orchestrated into episodes, helping to share family stories when they couldn't gather together.

He didn't expect that a few months later his casual hobby would lead to producing for a university. Cornelsen is the host of "So What?" the new monthly Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) podcast that draws out key ideas from public discussions and lectures at the school.

Cornelsen, 27, graduated from CMU in

heard about Cornelsen's family podcast, they invited him on board.

The four episodes that have aired so far have explored CMU's Face2Face events, panel conversations that engage the community in a variety of current topics.

"This approach originated from a sense of wanting to do more with the content CMU already had," Cornelsen says. "I occasionally would listen to these events at CMU and enjoy them and think, wow this is a lot of great stuff!"

But the events often run two hours long and Cornelsen recognized that people around his age, with full-time jobs, young kids, or both, don't have much undisturbed time to sit down and watch a video of that length. He wanted people to be able to hear a condensed version of this content in a convenient way.

He now spends hours listening to the events, taking notes, making cuts, narrating, choosing music and editing it all together to create each episode. Rather than trying to summarize the entire event in broad strokes, Cornelsen provides a specific window into the content by highlighting key moments that tell a story, while staying true to the message.

"Though targeting alumni, 'So What?' has proven to engage a wider audience, given the breadth and quality of content," says Kevin Kilbrei, director of communications and marketing at CMU. "In just 20 minutes, Jonas extracts thought-filled nuggets from CMU conversations and lectures that address social issues that affect us all. 'So What?' is tangible evidence of the critical thinking and quality dialogue that takes place at CMU."

Moving forward, Cornelsen is interested



PHOTO COURTESY OF JONAS CORNELSEN

One of Jonas Cornelsen's favourite moments of the show so far is CMU professor Chris Huebner's analysis of COVID-19 in Episode 1, when he related the pandemic to early Anabaptism, which was originally understood in viral terms, like 'contagious' and 'dangerous.'

in tackling more complicated material like lectures from the J.J. Thiessen series or the Canadian School of Peacebuilding. One of his favourite dreams for the podcast is to have a voicemail line open for alumni to call in and share updates or answer questions, which he would share on the show. "I've heard a lot just anecdotally . . . that people want to connect with each other and people who have been really shaped by a place like CMU want to hear about how that has influenced others," he says.

Digging into subjects like aging, treaties, polarization and the pandemic, "So What?" poses important questions for those within and beyond the CMU sphere, including the church, to consider. "I'm really happy to be participating in some aspect of CMU's thought and campus life, even from a distance," Cornelsen says. "It's good for me, and I hope it makes other alumni feel more connected."

To listen to "So What?" visit cmu.ca/sowhatpodcast.



2016 with majors in communications and media and political studies. He now lives in Calgary, where he is studying therapeutic recreation with a focus on gerontology.

While teaching a course on podcasting, CMU professor David Balzer realized that the medium was a resource that might benefit the CMU community. He polled some alumni to see if this idea would resonate with them and he received an overwhelming "yes!" When CMU staff



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Resettled refugees offer front-line support during COVID-19

A number of refugees who have been resettled in Canada through Mennonite Central Committee have stepped up to the front lines during the pandemic. canadianmennonite.org/frontline



Bethel Church holds outdoor service, prayer walks

Members at Bethel Mennonite Church in Langley gathered outdoors at the end of April for the church's first in-person service since November. canadianmennonite.org/betheloutdoors



Called to care, equipped to serve

A service term with Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network put Honduran doctor Ela Castro on the path she's always envisioned for herself. canadianmennonite.org/castro

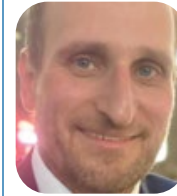


Witness workers embrace Indigenous names, identities

Dann and Joji Pantoja, Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers in the Philippines, talk about their decolonization journey. canadianmennonite.org/newnames

News brief

Menno Simons Sermon Prize awarded to German broadcaster



Daniel Kaiser, head of the cultural section of the north-German public radio station NDR 90.3, received the 2021 Menno Simons Sermon Prize

from the Center of Peace Church Theology (University of Hamburg). His award-winning sermon was delivered on Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020, in the service of the Mennonite Church Hamburg-Altona, during the time of the first COVID-19 lockdown. Entitled "The anointing in Bethany," the sermon retells the incident in which a woman enters the "men's circle" of the disciples and anoints Jesus with expensive oil. Scandalous, because the proceeds from the sale of this oil could have helped many poor people, Kaiser places this story in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. "When I delivered the sermon, the situation of course was different," he told the World Council of Churches (WCC). "The virus was fresh. People were afraid. They asked: 'What is the right thing to do? Should we join the Swedish way, live our lives and risk the lives of the older people? Isn't the economy more important than very old people who probably would have died sooner or later? What's with the people who suffer from these circumstances? What can we do?' I understood the story of the anointing of Jesus as a story showing we should care for each other—and not look at the cost. The anointing is what Jesus needed in that moment. It was the only good thing that happened to him in those days. So the story works as an empowerment for us: 'Where is our bottle we can crack open in order to help someone?'"

—WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

CANADIAN MENNONITE

Contract Opportunity Advertising Representative

Do you enjoy sales? Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service seeks a representative to manage advertising sales for the CM website and print magazine. Compensation offered is a monthly retainer fee plus commission. Remote work is possible.

Working with the publisher, the advertising representative will develop and implement sales strategies, including creative approaches to advertising and sponsored content opportunities; maintain relationships with existing clients and develop new ones. The ideal candidate has experience in sales and an understanding of the Mennonite church constituency.

