

CANADIAN MENNONITE

May 2, 2022 Volume 26 Number 9

He is risen

Fresh-cut flowers adorn
a wooden cross at
Calgary Inter-Mennonite
Church in Calgary

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EDITORIAL

Speaking of faith

BY VIRGINIA A. HOSTETLER
Executive editor



“How do we speak of our faith in a society of many faiths and no faith, a society that has seen all too well the harm the church can inflict in the name of Jesus?”

This is one of the questions posed in the study guide for Gathering 2022, to be held in Edmonton this summer. There, people from all corners of Mennonite Church Canada will meet for conversation and decision making for the nationwide church. Both the event and the study guide go by the title, “We Declare: What We Have Seen and Heard.”

It’s a relevant question for a church with historical roots in a movement that spoke openly about the message of Jesus. For some of our ancestors in the faith, their speaking led to persecution and death.

In the 20th century, testifying about faith in evangelical circles sometimes required a certain formula: about how you had converted from a life of depravity to a life of holiness through a one-time encounter with the Saviour. Some of us remember the large evangelistic meetings that emphasized that kind of personal and dramatic transformation that didn’t always feel authentic.

With an eye toward past misdeeds in the name of Christianity, we see the ways in which the Christian message has sometimes harmed people—both outside and within the church. The temptation nowadays is to remain quiet about our experience of the Holy. Perhaps that is why we sometimes

struggle to talk—even within church circles—about the joys and struggles of our faith.

And yet. . . . If we claim the liberating and powerful good news of Jesus, we will want to share it with those who don’t know him.

In her book, *Tongue-tied: Learning the Lost Art of Talking about Faith*, Sara Wenger Shenk writes of “ground rules for learning to talk about faith with authenticity, humility, love and conviction.” These will “provide sturdy ground from which to speak with moral integrity to our children—and to the listening world.” (To read an excerpt from the book, see “Learning fluency step by step,” *Canadian Mennonite*, July 19, 2021, or canadianmennonite.org/stories/learning-fluency-step-step)

Speaking with each other about our faith experience requires openness to God and to each other—a humble desire to listen and learn. This might be experienced in several ways within the household of faith.

Cultivating an awareness of God’s presence. We are invited to pay attention to how the Holy Spirit is present in one’s own life, in one’s ongoing journey of conversion. For this, some Christians practice the prayer of examen. This includes a review of each day’s events with the questions: “Where have you known the God of life today?” and “Is there anything you want to ask of God for the coming days?”

Losing inhibitions about using faith language in everyday life. At home and in church, our children and youth want to hear stories of how we experience

God’s presence. With close friends and in small groups, we can share and encourage each other, knowing that each is on an individual spiritual path. This means putting aside formulas and “Christian-ese” and finding authentic ways to tell faith stories that feel true to who we are.

Reviving the practice of “testimonies” at church. The study invites a “curiosity about how God is active in our lives.” Some congregations practice this with a “sharing time” or “sharing of joys and concerns” during worship services, but those times can easily devolve into a simple listing of individual health concerns. In our corporate worship, we can find ways to encourage deeper testimony of spiritual joys and concerns, with stories of God-sightings in our lives and even honest sharing of doubts and questions. Congregations can be receptive to the many ways in which people experience spiritual growth.

Practices like these can transform our faith-speech from being a duty to being a part of a life authentically lived, with awareness of how God is present among us.

In the months leading up Gathering 2022, I plan to listen for stories of how Christians are seeing and hearing God active in their lives. Will you join me?

The guide “We Declare” can be downloaded from commonword.ca/ResourceView/82/24191. To read inspiring personal stories of faith, check out the books, *Godward* and *Fifty Shades of Grace*, both available from commonword.ca. ❧



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PHOTO BY JESSICA EVANS / CANADIAN MENNONITE

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FEATURE

Justice in the name of Jesus

Infusing social justice with evangelical zeal

By Will Braun
Senior Writer



PHOTO BY JEANETTE HANSON

At a recent annual gathering, Colombian Mennonites pray for outgoing denominational president Yalile Caballero, who was an influential advocate for peace and justice. Jeanette Hanson, MC Canada's director of International Witness, says of the Colombian Mennonites that they do 'amazing peace and justice work because they love Jesus.' Reports produced by Justapaz, the peace and justice arm of the Colombian Mennonites, weave an overt spiritual intimacy into documentation of human-rights violations.

Some Mennonites raise their hands when they sing. Others don't.

Some attend climate rallies and examine decolonization. Others don't.

Some Mennonites hear sermons focused on the Word and personal relationship with Jesus. Others hear sermons that draw on Pete Enns; Mary

Oliver, a modern day mystic; or the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

My point, which I make with hesitation, is to identify two centres of gravity within Mennonite Church Canada: one, more evangelical; the other, more oriented toward peace and justice (climate, reconciliation with Indigenous people, LGBTQ+ inclusion, etc.).

This is not news. But it is also not discussed much. At least not openly.

Of course, generalizations are tricky. Definitions differ, lines blur, exceptions pop up, and a sizeable segment of MC Canada congregations fit neither evangelical nor justice categories. Still, I hope generalization allows for discussion of a potentially creative tension.

A further generalization is that the more evangelical churches tend to be predominantly made up of newcomers from Africa, Asia or Latin America. (I recognize Euro-Canadians are also relative newcomers.) Conversely, emphasis on peace and justice is more common in Euro-Canadian congregations.

I recognize that some congregations include both newcomers and Euro-Canadians, but many are almost exclusively one or the other.

I also recognize that some people find it awkward to speak openly of these differences. Indeed, these are difficult discussions. I proceed with a profound belief in the awkward value of diversity and a prayer for the free flow of grace.

Personally, I lean more toward peace and justice. But I am also drawn to the spiritual intimacy and passion I have sensed among newcomer churches. My real quest, however, is for the point where the two become one.

Holy place



Jeanette Hanson hears people within MC Canada express a desire for an evangelically enlivened approach to peace and

justice. As director of International Witness for MC Canada, she sees the coming together of the two as a “holy place.” Conversely, she says there’s a “risk of both sides losing out if we go our separate ways.”

Hanson recounts a meeting of various Anabaptist groups in Hong Kong some years ago, at which the leader of a session asked participants to line up across the room according to where they fell on the spectrum I have presented above. Awkwardness filled the room until Max Ediger, a Mennonite

Central Committee worker of some physical stature, strode up and laid his full frame out on the floor, spanning as much of the spectrum as possible and declaring that he cared about peace and justice because he loved Jesus.

Hanson recently returned from Colombia and Thailand, where she saw the intersection of evangelical fervour and peace and justice. She says of the Colombian Mennonites that they do “amazing peace and justice work because they love Jesus.” Reports produced by Justapaz, the peace and justice arm of the Colombian Mennonites, weave an overt spiritual intimacy into documentation of human-rights violations.

In Thailand, churches are inviting people to follow Jesus in a very relational way while also addressing food security by providing organic food that is not mass produced. Some pastors are involved in legal action against an agri-food giant that is squeezing farmers.

Here in Canada, Hanson observes that there are Mennonites who “want to see a deep sense of why we’re doing social-justice work; at the heart of it has to be Jesus, otherwise we’re just another really good community organization.”

Good News



Justin Sun has navigated much of the spectrum between evangelicalism and peace and justice. He grew up in a tight-knit

evangelical Chinese church in Edmonton, surrounded by extended family. “I was involved with everything,” he says of church life.

In 2016, an online search for Christian colleges led him to Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C. He knew nothing of Mennonites, nor had he ever been in such a predominantly white setting.

Amid a “massive culture shock” at Columbia, Sun was also encountering “radically new ideas of faith and what the Gospel is about.” This differed from the more heaven-oriented theology of his youth. The deconstruction and reconstruction was both “painful” and

thrilling. He says it was a “privilege to wake up every day and study the Bible.”

Now, Sun, 28, serves on the pastoral staff of both Peace Chinese Mennonite Church and Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, B.C. He preaches about the “radical call of Jesus” and racial reconciliation, about our “belovedness” and climate change, as well as Dirk Willems.

Sun admits that, on peace and justice issues, he “came on pretty strong” in his early sermons. “I’ve had to dial back a bit,” he says. The congregation is grappling with peace and justice questions. Sun notes that, in 50 years, Richmond itself—with an average elevation of one metre above sea level—could be under water. Climate is an existential question.

In relation to the tension between evangelicalism and social justice, Sun takes a critical step back. He says the “tension exists largely because there are groups that are dominant and groups that are pushing against that.” For groups whose well-being is fundamentally threatened, social-justice issues are not “issues;” they are life. Those groups do not have a choice of whether to get involved. For them, it is about the “fundamental outworking of the Gospel in their life and context.”

Social justice as a “category,” Sun says, “is largely the product of privilege, comfort, options.”

In this context, the Good News, says Sun, is that “the Creator God identifies so deeply with the poor, oppressed and marginalized, that [God] came in the form of a man who fundamentally took on those qualities in order to announce life and liberation over and against them—victory over these deep-rooted systems that cause death and destruction.”

Interculturalism



In response to my question about the tension between newcomer evangelicalism and Euro-Canadian social-justice emphasis,

Joon Park focuses on the cross-cultural dynamic. Creating transformative connections between BIPOC (Black,

Indigenous, People of Colour) Mennonites and Euro-Canadian Mennonites is his passion. Park serves on the MC Canada Intercultural Church Steering Committee.

He and his wife, Shim Beack, have attended Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., for 17 years. Before coming to Canada, Park lived, worked and studied in his native Korea, as well as in Germany and the United States.

Park says that, in order to “retrieve the real meaning of the Gospel,” the church must “embrace all people regardless of any kind of difference.” His vision of true “interculturalism” is one in which we “break down all the walls and barriers,” share all that we have to share, and come together in “worship and praise.”

Park’s vision is not satisfied by mere numbers, multicultural representation, or anything more superficial than coming before Christ in transformative, integrative, soulful, “all-embracing” interculturalism.

This profound sharing, he says, encompasses the “true meaning of social justice, not different from the true meaning of the Gospel.” It also encompasses evangelism. As with Sun’s view, here peace and justice meld into the heart of faith expression.

Evangelical intention

Moses Falco expresses this synthesis in his own way. Now a pastor of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg, Falco was raised in a Baptist church in Toronto. He and his wife Jessica, who is from Sterling, met while at Bible school in Germany.

Falco recalls working at summer camp in his youth and being asked at the end of the week, “What’s your number?” That is, how many kids “said the [sinner’s] prayer?” How many were converted?

He “felt uncomfortable” with that form of sharing the Good News.

Falco understands why some people want to “push away” from evangelism. When Christians believe they “have the ‘capital-T’ truth to themselves to bestow on others,” he says, their actions have too often been “coercive and oppressive,

more than invitational.”

But Falco still very much wants people to “find healing and forgiveness and life in Christ.” He wants people to “know God and find themselves in a Christian community.” He also actively works for climate action and systemic justice for Indigenous peoples.

Falco says that some people just want to address justice and oppression, while others focus only on people coming to trust Jesus as their personal saviour. He says these two impulses should not be separated, and justice work must be undergirded by a faith “intention.”

Falco recounts the story of Churches for Freedom Road, an initiative that saw dozens of Manitoba churches—Mennonite, Baptist and others—support Shoal Lake 40 First Nation in its effort to obtain an all-weather link to the rest of Canada. Falco says that, while in that

case it would have been problematic and insensitive to speak openly about Jesus at rallies and meetings—“almost like a bait and switch”—churches were involved because they felt called by God to respond to injustice.

“Not every scenario calls us to preach the Gospel,” says Falco. Sometimes Christians must support those who are oppressed and then let go, allowing God to work.

Falco says that some among us “would feel frustrated with some of our Mennonite groups that focus solely on social justice without even mentioning that their intention is linked to faith in Jesus. It begs the question: Is it linked?”

For the people I spoke with, the answer is that, if that link can indeed be brought to life, sparks of holiness will spread on earth and rise to heaven. ❧

❧ For discussion

1. If you were preaching a sermon, what would your focus be on? What do you believe is most important for the church to hear and be reminded of? What are the things that your spirit is passionate about?
2. Will Braun makes some generalizations about Mennonite churches, saying that there tends to be two centres of gravity, with evangelicalism on one side and peace and justice on the other. Do you think his generalizations are accurate? Where do you see yourself and your congregation on this continuum?
3. Justin Sun says that seeing social justice as a “category” is “largely the product of privilege, comfort, options.” Do you agree? What are the concerns in your community that Christian churches should be addressing? How important is it that these concerns be mentioned in worship services?
4. When it comes to social justice and evangelism, do you see tensions between traditional Mennonite churches and those predominantly made up of newcomers to Canada? How does being an intercultural church affect its Christian witness?
5. How important is it to clearly connect concern for social justice and faith in Jesus? Can you think of examples when you have seen the two brought together?

—By Barb Draper



See related Peace Theology resources at www.commonword.ca/go/1351 and Christian Mission resources at www.commonword.ca/go/2283

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/// Readers write

✉ Ottawa citizen offers different view of life under the 'freedom convoy'

Re: "First letter of "Two views on the 'freedom convoy,'" April 4, page 7.

The letter from a Bible study group in St. Catharines, Ont., indicated how peaceful and lawful the "freedom convoy" was. They clearly did not hear the incessant honking of horns from the big rigs parked near Parliament Hill, smell the diesel fumes, see the signs calling for the assassination of the prime minister, or read about the harassment experienced by staff at the Shepherds of Good Hope from convoy participants demanding to be fed. Visible minority people I know, who live in the area, were threatened.

This clearly was not a peaceful three-week protest, and the prayer circles referred to by the Bible study group brought little peace or comfort to those of us living in Ottawa.

Kudos to Mennonite Church Canada for its statement on "freedom rallies," Feb. 21, page 8.

MARTHA WIEBE, OTTAWA

✉ 'Freedom convoy' left Ottawa reader feeling unsafe

Re: "In search of the holy grey" and the first letter of "Two views on the 'freedom convoy,'" April 4, pages 14 and 7, respectively.

As a resident of downtown Ottawa who had no choice but to witness and experience the trucker convoy first hand, I struggle to find the grey. Certainly there is some grey out there, but it isn't possible to dialogue with someone who asserts that the sky is lime green with yellow polka dots.

The period of time that my neighbourhood became completely overrun by a group of people not having a protest, but throwing a violent temper tantrum, was the first time that I have ever felt unsafe walking alone at night since moving to Ottawa in 2017. I witnessed a Nazi flag and many hand-drawn swastikas, Confederate flags, people harassing seniors and others because they were wearing masks, people throwing garbage on the streets and trampling over yards.

While most of my neighbours in the thick of it had not just their daily lives, but their sleep disrupted as well, thankfully I live just enough blocks away that, with closed windows and some TV or music, I wasn't inundated with the non-stop blaring of noise.

I did witness love from my local community. On

the "Buy Nothing" group that I'm a part of on Facebook, people were giving out ear plugs to neighbours and offering to get groceries for those who felt too unsafe to leave their homes.

These heartwarming moments of graciousness and care from my presumably non-Christian neighbours underscored for me the importance of kindness, caring, respect and empathy. These values set a high standard, one that I will endeavour to always reach for, even when my neighbourhood is overrun by people doing the opposite.

STEPHANIE REMPEL, OTTAWA

✉ Small things and a non-judgmental attitude

Re: "A culture of peace" column, March 21, page 12.

How often has the easier path been retaliation!

Columnist Randolph Haluza-DeLay is right: peace is not a human tendency.

It seems, as my brother-in-law says, humans are flawed. I need to take a step back and accept my own humanness! When I think about revenge, I must challenge myself to forgive and to become a little more like Jesus. It brings the kingdom promised by Christ a bit closer. That I can do. As for war, I, too, have no direct experience. I will not judge.

MARTIN BLANCHET (ONLINE COMMENT)

Thought provoking.

I take for granted our work in social justice through Development and Peace—Caritas Canada, quietly sowing the seeds of peace.

Among the major challenges in our world we can also do small things, like shovel walks for those who find it difficult, or provide a listening ear for the alienated. Distribution of love and kindness ranks equally with food, but we are way behind. Worse, we live in the half of the world whose leaders promote war in the other half, to maintain political instability for the easier extraction of valuable resources. There is much to be done, one day, one person, at a time.

KAREN BLANCHET (ONLINE COMMENT)

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



We Declare
what we have seen & heard

Gathering 2022 Edmonton, Alberta
July 29 – August 1, 2022

Join us on Treaty 6 territory as we re-examine what it means to tell the Good News and bear witness to the Gospel of peace.

mennonitechurch.ca/gathering2022



Mennonite Church Canada
Our nationwide community of faith



July 31 – August 4, 2022
Camp Valaqua, Alberta

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giving voice to what we've seen & heard



A Nationwide Youth Gathering!

For youth ages 12-18. Visit the website below for the latest information and updates as the Youth Gathering takes shape. Contact youth@mennonitechurch.ca for more details.

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/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Nowak—Brooks Archer (b. March 23, 2022), to Kory and Chantel Nowak, Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.

Roes—Everleigh Sarah (b. March 5, 2022), to Kyle and Alison Roes, Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.

Toews—Elwyn (b. Feb. 20, 2022), to Chris and Lara Toews, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Wagner—Nicola Delphine (b. Feb. 4, 2022), to Emily and Rence Wagner, Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.

Deaths

Boniface—Audrey, 95 (b. May 8, 1926; d. March 22, 2022), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Neufeld—Edward, 91 (b. Nov. 16, 1930; d. March 28, 2022), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Sawatzky—Jake, 85 (b. Oct. 10, 1936; d. April 4, 2022), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Schroeder—Margaret (Braun), 95 (b. Jan. 26, 1927; d. April 5, 2022), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Steinmann—Arthur Joseph, 94 (b. Aug. 16, 1927; d. March 4, 2022), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont. (A correction to a death notice that appeared in the April 4 issue, page 9.)



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Church
Saskatchewan**

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Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, a regional church of MC Canada, comprised of 22 congregations in covenant with each other, invites applications for an Executive Minister.

Those called to lead the church into the 21st century with its growing diversity and change are sought for this position.

Gifts of a pastoral nature and leadership skills are valuable attributes for those applying.

The ability to reach out in support of pastors, in both rural and urban congregations, is an important component of the position.

For the Executive Minister job description, with preferred qualifications and current responsibilities, visit www.mcsask.ca or contact Andrea Enns-Gooding at searchcommittee@mcsask.ca. We will acknowledge receipt of all applications.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Reflection on Ukraine

Arlyn Friesen Epp

The horrific images from Ukraine jolt me from my comfort and I reflect on air-raid sirens, bunkers, explosions, refugees, civilian and military casualties.

Historical connections to the region seem to draw my curiosity closer. Ukraine is part of my family lore.

Moreover, the Ukrainian countryside and their cities look very much like ours. Mariupol looks like Winnipeg. The maternity hospital, hit by an air strike on March 9, looks like the health-care building two blocks from my home.

And I notice many of the people themselves look like me: a white male of European descent.

In a more sober moment, I wonder about atrocities in general, of which there are many: Myanmar, Afghanistan, Yemen, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria, Palestine and many more. And I wonder about our selective news coverage, the overwhelming need, our political will, the role of the church—and the significance of my own white racial lens.

I am reminded that it's possible to name a citizen, armed to protect their country, a "hero" (in Ukraine) and another, a "terrorist" (say, in Palestine).

Mainstream media narrates the heroism of the current Ukrainian population, and I am drawn into the emotional appeals, the strong pleas, the "sensible" nature of defensive violence against barbaric attacks.

I am also reminded that, 100 years ago, in this same region, under similar violent and chaotic circumstances, some in my Mennonite history formed the *Selbstschutz*, or self-defence units. Some would consider them heroes, although the dominant Mennonite storyline, to which I have generally subscribed, has viewed such violence as a severe compromise to a pacifism that is central to our faith.

My sombre reflections invite me to deeply consider two things: A racism that colours what we see and don't see, and a personal faith that would be duly tested should such horrific circumstances be closer to home.

What do we do in this complexity? Where is God when doubt and fear and anger rise?

Let me offer some practices to which I feel compelled:

- **Live generously because** God is generous, and because war exposes how

much we have and others don't.

- **Work to break down** racial, gender and other barriers because God is welcoming and inclusive, and because recognizing privilege, dismantling walls of division and loving enemies is the work of nonviolent peacemaking.

- **Read good literature**, rediscover the biblical peacemaking traditions found in Scripture and engage books like *A Field Guide to Christian Nonviolence*, one of many titles at CommonWord about key thinkers, activists and movements for the gospel of peace.

- **Talk and pray** frequently with family, friends and congregational members.

- **Moreover, rest and wrestle** with the Prince of Peace, who shows God's true self, God's full intentions, and whose Spirit moves still within and among us.

May all our efforts of nonviolence become habitual practices and loving postures, whose effects, multiplied by the Spirit, reach beyond our imaginings. ☿



Arlyn Friesen Epp is director of the CommonWord Bookstore and Resource Centre in Winnipeg.