Please send expressions of interest to Tobi Thiessen at publisher@canadianmennonite.org. Go to www.canadianmennonite.org/employment for more details.

Calendar

Nationwide

June 3-5: MC Canada is offering to sponsor 20 people from across the nationwide church community to attend this year's virtual NAIITS symposium, whose theme is "Treaty and covenant: Creating space for hope." For more information, or to register, visit: bit.ly/39WyeiC.

Alberta

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

Saskatchewan

June 6: Experience the glory and presence of God in outdoor worship with forest church at the Shekinah Retreat Centre, at 2:30 p.m. More information coming soon online at shekinahretreatcentre.org.

Manitoba

Ongoing: Attendees of MC Manitoba congregations are invited to participate in online

Gatitude Groups, led by a spiritual director. More information and to sign up visit: bit.ly/2RRyOlq

Ontario

May 28-29: (28) New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale live online auction, at 7 p.m. Auction items include experiences, gift baskets and outdoor items. (29) Quilt auction featuring more than 150 handmade quilts, at 9 a.m. For more information and updates, visit NHMRS.com.

June 8-22: Ninth International Conference on Aging and Spirituality, a virtual conference hosted by Conrad Grebel University College. Theme: "Vital connections: Claiming voice and learning to listen." Seven 90-minute conference sessions will take place between June 8 and 22.

To learn more or to register, visit uwaterloo.ca/aging-spirituality. **June 22:** 54th annual chicken barbecue fundraiser for Hidden Acres Camp, New Hamburg, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., will be a drive-through event this year. For more information, and to order tickets, visit hiddenacres.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. Theme:

"Following Jesus together across barriers." 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. For more Calendar listings online, visit canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar.



Advertising Information

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For more information please go to the Mennonite Church Eastern Canada website: www.mcec.ca/ministry-opportunities or contact pastoraltransitions@mcec.ca.

www.wellesleymennonite.ca

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CMU launches new Centre for Career and Vocation

Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) celebrated the launch of its newest initiative, the Centre for Career and Vocation, as Work-Integrated Learning Month kicked off across Canada on March 1.

The Centre for Career and Vocation's mission is "to equip members of the CMU community to purposefully connect calling, courses and career through curriculum-integrated academic and vocational advising, experiential and work-integrated learning, and encouraging interdisciplinary exploration and creativity."

The centre brings together three areas: career development and vocational discernment; practicum/work-integrated learning; and vocation-centred advising and curriculum.

It provides students with career advising and resources through individual appointments, workshops and peer coaching, as well as offering for-credit courses in career development. Additionally, the centre supports faculty and staff to develop a common framework for vocational advising and curriculum development.

The work-integrated learning (or practicum) program has always been integral to CMU, the only Canadian school to require all undergraduate students to complete a work-integrated learning placement to graduate. These opportunities help students weave together their classroom learning with other interests.

The Centre for Career and Vocation provides a centralized location for information and increases the visibility of the practicum program within CMU, helping it to grow and become even stronger.



"I love career-advising work," says Christine Kampen Robinson, director of the Centre for Career and Vocation, and CMU's director of practicum. "Anytime I talk to people about 'career,' I'm really talking about who people are and who they want to be, what they care about and what kinds of problems they want to help solve."



Christine Kampen Robinson is the director of the Centre for Career and Vocation and CMU's director of practicum.

To learn more about the CMU Centre for Career and Vocation, visit cmu.ca/ccv.



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Schools Directory featuring RJC High School and Canadian Mennonite University

‘Looking twice’

RJC finds opportunity during a pandemic year

By Alex Tiessen
RJC High School, Rosthern, Sask.

It is easy during a pandemic year for students and staff to dwell on all that they aren't able to do at their school. But, at RJC High School, students and staff have found opportunities to invest in different ways in on-campus activities and partner with local organizations in different ways.

In recent months, RJC staff and students have considered the words of Jamake High-tower, a Blackfoot man: "You must learn to look at the world twice if you wish to see all there is to see." This teaching encourages people to look at "familiar notions in new light."

Taking a look at the school year through this lens, the RJC community has been able to see "new light," or opportunity, in extracurricular activities and grade-based programs.

Last winter, with the absence of inter-collegiate sports, RJC took a second look at its campus and recreation spaces. It became clear that there were several opportunities and, in the winter, RJC launched a student health and wellness fundraiser to help purchase new cross-country skis and to update spaces on campus, such as the arena, for student recreation and health.

The RJC community has also had the chance to "look twice" at its grade-based programs. In a typical year, the RJC Grade 10 Imagine class has the chance to work closely with, and learn from, an organization called STR8 UP, which supports people who are exiting gangs and prison, or recovering from addictions. With the absence of working closely together in a physical environment, STR8 UP and RJC found a new way to



Ashley Skaar with a copy of STR8 UP Recovery: A Journey of Hope, a resource that the Grade 10 Imagine students had the chance to contribute to this school year.

partner together by having RJC students contribute inspirational quotes and reflections for STR8 UP's new recovery booklet.

Although the year has posed challenges, the RJC community has found new meaning in the relationships with their its organizations and campus spaces by choosing to "look twice."

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Foothills Mennonite goes to work at Camp Valaqua



Steven Heidebrecht fells trees at the camp located near Water Valley, Alta.



PHOTOS © BY RUTH BERGEN BRAUN / TEXT BY JOANNE DE JONG
Jeff Toews splits wood at the Mennonite Church Alberta camp.



Louisa Adria gets the camper cabins ready for the summer season during the socially distanced work day at Camp Valaqua on May 1.