A moment from yesterday



The variety of banners at the 1978 Mennonite World Conference assembly in Wichita, Kan., is a representation of the diversity of people at the assembly, with 9,500 people registered from 44 countries, including Canada. The Findings Committee reported at length and stated in part: "We give thanks for those of our people in times present and past who have crossed borders of nation and culture to bring to others the good news of the kingdom. And now . . . their spiritual sons and daughters come in joyous procession to tell their stories of the kingdom, to celebrate their life in Christ and to call to renewal faithfulness those who have grown weary and faint hearted." (*Mennonite Reporter*, Aug. 21, 1978, page 7.)

Text: Conrad Stoesz

Photo: Commission on Education of the General Conference Mennonite Church



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 THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

Meetinghouses

Arli Klassen

I spent my high-school years in a congregation that was proud of our basketball hoops. Greenbelt Baptist Church decided to use public schools for worship and Sunday school, homes for Bible study, and a community centre for weekly youth events. This was a very intentional way of being visible and connected to the local community. We joked about having the best basketball hoops of any congregation in Ottawa.

I learned to prioritize community connections over beautiful worshipful space, knowing that one can encounter God anywhere.

As young adults, my husband Keith and I spent nine years in Toronto and, to our surprise, found ourselves at Little Trinity Anglican Church. This congregation began nearly 200 years ago to provide services to the poorer folks of downtown Toronto, so the building was designed quite differently than the Anglican cathedral a short streetcar ride away.

The stained-glass windows in the front and sides were coloured glass with no pictures. The altar area was designed so that all parishioners could come kneel around the altar in a circle instead of it being a separate area for the ministers.

I learned to appreciate beauty in those

stained-glass windows, leading me to encounter God in both body and soul. I learned to value communion in a circle, on one's knees before God and the gathered community, open to receiving God's grace in this act of worship together.

Our children were in elementary school when we joined East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., with a sign in front of the building naming it as a Mennonite Meetinghouse. The decorations were minimal at best. Most congregational singing was without any accompaniment, and so our young children stood on the pews with my arm around one or the other, studying the hymn book, and matching their voices to mine as we sang in four-part harmony.

I had never sung like this before, and found it entrancingly beautiful; my husband, not so much. The building was designed to prioritize good acoustics, to lift our voices and our hearts together to God, in community, without adornment.

Recently, gathering together for worship on Zoom brings us face to face with each other, assuming most people turn on their cameras. It is a delight to smile directly at each other, and to look at each other throughout the service.

Face-to-face connections are a priority

in Zoom rooms.

My current congregation, First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont., meets in a very old building, one that is noteworthy for its thick, solid walls and many additions reflecting changing needs. Our congregation, like many, has too much building for our people. We have begun exploring ideas on how we might use the land in order to come up with buildings that provide for community needs, such as affordable housing, as well as a beautiful and practical worship space. I know there are other congregations across Canada who are exploring similar ideas. I find this exciting!

On the other hand, many newer congregations were renting worship space pre-COVID-19, but they lost access to their space for much of the pandemic. Many are still trying to figure out where to meet, yearning to purchase land or buildings that they can call their own for worship and community.

Buildings are important for worship and for community. Each meetinghouse shapes the community that gathers in that space, just as the community itself shapes their building priorities. I hope our meetinghouses reflect who we are as Jesus followers, helping us to encounter God and each other, engaged in the communities where we find ourselves. ✎



Arli Klassen is a member at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., and can be reached at klassenarli@gmail.com.

 Et cetera

Where it's dangerous to be a Christian

Open Doors Canada has released the "2022 World Watch List," based on year-round research on the status of Christian persecution around the world. Looking at factors such as religious freedom, discrimination and violence, it ranks the Top 50 countries where it is most dangerous to live as a Christian. The research attempts to measure both the daily pressure and the violence inflicted on more than 360 million Christians globally. This year, Afghanistan holds the ominous title as the worst place on earth to live as a Christian, surpassing North Korea, the country that has been in the No. 1 spot since 2002. Following, in order of risk, are Somalia, Libya, Yemen, Eritrea, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iran and India. To see the complete list, visit opendoorscanada.org/worldwatchlist.

Source: Open Doors



LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Christ in you

Troy Watson

At the heart of the Christ path is a radical notion that our true identity is found in Christ. Paul says it is no longer he who lives, but Christ who lives in him. He says our true identity, our true self, is “Christ in you.” What does this mean?

Some theologians refer to the Incarnation as the Christ event. Christ is not Jesus’ last name, obviously. Christ is a title that refers to the incarnational self of Jesus, namely, the union of divinity and humanity in his person.

Your true self is “Christ in you,” but that doesn’t mean your true self is God. Your true self is oneness with God. This is an important distinction. God is infinite; you are not.

“Christ in you” is the union of divinity and humanity in your person. It is the essential self within you, where divinity and humanity are one. As 13th-century theologian Meister Eckhart wrote: “The eye with which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me; my eye and God’s eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love.”

At Pentecost, we celebrate Spirit baptism, which is the moment you become aware of your true self, which is “Christ in you.” In fact, *baptizo*, the Greek word for “baptize,” means “to merge.” Spirit baptism awakens us to our merged self, our oneness with God.

In John 17, Jesus talks about this mysterious oneness with God right before he was arrested and crucified. He says that we can experience the same oneness with God that he experienced. Paul refers to this oneness with God, that Jesus talked about, as “Christ in you.”

I grew up in a Christian church that

encouraged us to “accept Jesus into our hearts.” This image of “accepting Jesus into your heart” can be a helpful way of thinking about “Christ in you” at a certain point of your faith formation and spiritual development.

However, what does it actually mean to accept Jesus into your heart? I don’t think anyone believes Jesus, the human being who lived 2,000 years ago, magically shrinks, enters your blood stream like a little nano-Jesus, and moves into your heart.

The concept of “accepting Jesus into your heart” is acknowledging that the same Spirit that lived in Jesus, lives in you and in me. Spirit baptism is a spiritual awakening when you become conscious of “Christ in you,” aware that the Spirit of Christ, the same Spirit who lived in Jesus, resides in your inner being as your true identity, your true self.

Christians recognize “Christ in Jesus.” We see the union of divinity and humanity in Jesus, and exalt him, because we see this so clearly. However, the mystery of the Gospel, as Paul explains in Colossians 1, is to see “Christ in you,” not just in Jesus. It is interesting that Paul says this mystery of the Gospel was hidden for ages. This means that the mystery of “Christ in us” was a reality before Jesus was ever born. In fact, Jesus came to reveal what “Christ in you” looks like.

Your true self is “Christ in you,” but that doesn’t mean your true self is God. Your true self is oneness with God. This

is an important distinction. God is infinite; you are not. You are a finite creation that is one with God, and you become aware of your true self when you become conscious of your oneness with God.

When you become aware of your oneness with God, you become simultaneously aware that all humans are one with God, even if they aren’t aware of it. In Ephesians 3, Paul says the mystery of the Gospel is that we are all members of one body, we are all one. The mystery of the Gospel is that we are all one with God and humanity.

The only division between us, if you can call it that, is that there are those who are aware of our collective oneness with God, and those who are not.

In his first letter, John says we cannot love God if we don’t love other human beings. If you say you love God but do not love your fellow humans, you are a liar. If anyone does not love their fellow humans, they cannot love God. Loving God and loving humanity are interconnected because we are all one with God and one another.

This “divine oneness” can be a confusing “mystical” teaching, but it is central to the way of Jesus. And to experience this mystical reality changes everything. More on that in my next column. ☞



Troy Watson (troy @avonchurch.ca) is a pastor of Avon Church in Stratford, Ont.



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VIEWPOINT

A different frame of reference

What Mennonites can bring to the conversation about climate change

Kate Strathdee

When I ponder the question of what Mennonites and Anabaptists can bring to the conversation about climate change, I think about the language that many governments and corporations use. The words “fight,” “tackle” and “battle” are commonly used when discussing the imperative to quickly solve the climate crisis. The time frame that our global community has to save our planet from ecological collapse is sometimes compared to a war-level mobilization.

The language that we use reflects our values as individuals, communities or societies. The reality is that the mentality behind this imperialist language is what

Some may say that they are the corporations, the wealthy and governments. However, we know that these institutions have also adopted this same language. And often the target may be the poor and those residing in the Global South.

While I think that electric cars are an important part of the “green energy transition,” we cannot ignore those who are living in communities where lithium is being mined. Protecting some lands from economic development is important for preventing further biodiversity loss; it should not come at the expense of forcibly taking land away from Indigenous landowners.

peaceful language we are showing the world that the environment should always be top of mind. Our job as human beings is to tend God’s garden as mentioned in Genesis 2:15.

It will likely take a while before our society moves from speaking about environmentalism as a battle, to something that is simply a part of life. It is true that we have destroyed the planet for so long that we do need to act quickly to prevent the worst outcomes from occurring. We must not be passive, and it is important to call out those who created the problem in the first place.

But we must also talk about repairing, restoring and reconciling. Ecclesiastes 3:2 reminds us that we need to break down the things that are evil and create good things. We cannot have one or the other. By starting to change our language around climate change, we become like a mustard seed planted into the soil, one that, with tenderness and care, can grow into a larger tree. ❧

I think this is a reminder that we should not be using only violent language when talking about climate change. We need to be restoring, healing and mending.

got us into this mess in the first place. While we do need to transition away from fossil fuels and reduce our carbon emissions, that is not the end of our responsibility of taking care of the earth.

The work of restoring our earth will take a long time, and we can’t stop thinking about this issue once a certain piece of legislation has been passed. As well, in a war there are always enemies. Who are the enemies in the so-called battle against climate change?

Even though governments and corporations may continue to use warlike language in regards to climate change, could Mennonites reframe this in a different way?

Jesus calls us to be peacemakers. He said, “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall become the children of God*” (Matthew 5:9). He believed that those “*who take the sword will perish by the sword*” (Matthew 26: 52).

I think this is a reminder that we should not be using only violent language when talking about climate change. We need to be restoring, healing and mending. I do not think that any language involving the word “fight” is bad, but I think that the fact that so much of climate discourse uses the word is the main problem. By using more



Kate Strathdee is an undergraduate fourth-year student at Carleton University studying global and international studies, and she is

planning to work in elementary education in the future. She was also an intern with Mennonite Creation Care Network in 2021. She was raised in the Mennonite tradition and currently attends Ottawa Mennonite Church. She is passionate about education, music, environmental justice, food justice and Jesus.

Originally posted online by the Mennonite Creation Care Network on June 23, 2021, at <https://bit.ly/3O5rcuB>.



Canadian Mennonite discussion event to explore the climate crisis

Canadian Mennonite is launching an online discussion series exploring current events that are impacting the church and wider world, and the climate crisis is the subject of the first event.

Hosted by Aaron Epp, CM's online media manager, the first event takes place on Wednesday, May 25 at 8 p.m. ET. You can register to attend at canadianmennonite.org/events.

We asked the three guests who will be joining Epp on May 25—Joanne Moyer, Ian Funk and Anthony Siegrist—to write a few paragraphs introducing themselves and to identify a question they hope to bring to the discussion.

Joanne Moyer

The roots of my love for God's creation were planted during my childhood through family treks in the Old Man River Valley in Lethbridge, Alta.; game drives through parks in Tanzania, East Africa; and summers working at Camp Valaqua in the Alberta foothills.

Especially at Camp Valaqua, my faith was nurtured in a setting with intense connection to nature, and I developed a strong understanding of God as Creator and a conviction that my response to God's love must include attention to, and care for, God's creation.

These convictions are closely linked with justice concerns, recognizing that the vulnerable in our societies frequently suffer the greatest harm from environmental degradation while often contributing the least to causing it.

After completing a theology degree at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, I pursued environmental studies degrees at several levels, culminating in a PhD. During my studies, I was invited to serve as one of the Canadian council members for the newly formed Mennonite Creation Care Network, and I have served with the network for almost 20 years.

I currently work at The King's University in Edmonton, teaching environmental studies and geography,



Joanne
Moyer



Ian Funk



Anthony
Siegrist

and conducting research on faith-based environmental engagement in Canada.

I try to walk all this talk in my personal life, choosing not to own a car; considering my purchases and travel carefully; gardening; and eating lots of beans.

My question: *Which is more important for addressing climate change: personal lifestyle choices or political advocacy aimed at creating systemic transformation?*

Ian Funk

I have been a pastor for the last six years at Langley Mennonite Fellowship in British Columbia, and I have also been studying at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

In both my studies and in my formation as a pastor I am finding more and more that every dimension of faith intersects with how we relate to creation. In creation we experience grace, incarnation, revelation, goodness, forgiveness, redemption, life, providence, calling, shalom and a connection with Creator God.

I pray that, in a time of climate crisis, the church does all that it can to tune into every dimension of our faith that connects us with creation; creation is calling for this.

I am a part of the Mennonite Church B.C. Creation Care Task Group and MC Canada's Sustainability Leadership Group.

I was recently a part of a Mennonite church community learning series—"Creator's Call in a Climate Emergency"—in which it became abundantly clear that there is a very deep sense of urgency among church folk to respond to the climate crisis. In this series, we learned that creation has suffered largely because

of a prevailing worldview that justifies extraction and conquest, and that the church needs to actively participate in a dramatic, imaginative shift in our thinking which realizes our intimate connection with creation.

My question (from the MC B.C. Creation Care Task Group): *Who is ready to actively engage with creation care in the church community? Is the church viewed as a venue where we can respond to the climate crisis?*

Anthony Siegrist

Being involved in creation care means putting our hands to the local work of rejuvenating habitats and reducing the harmful aspects of our ecological impact. It also means contributing our voices and our votes to the task of changing the systems that make damaging consumption seem normal and victimless.

My work with A Rocha is part of this, but I hope my everyday *oikological* work is as well. Like many others, I was initially drawn to environmental concerns because it was in nature that I encountered God's peace. There is something about natural landscapes that makes me feel like I know what it means to be a human. These places, and the wild ramble of flora and fauna that make them up, deserve our care.

I'm motivated by the connections as well: the fact that almost all of us are upstream from somebody else, the fact that our lives depend on natural systems and organisms we didn't create, and for which we could not pay. We live in a world of gifts and grace. The only right response is to extend that grace, to live in wonder and care.

My question: *Which biblical lens, which story or theme, puts the climate crisis into the right focus?*

For more information, visit canadianmennonite.org/events.



NEWS

'Come over and help us so that we can help the needy ones'

Update from Mennonites in Ethiopia, where violence persists

By Will Braun
Senior Writer

Pastor Desalegn Abebe's message to North American Mennonites is simple. Abebe is the head of Meserete Kristos Church (MKC), the Anabaptist denomination in Ethiopia, where 17 months of civil violence has led to 12 MKC churches being burned, 44 displaced and 163 full-time ministers and their families displaced and without income.

Speaking via video link from Addis Ababa, Abebe says to his North American sisters and brothers: "Your forefathers planted MKC in Ethiopia; now we are the largest church [in Mennonite World Conference], and we are in need. Come over and help us so that we can help the needy ones among us. And pray for us that God would bring some bright days ahead for our children."

Last October, the World Food Programme said seven million people were in "dire need of food assistance" because of the conflict. The United Nations says more than two million people have fled their homes.

The turmoil in Ethiopia deeply affects members of the eight Ethiopian congregations within Mennonite Church Canada. Many of these people are first-generation Canadians with close ties to Ethiopia.

MKC is involved in humanitarian assistance, as well as peacebuilding activities that range from peer-based trauma-healing programs in remote villages to official participation in the Ethiopia's National Dialogue Commission.

The conflict began in 2020 as a flare-up of underlying tension between the national government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), based in the northern state of Tigray. The TPLF effectively controlled the national government for 27 years after leading the ouster of a repressive military regime in 1991. But in 2018, TPLF lost power.

While the current conflict started in Tigray state, violence has shifted to neighbouring states, with various regional and ethnic militias becoming involved. A recent UN report referenced severe human-rights violations, noting that all sides were implicated. Many reports of the weaponization of rape have surfaced. Abebe also mentioned rape.

The situation is complex for MKC because the denomination includes members from all the regions and ethnic groups involved in the conflict. They live in the context of battling narratives in their country.

Abebe says that, while MKC leaders encourage churches not to take a position, but to focus on unity in Christ, this is a challenge. "I can't deny that division is in our midst based on ethnic background," he says. But he adds that there are also strong signs of unity and churches supporting each other.

MKC is also working for peace on the political level. Abebe and his colleagues are actively involved in conversation with government officials, about both aid and peace. An MKC member was recently selected from a pool of more than 600 nominees to sit on the 11-member National Dialogue Commission.

On the aid front, MKC's relief and development arm is waiting its turn to be given government approval to deliver assistance to the north.

Abebe notes that another conflict a continent away is compounding suffering in his country.

Rebecca and Paul Mosely—Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) country representatives for Ethiopia—explain the impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Inflation related to the invasion is making food relief more expensive everywhere, they said via video link from Addis Ababa. "Inflation is catastrophic here. Inflation means people just don't eat."

Since the violence began, MCC has added emergency response to its existing work in conservation agriculture, health, water, education and peacebuilding. MCC works with various partners in Ethiopia, including MKC. Much of MCC's emergency relief is through the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA), the largest non-governmental organization in Afar state, which borders Tigray and is home to much of the worst fighting now.

The TPLF considers parts of Afar



PHOTO BY PAUL MOSELY

A refugee camp in Debarq, Ethiopia, set up to house people displaced by civil conflict.

contested territory. Also of significance, the highway from Addis Ababa to the sea port in Djibouti—a nationally critical piece of infrastructure—passes through Afar. It has been a TPLF target.

Life was difficult in the sparsely populated Afar state even before the violence, say the Moselys. Many inhabitants are nomadic goat herders. Now, herds have been “decimated,” thousands of people displaced, and, in cases where people can return home once the violence shifts elsewhere, they go back to destroyed homes, clinics, schools and water systems. The Moselys say some people have been forced to flee to “remote wastelands” where there is sometimes no water. Food insecurity is rampant. Some areas are entirely cut off from aid by the fighting. APDA staff report widespread cases of stunted growth among children.

MCC is partnering with APDA on a project to provide palm-mat shelters.

Elsewhere, MCC partners with MKC to train people in trauma healing and peace-building. One element of this work is to help prevent a scenario in which tensions from this conflict become seeds for future conflict. MCC also assisted in organizing a national gathering at which senior church representatives from Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant denominations discussed conflict and peace.

Abebe expresses gratitude for support from Mennonites elsewhere in the world. “Many countries have given us weapons to fight each other, some have given ideas that worsen the conflict, but Mennonites in the rest of the world have given us money and courage,” he says, acknowledging a “sense of belonging” to the international faith community.

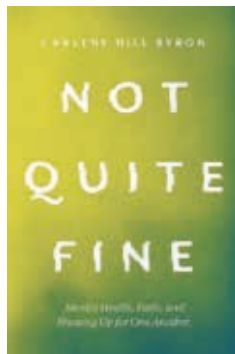
“We are one body in Christ,” he says. “If one part of our body is sick, all of our body [is] sick. If you feel that [sickness], then now is a time to join hands and help our people in Ethiopia, and in Ukraine.” ❧

To contribute toward the ministry needs of MKC churches that have been destroyed and members who have been displaced, contact Norm Dyck of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (ndyck@mcec.ca or 1-855-476-2500 ext. 707). To contribute to MCC's work, visit mcccanada.ca.



News brief

New book chosen for Mennonites to read together

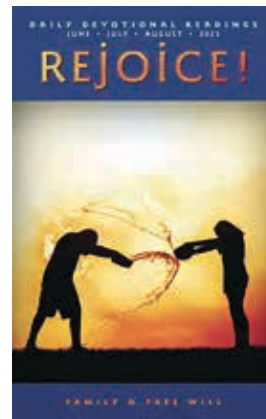


Mennonite Church Canada, MC U.S.A. and Herald Press began partnering in September 2020 to encourage Mennonites to engage in a “common read,” a shared reading experience focused on specific books written to nurture Christian faith in this cultural moment. The Common Read continues from April through June with *Not Quite Fine: Mental Health, Faith, and Showing Up for One Another* by Carlene Hill Byron. At no other time in history have so many people understood themselves to be suffering from mental-health problems. Medicines and therapies have their roles in supporting those who live with mental health-problems or mental illness, but the church can also be a strong support. Byron offers practical ways the church can promote healthier mental states for everyone, including those who struggle with mental-health challenges. Hill Byron is a spiritual wellness volunteer in the Maine Health hospital system and is active in her Lutheran church. She has been medically treated for depression or bipolar disorder since the age of 19, with doctors attempting more than 20 different medications to contain her symptoms. Find her online at The Mighty, Mad in America, The Redbud Post, and The Church and Mental Illness. *Not Quite Fine* can be purchased from CommonWord.ca in Canada. A free downloadable study guide is also available.

—MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA

News brief

MennoMedia assumes full ownership of *Rejoice!*



HARRISONBURG, VA.—MennoMedia and Kindred Productions have reached an agreement for MennoMedia to assume full ownership of the quarterly devotional magazine *Rejoice!*. Beginning with the fall 2022 issue, all Kindred *Rejoice!* subscribers will transfer to MennoMedia. Kindred subscribers will receive a letter with their summer issue explaining how their subscription will be handled after the transfer. “We want to make the transition as seamless as possible for all Kindred subscribers,” says Amy Gingerich, MennoMedia’s publisher. “We look forward to serving them for many years and want to start our relationship off right.” MennoMedia and Kindred reached the agreement in March. “Financially and logistically, it made the most sense for Kindred Productions to transfer all ownership of *Rejoice!* to MennoMedia,” says Carson Samson, the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches’ operations and communications director. “The *Rejoice!* devotionals are a regular part of many readers’ lives, and we are pleased they can continue to receive them each quarter.” MennoMedia, the publishing arm of Mennonite Church U.S.A. and MC Canada, and Kindred Productions, the Mennonite Brethren publisher, first partnered on *Rejoice!* in 1972.

—MENNOMEDIA / KINDRED PRODUCTIONS

'All of a sudden there's buds on the trees'

Drop-in program connects kids with creation

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Many children today live in a nature deficit. As screens constantly command their attention, parents tighten their protective grip as dangers outside seem to increase, and a multi-year pandemic continues to spread. Children are spending increasing amounts of time inside at home.

A Rocha Manitoba, a Christian environmental organization, and Jubilee Mennonite Church, a Winnipeg congregation, are working together to change that. They run Earthkeepers Kids Club, a weekly after-school drop-in program focused on connecting children with creation.

Every Tuesday, children aged 5 to 12 gather on the church's grounds to identify plants, search for animals, build fires and simply spend time outside.

"Nature is profoundly healing in a lot of ways and very hopeful," says Kari Miller, A Rocha Manitoba's environmental education coordinator. The organization and church jointly hired her to plan the programming and lead the group, which started in last September.

Anna Marie Geddert, community ministry pastor at Jubilee Mennonite, emphasizes how important it is to get children outside because of "the benefits of interacting with nature in terms of their physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development." It is also crucial in the current climate crisis: "These are our future generations. They can make a difference! They can let people know why we need to take care of the earth."

Miller and two other leaders facilitate interactive learning for the children. They have dug through compost, talking about life cycles. They have run around the yard hunting for hidden names identifying the surrounding trees. After they learned to build fires, they roasted marshmallows. They made natural dyes and painted the snow and crafted bird feeders out of pinecones and seeds. Miller read them stories, and when COVID-19 raged and temperatures plummeted, she put together art kits and dropped them off at the children's houses. "I love seeing kids learn to cultivate curiosity and learn how to ask

questions," she says.

Over the years, Jubilee Mennonite has expanded its outdoor space; the congregation has enlarged its community garden, developed a sand pit, planted trees and set up a fire pit. For a while, some children from the surrounding area would vandalize the yard, breaking branches while climbing trees or throwing around tomatoes.

"You can't love nature if you don't experience nature," Geddert says of the youthful vandalism. "If children have never participated in gardening or haven't had trees around them, [they need] to learn how to love it and then learn how to take care of it," she says.

Many kids who come to Earthkeepers and live in the area surrounding Jubilee Mennonite are from families who don't have cars or a high income, which limits their opportunities to experience nature. So the congregation started bringing summer camp to its community.

A Rocha runs week-long day camps in locations across the city throughout the summer, so Geddert arranged for A Rocha to host one at Jubilee. When she saw what a wonderful impact the day camp had, she wanted it to continue throughout the year. Thus Earthkeepers was born—the first time A Rocha Manitoba has run regular children's programming throughout the year.

The children who attend Earthkeepers come from many different religious and cultural contexts, so the leaders begin from a basic premise that spans differences.

"It all starts with the whole idea that God is the creator. . . . If God created the earth, it's our job to care for the earth," Geddert says.

Miller adds: "I also think that implicit



PHOTOS COURTESY OF A ROCHA MANITOBA

Earthkeepers Kids Club, a collaboration of Jubilee Mennonite Church and A Rocha Manitoba, aims to connect children with creation.



'You can't love nature if you don't experience nature . . . children need to learn how to love it and then learn how to take care of it,' says Anna Marie Geddert, community ministry pastor of Jubilee Mennonite Church.



At Earthkeepers, children learn outdoor skills like growing food, building fires and dressing for the weather, in addition to growing their relationships with creation.

in nature is a sense of God, a sense of the sacred and divine who created it."

By spending time in creation, children dig into big ideas like death, resiliency and perspective.

"Nature is a place that has an embodied story to it. This story is one of resiliency, of new birth and new life that's cyclical with death. . . . When these kids can be in nature they can see that," Miller says. "Every day the sun does come up despite how hard the last day was or despite how cold this winter is, all of a sudden there's buds on the trees again."

Miller has seen the children's knowledge and skills around navigating weather and fire-building improve, but the biggest change has been in the relationships created between leaders and children. She knows the children's families and has been to their houses. She has spent time with children learning what a joke is and how to

tell one, and with others who are learning how to process emotions in healthy ways as they go through difficult experiences.

Earthkeepers will wrap up at the end of June when children finish school, but A Rocha's day camp will once again be held at Jubilee in the summer, and Earthkeepers will restart in the fall, pending funding.

Miller plans to grow a garden with the children in Jubilee's community garden this spring. As they return to more outdoor activities, she is excited to see how their comfort and familiarity with the outdoors has changed. ❧

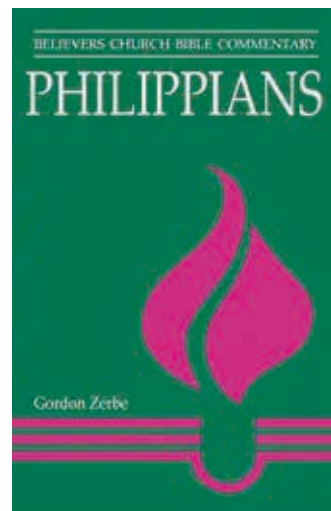


❧ News brief

Two donors top \$100,000 towards Bible commentary series

HARRISONBURG, VA.—Two anonymous donors have given more than \$100,000 to MennoMedia to support the Believers Church Bible Commentary series over the last decade. In 2013, the Ohio-based married couple, who wish to remain anonymous, started making small gifts for the commentaries, gifts which grew larger over time. "I have been interested in studying the Bible for many years, since high school, or earlier," says one of the donors, who continues to enjoy studying the Bible and teaching Bible studies. The series, published by MennoMedia's book imprint Herald Press, is based on the conviction that God is still speaking to all who will listen, and that the Holy Spirit makes the Word a living and authoritative guide for all who want to know and do God's will. Distinct features of this series are "The text in biblical context," and "The text in the life of the church" articles that conclude each section. The first volume was published in 1986. To date, 34 volumes have been published—18 Old Testament volumes and 16 New Testament volumes. A volume on Joel, Obadiah, and Micah will be released in late August. Nine additional volumes remain before the series is complete. "We are so thankful for the ways these donors have supported this series financially," says Amy Gingerich, publisher and executive director at MennoMedia. "Their passion for Bible study led them to help us support this ongoing series. Generous donors like them will help the project come to completion."

—MENNOMEDIA



Faith and art in Yarrow

Interactive Easter walk inspiring for all ages

By Amy Rinner Waddell
B.C. Correspondent



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMY KLASSEN

At one station at the Good Friday walk, participants were invited to take a living branch and weave it through a rope trellis, thinking about contributions they could make to God's kingdom.

Walking, biking or driving through twelve Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, April 15, residents of Yarrow, B.C., experienced the story of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection together through interactive and creative artwork.

The four churches of the small town, including Yarrow United Mennonite Church, cooperated in creating the experience, a Yarrow Holy Week tradition for the past decade. In past years, the stations were primarily indoors, but they moved to outdoor locations starting with the COVID-19 pandemic two years ago. This proved to be a success in the community, as many new people participated because they didn't have to enter a church building. Emphasis was on interaction with the displays, which were designed to be friendly for all ages.

Said Amy Klassen of Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church, the primary planner of the displays: "Each station has a theme, a key scripture and a question to ponder. Aside

from that, we deliberately choose ways to engage the senses at the various stations: sight, smell, touch, voices. I strongly believe this helps us to remember."

A transformed vegetable stand at Station 2 became a sanctuary to God becoming flesh. Interactions there included a wooden cross puzzle specially designed for the event and a recording of children talking about questions they would ask Jesus if they could.

The ancient Japanese pottery technique of kintsugi, in which broken pottery pieces are put back together again into wholeness, illustrated Mary's anointing of Jesus at Station 3. Participants could dab a cotton swab with perfume and take it with them as a reminder of Mary's gift to Jesus.

At Station 4, Judas's betrayal of Jesus, viewers faced this question: "What will you give me?" Real apples hung from a tree with pictures of some modern temptations—a new car, beautiful home, money—forcing people to think about what they might value more than their relationship with Christ.

Two bowls, one holding a pile of artificial coins and the other holding a heap of glass beads with crosses painted on them, encouraged people to run their fingers through the contents and ask, "Which will I choose?"

Participants were invited to take a living branch at one station and weave it through a rope trellis, thinking about the contributions they could make to God's kingdom. At the station hosted by Yarrow United Mennonite, illustrating the Last Supper, a newsprint mural of Jesus breaking bread was filled with portraits of children who had drawn themselves sitting at the table with Jesus.

Near the end of the walk was a depiction of the tomb, not an enclosed tomb but a wooden framework with a white sheet with scripture and questions about hope written inside. Participants walked through the tunnel with the ability to walk out the other end, thinking about causes for hope in the world as they pondered Jesus' words.

"One of the highlights for me was seeing families walking together and being able to interact with the Easter story," said Klassen. "As well, people have the opportunity to meet friends, say 'hello' and slow down the pace of life."

Yarrow resident Barbara Nickel, a member of Emmanuel Mennonite in Abbotsford, said she found the whole experience inspiring and she especially appreciated the participation of children at each station.

"My husband and son and I rode our bikes around Yarrow on Good Friday and experienced the abundant, creative, moving and thought-provoking stations of the Easter Story Walk," she said. "I loved the spirit of community fostered by running into neighbours and friends along the way and experiencing the Easter story together."

"The local Mighty Moose Ice Cream stand [closed for the season] was the station for the crucifixion. I wrote my confession on a slip of paper and hammered it to a large cross that was leaning against a picnic table. Dozens of confessions already fluttered under nails in the breeze. The walk offered so many ways to express and ponder faith in very tangible ways you could hear and see and even smell. I appreciated so much the involvement of children in every single station." ❧



PHOTO COURTESY OF EILEEN KLASSEN HAMM

Despite a slow start to spring-like weather across much of Saskatchewan this year, Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon still found a way to embrace natural beauty. At the church's sunrise Easter service, congregants were encouraged to walk around the area and "bring back four of something from the earth," said Eileen Klassen Hamm, who arranged the liturgy for the service. Participants then created a mandala with what they found.

Easter across the West



PHOTO BY JESSICA EVANS

Calgary Inter-Mennonite Church's Sunday morning Easter service was led by a portion of the Soggy Bottom Singers, a local folk group. The group is made up of four members, including, from left to right: Pastor Lauren Harms, Allison Goerzen on mandolin and Jonas Cornelsen on banjo. The three added a touch of folk to traditional Easter songs, such as 'Love is Come Again.'

PHOTO BY KERRY WILLIAMS ENNS

(Below) Members of United Mennonite Church of Black Creek, B.C., were happy to meet again this year for an Easter morning sunrise service on Oyster Bay, north of Black Creek. This annual tradition stopped for the past two years during COVID-19. Following the service, participants enjoyed Easter breakfast together at the church.



The land speaks

New documentary film explores shared Indigenous and settler care of unique Saskatchewan area

By Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent
NEAR HERSCHEL, SASK.

“We hope that people, landowners especially, will talk about what’s on their land, who occupied the land, and who occupies it now,” says Harry Lafond, a Muskeg Lake Cree First Nation elder. “The land holds everyone’s history and everyone’s story. We, all of us, need to be responsible custodians of the story. We need to talk about these issues. That’s what we’re really hoping this film will do.”

land, located near Herschel, has significant Indigenous artifacts, such as teepee circles, sacred circles and petroglyphs.

The documentary explores the calling to settlers of how to care for and share the land respectfully and graciously. The working title of the film is *Custodians of the Land* and is directed by Brad Leitch. Leitch also directed the award-winning 2016 film, *Reserve 107*. Both films were

94 Calls to Action. The \$60,000 project was supported by many donors from both Indigenous and Mennonite backgrounds.

The Walking the Path Committee is hoping for a spring premiere in Saskatoon, alongside other events that will promote the documentary.

The Walking the Path committee started discussing taking on this cinematic project in August 2020. The pandemic slowed down the process and, in spring of 2021, the group was unsure whether it should proceed with filming that summer, with so many unknowns about COVID-19, according to Randy Klassen, a Walking the Path committee member and Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan’s Indigenous Neighbours coordinator.

“We had several members of the committee who felt like this was the time, and this was our window of opportunity,” Klassen says. “Thankfully, we have some movers and shakers in the group, and from there things took off quite rapidly,” said Klassen.

Leitch and his film crew gathered a hundred hours of footage over the course of two weeks in July 2021. The final cut of the film will be approved soon and the committee hopes to begin screening the film in May.

David Neufeld, one of the committee’s members, has been involved with Ancient Echoes from the very beginning.

“I moved to Herschel in 1986 to serve the local church,” he says. “We learned that the land around what was, at that time, the Herschel School had many incredible features in terms of ecology, Indigenous sites and artifacts, and paleontological fossils. We knew how important that land was to our past and, really, our future too. So when it was decided that the school was to close, a group of local people, myself included, petitioned the rural municipality



PHOTOS COURTESY OF RANDY KLASSEN

David Neufeld, centre, leads an Ancient Echoes tour of the Coalmine Ravine region with Elaine Enns and Ched Myers in September 2021.

The film that Lafond refers to is a documentary that tells the story of the land surrounding the Ancient Echoes Interpretive Centre. The privately owned

commissioned by Walking the Path, an ad hoc committee of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan that seeks to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s



David Neufeld and Elaine Enns examine a bison rubbing stone at the Coalmine Ravine region in September 2021.



Dinosaur art installations at the site of Ancient Echoes Interpretive Centre located in Herschel, Sask.



to sell us the school to turn it into an interpretive centre. One of the things this film shows is how a group of local landowners, municipal governments and volunteers can work together to protect, promote and preserve our shared land. You don't need a whole pile of money to do this."

Neufeld and Lafond served, respectively, as the Mennonite representative and Indigenous elder on the film project and are credited as co-producers. For them, the land featured in the film invites people to keep one foot firmly grounded in the past and the other in the future.

Neufeld stresses the original intent of the Indigenous Peoples to share the land that became Canada: "When settlers first arrived in Canada, the Indigenous people were ready to share the land with the Europeans. But the settlers weren't here to share the land; they took over. In the end, the government left Indigenous people with just 2 percent of their original lands."

Lafond adds: "There are so many strands to this story. The land holds amazing prehistoric history, like the rock formations that tell amazing stories. It was also a stopping and gathering place for many Indigenous people groups. And this is everyone's history and everyone's future. What's amazing is that [Ancient Echoes] is a place that holds the story right on the surface. The land is alive; it's not a museum." ❧

(BELOW) At Ancient Echoes Interpretive Centre in Herschel, Sask., Cree elder and storyteller Joseph Naytowhow is interviewed by film-maker Brad Leitch, with assistance from Adrienne Leitch, while Diana Chabros listens in.

Remembering the passage of time

How reunions changed over time for one family

By Reta Bender and Melody Steinman
Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

John L. Erb and Barbara Oesch were Amish Mennonites who farmed in Wellesley Township in southwestern Ontario in the late 1800s. They attended Maple View Mennonite Church. Together they raised eight children and had 29 grandchildren.

These grandchildren grew up with the love and support not only of their parents and siblings, but also their seven Erb aunts and uncles and their families. They spent a lot of time together.

As the extended family expanded, the first Erb reunion was held in 1932.

Over the years, money was collected to rent a facility. Depending on the year, meals were potlucks or barbecues. A committee was established to determine the plans for the next reunion, which was traditionally held at the beginning of June.

During the years, attendance records were kept, as well as updates on marriages, births and deaths. Around 125 relatives came at the reunion's peak in 2002.

Prizes were often given to the individuals who guessed the weight of watermelons and the number of jelly beans in jars. Sometimes, other prizes were given to those who came the furthest distance. One year, a toothbrush and tube of toothpaste were given to the person who had last been to the dentist.

These grandchildren are now in their 70s, 80s and 90s, making it more difficult for the first cousins to meet. Many of these cousins have died. Only eleven are still living.

Interest in the following generations about getting together is declining. Even though in recent gatherings, the group talked together about what to do in terms of meeting again, no decisions were made. Time continued to pass without a resolution about the reunion when COVID-19 hit.

Since then, one of the cousins suggested

having one more formal Erb reunion before more of the family pass away. The individual cousins were contacted to determine their interest in such a function. With encouragement from everyone, plans were made to proceed.

Although not everyone could attend, the time came for the final reunion. It occurred at Steinmann Mennonite Church in Baden, Ont., with 15 people in attendance on April 7, 2022. A microphone was passed around to provide updates on where people are currently living and to allow each person time to share memories from the past.

There was also time for eating and informal visiting. Instead of a potluck, a big pot of potato soup was served with crackers, cheese and sandwiches. Pumpkin pie and cheese were served for dessert, as well as tea and coffee. It was a delicious time of food and fellowship.

This gathering was a landmark event in the John L. Erb and Barbara Oesch family. What was once a closely knit family had now assimilated into the general society, and how they related to each other had



PHOTO BY MELODY STEINMAN

Of the remaining 11 Erb cousins, seven were still able to attend the final reunion 90 years after it started.

changed.

The day was a time to acknowledge and bring closure to an era and a way of being together. The day was a time to recognize the role of the Erb family over the years, a time for the remaining first cousins and their spouses to reconnect once again, a time to share their memories of the reunions when they were children



PHOTO COURTESY OF RETA BENDER

The 1947 Erb reunion.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RETA BENDER

Children of John L. Erb and Barbara Oesch at a 1947 Erb family reunion.

and then later as adults, It was a time of gratitude to God, who was, and continues to be, faithful in their lives.

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). ❧

Reta Bender is one of the surviving first cousins. Melody Steinman is the daughter of Olin (also one of the first cousins) and Vernetta Steinman.

News brief

Camp Valaqua holds Family Feud fundraiser

How long would your pastor pray during the community prayer? Name a reason a person’s face might turn red. Name a word that is used more than any other in the Bible. Which commandment will the average person most likely break? These were just a few of the questions posed to participants at Camp Valaqua’s second annual Family Feud fundraiser. The online event took place on March 12 and was organized by former committee chair Kevin Stoesz. The event had about 60 screens representing over 100 participants, with each donating \$20 or more to participate. Each team entered a breakout room, answered the questions and scores were tabulated. A team named Pegmonton won the event, which raised just over \$3,400 in support of Camp Valaqua’s general budget.

—JESSICA EVANS

News brief

Young adult Bible curriculum celebrates diversity

“Diversity: God’s Design” is a new multimedia study from Mennonite Church U.S.A. that calls young adults to celebrate the intentional diversity of God’s creation. The free, four-week curriculum uses biblical reflections to introduce the importance of intercultural competency as part of Christian growth and formation. “This curriculum will become increasingly relevant as denominations such as ours seek to be more diverse and inclusive in sharing the good news,” says Glen Guyton, executive director of MC U.S.A. “Diversity: God’s Design” features voices of people from across the Mennonite church who share biblical narratives and personal experiences that invite participants to explore how and why they should join the journey of celebrating diversity. The study is recommended for young adult and intergenerational audiences in faith-based settings. Each 45- to 60-minute lesson includes: a featured sermonette video and biblical passage; a video sharing a young adult’s perspective; a spoken-word poetry video; reflection and engagement questions; weekly action steps; and supplemental resources. “Being intercultural is part of biblical discipleship,” says Sue Park-Hur, an MC U.S.A. denominational minister for transformative peacemaking. Free downloads are available at mennoniteusa.org/diversity-gods-design.

—MENNONITE CHURCH U.S.A.



News brief

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—JESSICA EVANS

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PEOPLE

Peacebuilding and relationship building go hand in hand

Ben Borne aims to build a more just world through communications work

By Emily Summach
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEN BORNE

For Ben Borne, his work is not only professional, it's also deeply personal, as he is both Saulteaux from Yellow Quill First Nation and Mennonite.

It's hard to imagine when Ben Borne finds time to sleep.

"I have four jobs," he says with an easy laugh. "It's busy, but I love what I do."

Borne works for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan, teaches at First Nations University of Canada, and is the co-president/co-founder of Symmetry Public Relations.

His fourth job is a new addition to his portfolio. Early in 2022, he became the publisher of *Eagle Feather News*, a Saskatchewan-based Indigenous newspaper. The newspaper recently celebrated 25 years and has a readership of 40,000 people across Canada.

"*Eagle Feather* is a publication that has a focus on telling the non-sensationalized stories from Indigenous communities," Borne says. "We share positive, important, true stories and profiles of Indigenous people; the sort of stories often aren't shared in mainstream media. We really try to capture the essence and nuance of these communities rather than portray groups of Indigenous people as a monolith."

For Borne, his career in communications work is part of a larger calling to share stories and work towards justice.

"I was always interested in storytelling and connecting with people," he says. "I would shoot and edit videos as a kid, and I did a semester in a media program in high school. When I went to Canadian Mennonite University, I was on a pastoral path, so I majored in biblical and theological studies and minored in communications and media, and there's really a storytelling element to both. I really owe my path to this weird mix of my interest and my upbringing. And my faith informs my work in my ethical practice, beliefs and my guiding principles. The

communication profession is so relationally oriented."

In his consulting work with Symmetry Public Relations, Borne is often hired to help businesses and organizations in the work of Indigenous-settler reconciliation, such as anti-racism work.

"As a consultant, I can say things that others can't," he says. "Outside consultants can poke at things. Businesses know that we're not here to be kind, but to walk through the process of understanding. Often this means looking at their practices and how to create anti-racist work policies, practices and procedures."

For Borne, this work is not only professional, it's also deeply personal, as he is both Saulteaux from Yellow Quill First Nation and Mennonite.

"My Mennonite identity gets challenged by new ideas and worldviews all the time," he says. "Mennonites have a long history of being involved with the foster-care systems and with AIM (Adopt Indian Metis).

"I'm a direct product of the 60s Scoop. My mom was adopted by a white family. I've been wrestling down that history. Hearing all the stories from both sides, Indigenous and Mennonite, helped me realize how I became 'white-ish.' I needed that bigger historical context to understand my place and how that fits into the bigger picture. It all comes down to knowing your story. To do the good work of reconciliation, you have to know where you come from. People need to know and tell their stories."

Borne says his experiences also offer a challenge to the broader Mennonite church: "Mennonites have a reputation as being an insular community. And there is a lot of good work that is being done through MCC and in Indigenous-settler relations and in some churches too. But we haven't really explored this path of anti-racist work, how churches and people still support racist policies and systems.

"We're still participating in systems that do not redistribute power. Still quiet on this front, and we have to be actively anti-racists. We have to be willing to speak out against it. Because if people aren't fully invited to the communion table, and there's still disparity, then there is not an equal experience of the bread. Communion is supposed to be equal.

"There's more work to be done," he continues, "and some people do it really well. We all live with the best of intentions and none of us are ever going to be perfect. But we have to be willing to wrestle, because we can't always foresee the consequences or challenges." ❧

40 minutes

Pastor reaches out to young adults from afar using social media

By Jessica Evans
Alberta Correspondent
DIDSBURY, ALTA.

Anna-Lisa Salo, pastor of Bergthal Mennonite Church in Didsbury, has taken advantage of Zoom's free 40 minute limit. Two years ago, she reached out to four young women from her congregation who were heading off to post-secondary institutions.

As it was during the beginning of the pandemic, Salo says she felt like she had lost an opportunity to connect with them: "I never had any real quality time with them other than a 'Hello' and 'How are you?' on Sunday morning."

She decided to reach out to the four in an attempt to get to know them better. With the knowledge that young adults are tech literate, she started by asking if they would like to check in once a week for 40 minutes, as she didn't have a Zoom account with unlimited time. Not entirely convinced that they would agree, she was surprised at the resounding "yes."

The gatherings started on Tuesday evenings, beginning with the Prayer of Examen, a spiritual practice of reviewing the day, to retune the group to the sacred in ordinary life. Usually lasting 15 to 20 minutes, and practised in the evening, the prayer prompts individuals and groups to remember God's presence, express gratitude, reflect on the day and prepare for the day to come.

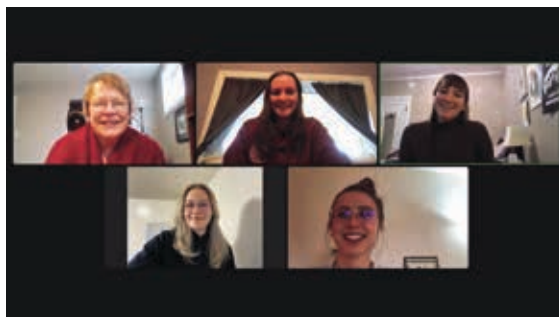
Salo asked two important questions of her group each evening:

- **For what** are you most grateful?
- **For what** are you least grateful?

She did not place any obligations on the participants to continue but, as trust was built between the five, they insisted and the group continues to meet every week. Topics range from school, marriage and

death, and everything in between.

The women started out as students; now they have jobs, are getting married and starting families. The group spoke of the joys and challenges that young adults face in life, asking questions, venting, listening, wondering, sharing and supporting one another.



SCREENSHOT BY ANNA-LISA SALO

Members of the '40 Minutes' group include Pastor Anna-Lisa Salo, top left, Danika Peters, Cassidy Brown, Taylor Derksen and Dayna Goerzen

"In our conversations, there is nothing off the table," Salo says. "Now I have a deeper relationship with them."

The virtual meetings became a safe space for the women to discuss whatever was on their minds and in their hearts without the threat of being judged. They said to Salo, "We never felt free to talk about this in a church setting."

Salo has a background working with young adults, so this group was a labour of love: "I love working with young adults, the fact that they are wide open and not afraid. It energizes me and gives me life."

She began the group as a facilitator, not directing the conversation to any particular topic. "I knew it was working when I didn't initiate, and there was care beyond Tuesday evening," says Salo, who noticed the women reaching out to one another

outside the group.

For those congregations that might want to replicate this model, Salo has some suggestions, based on her experience:

- **In order** to determine whether a group can be created, pastors or staff should first contact young adults and ask whether they are interested.
- **Setting a time limit**, like 40 minutes, is more productive; otherwise the group loses focus. In Salo's group, each participant shares for 10 minutes and they carry on in the next session.
- **Beyond sharing**, Salo suggests asking open-ended questions and being succinct in what is said. "Good communication sometimes requires stepping out and taking a risk, trying something new, and then sitting back and watching God grow a new community into being," she says.
- **"Do not** be afraid and think of it as a growing edge for you as a pastor,"

says Salo, also suggesting that facilitators step back as an authority figure and resist "teachable moments."

- **"Holding space"** for the group by being physically, mentally and emotionally present for the participants is also important. Salo suggests being sensitive to the needs of the moment, listening well and focusing on one person at a time, if needed.

"Ultimately, have love and respect for one another and ask that they dig deep into their soul and spirit," says Salo. "It's a fine dance and I think it's really needed. There has been a gamut of emotions that we have shared. We share deeply from the heart, and I will do this as long as they wish, until it has served its purpose." ❧

News brief

Herald Press pulls Bruxy Cavey books



MEETINGHOUSE FILE PHOTO BY
DALE D. GEHMAN

Bruxy Cavey was a keynote speaker at the 2015 Mennonite World Conference assembly in Pennsylvania.

HARRISONBURG, VA.—As of March 14, Herald Press is no longer selling books by Bruxy Cavey. Cavey, author of *Reunion* and *The End of Religion*, was asked to resign from his role as senior pastor at The Meeting House, Oakville, Ont., after the church received the results of a third-party investigation into sexual misconduct allegations against him. After submitting his resignation, Cavey publicly confessed to having a long-standing extramarital affair. The Meeting House has named this relationship as an abuse of power and authority. “We take our responsibility of resourcing the church seriously,” said Amy Gingerich, Herald Press’s publisher. “Like The Meeting House, we at MennoMedia also stand against sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and the abuse of power and authority. Given that The Meeting House asked Cavey to resign and removed all his teaching videos from their website, and the Be In Christ denomination revoked his credentials for ministry, we at Herald Press cannot in good faith sell his books.” Cavey’s books may continue to be available through retailers who have existing inventory, but Herald Press will no longer publish, print or distribute Cavey’s titles.

—MENNOMEDIA

Staff change

Pastoral transition in Alberta



Bill Christieson, left, was commissioned for service at Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary on March 27. He and his wife Christi accept the gift of a tree with fingerprints of all church members from Deanna Willms during the service.

Bill Christieson, left, was commissioned as pastor of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary on March 27. He had previously been pastor of Southside Community Church in Vancouver, helping the community build relationships in the neighbourhood. He earned a master of divinity degree from Regent College in Vancouver and is currently completing a doctor of ministry degree in Christian community development at Northern Seminary in Chicago. “The church is first and foremost a community rather than an institution; its shaped by its welcome, rather than its structure,” he says. Christieson says he is excited to develop relationships and build community at his new church, and to see how God is calling the church to impact the world.

—STORY AND PHOTO BY JESSICA EVANS

Staff change

MC Manitoba director of Leadership Ministries retires



Rick Neufeld retired on March 31 after 34 years in pastoral ministry. He spent the last six-and-a-half years as director of Leadership Ministries at Mennonite Church Manitoba. He previously spent 27 years working in pastoral roles, serving four congregations throughout the province: Portage Mennonite Church, Northdale Mennonite Fellowship (now Jubilee Mennonite Church), Morden Mennonite Church, and Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church. He simultaneously worked on his master of divinity degree at the University of Winnipeg’s Theological Consortium, a collaboration with Canadian Mennonite Bible College and several other colleges. Neufeld’s role as director of leadership ministries included providing care and resources to pastors, assisting congregations with pastoral searches, and overseeing pastoral ordination and licensing. “That process of credentialing our pastors was a real highlight for me,” he says. “This past year we credentialled 10 pastors even through COVID-19, and that was quite significant and important.” In retirement, he is looking forward to caring for his grandchild and doing some travelling. Michael Pahl, MC Manitoba’s executive minister, is managing the duties of the role in the interim. Jeff Friesen and Karen Schellenberg will be carrying on Neufeld’s work as co-directors of Leadership Ministries late this summer.

—BY NICOLIEN KLASSEN-WIEBE

/// Staff changes

New co-directors for Manitoba Leadership Ministries



Karen Schellenberg



Jeff Friesen

Karen Schellenberg and Jeff Friesen have been named as Mennonite Church Manitoba's next co-directors of Leadership Ministries. They will step into the position in late summer. "Rick Neufeld has done a terrific job in this role the past six-plus years, and his retirement at the end of March leaves a big hole in our support for our pastors and congregations," says Michael Pahl, executive minister of MC Manitoba. "Karen and Jeff are the perfect combination to move this critical role forward." Schellenberg will be the first woman to serve in this role, and this will be the first time the job is shared. Schellenberg has nearly 20 years of pastoral ministry experience with four congregations. She is currently completing a term as interim pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Winkler. Schellenberg earned a master's degree in theological studies from Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg. Friesen has 17 years of pastoral ministry experience, all at Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. He began with an exclusive focus on youth and young adults, but his role has evolved into that of co-pastor. Friesen also earned a master's degree in theological studies from CMU. Leadership Ministries provides care and ministry resourcing for pastors and other spiritual leaders. The director role involves working with congregations and pastors in pastoral searches and overseeing the credentialing of pastors toward licensing or ordination.

—MENNONITE CHURCH MANITOBA



ONLINE NOW!

at canadianmennonite.org



Watch: Witness workers extend greetings from Ethiopia

In a new video, the latest additions to MC Canada's team of International Witness workers talk about life in Ethiopia.

canadianmennonite.org/dejongs



The Mennonite Game's winners and losers

Who is "in" and who is "out" in Mennonite churches in North America? Laura Pauls-Thomas of Lancaster, Pa., reflects on that question.

canadianmennonite.org/mennogame



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Supporting each other through building robots

Story and Photo by Stacey VanderMeer
ROCKWAY MENNONITE COLLEGIATE, KITCHENER, ONT.

Just before the pandemic, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate teacher Candace Robbins started a robotics team. Rockway Robotics played in the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Robotics Competition, an international program that seeks to promote science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education for youth through exciting robotics programs. Team participants learn skills in science, technology and engineering, as well as leadership, communications and teamwork.

In its 2020 season, Rockway Robotics showed perseverance and determination, as it overcame technical difficulties throughout the Durham College Event, and it was chosen to be a part of the top-ranked three-team alliance that won the event.

In its 2022 season, the team was a finalist at the University of Waterloo event, a winner at the St. Mary Catholic Secondary School event, and participated in the

Ontario District championships, holding its own against teams with more members and more experience. At the end of the season, Rockway Robotics and its robot, Firewall, ranked 27th in the province.

Something that has really impacted members of the Rockway Robotics team is how the whole robotics community supports each other. At the event in 2020, when Firewall stopped working during the competition, other teams that were Rockway's competitors helped to get Firewall running again.

This season, other teams in Waterloo Region have offered support to Rockway in achieving its build goals as well as providing driving support at competitions. Whenever a call for help is made during competitions, Rockway team members always seek to provide assistance. It is this cooperation, support and community that truly makes FIRST Robotics such an important program.



Rockway Robotics drive team and their robot Firewall at the St. Mary Catholic Secondary School competition in Hamilton, Ont.



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Schools Directory featuring Rockway Mennonite Collegiate and Westgate Mennonite Collegiate

Community building in all kinds of weather

By Julia Theissen

WESTGATE MENNONITE COLLEGIATE, WINNIPEG

In early April, the Westgate community gathered in small groups to share a breakfast in celebration of God's generosity. Students in grades 6-12 learned each other's names, shared something they had been given in abundance, sang surprisingly boisterous versions of "Johnny Appleseed," and feasted on waffles, eggs and more.

And thus Westgate small groups were reinstated, continuing a long pre-pandemic tradition of student-led times together. These moments of silly games, heartfelt prayers and even awkward silences give students a chance to practise interacting with others outside their sphere of friends and classmates.

Westgate's vision statement asserts that "learning, at its best, occurs when academics are bound together with faith and positive relationships." Our commitment to marry classroom studies with strong community has been tested during the pandemic, yet

our students and staff have understood that knowing each other is not an optional part of Westgate life.

Senior Student Council instituted cohort days early in the pandemic, briefly interrupting classes for fun and fellowship. Junior Student Council recently took advantage of Manitoba's record snowfalls to host group snow-sculpture competitions. Grade 9 retreats continued as outdoor day camps, building familiarity at the start of the school year.

Of course, most community building happens not through mandatory events, but through more informal or voluntary gatherings. In the last two years, students have initiated everything from an after-school games club to a Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) Alliance, providing spaces to show up for one another. We've learned that even when wearing masks, we can meet face to face.



WESTGATE MENNONITE COLLEGIATE PHOTO

Westgate's commitment to marry classroom studies with strong community has been tested during the pandemic, yet our students and staff have understood that knowing each other is not an optional part of Westgate life.

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Calendar

Saskatchewan

May 13-14: This year's MC Saskatchewan women's retreat, "The Divine Spark," will be held at the Shekinah Retreat Centre. Speaker: Valerie Wiebe. To register, visit mcsask.ca/event/10899. Open to all women 16 years of age and older.

May 28: Annual RJC golf tournament

and fundraising banquet. Golf begins at 1 p.m. with a shotgun start at Valley Regional Park in Rosthern. The banquet and program follows at 6:30 p.m. at the school. Visit rjc.sk.ca/homecoming to register for golfing. Call 306-232-4222 to reserve banquet tickets.

Manitoba

May 27-29: Camps with Meaning's

20th annual Manitoba birding retreat, at Turtle Mountain Bible Camp. Speakers: Paul Epp and Dan Epp-Tiessen. To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3qSSr9v>. For more information, email Gordon Janzen at gordonjanzen@gmail.com.

Ontario

May 13: Menno Singers presents the "Schubert Mass in G," at First United

Church, Waterloo, at 6:30 p.m.; with guest soprano Joanna Loepp Thiessen, the Abner Martin Scholarship winner. This is Menno Singers' first in-person concert since the pandemic. To order tickets, visit mennosingers.com.

May 16: Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp hosts an in-person, outdoor, seniors retreat, beginning at 9:30 a.m. Facilitators Wendy Janzen of Burning Bush Forest Church and the camp's own Mary Anne Musser

UpComing

MDS Canada announces summer family program

Families looking to spend some time together, and do some service for others, can do both this summer in Princeton, B.C., through the family program offered by Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). Families will do landscaping and build garden sheds for people in the town whose homes were damaged by flooding last November. The program will run from July 17 to Aug. 13. Families can sign up for a week on a first-come first-served basis. Each week there will be three to four families with children, with age-appropriate work for all volunteers. MDS Canada will provide food and campsites for RVs, tent trailers and tents, supervision, tools, meals, and hard hats. MDS Canada is not providing accommodations; families should bring their own RVs, tent trailer or tent, along with lawn chairs and work clothes. Volunteers are responsible for their own transportation to and from the project; power and water hookups should be available. "It's a great opportunity for families to spend some quality time together and help others," says Kelsey Friesen, volunteer manager for MDS Canada, adding that vaccinations are not required, based on current B.C. health guidelines. Princeton is located in the Similkameen region of southern B.C., at the confluence of the Tulameen and Similkameen rivers, and at the junction of B.C. Highways 5 and 5A. For more information, contact Friesen toll-free at 1-866-261-1274 or email kfriesen@mds.org.

—Mennonite Disaster Service



MDS PHOTO BY JOHN LONGHURST

The MDS trailer was parked in Princeton, B.C., earlier this year.

UpComing

Grebel to host Indigenous-Menno conference from May 12 to 15

"It is incumbent on all settlers in Canada today to understand their relationship with Indigenous Peoples as a means to right the injustices of past and present, and to act on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2015 Calls to Action," says Marlene Epp, one of the organizers of the upcoming Indigenous Mennonite Encounters Conference, entitled "Indigenous Mennonite Encounters in Time and Place: A Gathering of Body, Mind and Spirit."

This academic conference and community education event, to be held from May 12 to 15, offers insight into the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Mennonite settlers. The keynote address will be offered by Lori Campbell, associate vice-president of Indigenous engagement at the University of Regina; and Maria Campbell, a writer, educator and activist. Karen Sunabacka, a Grebel music professor, has worked with a local musical group, the Andromeda Trio, to explore Indigenous and Mennonite history through music. A free public concert will be performed by Cris Derksen, a two-spirit, Juno Award-nominated Cree cellist, who was commissioned to write a choral piece for the concert called "ka-nimihitocik: They Who Are Dancing." There will also be in-person activities like gathering at the ceremonial fire grounds, and "On the Land," an outdoor photography exhibit by Bangishimo Johnston. Registration is required to attend. To learn more, visit bit.ly/2UhmHu.

—CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIS DERKSEN

A free public concert will be performed by Cris Derksen, a two-spirit, Juno Award-nominated Cree cellist.

will help participants nurture their faith through exploring God in nature. For more information, or to register, visit www.hiddenacres.ca.

May 21: Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp hosts an alumni day, beginning at 10 a.m. For more information, or to register, visit www.hiddenacres.ca.

May 26-29: "Cahoots Festival of Faith, Justice and D.I.Y" meets in person for the first time since 2019 at Pierce Williams Christian Camp, Fingal. The ecumenical family-friendly gathering allows participants to share skills and stories to create the world God envisions. (Event organizers include several members of MC Eastern Canada congregations.) For more information, or to register, visit www.cahootsfest.ca.

May 27-28: New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale, in person at the New Hamburg (Ont.) Fairgrounds. For updates sign up at nhmrs.com/subscribe.

May 28: MCC material resources warehouse hosts an open house at 65 Heritage Drive, New Hamburg,

from noon to 3 p.m. Visit mcco.ca/events for more information.

International

May 20: Mennonite World Conference online Zoom prayer hour, at 9 a.m. Central Daylight Savings Time. Join Anabaptist-Mennonites from Indonesia to Peru in an hour of prayer in English, Spanish, French, Hindi and Indonesian. To register, visit bit.ly/3wQ01xF.

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.



Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



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Please send a cover letter and resume to Randy Shantz, Pastor Search Committee chair, rshantz@mac-ca.com. **This role is anticipated to begin Fall 2022.**

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Local artists make Stations of the Cross public

Story and Photos by Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe
WINNIPEG

During Holy Week, bright pops of colour appeared in a downtown alley amid the brown slush and litter of a Winnipeg spring.

A group of artists from the congregation of Home Street Mennonite Church created their own versions of the Stations of the Cross and pasted them on the exterior of the church, making them accessible to all.

The 13 stations depict Jesus' journey to the cross, his death and resurrection.

The group was inspired by "Stations of the Street," the idea and project of Christian artist Scott Erickson.

"The church is in a bit of a lower-income area, so this was a way of kind of reclaiming the alleyway space, saying this is holy space too. We want people to be there as

well," Danielle Bailey, one of the organizers told CHVN Radio in Winnipeg. ☞

See more photos at canadianmennonite.org/home-street-stations.

